

The Alabama Restoration Journal

An Historical Perspective of
Churches of Christ In Alabama



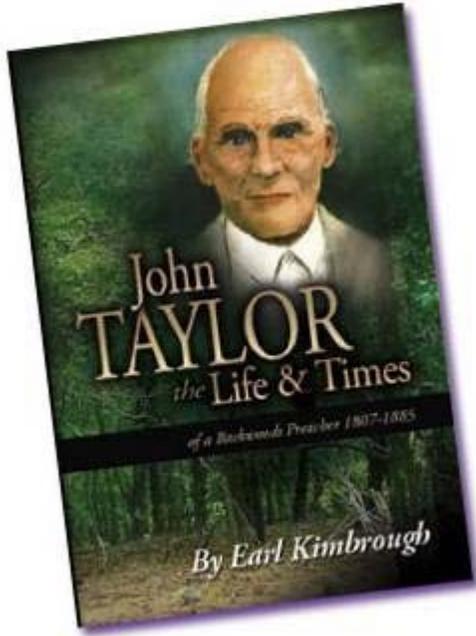
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VOLUME 5

ISSUE 2

October 01, 2011

Earl Kimbrough's Latest.....



**John Taylor-The Life & Times
of A Backwoods Preacher**

The life of John Taylor, one of the most beloved of the pioneer gospel preachers ever in Northwest Alabama, is a story that must be told. Who better to tell this story than Franklin County's own, Earl Kimbrough.

In writing this book, *John Taylor, the Life and Times of a Backwoods Preacher*, Earl comes home—home to the hill country of Franklin County, Alabama. Earl was born and raised in Russellville, the county seat of Franklin County. This is a story close to his heart. We are greatly indebted to Earl Kimbrough for telling this story of joys and sorrows of John and Polly Taylor, as they labored for the Lord until the time of their deaths.

\$24.95, 260 pages, cloth bound with dust jacket.
+ 3.50 Shipping

Earl Kimbrough, who gave us *The Warrior from Rock Creek: Life, Times, and Thoughts of F. B. Srygley (1859-1940)* in 2008, has, out of his vast knowledge of Restoration history and superb writing talents, given us another Restoration classic, *John Taylor: The Life and Times of a Backwoods Preacher (1807-1885)*.

Taylor labored among the poor in the hills of Northwest Alabama. Reared under the prevailing religious influence of the day--Calvinism--he sought to "get religion." Having never heard of Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, or any of the other leaders of the Restoration Movement, Taylor, on his own study of the Bible, learned the way of truth.

"While Taylor was unknown outside his field of labor, he was contemporary with Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. He was preaching the Bible alone and establishing New Testament churches [in Alabama] at the time of Walter Scott's great Restoration evangelism on the Western Reserve of Ohio" (page 21).

As Kimbrough states in the Introduction to the book, "The purpose of the work is to honor the memory of a man who pioneered, circulated, defended, and preserved New Testament Christianity, mostly among the poor people that inhabited the rugged hills and meandering hollows of Northwest Alabama in the nineteenth century."

Any one who loves the church of our Lord and the plea for non-sectarian Christianity will thrill at reading this beautifully told story.

--Hugh Fulford

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

The object of The Alabama Restoration Journal is to preserve and disseminate an historical record of the Restoration Movement primarily as it functioned in Alabama prior to World War II.

Brotherhood controversies as they unfolded in the years following this period are not included in this history, not because they lack historical validity, but because they do not fall within the frame of our primary time and area of coverage and because our interest is basically in our common roots.

Some articles and items may extend beyond our borders of state and time period, when the editor deems them pertinent to the main objective, when they are reflective of, or connected directly with, earlier history, or when they are purely of a human interest nature.

The Journal is not a "church paper" and is not designed to teach doctrine as such. It will not promote any hobby, controversy, or theological point of view that does not fall within the scope of the Restoration ideal within the time and area of primary interest.

The editor and contributing editors are responsible for keeping the material they submit for publication, whether written by them or selected from other sources, in keeping with the objects of The Journal.

The editor will retain the right to make the final determination of whether an article, or a portion thereof, fits the objective of The Journal.

No editing of material, other than routine editorial work, will be made on any writer's work without his prior knowledge and consent.

All historical material submitted for publication must be verifiable by documentation. Any opinions or conclusions based in part or whole upon supposition, while valid, will be given as such and not as historical facts.

Simple documentation may be supplied within the articles published, but it will be our purpose generally to omit footnotes.

The editors may not agree on all aspects of New Testament Christianity as currently practiced, but they have a common interest in Restoration history that transcends other differences, hold one another as brethren in Christ, and consider each other as committed to and capable of representing the Restoration ideal of speaking where the Bible Speaks and being silent where Bible is silent.

The writing of a particular story or the recording a particular event should be understood as reflecting the editor and associate editors perception of history and not necessarily as reflective of their own personal view.

Every effort will be made by the editor and writers to record history as it is and not to rewrite it as they might like for it to be. Historical revisionism is not the object of The Journal and will be excluded to the extent of our ability.

Source information for all articles will be available for those who request same.

The Editors

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Our Cover

Earl has done another great job on the cover for this issue. The back cover is a print by Earl that graced the back of our special on the church at Mooresville a couple of years ago.....LEW

The Alabama Restoration Journal

An Historical Perspective of churches of Christ in Alabama

"Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is," Jer 6:16

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UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS

Larry Whitehead

Limestone County is the smallest county in the State of Alabama. It is located in the North/Central part of the state. Bordered on the west by Lauderdale County, the East by Madison, the South by Morgan and Lawrence Counties in Alabama and the North by Tennessee. The census figures for the decade 1940-1950 show a population of near 36,000 people. Athens is the only city of significant size and thus was and is the center of activity in the county.

Adolphus J. Rollins, in a report he compiled on the history of the cause in the county in the 1940s, stated that in 1900 there were only six congregations in the county. By the 1940s, there were twenty-eight congregations.

Brother Bob Turner has lived in Limestone County all his life. He has preached for several of the congregations and is as knowledgeable of the county's Restoration history as anyone. In an interview Bobby, Frank and I had with brother Turner two years ago, he stated that the efforts to expand the cause in Limestone County in the late 1930s was led by four gospel preachers. They were A.J. Rollins, Bennie Lee Fudge, M.A. Creel and Irven Lee. They secured a tent and held meetings all over the county. When the weather permitted, they held them in brush arbors, in cotton sheds at cotton gins and in school houses when available. In the period from the mid 1930s until the mid 1950s, they were successful in planting about thirty five new congregations. Brother Rollins, in a report to the Gospel Advocate in October, 1941, reported *"The number of baptisms is off some from the last year or so. About two hundred thirty-five were baptized. This brings our total for the last five summers to sixteen hundred baptisms. Thirteen new congregations have been started."*(The full report is in this Journal on page 4) Several well known preachers from outside the area were invited to hold gospel meetings; men such as S.H. Hall, G.C. Brewer and others from other states.

Alabama preachers were also invited to participate. Rollins reported in the GA in August of 1940, on a meeting conducted by Granville Tyler, who preached for the church in Russellville in Franklin County. This report also shows the support, work and enthusiasm of ordinary Christians as

they became involved in the work. *"Preparation for the meeting began thirty days in advance of the opening service. Prayer meetings were held in the homes of members of the congregation, with their neighbors in attendance, and no stone was left unturned in the matter of advertising. We were better prepared to begin at the beginning than ever before. Rain, which fell during twelve of the fifteen days, did not halt or materially hinder the attendance and interest. In preparing for the meeting ten were baptized and two restored. In all there were sixty-eight additions, with fifty of that number baptized."* These are only two of the many reports in the GA during the decade of the 1940s, that space forbids us to show.

In 1943, the North Alabama Bible School was begun in Athens. Today it is known as Athens Bible School. It has been one of the most successful schools of its type to be found anywhere. Certainly, it can be argued that it has had a positive impact on the churches as young people are taught the Bible on a daily basis and grow up to take their place in the church and the community.

Brother Asa Plyler, in his unpublished manuscript of the history of the church in Alabama, suggested that by the mid 1940s, 25% of the populace of Limestone County were members of the Lord's Church. Brother Turner concurs. If these numbers are accurate, the per capita membership may very well have been the largest to be found in the country, indeed, possibly anywhere.

Today, the population of the County has more than doubled since 1950. There are approximately fifty congregations meeting according to the New Testament order. The Church is as strong today in Limestone County as any where in the country.

The story of the restoration movement in Limestone County is a story of dedication. It is a story of determination. It is a story of commitment. It is a story of hard work. Above all, it is a story of the gospel's power to touch people. It is also proof that all these factors working together, will bring *unprecedented success.....*

Welcome

We are pleased to announce that brother Hugh Fulford has joined our list of writers and is a contributing editor of the Journal. Hugh has written several articles for the Journal in the past and is familiar to our readers. His articles are always insightful and most interesting.

Hugh was born in Geneva County in south Alabama. The family moved to Florence in his teen years where he graduated from Mars Hill Academy. While a student there, at age 15, he began preaching for congregations in the area. After graduation from Mars Hill, he attended Freed Hardeman and later the University of Tennessee and Austin Peay State University. He has served churches in Kentucky, Tennessee and Texas as well as Mobile and Selma in Alabama. Now retired from local work. He preaches in gospel meetings, speaks in lecture ships, preaches by appointment, and works with congregations on an interim, or part-time. basis. He continues his active work of writing.

He has written numerous articles over the years, and he continues to write regularly for the Gospel Advocate and The Spiritual Sword. He has published several books: *Christianity Pure and Simple* (2005). *The Kind of Preaching Needed Today* (2006) and *The Lord Has Been Mindful Me* (2007). His current book, which we advertise, is *Essays On The Church*. He and his wife Jan, live in Gallatin, Tennessee.

Hugh will write a regular feature he calls **Restoration Tidbits** and occasionally write, as he has in the past, The **Final Say** column and other offerings as he sees fit.

We are delighted to have him as a part of our team.....

John Taylor Biography

We are pleased to announce that Earl Kimbrough's biography of one of Alabama's most beloved gospel preachers of days gone by, will be ready for shipping on or before November 1st. This wonderful work will take its place beside Earl's magnificent biography of F.B. Srygley-*The Warrior From Rock Creek...*

I believe that I speak for everyone associated with the Journal when I say we are indeed honored to be associated with a man of Earl Kimbrough's ability and many talents. He is truly a great historian and a wonderful storyteller. He is also a very talented artist. Earl's love for the Church is evident in his many articles and also his books. Read the book...I guarantee you will enjoy it...LEW

Larry reports on a special interview. Bobby begins with an article he calls **Gospel Roots In Limestone County**, tracing the beginning of the restoration plea in the area. Earl has a piece on a famous heresy trial from yesteryear he has named **R.W. Officer's Baptist Inquisition**. Bobby has as his second offering possibly the most in depth study available on a grand old pioneer from the area he has titled **John Favor: Planter, Patriot and Pioneer Preacher**. Kenneth has his final article in his wonderful series on **James Evans Matthews**. Earl has the story of a great discovery Frank made involving a grand old pioneer preacher from Limestone County which he has titled **A Man And A Book**. Uncle Isaac takes the old muzzle loader down and takes aim at some of the brethren. From Scott's, therestorationmovement.com, a piece about another pioneer preacher in Limestone County named **Thomas Weatherford**. Hugh has his first offering in **Restoration Tidbits**, a beautiful story about the relevance of the restoration plea. Bobby tells the story of **The Athens Bible School**, one of the most successful schools of its type to be found anywhere. Earl has an interesting piece he calls **A Hasty Visit To Limestone County**, a story of a debate with the Mormons. The **Gathering Home** column is about one of the most beloved gospel preachers ever to work in north Alabama, Granville Tyler. *Edward Bragwell* wrote this tribute in Truth magazine upon brother Tyler's death in 1996. Bobby reports on the second oldest Church of Christ in the county in a piece named simply **Old Reunion**. Earl has his regular column **Restoration Ramblings In The Heart Of Dixie**. Earl also has the **Poet's Corner** for this issue. Wayne has a most interesting article on a promising pioneer preacher who sadly made shipwreck of his faith and in the process, caused great damage to the cause of Christ, in a piece called **Alas! For His Wreck-The Apostasy Of James Ragan Collinsworth**. Bobby has as his last article, an offering called **The Curch Begins In Athens**. *A New Testament Christian* wraps this issue up with **The Final Say**.

A word about Bobby Graham..Bobby has done most of the articles on Limestone County for this issue. He and his wife Karen live in Athens and have done so for many years. Bobby has served several of the churches as minister over the years and it is fitting that we can share in his vast knowledge of the Lord's work there. He currently preaches for, and serves as an elder of the Old Moulton Road Church in Decatur and is also on the faculty of Athens Bible School. We give him special thanks for the great job he has done on this issue and for all his excellent articles....LEW

GOSPEL ROOTS IN LIMESTONE COUNTY

Bobby Graham

Both Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell were powerful forces in the cause of restoration in the larger theater of the newly formed country of the nineteenth century, but Stone's influence was the predominant one and the more lasting one in the Northern part of the new State of Alabama. The influence of Stone through his disciples and friends reached North Alabama a bit earlier in the 1820's, while the Campbell influence arrived here in the latter 1820's.

It will be seen from the following investigations into the history of the Disciples in the State of Alabama, that these two elements have played a large part in the winning of members and establishing churches there. The Stone movement contributed a powerful evangelism to Alabama, while the Campbell movement was largely argumentative, creating splits in the Baptist churches and winning converts from the Methodists and Presbyterians (Richard L. James, *The Disciples of Christ in Alabama, 1830-1860*, p. 14).

While some later Disciples of Christ historians have somewhat decried Campbell's approach as too combative, it is significant that the Editor of the Huntsville Democrat offered some commendation of Campbell's writings (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1831, p. 46):

However correct or incorrect Mr. Campbell's religious opinions may be, we think it may be said of him...that he has touched no subject which he has not adorned. We have given some extracts in today's paper, from his *Millennial Harbinger- Extra*, which we think will be read with interest. Mr. Campbell is, no doubt, cordially despised by many sectaries, and denounced as a ..."dangerous man," but one thing, we believe, will not be denied, that wherever his Christian Baptist or *Millennial Harbinger* is read, it begets a desire to "search the Scriptures;" that the New Testament particularly is more generally read, and there is a more thorough inquiry "whether these things be so."

The Camp Meetings in Northern Limestone County

The preaching of the restorers reached Limestone County during the 1820's, as it did earlier and, to a possibly greater extent, the contiguous counties of the state. Annual camp meetings were held in most of the northern counties of Alabama in the 1820's, influenced by the great Cane Ridge Camp Meeting of 1801 in

Kentucky, where Barton W. Stone had been moved eventually to sever his ties with the Presbyterians and to seek the unity of Christians on the basis of the Bible alone. Among these counties recorded as hosting camp meetings was Limestone County. The Green Hill Campground, located in the northern part of the county near Elkmont near Witty Mill Creek, seemed to serve this



purpose until 1849, some sources indicate. Johnny Boyd, an elderly member of the church at Hays Mill, showed Bobby Turner the location in the summer of 1971. Turner reported that the location was on the east side of the creek above the old Witty Mill, north of present-day Witty Mill Road. The following citations of evidence verifies the early presence of the restoration cause in Limestone County:

DEAR BROTHER—I have just returned from a tour of three weeks, during which time I attended three Camp Meetings: One in Limestone County, one in Morgan, and one in Blount. In Limestone we had a reviving time. About 20 joined the church—15 were baptized, and several others believed. Among those who were baptized, was David R. Scott and his Lady, who formerly resided near you. They wish this intelligence communicated to their friends. When we take into view the infantile state of the Church in the above County, its want of popularity, and the violent opposition of our popular brethren, we may safely say that the progress of truth was beyond what we had anticipated.—And what renders this revival still more gratifying, is, that it does not consist merely in speculation; for the people appeared to enjoy that heavenly-minded disposition, which makes them of one mind and one soul (James E. Matthews' letter of Sept. 24, 1827, *Christian Messenger*, November 1827).

I have been informed that at a Camp Meeting, near Athens, in Limestone County, about 20 professed faith in Christ, 15 of whom were baptized. In September last, I attended a four days meeting in Salem, Franklin county, Tennessee, where we constituted a church of 7 members. In this place and its vicinity, I was informed that we suffered great opposition, yet the meeting was well attended, and many appeared surprised, that we had been so greatly misrepresented. The prospect of doing good in this place is flattering. Brother J. McDonald is riding in that quarter, and I am informed that he has planted several churches in the

neighborhood of Winchester, and the adjoining settlements (James E. Matthews' report in Christian Messenger, April 1829, p. 142).

The next week at Conference in Limestone County, Ala. about 40 professed, 18 of whom were baptized (James E. Matthews' report of an 1829 area meeting, Christian Messenger, Dec. 1829, p. 19).

The next week a Camp Meeting was held both in Limestone county and in Morgan. In Limestone I am informed that about 25 united with the church. In Morgan 7. We have experienced great opposition at the last place, but I think that truth gained ground rapidly at the late meeting there (James E. Matthews' report, Christian Messenger, Dec. 1830, p. 285-286).

DEAR BROTHER;—Our Conference commenced on the last day of Sept. During the meeting 19 persons were immersed, and a number more professed faith in Jesus; most of whom have been baptized since. In Limestone county 23 were immersed, and others confessed the Lord Jesus. In Morgan Co. 4 were immersed; and in Blount county 8 were baptized, and several from other societies united with us (James E. Matthews' report, Christian Messenger, Jan. 1832, p. 29).

CAMP MEETING APPOINTMENTS.

Camp meeting at Winchester Ten. 4th Lord's day in July, 1832. Do. at Lewis', Jackson co. Manama, .and in Ruthetford Co. Ten. 5th Lord's day in July. Do in Wilson Co. Ten. and in Limestone Co. Ala. 1st Lord's day in August (Christian Messenger, March. 1832, p. 94).

Richard L. James attempted to list the preachers among the disciples in Alabama in his History of the Disciples in Alabama. Those found in Limestone County were J. Crowder and R. Golightly in 1830 and John Favor, Jr. in 1834. While we know little about the first two men, the name of John Favor, Jr. will become more important in the next section of this article.

Problems among the Baptists in Southwestern Limestone County

In addition to the camp meetings held in Limestone County, there was also an encouraging situation developing simultaneously with the camp meetings in the 1820's and 1830's in Southwestern Limestone County near the present communities of Poplar Creek and Ripley. This situation involved some members of the Baptist Church at Round Island and the one at Poplar Creek—the John Favor family and others—who left the

Baptists and took their stand on the Bible alone. Baptist records reflect these developments. The following chronology will trace the events centering around Favor and his turn from Baptist teaching and practice to that of the New Testament:

1822 (April): John Favor donated two acres of his farm to Round Island Baptist Church for a building.

1822 (October) : Favor and several others left Round Island Baptist and started Poplar Creek Baptist Church of Christ.

