

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ELDER FRANCIS CALLAWAY,
WRITTEN WHEN IN HIS SEVENTIETH YEAR (1861)
Born February 17, 1792
Died April 4, 1864

My grandfather, Francis Callaway, and his wife, my grandmother, were natives of Virginia. They raised three sons, viz.: Samuel; Joseph; and Francis (the last of whom was my father, who was born in Virginia, and when young was married to Sarah Brewer of North Carolina.

My mother had six brothers: John; George; Osborn; William; Nathan; and Barnwell Brewer. My father and mother had born unto them five children: two daughters and three sons of whom I am the youngest of all.

William, my oldest brother, removed to Tennessee and became a useful Baptist Minister, and as such laboured in Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi, and died in Noxsiba County, Mississippi, about the year 1837.

Gadsden, my second brother, married and raised a large family of children, and died in Terry County, Alabama, never having connected himself with any church.

My eldest sister was married to Jeremiah Cleveland of Pendleton district, South Carolina and raised nine children. My second sister is still unmarried and lives in Murry County, Georgia.

My father was baptised 1759 by Elder Thos. Gilmer of North Carolina. He served in the Revolutionary War, part of the time stationed at Charleston, South Carolina, about the close of the War he removed to Wilkes County, Georgia and united with the Huttonsford Church (now called Sardis). A short time after which difference sprung up in the church on Faith, one party led by Mercer and the other by Walker. My father took sides with Walker and was excluded, my mother continued with the original church.

About the year 1794 they removed to Pendleton District, South Carolina and settled on Cane Creek. Mother moved her membership to Shoalcreek Church, just across the line in Georgia, which was under the pastoral care of John Cleveland. They remained in that neighborhood about eleven years. When the excitement over the difficulties between the Mercer & Walker parties had subsided, my father, through the advice and assistance of Elder John Cleveland, was restored to fellowship in the Hutton's Creek Church, after which he drew a letter from said church and united with the Shoalcreek Church, by whose authority he was ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry, and was called to the care of the Liberty Baptist Church of Pendleton District, South Carolina, and served said church as pastor for about twenty-five years, when failing health caused him to resign.

About 1805 he moved to Franklin County, Georgia and settled about five miles from Garnsville. My mother died in 1807, after which my father married a widow Russell. She was an amiable lady and made him a good and kind companion and was to me a kind and gentle mother indeed. My father went to work with his characteristic zeal, and through his labours, was established The Hunter's Creek Church, which flourished greatly up to the time of his death, which occurred in 1817 or 1818.

This sketch of my family history I have given especially for the gratification of my own descendents that they might know something of their ancestry.

I was born in Wilkes County, Georgia, February 17, 1782. I was early taught the heinous nature of sin, and the dishonor as well, attached to cursing, swearing, lying, stealing, deceiving, etc., and that God took cognizance of all these things, which caused me to have much reflection of mind and to frequently disturb my rest at night, and often follow me through the day.

In the summer of 1804, when about 12 years old, the country was stirred with great revivals in religion, many united with-the churches, among whom was my oldest brother, William. I became

greatly concerned about myself, but after a time my anxiety weakened and I concluded that probably there was not as much truth in the reality of religion as I had supposed. Under the strict training of my mother my general deportment was what might be termed well, at least so I thought of myself, and felt but little need of any reformation.

When I was in my thirteenth year, by invitation I attended a corn-shucking at a neighbor's house at which place there was a quilting during the day. When the corn was shucked and the quilt quilted out, the young people joined in a dance, and I joined in with them for the first time. Before the dance was over I felt condemned and felt conscious that I was doing wrong, but being fond of the sport I concluded that there was not so much harm in it as people imagined, so I continued to indulge freely in the dance until circumstances forced upon me the conclusion that it was a very evil practice and averse to all religious feeling and sympathies.

When about the age of fifteen years I partially imbibed the doctrine of Universal. Salvation and held so for some years, keeping my opinions to myself.

I lived with my father, working on the farm until I was about eighteen years of age. My brother, William, moved to Giles County, Tennessee, and with my father's consent, I went with him. There I expected to make a fortune. That was the year 1810. Like Dr. Franklin, I saw bright and glittering prospects spread out before me. I expected by industry and frugality to grow rich in a very short time, but alas, I lived, too, to find it all a dream.

My first effort in Giles County was a crop of hemp, which was then commanding a good price, about \$14.00 per hundred pounds. But after I had raised the crop and got it ready for market it was worth only \$3.50 per hundred, about enough to pay for carrying it to market. I was let away down below zero and left in debt \$12.00 and my horse gone.

