

What follows is a transcribed copy of a letter that Eli Holland submitted to “The Primitive Baptist” and was printed in Vol 7, No. 10 on the 28 May 1842.

The Primitive Baptist

Tarborough, NC
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The following is a letter to the editors submitted by Eli Holland.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 1842

For THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST.

Rocky Grove, Johnston county, N. C. March 7th, 1842

Dear Brethren and Sisters, scattered aboard throughout the United States of America: I have often been made to rejoice at hearing from you through the columns of the Primitive Baptist, and believing that some of you have shared with me in those favors, for the first time I am about to write a few lines to let you know where I am and have been part of my past days. According to the record of my age, I was born in Wayne county, near Nauhunta Swamp, in the date of 1792, February 25th. My mother’s name before marriage was Patience Watkins, daughter of John Watkins, of Virginia. My mother died in my 15th year of age. My father soon married Patience Peacock, daughter of Uriah Peacock. [Note the name *Patience* Peacock.]

About my 16th year, I believe the Lord found me in a wilderness of sin and unbelief, and taught me by his spirit to see I was a sinner against a holy God; and notwithstanding I was much delighted with the follies of youth, I began to make promises to God. But as often as I made them I broke them, and for about nine years to describe the folly of my youth and iniquity of my riper days is more than I can do. The distresses, troubles, trials, difficulties, and awful warnings, broken vows, violated resolutions and even promises, all seemed to unite together and testify against me. And in the winter of 1816, I became so impaired both in body and mind, that I was unable to follow any hard labor. And my old associates with whom I had taken much pleasure as I thought, were now adding distress to my mind, seeing that sin was leading both them and me down to the chambers of eternal death, and I saw no way for our escape.

And having no peace of mind here, I determined to go to Georgia. And, on the 26th of Jan. 1816, got to John J. Cottles, in[?] Jefferson county, near Louisville. That spring myself and cousin Amos Fokes, rented the plantation of Isham McClendal, deceased, and commenced a crop. And all this time I endeavored to keep the exercise of my mind as much concealed as I could, but would go to meeting as often as convenient. And there were three fraternities of men and women, called churches, within about six miles of where I lived; and I can say, that I did not feel partial toward either of them; for, in some respects, they all preached condemnation to me, though the Methodists would tell me I could get religion when I pleased. But I knew that was not so, for I had been trying at times for about nine years, and instead of getting better, I felt that I was ten fold

worse. The Presbyterians said, if I would get a psalm by heart, and go and be sprinkled, that would do; but I heard the Savior say, you must be born again, or you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. I heard the Baptists say, no man could come to Christ, except the Father which sent Christ drew him. So the hope of peace for me seemed entirely cut off. But all this time I endeavored to keep my feelings concealed as much as possible.

One day I was ploughing, and John McClendal was dropping peas after me; and I became so feeble, that I sometimes would not plough across the field without lying down. At length little John began to cry, and begged me to go to the house, saying it would kill me to lie on the wet ground; and I did not wish to give pain to the tender little John, so I took my horse to the stable and fed him, thinking it might be the last time. It was wash day with the widow, and she and her children were down at the spring; and little John pushed off down there, - to tell her I was sick. Now is the time, thought I, to hide myself; so I went down on the branch side into a wheat patch, and laid myself down close in the lock of the fence, believing my body would be a corpse in a short time. And to describe the pain I bore there for about two hours, is more than I can do. At length I concluded I was doing wrong, for I was in a very secret place, and next morning the family would alarm the neighborhood and perhaps hunt for me several days before they would find me, and I did not want to give pain to any of my fellow creatures. So then it was best to go to the house and die there. So I arose in the agonies of death, as I thought, and felt that the pains of hell had got hold on me. I pushed on to the house, just before sunset, and went into the shed, where myself and cousin Amos Fokes slept, and there laid my body on the bed, and shut my eyes, and felt that my body was burning with the fire of God's wrath. And my prayer was, that God would destroy this body and save the soul. And at that time I do believe that my whole heart's desire and prayer to God was, that his will might be done. For, if he sent me to hell, I knew it was just; if he saved me, it was unmerited favor. And in this state of extremity, it seemed that a serenity of body and mind past over me, and all seemed to be peace and tranquility, both of body and mind; and a view presented to my mind, which I can't describe. And I felt that I never should commit another sin in life, nor doubt my glorious state.