1827 (September): Favor and several left Poplar Creek Baptist Church of Christ to begin Independent Baptist Church of Christ at Poplar Creek.

1828 (February): John Favor was listed by Campbell as an agent for Christian Baptist.

1829 (July 6): Favor is mentioned in the Christian Baptist as sending money to buy three back issues of the paper for J.N. Smith.

1834: John Favor, Sr. wrote the following report, indicating a major shift in the faith and practice of the new group:

Alexander Campbell noted "Elder John Favor, Limestone" as a new agent for the Christian Baptist for Tennessee (Christian Baptist, Feb. 5, 1828, p. 175) and "Elder John Favor, Limestone county, Alabama" as new agent (Christian Baptist, March 3, 1828, p. 200). It becomes clear that Favor was early exposed to the radical teachings of New Testament Christianity.

We separated from the Baptists a few years ago onaccount of some difference on church government; we then took the appellation of 'Independent Baptists,' we were twelve in number; we have since determined to take the living oracles for our guide in both faith and practice; we meet on every first day of the week to break bread, we have a Bishop who labors in word and doctrine, also three Elders who preside in the church, and Deacons. Our number is above one hundred at this time: we have frequent additions by confession and immersion.

Yours in gospel bonds.

JOHN TARVOR, Sen.

Limestone, Alabama

(The Evangelist, 1834, Vol. III, 216)

Walter Scott corrected the name "Tarvor" to "Favor" in the same issue of The Evangelist.

In the same year John Favor, Jr. sent in this report concerning the Mount Pleasant congregation, the church which the Favors and others formed upon their completely leaving the Baptists, as referenced in Favor

Senior's report included above:

Athens, Limestone county, Ala. October 16, 1834.

The good cause is progressing in my neighborhood. Between 60 and 70 have made the good confession, and were immersed for remission, since the meeting of which brother Speer informed you, or within 12 months past. These have all been added to the congregation at Mount Pleasant, near Poplar Creek. The disciples, with a few exceptions are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been meeting for worship on the first day of the week for more than two years, and can confidently say that the doctrine is of God. At a 3 days' meeting, held at Mount Pleasant, including last Lord's day, attended by brethren Anderson and Griffin, 10 confessed the Lord and were added to the congregation. The opposition is raging; but the truth is mighty and will prevail.

John Favor, Jun.

Millennial Harbinger, July 1835, 43

After preaching in the Poplar Creek community for the new group in October 1833, Joshua K. Speer from Tennessee, described the progress of the New Testament message in this report in the Millennial Harbinger, Jan. 1834, p. 45:

Cannons Creek, Maury county, Ten. December 4, 1833

I attended a four days meeting (including the 4th Lord's day in October last) at Poplar Creek, Limestone county, Alabama; where I had the pleasure of declaring the glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," for two hours on each day, to an attentive audience. Eight persons confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord by submitting to the institution of immersion for the remission of sins. We had, truly, a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The reformation has made a very fair beginning in Limestone county, having amongst its advocates several, of the more intelligent part of the community, a number of whom have shared largely in the honors of this world, but are now willing to seek "the honor which comes from God only."

As late as thirty-four years later, the Athens Post (September 1869) included this statement concerning what must have been the same congregation: "An interesting meeting which has been in progress for some time at Poplar Creek was brought to a close on Sunday night. The services were conducted by Elder J.H. Dunn of the Christian Church, and six persons connected themselves with the church." The church at Poplar Creek (Mt. Pleasant) evidently still existed, and Dunn

lived on in the county until his death in 1877.

Was There a Connection?

We have set forth the early beginnings of the original gospel of Christ in Limestone County in the period from 1820 to 1835. These beginnings occurred even before the more famous Mooresville church started. Though these other early beginnings are not as well known, they are surely worthy of our attention and appreciation, for they fill a place in the Restoration Movement in Limestone County, Alabama.

The question arises in the mind of the researcher: was there a link between the developments among the Baptists in Southwestern Limestone County just chronicled and the preaching in the camp meetings in Northern Limestone County? The distance between the two locations is approximately ten to twelve miles. One must admit that the distances is not a forbidding one in terms of a cause - effect relationship. To say the least, it is interesting to think about the preaching in the camp meetings by those connected with the Restoration Movement, especially about its effect and influence on people like the Favor family. It is also fair to pose another question: How did the Favors first learn the truth to start working their way out of the maze of denominationalism, if it was not from the teaching being done nearby? While we might never have definite answers to these two questions here raised, it is also possible that future research will uncover the very information here sought.

Some have thought that Alexander Campbell spoke in Limestone County as early as 1833 and as late as October 4, 1860, in the courthouse, but there is no documented proof of this visit in Campbell's usually detailed records of his travels found in the Millennial Harbinger. Stone Family sources say that Barton W. Stone came to the county more than once, including a visit in 1839. The visit of the latter is more likely because of Biard family relatives of his living in the Ripley community and the death of John Nelson Biard in 1839. It has been said by Stone's family that he preached to a congregation of Indians along the Tennessee River in their own language. Stone is known to have been proficient in different Indian languages.

The existence of Christians in the area of Mooresville, located in the Southern part of Limestone County along the Tennessee River, is known as early as 1839. J.H. Hundley, who was important in starting this work and that at Reunion farther north in the county a few years later, reported in Walter Scott's The Evangelist in 1840 on page 113:

DEAR BROTHER SCOTT:—The truth has taken a strong hold in this section; being last August convinced of the faith, I wrote to the brethren of Tuscumbia to send over a person to immerse me. Brother Kendrick came; he has for some time continued to teach us here the true gospel: the effect has been glorious: we now number seventy. To God be all the glory. Yours in the Lord,

Moorsville, Ala.
J. S. HUNDLEY.
From the Harbinger.

Thus enters the Restoration Movement into Limestone County a new name, that of Carroll Kendrick. The possibility exists that Kendrick had entered Limestone County earlier because of his nearness in locations like Morgan County, Tuscumbia, and Moulton, where he is recorded as preaching in earlier years. More than this scant notice we shall not presently give to Mooresville or to the rest of the county but simply remind the reader that an Wayne Kilpatrick's article about the Mooresville church appeared in Alabama Restoration Journal (vol. 2, Issue 2).

Looking Back

PROGRESS AROUND ATHENS

Adolphus J. Rollings, Athens, Ala.:
"Meetings among the churches of Limestone County are about over for the summer. The number of baptisms is off some from the last year or so. About two hundred thirty-five were baptized. This brings our total for the last five summers to sixteen hundred baptisms. Thirteen new congregations have been started— eleven in the county, one in Tennessee, and one in Louisiana. Two of the new churches in the county have since ceased to meet for worship as separate congregations. The brethren at Ardmore worship with the church at Hollings' Gin, and those at Ripley meet with the church at Mount Carmel. Five new buildings have been erected in the county, and one is under construction. The work in Athens has enjoyed a substantial and encouraging growth."
GA-October 9, 1941

Rock Creek Philisophy

The church was led into apostasy by emphasizing the "preacher" as a special class, a minister in a special sense. This will lead again to preacher rule, and to the kingdom of the clergy.
F.B. Srygley

Looking Back

Adolphus J. Rollings, Box 45, Athens, Ala.: "The church in Athens enjoyed one of the greatest meetings in its history, June 30 to July 14. Granville W. Tyler, of Russellville, Ala., did the preaching, and Chester O. Stout, also of Russellville, led the singing. Both did splendid work. Preparation for the meeting began thirty days in advance of the opening service. Prayer meetings were held in the homes of members of the congregation, with their neighbors in attendance, and no stone was left unturned in the matter of advertising. We were better prepared to begin at the beginning than ever before. Rain, which fell during twelve of the fifteen days, did not halt or materially hinder the attendance and interest. In preparing for the meeting ten were baptized and two restored. In all there were sixty-eight additions, with fifty of that number baptized. Two were restored from the digressives. Work on enlarging the auditorium began on the day - following the close of the meeting. Woodrow Wilson, of Sturgis, Ky., began work with the church following the meeting and will continue through the summer. He plans to enter George Pepperdine College this fall. On the day following the Athens meeting we moved the tent to Leggtown and started another meeting. Thirty were baptized. The first meeting to be held in this fine farming section of Limestone County was conducted last October. Fifty-six were baptized and five restored in that effort. The congregation met for worship during the winter in the schoolhouse and made splendid progress. These brethren did not fall in line with the all-too-generally-accepted routine of three songs, a prayer, another song, and then the Bible class, in their worship service. Usually a prayer is offered after every song. The result is that every man in the church learned to lead in public prayer and to otherwise actively engage in the service. Eighty-six were baptized in the two meetings, around fifty of whom were Methodists. About ten or twelve were Baptists. One of the young men baptized is now preaching regularly, twice each month for the home congregation and the rest of the time at near-by congregations. Work on a model building for a rural church was begun on the day following the close of the meeting."

GA-August 8, 1940

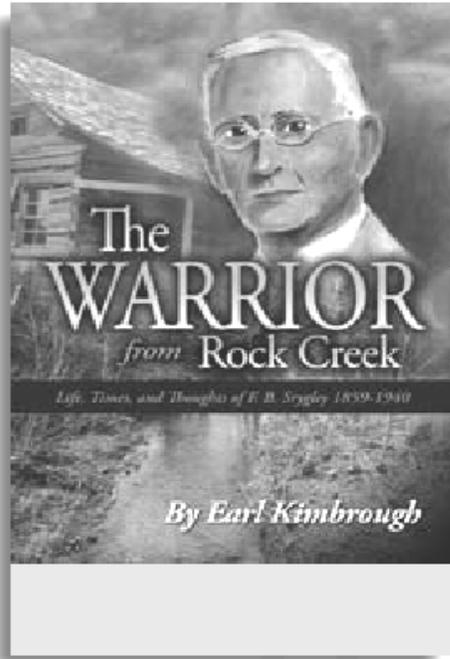
Sword Swipes
Cled Wallace

CAN'T UNDERSTAND ENGLISH.

I know a preacher whose friends boast that he can speak seven different languages, and yet he cannot understand the English of the great commission: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."
GA-7/28/32

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Earl Kimbrough



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Looking Back

G.C. Brewer's Report

ATHENS, ALA....This town is in Limestone County, and that county adjoins Lauderdale County, with Florence as its capital, and that is the town of my boyhood and the place where my parents and some of my brothers and sisters are buried. However, in my boyhood days there was no church at Athens, and I believe there were few, if any, in Limestone County. That was a long time ago, however, and many changes have taken place in that area. In recent years the church has grown very rapidly in north Alabama, and in no place has it grown more than in Limestone County. We have an excellent church at Athens, and, in addition, some brethren are conducting a high school at that place. Charles Chumley has been the principal of this school until recently, and now Jack Rollings is to serve in that capacity, while Brother Chumley goes back to school in an effort to receive his doctor's degree. I preached in the chapel each forenoon and in the church building each evening during the twelve days of the meeting. We baptized twentyseven persons, and had three to make confession of faults and to be restored to the fellowship of the church. This may indicate something of the interest in the meeting, but it was in all respects a very delightful meeting. Although we had a good deal of cold rain, we, nevertheless, had capacity audiences at all times. The church building is not large enough to accommodate the people who come, and the brethren now are planning to build a more commodious auditorium. They should, by all means, do this without delay.

During this meeting I made my home with Jack Rollings, and I enjoyed the hospitality that he and his good wife made so pleasant. There was a tie between these young people and me which does not always exist. Sister Rollings came from a family that had been hearing me preach and supporting my efforts since before she was born. Brother Rollings is a son of a man who .was my teacher when I attended Ashley S. Johnson's school, at Kimberlin Heights, Tenn. Well do I remember when this teacher went away to get his bride and to bring her back to the college. There were no students except boys in this college; and when Professor Rollings came back with a beautiful young lady with him, she was indeed a "blushing bride." Brother Jack's father long ago severed his connection with the Kimberlin Heights School, but he has been in the educational field all his life, and Jack has had a training that many others did not receive. The senior Rollings has been attending services with the conservativ.e brethren for many years, but I do not know that he has ever given up his views with reference to instrumental music and perhaps some other things to which Ashley Johnson's school was committed. Jack Rollings, however, stands like Gibraltar against any innovation or speculation in the service of the Lord.

GA-June 30, 1949

R.W. OFFICER'S BAPTIST INQUISITION

Earl Kimbrough

R.W. Officer was a Baptist preacher who was frequently in trouble with his fellow Baptists because of his teaching and practice. Through his study of the Scriptures, he learned the gospel plan of salvation and insisted on being baptized upon a simple confession of faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Furthermore, he preached the word of God on this and other matters



Robert Wallace Officer

Graves could handle a man whose faith was anchored in the word of God.

While Graves was Officer's chief inquisitor, other Baptist preachers were free to join in the questioning. They either sought to help the exasperated doctor of Baptist theology, or took up the questioned to give him a moment's respite. One of those who also questioned Officer was an Elder Pennington. After an extended dialogue between Graves and Officer, Pennington said: "You don't seem to have any standard of faith; we can't locate you; you seem to be out of harmony with the whole religious world."

Officer replied: "What is the Bible for, is it not the standard of faith for every man?"

Disregarding Officer's appeal to the Bible as the standard of his faith, the Baptist elder continued: "You are inconsistent with yourself and out of harmony with every church in the land. You seem to believe a little of them all. I think you should, to be consistent, join them all."

Given opportunity to speak, Officer's lengthy response show why he took the stand he did in spite of the persecution it aroused against him. It also shows why the Baptist preacher had a difficult time dealing with him. Officer said: "I care but little about consistency with myself; I want to be consist with

without respect for "Baptist usage." His preaching led to several trials for heresy. One of these was held at the Popular Creek Baptist Church in Limestone County. The Baptists had brought in Dr. J.R. Graves, a noted Baptist editor and preacher from Tennessee, to be Officer's prosecutor. The problem was that Officer answered all his questions with a book, chapter, and verse response. Not even Dr.

truth. I am ready to-day to contradict what I said yesterday, if convinced that I was wrong yesterday. As to harmony with the churches in the land, are they in harmony with each other? As to joining them all, Paul says: 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.' (1 Cor. 6:17.) This is the joining I am most interested in. I believe all the churches have some truth, but Jesus Christ is 'the way, the truth, and the life.' (John 14:6.)"

Continuing, Officer said: "I have no unkind feeling for Dr. Graves; I respect his age and ability. He is not authority, however, for me in things divine. I am not a conformist to the ways and thoughts of men. The Bible says: 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.' (Isa. 55:7.) This I am willing to do, and I ask you to help me do it. All who do this are one with God in Christ, in thoughts and ways. If all would do this, the Lord's prayer would be answered and the world would believe the Father sent the Son. Paul says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.' (1 Cor. 1:10.) For all to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, speak as the oracles of God, and hold the form of sound words, a God-approved harmony would result, as effect follows cause."

"I do not wish to hinder such blessed results, and I am persuaded better things of you. I regard it a splendid bargain to forsake my way and thoughts for the way and thoughts of God; but I am not ready yet to exchange my thoughts and ways for the thoughts and way of any other man or men. In regard to endorsing Brother Graves, I say, once for all, I endorse no man, but I endorse the truth in any man. I don't want to break up Baptist churches; I simply want to build upon the one foundation. However, I wish to say: If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, it cannot be overthrown. 'Who are thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.' (Rom. 14:4.)"

Such was the attitude of many men who, in the early days of the Restoration, deserted the doctrines and institutions of men to take their stand upon the Bible alone, without regard for the personal consequences.

Please check your renewal date.....

JOHN FAVOR, SR. (1763-1846)
PLANTER, PATRIOT, AND PIONEER PREACHER

Bobby Graham

The title of this article is a modification of one appearing in series in *Limestone Legacy*, the publication of the Limestone County, Historical Society—"Planters, Patriots, and Pioneers—One Hundred Seventy-five Years in Limestone County." Information on many aspects of the life of John Favor, Sr. comes from files of the Limestone County Archives, filed by Daughters of the American Revolution. In the following quotation from such information, one notices the spelling Faver, which appears in some of the early records of this man:

John Faver of Limestone County was one of the patriots who served with George R. Clark's III Regiment, VA troops. He first enlisted Aug 1, 1780 and continued to serve when needed during the Revolution. His last documented service was from Jan 1 - Feb 1784. At various times he served under the command of Capts. Isaac Taylor, Abraham Chapline, Lt. Richard Clark and Maj. Gen. George Walls. During this time he was residing in VA formerly Jefferson & Kentucky counties.

He was born ca. 1763 in Virginia and later he removed with his 1st wife, Henrietta and their children, John, Silas, and Elizabeth from VA to Lexington, Ky, thence to AL, where they settled in Limestone Co. He died ante 24 May 1847. John Faver is known to have married at least twice. On July 28, 1836, he took for his wife Mahala A. Hanson Lee. When this marriage was consummated the veteran groom was 73 and the bride 23 years of age. They had Sarah Ann, Theophilus, and Mary Malissa.

John Faver donated 2 acres of his property in 1823 to what is now known as Round Island Baptist Church. His daughter, Mary Malissa and her three children, Alfred and Albert Reid and daughter Susie Lee (Christopher) Gray, along with their spouses are among the many that are buried at Round Island cemetery. John Faver himself is buried on what was his farm in Limestone Co. in a nearby township and range (*Lim. Legacy*, Oct. 2008, 7).

The Favor Family

Information concerning John Favor's family is scarce, but some can be learned from the Federal Census of Limestone County, Alabama. Favor Sr. had married Henrietta Favor, probably his cousin, while they lived in Virginia. From there they moved to Lexington, KY, Madison County, AL, and finally Limestone County, AL, where he owned a rather large farm about 5 1/2 miles southwest of Athens. Marriage records show that he later married Mahala

Ann Hanson Lee (Lea) of White County (Sparta), TN, on July 21, 1836, making him 73 and her 23 at the time of their marriage. From this marriage he had children: Mary Melissa, Theophilus, and Sarah Ann; and children from the earlier marriage were of legal age by this time. One child from the first marriage, John Jr., of whom we shall say more, married Esther Lewis. He died before 1838, according to DAR records.

Favor's Ties to the Baptists

Favor's ties to the Baptist faith are documented above in the DAR statement, but he himself provides further evidence along this line:

We separated from the Baptists a few years ago on account of some difference on church government; we then took the appellation of 'Independent Baptists,' we were twelve in number; we have since determined to take the living oracles for our guide in both faith and practice; we meet on every first day of the week to break bread, we have a Bishop who labors in word and doctrine, also three Elders who preside in the church, and Deacons. Our number is above one hundred at this time: we have frequent additions by confession and immersion.

Yours in gospel bonds.
JOHN TARVOR, Sen.
Limestone, Alabama
(*The Evangelist*, 1834, Vol. III, 216)

Walter Scott's comment on Favor's report shown above, thus correcting the name from Tarvor to Favor: "Brother John Favor, Senior, writes, that in Athens, Alabama, they have a church of 100 members;" 282, same volume and year.

