

The Alabama Restoration Journal

An Historical Perspective of
Churches of Christ In Alabama

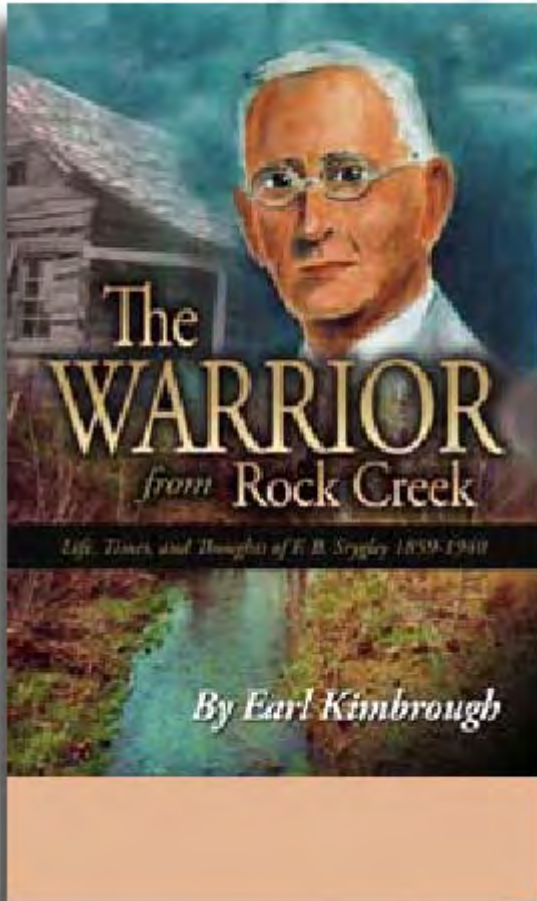


**The Murder of James Madison Pickens
Mountain Home, Alabama
February 03, 1881**

VOLUME 4

ISSUE 3

July 01, 2010



The Warrior from Rock Creek

Earl Kimbrough

The Warrior from Rock Creek is a long awaited volume. Earl Kimbrough labored in this material from every available source for more than fifty years to produce this history of the life, times, and thoughts of **F. B. Srygley**, 1859–1940. It covers many events and actions among the churches for about a century. Srygley was unique and beloved; a worthy subject for Kimbrough's historiographical labor. The author's critical examination of all materials, and the synthesis of the particulars placed into this volume, make it a veritable history of the church for the time covered. It will be desired by all who have an interest in the history of the churches of Christ.

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Hugh Fulford

"I have thoroughly enjoyed reading Earl's biography of **F.B. Srygley**, because of my own familiarity with the territory and people of that section. As I have bounded the hills and traversed the valleys in the life of '**The Warrior From Rock Creek**,' I have been energized anew to preach the New Testament gospel without fear or favor.".....**Bobby Graham**

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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 this cover different than previous issues. He has sketched an image of the murder of J.M. Pickens and the attempted killing of his companion. The back cover is a likeness of the Mountain Home School. A nice change of pace, so to speak. We appreciate Earl's artwork on each issue. He is truly a multi talented man...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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Volume No. 4

Issue No. 3

Date July 01, 2010

THE COMPASSIONATE WARRIOR

Larry Whitehead

Since the beginning of the *Alabama Restoration Journal*, we have chronicled the efforts of some great gospel preachers through its pages. Such greats as James E. Matthews, B.F. Hall, John Taylor, T.B. Larimore and the Randolphs to name a few. To that list, we must include James Madison Pickens. *Earl Kimbrough* believes and this writer concurs, that Pickens did his greatest work just after the Civil War in reorganizing and rebuilding the churches that were so devastated by the war and the following nine years reconstruction. In fact it can be argued that he did more in North Alabama than any other in this effort, especially in Northwest Alabama where the churches were almost totally destroyed by the war and deprivation of the members. Pickens, through his preaching and writing, led the way and in so doing, encouraged others to follow his lead and consequently the churches regained their footing and once again began to grow. He visited communities all over North Alabama and Northeast Mississippi and into West Tennessee,, encouraging the downtrodden members and helping them to cope with the poverty and terrible conditions they faced. Many of the churches that are strong for the cause even today, can credit J.M. Pickens efforts for their early success.

This however, was not the only battle this noble warrior was engaged in. In the period immediately after the war a major effort was made by those so inclined to organize the churches under the umbrella of the American Christian Missionary Society. Pickens, realizing the desperate need in this impoverished section of the country for laborers in the field, was sympathetic for a time to some questionable cooperative efforts. Several cooperation meetings were held and at one point he was selected as the evangelist for North Alabama. However, within a short time, evidently through diligent study, he came to oppose such efforts. Like the venerable Ben Franklin in the Northern states, he turned and then led the fight against this innovation. At a meeting in Columbus, Mississippi in 1870, called for the purpose of voting in the Louisville plan, he spoke so eloquently against such that the meeting closed without a decision being reached. This is amazing in view of the fact that some were present who helped to draft the plan. The consequence of his efforts and those of such men as the

Randolphs and Justus Barnes, was that the society never dominated in Alabama. In fact, the States of Alabama and Tennessee were the only states that came through this period with the overwhelming majority of the churches rejecting the organization. Both *Earl* and *Frank* cover this period in depth in their articles which follow.

Pickens' compassion for the poor and impoverished, led him to accept the nomination of the Greenback party for the office of Governor in the 1880 election. He was defeated, but became well known throughout the state. Again, both *Frank* and *Earl* deal with this aspect of his life in greater detail in the articles that follow.

While searching for information on Pickens for this issue, I found another paper, *The Alabama Free Press*, that he published during the 1870s at Somerville, Alabama in Morgan County. This paper was likely a political paper, designed to promote his political agenda, in view of the fact that he was a gubernatorial candidate in 1880. It certainly proved that he had printers ink flowing through his veins as he was publishing the *Southern Christian Weekly* from Moulton, Alabama at the same time. When his untimely death occurred in 1881, it was thought that he was starting another secular newspaper to compete with the *Moulton Advertiser*, one of north Alabama's major newspapers.

Like so many preachers of his day and possibly because of his untimely death at a relatively young age, Pickens did not leave a trail of letters and reports of his work. For this, we have had to depend largely on material about the man from his contemporaries. Both *Frank* and *Earl* have done a marvelous job of assembling the material for this issue. This is likely the most material ever presented in one journal on the man. Brother Asa Plyler interviewed one of his students in the 1940s for which we are grateful. This interview shed a different light on the circumstances of his death than had been known before. Dr. Richard James published a letter that he received from James M. Pickens, Jr. in the 1930s which dealt with his father's death. Information is so sketchy that we have tried unsuccessfully for two years to find a photo of Pickens.

Only eternity will reveal the true greatness of the man whom I choose to call "The *Compassionate Warrior*."

News And Notes

Friends of The Restoration Lectures

We attended the Friends of the Restoration lectures held in conjunction with the annual lectureship at Faulkner University. Our staff was well represented. Frank, Bennie, Hilda, Earl, Kenneth, Wayne and Scott were there, as were Katrina, Earl's daughter and Janice Randolph, Ken's wife. All had lunch together prior to the lectureship.

Scott opened the program with a slide presentation and discussion of the restoration sites in Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois, among others. A most enlightening presentation. Terry Gardener gave an excellent lecture on the life and times of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. The dinner speaker was John Hardin, a native of Moulton. His remarks were on B.C. Goodpasture and his influence. John's Doctoral dissertation on Goodpasture was on line recently and we believe it was the most objective work on Goodpasture that we have read.

A good crowd was present and many said it was the largest ever. We certainly look forward to this lectureship each year.

John Taylor Biography

Earl tells us that his biography of this beloved soldier of the cross is almost ready for the printer. We have read the manuscript and believe it will take its place with the popular works of the past. Earl continues to amaze us with the amount of work he turns out. He is the most prolific writer among us today.....

Frank Richey

Frank Richey also has a new book that is almost finished. This book is titled **Vignettes Of Virtue**. This is a compilation of articles Frank has written about some of his favorite personalities and happenings in the restoration movement. Frank does a great job. His articles are always well researched and equally well written...We expect no less in this work and look forward to its release....

C. Wayne Kilpatrick

We hear that another of our colleagues, Wayne Kilpatrick has almost finished a biography of another grand old preacher, J.R. Bradley. Brother Bradley worked in Middle Tennessee and North Alabama. We look forward to its publication later this year.....

In This Issue

A few years ago, there appeared in a prestigious southern historical journal, an article on the death of James M. Pickens. The writer suggested that Pickens was a victim of a political assassination and that this assassination may have been engineered by one of Alabama's greatest heroes.

Frank Richey decided to explore these allegations and over the next several months, spent many hours researching Pickens life, work and subsequent death. He searched old newspaper records, religious journals and various archives.

Frank was not aware that *Earl Kimbrough* had covered some of the same ground several years ago. *Earl* had planned to write a biography of Pickens, a man whom *Earl* believes contributed more to reorganizing the churches after the devastation of the Civil War, than any other. After long research, *Earl* determined that there was simply not enough material available about Pickens to justify a book. He, instead wrote a series of articles for *Faith and Facts*, a journal published in Indiana.

When we started The Alabama Restoration Journal, The family of brother Asa M. Plyler, provided the staff a copy of an unpublished manuscript by brother Plyler. This manuscript was written in the 1940s and included historical material that has been and continues to be valuable to our efforts. Included in this material, was an interview that Plyler had conducted with a lady who had been a student of Pickens at his Mountain Home school. She shed new light on Pickens death. This interview gave a different perspective and added much to what was known before.

With this in mind and our desire to give "honor to whom honor is due," we decided to devote an entire issue to this noble warrior. Pickens was with us only a few years, but his impact on the cause in this state was tremendous and at a time when it was most needed. We have combined *Earl's* articles into one. We also edited some material from the articles that is duplicated in both. Even so, there is still some overlap in the two articles.

Larry opens with an article he calls **The Compassionate Warrior**. *Earl* follows with his article called simply, **James Madison Pickens**. *Frank* has named his article **The Murder Of James Madison Pickens**. We also carry an article from Pickens' **Southern Christian Monthly**. *Isaac* takes his usual shots at the brethren. The **Gathering Home** column follows and brother *Hugh Fulford* has the **Final Say**. We hope you enjoy this issue.....

JAMES MADISON PICKENS Earl Kimbrough

The years following the Civil War were extremely harsh for the people of the Southland, and Northwest Alabama was no exception. Many of its best men were killed or maimed in battle. Widows and orphans of war filled the devastated land. Society was greatly demoralized and in a state of turmoil. Poverty abounded on every hand. F.D. Srygley, a witness of the chaos, wrote of the land along the Tennessee River: "The valley plantations were all in ruins, and their once prosperous owners in abject want. Mules all destroyed in the war, barns burned, palatial residences fallen into decay, fences laid waste, and negroes all freed, this once glorious country was now one vast neglected, abandoned and ruined cemetery of buried magnificence." (*F.D. Srygley, Smiles and Tears, 45.*)

Those who witnessed the devastation of North Alabama that was left by four years of seesawing armies and renegade bands agree that it was not possible to adequately describe it to anyone who did not behold it for themselves; but they tried. Thomas D. Butler, a Northern disciple of Christ who traveled through the area by rail one year after Appomattox, was deeply impressed by the war's effect on the Tennessee Valley. His journey carried him from Louisville, Kentucky, to Memphis, Tennessee, by way of Decatur, Alabama.

From Memphis Butler wrote: "Decatur, Alabama, on the Tennessee River, is only a fragment of its former proportions. Before time's plough-share' left here scarcely one stone upon another, there were 2,000 souls: now only a few remain to tell the story of its collapse. From Decatur we traveled 100 miles through the Northern part of Alabama. There might be more desirable and inviting lands through the South, but I have rarely seen a richer and more beautiful tract of country than that extending from the Tennessee River to Corinth, Miss. The population of the region seems like 'a few souls' saved from a tornado, which, far and wide ... swept with the scourge of death ... The ruins of happy homesteads are piled in solitary heaps, and the trail of war is broad, deep, and black. The hammer, axe, and saw are dexterously applied to the work of reconstruction within the former lines ... and the lands are being rapidly enclosed with millions and millions of rails." (*Christian Standard, May 5, 1866.*)

In addition to the mental and physical suffering brought on by the ravages of war, an oppressive political and military rule was imposed on the Southern

States. The Radical Republicans who held power in Washington were determined to treat the former Confederacy as a conquered land. "Most of the consequences of the war can be summed up in the one word, Reconstruction. As costly as four years of war proved to be for Alabama, nine years of Reconstruction cost the state even more in both property and anguish." (*Charles Grayson Summersell, Alabama History, p.335.*)

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN NORTH ALABAMA

The churches of Christ in Alabama were naturally as war-torn as the other people of the Southland. The church at Russellville, already weakened in numbers before the war, was barely able to survive the upheavals of the conflict itself. John Taylor, the venerable old pioneer preacher of Northwest Alabama, had helped revive the congregation to active fellowship before the war, and he and Thomas B. Trotter filled appointments there during 1861. However, as the war wore wearily on the church there fell into disarray and the spring of 1865 found it in spiritual shambles.

