

## THE REFORMERS = THE RESTORERS

By Roelf L. Ruffner

My friends, do we truly understand the power of the Gospel to change our world? I came across this quote from a reprint of "The TENNESSEE GAZETTEER" of 1834. In describing the different churches in the city of Nashville in that year I marveled at this quote:

"The *Baptist Church*, also on Spring Street is a neat brick building two stories high, forty five by sixty feet, with a tall steeple, and an excellent bell. The whole cost was \$6000.

The Baptist association was formed in 1820, and in 1825, there was a division, and the Reformers as they are denominated, seceded from the regular Baptists, retained the church, and declined any further connection with the Association, deeming it unwarranted by the word of God. They rejected all confessions of faith, and profess to be guided by the scriptures alone. They receive all persons professing faith in Jesus Christ by Immersion, for the remission of sins, and they meet every Lord's day, in order to engage in worship, by reading the scriptures, exhortation, prayer, praise, breaking of bread and contribution to the poor. The number of members in April, 1834, was 456, of which 280 were colored. The regular Baptists have about 100 members, and hold their meetings in the Masonic Hall."

Unless I am mistaken I believe the folk described here are New Testament Christians wrestled from the kingdom of darkness (the Baptists) to the kingdom of light. I have not been able to verify this but I am almost certain the Bible converted a whole Baptist congregation in Nashville to the Truth (John 8:31-32) in 1825. You may recall that Alexander Campbell came out of the Baptist Church. Did he speak at this Baptist Church?

My friends, it is my fervent prayer that every local Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Catholic Church, Mormon Church, Community Church, Assembly of God, etc. would be transformed by the word of God; cutting their ties with the denominational world and becoming Christians only and the only Christians (John 17:21; Mat.15:9). It happened in 1825 with this Baptist Church in Nashville; it can happen in 2015.

I may say, "That would never happen today!" Maybe, but does my mind set betray a lack of faith in the Truth and play into the hands of the devil? Brethren, we have in our possession the most powerful transformational force the world has ever known – the word of God (Luke 8:11; Heb.4:12). Why don't we use it? We could challenge our religious neighbors to a debate or we may simple ask, "Jose, have you ever read this in your Bible?"

Please notice in the original quote that more than half of the congregation in 1834 Nashville was "colored' or black; probably slaves or freemen. Now "in Christ" (cf. Eph. 1:3,7), both the white and black members of the congregation were "free" – free from the bondage of sin and false religion. "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Cor. 7:22,23). May all the inhabitants of our beloved country soon know such freedom!

"Eastin Morris' TENNESSEE GAZETEER 1834 and Matthew Rhea's MAP OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE 1832," Robert M. McBride & Owen Meredith, Editors (Nashville, TN: The Gazetteer Press, 1971), p. 216.