Hosea Holcombe, famous Baptist historian of the nineteenth century, also verifies Favor's Baptist ties in his *History of the Baptists in Alabama* (279). He says that Favor was ordained to the Baptist ministry in 1822 but then dismissed the following year. He then says that Favor later joined the Separate (Independent) Baptists around Duck River in Tennessee, with a number following him. Finally Holcombe chronicles his becoming a Campbellite, with the additional note that Mr. Favor was a good man.

Favor's Ties with Round Island/Poplar Creek

Dave Hurst, a Registered Pharmacist in Athens, Alabama, and then a member of Round Island, wrote a history of Round Island Baptist Church, which he called "Remember and Rejoice, 1817-1992" (6-7). In his mention of the years of Favor's problems at Round Island, he says that six of the original members asked for and received

letters of dismissal from Round Island in August 1822. In October those six and several others who had joined Round Island after its formation, left to form Poplar Creek Baptist Church of Christ. This new congregation became the mother church of another group formed in 1827—Independent Poplar Creek Baptist Church of Christ. Favor's son, John Favor, Jr. was selected to be the pastor of this church. Favor, Jr. had been ordained at Elim (original name of the Athens First Baptist Church). Hurst says that there had been problems with the Favor family at Round Island for about two years. The minutes indicate that both father and son had disrupted services and business meetings and had accused the pastor of teaching the "abominable doctrines of the Church at Rome." Round Island made formal charges against the Favors and later demanded that the new church at Poplar Creek judge and discipline them. When Poplar Creek refused Round Island's demand, there followed a period of peace. The matter must have grown serious, because the Flint River Association had a committee investigate it in 1826 and to mediate peace between the two churches. Minutes from 1827 reveal that the association broke fellowship with the two men because they were adamant and unrepentant. Hurst adds, "All this from the family who had donated the land upon which the church was built!" He also opines that the Favors had disagreed with the manner in which the Round Island Church had dealt with some were not living up to standards set by the Rules of Decorum. The history then later says that both of the Favors returned to Round Island in 1834 to ask forgiveness for their differences and the church received them back: "...both men came back to Round Island and asked to be forgiven for their past differences and the church was glad to receive them back and restore fellowship" (Hurst, p. 7). The reader must realize that these final statements concerning their causing problems and returning to ask forgiveness come from the Baptist perspective, and he must weigh them against statements from the Favors during this period of time and later to learn whether they truly became Baptists again.

Did Favor Return to the Baptists?

The writer now presents compelling evidence to the contrary; that is, there is abundant evidence that the two favours—John Favor, Sr. and John Favor, Jr.—did not return to the Baptist Church as seemingly indicated in the Round Island history. Note the following evidence: (1) The earlier report sent by John Tarvor (Favor) Sen. to Walter Scott's paper *The Evangelist*, sent in the same year, places such claim about their return to be Baptists in a bad light. (2) If the Favors did become Baptists again, why did Holcombe not mention such in his historical account of Favor Senior's defection as a Baptist and his becoming a Campbellite (notice earlier reference to such)? His history covers many years past the time of the claimed return to the Baptists. (3)

Further, Favor, Jr. is listed by Richard L. James as a preacher in Athens, Alabama, among the Christian churches in Alabama in 1834 (*The Disciples of Christ in Alabama 1830-1860*, CD p. 99). (4) Another evidence that the claim is not substantiated is that "John Faver paid for sundry of his list of subscribers" to *The Evangelist* in 1835, which is a year after his supposed return (CD of *The Evangelist*, 1835, p. 288). (5) Finally, John Favor is on record in 1838 as sending a \$5 payment for *The Gospel Restored* in *The Evangelist*, 1838 (CD p. 76). This writer's conclusion is that the claims made about the two Favors returning to the Baptists are rejected as lacking ground for their credibility, especially in view of the strong and clear evidences to the contrary here presented, though there might have been some acknowledgement by the Favors of their bad behavior.

Additional information about family members and the connections with the Round Island Baptist Church has been found in "Members of Round Island Baptist Church as Recorded in Minutes 1817-1860" (*Limestone Legacy*, V. I, pp. 35-39). In 1823 Elizabeth Favor joined Round Island Church along with her brother John Jr. In 1824 Henrietta, wife of John Sr., was excluded by the Round Island Church. In 1847 Mahala Favour (spelling in the minutes, second wife of John Sr.) was also excluded by the church. Evidently she held to her Baptist beliefs longer than he husband did, but such occurrences were somewhat common in this first generation of Restoration leaders.

"A Fair Beginning in Limestone County"

Early in the year of Favor's alleged return to the Baptists, Joshua K. Speer from Maury County, TN, visited Favor's section of the county to speak. The following report, which he sent to *The Millennial Harbinger*, reflects what was then happening:

Jan. 1834 MH, pg. 45

Cannons Creek, Maury county, Ten. December 4, 1833,

I attended a four days meeting (including the 4th Lord's day in October last) at Poplar Creek, Limestone county, Alabama; where I had the pleasure of declaring the glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, " for two hours on each day, to an attentive audience. Eight persons confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord by submitting to the institution of immersion for the remission of sins. We had, truly, a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The reformation has made a very fair beginning in Limestone county, having amongst its advocates several, of the more intelligent part of the community, a number of whom have shared largely in the honors of this world, but are now willing to seek "the honor which comes from God only." Joshua K. Speer.

Remember that the Favors had left Round Island before this time and had started Poplar Creek Baptist Church of Christ (1822). The Poplar Creek group had also undergone transformation to Independent Poplar Creek Baptist Church (1827). Poplar Creek had also refused to discipline the Favors, as demanded by Round Island; and the two Favors had had their fellowship with the Flint River Association severed in 1827, because they were adamant and unrepentant.

Ten months year later John Favor, Jr. sent a letter to Alexander Campbell, printed in *The Millennial Harbinger* in January 1835:

Athens, Limestone county, Ala. October 16, 1834.

The good cause is progressing in my neighborhood. Between 60 and 70 have made the good confession, and were immersed for remission, since the meeting of which brother Speer informed you, or within 12 months past. These have all been added to the congregation at Mount Pleasant, near Poplar Creek. The disciples, with a few exceptions are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been meeting for worship on the first day of the week for more than two years, and can confidently say that the doctrine is of God. At a 3 days' meeting, held at Mount Pleasant, including last Lord's day, attended by brethren Anderson and Griffin, 10 confessed the Lord and were added to the congregation. The opposition is raging; but the truth is mighty and will prevail.

John Favor, Jun.

Notice in this letter that a new congregation had begun, Mount Pleasant near Poplar Creek, which apparently was the one formed at least two years earlier when the Favors and their associates left the Baptists for good. Eight conversions reported by Speer and 60 to 70 since Speer's meeting in this letter reported by Favor, making a sizeable group of some 75 people. The presence of "brethren Anderson and Griffin" at Mount Pleasant is additional evidence of a clear break with Baptist teaching and practice, because Thacker Griffin and James C. Anderson were clarion voices of truth wherever they spoke. We can well understand why he finally reported the opposition to be raging, but its demise was assured by the mighty and prevailing truth of God.

Favor's Courageous Stand for Truth

In a day when the doctrine of the Baptists held more sway in Limestone County than any other doctrine, it was almost unthinkable that a Baptist preacher would renounce his Baptist faith and pursue the little known and much maligned doctrine being espoused by the "Campbellites." To forfeit one's standing in the most popular denomination

of that time and place was to invite the disapproval of the masses, the scorn of one's neighbors, and even the disagreement of one's own family. For these reasons, it involved a test of one's faith like the Jews in the first century (Jn. 12:42).

In his short letter to Walter Scott in which Favor specified church government as one area where he had a difference with the Baptists. He also indicated his being done with human creeds in his determination to accept only the living oracles as a guide in faith and practice. Weekly meetings to break the bread; having a bishop, three elders, and deacons; and additions by confession and immersion were enough to set him and others apart from their former associates, because they were not the faith and practice of the Baptists. He was not a silent or secret disciple, as some try to be, because the congregation had grown to approximately 100 members.

Favor's willingness to listen to truth which ran counter to his professed and proclaimed beliefs says something about his heart; this man had an honest and good heart, as Jesus described it. The compliment paid Favor by Baptist historian Holcombe was that he was "a good man"; but he was more than that, as demonstrated by his honest and good heart.

Such was the beginning of the gospel in Limestone County, Alabama—what Joshua K. Speer called "a very fair beginning." In that day of general religious inclination and entrenched denominational error, men like the Favors and others serve a great purpose in the world's greatest work. They step forth to make the difference between truth and error, good and evil, authorized religion and unauthorized religion.

Setting The Record Straight

We commend the following lesson in "how to say it" to certain verbose preachers to whom we have listened in boredom in years past: An habitual drunk was before the judge to plead. "As God is my judge." Whined the drunk, "I am not guilty." "He's not; I am; you are; thirty days," said the judge.

GG-VOLUME 12 December 22, 1960

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JAMES EVANS MATTHEWS

Early Alabama Restorer

Part Three

Kenneth Randolph

From this point, news of James E. Matthews becomes sketchy, as far as the periodicals are concerned. One of the reasons that the Christian Messenger has little from him is because the paper was moved from Georgetown, Ky. to Jacksonville, Illinois, after 1834, and consequently did not have as ready an audience among the Alabama brethren as in the past. The reports in it after its move concentrated more on the states in the general Illinois area. Also, sometime after 1838, Matthews moved to Jackson, Mississippi, a field of labor far removed from North Alabama. There is a report, however, in February, 1842, which indicated that he continued to preach, and that a recent trip to Texas had resulted in 20 added to the church, among whom was his own brother, John H. Matthews. He also stated that 30 had been added 12 miles south of Jackson, and that the prospects were good in that area. He named William Clark and Jonathan Vancleave as being the preaching brethren with him in that area.

In 1844, his last report to the Christian Messenger, and its last year under Stone, who died that year, is interesting in a number of ways. First, it reflects his continuing concern for the proper spirit of Christianity. After greeting "my dear old brother, B.W. Stone," and commending the "late dress" of the Christian Messenger, he says that it was "always a favorite with me." He then says,

The reformation which you plead, is the reformation, of which a perishing world stands most in need. It is a lamentable truth, that, most of the professors of the christian religion, understand much better than they perform. Charity cannot prevent me from entertaining the fear that many in our so called reformation, are resting under the impression that they have attained to a high degree of excellence in the christian profession, because they understand its theory better than the sects do, while they forget that Christianity was never designed to be a system of mere metaphysical investigation, or philosophical speculation, about which men should spend their time in debate, contention and strife; but a pure, heavenly system of truth, unveiling to us the character of God—the otherwise inscrutable mysteries of the universe—our duties and relations to God and to each other—the glorious scheme of redemption through the

life, death and resurrection of the son of God—immortality and eternal life, by the display of which our hearts should be renovated, our affections improved and our whole moral nature brought into willing captivity to the law of Christ.

The letter next reveals that he had been Auditor of Public Accounts for the State of Mississippi for the past two years, but that he had continued to preach. He mentioned that he had been preaching to the convicts at the State Penitentiary and at little churches in the vicinity. Lastly, he adds a note about a trip to Texas and a visit with his uncle, Joseph Matthews. He stated that Joseph was the father of Mansel W., and that Mansel was at that time preaching in that vicinity of Texas. Matthews also stated that two of his brothers and two of his sisters were living there in Texas.

The Millennial Harbinger mentions Matthews as being one of the editors of the Christian Review, in 1844, along with Tolbert Fanning, Dr. J. R. Howard, W. D. Carnes, and others. In 1848, Matthews writes from Jackson, Mississippi to the Christian Magazine (successor to the Christian Review) about a meeting near Jackson, held by "Brethren Clark, Caskey, and G.W.H. Smith . . ." Again, to the same paper, later in 1848, Matthews wrote that "within the past six months we have immersed nineteen of the convicts in the penitentiary and a number of others, respectable persons, in and around Jackson."

When the 1850 U.S. Census was taken, Matthews still lived in Jackson, Mississippi, but in 1851 William Clark wrote in the Millennial Harbinger that "Brother J.E. Matthews is now employed in business in the northern portion of this state." Early in 1851, he made a trip to visit his daughter in New Orleans. A brother writes that because of feeble health, Matthews spoke only one time while there. He then described him,

Of clear and discriminating mind, disposed to a logical and rather severe analysis of every subject that comes under his observation, united with a frank and affectionate address, we have few men who have more fearlessly and successfully advocated the cause of New Testament religion than he. I was impressed . . . that I had the company of one whose researches in the word of God were free from the influence of dogmas, whether orthodox or heterodox, and whose labors had been rewarded by clear and consistent views of most subjects upon which so many teachers of the people are but the parrots of their predecessors or more industrious contemporaries.

Matthews moved to Desoto County, Mississippi, locating about 40 miles south of Memphis. Four private letters to his sister Hannah, in California, reveal mostly

family matters, but do reveal that in 1856 he was serving in the State Legislature, that he owned land in Texas, and owned a home and land where he was located. In 1855 he said that he "preached last summer and fall until I was not able to do so any longer," and that if he got better, he expected to spend most of his time as an evangelist. The letters breathe a spirit of love and concern for his family, and especially for their spiritual welfare. They are models of Christian courtesy and love. In 1858 he wrote,

Your kind and interesting letter. . . is received, and I now take time to reply. The deep feeling of affection which it breathes for your old bro. is fully appreciated, and as fully, I hope, reciprocated. You always were to me a dear, dear Sister, and I regard your letter as a treasure, to be kept as precious mementoes of One whose loved image is engraved on the tablet of my memory, and treasured in my heart of hearts."

W.J. Barbee, in his short sketch of Matthews, said that from 1827 until the day of his death "he ceased not to teach Christ and proclaim the unsearchable riches of the Redeemer."

Matthews died in Desoto County, June 30, 1867. He was a man of some wealth before his death. In 1850 his real estate was valued at \$11,000, and in 1860 his worth was about \$30,000. Whether he died a wealthy man in this world's goods is unknown, but he lived and died a man rich in faith and good works. The editor of the Jackson, Mississippi Clarion wrote at his death,

In our columns today will be found an account of the death of one of the most honored and respected citizens of Mississippi, Hon. James E. Matthews, formerly Member of the Legislature, Auditor of Public Accounts, etc. He died at the age of sixty-eight, leaving a name

around which clusters the memory of virtue, holiness an a life well spent in the service of his people. Tolbert Fanning wrote in the Gospel Advocate,

Bro. Matthews was but little known out of the states of Alabama and Mississippi, but when known his distinguished ability was felt and acknowledged, both as a preacher and statesman. . . In his long political career he never for a moment slighted the banner of our King; and whether in the councils of his country, or laboring as a minister of peace, he was a model man, always doing good.

Matthews was a pioneer preacher in the true sense of the word, His preaching covered over forty years, and according to W.J. Barbee, he preached "in groves, barns,

store-houses, as well as in courthouses and town halls. He traveled horseback and on foot . . . and his converts were counted by the hundreds." H. Leo Boles said that he "established many congregations throughout Mississippi and Alabama, baptizing thousands of people into Christ."

Anna Mariah Randolph, daughter of Matthews' early co-laborer, Elisha Randolph, was baptized by Matthews in 1830 at a camp meeting in Blount County, Alabama. Later, Matthews performed the wedding ceremony of Anna to Jeptha Billingsley in Blount County, October 23, 1831. One of their sons they named, James E. Matthews Billingsley, and he became a faithful minister of word in Mississippi and Arkansas. Truly, James E. Matthews did a great work in his lifetime; after death he lived on in those he touched.



**Sacred to the Memory Of
Farewell
Our Father
Jas E. Matthews
Born
Nov. 16, 1799,
Died
June 30,
1867**

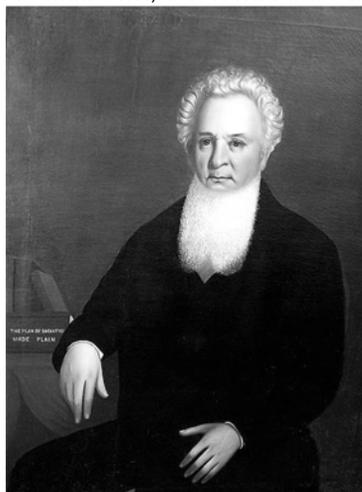
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A MAN AND A BOOK

Earl Kimbrough

In the course of studying Restoration history, we occasionally come across an important artifact or document that is valuable to our heritage. Larry Whitehead and Frank Richey recently found an old oil painting of Dr. John Henderson Hundley, the first Christian in Mooresville, Alabama. The whereabouts of the painting had long been “lost.” At least, brethren who know of the painting did not know what had become of it. Hundley learned from reading *The Evangelist*, a pioneer Restoration journal published by Walter Scott (1832-1842), that baptism is for the remission of sins. Scott, one of the four men regarded as the most important leaders in the American Restoration Movement, is accredited with being the first to set forth in his preaching the order of salvation as preached by Peter on Pentecost. He arranged the answer to, “What must I do to be saved?,” into a simple five-finger exercise: faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and (combined) the gift of the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

How Dr. Hundley came in contact with Scott’s journal is unknown, but it had subscribers in North Alabama and it



Dr. John Henderson Hundley

is likely that he obtained copies, or was led to subscribe himself, by some Christian reader in his region, perhaps a patient. Be that as it may, it was from reading this journal that he learned what he must do to be saved. Apparently there was none in his neighborhood who could or would baptize him for the remission of sins and so in late 1839, he wrote to Dr. W.H. Wharton at Tuscumbia, about fifty miles down the Tennessee Valley, requesting that someone come to Mooresville and baptize him. It is probable that Hundley knew Wharton personally, or he may have learned about him and the church at Tuscumbia from *The Evangelist*. As early as 1834, Wharton wrote a letter to Scott, published in the journal, introducing himself as “a resident of Tuscumbia.”

Hundley’s sending for someone to come to Mooresville to baptize him, rather than going to Tuscumbia himself for that purpose, was probably his a desire to also have the gospel preached to others in Mooresville. In a short letter to Scott published in May 1840, Hundley wrote: “The truth has taken strong hold in this section; being last August convinced of the faith, I wrote to the brethren of Tuscumbia

to send over a person to immerse me. Brother [Carroll] Kendrick came; he has for some time continued to teach us here the true gospel; the effect has been glorious: we now number seventy.” (*Evangelist*, May 1840.) It seems that Kendrick went to Mooresville not long after Hundley’s request was received in Tuscumbia. Kendrick was a native of Lauderdale County and did his first preaching in North Alabama. He later became well known as a preacher and writer in Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, and California.

Kendrick not only baptized Hundley on his first visit to Mooresville, but he also preached the gospel and established a congregation in the village. Hundley’s letter to Scott indicates that Kendrick had continued to preach at Mooresville “for some time” and that the church had grown considerably. The church met in a community building, known as “Old Brick Church,” which was used by other religious groups. This continued until about 1846 when the Presbyterians, the largest church in Mooresville, took sole possession of the building and excluded all others. We cannot help but wonder if the conversion of Hundley, who had been a member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, along with the conversion of some other members of that denomination, had a part in shutting the Christians out of the “Old Brick” building. When the Christians completed their own building in Mooresville, “The Reverend Mr. Johnson,” as reported by the Huntsville Times, pointed in the direction of the new meetinghouse and, without taking his eyes off of his congregation, declared: “The Christian Church is an egg of the devil hatched under the mud sills of Hell.”