I cast about me, for something to do, and found work, but could only get 25¢ per day. I was out of money, out of clothes, horse run away or stolen, and in debt \$12.00 and could get only 25¢ per day for a full day's work. It looked to be a little like hard times, and I felt for a while just like I had about as soon quit this world as any way. And in my chagrin and disappointment had serious thoughts of self-destruction and nothing saved me but reflection upon the crime that I would be guilty of in self murder.

I finally found employment at a distillery owned and run by a man by the name of John Thompson, who was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and though it seems strange now, he held family prayers night and morning.

My business was to tend the distillery during the day and half of night, working about 18 hours per day at \$7.00 per month, out of which I paid \$1.00 per month for washing. At the end of the first month my employer raised my wages to \$9.00 per month. I felt now that by spring I would be able to pay up my indebtedness, and also be able to get myself some new clothes, and would have been comparatively happy under these circumstances but for the fact that right at this time it was forcibly impressed upon me that, notwithstanding my boasted morality, I was indeed a great sinner and without a radical change in some way I should be finally lost, and that thought began to haunt me daily.

A dancing party coming off in the neighborhood, I determined to attend, and to throw myself in to the fullest extent and, if possible, get rid of this seriousness of mine about religion and the future existence, at least for the present. So I attended and was the gayest among the gay. But while I was there a very pious man, who had come there on business, dropped to me some words of Solomon warning, which I never forgot. This was during Christmas week. The next Saturday and Sunday there was to be preaching in the neighborhood and we all agreed to wind up Christmas by going to preaching on Saturday. So we carried out the agreement and were all there. I recon there never had been so many at preaching at that place on Saturday, as there were on that day, notwithstanding it was a bitter cold day. After preaching by one man and exhortation by another, back-sliders were invited to make

themselves known and if desirable to come forward and kneel for prayer. To my astonishment many church members went up in tears, and to my further astonishment when the invitation was extended to mourners many of my dancing comrades went up trembling and weeping. I was shaken to the center, and felt if anyone in the world needed praying for, that certainly it was I. I realized fully that I was on the road to eternal banishment, an ungrateful sinner. Yet in my stubbornness I refused to make any demonstrations and remained at my seat. After an intermission, the church met in conference, and when the opportunity was offered, a man by the name of Wilson Went forward to unite with the church. His relation being satisfactory, he was received for baptism. While extending the hand of fellowship they sang that best of all hymns, "Jesus my all to Heaven is gone", etc. I became very deeply affected and before singing ceased my heart's affections went out to them, and they appeared differently to what I had ever witnessed before, and I felt like a criminal in their midst, and I have never desired to dance since. I then determined to seek peace with God silently and say nothing about it. While I had often knelt while other prayed, I had never knelt in prayer for myself. - I determined to offer myself to God in prayer, so I went apart to myself and knelt down and began to try to pray. I became frightened at I know not what, rose up and left the place. But the next day I tried it again with, I thought, a little better success, and I concluded that it would take me about three weeks praying to get myself in a condition that God would accept me. So I applied myself to prayer and meditation day after day, and thought that I was progressing admirably. I kept all this to myself. Three weeks passed away and I found myself the very same. It occurred to me that while I guarded my actions, I indulged in foolish thoughts, that this was the reason why the Lord would not hear me; so I determined to watch myself in this particular. Two weeks more passed, and instead of feeling that I was nearer to the Lord, it appeared that I was further off and that my heart was hard and more desperately wicked than anyone else that I had ever seen. So I concluded that it was useless for such a sinner as I was, to try to be anything else but a sinner, for my sins were so numerous and formidable that the-Lord would not hear me. In my extremity I determined to join the Methodist Church as a seeker and attended their meetings for that purpose. But after hearing the preacher preach, I gave it up. I went away sorrowful, finding no consolation in his doctrines. All my resources for peace of mind were now exhausted and I was ready to give up the struggle, and would have done so, if it had been possible so to do. On the next Sunday, I had a conversation with the preacher, on the way to a Baptist meeting. I did what I had determined not to do, I unbosomed myself to him, and told him all my grief's.

He asked me to pray for him, that he might be enabled to preach aright, and pray to God to help me pray aright, and to save me from my sins.