Writing from Aberdeen, Mississippi, one year after the war, James Madison Pickens, the subject of this biography, described the condition of some of the churches in Northwest Alabama. In a letter to David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning, editors of the *Gospel Advocate*, he said: "According to your request published in the *Gospel Advocate*, I give you a report of my labors south of the Tennessee. Seeing that laborers were few in this section and that the cause of our Master was sadly neglected, and likely to still be, I left the pleasant associations of our brethren in Tennessee in the month of February. The first place I visited was Tuscumbia, Ala., where I preached for eight days, during which time we succeeded in organizing a small congregation from scattered remains of a once large one, that assembled in that place, to which we also had some additions. This congregation contains some good material, and displays commendable zeal ... "

"Subsequently in company with our esteemed Bro. Trimble [R.B. Trimble of Spring Hill, Tennessee], I visited Russelville [sic], but it is sad to tell the havoc which time and neglect have made of that once large and flourishing church, the members scattered, the house tom to pieces and almost destroyed, and the candlestick removed out of its place, were some of the

features it presented. But still there were a few of the faithful left. We labored there a week, and after we had set in order the things that were wanting, the best we could, and added several unto them, we left them under a promise that they would keep up the regular meetings, which I learn they have continued to do ever since. The brethren will please remember that the house is yet to be repaired. After visiting Tuscumbia and preaching for them again, I went to Corinth, Miss., but found that the house built by our brethren was completely demolished, and still worse, the house was a perfect type of the congregation. Not a single member could be found.... It is barely remembered that there was once a congregation there." (*Gospel Advocate*, May 8, 1866.)

PICKENS' REMOVAL TO ALABAMA

Pickens, a native of Maury County, Tennessee, and a veteran of the Confederate Army, moved to Northwest Alabama soon after the war, intent on helping rebuild New Testament Christianity in that troubled region. He was about thirty years of age at the time, but he was already an experienced preacher of exceptional ability. He settled in Lawrence County, at a site near the center of his chosen field of labor, and remained there, except for a brief time in Mississippi, until his tragic death in 1881. Several good men labored zealously and sacrificially to reestablish the decimated congregations in various parts of Alabama during those critical fifteen years. Some of these, particularly John Taylor and T.B. Larimore, were contemporary with Pickens in the northwestern part of the state; but Pickens, though barely remembered today, was probably the most important single force in gathering together the remnants of the churches of Christ in that region and in restoring them to divine service and sustaining them through the difficult years of Reconstruction. Perhaps few men, if any, were better suited, by temperament, experience, and training, to fill his place or match his accomplishments in that place and time.

Dr. Lewis C. Chisholm, a native of Tuscumbia, Alabama, and a "long and intimate acquaintance" of Tolbert Fanning, writing in the summer of 1866, said: "During the last winter our young brother, J.M. Pickens, rather accidentally visited Tuscumbia, where he very soon assembled a little flock that seemed both willing and anxious to keep the ordinances of the Lord, but at that time it seemed next to impossibility to get a hearing, but the scale has now turned We are

steadily gaining ground and adding to our number, but the labors of Bro. Pickens have not been confined to Tuscumbia alone, (he preaches at other places as well). We had the pleasure of visiting Moulton, Ala., in company with him last week, and a more interesting meeting we never witnessed. The interest seemed to increase to the very close. The people seemed to be spellbound and taken captive by the majesty and force of the truth. The church that formerly met at that place, was most effectually aroused from its lethargy, the erring reclaimed and sinners came flocking to the fold. We were particularly struck with seeing an old gray-headed veteran from the Baptists come forward, give his hand and hear him say he had earnestly sought the truth for twenty-five years, and it had dawned upon him at last. Bro. P. labored faithfully with us, and promises to continue his labors in North Alabama, Mississippi and West Tennessee. Will the brethren in these sections sustain him, and ... all who labor with and for us in the Lord." (*Ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1866.)

J.H. McDonald of Moulton, Alabama, also wrote about the condition of the church at that place in 1866: "We have been taught, year upon year, by those who understood the truth, yet such have been the troubles of the four or five years past, that our courage was not equal to our obligation, but we are aroused, and have renewed our vows ... One of you [Tolbert Fanning] who has labored for us will rejoice with us that there was within us such a will as would induce recovery from our waywardness. Our beloved brother, J. M. Pickens, from your state, spent some four or five days with us ... in July, and his labors were successful in putting us to work in duties which belong to the house of the Lord, and in adding by baptism ten." (*Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1866.)

IN LABORS ABUNDANT

The fall of 1866 found Pickens preaching at several points in Mississippi in company with E.G. Sewell who was later associated with David Lipscomb in editing the *Gospel Advocate* for more than fifty years. In reporting the journey, Pickens, said: "And after our labors were over, we returned to Columbus, where I was married by Bro. Sewell, to Miss Mary C. Williams, a sister in Christ. Since, I have returned to North Alabama, and during a meeting of four days, at Frankfort, added twenty-one; quite a number of them from the Baptists and Methodists." (*Ibid.*, Oct 30, 1866.) Frankfort, then the county seat of Franklin County, was a thriving community with a flourishing congregation of Christians before the war, but like so many other

places, the church there had ceased to function while the land was ravaged by carnal strife.

Earlier in 1866, Pickens had succeeded in organizing a revived church with forty-two members at Frankfort. In the latter part of 1867, he called for a meeting of the disciples in Alabama and Mississippi "for the purpose of consulting with reference to the conditions and needs of the church in Alabama and Mississippi, and of inaugurating co-operative work in the two states." The meeting was held at Columbus, Mississippi. B.F. Manire gave a secondhand account of it, saying: "Not being able to attend the meeting, I know not what churches, nor how many, were represented. I learned that the brethren in attendance had a very pleasant and harmonious meeting, discussing the state of affairs, and listening to good sermons that were delivered by the preachers who were present. The only practical result of that meeting, so far as I know, was that Bro. Pickens was selected to evangelize in Alabama and Bro. Manire in Mississippi ... It was *resolved* that our salary for the year's labor should be *fifteen hundred* dollars each, that is, *provided that we raise it ourselves* Bro. Pickens entered on the work in his state, but for want of adequate support was soon compelled to enter the schoolroom as a teacher, and that ended the Alabama part of the cooperation." (B.F. Manire, *Reminiscences of Preachers and Churches in Mississippi*, 39,40.)

Even though Pickens was a comparatively young man, Manire described him as "a man of superior ability both natural and acquired." He was well qualified to do the work of an evangelist and his labors were attended by more than ordinary success; but he was also efficient in the classroom into which circumstances thrust him. He began operating a school at Mountain Home, the place where he settled in Lawrence County, in 1868 as a means of supplementing his income so he could continue to preach as opportunity afforded.

Selina Campbell, the widow of the Sage of Bethany, spent some time with a niece at Wheeler Station, Alabama, in 1868. This was not far from Mountain Home. Mrs. Campbell became acquainted with Pickens during this visit and presented him with an inscribed copy of *Living Oracles*, a translation of the New Testament compiled and published by her husband more than forty years before. The volume, Campbell's personal copy, is preserved in the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee. Mrs. Campbell wrote a letter to the *Christian Standard* that same year in which she spoke of Pickens' work in Alabama. The journal said: "Mrs. Campbell writing from

Ingleside Plantation, near Courtland, Ala., tells of the needs of northern Alabama and how James M. Pickens, working at his own expense, has organized 8 churches and baptized over 200. She summons the brethren to support him and tells her sympathy for the Freedmen." (*Christian Standard*, April 27, 1870.)

MOUNTAIN HOME SCHOOL

Justus M. Barnes was probably the first disciple of Christ to establish a school with a Christian environment in Alabama. This was at Strata in Montgomery County in 1856. The first effort to establish such a school in North Alabama was the one begun by James M. Pickens at Mountain Home in 1868. Writing of this school many years later, James M. Pickens, Jr. said: "My father bought a place and started a school at Mountain Home a year or two before 1870. There was a large residence and another large building, with a few hundred acres of land.... It lacked sufficient support and he abandoned it after a few years." (J.M. Pickens, Jr., *Letter to Richard L. James*, Nov. 14, 1926, Disciples of Christ Historical Society.) The school continued until 1875, when it was destroyed by fire.

Mountain Home School was located "on the mountain south of the Tennessee Valley, near the Memphis and Charleston Railroad ... and immediately on the road from Courtland to Moulton." This location, J. M. Pickens wrote in 1870, "combined every advantage which Nature can give to render it eligible for a School; pure, fresh air, free from miasma, dust and all local causes of disease, and abundance of excellent spring water, pure freestone and chalybeate, furnished by a number of beautiful, gushing springs; is quiet, retired, free from all temptations of extravagance and vice and has long been a favorite resort for persons seeking health." (*Christian Monthly*, Aug. 1870.)

The school consisted of Primary, Preparatory, and Academic departments. The Course of Study embraced "every branch of education usually taught in schools of high grade and necessary to prepare the student for any business or position in life." It was primarily an academic business; it was not a "Bible school" in the general use of the term. The curriculum apparently did not include a Bible course as such. But the school clearly provided a Christian atmosphere. In addition to serving as principal, Pickens taught Rhetoric, Mental and Moral Philosophy, Latin, and Greek. However, strict discipline was maintained "at all times, and every endeavor used to induce studious and industrious habits, moral conduct and genteel

deportment." And each boarding student was expected "to attend worship and Sunday School regularly."

It was through the influence of R.B. Trimble, one of the pioneer preachers of Tennessee, that T.B. Larimore went to Mountain Home to teach in Pickens' school early in 1868, after completing a course of study



Mountain Home School

under Tolbert Fanning at Franklin College. H. Leo Boles said: "It was Brother Trimble who encouraged and started Brethren T. B. Larimore, J.D. Floyd, and E.L. Cambron to preaching the gospel." (H. Leo Boles, *Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers*, 201.) Larimore had traveled with Trimble through Maury, Hickman, and adjoining counties in Middle Tennessee in "the protracted meeting period" in the summer of 1867.

In the summer of 1868, between sessions at Mountain Home School, Larimore made his first preaching tour through the mountains of Northwest Alabama, in company with the venerable John Taylor. He returned to Mountain Home in the fall and remained until the beginning of 1869, but had to leave because of an insufficient number of students enrolled. In January 1871, he opened Mars' Hill Academy (later known as Mars' Hill College) near Florence, Alabama, which he operated seventeen years, until 1887. One historian says it was through his experience at Mountain Home that Larimore conceived the idea of a school in which the Bible would be the primary text book. So it seems that the influence of Pickens was at least in part the impetus for the great work that Larimore did at Mars' Hill, which helped produce several highly successful gospel preachers, including F.D. and F.B. Srygley, John T. Underwood, J.C. McQuiddy, J.H. Halbrook, Brown Godwin, and Lee Jackson.

PICKENS' RELIGIOUS JOURNALS

In 1870, Pickens began editing and publishing *The Christian Monthly*, a journal "Devoted to Christianity and Education." After it had been in circulation a few months, David Lipscomb wrote: "We have not seen a sounder or more pointed paper on the subjects it discusses than the Monthly." (*Gospel Advocate*, June 2, 1870.) At the same time, Jacob Creath, Jr. also endorsed the journal, saying: "Let me recommend to our people to sustain the Christian Monthly, a young, able and promising periodical, edited by our zealous Brother, J. M. Pickens of Mountain Home, Ala Its tone is independent, like that of the Advocate." (Ibid.) The *Christian Monthly* was also acclaimed by R. B. Trimble, who said: "The *Monthly* has reached its 4th number, and so far is sound to the core, containing much valuable reading matter." (Ibid.)

In the first issue of the paper's second volume Pickens wrote: "Having obtained a good circulation through Alabama, Mississippi, Middle and West Tennessee, and other sections of the South, particularly along the Railroads, The Monthly has become an important means of advertising in this section. True such was not the design of establishing The Monthly; but as it necessarily attends the success of the paper, we see no reason this branch of usefulness may not be employed with beneficial results to the publisher, the subscriber and the advertiser." (*Christian Monthly*, Jan. 1871.) Religious journals of that day, including the *Gospel Advocate*, commonly carried secular advertisements as a means of sustaining their circulation.

Pickens changed the name of the paper to *The Southern Christian Weekly* in 1872 and continued it as a weekly until 1875. In that year, due to financial difficulty, Pickens sold the paper to William E. Hall who published it from New Orleans as *The Iron Preacher*. During the five years that Pickens published the paper, it exerted a wide influence for New Testament Christianity in the Mid-South. The galaxy of able preachers who contributed to its pages included B.F. Manire, J.J. Barclay, J.C. Oliver, Thomas W. Caskey, William E. Hall, Laurence W. Scott, Pinckney B. Lawson, Justus M. Barnes, W.A. Crum, Jacob Creath, Jr., and W.H.D. Carlington.

"The Cause in North Alabama" was the subject of an editorial by Pickens in 1871. In it he discussed the condition of the churches of Christ in the Mid-South five years after the Civil War. The article was in response to a criticism of the Lord's work in North Alabama and parts of Tennessee by T.W. Council, published in Benjamin Franklin's *American Christian Review*.

Council, claiming firsthand knowledge of the situation, said there was "great want of light in that region" and called for missionaries to give notice to it. In reply, Pickens wrote: "We know not who Bro. T.W. Council is, or what his opportunities for knowing whereof he affirms is; but ... he has not fairly represented the condition of the cause of Christ in Middle or West Tennessee or even in North Alabama.

We very much doubt if there is a region of the country in the Union where the church is more rapidly increasing in proportion to its numbers than in Middle Tennessee. In Maury County where I was raised, it is believed, that the Church has increased a hundred percent since the war."

"In North Alabama there are not so many preachers and not so much to sustain them, still the gospel has been presented in most communities in this benighted land. There are, however, different circumstances attending the success of the gospel [in Tennessee]. In some places the Reformation began with the settlement of the country and the church grew up with the country. But here [in North Alabama] sectarianism was planted with the settlement of the country, and grew up as other interests of society and in this way obtained a deep root and therefore is hard to contend with. Preachers do not meet with that success in their preaching here that they do elsewhere."