Frank Richey tells about finding Dr. Hundley’s portrait. The trail began in a conversation with Dee Green, the owner of the Mooresville Restaurant, where Frank and a group of Restoration devotees were having lunch. (See *Alabama Restoration Journal*, June 2007.) The portrait was found by Frank and Larry Whitehead at the home of Thomas McGrary, Hundley’s ninety-five year old grandson of New Market in Madison County, Alabama. As a result, people associated with the *Alabama Restoration Journal* were able to find and preserve another important piece of Alabama Restoration History. But the story of the Mooresville doctor does not end here.

The oil portrait of Dr. Hundley, reprinted on the cover of the *Alabama Restoration Journal* (June 2007), depicts him seated beside a table on which there are a few books. One of the books includes its title: “The Plan of Salvation Made Plain.” Frank Richey, in his quest for information about Dr. John H. Hundley, which led to the discovery pictures of Hundley and his wife, and then to the portrait of Dr. Hundley, also led to the discovery of, a copy of Dr. Hundley’s lost book. Wayne Kilpatrick, an avid Restoration historian, had told Frank about the book, published in 1858. When Frank met with Jacque Gray, a descendant of Dr. Hundley, she not only had a picture of Dr. Hundley, but she said: “I also have a book that J.H. Hundley wrote.” Frank

could hardly contain himself in anticipation of seeing it. Could it be a copy of the book in the portrait, the one collector Wayne Kilpatrick would travel to the moon, if he could, to get his hands on? As it turns out, it was the very same book shown in the picture. So another "lost" piece of Alabama Restoration history was rescued from the dark world of obscurity and returned to the light of day; thanks to Frank Richey's bloodhound instincts for our treasured past.

Jacque Gray arranged to send Frank a copy of the book. When he obtained the promised replica, Frank immediately made a copy of it for Wayne Kilpatrick and took it to him. Wayne was called from his classroom at Heritage Christian University to receive the book. Frank says: "Wayne, who seldom gets excited, gleamed when I have him his copy of Hundley's work. Wayne returned to his class, and as I was leaving, I heard him tell his class, 'I have just been given a book for which I have searched thirty years.' I smiled as I walked away with the feeling of 'mission accomplished.' I was finally able to do something for the man who had introduced me, not only to J.H. Hundley, but also the study of Restoration history." (*Alabama Restoration Journal*, June 2007.)

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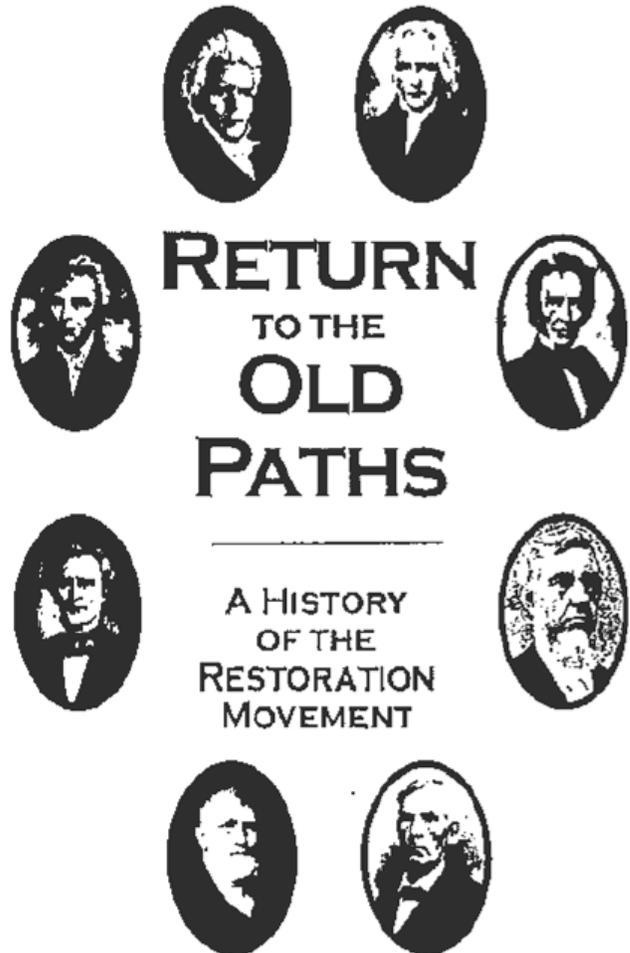
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One of the best written works on Restoration history available today. Brother McCoy writes in a clear, concise way that brings the stories to life....LEW



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Prior to 1900, there were two congregations worshipping according to the ancient order in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The digressives, progressives, modernists, etc. moved in and captured these churches with their liberal ideas and followed the modernistic trends of the day. For the next twenty five years, there was not a congregation in the area worshipping according to the new testament pattern. In the 1920s, a group of young students at the University of Alabama decided to restore the old paths and began to meet in the school library and anywhere else they could find. After several years of struggle and hardship, they were able to once again plant the cause of new testament Christianity in Tuscaloosa. Over the next ninety years the cause has prospered and several congregations are meeting and worshipping according to the ancient order in the area.

Comes now some modern day prophets, generally men "raised" in the church, who have been educated in our "Christian schools; "wolves in sheep's clothing," if you will, who have had a new revelation. This new revelation has led them to determine that those who have led the cause for centuries have it all wrong. Only they, in their infinite wisdom, have the truth. Those who have gone before and those today, have misled millions, maybe to their doom, with our legalistic, patternistic mindset over all these years. Only they, and their followers, understand the true meaning of the Lord's will. They infiltrate local congregations and gain support among the unlearned until they get themselves appointed as elders, teachers and preachers. A college town, such as Tuscaloosa, is prime territory for these "takeover artists." Once they gain control, they can have free access to the eager, young minds of the students to fill these young minds with their heretical, feel good gospel and lead them into their fold, without interference from Christian parents, back home, who would most likely know better.

One of the proponents of this "new gospel," in a recent series of articles on instrumental music in the worship, led his readers down a long, torturous path in a feeble attempt to justify the use of instruments in the worship, through page after page of tomfoolery and arguments that denominational preachers have used for years. I frankly was disappointed. I thought this new hermeneutic would lead me into new found truth. No such luck. No logical effort to establish New Testament authority for such. No imposition of "a thus saith the

Lord." Mostly a series of interviews with leading proponents of the same misguided philosophy. Not only did he argue for acceptance of instrumental music in worship, but one gets the feeling that he believes it is essential to pleasing God. WOW! He basically gave his reasons for its use as the following: (1) The young folks like it. (2) It is difficult to find recordings of a cappella music in the music stores. I believe if I was a "young'un, I would strongly resent being made the scapegoat for the sins of the older crowd. We've heard this before in an effort by some to justify other questionable practices.

The bottom line is, these people have no regard for the idea of scriptural authority. Their authority is: We like it, We want it, We are going to have it, as the old southern saying goes "come hell or high water." I don't know much about high water, but I know more than I want to know about hell and I strongly suspect these folks are going to get acquainted with it if they don't repent and change their ways. Of course, there is always the possibility that they don't believe in hell either. That's another "new hermeneutic" some have developed.

The lamented J.M. Barnes put it as clear as it can be said, many years ago, during the great apostasy of the late 1800s...."there will grow out of the church of Christ, in the United States, a sectarian party. They will be composed of the progressive and organ element. Let them go; the sooner, the better. They are a curse to the cause we plead." To which I say, amen and amen.

Meanwhile, what of the young students who struggled to restore new testament Christianity to Tuscaloosa, Alabama? Likely, they have all gone on to a blessed reward. It is sad that their struggles and success are now, among some, in danger of a return to the apostasy of yesteryear. They may be kicking the dirt off their graves. Sad, so very, very sad. Thanks be to God, there are Christians in Tuscaloosa that have not yet "bowed the knee to Baal;" who still "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is," Jer 6:16

Just when I think I have heard and seen it all and am hardened to some of the stunts my brethren sometimes resort to, something new and more shocking takes place to drive me into a frenzied fit. Recently I received an ad for a vacation Bible school from a congregation I had heard of all my adult life. One of my best friends grew up attending this church. Another preached in a gospel meeting for them years ago. One of the elders where I attend, taught Bible classes and visited them on many occasions.. Men who worked with this congregation over the eighty five years of its life, read like a whose who in the brotherhood. The churches reputation, in years past was known and respected statewide. Imagine my shock when I received the ad announcing "COME & LEARN ABOUT J.C." What an irreverent reference to our Lord and Savior...J.C. indeed. What kind of elders would let this sort of thing

happen. It is outrageous. I don't believe the most liberal of denominations would stoop to desecrating the Lord's name in such way. Even the atheist and agnostics in the press show more respect. To see such a statement over the name of a congregation that professes to belong to the one they ridiculed is appalling. To show this kind of disrespect for the one who died for us all. There is no justification for such an absurd statement. It borders on blasphemy. If whoever authored this nonsensical advertisement was trying to be cool or cute, they failed miserably. One has to assume that the target for such are the youngsters. Is this the way we want them to name that most sacred name. What would be said if a youngster mentioned Christ and the apostles as J.C. and the boys? I do believe it is one of the most egregious things I have ever been witness to. Call me a crank or an old fogey if you will. Whoever the author is, he or she should be fired forth with and if the elders approved, they should resign in shame. What in the world have we come to? A bad end for sure.

This incident reminds me of the story circulated in some of our journals from the 1960s. Seems a young hippy type lad was called on to dismiss one of the congregations in the San Francisco area and he addressed God as "Big Daddy." I believe this episode equates to that shameful episode. It also lends credibility to the idea that I have had for some time, that there are those among us who are bound and determined to rebel against everything we have held sacred for generations, including our belief in the Bible.

The word is that a congregation in our area has announced plans to build a 8 million dollar edifice (cathedral) in which to worship. We like what the lamented Ben Franklin said about such in Cincinnati, in 1872, "New Building in Cincinnati (1872) These leading men in Cincinnati . . . have utterly disregarded the view of the great body of the brotherhood. They have put us to the test, to come up and tacitly endorse their folly, extravagance, and pride, with their corruption of the worship, or stay away. We can tell them plainly that we will never endorse them in their present worldly course. They will find many thousands more of the same mind. We would blush to talk of the "ancient order, the "gospel restored," returning to the "primitive order, the "man of sorrows" who "had not where to lay his head" . . . in this temple of folly and pride.—ACR Febraury 20, 1872.

A more up to date response was made by a local, who said, "what a vulgar use of the Lord's money." Lord, please, please come quickly.....Isaac

Looking Back

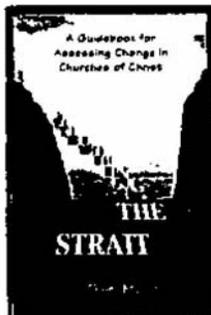
J. L. Clay, Box 1016, University, Ala., April 2:
 "I am writing from the University of Alabama which is located at Tuscaloosa a city of about thirty thousand people. This institution has an annual enrollment, including the summer school, of about six thousand students. Every State in the Union, I believe, is represented. The principal denominations are very active in the college and community life. But there is not an established congregation of the church of Christ in the city or near by. A few of us students have been endeavoring to worship 'as it is written, meeting in a private home each Lord's day. We are appealing for help to plant the Jerusalem gospel at this place.. We are trying to raise a fund for the purpose of securing the services of an able preacher of the gospel in a meeting this spring or summer. We feel that it is of the greatest importance that an effort be made to firmly establish a permanent congregation here, since there is great danger of our young people who come to school here being absorbed by the denominations. Most of them show a tendency to fellowship with the 'digressives.' We wish to acknowledge, with thanks, a contribution of fourteen dollars recently received from our brethren at Corinth Miss. If other congregations desire a part in getting the work started, we will appreciate any aid extended.".....GA--4/19/1928

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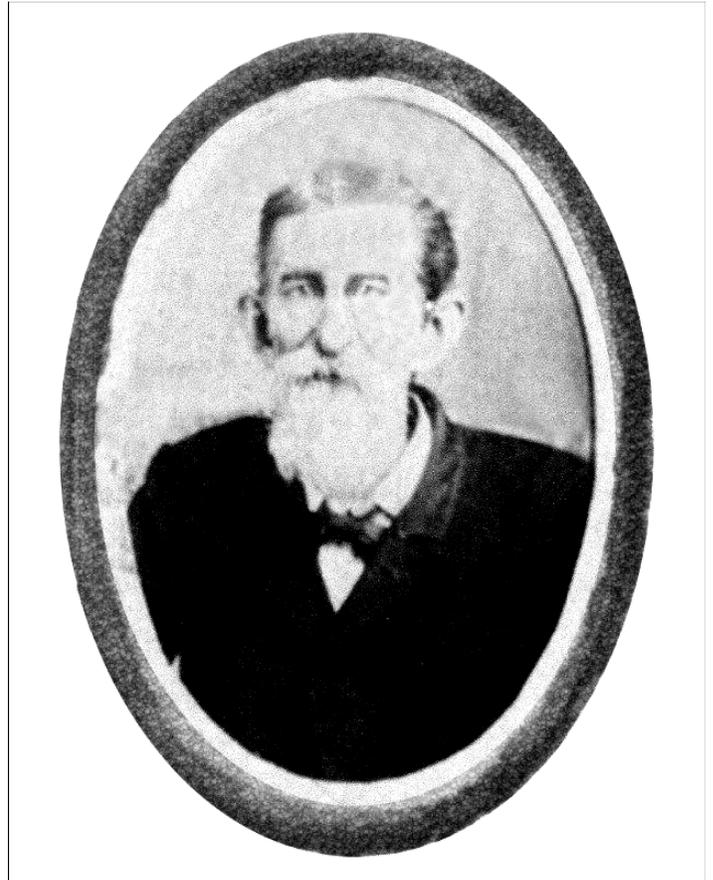
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THOMAS L. WEATHERFORD
1838-1908

Gospel Advocate Obituary Thomas L. Weatherford

The subject of this sketch was born in Limestone County, Ala., on April 5, 1838, and died on Sunday, March 9, 1908, at the home of his son, near Athens, Alabama. Brother Weatherford, according to his neighbors' testimony, was a good man. His nearest neighbor said to me a short while after his death: "You can't beat him." Another, who is a brother in the church, told me that he had known him all his life-had been his neighbor, had been in the war with him and in the church with him-and thought he knew him, and by his evidence he was one among the best men of his country. Brother Weatherford had been a preacher for about thirty-five years and had baptized hundreds of persons, but no one knows definitely the number. I had known him for about fifteen years, but was associated with him but little till I moved to this country recently. It seemed to be his heart's desire in his preaching to be true to "What is written," neither adding to nor taking from. He seemed to regret very much the troubles that are coming upon the church about things untaught. He will be missed by the little band of Christians that meet in the courthouse in Athens. He had a short time before his death moved to his son's, near here, to spend the remainder of his days on earth, and, being aged and feeble, said he had called in his regular appointments and would cast his lot with us, as he could not fellowship with unscriptural things in the "digressive" church here. He had consented to preach for us once a month, but filled only one appointment, and that just two weeks before the final summons came. He preached a great deal in schoolhouse, under brush arbors, and in private homes, much of the time without remuneration, working hard on the farm at the same time for a support for his family. His principal work was in the county in which he was born, in which he died, and in which to-day there are nine churches (with perhaps eight hundred members, many of whom he baptized,) all of which were established independent of any society other than the church, and all save one still worshipping "as it is written," notwithstanding the society advocates claim that the church is doing nothing. I have made careful inquiry, and have not yet to hear of one protracted meeting held by them at a mission point in the county. Brother Weatherford labored some in other counties in Alabama, some in Middle Tennessee, and some in Texas. He attended school at Mars' Hill about the year

1879. I think he was then a man of family. He leaves an aged companion and eight children behind to mourn his departure, but he also leaves an influence that can be measured only by eternity. He doubtless had his faults, as all men have; but he was a good citizen and neighbor, a kind husband and father, and an earnest member of the church of the living God.
-by W. Derryberry, Gospel Advocate, 1908, page 240



Thomas L. Weatherford

Looking Back

The Highland Avenue Church, Montgomery, Ala., was busy last year in spreading the gospel. It held nine meetings, and one church was planted and several others" strengthened. Floyd A. Decker, who labors with this congregation, preached two hundred and eighty-seven sermons during the year. He has time open for a meeting in March or the early part of April. If you desire his services, address him at 811 Highland Avenue, Montgomery, Ala. GA-1/15/31

RESTORATION TIDBITS

Hugh Fulford

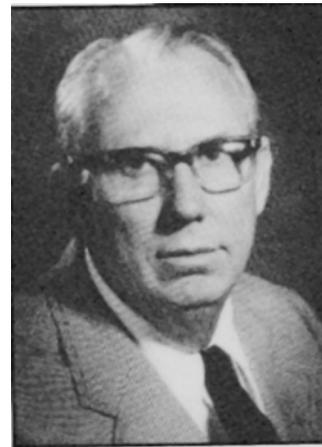
The following is a modern story about the relevance and appeal of the restoration plea. The event occurred in 1950, and was related by Howard Winters (1928-1988) in the Preface (p. 7) of his *Commentary on Romans*. It is a beautiful tribute to the restoration plea and its validity. Hear it in Howard's own language.

"I was reared under the influence of denominationalism in the poverty-stricken mountains of East Tennessee. But worse than the poverty was the isolation. Until a few weeks before I obeyed the gospel, I had never heard of the churches of Christ as I now know them. But I loved the Lord, believed the Bible to be the inspired word of God, and the only source of religious truth, and I desired with my whole heart to do that which is right in the sight of God. As I studied the Bible (the only religious book I possessed) I preached and put into practice everything I learned from it. This created some problems in the church for which I preached, problems which eventually led to division. About the time the division took place, my oldest brother heard some preachers on the radio in a distant city. He identified them with our needs and desires—the desire to go back to the Bible and follow it in every act of faith and practice. He contacted them and asked them to come and help us.

"In a few weeks one of the radio preachers, Oswald D. Wilson, who had a short time previous to this renounced the digression of the 'Christian Church,' came to our community and scheduled a five-night's meeting with the small rural church for which I was preaching. On the second night of the meeting, every member of the church which was present, except one (my mother, and she maintained until the day of her death that she had been Scripturally baptized in her youth), including me, went forward to make the good confession and to be baptized (the following day) for the remission of our sins, as Peter had instructed penitent believers to do on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38). The next day (there was no prepared place to baptize that night) when we assembled to obey our Lord, seven more members, not present the night before, came to make the confession and thus the whole congregation were baptized together."

