

Kelly's Station, Christian County, Ky.,
December 26th, 1875.

I have been requested by several of the brethren and sisters in the States of Georgia and North Carolina to write out my experience and call to the ministry and have it published in the LANDMARK.

In the first place I will say, that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing; and, if I have anything good in my soul, God, by his Spirit, has put it there.

I was born in Orange County, N. C., I think, in the year 1800. My father moved to Tennessee in 1087—that State at that time was almost a wilderness; the people were very wild, as it were: very little said about religion. I grew up to manhood in wickedness, committing every abomination but murder and theft. But, at times, I had serious thoughts about my future state; yet, like all men in a state of nature would say, I was as good as any of them. I continued in vice and folly until I married my first wife, (I was then twenty-four years of age) when it pleased God, I hope, to convert her; she attached herself to the Old Baptist Church, when it seemed that there was a line of distinction drawn between her and me. But, I always attended meetings with her, for manner's sake, it was not for the love I had for religion. My brother, according to the flesh, was pastor of the Church where my wife held her membership. (His name was George Hern). I frequently told him he was a disgrace to the whole family. One day, about six months after my wife joined the Church, I went with her to meeting, and after preaching the Church held conference, and a man by the name of George Ely told his experience and was received.—About the time of dismission, these words of scripture were presented to my mind, as powerfully as if they had been spoken to me by some one, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." It came with so much power it seemed to awaken every sensation of my soul. I tried to examine my case to see if I could meet him in peace. I saw that if I was called to meet him in the condition that I was then in my case would be a doubtful one. But, like all other men, I thought it my duty to prepare myself to meet him; so, I tried to get religion, (as some call it) and tried to live a moral life, and prayed at least twice a day for a long time; but, still thought a change had to be wrought in me. So, one Sunday morning, I thought of a place where I intended to go and get religion; (which was a common phrase) so in the evening I started to my appointed place with a full expectation of getting religion, and thought I would return with the glorious news to my wife that I was converted. But, to my sad surprise, before I got half way to my appointed place, the first thing I knew I was standing in amazement; it looked to me that every sin I had committed was presented to my view; I saw very plainly that my outbreakings proceeded from my sinful heart. I went on to the place where I started to; but, I do believe that my soul was

praying to God for mercy. From this time it looked to me that God could not save as vile a sinner as I was and be just, and I fully believed that he was a just God. After I had a view of the sinful nature of my heart my good works were all taken from me; and, when I would secrete myself and try to pray, many times I could not utter one word. It seemed that it was a sin for me to call the name of God with my sin-defiled lips. I was often afraid to close my eyes to sleep for fear I would wake up in a well-deserved hell. It appeared to me that I had no friend in heaven nor on earth.—I got in such a condition that my own dear wife seemed to be no company to me; she always insisted that I should go to meeting with her. A strange preacher came to our neighborhood and preached at night—I went. When he closed his remarks I arose to my feet, but my limbs seemed paralyzed and I sank on my seat and could not move for some time. I then thought I would never go to preaching again. I shall never be able to tell what trouble I experienced for one month after that night.—I fully believed that my day of grace had passed. Shortly after this, my wife's Church meeting commenced, and I thought I would never go to Church meeting again, for the preaching seemed to condemn me; but, to satisfy my wife I went. It was a beautiful day, nevertheless it seemed gloomy to me, and I felt worse, if possible, than a criminal under the gallows; I never expected to be permitted to return home. I went in the Meeting House and tried to get out of sight of as many as possible. I am not able to tell you what was preached: it seemed that the Lord would make an example of me by opening the earth and swallowing me up. I shall never be able to tell my troubles. I saw the justice of God in my condemnation. I prayed, Lord, save, I perish! when I hope the Lord took away my burden of sin and revealed the glorious plan of salvation unto me. When this change took place it looked to me that everything and everybody present underwent a change—I thought they were the most beautiful people that I ever beheld. I never uttered a word but my very soul praised God. I now had faith to know how God could save as vile a sinner as I was, upon a principle of justice, through the mediation of his Son. This took place on the second Sunday in December, 1825, and, on the second Sunday in February, 1826, I was baptized at Rising River Church, Overton Co., Tenn., by my brother—George Hern.

I have related to you my travails from nature to grace, (if not deceived,) in as short a way as I could. I will now try to show you the cause of my trying to preach what I believe to be the gospel.