About this time I really thought I loved every human being on earth, and all the creation of God seemed to be good in their several conditions; but more especially professing people, thought I, were all Christians, and I wanted to be among them. But how shall I get there? Answer, there are gospel ordinances for believers to comply with, and one of them is baptism, which seems to be first. And what church shall I go to get this administered? I was not able to read the scriptures but very little, and I was determined to learn to read them, for I wanted to comply with my duty. *(to be continued.)*

ELY HOLLAND

To Editors Primitive Baptist

Rocky Grove, Johnston county, April 16th, 1842

(continued from page 121)

I now began to be distressed on account of baptism, for I believed it to be my duty to comply with it as a gospel ordinance; and I wanted to comply with it according to the word of god. And I found the apostle Paul saying to the Ephesians: One Lord, one faith, one baptism. So the many ways spoken of by men in this age could not be right, so I began to search for the Primitive mode; and my prayer was when I got the Bible in hand, that it might fall open at some passage that would show me the apostolic mode. And the first time, the Book opened where the Saviour came to John and demanded baptism. I read the passage, and was satisfied that immersion was the mode that John administered and God commanded. I heard about this time, that a Methodist preacher had promised to preach the next Sabbath at a meeting house about six miles from where I lived, on the subject of baptism; and I went to hear him, hoping I should get more confirmed on the subject. But to my surprise, when he commenced, he said there were three modes of water baptism: pouring, sprinkling, and immersion; when the apostle had said, one. He further said, that pouring or sprinkling was intended for church members; but immersion for priests and kings, and that Christ was to be priest and king over the Jews, therefore it was needful that he should be immersed, or washed all over. The preacher further added, that all that were baptized by immersion, were seeking kingly authority. So I returned home, more distressed about it than before; thinking surely, that man in the pulpit to-day knows abundance more about the scripture than I do. And further, he and Paul disagrees about it; and what shall poor ignorant me do? Lord, teach me to obey thy precepts, and direct me to some portion of thy word, where I may find the ordinance of baptism plainly set down, if it is my duty to comply with it.

So I opened the Book and found where Philip and the Eunuch both went down into the water, and came up out of the water; and then said I, Philip baptized by immersion. But by reading the passage, I learned the subject was an Ethiopian, and the Presbyterians said, it was not right to have a negro into the church. So a thought suggested to me, perhaps this was a rite set apart for negroes, but not white people. And I became so distressed, that before I would lay down of an evening I would get on my knees desiring the Lord to show me in a dream the right mode of baptism. And after many nights, and often dreaming about seeing much water and people in it swimming, but nothing that relieved my mind on the subject of baptism, I went one evening to see uncle John Watkins, two miles west of Louisville, my distresses still growing worse. That night I lay in a room in one end of the piazza, and I felt that I was out of my duty for want of instruction, and I believed the Lord was the best instructor. So I fell on my knees and implored him for relief, then lay down, dropt to sleep, and when I awoke I was on my feet by the bed side, much alarmed; for I had a dream so plain, that for a minute or two I hardly could believe I was in my uncle's house,

the particulars of which I will tell.

It appeared I was traveling toward Norfolk, and came in sight of Winn's Ferry, on Chowan river, and saw a small company of people go into a boat and start across the river. I wanted to be with them, but as they were strangers, I would not call to them but walked on down to the river and waited the return of the boat. When I got to the river, I saw an old boat, one end on the sand and the other out in the river; there appeared to be a plank lying across the further end of the boat, I thought I would go and sit down on the plank and rest until the return of the other boat. And about the time I turned round to sit down, the boat sank and I saw the water shut over my head. I made an effort to swim and I and the boat all rose together, and I sprung out on the sand and found myself as above written, standing by the bed side. And from that time to this, I have never doubted the mode of baptism by immersion. I then could read, one body, and one spirit; even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, &c. &c.