In 1988, the year of his death, Howard Winters wrote an excellent little book titled *Up to Bethany: Another Look at the Restoration Plea* in which he tells of his visit to Bethany, the home of Alexander Campbell, during a time when he was preaching in a

meeting in Parkersburg, WV. He was as excited as a kid in a candy store about that visit! In the Preface of the book Howard wrote: "In dealing with the Restoration Plea I have tried to present it in all of its simplicity, to show what it is and how it may be applied. I have not, however, dealt with the problems and difficulties of its application. (He recognized and we recognize that such exist, hf). When I first heard the plea proclaimed, the plea to go back to the Bible for all things pertaining to faith and practice, I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard (other than the gospel itself). After making the plea myself for nearly 40 years, my initial appraisal has only been



Howard Winters

heightened. After seeing what it offers a divided religious world, and after understanding its ramifications, I stand amazed that anyone, especially those who believe the Bible, could reject it."

In his Conclusion Howard said: "I have presented to you the Restoration Plea as plainly and as forcefully as my abilities permit...But if you conclude that the Restoration Plea is only a fool's dream, then you must try to get to heaven some way other than the Bible way. That is, you must either go the Bible way (which is precisely what the Restoration Plea urges) or else you must go some other way. There is no logical or Scriptural ground between these two choices."

The restoration principle is still valid and it is still appealing! It is a "back to God, back to Christ, back to the Bible, and back to the church of the Bible" plea.

Keep'em Awake

Brother Gus Dunn was holding a meeting, and was preaching from a blackboard, using a pointer. A brother sat on the front seat and always went to sleep. In the middle of the sermon Brother Dunn stopped and said, "Brother _____, hold this pointer." The brother got up and took the pointer. Brother Dunn then said, "Hold it higher, still higher. O.K., you are awake now, you can sit down." Chances are, the good brother stayed awake when Dunn was preaching after this episode.....

NORTH ALABAMA BIBLE SCHOOL (ATHENS BIBLE SCHOOL)

Bobby Graham

While it is not the practice of Alabama Restoration Journal to publicize or promote any school or other human institution, it is thought important to feature the role of Athens Bible School in this Limestone County issue, because of its important place in the lives of the Christians in the county. Today's Athens Bible School began as North Alabama Bible School, the dream of Benjamin Lee Fudge, better known as Bennie Lee Fudge.

After his years of growing up as the first of eight children on a farm in Limestone County and going to David Lipscomb College and Abilene Christian College (broken by entire years out of school to work on the family farm), Fudge returned to his home county with a wife whom he had met in Abilene, Sybil Short. He came back to fulfill his childhood dream of founding a school where the students would study the Bible along with other disciplines of study under Christians, hoping to go later to Africa to preach. Though he did not realize this second dream, he did see the school of his dreams established in Athens in 1943. Every student still regularly attends a Bible class and chapel daily at Athens Bible School. From the time of his return to the Athens area in 1943 until his premature death at 57 in early 1972, Bennie Lee worked at the school in its early years and on behalf of it the rest of his life, preached for several congregations in the area, spoke often on an Athens radio program ("Spiritual Guidance") and coordinated its speakers, and served as helper and counselor to many who knew and trusted him. While Fudge was the one man most responsible for the beginning of what became Athens Bible School, he had the help of other significant men in this herculean task.

By the week of Christmas 1943, more than 200 families from Limestone County had paid the total price of \$3,750 for the house and fourteen acres of land where the school would begin with their gifts ranging from 25 cents to \$100, with their total contributions amounting to \$6,001.18. The major helpers in Fudge's effort were M.A. Creel, A.J. ("Jack") Rollings, and Irven Lee, preachers in the county who worked door to door to raise funds. School opened with about 153 students and eight teachers on September 6, 1943 in the old Ryan house, to which an auditorium was soon added with the generous help of O.G. Johnson's farm/cotton gin workers. State accreditation came after only one

semester of operation. Concrete blocks for expansion were made on site under a tent by the workers from all parts of the county, led by W.B. Bullington, on cold, wet days during the winter of 1943-44. Gifts from as far away as Nashville and Abilene came from friends to make possible a larger building. The second year saw over 180 students in the school. When the school was denied a building permit for a larger building, local farmer and later board member Earl Chandler bought a house for the school to use, moved it across from the school, and re-modeled it.



**Front Row: Bennie Lee Fudge, A.J. Rollings, Irven Lee.
Back Row: George Williams, Wayne Mickey, George Hook, Foy Short, Charles Chumley**

Irven Lee served as President, A.J. Rollings as Vice President, and Bennie Lee Fudge as Dean. These same men served in other administrative positions in the school's early years. Lee also worked in Florence to help in the beginning of Mars Hill Bible School, taught one year at David Lipscomb College in 1935-36, and also worked at Dasher Bible School in Valdosta, GA. The school began with grades 7-12 and later added the earlier grades. Fudge continued with the school for several years, but Rollings stayed as a teacher until nearly the time of his death in 1987. Early board members and faculty members struggled for the school, as many later ones have done. Teachers who preached for local churches received from the school whatever they lacked to make their salary \$150 per month; Rollings never took money from the school and Fudge and Lee took very little. Cost to students was \$1 per week tuition and a \$5 per year extra fee for those who could pay it. M.A. Creel, though never a teacher, worked as hard as anyone in raising money for the school and promoting it in Limestone County and served on the first Board of Directors. His oldest daughter Mary Agnes was in the

school's first graduating class and youngest daughter Winnie graduated in 1947.

Faculty members in early years included those already mentioned, Foy Short, Charles Chumley, George Williams, George Hook, J.C. Reed, Wayne Mickey, Everette Alexander, Wayne Hemingway, Doyle Banta, Robbie Lou Givens, and Loveta Fulfer. Board members in the formative years included O. G. Johnson, Barney Griffin,



W.B. Bullington, Clinton Ezell, *M.A. "Mack" Creel* Vaughn McKee, M.A. Creel, Earl Chandler, and Joe Morris.

From its beginning the board and faculty stood for Biblical teaching and practice and against all that conflicted with it, as the school's publications from those early days show. Singled out for opposition were premillennialism, evolution, denominational doctrines, Christian participation in warfare, various forms of worldliness like dancing, mixed bathing, Hollywood movies, smoking, and profanity. "The North Alabama Bible School stands foursquare on the teaching of the Bible, regardless of popularity or unpopularity." A lengthy statement in one of the schools' early publications was titled "Relation of Bible School to Church." In this statement an ample scriptural explanation was made of the school's existence as an adjunct to the family, not an appendage to the church. In consequence of this relationship, Athens Bible School has never accepted contributions from churches (This writer recalls returning two or three memorial donations from churches given in honor of a deceased president/principal in his days as administrator in the late 1970's). "The North Alabama Bible School will not accept donations from churches, because its Administration does not believe that it is the work of the church to teach arithmetic, geography, and science." Some teachers were preachers supported by local churches to teach Bible wherever they could do so, and they volunteered their time to teach other subjects. (Any reader who wishes to read the lengthy statement may do so on the school's website: http://www.athensbibleschool.org/about_abs/history/abs_in_the_beginning/) Further information is found on the website and in the book written by Nan Ray Alexander, the widow of Everette Alexander, entitled [It Was Their Spirit That Made Them Go.](#)

The current general stance of Athens Bible School is well summarized in its Statement of Vision, Purpose, and Beliefs, also shown on its website:

Vision, Purpose, Beliefs

Our Vision and Purpose

The vision and purpose of Athens Bible School is to provide each student with a quality education in a Christian atmosphere by working with the home and family to foster the complete and harmonious development of the whole person: spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially.

Our Beliefs

1. Students learning in a Christ-centered environment is the chief priority of Athens Bible School.
2. Bible instruction and moral training are key components of the school's mission.
3. Students' learning needs should be the primary focus of all decisions impacting the work of the school.
4. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process by solving problems and producing quality work repeatedly.
5. Each student is a valued individual with unique spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
6. A safe and physically comfortable environment promotes student learning.
7. Teachers, administrators, and parents share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
8. The commitment to continuous improvement is imperative if our school is going to enable students to become confident, self-directed, lifelong learners.

While it has not been the purpose of this article to explore the school's entire operation or history (enrollment in recent years varying from 325 to 350), possibly sufficient has been written to establish the significant role of the school in training young people for service to God and man. Limestone County has been the beneficiary of the influence of the people associated with Athens Bible School for sixty-seven years, and the congregations of the Lord's people in the area have also indirectly received many blessings from the school through those families connected with the school. Morality and firmness of faith/conviction have no doubt been enhanced through its influence. No endowment has ever existed for Athens Bible School, and salaries have always been low. Irven Lee once said in the school's early years, "We will keep good teachers if we keep the salary low enough." Charles Chumley, when asked about the school's course if it had had an endowment, said, "I don't believe we'd have had what we had." He also well stated, "Probably the greatest thing we had was the wonderful spirit, brought about by the close relationship between the students and teachers."

A HASTY VISIT TO LIMESTONE COUNTY

Earl Kimbrough

In 1930, F.B. Srygley debated some Mormons near Athens, Alabama. "On Friday, October 10, at about 10 P.M.," he said, "Brother H. Leo Boles called me and told me that Brother John Hayes wanted either him or me to come the next day to Athens, Ala., to begin a debate with the Mormons on Saturday. Brother Boles said he could not go; so I left Nashville for Athens on Saturday at 8:05 A.M. When I got there, I learned that the debate was to be at the Bethlehem [Bethel] church house, five miles east of Athens. I got to the neighborhood about 3 P.M., Saturday. The debate was to begin at 7 P.M. Brother W. Clarence Cooke had been trying to get them into a



F.B. Srygley

discussion with him for some time, but they would never agree of propositions or on the time.... Friday evening about sundown two Mormon preachers ... came into the neighborhood with the statement that the debate had to begin Saturday night or never. They positively refused to meet Brother Hayes, who lives near, and it appeared that the discussion would be bound to fail. Then the brethren tried to get Brother Cooke, but failed. They then called Brother Boles, and it fell on me to go."

This is typical of Srygley's readiness to debate false teaching at any opportunity. He was as ready to "give an answer" on the spur of the moment as any preacher in modern times. His only immediate preparation was on the night of the call from Athens. He said: "I hastily gathered up a few books and went to bed at eleven o'clock to dream of Joseph and Hiram Smith, Solomon Spaulding, and Sidney Rigdon. I met the two Mormon preachers only a few minutes before we went to the church to begin the discussion. They would agree to debate only one proposition, and they must affirm that. The proposition was that [Joseph] Smith was a true prophet of God and that the 'Book of Mormon' was inspired by God as the other sacred writings. One of them wrote the proposition on the blackboard and signed both their names to it. He then asked if I wanted 'Rev.' before my name, and I told him no, to put F.B. Srygley, which he did."

"Mr. White made the first speech," Srygley said, "and his only effort at an argument was to try to prove the need of prophets." Srygley fully dealt with the

proposition, exposing it to the light of God's word. But two interesting events occurred in that debate. Srygley said: "To my surprise, when I was through with my first speech, a Mr. Campbell, arose to make the next speech." So Srygley found himself debating two Mormon preachers at once. Campbell complained about Srygley calling Smith a false prophet. He had written to a brother, asking that Srygley not be allowed to call Smith a falsifier until he had proved it to the Mormons' satisfaction. Srygley agreed to leave that decision to the audience, but the Mormons seemed loath to accept it. Srygley knew nothing of the letter and would have ignored it if he did. But he met the complaint two ways. He told them that his denying the Mormons' proposition was "equivalent to charging falsehood against Joseph Smith."

Then Srygley read a statement from David Whitmer. Whitmer and Hiram Smith were trying to raise money to publish the *Book of Mormon*. When an expected source was slow in developing, they asked Smith to consult God about it. Smith put the stone he used to receive "revelations" in his hat, and after looking at it, told them that God said if they went to Toronto, Canada, they could raise the money, and they tried it and failed. When they returned, Whitmer said Smith again looked at his "revelation" stone in his hat, and said God revealed that "some revelations come from God, some from man, and some from the devil." Srygley said: "After reading this from Whitmer, I asked the Mormon boys, otherwise called 'elders,' if this was satisfactory and if I would now be justified in calling Joseph Smith an impostor, and therefore a falsifier. They made no further complaint. I preached on Sunday morning and then debated two sessions of two hours each, one in the afternoon and the other at night. It was a long and eventful day, but I enjoyed every minute of it."

An interesting sidelight is Srygley's note about John Hayes. He said: "Brother John Hayes is doing a good work in that part of Alabama, and he has been a thorn in the flesh of the Mormons, who sometimes come to Athens and preach on the streets. Brother Hayes always makes it a point to be present to reply to them on the street and before the same audience. Like Paul of old, he disputes with them in the market place. No wonder they dread him and refuse to debate with him. 'A burnt child dreads the fire.' The Mormons have very little hold in that country, and they will not likely hold that long. Mormonism prospers better among the ignorant and uninformed. I will not soon forget my visit to [Bethel], near Athens, Ala." (*Gospel Advocate*, Nov. 6, 1930.)

Rock Creek Philosophy

As I see it, one reason for fine buildings is that they can be seen with the eye, while true spirituality is of the heart and can be seen only by the Lord. F.B. Srygley

Gathering Home

"For Man Goes To His Eternal Home,
And Mourners Go About the Streets." Eccl. 12:5

GRANVILLE W. TYLER **1908 - 1996**

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Granville W. Tyler was born September 11, 1908 at Primm Springs, Tennessee. Primm Springs is in Hickman County, about 50 miles southwest of Nashville. He passed from this life on April 13, 1996 at his home in Decatur, Alabama. On April 16, a memorial service was conducted at the meeting place of the Sommerville Road church of Christ in Decatur, with Irvin Himmel, Eugene Britnell, and this writer participating. Charles Littrell conducted the grave side service at the Roselawn Cemetery in Decatur.

Brother Tyler was the oldest of seven children born to James Edward and Mattie Derinda McGahey Tyler. His brother Leonard, now living in Longview, Texas, also be-came a well-known gospel preacher. Brother Tyler's early education was in one, two, and four-room schools in Hickman County. After his mother's death, his father married again. Three children were born to that union, making ten children in all.

His mother's death had a profound effect upon him. It may have had a lot to do with turning his mind heavenward and shaping his character with so much love, compassion, and understanding. He spoke of it often, many times publicly, throughout his life. He could never speak of it without tears welling up in his eyes. In some notes, given to me by his family, he writes:

"In 1924 while at Hunter Hill, near Wrigley, at about 4 o'clock in the morning my mother died. The feeling of despair and anguish that overwhelmed us was indescribable. We, my father and his seven children, I the oldest at fifteen and Geda, the youngest at about two, stood perplexed facing a dismal future. I still cannot understand how we came through those experiences. But somehow we joined our hearts and hands and committed ourselves to the task. We older children resolved that we would look after the baby, Geda, regardless of what happened. All of this, and much more, bound us together with cords of love, compassion and understanding, and that bond remains until this day."

Shortly after his mother died, brother Tyler went to work at a rock quarry at Wrigley, Tennessee

making \$1.25 per day. He later moved into the plant as oil boy, then to engineer, in charge of the pumps, turbines, and operation of the big blowing engine for the blast furnace. He writes in his notes: "For a little over two years I continued at this work. My hours at that time were from 6 to 6, twelve hours a day. We were on shift work during this time, two weeks days and two weeks nights. But the salary made it worthwhile. I was making \$3.60 for the twelve hour day, which was more than many workers made at that time."



Granville Tyler

During this time he worshiped with the church at Lyles, Tennessee. At age 16, he was asked to read the scriptures and lead public prayer for the first time. He then began to participate in the public services of the church, not only at Lyles, but visited neighboring congregations to make talks. During one of several meetings in the area, brother W.B. West, Jr. asked the young brother Tyler to preach at one of the morning services. Brother West then drove brother Tyler to Nashville to meet brother H. Leo Boles to talk about enrolling in David Lipscomb College. With only a grammar school education, it was thought that the young man, he was nineteen by now, might enroll as a special student taking Bible, church history, and public speaking. But, brother Boles suggested that he finish high school first and then enroll as a regular student.

His first choice was to attend the high school at Lipscomb, but found it too expensive for his means. Brother West knew of a school in Charleston, Mississippi where boys could go, work on the experimental farm connected with the school, and get their high school education. So, in September of 1929, at age 21, brother Tyler quit his job at Wrigley and enrolled in Tallahatchie Agricultural High School to, in his words, "begin my education and my life's work as a preacher of the gospel." He lived in the school dorm and ate in the school cafeteria. The principal of the school, a member of a denomination, learned that brother Tyler wanted to preach. He insisted that brother Tyler have time to study, so he often excused him from work chores on the farm so that he could study. Brother Tyler was given credit toward his school expenses for the time that he spent in study in lieu of farm work. While at the school he filled preaching appointments at several small churches around Charleston. After high school, he went to David Lipscomb and Harding Colleges.

Between David Lipscomb and Harding, he worked for a year (1934) with the Washington Avenue

church in Russellville, Alabama. At Harding he met and married his beloved Frances Elliott who preceded him in death by a little less than fourteen months.

He returned to Russellville to work with the church again for four years (1937-1941). He then moved to work with the Central church in McMinnville, Tennessee for two years (1941-1943). While here, he and Frances became the proud parents of their only child, Elliott (June 24, 1942). He then worked with the Red Bank church in Chattanooga, Tennessee for two years (1944-1946); the Washington Avenue church in Russellville, Alabama, again for some over three years (1946-1950); the 77th Street church in Birmingham, Alabama for three years (1950-1953); a church in Pampa, Texas for a year (1954-1955); West Helena, Arkansas for three years (1955-1958). In September of 1958 he moved to work with the Sommerville Road church in Decatur, Alabama where he remained until his death. About twenty years or so ago, he "retired" from the local work at Sommerville Road to devote full time to meeting work, but he remained a member there and helped with the work in various capacities when not away in meetings. Brother Tyler probably held more meetings than any other man in this century. Brother Eugene Britnell, at the funeral, recalled hearing him say that he had held more than twenty meetings at the Market Street church in Athens, Alabama alone. While he held many meetings all over the country, most of his meetings were in the Southeastern section of the country. There is no way to tell how many churches have used and are still using his popular workbook series.

When the institutional issues arose in the 1950s brother Tyler studied the issues carefully and then took his stand. After taking his stand, he never wavered. Many of his closest friends did not come to the same conclusions as he did. However, virtually all of them still maintained a good friendship with him. It would have been hard for anyone not to be friends with one who showed himself so friendly. His stand cost in canceled meetings, but he had to stand by and preach his convictions.

He was well known for his keen mind and quick wit. Often his wit was aimed at those that he loved most. No man ever loved a brother more than he loved his younger brother, S. Leonard Tyler. He loved to argue Bible questions with Leonard. He also loved to make him the object of a joke. One night after Leonard had preached with Granville in the audience, someone asked Granville if he had given Leonard the outline that he had preached. As quick as a flash, Granville replied, "As a matter of fact, I did. But I forgot to tell him that it was supposed to be a series." Not only will people in this part of the country miss the

preaching of brother Tyler, they will miss the hilariously funny stories that he told in many a gathering of friends in private homes about characters that he knew during his younger days in Tennessee. As he told the stories, he would imitate their gestures and speech patterns, making his audience hold their sides with laughter. He and country comedienne, Minnie Pearl, grew up in the same county. They must have breathed the same air and drunk the same water.