"There is an immense difference in results attending the same preaching when backed up by number, wealth, popularity, etc., and when the cause and the preachers have few friends and fewer supporters. It is one thing to go from city to city, attend great meetings and write about them; and quite another thing to go out into the highways, hedges, and backwoods, preach to a great extent at your own expense and say little or nothing about it. There is perhaps not a more striking difference between this and other sections than the last mentioned."

"We would most certainly be delighted to receive for the cause in our midst any assistance that our brethren can furnish either in preachers and preaching or in dollars and cents. All those preaching brethren of other sections who are advertising for situations can find sufficient employment here. We cannot object to any proposition to give us help, but we do think a little more 'personal observation' and Bro. Council will not draw quite so dark a picture." (*Christian Monthly*, Mar. 1871.)

PICKENS' DEBATES

Pickens was fond of debating and engaged in several public discussions with representatives of

various denominations. He was ideally suited in knowledge, ability, temperament, and composure for this form of teaching the gospel. Nothing could throw him into confusion or cause him to lose his temper and display a bad attitude toward his opponent. His brethren who heard his debates were not only satisfied with his efforts, they were delighted with them. And none gave them more delight than his debate with Dr. Jacob Ditzler, the great Methodist preacher whom H. Leo Boles called "the giant defender of Methodism."

Several contemporary gospel preachers had debates with Ditzler, including David Lipscomb, Dr. T.W. Brents, and L.B. Wilkes. Lipscomb met Ditzler in debate at Gallatin, Tennessee, in 1871, about two years before Pickens' debate with him. Brents and Wilkes conducted frequent debates with Ditzler during the decade following the Civil War. The famous Louisville discussion between Wilkes and Ditzler in 1870 was published in a large volume. J.S. Sweeney also had Ditzler as an opponent in debate, at Sherman, Texas, in 1875. About that same year, Dr. J.H. Graves, the noted Baptist editor and preacher, also took on Ditzler. Perhaps few denominational preachers of post-Civil War days were as experienced in defending their beliefs as Jacob Ditzler.

Pickens' debate with the great champion of Methodism was held at McKendree Chapel in Morgan County, Alabama, in the early 1870s. The proposition concerned Infant Baptism which Ditzler affirmed to be a scriptural practice. The "doughty" doctor, whom Brother J.T. Wood described as a "braggard," not thinking he would find such a man as Pickens in the mountains of Northwest Alabama, "had expected an easy victory, but was doubtless as badly disappointed as in any debates he ever had, for Pickens picked him all to pieces." (B.F. Manire, *Reminiscences of Preachers and Churches in Mississippi*, 40.)

The Debate at McKendree Chapel between Jacob Ditzler and J.M. Pickens was published in *The Southern Christian Weekly* in 1874. The debate was conducted in the form of a dialogue, with each man in turn carrying his side of the discussion, in a few sentences or in several paragraphs, as he saw fit. At one point, Ditzler attempted to justify Infant Baptism by Post-Apostolic History. In taking up what he called "the historical argument for infant baptism," he began with Tertullian who, he said, opposed Infant Baptism in the second century. His argument was that Tertullian's opposition proved the existence of the practice at that early date and from apostolic times. He concluded: "If infant baptism had been an innovation, if all the church was

not practicing it from the Apostles down, Tertullian was too shrewd a man not to have seen the force of the argument. He need only to have said, it is an innovation, we have no such command from the Apostles, the church has not been accustomed to practice it and it is not now the general practice." (*Southern Christian Weekly*, Feb. 5, 1874.)

In response to this point, Pickens noted that Ditzler, who had been arguing from the Old Testament for some time, now made a long bound and leaped all the way to the end of the second century, making only slight mention of the New Testament, coming on down past it and attempting to prove Infant Baptism by the "fathers!" Pickens continued:

"In this we wish him abundant success; and if he does not prove infant baptism was authorized by the fathers, we will try to help him. I agree with him that infant baptism was authorized by the fathers. If he does not prove it to your satisfaction, I propose to furnish the proof myself. But I would have him to remember, and you my friends to understand that he has undertaken to prove that 'infant baptism is authorized by the word of God.' But this proposition can never be sustained by proving that infant baptism was authorized by the fathers.... We do not think however, that the gentleman can prove from Tertullian, that infant baptism existed quite so early." (*Ibid.*)

Pickens then proceeded to explain that Tertullian had been asked if infants might be baptized as soon as they *asked* to be, and that Tertullian had replied that baptism ought not to be administered rashly. He added: "The church in Carthage had increased rapidly. There were many, it is claimed, who did not live up to their profession. There was something of austerity about Tertullian. He opposed the baptism of children when they were too young to understand what was required of them. He also opposed the introduction of others till they understood the necessity of living up to their profession. He advocated purity in the lives of church members. This is the ground on which he opposed the baptism of both the young and those that were of 'riper years.'" (*Ibid.*) Pickens also pointed out that the word infant, "as then used, and as often used now, has reference to minors," and that the infants about whom Tertullian was speaking could talk.

F.B. Srygley, an able preacher and defender of the faith in the following generation and whose mother was baptized by Pickens soon after the Civil War, held the evangelist in esteem fifty years after his death. In 1931, he wrote of Pickens: "He was a great man and a great debater. He debated with Dr. Ditzler and published the

debate in his paper. When only a child, I read this debate with great interest and profit. Though young, I was able to see that Dr. Ditzler had his hands full." (*Gospel Advocate*, Nov. 12, 1931.)

EVANGELISTIC LABORS

While J.M. Pickens engaged in several kinds of activity calculated to advance the cause of Christ, it was primarily as a preacher that he aimed his efforts. Moulton, Alabama, near his home, was a frequent preaching point. He also preached monthly for some time at Mooresville, where Gen. James A. Garfield once preached during the Civil War. But, like most preachers of the day, his field of labor extended over a broad area. Perhaps typical of his work was; a two weeks tour he made through Marion and Fayette Counties, in Alabama, in 1874. In reporting the tour, he wrote: "We were with the church at Buttahatchee six days; and delivered ten discourses. On Sunday the attendance was exceedingly large, so much so, that we had to abandon the house for the grove. During the week we occupied the house though the attendance was still too large for its capacity. (*Southern Christian Weekly*, Aug. 20, 1874.) Thirty-two were added to the church during this meeting. Forty-six had been added there the year before under his preaching. This congregation was one of the largest in Alabama, numbering about 300 members.

The Buttahatchee meeting closed on Friday morning, after which Pickens "rode sixteen miles and preached at night to a large congregation at Hopewell, a Baptist house." The next morning found him in Fayette County at Berea church, one of Brother John Taylor's preaching points. Berea church was established by Taylor in 1829-1830 after he was excluded from the Baptist church and began preaching the ancient gospel. This was before he had ever heard of Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and the Restoration Movement. He actually began a restoration movement of his own in the hills of Northwest Alabama. Pickens preached at Berea eleven times over the next few days and saw twenty-two added to the church before returning home.

During that same year, Pickens attended a "consultation meeting" at Trenton, Tennessee, and addressed the brethren on the subject, "Whiskey Making, Whiskey Selling, and Whiskey Drinking by Members of the Church of Christ." It is assumed that he opposed all three activities and that the time was not wasted. Contemporary history indicates that the

consumption of alcohol was widespread in nineteenth century Alabama, not excluding preachers and other church members, F.D. Srygley, writing of a time and area approximating Pickens field of labor, said: "Drinking was as common as eating. Still houses were more numerous than schoolhouses ... Every householder laid in his yearly supply of "spirits" as regular as his bread-stuff.... Fifty cents would buy a gallon of the best whiskey on the market. One no more thought of entertaining guests without drinks than without regular meals and lodging. Drinking was not restricted by law, opposed by temperance organizations or discouraged by churches. Preachers drank habitually, but not to drunkenness, and openly took their stimulants at public bars." (F.D. Srygley, *Seventy Years in Dixie*, 176,177.) It is not to be supposed that members of the church of Christ were free of involvement in every phase of the "spirits" market: making, selling, and consuming. Pickens' sermon on the subject at Trenton was no doubt very timely.

COOPERATION AMONG CHURCHES

The Alabama Christian Missionary Cooperation, the state's first fun-fledged missionary society among churches of Christ in the state, was not organized until several years alter Pickens' death. However, "consultation meetings" in which several churches had fellowship in arranging the support of evangelists to preach in a given area were commonly held among the churches during his lifetime. Pickens himself often participated in these and recognized some good in them. But he soon became disillusioned about such meetings and came out in opposition to them, apparently because they were developing into separate organizations, rather than being a loose and informal gathering of brethren for "consultation," as the earlier meetings had been.

In 1869, after the state missionary society in Mississippi was organized, Pickens wrote an article for the *Gospel Advocate* expressing his disapproval of cooperation meetings and missionary societies. "A co-operation," he said, "is an excellent blowing hole" where there is more praise to preachers than to God, even though they usually "wind up with 'to the Lord be the praise.'" In regard to the society, he said: "So it remains to be seen whether Mississippi with her co-operation and her four evangelists will accomplish more than the preachers of Alabama, who work and say but little about it." He then gave three reasons why he thought "an effort at cooperation in Alabama would be

impractical: "1st, There is not sufficient unanimity of sentiment. 2nd, North and South Alabama are too remote from each other. 3rd, I am of the opinion that the churches will give more to have preaching in their own neighborhood than they would give to a co-operation ... I presume that preachers of North Alabama could do no more under a co-operation than they are already doing." (*Gospel Advocate*, Dec. 8, 1869.)

The following year, Pickens attended the semi-annual Mississippi Cooperation meeting at Columbus and participated in the deliberations, having been requested by a few brethren to represent them in the co-operation." He was also there because of deep interest in the cause in that state where he had "bestowed much labor ... during the past four years." If his presence and participation in the meeting appear inconsistent with his clearly expressed opposing views, it must be remembered that lines of fellowship had not been sharply drawn over the issue of missionary societies and that his objections, while strongly worded, were tempered with toleration, no doubt growing out of his respect for the men who promoted the society.

In reporting the meeting, Pickens spoke of its favorable aspects: the encouraging reports from the brethren, the refreshing seasons of worship it provided, the association with preachers from several states, and the fact that five were baptized into Christ. He gave particular attention to "the question of adopting the 'Louisville plan.'" which had been introduced and urged upon the state of Mississippi at the previous cooperation meeting at Jackson by Thomas Munnell, the corresponding secretary of the American Christian Missionary Society. At the Columbus meeting, T.W. Caskey addressed the brethren "in quite a lengthy speech" on this plan, which he had helped draft at Louisville.

The Louisville Plan was an attempt by some leading brethren to revive interest in national cooperation. Dissatisfaction with the American Christian Missionary Society had become so wide spread among the brethren that by 1868 it was a practical failure. So efforts were made to overcome the opposition and apathy by devising a plan that, its creators hoped, would be more acceptable to the "brotherhood." The plan, developed at a meeting in Louisville in 1868, "called for a general convention composed of messengers from state conventions, who were to be the chosen representatives of the churches and district conventions, the latter being composed of messengers from the churches." (James D. Murch, *Christians Only*, 183.)

Pickens spoke at the Columbus meeting in opposition to the Louisville Plan, replying specifically to each point Caskey made in its favor. Caskey had mainly argued, as Alexander Campbell before him, that since the Bible furnished no plan for centralized cooperation, the question of conventions and societies is a matter of expediency. Pickens answered Caskey with an eloquent appeal for congregational independence and against centralized cooperation. In later reviewing his opposition to Caskey, he said:

"1st. That it does not necessarily follow that because individuals co-operate to do the work in a congregation that congregations must or may bind themselves together to do either the same or another work. That it is not a question of analogy, but of fact and of authority, and that while the Scriptures furnish authority for individual cooperation, they furnish none whatever for consolidation and centralization of power among the congregations."

"2nd, That because congregations could not co-operate as so many bodies, but are compelled to delegate their authority to one or a few individuals, their co-operation is therefore impractical, and the power vested in one or a few becomes dangerous."

"3rd. That while history, sacred and secular, is freighted down with facts which testify that congregations were separate and independent up to the completion of the apostolic commission, that while purity of doctrine, piety and religious liberty go hand in hand with church independence, that while error, apostasy and ecclesiastic despotism are the results of the centralization of power in the churches, and that while the Bible furnishes authority for individual cooperation, but none whatever for centralization or consolidation among the churches, the independence of the congregation is a principle for which we shall ever most earnestly contend."

"4th. That if the Bible makes no provision for raising money or spreading the gospel, what did Paul mean when he said, 'All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) Is preaching the gospel not a work, and a good work too? But if the Bible gives no plan, why not respect the silence of the Bible and have no plan? We must contend not only for the Bible, the whole Bible, but also for nothing but the Bible. This has been the strength of our plea, and will accomplish more than all the missionary societies in the world. By it we have

grown to be a mighty people. Why then should we desert it in the hour of victory? If after denying the Bible has given a plan, we adopt one, how shall we any longer contend for the Bible alone? And if we adopt that for which there is no Scriptural authority, where shall we stop? If the door is once set ajar to innovations, how shall we determine where it shall stand or that it should not stand wide open, and that continually?"

"As Bro. Caskey was one of the committee of twenty [that developed the Louisville Plan], we suppose he represents fairly the views of that committee. We conclude, therefore, that the committee found that it was impossible to report a Scriptural plan, if, indeed, it is practical, The Louisville plan is then purely a human device."

"5th, We make no question of the wisdom and piety of the men who framed the Louisville plan, yet the wisdom of men, however pious they may be, weighs not one feather with us in either matters of faith or plans of operation."