When God revealed the plan of salvation to me the impression came with it to try to instruct and comfort others in the same state that I had been in, trying to show them the plan of redemption through Christ. When I was baptized, after I came out of the water, the first thing I knew I was talking to the

people; what I said to them I know not; but, some of the Church concluded that the Lord had called me to preach the gospel, and without consulting me, in two months after I became a member, they liberated me to preach. This was more than I asked of them, for I thought it would be an impossibility for as ignorant a man as I was to preach. At times passages of scripture would be presented to my mind and remain there for days, and look dark to me. At other times passages would open beautifully to my view. But, it seemed to me that God would not call such a man as I was when there were others in the Church better qualified. I never did tell the Lord, in my mind, that I would not preach; but oftentimes I have said, Lord, I cannot, send some man that is better qualified than I am. I could see no qualification in myself for that important duty. So, I never attempted to preach while I remained there. It pleased the Lord to leave me to the buffeting of Satan for my disobedience. After this I sold out and left the State with the full determination of never attaching myself to the Church again, or even let the people know that I was an Old Baptist. After I reached my destination I found no Old Baptists near where I stopped. My feelings can't be described, being surrounded by arminians. Probably I felt like Jonah did while in the whale's belly. The Lord sorely chastised me. My arminian friends seeing I was so badly satisfied told me there was an Old Baptist Church about twelve miles off. So, I found out when they held their meetings and concluded to go and hear them and not let it be known that I was an Old Baptist. I went, and when I heard the truth preached I could not hide my feelings any longer; my looks showed that I received the preaching with a feeling of joy; and, seeing that it took hold on me, the whole Church was affected. They asked me if I was an Old Baptist? I told them that I was an unworthy one. But, I did not tell them that I had done as Jonah did, left my native country to keep from preaching what I believed God bade me to preach. So, they desired that my wife and I should attend their next meeting, and then if we were satisfied that they were our people to connect ourselves with them—we did so. Then the impression to preach came with double weight. I had promised the Lord, in my darkness, that if he would restore peace to my troubled soul I would then make the attempt. The Church soon found out that I had an impression, and they did all they could to encourage me to make the attempt. But, I bore the chastising rod of God until it seemed to me that I would become insane. My wife seeing the trouble I was in became uneasy and said to me, Abner, what is the matter with you? I could not tell her. I remained in this condition for several months before I undertook the task. But the Church, to encourage, liberated me on Saturday of Conference, and appointed a meeting that night in order for me to make my first attempt. There were two old preach-

ers present when I preached my first sermon (if it may be called one.) I don't suppose I talked more than twenty minutes. They bid me God's speed, and encouraged me to go on. So, I have been trying to preach the gospel from that time to the present. I have often tried to stop. I am sure I would never have preached if I could have lived content without it. But I believed that if I disobeyed God any longer he would make a public example of me.

I have, in as short space as I could, tried to show you why I have been trying to preach the gospel of my Savior. I will leave my brethren and sisters to judge the dealings of God with me, both in my experience and call to the ministry.

I will add no more at present, only I hope that I am a

Friend to all lovers of truth,

ABNER HERN.

"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."—Matt. 11: 11, 12, 13.

Elder J. E. Williams, of Afton, Ga., and sister Lovett of Berrien Co., Ga., have twice requested my views, through the LANDMARK, on the above; beside another person, some time back, whose name is now forgotten. Instead of giving my views, I might say Elder Williams should teach me. But that is not the question. He asks for my views, and I give them, hesitating only on the ground of fear of occupying too much space in our paper, and may have become worrying to many.

In the first verse here the apostle, by contrasting John the Baptist with the least in the kingdom of heaven, divides him from that kingdom in the sense in which it is here presented. And to understand the phrase—"the kingdom of heaven"—in its varying sense, is necessary to a correct understanding of the above subject. For if the kingdom of heaven should always be one and the same in principle, meaning, application and position, we have John the Baptist separated from it by being contrasted as one out of it, with one in it. But this is not so. The kingdom of heaven, as used in the Testament, varies in all the above. And at that time of the above expression the kingdom of heaven, or what was synonymous in their minds, was claimed by the Jews as a nation; had been preached by John the Baptist and was at hand to be proclaimed and established in spiritual power by Jesus Christ.—But the true, perfect kingdom of heaven, in demonstration of Spirit and of divine power, was the kingdom just then, manifestly, transferred to Jesus to be established and set up forever. And this was the kingdom referred to, the least in which was greater than John the Baptist.

But the phrase—the kingdom of heaven—might be applied to a set form or system of laws and principles of heaven and its king, without the living spirit; and so it was among the Jews. And even John the Baptist made no pretensions to claim the