I knew a people called Baptists embodied in church fellowship at a meeting house I think was called Bethel, about 5 miles S. W. from Louisville, Jefferson county, Georgia. I then went to that church and told them a part of my experience on the 15th of June, 1816, and on the 16th was baptized by Norvel Robertson, their pastor. I then felt that I had discharged a duty that had long weighted my mind, and I thought my troubles and trials were all gone, and I should live the rest of my days in peace with God and all men. But alas, how soon I found the flesh warring against the spirit, and the things I would, them I did not; and the things I would not, them I often done. And had it not been for the writing of Paul, I have often felt that I should despair of my gracious state. But I hope that I am kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last day.

And, brethren, I have never given into modern schemes of filthy lucre, generally called benevolence. And I will tell you some of my reasons why. In the summer of 1816, going from preaching in the company of Elder Norvel Robertson, John J. Cottle, and William Fokes, I heard them talking about one Luther Rice and Doctor Staughton, in the North, having appointed some agents in Georgia to form societies for the purpose of collecting money to send the gospel, they said, amongst the heathen; and that any person might become a member of that society for his money, even the gambler and drunkard, the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or any body else. And they were fearful that it was a stratagem of satan to blend the world and church together in order that he might play his game the easier. I said nothing, -- but thought within myself, that I would watch and see what those societies would do. And in a short time they proselyted a considerable number in Georgia.

But in October, 1816, I started back to North Carolina. And on the 25th of December following, I was married to Edith Hood, daughter of Thomas Hood, of Wake county, N. C. I then settled in Johnston county, and put my letter in Memorial church, in Wayne county; of which church Ruben Hayes was pastor. Little or nothing was said in that church about missions. The year following I

moved into Wake county, and put a letter into Hepihah [?] church, of which John Parify was pastor. I soon began to hear the mission system harped on even in the pulpit, and but few meetings past without begging for money for some purpose or other. And he said, if the church did not give him more, he should leave the church. Some of them said, agreed; I for one. By this time the subject of missions began to be the general topic of conversation among the brethren in that section. At the end of about two years, I moved back to Johnston, and put my letter in Beulah church, where I now belong. At that time Elder William Wall was her pastor, and I believe faithful; for he never suffered one of them peace destroying institutions to come into her at all, neither has one found a seat there yet.

And in the date of 1822 or '23, myself and Elder Wall were sent as messengers to the Raleigh Association in which we belonged. It convened that year at Neal's Creek, Cumberland county, N. C. On Saturday, just before the Association got through her business, there was a call for a minister to the stage. Question was asked, who does the congregation want? Some person answered outside the house and said Ezekiel Trice was requested to go, whereupon Elder Robert T. Daniel rose and objected, saying he had some business to lay before the Association, when she got through hers, and wanted Elder Trice to be present. The Association told Trice to go to the stage; they would get through their business and go and hear him, then return to the house and hear R. T. Daniel's business. Accordingly we done so, and Daniel was called on to present his business; whereupon he laid two letters upon the table, and said, he wanted the Association to hear them read. Question, shall they be read? Answer read. Whereupon Elder Daniel asked leave to read, saying, the letters were in his own hand write. The Association granted leave. After he had read them, he laid them on the table and took his seat. The purpose of the letters was, that the mission system doing great things away over yonder where, we were not acquainted, and that many poor widows and orphans, that hardly had wherewith to support, had cast into the bag beautifully. And I thought if the letters were true, these poor people needed help, rather than cast into such men as Robert T. Daniel, who was then allowed forty dollars per month to beg money to divide between himself and others engaged in the same craft, at from one to two dollars per day; and these high salaries paid out of the money thus filched from the hand of the poor laborers at perhaps not more than four or five dollars per month.

But to pass on. Elder Wall moved the Association to adjourn, whereupon Elder Daniel said, he had one request to make to the Association; that was, he wished her to dissolve and form a board auxiliary to the board of foreign missions; and instead of meeting as an Association yearly, meet as a board; and that each member of that Association could become members of the board for three dollars sent up the next year by their messengers, or one dollar annually; which if agreed to, would have enthralled every member of that Association in the mission system; when R. T. Daniel and Ezekiel Trice well knew that some of them had taken a decided stand against those money gathering institutions. And until then I had been quite silent upon the subject of missions, but now I began to think it was time for every lover of peace and union among the Baptist churches, to take the advice of the blessed Jesus; Watch, and be sober. And

inasmuch as I could find neither precept nor example set by Christ nor his apostles, for the conduct of those hirelings, I was led to believe, and yet do believe, they are of the bond woman, and lead to bondage. And Paul says: After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in amongst you – that is, the church – not sparing the flock. Suppose the Association at that time had adopted the plan laid by Daniel and others, and the messengers, when they returned to their several churches could have prevailed on their brethren to send up their three dollars per head, it would have amounted to upwards of three thousand dollars; enough to hire several others that are too lazy to work with their hands for their support, to engage in the same craft. And so continually be fleecing the poor laboring class, to clothe and feed the lazy proud hirelings.