However, in his preaching, he was deadly serious. Some-times he would inject a humorous illustration, never for the sake of humor, but to make his point more clear. His sermons were simple, Scripture filled efforts to teach men and women God's will and urge them to obey it. He could challenge the minds and touch the hearts of people with his lessons as well as any man this writer has ever known. He was keenly aware, and often said so, that he would have to give an account for each sermon that he preached. He also reminded his audiences that they would have to give an account for their response to the things he spoke, if he spoke the truth. He also reminded them often that if he did not speak the truth, that they would give account for not correcting him.

He touched the lives of so many of us. We will miss him.

Guardian of Truth XL: 11 p. 14-15 June 6, 1996



Frances, Elliott and Granville

OLD REUNION

Bobby Graham

Reunion, sometimes still called “Old Reunion,” is the oldest continuously meeting congregation of the Lord’s people in Limestone County, Alabama. At least three other churches began before Reunion — Green Hill Campground near Elkmont in 1829, Mt. Pleasant in the Poplar Creek community about 1832, and Mooresville about 1837, but none of these three now meets.

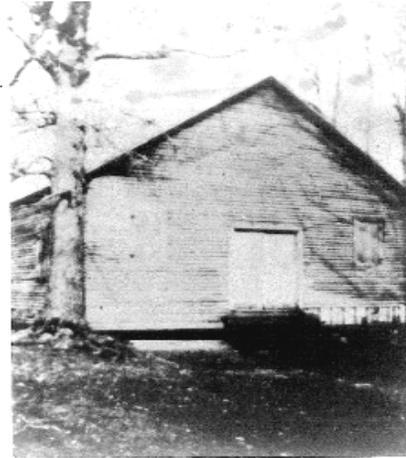
Reunion does share something in common with the Mooresville church—the presence of J.H. Hundley, who was the first charter member at Mooresville where he owned the Hundley Plantation (“Hundley Hill”) near that village. Hundley — doctor, farmer, school teacher, and author of Plan of Salvation in 1858— later moved to land which he purchased near Reunion, where he then played an influential role along with Reuben D. Glaze, whose name appears on the 1858 deed to the property along with that of Hundley. There is also evidence that Hundley preached some for the congregation. Reunion was then located on the stage-coach road running from Mooresville to the Elk River opposite Elkton, Tennessee, possibly explaining why Hundley wanted to own property in the community.

A fairly extensive history of the Christian Church in Athens (which shares a common early history with all of the early congregations already mentioned in Limestone County), written by Nancy Martin, says that Reunion began in the years after the demise of the Green Hill Campground Church, which took place in 1848 or 1849. She also credits J.H. Hundley with starting Reunion. She states that the “first church of the faith, as it was delivered unto the saints, was organized in 1829 by Elders Green and Hill, about five miles northwest of Athens.” Among the earliest burials in the Reunion Cemetery are those of Samuel Clem (1812-1860) and of Mary E. Bradford (1857-1860).

Reunion Records and What They Record

An advantage exists in the several Reunion record books kept through the years. The oldest record book begins in 1892 and continues records until 1939. It provides alphabetical listings of many members of the church from those years. Other record books list numerous baptisms for certain years.

An indenture (certificate of indebtedness) dated 1858 states that “Reuben Glaze, manager of the



Old Reunion Meetinghouse

The building in this picture was torn down when the new building was erected last year (1943, BLG). It was the oldest church of any kind in Limestone County. The walls were hewn logs, joined by wooden pegs. The windows were small, high, and equipped with wooden shutters. Reunion ranks next to Mooresville as the oldest Church of Christ in Limestone County.--The Commission, edited by Bennie Lee Fudge, Sunday, August 24, 1944

Congregation of the Disciples of Christ” received land from William and Sarah A. Moore for the sum of \$8.00. One landmark used to establish boundaries for this property and mentioned in this indenture was a sassafras tree on the east bank of Piney Creek. A later indenture dated March 4, 1861, re-states this same indebtedness involving the same property for the same sum of money with only Sarah Moore mentioned (William is no longer mentioned).

A deed dated 1898 shows the transfer of 1/2 acre of land on the south side of the then existing church lot from S.P. and Elizabeth Todsens to Rufus Brown and others in the Reunion Church for the sum of \$3.00.

The earliest records of Reunion are four quite fragile letters recommending members who came to Reunion from other congregations as faithful Christians (a common practice in earlier times). The important information concerning these follows: (1) April 1854, Maury County, Tennessee, Rolling Spring congregation, Recommends Nancy Allen, signed by Jonathan S. Hunt (church clerk); (2) January 19, 1862, Marshall County, Tennessee, Lewisburg congregation, Recommends Matilda Allen, signed by G.W. Bills (clerk); (3) April 14, 1866, Nashville, Tennessee, Congregation of Jesus Christ Nashville, Recommends Fannie E. Reynolds, signed by P.S. Fall; and (4) Second Sunday in August 1867, Limestone County, Alabama, Berea church, Recommends Jane Mental, signed by G.W. Puckett (moderator) and U. W. Tisdale (clerk).

Records indicate that Reunion survived the War between the States (so did Mt. Pleasant and Mooresville), while some other North Alabama churches ceased to exist. Mary Fielding wrote in her diary of November 2, 1862, “We went to a big meeting at Reunion today. That is, ‘twas to

have been a big meeting, but only one preacher, old Mr. Hundley, was there, and he was sick, and only sorta preached." A later diary entry from a sister of Mary Fielding shows that Reunion was still meeting after the Civil War. However, in an old record book there is a reference to the church's being re-organized on August 24, 1917, possibly meaning that it had ceased meeting for a time.

Also mentioned in one record book is the tearing down of the old building and building of the present building in 1943. An article by A.J. Rollings in the March 30, 1939 Limestone Democrat says that an old settler in the Reunion community stated that his uncle and his father helped to build the church building then standing and being used. There is a picture available of that building in an August 27, 1944 issue of a paper called The Commission, published by Bennie Lee Fudge. Others also have a picture of this same building. It was then said to be the oldest church building of any kind in Limestone County. Its walls were hewn logs, joined by wooden pegs. The windows were small, high, and equipped with wooden shutters.

Men Who Preached at Reunion

For the purpose of this directory, it will be informative to see some of the preachers at Reunion, both in monthly appointments (using a different preacher each Sunday and for that same Sunday each month), regular work, and meetings. The following names (in no particular order) have been gathered from several of the old record books, Athens newspapers from the 1800's, and other sources.

Preachers in the 19th Century

John Henry Dunn (1866): An interesting reference to Dunn appears in Eliza Jane "Piggie" Fielding's (sister of Mary Fielding, whose diary was earlier quoted) diary entry for September 9, 1866 (p. 177): "We...went to Reunion and got so mad we liked to [have] died. I never heard such a sermon in my life as old Dun[n] preached, compared us to every thing he could. Jennie and I left the church before he got half through and that made Mrs. Crawford so mad she looked like she could whip us good. She liked to [have] preached my funeral when she got home." Dunn has been remembered as the preacher who "fell with his armor on," evidently meaning that he died while preaching.

Tolbert Fanning (1869)

James M. Pickens (1869)

David Lipscomb (1870)

Thomas L. Weatherford (4th Sundays in 1880)

Rock Creek Philosophy

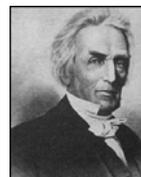
If God's people would think less about human authority in the church and more about the authority of Christ, the head, it would be better for all concerned. *F.B. Srygley*

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RESTORATION RAMBLING

In the Heart of Dixie

Earl Kimbrough

Influence

The word influence is often misused by Restoration writers of all levels. It is doubtful that the influence of any preacher in the movement is as great as some state or imply. If a man in his youth took a long buggy ride with Alexander Campbell, some might regard him as a “Campbell man.” If Barton W. Stone baptized a teenage boy, who never saw him again, some would likely regard him as a “Stone man.” If a preacher took the *Gospel Advocate* when David Lipscomb edited it, he may possibly be thought of as under Lipscomb’s influence. None knows the percentage of the *Advocate* readers that accepted his views on civil government, bachelor elders, and military service. And if they did, was it because of his influence, or did they read the *Advocate* because Lipscomb agreed with them?

To say Campbell influenced a certain preacher leads us to ask: “Which Alexander Campbell? The one that edited the *Christian Baptist*, or the one that became president of the American Christian Missionary Society? Moses E. Lard was converted by Jerry P. Lancaster. He later went to Bethany College. Was he a Lancaster man, or a Campbell man? In my opinion, he was his own man!

One of the strongest opponents of missionary societies in Alabama studied under Campbell. The fact that men closely associated with Stone first preached “the ancient order” in Alabama does not mean they were “followers of Stone.” In some ways, Stone followed them.

Many pioneer preachers of Alabama had poor educations. They learned from the works of “great preachers.” But most likely they did so selectively. Most were independent. They accepted ideas in the light of their own understanding of God’s word. To call one a Stone man or a Campbell man may be close to regarding him as incapable of reading the Bible and reaching conclusions without the help of “great men.” Some historians do not seem to be comfortable unless they can put everyone in a box of influence, labeled and filed accordingly. The human mind is more complex than that, and Alabamians are known to be independent.#

William H. Gresham

The names of some early Alabama gospel preachers are historically well known, while the names of others are not well known, if at all. In a letter to Richard L. James in October 1939, the daughter of William H. Gresham, 1840-1917, one of the lesser known preachers, gives a description her father’s work, which was characteristic of many gospel preachers during the later years of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century.

“He made his living by farming. He would work hard all day

in the field, then study two or three hours every night. Study rainy days, and cold days that he could not work in the field. He held protracted meetings in the summer time when his crops were not needing work so very badly. In his study *his main book was the Bible* [emphasis added]. His helping books were the Dictionary, the Gospel Advocate, and books on debates.” (Emma Sue Gresham, Letter to Richard L. James, Oct. 17, 1937.)#

The Name “Christian”

People associated with the Restoration movement of Barton W. Stone were called Christians, while those of the Campbell movement preferred to be called Reformers or Disciples of Christ. It is generally thought that after the two groups began to merge in 1831, these names were used interchangeably by both groups. This was true in many instances. But with Stone himself there was never a choice. From the first, he considered the name of Christ or Christian as the *exclusive* name for God’s people.

“It is also a fact, that about the same period [more than thirty years ago, cir. 1804], we from conviction took the name *Christian*, which name was given to the Disciples by divine authority. For this name *alone* we have ever contended, and yet cleave to it with warm affection, to the utter exclusion of every other. If any prefer to be called *Campbellites*, we do not. If any prefer the name *Reformers*, we do not. If any choose the name *Disciples*, we do not. *Christian*, and *Christian* alone, is our name.... I will never be the member of any church, which is not called the Church of Christ, or who are not called Christians.” (*Christians Messenger*, May 1835.)

In Alabama, most Christians seem to have agreed with Stone, and at least some of them did so before they ever heard tell of a preacher named Barton. W. Stone.#

Going On To Perfection

Some people seem to think “going on to perfection” is more than growing in grace and knowledge. With them going on to perfection is like taking an elevator to the top of a tall building. They’re not satisfied to think they have reached the top. They see more “perfection” to go on to. They want to take the elevator through the roof into the outer space of their own wisdom. To them *real* perfection is in explaining to us Alabama hillbillies that God’s commands are just suggestions, and his silence is there to give them space to fill in the blanks with their theological jargon.#

“Let us use our common sense, if we have any, and if we have none, let us talk at any rate as if we had a little.” J.W. McGarvey, 1896.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN TAYLOR

Some preachers preach to make them a name,
Their aim in life is fortune and fame.
John Taylor ne'r sought an earthly reward,
His goal in life was the favor of God.

For fourscore years, and just minus two,
He lived his long life with heaven in view.
He toiled o'er the anvil, the saw, and the plow,
To keep his family from poverty's power.

He preached with scant pay mid the poor of the hills,
Where wild deer roamed near forests and rills;
Teaching lost sinners the love of his God,
Warning them, too, of His chastening rod.

In old log church and old brush arbor,
He guided the lost to heaven's safe harbor.
He baptized them all, both kith and kin,
In Peter's words, "for remission of sin."

No choirs in choir robes holy hymns intoned.
No wheezing organs around him groaned;
Just hearts of pure faith their melody made.
No need at all for mechanical aid.

They met each week to eat of the bread,
On the day that Jesus arose from the dead.
They drank from the cup of crimson red wine,
Rememb'ring His blood, God's gift sublime.

No label of honor John's name preceded,
Just "Brother John" was all that he needed.
No Reverend, nor Pastor, nor titles of men;
No Clergy, nor Bishop, and nothing akin.

Four thousand souls, and five hundred more,
He led them to Jesus and heaven's bright shore.
Some day they'll gather by the river of life,
Forever delivered from all sin and all strife.

John's ashes now rest in the old resting ground,
Amidst graves of the dead scattered around.
His soul is with Jesus in a fair summer land,
Singing praises to Him who's at God's right hand.

Earl Kimbrough

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ESSAYS ON THE CHURCH



HUGH FULFORD

*"A most timely and needed work as the Ship of Zion sails on the troubled seas of today....Excellent
....LEW*

About the Book

How is an undenominational church supposed to thrive in a denominational world? This is a question that Christians ask themselves today when others reject the teachings of God in order to follow a more 'convenient' or 'fulfilling' path. Throughout his fifty years of

preaching, Hugh Fulford has seen the Lord's church face many of these same oppositions and questions. This volume of essays deals specifically with the identity of the church as God planned it, Laying aside all modern opinions, expectations, and prejudices, Fulford goes to our one and only true source for the answers we need. Using the Bible as a guide, we can find out what it really means to be an undenominational Christian.

About the Author

Hugh Fulford began preaching the gospel when he was 15 years old, beginning full-time work in 1958. He has preached for over fifty years, serving churches in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Texas. Since July 2000, Fulford has preached in gospel meetings, spoken in lecture ships, preached by appointment, and worked with congregations on an interim, or part-time, basis. He continues his active work of writing.

Fulford was educated at Freed-Hardeman University, the University of Tennessee, and Austin Peay State University. He has written numerous articles over the years, and he continues to write regularly for the Gospel Advocate and The Spiritual Sword. He has published three books: *Christianity Pure and Simple* (2005), *The Kind of Preaching Needed Today* (2006), and *The Lord Has Been Mindful Me* (2007), all of which may be ordered online from hesterpublications.com. Hugh and his wife Jan make their home in Gallatin, Tennessee.

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Alas! For His Wreck *The Apostasy of James Ragan Collinsworth*

C. Wayne Kilpatrick

James Ragan Collinsworth was born January 25, 1814. He is said to have been born in Blount County, Tennessee; but could have just as easily been born in Blount County, Alabama. Official records are more in favor of an Alabama birthplace, since he was in and around the Blount and Morgan counties area of Alabama until he was twenty-nine years old; with the exception of his attending a formal school in Tennessee, for a brief time. His parents were of Methodist persuasion and named him after a local Methodist preacher by the name of James Ragan. Ragan sprinkled J.R. a few days after he was born (*The Cumberland Presbyterian*, December 3, 1903, p.711). Both of his parents died when young Collinsworth was fifteen years old. He was left to others to raise him. He must have had someone of reasonable wealth to help him, because of the schools he attended. His first formal education was at Fayetteville, Tennessee and then he attended LaGrange College, near Tuscumbia, Alabama. LaGrange College moved to Florence, Alabama in 1840 and would later become Florence Normal School, and eventually become the University of North Alabama. LaGrange was a Methodist College at the time J.R. attended. Until the camp meeting in Blount County, Alabama in 1838, his religious affiliations were with the Methodists.

His religious views changed radically during the third week of September 1838. He attended a huge camp meeting on Thomas Billingsley's farm at present day Hanceville, Blount County, Alabama. One of the key speakers was young Carroll Kendrick, who would baptize nearly 30,000 souls in his lifetime. Although Collinsworth was two years older than Kendrick, he was touched by Kendrick's message and was moved to be baptized. Another young man from Morgan County, an adjacent county from which Collinsworth also came, was baptized at the same time. He was James Matthew Hackworth, who also became a great preacher, in his own right. Hackworth and Collinsworth became preachers within two or three months of their conversion. Hackworth wrote the following concerning their first few months of ministry:

There are two little congregations of us in this county, numbering in all, between 40 and 50 members, 25 of which number have been immersed within the last two years; 22 of them by Brother C.Kendrick, by whom I was immersed; and 3 of them by myself. We have two elders and two

deacons. Brothers J. Medford and R. Couth, are our elders; brothers P. Couth and D.C. Conway, are our deacons. There are three of us speakers: Brother J. Collinsworth, my father (Nick Hackworth), and myself. All the brethren appear, with some few exceptions, to be alive to the cause. We meet two Sundays of every month at each congregation (***Christian Preacher***, May, 1839).

This tells us that Collinsworth was still working with the Hackworths, at that time, in Morgan County. He would continue there until 1843. Piney Grove and Cedar Plains were the two churches with which these three men were working. J.R. had moved to the Athens, Alabama area by the fall of 1843. His first report was published by Tolbert Fanning in his ***Christian Review*** in January of 1844 as follows:

Brother James Collinsworth, of Athens, Alabama held a meeting at Green Hill, five miles from that place, in the month of October, at which fourteen were added to the faithful (*Christian Review*, January, 1844, p.). This reveals that Collinsworth's residency was in Athens by October of 1843.

Two years later W.S. Speer, the son of Joshua K. Speer, came to Green Hill and reported the following meeting:

From the 3rd to the 8th inst. inclusive, I preached sixteen times. No other preacher present, except our excellent brother J. Collingsworth (sic), who being at home, literally refused to speak. We had rain and mud in abundance. The meeting closed with thirty-two additions (*C.R.*, December, 1845, p. 237).

From this letter we know that J.R. is still preaching at Green Hill. He definitely remained in the Limestone County area until sometime in 1847; because he wrote a letter, which was dated May 27, 1847, from Limestone County, Alabama. The letter was addressed to Jacob Creath, Jr. through the ***Bible Advocate***. In this letter, Collinsworth is very sarcastic in his tone and aggressive toward Brother Creath. He showed uncertainty toward some things that Creath had written on the subject of "Spiritual Babylon" (***Bible Advocate***, July, 1847, p.139). This was one of the first signs that J.R. was taking a different path, theologically speaking. This attack on Creath demonstrated the beginning stages of his instability. The date and location of this writing by Collinsworth, is proof that he was still living in Limestone County at that time.

It is highly possible that he was still in the Athens area until the end of the summer of 1848. Ben Cooper reported a meeting at Moulton, in which J.H. Dunn, J.R. Collinsworth, and Cooper all labored together. In this meeting fourteen were baptized into Christ.