"Human brain is good in its place, but the facts of history ought by this time to have shown that it is a poor means of making systems of divinity. 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.' (1 Cor. 1:27)." (*Christian Monthly*, Aug. 1870.)

The outcome of the controversy at the Columbus meeting was a temporary victory for the opposition to the Louisville Plan. Even though proponents of the plan were apparently in charge of the meeting and some powerful voices urged its adoption in Mississippi, those who placed the question before the meeting, Pickens said, "seemed to prefer a withdrawal to a discussion, and accordingly withdrew the proposition to adopt or reject it." Pickens also stated that the brethren who spoke against the Louisville Plan "displayed great mildness, prudence and Christian courtesy," and, while firm in their opposition, said nothing "which could be construed in the least unchristian." He went on to say: "It did seem, however, that there was some restlessness manifested on the part of some of those who favored the plan, when anything was said against its adoption. We noticed that each brother who spoke against the plan was called to time, while others were allowed to occupy as much time as they wished." (*Ibid.*)

PICKENS' LAST DAYS

In about 1879, Pickens moved to Columbus, Mississippi where he worked as an evangelist for about a year. However, he returned to Alabama in 1880 to run

for governor of the Greenback-Labor Party. This populist, farmer-labor, party in Alabama was known as the People's Anti-Bourbon Party. It met in convention at Montgomery, June 24, 1880, and reaffirmed the national Greenback-Labor platform that had been adopted in Chicago and that had nominated James B. Weaver as its candidate for president. This was the year the Republicans nominated and elected James A. Garfield for president. "The Republicans [in Alabama] had no regular ticket but supported the Anti-Bourbons who, in their first campaign, nominated a full state ticket for 1880 headed by Reverend James M. Pickens of Lawrence County for governor." (John B. Clark, *Populism in Alabama*, 26.) The Greenback strength in the state lay mainly with North Alabama farmers. However, the party carried only three counties—Lawrence, Colbert, and Winston. Pickens' vote was 42,342 to Democrat R. W. Cobb's 134,911.

It is not our purpose to discuss the politics of the era, other than to note that the corrupt Bourbon Democrats who were in power in the state were determined to maintain "white only" control at all cost, not excluding election fraud, suppression of free speech, physical intimidation, and murder. "The state election of 1880, for example, was ridiculed in the national press. An Alabama correspondent of the New York Times sarcastically described a 'two story ballot-box' used by Democratic election officials to fill Black Belt boxes with impossible majorities. A spring-loaded mechanism of the top box quickly discarded ballots cast by African Americans and replaced them with 'pure white ballots' in the bottom box. Two weeks after the election the Times declared that 'the utter hollowness of the Alabama election must be conceded by the most prejudiced observers.'" (*Alabama Review*, April 2004.) Pickens likely would not have won the election if it had been fairly conducted, but he believed that fail' counts would have yielded Greenbacker victories in some state and national elections in Alabama.

There is no indication that politics had much attraction for Pickens before the late 1870s, or that he ever ran for any other political office. However, he was a man of liberal ideas politically, and no doubt his strong sympathy for the economic plight of the farmers of North Alabama, who were unfairly represented in the state Democrat convention and legislature, moved him to seek high office in their behalf. But the very fact that a gospel preacher like Pickens could be nominated for governor and carry a third of the votes, especially under the circumstances of the time, testifies to the esteem in which the good man was held by the people of

Northwest Alabama. According to B. F. Manire, Pickens returned to his studies and labors as a preacher after his brief bout with politics. Some later references in the *Gospel Advocate* implying that he ceased preaching after he "got mixed up in politics" are in error, although he did interrupt his preaching for a few months to run for office." (B. F. Manire, *Reminiscences of Preachers and Churches in Mississippi*. 41.).

PICKENS' DEATH

The career of Pickens ended when he was wantonly murdered in February 1881, "in broad daylight, and within sight of his house." His death notice as carried in the secular press said: "Rev. James M. Pickens, of the Christian Church, and late Greenback candidate for Governor of Alabama, was shot and killed at Mountain Home by Robert Letson, yesterday (Feb. 3). At the same time, Letson mortally wounded William Davidson, and then surrendered. Pickens and Davidson were walking through a lane to the woods where some chopping was being done, when accosted by Letson, who charged Davidson with slandering his daughter Letson fired upon Davidson, and was in the act of shooting the second time, when Pickens knocked the pistol out of his hand with an ax helve. Then they clinched and during the scuffle, Letson regained the pistol and shot Pickens twice. Pickens turned to run and was shot twice more, and died instantly The deceased was a ripe scholar and an able debater, and, after his defeat for Governor had been admitted to the bar." (Quoted, *Gospel Advocate*, Feb. 17, 1881.) This is supported by a letter from Pickens' son to historian Richard L. James, which says of his father: "He was killed in 1881, trying to stop a quarrel between two neighbors." (J.M. Pickens, Jr., *Letter to Richard L. James*, Disciples of Christ Historical Society.)

The whole episode appeared suspect to the anti-Bourbons. Many believed that Pickens' death was a premeditated murder plot carried out by Letson to silence his strong opposition to the Bourbon party in Alabama. Pickens reportedly had obtained a press with the intention of publishing an anti-Bourbon paper to expose the corruption of the Bourbons. The shootings sent shockwaves through Lawrence County. "In the wake of Pickens's death Bourbons tended to insist that Letson's rage was motivated by Davidson's slander of his daughter and that the case was clearly second-degree murder. Anti-Bourbons, on the other hand, saw the crime as a political assassination fitting a pattern that extended back to Klan outrages during Reconstruction. Bourbons, from this perspective, would

not tolerate free speech and harassed or killed those who challenged them publicly." (Alabama Review, April 2004.) While we are inclined to accept the version of Pickens' death as published in the press at the time, the political atmosphere and possibility of assassination cannot be discounted. "Tensions ran so high in Lawrence County that sixty indictments, more than half of the total handed down by the circuit court in 1881, were for carrying concealed weapons." (Ibid.)

In later years, some have tried to make a case for a murder plot drawn up by Pickens' political enemies who feared his influence in opposing the dominant Bourbon hold on state and national political offices. While a murder plot is plausible, given the political climate of the time, the evidence presented, although carefully woven, appears speculative and circumstantial, but there is no doubt that not a few Bourbon politicians and newspaper editors found comfort in the preacher's death. We believe that Pickens' son, who no doubt was aware of the anti-Bourbons' suspicions at the time of his father's death, gave the correct view of the matter.

Regardless of the cause of Pickens' death, it proved to be a great loss to the disciples of Christ in Alabama. He not only established many churches in his section of the state, but also was instrumental in the origin of some in Mississippi and Tennessee. He accomplished perhaps more than any other man in getting the Restoration plea before the people of that region in an intelligent and respectable manner through his preaching, teaching, writing, and debating. In reporting his death, the *Gospel Advocate* said: "The cause in Alabama was hindered by the death of J. M. Pickens on February 3, 1881 ... Pickens was only forty-five years old, and ready to do his greatest work." (*Gospel Advocate*, Feb. 17, 1881.)

The churches of Christ in Northwest Alabama and the adjacent parts of Mississippi and Tennessee owe a huge debt to James Madison Pickens. He came to that region at a time when the cause of Christ was in shambles and the people demoralized by four years of civil upheavals. His talents could easily have been turned toward seeking a personal fortune with undoubted success, but he chose another route: the preaching of the gospel. He employed every avenue open to him—pulpit, classroom, and press—to carry the message of salvation to lost souls and to encourage his brethren to faithfulness in serving the Lord. And in this work he was highly successful.

In spite of his brief involvement in politics, Pickens was deeply religious, highly moral, and

righteously motivated. "A.H. Brittin of the Huntsville Advocate described Pickens as a man of 'iron will, great energy and honest industry.' He was 'universally esteemed and greatly loved' and 'deeply' sympathetic to the plight of 'the oppressed and downtrodden sons of toil.' Moreover, according to Brittin, Pickens was 'thoroughly imbued with a determination to right the gigantic wrongs under which "Ring Bourbonism" had crushed the hopes of his fellow citizens.' Pickens knew [Bourbon politician] Joe Wheeler, who summered near the town of Mountain Home to escape the valley heat. Pickens' class perspective and his emotional religiosity clashed with Wheeler's social climbing, reserved demeanor, and Episcopal prep-school upbringing. The two leaders did not like one another." (Ibid.) Paul Horton, who made a careful study of the politics of Alabama in this period said: "Pickens's philosophy was at core religious." (Ibid.)

J.M. Pickens was a faithful and gifted preacher of the ancient gospel. Restoration historians of note regard his untimely death as a hindrance to the churches of Christ in North Alabama and the mid-South. He established a number of churches, made numerous converts to Christ, and was instrumental in encouraging, strengthening, and restoring the membership in many places. He was principally responsible for reviving the churches at Russellville, Moulton, and Tusculumbia after the Civil War. He is also credited with organizing Christians in Florence, Mooresville, Danville, and Huntsville. He worked tirelessly in regular preaching, holding meetings, and conducting debates. Horton writes: "He preferred to work with the less educated and the poor and was an outspoken critic of status-seeking city ministers who lost their true calling in an effort to keep up with the 'appearances' put on by their peers. Pickens's Christian mission was devoted to the poor and self-respect in a simple, rock-solid faith." (Ibid.) He was only 45 years old at the time of his death and ready for what may have been his finest work in the cause of Christ.

Saints and sinners

The original design of the preaching of the gospel was to save sinners, but a class of salaried clergymen have found it more profitable to them to entertain saints."

— *Alfred Ellmore (1918)*

Looking Back

Bear Creek, April 15.-The little band of worshipers here continue to meet each Lord's day, morning and night, for Bible study, and on Wednesday nights for prayer meeting mostly sisters and children. The writer had the pleasure of calling on Brother and Sister A. D. Dias, at their home in Oakman, between trains. He is doing a great work in the church there and in the surrounding country. He is busy all the time when not engaged in preaching. He is working with his hands, painting houses and working in a barber shop. They were in sorrow for the loss of their little girl, who passed away a few days ago. Brother Dias gave us an appointment for the fifth Lord's day in May. I had the pleasure of meeting Brethren Richards, Sweeney, Jones, Brother Morrow and wife, and others while there. Preachers are scarce in these parts. Brother Willcut preaches for us on the fourth Lord's day in each month.-J. R. Phillips..... GA 4/29/1920

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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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The Murder of James Madison Pickens

Frank Richey

One of the greatest news stories in the history of Lawrence County, Alabama was reported in the local newspaper, the Moulton Advertiser, February 10, 1881. It may have been that the extremely short account of the murder was due to the newspaper editor's distaste for the victim. The murdered man was one of the most well-known citizens of Lawrence County. He was a gospel preacher, principal of a private school (which he owned), editor of a paper, and candidate for governor a few months earlier in the 1880 governor's election, on the Greenback Party ticket, only to be defeated in the polls. The murdered man was James Madison Pickens. The Moulton Advertiser said:

"Robert G. Letson shot and killed Rev. J. M. Pickens and severely if not fatally wounded Wm. Davidson, at Mountain Home, on Thursday morning of last week. Letson immediately repaired to Courtland and surrendered himself to the authorities, stating that he had killed Pickens and Davidson—Davidson for slandering his daughter, and Pickens in self-defense. He was given a preliminary trial at Courtland on Saturday and Monday last, and the following card tells of the result: Courtland, Ala., Feb. 7th 1881. Maj. D. C. White: Dear Sir: Letson's trial was concluded this evening. The attorneys submitted the case without argument. The verdict was to send him to Tuscombua jail, there to await his trial in the Circuit Court. Letson preferred jail to giving bond. The Sheriff will take him there tomorrow. No other news. Your friend, D. Simmons"

The murder was reported in several other papers in nearby cities with much more detail. Jourd White, one of the editors of the Moulton Advertiser, was a political enemy of J. M. Pickens. This is probably the reason the news story was given such little space in the local paper. Pickens was known state-wide as the Greenback Party candidate for governor just a few months prior to his death. In recent years, this has given speculation to the theory that the death of J. M. Pickens was not an accident, or in self-defense as claimed by his murderer, Robert Letson, but a political assassination.

J. M. Pickens was in his prime, being only forty-four years old when he died. (He died three days prior to his forty-fifth birthday.) He was one of the finest gospel preachers and debaters among the disciples. Mrs. Alexander Campbell was so moved by the preaching ability of Pickens, that while living near Mountain Home in Lawrence County, Alabama,

she presented Pickens with Alexander Campbell's personal Bible.

Early Life

James Madison Pickens was born February 6, 1836, in Maury County, Tennessee. He was the third child of William and Charlotte Bruce Pickens. Young Pickens was an excellent student, learning Latin and Greek during his leisure time. He attended Jackson College at Columbia, Tennessee, and then went to the University of Kentucky at Lexington. Although Pickens did not graduate from this institution, he continued studying on his own. To his knowledge of the languages of Latin and Greek, he added Hebrew. He was considered a scholar in the south for his time.

Pickens was brought up in the church of Christ (also referred to as The Disciples and/or the Christian Church). Perhaps his early years of spiritual training were at the feet of men like Tolbert Fanning, John M. Barnes, and James Anderson who were men who preached in Maury County prior to the Civil War.

When the Civil War broke out, Pickens enlisted in the Confederate Army on August 28, 1861 at Camp Galloway, in Columbia, Tennessee. He was a private in Captain Edmund O'Neill's company, 2nd Regiment, Tennessee volunteers, and subsequently, Company B, 2nd Regiment, Robison's Regiment, Tennessee Infantry. When his enlistment was up, he enlisted for two more years. This was on February 14, 1862, three weeks prior to the Battle of Shiloh. For some unknown reason, Pickens was discharged on April 4, 1862, at Corinth, Mississippi, just two days before the beginning of the Battle of Shiloh. Since the South was preparing for the greatest battle yet in the war, there must have been a reason for this discharge. No doubt every able bodied man was needed in this battle. The assumption is that Pickens was taken sick or was injured and was not able to fight in the battle.