Dear brethren, those things above hinted at, are a wide departure from the Primitive faith and practice. My wish is, that every person should have the liberty of conscience, and worship God according to the dictates of the same; and give their money to whom they please. But they should be careful to keep themselves from idols, especially those that profess to believe that Christ died for their sins and rose for their justification, should not leave the word of God and go aside following the traditions of men, in bidding God speed to those institutions that are unwarrantable by the word of God, to the wounding of the cause of Christ and a grief to the faithful members of this body.

Dear brethren, I have been trying to read the good old Book called the Bible at times for near thirty years; and for my use, I would not give it for all others that I have yet seen. For when I look in that, I count it all truth; but other books are like their authors fallible. Nevertheless, the word of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Brethren and sisters, search it freely; for it contains a sufficient rule for our faith and practice in this world.

So I must conclude, as this is the first piece I ever wrote for publication; and for all I know, may be the last. But if I never do write another, I want the precious brethren to continue their communications, for I want to hear from them often, as it is all the satisfaction I can have with them. I should be glad to hear from them precious sisters again, Harriet Peacock, Whatley, Higgins, and others. And now, may the great head of the church be with and preside over us all, and enable us to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, is my prayer for his name's sake.

ELY HOLLAND

1860 US Census shows: Eli Holland, listed as Primitive Baptist preacher, age 68, living in Colquitt County, GA, with his wife, Edith, age 63, and children: Mariah and Joseph. Note- Listed below Eli and his family is Martha, Eli and Edith's daughter, with her husband, Ezekiel Crawford.

Page No. 5
SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in _____ **in the County of Colquitt State**
of Georgia enumerated by me, on the 19 day of June 1860. Peter O'Wing Ass't Marshal
 Post Office Woolwin

| 1 | 2 | 3 | DESCRIPTION. | | | VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED. | | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|----|----|-------------------|--------------|---|---------------|------------------------|------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | | | | |
| 32 | 28 | Eli Holland | 68 | M | Prim Baptist | 3500 | 2055 | GA | | | | |
| | | Edith Hollans | 63 | F | | | | GA | | | | |
| | | Mariah H | 13 | F | | | | GA | | | | |
| | | Joseph P | 9 | M | | | | GA | | | | |
| 33 | 29 | Ezekiel Crawford | 48 | M | Farm Labourer | | 1775 | GA | | | | |
| | | Martha D Crawford | 28 | F | | | | GA | | | | |

Edith, wife of Eli Holland, died 5 years after this census was taken.

1870 US Census shows: Eli Holland, age 78, occupation listed as Primitive Baptist preacher, is now living with his daughter, Lucinda and her husband, Adam Adams, and their family in Mitchell County, GA.

Page No. 39 } Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20 are to be answered (if not all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.
SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in 10th District **in the County of Mitchell State**
of Georgia, enumerated by me on the 25 day of June, 1870.
 Post Office: Camilla Georgia Charles W. Burt, Ass't Marshal.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | DESCRIPTION. | | | VALUE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED. | | 10 | PARENTAGE. | | | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----|---------|------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | 9 | 11 | 12 | | | |
| | | Adam Adams | 36 | M | Farming | 700 | 900 | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | Lucinda | 35 | F | Helping Adam | | | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | Jas. Adams | 18 | M | Farm Labourer | | | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | Thomas | 9 | M | | | | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | Charles | 2 | M | | | | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | None | 3/2 | M | | | | Georgia | | | | | | |
| | | Hollands Eli | 78 | M | Primitive B.P. P. | | | Georgia | | | | | | |

Eli Holland died 27 Oct 1870