Cooper's letter was dated: August 12, 1848 (Millennial Harbinger, December, 1848, p.703). Between August and December of that year J.R. had moved to Fayetteville, Tennessee. He was listed, Alexander Hall, as being the minister for the church in that place, in December of 1848 (Christian Register, December, 1848, p. 39). J.R. mainly focused on the Tennessee work the remainder of his career in the Churches of Christ. He did, however return to preach in Alabama, on occasion. His first full year of labor in Tennessee was productive. He sent a report to Alexander Campbell that he had baptized 200 souls during of 1849, in a letter dated: December 9, 1849 and was written from Lewisburg, Tennessee (M.H., February, 1850, p.108). That was the only report sent to any journal editor for that entire year. It seems that the southern journals were no longer favored by Collinsworth. His last few reports, as a Christian minister were sent to Alexander Campbell and the Millennial Harbinger. Perhaps he thought Campbell would be more likely, than Fanning or some other southern writer, to side with his changing views. It is highly possible that his sarcasm toward Creath just cooled the southern brethren toward him. The one thing we know for sure from this letter is that it places J.R. in Lewisburg, where he would remain until his defection was made to the Presbyterians. Even after joining the ranks of the Presbyterians, he continued for a while in Lewisburg. From the foregoing evidence a strong feeling of distrust had developed.

Whether or not J.R. was angry with the southern journals, it did not impede his effectiveness in the pulpit. In 1851 he held a meeting at Liberty, in Marshall County, Tennessee, and baptized 156 persons (Goodspeed's History of Tennessee, 1886, p.). In 1852 he held a joint meeting with P.H. Morse in Paris, Tennessee, which was reported by S.B. Aden. Eight were baptized during this meeting (M.H., November, 1852, p. 658). He sent one correspondence as a minister for the Church of Christ, between 1852 and 1857, but much more transpired. He began to question his understanding of the New Testament appeal for a return to the original pattern. By the end of 1857, it was clear that J.R. was highly disturbed in his religious views. He wrote a lengthy letter to Alexander Campbell; which Campbell published in the Harbinger. Collinsworth was asking about the "foreknowledge of God." His letter read:

Dear Brother Campbell: - There are not a few in this region who say much on the perplexing subject of the "fore-knowledge of God." Some say that God does not know all events in the future; some say that He could know all things if He would, but chooses not to know all things.

Say they, "If God knows all things, He knows who will be saved and Who will be lost, to

infinite certainty, and this would destroy the agency of man."

Say they, "If God from eternity saw all things, He from eternity ordained all things, for there is no difference between His fore-knowledge and fore-ordination." They say, "Brother Campbell does not believe that Jehovah from everlasting certainly knew all future events, nor does he believe that the plan of Redemption was matured in the Divine mind before the creation of the world." Now my venerable father it does occur to me that 10 or 15 pages on the above topics from your able pen, would have much to do in settling the unpleasant controversies upon these questions (M.H., September, 1857, p. 521).

He further stated that some thought that Campbell did not believe the doctrine of Baptism as to its chief design, as Campbell taught in the McCalla Debate and endorsed in the Rice Debate (Ibid.).

Campbell answered in his succinct style, not in 10 or 15 pages, as Collinsworth suggested. His response was one and one half pages in length but to the point. Campbell seemed to sense what Collinsworth was doing. Maybe he felt that the sarcasm on, Collinsworth's part, did not deserve much time or paper. It may be, also, that Campbell had already heard rumblings from Tennessee of Collinsworth's spiritual problems. By the time this letter had been written, J.R. was already in serious trouble with the brethren at Lewisburg and within a year he made application for membership in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (*The Pseudo Church of Anti-Pedo-Baptists Defined and Refuted, by J.R. Collinsworth, 1892, p.4*). The fallout was so much so, that the Wilson Hill Church of Christ, in Marshall County, Tennessee, lost many members over his defection (*Goodspeed, p. 1886*). Apart from the theological problems of Collinsworth, he also had trust issues. He claimed to have lost two hundred dollars he had collected for the Yowell brothers at Lewisburg. The combination of all of his problems caused the church in Lewisburg to withdraw from him in 1857. Fanning warned that from J.R. "we might expect the opposition of a mean enemy" (*G.A., August, 1861, p.243*).

For a brief period he went to Arkansas, perhaps to console his soul. While there he began to speak of the brethren in vicious ways and make claims of things that they believed, of which they did not. He met a Baptist preacher by the name of Thomas Owens, who related this incident to Brother John H. Moss of Chestnut Bluff, Tennessee, who in turn passed it on to Fanning and the Advocate. Moss said:

Bro. Owens says that Collinsworth is using stronger exertions to prejudice the minds of the people against the doctrine of the Christian

Church than any other man he has ever met with (sic), and that while in the company of Mr. C., sheer justice required that he should defend the Christian Church from the vile persecutions heaped upon it by Mr. Collinsworth. He (Owens) informed me that he has read the writings of the principal editors of the Reformation, and that he has never seen anything assimilating to what Mr. Collinsworth represents us as believing and teaching (*G.A., July, 1858, p. 210*.)” Fanning wrote a postscript to Moss’ letter: “Our *quandom* friend, J.R. Collinsworth, indulged in idle speculations, apostatized and was excluded from the Church at Lewisburg; and is now a very mean enemy” (*G.A., Ibid.*).

That poignant comment by Fanning brought a protest by Collinsworth.

Fanning answers Collinsworth’s protest with the following:

Our former Brother, J.R. Collinsworth, of whom we spoke in the July No., as an apostate, complains bitterly, and we are willing, if he has not abandoned the cause, and is not representing us as reported by a respectable Baptist minister, as preachers of water regeneration, to make all proper correction. Friend Collinsworth must show his faith by works before we can respect him as a Christian. He may belong to the school of Messrs. Ferguson, Richardson, Russell, and Carmen, but not to the school of Christ (*G.A., August, 1858, p.241*).

Fanning was very pointed and strict with Collinsworth in his response. He was well aware of the leanings that J.R. had, now toward the Cumberland Presbyterians. Fanning was not at all surprised when news arrived from Lewisburg concerning J.R.’s defection.

In another article Fanning wrote of Collinsworth’s defection:

Regarding the moral death of J.R. Collinsworth, we regard it due to the brethren to notice the completion of his shame, and then we hope never to write his name again. Brother W.P. Cowden, of Lewisburg, informs us that he has “joined the Cumberland Presbyterian church.” He says “in giving his trial soul to the Cumberland brethren, he said he experienced pardon of sins about the time he was fourteen years old. Shortly afterwards he was sprinkled, and is now preaching for his new brethren.” To our mind it is perfectly plain there is not a sincere and intelligent man on earth, who has read and preached as much truth as friend C., who was ever convinced that a knowledge of pardon of sins is experienced in the revelations of the altar or mourner’s bench; that immersion is not the

baptism of the New Testament, or that sprinkling is obedience to God. Dead, dead, hopelessly dead, is he (*G.A., September, 1858, p. 270*).

It seemed that J.R. Collinsworth was bent on destroying the Church of Christ, if within his power.

What precipitated this radical abandonment of New Testament principles?

Perhaps a clue lies in Fanning’s last article concerning Collinsworth, in the *Gospel Advocate*. It reads:

His apostasy from the truth places him beyond the reach of the servants of God, his conduct in professing to have lost money collected for the brothers Yowell, must in our judgment, stain his character as to the truth and honesty while he lives, and his efforts to destroy the fair fame of Dr. Brents, as set forth in a letter to Mr. Meadows, places him beyond the respect of all high-toned gentlemen of the world, who examine the facts (*G.A., August, 1861, p.243*).

The letter showed that the “Devil had entered Judas over money,” and not religious issues, although Fanning says of him:

Although from a personal interview with Mr. Collinsworth, anterior to the withdrawal of the church from him, we were fully satisfied that he cultivated no fixed confidence in the institutions of the Lord, and after his expulsion in publishing the fact, we intimated that we might expect the opposition of a “very mean enemy,” his conduct exhibits shades of character so much darker than we then anticipated, that we are not only moved with pity toward him, but seriously regret that apparent necessity for the publication of the *expose* or of another reference to the matter in paper (*G.A., Ibid.*).

Fanning had hoped that there would never be a need to mention Collinsworth’s name in the pages of the *Advocate* ever again. He was through with Collinsworth for good. These matters mentioned by Fanning had occurred, beginning in the summer of 1857 through the finalization of his apostasy to the Cumberland Presbyterians, in September of 1858.

In October of 1860, Fanning had to, reluctantly, print Collinsworth’s name once more. He received a letter from a former South Alabama preacher, James A. Butler, inquiring about Collinsworth. He wrote:

Where is James Collinsworth? We held sweet communion through the media of written exchange, for a time, in the days that were. I remember well, that the last letter which I received from him, I showed it to an impulsive sharp brother—Walsh Hardy. He slides in speech, not quite a stutter. He drew a bead on the document, and said, “if- ef you don’t hi-heap up a good pile fer-for him, hi-he will slip the

noose, and bolt the track!" Has he bolted? [He has been sold to the Cumberlands, to abuse the cause of Christ—Ed.] (*G.A., October, 1860, p.*).

By the time Fanning published this article; Collinsworth had already taken charge of the Bear Creek Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Marshall County, Tennessee and served that church, as its minister, for one year ("Bear Creek Community Church Preservation Plan," p. 105). His defection had been completed. He now turned his energy against the Churches of Christ. The strong language used by him in Arkansas was just a prelude for things to come.

The Presbyterians told a different story, as one might expect. They had different versions, which seemed to have drawn on information that originated with Collinsworth. One version read as follows:

A fact, perhaps, not generally known is that Mr. Collinsworth's conversion from the Christian (Campbellite) church, in which he was a powerful and popular preacher, was due more to discussions with W.W. Hendrix, D.D. of Franklin, Tennessee, than to any other influence. After prolonged private debates with this now venerable, but still vigorous, Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, Mr. Collinsworth renounced the creed of the Christian church and was admitted to the membership in the church at Lewisburg, Tennessee, by Dr. Hendrix, then the pastor there. Dr. Hendrix also conducted the examination when Mr. Collinsworth subsequently applied to the presbytery as a candidate for the ministry (The Cumberland Presbyterian, November 3, 1892, p. 1).

This version portrays Collinsworth as being directly converted by W. W. Hendrix.

There is, however, another Cumberland Presbyterian version. It reads:

Although baptized in infancy, he was at first a member of what is called the Campbellite Church, for twelve or fifteen years was a minister in that body. His ability soon put him in the front rank. But, becoming skeptical of his position, he quit preaching for two three years, and gave himself to an examination of his position. The result was a complete renunciation of his former position, and an advocacy of the Pedobaptist position. He joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1858, and was licensed and ordained in its ministry. He gave his time mostly to lecturing against the positions which he had formerly defended, and it was said by those who knew best that his arguments were unanswerable (The Cumberland Presbyterian, December 1, 1903, p. 711).

This version differs in the way he was converted,

considerably, from the previous version, cited above. Collinsworth had completely turned his back on the New Testament pattern, in exchange for the Cumberland Presbyterian creed.

Over the remainder of his life, he lectured against the Churches of Christ. He was challenged so much, that in 1873 he was forced to publish something to help defend his position. The result was a book entitled "A Triumphant Defense of Rev. J.R. Collinsworth, Against the Slanders of His Enemies" It was published in St. Louis, Missouri, by the Cumberland Presbyterian Printing House. By the time he died in 1892, his lectures were published as: "The Pseudo Church Doctrines of Anti-Pedo-Baptists Defined and Refuted: In a Series of Lectures on the Organization, Identity and Perpetuity God's Visible Church: Also Showing Its Scriptural Membership and Mode of Baptism."

He died on September 22, 1892, in Hartsville, Tennessee, where he had lived the last thirty years of his life. He was like J.B. Ferguson, whom H. Leo Boles compares to a meteor that flashed across the sky and was gone. Fanning even compared him to Ferguson. Carroll Kendrick, the man who had baptized Collinsworth in 1838, said of Collinsworth: "Alas! for his wreck" (*G.A., September 2, 1891, p.547*). Many lessons can be learned from Collinsworth's fall. We hope that those of our generation are sincere in their faith and not unstable like Collinsworth. He brought shame and reproach upon the Church bought by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May we ever hold faithful to Christ.

SWORD SWIPES

Cled Wallace

Whom shall we call on to lead public prayer in our public gatherings? Surely not some one who has not obeyed the gospel, even though he be a popular "minister." Such a sacred matter is not to be passed around as a "courtesy." Call on some f a i t h f u l Christian for that important service. He is at least interested in the success of the meeting; and, then, too, there is the probability that the Lord w i l l listen to him! Any other course is cheap compromise. I do not care to have some preacher praying for my success in public who privately hopes that I will fail.....
GA-12/8/1931

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THE CHURCH BEGINS IN ATHENS

Bobby Graham

The cause of restoration reached back in Limestone County (of which Athens is the county seat) to the 1820's, as other articles establish. Even in Athens and its environs there is a record of preachers speaking at various locations. The following milestones—by no means complete, but selective—arranged chronologically establish the background and foundation for the beginning of a church in Athens:

Milestones Leading to the Athens Church

Numerous camp meetings were held in Northern Limestone County near present-day Elkmont. In these meetings different preachers connected with the Restoration Movement introduced the message of the New Testament into Limestone County over a twenty-five year period. The following families' names were associated with these meetings, either as speakers or converts: Andrew Witty, T.L. Weatherford, David Eckerberger, James C. Anderson, Samuel Giles, Carroll Kendrick, and Allen Kendrick.

The records of the First Christian Church in Athens include the claim that a congregation called "Green Hill Campground" began in 1829 as a result of these camp meetings and continued until 1848. This same information is found in the Watsons' book *History of Christian Churches in Alabama*.

Tolbert Fanning, preacher from Nashville and editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, spoke at the courthouse on July 4, 1868. He said he "hardly recognized the war-torn town."

Tolbert Fanning again spoke in Athens at the Baptist building for 1 1/2 hours on "The Doctrines of the Christian Church" The editor added that "it was a very convincing sermon." (*Athens Post*, Oct. 8, 1869).

The same year T.B. Larimore made a preaching tour through Limestone County and North Alabama with John Taylor.

In September 1869 there was this notice in the *Athens Post*: "A protracted meeting will begin at Reunion on Saturday, October 2. Elders Fanning and Pickens will be in attendance."

The same paper on the same date spoke of "an interesting meeting which has been in progress for some time at Poplar Creek" with Elder J.H. Dunn of the Christian Church. Six people connected themselves with the church.

May 28, 1870: Elder Jacob Creath spoke in Athens at the Town Hall over Goldsmith's Store on the East side of the Square on Saturday night and Sunday.

In July 1870 it was noted that David Lipscomb spoke in a meeting at reunion. Four were added to the church.

In this same year James M. Pickens, T. B. Larimore, Tom Weatherford, and J.H. Dunn were preaching in the area

around Athens.

In 1880 the Mt. Carmel congregation was meeting in a schoolhouse west of Athens.

In 1880, the Bethel church started meeting east of Athens in a log building. Some of its members soon started helping with the work in Athens—namely, Clint Glaze and Bob Isom, who owned a business in town.

By the time of the establishment of a church in Athens in 1884, through the preaching of Dr. A.C. Henry, who was sent to Athens by the Mooresville congregation, in a series of meetings in the Baptist Church building in town, the county already had a few churches pleading the cause of returning to the New Testament pattern.

Early Christians in Athens began meeting in the Bob Isom home and later moved to Isom's meat shop near the Big Spring on the East side of the town.

The name of Dr. N. B. Wallace, a preacher and a medical doctor who came from the Hackworth family of Morgan County, Alabama—a prominent one in the early history of the church in that county from the 1830's—appears different times in the early history of Christians in Athens. This transplant from Morgan County remained true to the cause of New Testament Christianity in the face of departures which were sweeping many disciples away. In his work of preaching in the Athens area (including the Mt. Carmel congregation approximately fifteen miles west of Athens on the Florence Road, he was closely allied with Tom Weatherford. Because Wallace died in 1899, his strong influence for truth was absent when the Athens congregation was shaken and divided just a few years later by the introduction of an organ for a wedding; but it never left the building.

The courthouse in Athens also served as their meeting place. Here T.B. Larimore held a meeting in 1888.

The photograph studio of Mr. William Y. Haggard, who had moved from Anniston, was located on the West side of the square in 1892. It was in this location that R. Lin Cave of Nashville spoke in a series of evangelistic meetings in 1892.

In 1893 the church gained a meeting place by purchasing a building consisting of offices.

O.P. Spiegel, who had been baptized by Dr. Henry, came to Athens as State Evangelist in 1894 and organized the church with thirty-three members, with Dr. Henry returning to preach regularly in Athens in 1895 (Henry was a medical-school graduate and had been a surgeon in the Confederate Army). Spiegel's associations with Christians in Athens extended at least as far back to the 1886 and 1887, when he spoke in meetings in Limestone County close to the town and met Athens disciples (Letter from O. P. Spiegel written March 20, 1920, in author's possession).

In July 1893 John Hayes was noted as preaching in a protracted meeting at Oak Grove Schoolhouse a few miles northeast of Athens, beginning the third Sunday in August.

In 1901 the church built a new building on the same lot

where they had been meeting.

While this record of the preaching in Athens and the surrounding area is only partial, it still provides the foundation for the beginning of the work in Athens. Acquaintance with many of the names prominent in the preaching in the area also underscores the reason for the strength of the church for the adverse times soon to arise—names like Fanning, Lipscomb, Pickens, Larimore, Weatherford, Wallace, and Hayes.

Athens Get Its Own Building

The church's own building dates to September 26, 1893, when they bought the building used as law offices by J.J. Turrentine on West Market Street. The building, also known as the Herald Office, was deeded to Clinton D. Glaze, Wilburn Lee Martin, W.Y. Haggard, and William R. Isom (Glaze and Isom from the Bethel church east of Athens had helped start the Athens church). The congregation paid \$500 for the building, paying half initially and financing the other half at 8 % interest. The Baptists in Athens allowed them to borrow benches, and Mooresville sent them a pulpit stand. During this first year in their own building they contributed \$35 for overseas evangelism. Here they met until the building was removed in 1901 and replaced on the same site by their first building designed for use by a church at 314 West Market Street behind U.G. White Hardware. Regular services were advertised in the Alabama Courier's "Church Directory" in January 1894 as follows: Sunday School 9:30, Communion 10:30, Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:15 P.M. This building of 1903 remained the meeting place of the whole church until later division occurred. After that 1903 division over an organ, the departing group met elsewhere, with the Christian Church remaining in the 1903 building until they moved a block west on Market Street at Madison Street to their present structure in 1919.