Pickens was described as a talented musician, playing the violin. While in the confederate army, Pickens became associated with Carlo Patti, a brother of the famous singer Adelina Patti, and they performed concerts to raise money for the confederate hospitals.

War brings out the worst in men. Moved by the immorality of the troops, Pickens began to speak to them of spiritual matters and tried to preach to them. The soldiers didn't care for Pickens' preaching, and on one occasion, Pickens was quoted as saying, "If you fellows don't want to listen to me you can just go to hell and be damned!"

Pickens in Lawrence County, Alabama

After the war, Pickens married Mary Caroline Williams of Columbus, Mississippi. They bought a school and farm at Mountain Home, Lawrence County, Alabama. The farm consisted of between 300 and 400 acres. It was on the top of a low mountain, which overlooked the Tennessee Valley to the north. The location was described as a beautiful natural location a few miles south of the Tennessee River and four miles south of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, the nearest station being Wheeler Station, named for General Joseph Wheeler, whose plantation at Pond Spring was nearby. The Pickens family lived a few miles from the Barclay plantation called Ingleside Plantation. The Barclay's, Judson and Robert, were the sons of Dr. James T. Barclay, the first missionary of the American Christian Missionary Society. Judson and Robert were married to daughters of Alexander Campbell. Judson was married to Decima Campbell and Robert was married to Emma, an adopted daughter of the Campbell's. For this reason, after the death of Alexander Campbell, Mrs. Campbell would frequent north Alabama, visiting her daughters and her grandchildren. Dr. Judson J. Barclay would later be listed as a co-editor of the paper that Pickens started. Pickens' paper began about 1870. He edited the Christian Monthly which became the Southern Christian Weekly, and continued for four or five years.

In the November 5, 1874 issue of the Southern Christian Weekly, Pickens published an obituary of Dr. James T. Barclay. Pickens shared a common faith with the Barclay's and James Barclay's son, Judson, was closely associated with Pickens in the publishing of the Southern Christian Weekly. After relating the remarkable life of Dr. James Barclay as a preacher, missionary, ambassador, and author, he told of his last visit with Dr. Barclay just prior to his death. As Pickens left, Dr. Barclay, in a very weak voice said, "The Lord Bless you." The last words of Dr. Barclay was the quoting of these beautiful lines: "My soul anticipates the day—Would stretch her wings and soar away, To aid the song, the palm to bear, And praise my great Redeemer there."

Mountain Home School

For several years, J. M. Pickens conducted his school at Mountain Home. It began about 1867 and lasted until after his death, when Mrs. Pickens sold the school to a group of Quakers who continued the school several years. An old photograph shows the main building of the school, a two story structure, sometime in the 1950s, according to the model of the

automobile that is parked in front of it. The building no longer stands.

This writer has a copy of one of the Southern Christian Weekly papers obtained from the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee, which carried an advertisement for Mountain Home School. It stated:

The next session of this School will begin on Monday, October 3d, 1870 and continue nine months, embracing two terms of eighteen weeks each.

LOCATION—This Institution is located in Lawrence County, Alabama, on the mountain south of the Tennessee Valley, near the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, seven miles Southeast of Courtland, and immediately on the road from Courtland to Moulton.

The situation combines every advantage which Nature can give to render it eligible for a School; pure, fresh air, free from miasma (pollution-FR), dust and all local causes of sickness, and abundance of excellent spring water, pure freestone and chalybeate, furnished by a number of beautiful, gushing springs; is quiet, retired, free from all temptations to extravagance and vice, and has long been a favorite resort for persons seeking health.

BUILDINGS—The buildings were originally constructed for a school, are sufficiently extensive for the accommodation of one hundred pupils, and are well adapted to school purposes.

COURSE OF STUDY—The Course of Study will embrace every branch of education usually taught in schools of high grade and necessary to prepare the student for any business or position in life. Particular attention will be given to the elementary principles of an English education, while as extensive a course of Mathematics, of Latin and of Greek will be furnished as may be desired. The best facilities for learning Modern Languages and Music will be afforded.

Strict discipline will be maintained at all times, and every endeavor used to induce studious and industrious habits, moral conduct and genteel deportment. Each boarding pupil will be expected to attend worship and Sunday School regularly.

BOARDING—A regular boarding department will be kept up in connection with the School; everything necessary to health and comfort will be furnished and served in good style, and an earnest endeavor will be made to remove all cause of complaint so frequently and so justly urged against boarding schools.

RATE OF CHARGES

Board, including lodging, washing, lights and fuel, per month	\$20.00
Tuition in Primary Department, per mo	3.00

Tuition in Preparatory Department, per mo	4.00
Tuition in Academic Department, per mo	5.00
Music, extra per month	5.00
Use of Instrument, extra per month	1.00
Modern Languages, extra per month	2.00
No extra charge for any branch of study except for Modern Languages and Music.	

FACULTY

J. M. PICKENS, Principal and Teacher of Rhetoric, Mental and Moral Philosophy, Latin and Greek.
 MRS. M. M. PICKENS, Composition, Rhetoric and Music
 W. M. WOOD, English Branches and Mathematics
 MRS. SARAH E. WILLIAMS, Matron

Other competent assistants will be secured as the demand may require.

Male and Female Departments conducted separately. Persons coming to Mountain Home should stop at Courtland, on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, where arrangements will be made for conveyance at reasonable rates.

Address the undersigned, Mountain Home, via Courtland, Ala.

J. M. PICKENS Principal

In 1868, Pickens asked a young teacher to join him at Mountain Home School. This young teacher, fresh out of Franklin College, was T. B. Larimore. Larimore, recognizing the influence of schools like Pickens' school, started his own school in 1871 near Florence, Alabama. Larimore's school at Mars' Hill lasted from 1871 to 1887, and had a great influence on the preaching of the gospel and establishing of churches in northwest Alabama. Hundreds of young men were educated and trained to preach at this school.

Larimore's marriage ceremony was performed by J. M. Pickens on August 30, 1868, as T. B. married Julia Esther Gresham. Esther had inherited twenty-eight acres of land from her father, Philemon Gresham. On this initial acreage, T. B. and Esther labored to establish a college that would eventually have over five hundred acres and twenty buildings.

Controversy between the Tuscumbia Baptists and Disciples

Some of J. M. Pickens' earliest preaching in northwest Alabama was at Tuscumbia, Alabama. In 1866, Pickens held a meeting in Tuscumbia and helped to establish the church that had been devastated during the Civil War. The Tuscumbia church was organized under the leadership of Dr. W. H. Wharton in 1834. Dr. L. C. Chisholm of

Tuscumbia wrote in the Gospel Advocate the following note:

"During the last winter our young brother, J. M. Pickens, rather accidentally visited Tuscumbia, where he very soon assembled a little flock that seemed both willing and anxious to keep the ordinances of the Lord, but at that time it seemed next to impossibility to get a hearing, but the scale has now turned We are steadily gaining ground and adding to our number, but the labors of Bro. Pickens have not been confined to Tuscumbia alone, (he preaches at other places as well). We had the pleasure of visiting Moulton, Ala., in company with him last week, and a more interesting meeting we never witnessed. The interest seemed to increase to the very close. The people seemed to be spellbound and taken captive by the majesty and force of the truth. The church that formerly met at that place, was most effectually aroused from its lethargy, the erring reclaimed and sinners came flocking to the fold. We were particularly struck with seeing an old gray-headed veteran from the Baptists come forward, give his hand and hear him say he had earnestly sought the truth for twenty-five years, and it had dawned upon him at last. Bro. P. labored faithfully with us, and promises to continue his labors in North Alabama, Mississippi and West Tennessee. Will the brethren in these sections sustain him, and ...all who labor with and for us in the Lord" (Gospel Advocate, Sept. 11, 1866)?

The church in Tuscumbia, prior to the war, had secured property and built a nice brick meeting house. Evidently, dispersed and devastated by the war, the church stopped meeting in the building. At some point, the Baptists of Tuscumbia took the building for their meeting place. Pickens tried to find legal documents giving the Baptists the right to the building and could not. Not only were the Baptists meeting in the building for which they had no legal documents to prove ownership, the Church of Christ was not allowed to use the building.

In June 1870, Pickens wrote an article in The Christian Monthly pointing out that the building under question still belonged to the Church of Christ. He was answered by Joseph Shackelford of Tuscumbia, speaking on behalf of the Baptists, and Shackelford's answer was printed in the August, 1870 issue of The Christian Monthly. Shackelford contended that the building came into the hands of Mr. Carroll, a citizen of Tuscumbia. Shackelford stated, "How he came the owner of the house or had a right to sell it we are unable to say." He continued, "At any rate, he sold it to Deacon Edmund Ellet, a member and deacon of

the Baptist church, for \$500.00.”

Pickens responded to Shackelford, saying, “We object, however, to at least two dozen of his statements.” Pickens said, “Mr. Shackelford says the house came into the hands of Mr. Carroll, but how he became the owner, or had a right to sell it he is unable to say.” Pickens then published a letter by Dr. W. H. Wharton, written from Nashville on March 30, 1867. In this letter, Wharton, the man that had started the church in Tuscumbia, said, “I never gave any title that I remember, for in fact I had none individually. I never opposed the Baptists or any other religious party using the house, however, at any time. We once had a church of near one hundred members. Most of them moved away or died.”

Pickens continued questioning how a transaction could take place without the knowledge of those to whom the house belonged and without any compensation for their rights, and said that their statements “are statements that bear unmistakable evidence of fraud and falsehood.” Pickens called the sale of the building a “sham sale.” He then challenged Shackelford to prove the following:

That the Baptists and other denominations ever had any rights in or title to the house in question.

That the Christian Church ever did, either alone or in connection with others, constitute George Carroll a trustee and clothe him with the right or power to sell and convey the house.

That Mr. Carroll did actually sell and convey to Edmund Ellet or the Baptists of Tuscumbia the house which you call the Baptist Church.

That said Ellet or the Baptist did ever pay to those who built and owned the house the sum of \$500.00 or even one dollar.

That you Baptist of Tuscumbia can now or that you ever could produce any show of title or ownership other than your bald assertions.

The above episode shows the intense effort on the part of Pickens to regain the Tuscumbia Christian meeting house. Today, the Baptist church still meets on this property. The Tuscumbia Church of Christ meets in a building located beside this original property.

It was also in the year 1866 that Pickens had succeeded in organizing a revived church at Frankfort. His efforts as a preacher caught the attention of gospel preacher, B. F. Manire, who described Pickens as “a man of superior ability both natural and acquired.” Manire, after the death of Pickens, said, “He was unquestionably our ablest debater, and many thought our ablest preacher also.”

Debate with Jacob Ditzler

Though a young man, Pickens was building a reputation as a gospel preacher, school leader, and debater. He debated Jacob Ditzler on the subject of infant baptism. The Moulton Advertiser issued an announcement of the debate with the following statement: “J. A. Woodall and W. E. Cameron publishes in the Decatur paper, ‘that Rev. Jacob Ditzler, of Ky., will meet Elder J. M. Pickens at McKendree church, 7 miles south east of Danville, on Thursday the 16th of October in a debate on the subject of Baptism &c.,’ (sic) We should like to hear it but don't propose to ride 40 miles to enjoy so great a blessing” (Moulton Advertiser, October 17, 1873).

Dr. Jacob Ditzler was a Methodist and the champion of the Methodist cause. He held numerous debates and probably thought the young man from Lawrence County could not be a worthy opponent in debate. If Ditzler thought this, he was badly mistaken. B. F. Manire wrote in his book, *The History of the Christian Church in Mississippi*, (p. 72), “The doughty Dr. (Ditzler) not expecting to find such a man in the mountains of North Alabama, had anticipated an easy victory, but was doubtless as badly disappointed as in any debate he ever held, for Pickens picked him all (to) pieces. Excerpts of the debate were published in the February 5, 1874 issue of *The Southern Christian Weekly*. Ditzler, who depended greatly on history and not on scripture, met his match in the young man, Pickens. Manire said that Pickens “was a man of superior ability both natural and acquired.”

Ditzler supported his position of infant baptism using various men from history as the authority for his position. He pointed to Tertullian, the Council of Carthage, Bishop Fidus, Origen, Father Smarius, and Orchard's church History. Pickens said of Ditzler, “My friend is a remarkable genius; he can prove infant baptism from the voice of history and then from its silence. Indeed, I scarcely know of any premise from which he can not draw infant baptism. Pickens said of Ditzler's use of history to prove infant baptism, “He speaks of infant baptism, therefore it is authorized by the word of God.” The last statement in the article was, “As was apparent to the audience, Mr. D. signally failed.”

Greenback Candidate for Governor

The Greenback political party was born in the mid-1870's and was a short lived coalitions of farmers and laborers who came together to protest the federal monetary policies. This movement made allies with organized labor and managed to influence the

continued printing of paper money. The Greenbacks demanded that the federal government issue an adequate supply of paper money when the supply of currency was failing to keep up with population growth. Many southerners felt this policy was detrimental to their region, which suffered from a lack of currency, over the Northeast part of the country with the nation's center of industry and finance.

