

## **R.W. Officer**

R.W. OFFICER (1845-1930) was arraigned before the Baptist Association which met with Poplar Creek Church, Limestone County, Ala., on the charge of heresy. Dr. J. R. Graves examined him as to his "soundness of faith."

Dr. Graves: "Do you believe in the doctrine of total depravity?"

Officer: "Paul said: 'Hold fast the form of sound words.' (2 Tim. 1: 13.) Peter said; 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.' (1 Pet. 4:11.) Is there any such form of sound words in the oracles of God as total depravity?"

Graves: "Total depravity is a doctrine which Baptists believe the Bible teaches; and if you don't believe the doctrine, you are unsound. What do you believe about it?"

Officer: "Am I to be examined by the Bible or by what the Baptists believe?"

Graves: "By the Bible."

Officer: "Then, what does the Bible say about total depravity?"

Officer: "I am willing for you to examine me; but how will you examine me by the Bible unless you take what the Bible says?"

Graves: " Do you believe in total depravity?"

Officer: "Do you believe you have a case of total depravity? I do not believe I have a case of it, and unless you avow it for yourself, I am unwilling to apply the doctrine to you or any of the rest of my brethren, if the Bible does not plainly teach it."

Graves: "I have been informed that you make baptism a condition of pardon; in other words, you teach water salvation. When is the sinner pardoned?"

Officer: "Paul says the sinner is freed from sin when he obeys from the heart the form of doctrine delivered him. (Rom. 6:17,18.) 'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' I take it that we rise from the waters of baptism to 'walk in newness of life.' (Rom. 6:1-5.)"

Graves: "But what does that mean?"

Officer: "It means what it says."

Graves: "What do you believe are the conditions of pardon or remission of sins?"

Officer: "I believe just what the Bible says on that subject."

Graves: "But what is your interpretation of the Bible on that subject?"

Officer: "Suppose I have no interpretation of the Bible on any subject."

Graves: "But you have; all denominations have their interpretations of the Bible. We, as Baptists, teach that repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ secure pardon. What do you think about it?"

Officer: "The Bible says: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' (John 3:5.) 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' (Mark 16:16.) To believers, Peter said: 'Repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins' (Acts 2: 38.)." (Edited) ret