The church thus starting, as a result of the contributions of many in labor and funds, was soon to be swept by a torrent of conflict, resulting from devastating forces unleashed with destructive effects. The same conditions causing division in countless churches across the nation and in Alabama soon developed. Again we stress that some of the names mentioned earlier as important in the formative years of the Athens church swayed some of her members with more liberal attitudes toward the inspired Scriptures—names like Cave and Spiegel. The silence of the Scriptures was no longer viewed by some as prohibitive, but as permissive. Further deterioration of regard for the Scriptures was seen in the view fast gaining acceptance among disciples that the Scriptures were not to be seen as giving a pattern with regulatory power, but as a general guide with only loose restraints ambiguously defined.

Division was inevitable with these two radically different perspectives and attitudes toward the Bible.

An Historical Perspective

It is usually impossible for the powerful forces working in one location to remain there, so that their effects do not eventually manifest themselves elsewhere through connections and associations between the different regions. Such was the case with the ever proliferating disregard of New Testament authority which led to the introduction of the missionary society into the work of local churches, in violation of New Testament church organization, and of the instrument of music into their worship, in violation of New Testament church worship. What started at Midway, Kentucky, in 1859 among churches seeking the restoration of the New Testament order moved to many other areas of the country where Christians had begun the effort to adhere to the New Testament order, so that churches in Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Nashville, Tennessee; Akron, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Thorp Springs, Texas; and hundreds of other cities and hamlets suffered division within their ranks. Much later, but eventually, these powerful forces contrived by Satan to afflict the people of God made their way to Athens, Alabama, by 1903. The outstanding work done by rugged pioneers of the gospel message over the foregoing eighty years did not prevent the defection of some from the cause of truth, but it did lay the groundwork for a strong opposition to the modern thinking then encircling the camps of the disciples and thus minimized the damage. There arose a sizable cadre of stalwart soldiers who would not bend or bow to the "modern gods." In most cases, the attitude of the pro-instrument forces was like that displayed in Thorp Springs, Texas. There a list of more than a hundred opponents of the organ was handed to one of the church's elders, who then heedless of their desires, spoke to the organist, "Play on, Miss Bertha." Because Miss Bertha played in many congregations, division resulted in many locations.

"The division came suddenly if we follow the report of the yearly statistics. When the Department of Commerce made a religious census in 1906, a group of ministers led by J. W. Shepherd requested that those churches opposed to missionary societies and instrumental music be listed separately from Disciples of Christ. This wish was complied with and a division of opinion became an organic division. This 1906 census listed for Alabama 8,756 Disciple of Christ members; 9,214 Church of Christ members. Since 1906 those churches known as Churches of Christ have gone a separate path. They were never alienated from the Alabama Christian Missionary Co-operation since they were never aligned with it, though listed by it" (Watson, History of Christian Churches in Alabama, 67-68).

Earl I. West gives David Lipscomb's analysis of the division in these words: "He pointed out that a rupture had taken place in the restoration movement because many had wanted to adopt 'human inventions,' which, in earlier years, had been rejected" (Search for the Ancient Order, III, 22). He provided more from Lipscomb in these words:

"These disciples have separated from the "christian Churches" that grew out of the effort to restore pure primitive Christianity, by remaining true to the original purpose and the principles needful to develop it while these churches have departed from this end and have set aside the principles of fidelity to the word of God as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice of Christians. This seems to give as correct an idea of the facts concerning these churches as I can give."

Such forces did not work division in the Poplar Street Church in nearby Florence until 1917, but there also division arrived, when "sixteen members... withdrew to organize a more liberal church with instrumental music" (Watson, 191). Because of the powerful influence of the Gospel Advocate in the Southland, most congregations opposed the introduction of these two innovations—the missionary society and the musical instrument.

Division in Athens

The course of the division brought by the instrument of music in Athens was similar to what transpired in other places. In preparation for a wedding, in 1903 a family brought an organ into the building erected in 1901, which they never removed after the wedding. The conservative members of the church left and began meeting at the courthouse. Among those leaving were Joe Terry and E.E. Carruth. As a result, neither John Hayes nor Joe Jones would then preach for the group using the instrument. The record shows that Jones later preached for the departing group meeting in the Courthouse two Sundays a month and evenings in the Courthouse.

An obituary of Thomas L. Weatherford, a Limestone County native and gospel preacher (1838-1908), appearing in the Gospel Advocate in 1908, gives valuable information concerning his role in the early years of the congregation formed from the division in 1903. Wilburn Derryberry, writer of the obituary, points out that at the time of Weatherford's death, there were nine churches in Limestone County, including the digressive church in Athens, where Weatherford, like Hayes and Jones above, no longer preached. The obituary says of Weatherford:

"He seemed to regret very much the troubles that are coming upon the church about things untaught. He will be missed by the little band of Christians that meet in the

courthouse in Athens. He had a short time before his death moved to his son's, near here, to spend the remainder of his days on earth, and being aged and feeble, said he had called in his regular appointments and would cast his lot with us, as he could not fellowship the unscriptural things in the digressive church here. He had consented to preach for us once a month, but filled only one appointment, and that just two weeks before the final summons came."

The following account is part of an affidavit filed in the Office of the Judge of Probate of Limestone County by J.A. Terry on June 22, 1950:

"That in the year 1903 a Mrs. McClellan, who was the mother of Mrs. Memory McClellan Walker, of Athens, Alabama, gave an organ to the Church of Christ of Athens, Alabama, to be used in the worship services of said church. That because of this introduction of musical instruments into the worship services of said church and as a result thereof, a minority group of the congregation of the Church of Christ of Athens, Alabama, led by a Mr. Lappington, left the congregation of the Church of Christ of Athens, Alabama, and held their own services in various places, such as the Courthouse and in the homes of various members who opposed the introduction of musical instruments in religious worship."

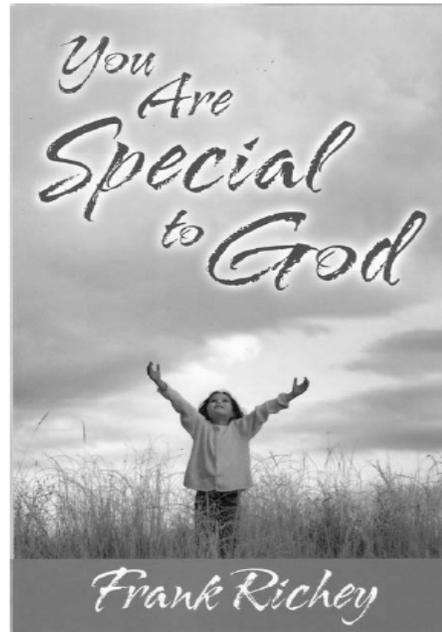
The affidavit also states that the church was alternately known by these interchangeable names after its organization in 1893 until the division in 1903: Church of Christ of Athens, Alabama; Christian Church of Athens, Alabama; and Disciples of Christ of Athens, Alabama. Another significant statement of the affidavit is that the majority of the congregation remained with the group using the instrument of music and retaining the property, and that they henceforth used the name of Christian Church of Athens, Alabama, to the exclusion of all other names. Another part of the affidavit states a matter of common knowledge—that the church once known as the Christian Church of Athens, Alabama, is now known as First Christian Church of Athens, Alabama. It is also a fact that the building built by the Christian Church in 1903 was retained by them until they sold it to the Athens Church of Christ in 1919, which began to be known as the Market Street Church of Christ about 1950. (The new Market Street building would not accept the same innovation which had driven a wedge into the 1903 congregation, because of the following words attached to the deed: "No instrument of music shall be allowed in this building.") This old 1903 building located behind U.G. White Hardware on Market Street had a problem with its title, and the Church of Christ lost the building and then re-bought it. The title was finally cleared in 1921 so that the Athens Church of Christ took possession of it and remained there until the present building farther west on Market Street was built in 1950.

A 1906 Federal Census taken of religious groups indicated that there were 165 members of the Christian Church in Athens and 457 members of the Church of Christ in Athens. After the conflicts and troubles of their division in the Athens Church, it does appear that growth was again taking place. The size of the Athens church stands out, especially after the years of conflict and division, when measured by the size of the church in the county as a whole. The Weatherford obituary penned by Derryberry and published in 1908 by the Gospel Advocate, says that by that year there were "perhaps eight hundred members" in the eight churches in Limestone County.

SWORD SWIPES
Cled Wallace

THE PREACHER AND THE DOG.

I confess a weakness for dogs. I like a dog. I take it as a compliment when one goes out of his way to wag his tail at me in a friendly fashion. I am not temperamentally qualified to be impatient with a man who had rather hear a pack of hounds in full cry than listen to a prima donna sing. But dogs should be taught good manners. They should not be allowed to contest an appointment with a preacher. It sometimes turns out to the embarrassment of the preacher. That preacher in Oklahoma City, for instance, who booted a dog from his pulpit, quickly found out that a lot of people, even some of his own members, thought more of the dog than they did of him. He might never have found that out if he had not kicked the dog. By so doing he disturbed the public worship more than the dog did. It raised a terrible furor. Some of the congregation wanted to kick the preacher, and did try to prosecute him for cruelty to a dumb animal. It is a mistake for preachers to always give vent to their feelings. I have often devoutly wished to spank somebody else's babies in meeting, but I have not done it yet. If I should stop my sermon, stalk back into the congregation, and lift a squalling baby from its dumb mother's lap and give it a good spanking, no telling what would happen. The mother might not like it. And I am not kicking other people's dogs around, either. The preacher got what was coming to him. He ought not to have kicked the dog. He should have been removed more gently and more allowance made for his raising. But the people who got mad at the preacher are to be blamed for one thing. The preacher had been kicking and mutilating the gospel more than he did the dog, and they did not object to that at all. Abuse the gospel any way you want to, but be careful how you kick a dog around. GA-6/15/1933



You Are Special to God

There are many today that have an inappropriate self-image because of insecurity, inadequacy, and even rejection. Many have never known or realized that Christians are special people, designated so by God.

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If you have forgotten or have never known how special you are, then explore and benefit from this study of the subject, "You Are Special to God." If you have friends that you would like to encourage, share this message with them.....

A truly inspirational work by brother Richey. He explores the special relationship that we as Christians have with the Lord and encourages us to appreciate that God loves us enough to make us special and has designated us a peculiar people and honored us as his children...A great read....LEW

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A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT

By A New Testament Christian

Dear liberals, leftists, progressives, modernists, denominationalists, et al:

We have stuck together for lo, these many years for the sake of the youngsters and the unlearned, but the whole of the last 25-50 years has made me realize that I want a divorce. I know we tolerated each other for many years for appearances and for the sake of future generations, but sadly, this relationship has clearly run its course.

Our two theological views cannot and will not ever agree on what is right for us all, so let's just end it on friendly terms. We can smile and chalk it up to irreconcilable differences and go our separate ways.

Others recognized our situation long before we have. Many of our spiritual siblings grew alarmed at your attitude and left us 40 or 50 years ago and no longer visit our family gatherings. Hopefully this bill of divorcement will lead to a reconciliation with them. It is now time for us to recognize that as the prophet of old stated, "*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*" Amos 3:3...I tolerated your changing attitude far too long and I can only pray that it's not too late to salvage some of your followers who have not fully embraced your denominational views.

Please indulge me to list a few grievances that have led me to petition for this divorce:

1. You have abandoned the restoration plea and in so doing, the Holy Scriptures as your sole authority in spiritual matters.
2. You now believe and teach that baptism is no longer a requirement for admission into the church of our Lord as the Holy Scriptures clearly teach. Open membership is the result.
3. You have installed women in places of leadership and authority over men in the church in direct violation of such passages as 1 Cor 14:34-35 –
4. You no longer believe that the use of, or the non-use of mechanical instruments of music, is as you are fond of saying, "a salvation issue." In other words you believe its use is perfectly acceptable in the worship of our Lord..
5. You have created a "country club atmosphere" in your houses of worship with your entertainment events, jazz festivals, rock concerts, dance classes, superbowl parties, celebrations of pagan holidays, etc.
6. You allow your preachers to exchange pulpits with the mortal enemies of the ancient faith and thus allow these heretics to teach their false doctrines to

your members all in the name of an "ecumenical spirit." This constitutes spiritual adultery....

7. Many of your preachers ridicule and heap scorn on the godly men of yesteryear who built the churches where they now preach. They refer to those who stand for the "faith once delivered to the saints" by derisive names such as legalists, new antis, radicals, fanatics, etc.
8. Your desire to be accepted by the world has led you to not only turn from, but to corrupt the only plan for the hope of mankind...The simple New Testament Gospel....

These are only some of our points of difference. In summation, you wish too, and have had alarming success, in turning the One True Church into just another denomination among the many.....

Sincerely,
A Broken-hearted New Testament Christian

P.S. I no longer wish to share that most sacred name of the son of God with you..As part of our agreement, please change the name by which you are known...

Editor's Note: The primary purpose of the Alabama Restoration Journal is and will continue to be, to preserve the history of the restoration plea in Alabama. We made the decision at the beginning that we would not engage in "brotherhood" controversies. However, the view of the editor is that the plea is in danger of being lost in a wave of unbelief and dilution of the idea that we seek to preserve. That is that we must have a thus saith the Lord for that which we practice religiously. The editor made the decision to run this article to ensure that our readers know and understand the dangers we face.

WELL SAID

Thank God that the the large crowds heard Him gladly in spite of the efforts of the Sanhedrin to destroy His influence (Mk. 12:37). Belief in the absoluteness of inspiration and unchangeableness of the word of God, that it means today exactly what it meant when given, is the only ground upon which the Bible can be accepted today. If changes come in the next twenty years as they have in the past twenty, how many **true** churches will exist? *Earl Robertson - 2011*

BOOKS ON CD

Below is a partial listing of some of the great books of The Restoration Movement. Brother Bennie Johns has spent countless hours scanning this material and making it available to the public.

We have ordered several of these works and have no reservation about recommending them to you. This is a way to build a tremendous library without the cost. Many of, if not all of these wonderful works, are out of print... ..LEW

AN OUTSTANDING COLLECTION OF "RESTORATION" WRITINGS ON CD (PDF FORMAT).

Space does not permit a full listing of all materials on the CDs. If you would like further information, contact Bennie Johns at bjohns@hiwaay.net, or phone at 256-796-2680. He will be happy to provide any needed information.

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2. **Classic Christian Reading Material #2** – Contains 32 outstanding books from the Restoration Period. J. W. Shepherd's "Handbook on Baptism" is worth many times the price of the CD. – \$19.95.

3. **21 Old Religious Debates** – Covers a number of subjects of vital interest in the late 1800s and early 1900s. – \$19.95.

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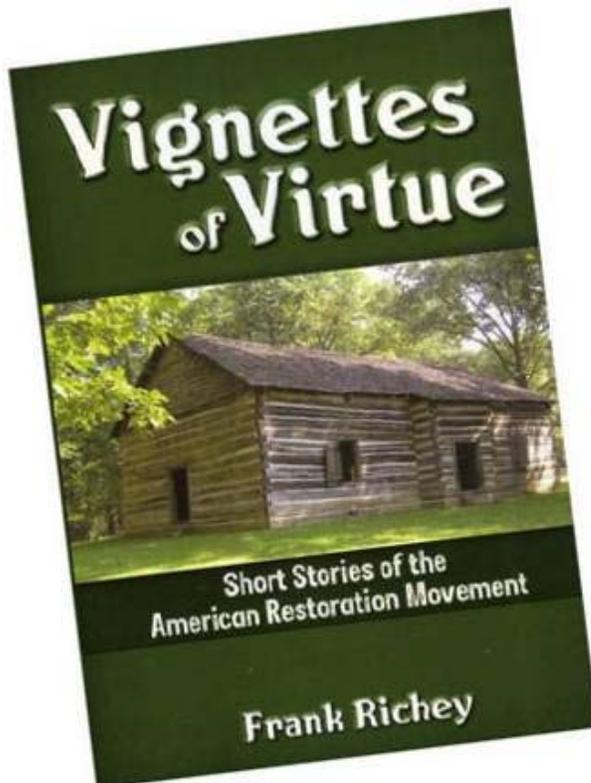
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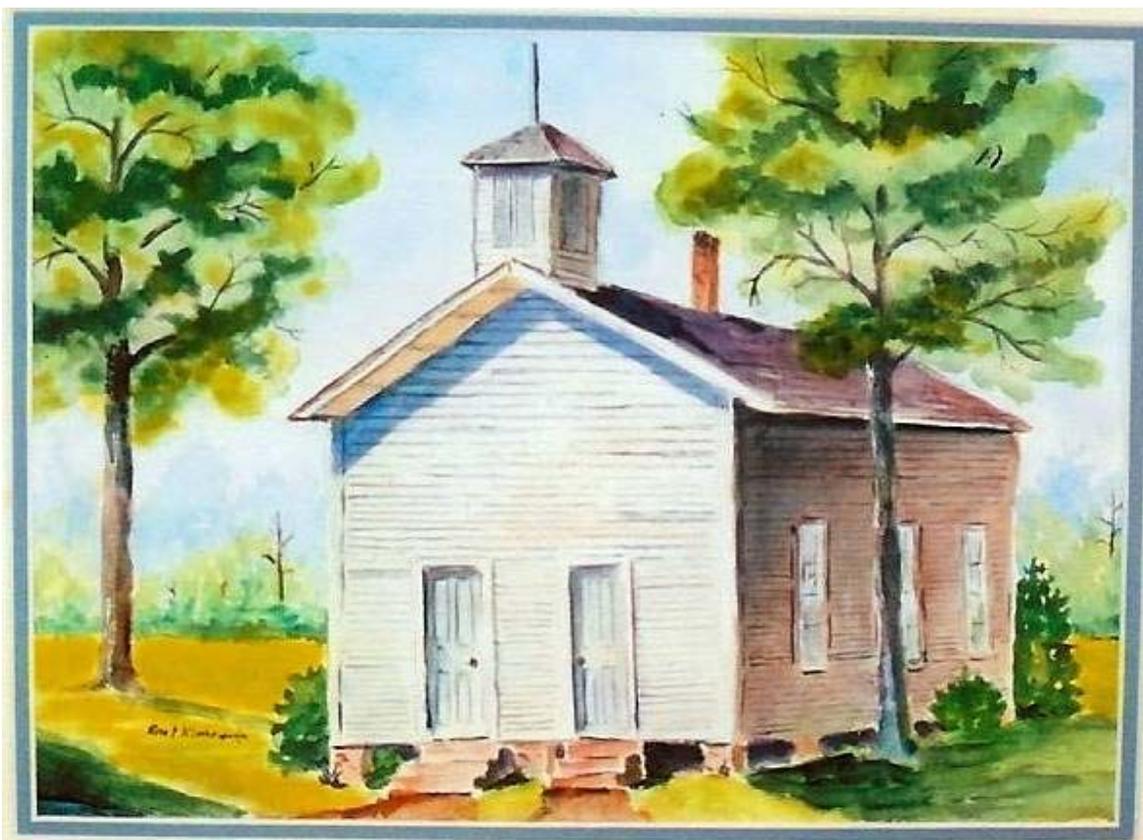
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