In Alabama, the Greenback Party made bids for the state legislature, opposing the Democratic Party. In 1878, William Lowe, of Huntsville, won election to the U. S. House of Representatives as a Greenback Party candidate. In 1880, the Greenback Party ran its first candidate for governor of Alabama. James Madison Pickens, of Lawrence County, was selected to lead the ticket. Pickens was recognized as a leading proponent of the working class. Pickens won the endorsement of the Republican Party in the 1889 election, but still only gained 24 percent of the vote, losing the election to Rufus W. Cobb. (Cobb, elected for two terms as governor, was the president of Central Iron Works in Helena, Alabama, and was a staunch ally of mining and manufacturing interests. He also served as an attorney for the powerful Louisville and Nashville Railroad.) The reported violence, intimidation, and tampering with vote counts by the Democrats is believed to have played a large role in Pickens' poor showing. Such tactics also initially deprived Lowe of re-election to Congress, but he contested the election results and was ultimately declared the winner. Neither of these men lived much longer. The death of Pickens in 1881 remains a mystery. Some believe his death was a political assassin, motivated by politics. Lowe died in October 1882, depriving the Alabama Greenback Party of its lone major officeholder.

The Death of J. M. Pickens

Several north Alabama newspapers carried the account of the death of J. M. Pickens. The North Alabamian, published in Tuscumbia, Alabama, carried a detailed article in its February 11, 1881 issue. Pickens was well known in the Tuscumbia area. He had preached in and around Tuscumbia, and one genealogical website reported that Pickens had served as President of Deshler Female Institute in Tuscumbia. Also, the North Alabamian held similar political views as Pickens. The paper reported:

The Rev. J. M. Pickens, late candidate for Governor of this State, and William Davidson, a young man who lived with him, were shot last Thursday by Robt. Letson in sight of their home at Mountain Home, and Pickens killed outright and Davidson dangerously

wounded."

"From parties who were at the preliminary trial of Letson last Monday, we gather the following facts:

Pickens and Davison had just left the residence of Mr. French where they had gone to grind their axes. Pickens was carrying both axes and Davidson a maul. Whilst in sight of French's house they were met by Letson who stated to Pickens that Davidson had slandered his daughter and that he intended to kill him. He at once drew his pistol and shot Davidson down, the ball going through his right lung. As he attempted to shoot the second time, Pickens who had remonstrated with him, struck the pistol out of his hand with the helve of the axe. There upon a struggle for the pistol ensued and Letson regained it and commenced shooting Pickens. After the first shot, which ranged up his arm towards the elbow, he ran, pursued by Letson who fired three more shots two of which took effect in his side or back the last killing him instantly, it is supposed. He ran more than a hundred yards before he was shot the last time, Letson following him up. When the latter turned back from Pickens he was heard to say to him, 'Now get up d__n you, if you can.' We are informed that Davidson who is still living says that on returning to him he said he would finish him, but he told him he was dying and he then passed on. It was proved on the trial that Davidson, who will probably get well, had repeatedly circulated the most shameful and disgraceful reports about Letson's daughter."

"A young man named French was the only witness to the shooting. He had gone into the house and heard the shot fired. (He saw) Pickens holding an axe up cross wise before him as if to ward off an attack, and almost at the same time he saw Letson shoot and Pickens run, and was killed as above stated."

"Mr. Pickens leaves an interesting family, a wife and three children. He was a man of considerable ability and was widely known as a Campbellite Minister and a musician of a high order of talent. Little or no sympathy is expressed for Davidson, but the murder of Mr. Pickens is considered one of the most atrocious and cowardly crimes ever committed in this State. Letson was remanded to jail and was sent to this place Tuesday to await the action of the Grand Jury of Lawrence County."

Notice the article states that Pickens had three children. This is believed to be a mistake in the newspaper. Pickens had four living children, his fourth being born in 1880, and was just a few months old at the time of the murder. J. M. Pickens body was taken to Columbus, Mississippi where he was buried in the Friendship Cemetery. His tombstone does not

extol his virtues or honors. It simply says, "James M. Pickens, born Feb. 6, 1836, died Feb. 3, 1881." When his wife, Mary, died fifteen years later, she was laid to rest beside him.

The Trial of Robert Letson

The trial of Robert Letson for the murder of J. M. Pickens was held the first week of November 1881, in Tusculumbia, Alabama. The Moulton Advertiser newspaper reported the following account of the trial in its November 10, 1881 edition:

"R. G. Letson was tried last week for the killing of Rev. J. M. Pickens, and found guilty of murder in the second degree and sentenced to the Penitentiary for twelve years."

"The argument of counsel on both sides were able and eloquent. Mr. J. H. Branch opened for the prosecution and in a three-quarters of an hour's speech, ably presented the strong points in the case. He was followed by Col. E. H. Foster for the defense; who, in a masterly and eloquent speech, occupying a portion each of two days, made an earnest appeal for the life of his client. It was, perhaps, the most feeling and heart touching speech that was made during the trial. Mr. S. P. Rather then followed for the prosecution, and made a brief but forcible argument. Judge R. O. Picket closed the argument for the defense in the factious and strongly legal manner. He swept down upon the Jury and audience with power, and at times he became very eloquent, and moved every heart in sympathy toward his client. Solicitor Henry C. Jones then, in a speech that held the vast audience in profound silence for an hour, closed the argument for the State. The charge of Judge Speake was given in manuscript, with several snatches of law from the attorneys; and at one o'clock p. m. Friday the case went to the Jury and the above mentioned verdict was returned the next morning at 9 o'clock."

"The widow of the deceased, with her orphan children, was present pleading for justice. The defendant's wife, slandered daughter and other children were by his side, asking for mercy."

"The Jury was composed of members of all parties and churches."

From reading the above account of Letson's trial, the trial was more of persuasive speeches than law or testimony. The defense was based on a crime of passion and for this reason, Letson only received a twelve year sentence. This gave rise to outrage among Pickens supporters and Greenback Party members. Cries of political assassination and cover-

up were expressed in local newspapers. It is not known if Letson's prior criminal record was considered in the trial. According to Paul Horton's paper (mentioned later in this story), "he (Letson) had been indicted for a criminal offense for which he posted bond in the fall of 1869. In 1880, the circuit court indicted him for killing or injuring an ox owned by Davidson and for 'falsely and maliciously' accusing Sarah Davidson of stealing his cotton." Letson was a violent and disturbed man. After being released from prison, he raped his own daughter. His violence and immoral behavior resulted in his death at the hands of his son-in-law, Thomas Goodwin. Goodwin killed Letson, shooting him with a double-barreled shotgun.

Was Pickens Death a Political Assassination?

An excellent paper, titled The Assassination of Rev. James Madison Pickens and the Persistence of Anti-bourbon Activism in North Alabama, by Paul Horton, was published by the Alabama Review 2004. In the paper, Horton explores the evidence of political assassination as the cause Pickens' death. Horton suggests the possibility of Letson being coaxed into killing Pickens in a "manner that would allow him to plead guilty to manslaughter or, at worst, second-degree murder," which would result in a shortened sentence. Some believed the death of Pickens was carried out in order to prevent Pickens from publishing a Greenback Party paper at this Mountain Home community. Such a paper could have been a serious blow to the Democratic Party. Horton offered evidence of oral history from the Mountain Home community that Letson's wife, after divorcing Letson, told several teachers at the Mountain Home School that Letson had told her prior to the shootings, that he was going to kill Pickens and Davidson. Additional evidence that further fuels this contention is that the chairman of the Democratic Party Executive Committee for the eighth congressional district, Ephraim Hubbard Foster, served as counsel for Letson.

Additionally, the assassination theory was further corroborated by the fact that there was an attempt to kill the only witness to the murder. John French, who witnessed the murder, was shot at while standing at the back door of his house. The shot, fired from the nearby woods, resulted in a bullet in the weather boarding of the French house. An examination of the bullet showed that the bullet had been hollowed out and filled with axle grease. Those that know anything about firearms and ammunition know that hollowed out bullets are meant to spread out on contact and promote the greatest amount of damage. Letson was in jail at the time. This gives additional evidence that

Letson did not act alone. Paul Horton's paper states, "A story originally printed in the Hartselle Sentinel and reprinted in the Huntsville Advocate maintained that the murder was premeditated and amounted to a political assassination."

In 1945, gospel preacher Asa Plyler, traveled the state of Alabama studying and recording history of the churches of Christ. (His writings have recently been published in a book, Historical Sketches of the Churches of Christ in Alabama.) In the summer of 1945, he came to Mountain Home to inquire if anyone could remember anything about the school at Mountain Home, or about James Madison Pickens. He stopped at a store and inquired if anyone in the community knew anything about the school or Pickens. He was told of an elderly lady that might help him. The woman, eighty-two years old, had lived at Mountain Home all her life. When asked about Pickens, the old lady's face lighted up with a smile. She replied, "I most certainly do, and do I remember him, he was my teacher." The woman continued to tell of the death of Pickens, which differed from the newspaper account. Plyler perhaps was surprised to find out that this woman was the sister of William Davidson, the man shot at the same time as Pickens. She said that her brother was the printer for Pickens and that Pickens was enlarging his printing office at the time of his death. She said he had just bought a new and larger printing press for publishing a paper. She stated that the man who killed Pickens came up to the shop and said, "I am not going to have any paper published here, he pulled a pistol from his pocket and shot my brother one time and he fell, brother Pickens began to beg him not to shoot him any more. The man then shot brother Pickens in the arm and as he turned away he then shot him four times in the back, he fell in the road and was dead within a few minutes. No cause was ever given except that no paper was going to be published there."

This account is in agreement with the statement in Paul Horton's paper that Letson was heard to say that he "would ride fifty miles to kill a man who would publish such political matter as that contained in a copy of the Huntsville Advocate, which a man had been reading him." It may have been widely known that Pickens was going to publish a paper, and that the paper would put the Democratic Party in a bad light, while promoting the Greenback Party.

Did members of the Democratic Party have Pickens killed? "Dirty" and "politics" are two words that have long been associated in describing Alabama politics. This writer has a friend who was beaten with an axe handle while serving as a poll watcher for the Republican Party as late as 1966.

Conspiracy, or conspiracy theory, there is evidence for a cover-up of a political assassination.

Death of Robert Letson

Upon Robert Letson's release from prison, he sexually assaulted his own daughter, Elizabeth Letson Goodwin, shortly after she married Thomas Goodwin. He then threatened to kill his son-in-law, Thomas Goodwin. The Courtland Enterprise newspaper reported the following:

Friday, November 11, 1898—R. G. Letson, of Mountain Home, was shot and instantly killed by his son-in-law, Thomas Goodwin, on last Thursday evening, at the home of Harvey Wright, about four miles from here. It seems that some family trouble had arisen between the two, and Goodwin left Letson's house about a month ago. On Thursday Letson went to look for Goodwin—for what cause is not known—but Goodwin fearing trouble was prepared for him and on sight shot him with a double barrel shotgun, loaded with buck shot, seventeen of which took effect killing Letson instantly. The facts in the case, no doubt will all come out at the preliminary trial, which is set for Monday next.

It only took one week for a preliminary trial to determine that Thomas Goodwin acted in self-defense. The Courtland Enterprise, Friday, November 18, 1899 reported:

In the preliminary trial, on Monday last, of Tommie Goodwin, charged with murder in the first degree, in the killing of R. G. Letson, before Squires W. R. Aycock and Jno. A. Gilchrist, was acquitted. The defense was represented by Hon. C. M. Sherrod, and he made out a clear case of self-defense, not only so, but the State witnesses made it a clear case of justifiable homicide.

Epilogue

The death of James Madison Pickens left Mrs. Pickens and her four children without means of support. Gospel preacher, B. F. Manire, wrote from Sallito, Mississippi on August 31, 1882, a plea published in The Christian Standard, September 1882 that a fund was being established for the Pickens' family. He said:

"The death of Bro. Pickens was a calamity to the cause at large, and especially to the cause in these two States. He was unquestionably our ablest debater, and many thought our ablest preacher also.

He lost his own life in saving the life of another man, a young man in his employment. I knew him from his boyhood, and have known his wife from her childhood. Her father and mother were for many years strong pillars (sic) in the church at Columbus, Miss."

"Sister Pickens is in feeble health, in destitute circumstances, and has four small children to be raised and educated. She has four sisters and one brother, all of whom, with their companions, would, I am sure, share most freely their last crust of bread with her and her helpless children; but their means are limited, and they have children of their own to raise and educate, and can not do all that needs to be done. The church at Columbus, I feel assured, will manifest a commendable liberality, but the church itself is weak both financially and numerically, and needs help to do the church work that ought to be done in Columbus. Sister Pickens needs help not only to carry her through the coming winter, but through several coming years, until her boys are large enough and well enough educated to make a living for her and themselves."

Manire pointed out in this article that Mrs. Pickens had "an agency" to sell the book, "Home Life of Alexander Campbell," a book written by Mrs. Alexander Campbell. Christians were urged to purchase this book, from which Mrs. Pickens would receive a commission. He also submitted a copy of a newspaper article from the Courtland, Alabama Sentinel, which carried the announcement of the Pickens' Children Fund. In part, the article stated:

"The object of the Pickens Orphan Fund, as has been previously stated is to raise a sum of money sufficient to educate Mr. Pickens' four fatherless children. It is needless to say had he lived no appeal like this would have been made; but since he was brutally murdered by an individual whom he never wronged, we think it obligatory upon the members of the Christian church, of which he was an able and honored minister, to see that his children are properly educated. It can be done by contributions to the Pickens Orphan Fund, the officers of which are high-toned gentlemen, who will see that every cent given is used for the object indicated."

"All monies received will be deposited in a saving bank, and the interest thereon used for the purpose of educating these four bright and promising children."

"Every member of the Christian Church should contribute his or her mite, and ere long we will all be rejoiced at the great good that will have been accomplished."

