

THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL

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The Home Mission Journal.

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NOTICE.

The next meeting of the Kings and St. John counties will (D. V.) convene at Hatfield's Point on February 17th at seven o'clock p. m. Pastor J. D. Wetmore is to preach the opening sermon; Pastor W. J. Gordon to preach the quarterly sermon; Pastor N. A. McNeal is to give a missionary sermon. Let all the churches in these counties be represented.

S. D. ERVINE, *Secretary.*

Ordinations.

"Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set." Proverbs xxii. 28.

It was regarded as a great crime in Israel for anyone to remove the landmarks which the fathers had set. A curse was pronounced upon whoever did so, and all the people were to say amen. It was by divine direction the portion of the inheritance of each tribe was marked out, as also that which was allotted to each family; and the removal of those dividing lines was strictly forbidden. Due regard and profound respect was enjoined upon all for what the fathers had been inspired to arrange for the order of the covenant people. The old boundaries and old paths were never to be forsaken nor changed. A deviation from them was regarded as dangerous and criminal. This was so both as regarded their social and religious life. The prophets exhorted the people to seek after the old paths and to walk therein, that they might enjoy rest for their souls. Under the old dispensation the prophets set up the waymarks for the religious faith and conduct of the people; and obedience to their teaching secured the salvation of the nation. Under the new dispensation the apostles laid the foundation principles of both faith and duty for the new covenant people, incorporating into them the words of faith spoken by the prophets. Thus prophets and apostles were workers together as foundation layers for the New Testament church, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. So the landmarks and boundaries of the New Testament church are set by divinely inspired authorities; and no

council, association, convention nor ecclesiastical body has any right to change, alter, amend nor deviate from the original pattern. Nor can they do so with impunity. The fathers of our denomination in these provinces established our churches upon these old primitive foundations, which have characterized the Baptists through all the centuries—from apostolic days to the present. They had no sympathy with expediencies nor human policy, but adhered closely to the old landmarks. Hence the uniqueness and simplicity of our organizations. Adherence to primitive form and order, church government and polity has held our churches in unity through all the ages, without any controlling head or central source of authority, but Christ alone. And it is with alarm we recognize any attempt to move the old landmarks that have always distinguished us from other religious bodies. Of late there seems to be a growing disposition in certain would-be controlling minds to bring in among us usages and customs that neither we nor our fathers were wont to follow. We refer now to the attempt to change the method of ordaining men for the ministry, as pastors of our churches; and we fear that the design of the proposed change means more than the mere method. It smacks somewhat of what may be but the entering wedge of what may culminate in a denominational hierarchy. If once we remove the old landmarks, and adopt lines of human policy and expediency, we know not whither we will drift. We have no doubt but the church at Rome at first was a Baptist church. It did not become a Papist church at a single bound, but by departing by little from primitive usages, and adopting the policy and customs of non-Christian organizations around them, they gradually in a few centuries became what they are to-day. What is the matter with the course we have always pursued in ordaining candidates to the ministry? Have we not grown in numbers, influence and strength beyond the ratio of other religious bodies, notwithstanding the fact that our increase of membership is dependent upon spiritual births, not upon natural births, as many others are. But the promoters of the proposed changes say they only want to set up a safeguard against the introduction of unqualified men into the ministry. Very well; we are not pleading for ordained ignorance in the pulpit.

But we are opposed to setting up any standard of collegiate qualifications a brother must have before he can be ordained to the pastorate. We find no such standard set up by the Apostles who founded the primitive churches. Nor was it set up by our old fathers who in

the beginning planted our churches in these provinces. The fact is, if we had been dependent on a ministry with collegiate diplomas for our growth and prosperity, we would not have been able to make the showing we do at the present. The greater part of our increase of membership in the churches during all our past history up to the present has been through the instrumentality of men who never were helped nor hindered by a collegiate education. And the time has not yet come, if it ever does, when we can afford to do without the God-given help of men whose hearts are filled with the love and spirit of God, and a passion for the salvation of souls, though they may not have had a college education. Some of our most successful workers to-day are men who never were inside of a college. We are not disparaging a college education. But what we do say is, that it should not take the place of the qualifications required in the New Testament. A college education though desirable, and of great advantage to a Christian minister, is not enumerated in the catalogue of qualifications for the pastorate required by apostolic authority. The Apostles asked that men should be chosen for the pastoral office who were of good behavior, and had a desire for the work, given to hospitality, not a drinker, given to study, apt to teach, able to rule, not a novice, not quarrelsome, not greedy of filthy lucre, not soon angry, not self-willed, but blameless and sound in doctrine, etc. And they were admonished to preach the word, not science, nor philosophy; not men, but Christ Jesus, and Him crucified, risen, and reigning; to feed the flock, and care for the church. It is useless for men to set up standards for God to work by, or to make grooves for the Holy Spirit to move in. Attempts of this kind has been the bane of Christianity, and has given a non-primitive type to church-anity to an alarming extent throughout Christendom. And Christianity owes it to Baptist adherence to primitive doctrine, and church order, that any of the ancient landmarks are within sight to-day.

Therefore let us beware lest the removal of any of the old landmarks opens a door for innovations that may be but the beginning of episcopal and then papistical rule among us; and then the inscription of Ichabod, instead Hephzibah, be written upon our banners. Baptists are noted for loyalty to Christ and New Testament doctrine, discipline and usage; and God has borne them on through persecutions and tribulations along all the centuries to these days of liberty of conscience and denominational prosperity. But, still we have distinctive principles and practices, and position to maintain, and we should not allow ourselves