Mary Pickens would live another fifteen years


before her death in 1896. J. M. and Mary had six children. Two preceded J. M. in death. James Madison Pickens Jr., born in 1872, left home at age of thirteen and held a civil service position in Washington, D. C. for many years. He died in 1963, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Sallie Pickens married and lived in Birmingham, Alabama. No date of death is known. William Pickens died in 1936 in Los Angeles, California. Carrie Pickens also married and settled in Birmingham, Alabama. The date of her death is not known.

William Davidson, who was shot by Robert Letson at the time Pickens was killed, survived the attack. According to Paul Horton, Davidson, using his printing skills went on to become the editor of "an Agricultural Wheel paper and a Republican paper in Calera, Alabama, in the late 1880s. He later became a renowned surgeon with substantial property in Montana and California."

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"The Christian Monthly"

B. L. DOUTHITT

While visiting in the home of I. B. Bradley, I examined a copy of The Christian Monthly, by J. M. Pickens, editor and publisher, Mountain Home, Ala. The Christian Monthly was published in 1870. The great object of the paper was to awaken interest in the study of the Scriptures, to teach the gospel in its beauty and purity, to promote personal piety, union and activity among Christians, to oppose all unscriptural doctrines, practices and organizations, and to regard matters of doubtful propriety with great care. The following article, "Self-Examination," by Wesley K. Burr, appeared in The Christian Monthly, 1870:

SELF-EXAMINATION

Let a man examine himself in the language of the inspired Volume. It is one of the injunctions we do well to observe in our pilgrimage through life, and it is quite certain were it often observed, we would see more of our fellow beings walking circumspectly and attending to every ordinance of the Lord's house. We may feel as though we were living in conformity to the requirements of the Lord, notwithstanding we are daily wandering from the path of duty and rectitude. It appears to be so difficult to persuade ourselves or even to be persuaded by others to do our whole duty. This is one reason why we see so many, on their deathbeds, trying to gain, at that critical period, an abundant entrance into that ever-rich and luxuriant land where all is joy, peace, and happiness. They are then brought, as it were, to their senses and enabled to see themselves in their true light by undergoing a rigid examination. Thus it is that afflictions prove beneficial to us in enabling us to prepare for an eternity of bliss beyond the grave.

Self-examination consists in studying and understanding ourselves in the light of God's word. Were this more frequently attended to, there would be far *more* Christians in the world; for an individual may be regarded as an acceptable member of the church, and he may feel as though his life conformed in all essential matters with the requirements of the gospel, while in the light of truth he is but too idle and unfruitful in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior. Hence, we see the great importance of adopting a regular course for examining ourselves in order that at all times we be pure, holy, and undefiled.

The more we are engaged in examining ourselves and comparing our works with the standard of the Bible, the greater will be the opportunities presented us *for* doing good, and we will be greatly enabled to live in obedience to all the commandments of God. Would it not be well to make our reports at the close of every day, always keeping a conscience void of offense toward God and man? Then we would be always in readiness for the dying hour, with our lamps trimmed and burning, having on the wedding garment, with our robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, ready to meet him at his coming.

By examining ourselves we will be greatly enabled to

progress in the divine life. But we should remember, too, that we are not to compare ourselves with others, even though they may be -good men. Not infrequently we have heard the following remark: "Why, what's the use of living so strict? Mr. _____ is a good Christian and he is not so particular." To all such we say that the word of God, which shall judge us in the last day, is the standard and the only standard by which we should examine ourselves and reform our lives. We are required to look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein. Then, and not till then, have we the Promise of being blessed in our deeds. It requires a great deal of energy and a considerable amount of attention paid to the Bible in order for a Christian to know himself. He should certainly pay more regard to the duty of watchfulness and self-examination. He would then have a greater desire to study the Scriptures, and thereby be enabled to be more faithful and devoted to the service of Christ. Too many professed Christians study the Scriptures but little; and many who do study them do not do it to show themselves approved unto God. They appear to have a desire simply to learn doctrines and defend certain principles. Alas, for such!

By daily reading the Scriptures and at the same time comparing our actions with its sacred truths, we can quite easily perceive whether we are living as we ought in order to obtain that rich reward promised to the redeemed. For instance, when we read the apostle's injunction, "Pray without ceasing," should we ask ourselves the question, "Do we always pray?" Again we are required in everything to give thanks, to speak the truth in love, to lay aside all malice, hypocrisies, envies,backbiting, evilspeaking, etc. How important, then, that we examine our thoughts, our words, our deeds, and our aims to know whether we are living in strict conformity to the will of him "who was and who is and who is to come."

Soon our days will be numbered; soon our work will be ended. And soon, too, will we stand an examination before him who presides upon heaven's golden circle, and who now rules in the kingdoms of this world. What solemnity pervades our inmost soul to think of this! How careful we ought to be to so fit and prepare ourselves here by frequent and thorough examinations that when brought before the God of heaven and earth for a final examination, we will be enabled to stand the test and receive the prize, a crown of glory in the skies.

Rock Creek Philosophy

Men who are enjoying the benefits of the gospel, unmixed with human error, are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the truth.

CONTEMPORARIES OF J.M. PICKENS



Green Monroe Haley
1820-1882

Green Haley's field of labor was primarily in Marion County. His home congregation was Union on Butthatchee River, near present day Haleyville. He was converted by John Taylor (see story in Alabama Restoration Journal-Vol. 1-Issue 1) Pickens held several successful meetings at Buttahatchee.....



Jesse Turner Wood
1820-1894

J.T. Wood spent his preaching life in Morgan County. His home congregation was Cedar Plains, near Falkville. He reported on Pickens debate with Jacob Ditzler to Gospel Advocate. Married to Mary Jane Wallace, granddaughter of the lamented Nick Hackworth, pioneer preacher of Morgan, County.



Justus McDuffie Barnes
1832-1913

J.M. Barnes worked with Pickens in both north and south Alabama. Stood together against the missionary society in the state. Barnes home congregation, most of his preaching life, was at Strata in Montgomery County. He started Highland Home College. He Planted first congregation in Birmingham.



T. B. Larimore
1843-1929

Taught school with Pickens at Mountain Home School in Lawrence County near Noulton. He later founded Mars Hill College in Florence. He is recognized as one of the greatest preachers and teachers of all time.

Married to Esther Gresham of Florence. J.M. Pickens performed their marriage ceremony.



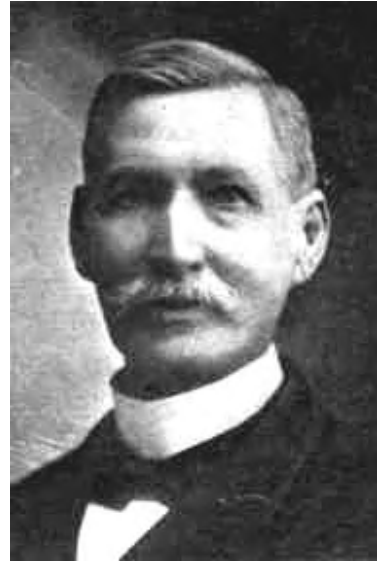
John Taylor
1807-1885

John Taylor was one of the most beloved preachers ever in northwest Alabama. He started his ministry in 1829 in Fayette County. He moved to Franklin County in the early 1840s and spent the rest of his days there. He worked with Pickens in numerous meetings in his area of influence, likely including northeast Mississippi.



Joseph H. Holbrook
1841-1905

One of Larimore's boys. After finishing his studies at Mars Hill, Holbrook moved to New River in Fayette County. From there he travelled over north Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas holding gospel meetings. He worked with Pickens, Taylor, Larimore and others in the work in these areas.



B.F. Manire
1829-1911

B.F. Manire was one of the leaders of the restoration movement in Mississippi. He likely worked with Pickens in the work in NE Mississippi. He had a tremendous respect for Pickens, even though they would later clash over the missionary society. He once said that "Pckens was our greatest debater."



Jacob Creath, Jr.
1799-1885

Jacob Creath was a generation older than Pickens. One has to assume that they met and possibly worked together in south Alabama and Mississippi while Pickens lived in Eutaw and later Columbus, Ms. Creath did considerable work in these areas. He was a staunch supporter of Pickens' papers, promoting both in his paper.

Looking Back

TENT MEETING AT OZARK, ALA. BY FRED M. LITTLE.

Our tent meeting in Ozark, county seat of Dale County, Ala., began on Lord's day, July 8. Brother R. C. Taylor, of Fort Deposit, preached until Friday, when he had to go to begin a meeting at Salem Church, in Crenshaw County. During the time Brother Taylor preached rain hindred, but the attendance was good when fair weather prevailed. One young man confessed wrongdoing and was restored to fellowship, and the public was impressed with Brother Taylor's sincerity of purpose and clear understanding of the Bible. Though Brother Taylor could not remain longer than six days, the meeting was continued till July 22, making a two-weeks' meeting. With more favorable weather the second week, the attendance was as good as could be expected in a town like Ozark, where the people are unconcerned as to the truth as it is revealed in the New Testament. A few times the tent was about full. Three ladies united with the congregation. The members of the congregation decided to resume meeting for Lord's day worship in the courthouse, which had been discontinued since last December.

Over a year ago the members bargained for a building site. They have paid three hundred dollars on it. They still owe four hundred dollars. Their present plan is to finish paying for the lot, then build a modest house of worship. If the Ozark brethren can have preaching occasionally, they will be enabled to stay intact as a worshipping congregation and eventually mature their plans. Dale County is a great field of labor in behalf of the church of Christ. We hope brethren in this part of Alabama will cooperate with disciples there in such a way as to be of material assistance to the cause of Christ in what is known as the "wire grass section of Alabama."

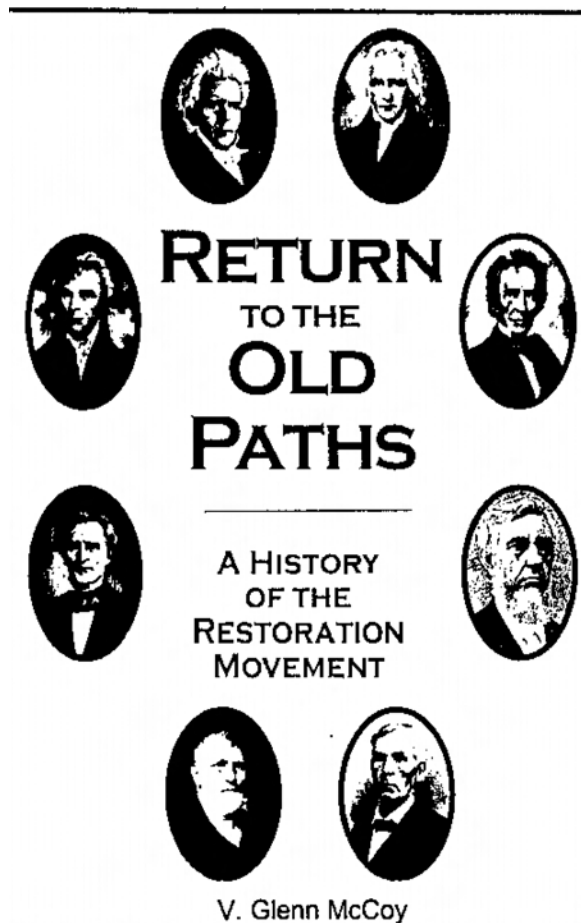
GA-8/2/28

Gardner S. Hall, Ragland, Ala .• July 3: ••Since last report I have worked a month for the church at Munford, Ala.; preached the commencement sermon for the Ragland High School; and have just closed at Alabama City, with eleven additions."

GA- 7/12/28

BE SURE AND CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR RENEWAL DATE.....

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Uncle Isaac Sez

WARNING! Be sure to have a goodly supply of Pepto-Bismol available before reading the following:

Just in case you think you have heard it all, take a look at this one...Now comes the report of one of the



largest congregations in our area having a super bowl party during the super bowl game in lieu of the regular worship service. We did not attend but bro. Josh wondered if the opening hymn was the old Bobby Bare tune "Drop Kick Me Jesus Through The Goalposts Of Life." We hear they

projected the game on a big screen and cheered lustily for the "Saints." We hear that a short devotional was offered at halftime while the rock band "The Who" was performing on screen. We have been told that prizes were given, for what we know not. . No doubt the Lord was glorified and the fans were edified. Josh says that no such party in this state would be complete without a few Roll Tides and an occasional War Eagle. Since the Saints won, it would have been fitting for the invitation to be that old standby, "When The Saints Go Marching In." We doubt if one of our favorites "Do All In The Name Of The Lord" was offered in the song service....Begin taking the Pepto-Bismol....

And this from a recent issue of The Nashville Tennessean; When he was growing up, Doug Sanders learned there were two kinds of people in the world. Those who belonged to the a cappella Churches of Christ, who were going to heaven. And those who didn't, who were going to hell. "In the Church of Christ, we had all the answers," said Sanders, associate minister at Otter Creek Church in Brentwood. "And if we had the answers, that meant everyone else didn't. It's kind of embarrassing to admit it, but that's the way it was." Since the late 1800s, Churches of Christ, one of Tennessee's largest faith groups, have believed their approach to church — singing without instruments in worship, interpreting the Bible literally, taking Communion weekly and banning women from church leadership was God's way That meant they kept mostly to themselves, shunned other Christians and did not participate in interfaith projects for the community. **(maybe Sanders and those of his ilk, would have us apologize for these Godly men and women and their stand for the truth...Embarrassed indeed!-Isaac).** In recent years, congregations like Otter Creek have adopted a more progressive view of their faith. They've added instruments to church services on Sunday nights and during the week. And they've begun cooperating with other faith

groups, especially on charitable projects...**Stop here and swig Pepto Bismol as needed.....**

And this report of "Easter" celebration at one of "ours" in New Jerusalem, Tennessee, from a website posted by a "gospel" preacher. The Woodmont Hills church prepared for this day by observing the Lenten season. On Palm Sunday evening, more than 400 gathered for a fellowship meal billed as a Passover Dinner and presided over by a rabbi from a Messianic congregation. He took us through Jewish history from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Christ. On Good Friday evening we had a special worship including the opportunity to symbolically nail our sins to the cross by driving real nails into a real cross. Overflow crowds, with some watching by TV in large class rooms, attended both morning worship today. A large choir, including children, old folks, ex-criminals, black, white, oriental, led both presentation and congregational music. Our children's minister, assisted by her daughter and another family, read the Easter story and two young boys led the communion prayers. Worshipers brought flowers from their yards and decorated two large crosses with these symbols of new life. Dean Barham preached an excellent sermon, emphasizing that we are to live the resurrection life here and now. The traditional exchange, "He is risen!" and "He is risen indeed!" made it a perfect day....**Seems to me the only thing missing was the local archbishop walking around in his white robe and beanie, shaking his little thingy of holy water on the worshipersQuestion...What is the Easter story?...The only Easter story I know is Peter Cottontail...QuestionDid the "choir" sing either of two old favorites ...Gene Autry's Here Comes Peter Cottontail Hopping Down The Bunny Trail and Irving Berlin's The Easter Parade? ...You may stop here and go upchuck...This is more than the Pepto-Bismol can handle.....**

How did the Lord's Church get into this mess? There are several reasons in my view. Here are a couple. Fifty years of watered down, soft soaping, non controversial sermons for fear of offending someone. Sermons that dealt with social issues, psychology, philosophy and generally feel good topics that would be welcome in almost any denominational meeting. The truth was off limits because the truth of the gospel is sometimes offensive, Thus, there is nothing to convict the sinner. He can hear the same type of sermon, with a few variations, in any denomination he might choose to attend. Why make the change? Why risk alienating family and friends when there is really very little difference? My bride of near 50 years experienced this alienation. Her family were members of the largest denomination in the south. Her grandfather was a prominent preacher for them. When she obeyed the gospel, all things changed. Her family blames me to this day and would be hard pressed to pour water on me if I was on fire. They never accepted the fact that

the decision was her's and her's alone.

Then there are the elders. There was a time in the not too distant past, when the elders of a congregation were the most respected men in the church. They were chosen, based on the qualifications set forth in the scriptures without variation. Many of churches have replaced the Biblical qualifications with new, more lenient manmade qualifications. These include popularity, success in business, personal attractiveness, financial status, willingness to compromise as well as others. Gone are the days in these churches, when men selected for this, the most important role in the church, were the the most knowledgeable in scriptural teachings, men of dedication to the cause, men of courage with a determination to stand on the rock without wavering from its precepts. Men who understood the awesome responsibility that was theirs to guide the flock and maintain the purity of the Lord's church through their willingness to exercise the necessary discipline to insure same. Today, many accept the title as an honorary one rather than a God ordained one. Such men have no stomach for the difficult tasks that are necessary for the job. Discipline is usually one of the first thing thrown out. Today it is rare for someone to be withdrawn from for any cause. If they are, all they have to do is look around and they will find another church of Christ nearby, with spineless elders, to accept them into the fellowship. In fact some congregations go so far as to let it be known that "no questions will be asked."

In a day when unscriptural divorces and remarriages are common among the membership, open membership is taught from some of our pulpits, brethren take brethren to law, instrumental music is accepted by many, immodest dress is scandalous, the worship services are corrupted by festivities and entertainment practices, such as those above and all kinds of worldliness flows down our aisles as a rushing river, many of our elders set idly by and watch without questioning such. Why have we allowed ourselves to be led by men who have such disregard for the truth and for their responsibility to God and to us. Men who either do not understand ther duties or worse, simply don't care. We need dedicated men with the backbone to put the brakes on and return these churches to a solid, scriptural footing. We need men who understand God's laws and the responsibility of elders.

I am reminded of the statement allegedly made by James A. Garfield as he resigned the eldership at his home congregation to leave for Washington, D.C. to become President of the United States. He is reported to have said, "I am taking a step down." The church sorely needs men with this attitude today..... Help us Lord Jesus and please come quickly...ISAAC



Tombstone for James Madison Pickens



Tombstone of Mary Williams Pickens

J.M. Pickens is buried in Columbus, Mississippi in the Friendship Cemetery.

For additional info., go to:
<http://therestorationmovement.com/>

GATHERING HOME

LUCY A. WILSON.

This noble Christian woman, a faithful companion and devoted mother, was called from this world's existence on May 24, 1929, about 8:45 P.M., at her happy home in Russellville, Ala., at the ripe age of eighty-two years, one month, and twenty-three days. She was the faithful and devoted wife of Mr. C. E. Wilson, Sr., a widely known and highly respected business man, though now practically retired because of his advanced age, being eighty-three years and some months old. Mrs. Wilson was Miss Lucy Trimble before her marriage to Mr. Wilson, and her family was among the pioneers of Russellville, a family well known and highly esteemed.

Mrs. Wilson leaves her faithful and devoted husband, with one son and three daughters, to cherish her fond memory. They are: C. E. Wilson, Sr.; C. E. Wilson, Jr., a progressive merchant and active civic worker; Mrs. W. A. Gresham; Misses Mary, and Lula Wilson. All live in Russellville. Also an aged sister, Mrs. Agnes C. Jones, resides here, and she is so amiable, gentle, and kind that she is often referred to as "Mother Jones."

Mrs. Wilson obeyed the gospel in the very morning of her young womanhood, being baptized by that saintly and much-beloved minister of the gospel, Brother T. B. Larimore, who recently went to his reward. From the time Mrs. Wilson became a member of the church she was faithful and loyal in all her church duties and obligations. Her consecrated life was an inspiration and an encouragement to her numerous friends who came under her influence. She was, indeed, a "mother in Israel." Truly can it be said of this good woman: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." We believe that the beauty and purity of her consecrated life will be reflected in the lives of all who were associated with her here. I can think of nothing that we can say that would be more appropriate and in accord with the life she lived than to quote the peerless apostle Paul when he said: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day." "Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his saints."

The many floral offerings and the large throng of people attending the funeral betokened the love and respect many friends had for her. Funeral services

were conducted by R. I. Walston, of Sheffield, Ala., who had known her practically all his life, assisted by the writer. Interment was in the Wilson cemetery, south of Russellville, where she gently sleeps, awaiting that glorious day when the Savior shall come upon the clouds of heaven to gather together all the faithful of earth and waft their sinless souls to that blissful home over there, to live throughout eternity with the Christ who redeemed us and with the numberless hosts who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white as snow; where there will be no more death, sorrow, and separation, and where all tears will be wiped from our eyesT.H. ROBERSON.

GA -6/2/1929

T. H. ROBERSON.

The church at Russellville, Ala., has suffered a great loss in the death of T. H. Roberson. Not since the establishment of the Congregation by Tolbert Fanning, more than a hundred years ago, has the influence of one man been so great. Many years ago, when a young man, Brother Roberson came in contact with the truth, through the preaching of T. B. Larimore, and severed his connection with the Baptist Church. He developed rapidly into a Bible teacher of the highest rank. For about forty years he was a teacher at Russellville, and for many years the senior elder. He probably conducted more funerals than any man in the county who was not giving full time to public teaching. He was active in the business world, serving as a teacher, bookkeeper, merchant, superintendent of education, and banker. He was never idle; and whatever he did, he did with all of his might. He was never too busy to give help and encouragement to those who called upon him. He was an abiding source of inspiration to the writer. His life was wonderful, and his works follow him.....LINDSAY ALLEN.

GA-9/14/1936

Rock Creek Philosophy

Men who are enjoying the benefits of the gospel, unmixed with human error, are enjoying these benefits because our fathers fought for the truth.

F.B. Srygley

The Final Say

Editor's Note: Brother Hugh Fulford gave the following response to an inquiry about his view of scripture. We think he said it as well as it could be said....LEW

My View of Scripture

1. I believe that all Scripture, including the New Testament, is given by inspiration of God and is sufficient for all religious/spiritual instruction. II Tim. 3:16-17; I Cor. 2:12-13; Eph. 3:1-5; Gal. 1:12-13; I Pet. 4:11.

2. I believe that Scripture was given "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work," and that it is not to be added to, subtracted from, substituted for, modified, amended, or supplemented by human creeds, church manuals, and catechisms. Matt. 24:35; I Pet. 1:24-25; I Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:6-9; II Jno. 9.

3. I believe that Scripture must be handled aright (rightly divided), recognizing the difference between the various dispensations, the Mosaical covenant and the covenant of Christ, and things that were of a local, cultural, and/or incidental nature and things that are abiding and permanent. II Tim. 2:15; Heb. 1:1-2; 9:15-16; et al.

4. I believe that Scripture speaks to us in plain, explicit statements of various kinds (declarative, imperative, interrogative, hortative, etc.), commands, examples, and implications from which we draw necessary inferences. (With reference to inference, I would call attention to the fact that Paul asserts that the existence of the universe teaches us by necessary inference that there is an all-powerful, all-wise Creator [Rom 1:19-20]. Jesus used inference in refuting the Sadducees' lack of faith in the resurrection [Mk 12:24-27]. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then they must necessarily still be alive, and so the necessary inference follows that there will be a resurrection of the dead. The empty tomb of Jesus necessarily implied to John that Christ was raised [Jno. 20:8-9]). Too, I believe that we must honor the silence of Scripture, and not presume where God has not spoken (that we should hush where He hushes). I Pet. 4:11.

5. I believe that a person of average intelligence can read and understand the Bible for himself/herself as

surely as he/she can read any number of other documents and understand them. Eph. 3:4; II Tim. 2:15. (See comment following last enumerated point).

6. I believe that we should adhere strictly to Scripture in all matters of faith, doctrine, and practice, including what the New Testament says with reference to being saved from sin, the church, worship, and daily living. Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9; I Cor. 4:6; I Pet. 4:11; II Jno. 9.

7. I believe that all that we do must be done in love—for God and our fellowman—and motivated by the principle of "faith working through love." Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8; I Cor. 16:14; Gal. 5:6; Jno. 14:15; I Jno. 5:3.

Concluding Note: In my judgment, our problems/differences today are not so much a matter of not *understanding* what Scripture says as they are a matter of not *believing* what Scripture says. (This is not meant to be a harsh, mean-spirited statement, but simply an honest expression of what I believe is a big part of the problem.) This is not to freely acknowledge that there are some knotty passages concerning which good and godly men have differed. But I fear that in too many instances some have allowed their social and professional peers and their religious friends to intimidate them into compromised beliefs and positions where biblical teaching is concerned. Paul expressed a fear that "as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity (sincere and pure devotion, NIV) that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). The "strait" (observe the spelling) way is too restricted for some (Matt. 7:13-14). To insist on salvation only through Christ is too "limiting" for some (Jno. 14:6; Acts 4:11-12). To insist on immersion for the remission of sins too "narrow" for some (Rom. 6:4; Acts 2:38). To worship without the instrument is too "odd" for some (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). To insist on male only leadership in the church is too "politically incorrect" for some (I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 2:11-12). (The preceding is only illustrative of the problem). Some seemingly have come to the point where they are ashamed of the simple truths of the Bible. I am reminded of the words of an old country preacher concerning his attitude toward Christ and His gospel: "I would be ashamed to be afraid and afraid to be ashamed." Jesus had some sobering words for all who fall into that category (Mk. 8:38).

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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.

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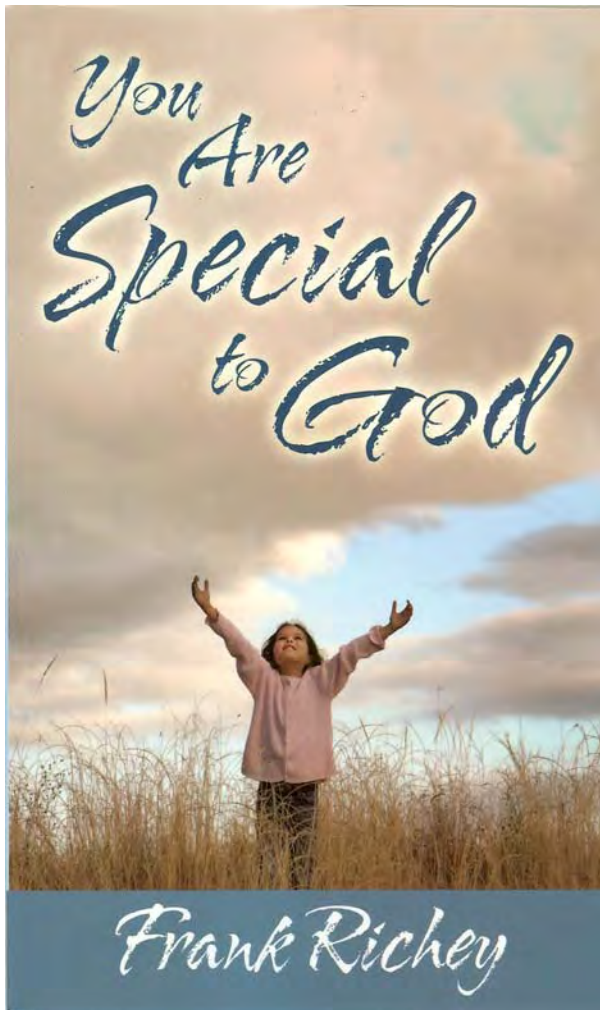
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