In the opening of his services he prayed earnestly for me, not calling my name however. His sermon appeared to be delivered with power and zeal, that was unusual, and by the time he was through I felt that my case was a hopeless one indeed. I met up with a young lady, with whom I had danced frequently. She was disposed to make light of religion, but my feelings were such that I could not hide them, and could not help dropping a few words of warning to her. We soon parted, and while traveling alone in my deep distress, I became strangely impressed with the idea that whatever God did was right and I felt indescribable resignation to His will, my distresses were gone and I found myself in a state of mind that I cannot describe. I prayed earnestly to God for correct views and a clear understanding of myself, and of my relationship to Him. While thus engaged I had such a clear manifestation of His love, mercy, and goodness and feeling a sense of His forgiveness of my sins that I was, for the first time, enabled to truly rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and realized in my soul that Salvation was indeed of the Lord and my mind was in a state of peaceful resignation to the will of my heavenly Father, and I desired to follow my Savior, through sometimes fear would arise in my mind, that maybe I was mistaken; but the Lord strengthened me, and the first Sunday in April 1812, I

was received into the fellowship of the Union Baptist Church, Giles County, Tennessee, and was baptized by Elder George Brown, pastor of the church.

After following my Savior in the ordinance of baptism, I was much rejoiced and strengthened, and the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and there at the water's edge I plead my redeemer's cause. Several others were baptised at the same time. After the baptismal service was over the congregation assembled at the house and the church engaged in a very impressive and solemn service.

The pleasures of that day were great indeed, and though 40 years have passed, the pleasures of that day are fresh in my memory.

I began immediately, an opportunity offered to exhort men to repent and believe in the gospel. The custom of holding religious services at private houses, older brethren conducting the younger along public usefulness, was prevalent in those days, and the business of the distillery being over for the season, I had not much to do but to go to meeting.

I continued to warn sinners, in exhortation, and the fourth Sunday in July 1812, Union Church authorized me to exercise my gift in exhortation and preaching whenever a door of usefulness was opened unto me.

Soon after I engaged in a series of meetings with Elder Childers and O'Bannon, in which I was much profited, Brother Childers especially being very communicative. In September I took a trip back to Franklin County, Georgia, and to my great joy, found the churches there in a state of revival. I remained among them five weeks and labored with them to the best of my ability. During the time I contracted marriage with Miss Elizabeth Taylor, to be consummated the next year.

I returned to Giles County, Tennessee, and began to make whiskey at the same distillery that I had been employed the year before, desirous of earning enough through the winter to enable me to spend the next summer preaching again. Whatever may be thought about it now, it was then not only legitimate, but as respectable a calling as farming or any other business; I mean whiskey making. I followed my business closely through the winter and spring, during which time my mind was closely engaged with thought of the ministry and the Bible.

In September 1813 I went back to Franklin County, Georgia, and united with the Poplar Springs Church. I continued without any regular employment through the balance of that year. The year 1814 I lived with my brother-in-law, J. Cleveland, and made a crop jointly with him, preaching monthly at Benj. Cleveland's. At the June meeting of Poplar Springs Church a written license was given me to preach, in accordance with the custom in those days.

On the first Sunday in July I visited Miss Elizabeth Taylor, and we renewed our marriage engagement, after having postponed it once. The time was named and we were married September 8, 1814.

It is proper here to add that Miss Elizabeth Taylor was the youngest daughter of Charles Taylor, a continental soldier in the Revolutionary War, and a native of North Carolina. Her mother's maiden name was Cook, sister of George Cook, a lawyer in Elbert County, Georgia, also another brother, Randal Cook.

My wife's father died before our marriage, and her mother married 2nd to James Brown, with whom she lived 16 or 17 years before her death. My wife had one sister, Martha Taylor, who was twice married but raised no family. She also had one brother, George C. Taylor, who married a Miss Mullen. They raised 9 or 10 children, most of who yet live in Mississippi, and other western states. His wife died and he married a 2nd time and still lives in Octibahalo, Mississippi. After my marriage I settled a farm on the Carolina side of the Tugalo river, the river being the line between Georgia and South Carolina at that point.

In the year 1815 myself and Brother John M. Gray, who was also a licensed preacher and

member of Poplar Springs Church, were called to ordination. This I thought a little premature on the part of the Church, but after much prayer and medication, though I felt a little rebellious in regard to the matter, I concluded to submit myself to the will of my brethren, and so we were set apart to the full work of the gospel ministry by laying on of hands of the presbytery, selected by the church, and by whom we were subjected to a close examination on the doctrines of the Bible, ordinances of the church, etc. The presbytery was composed of the Elders John Cleveland, the pastor, Thos. Gilbert, Littleton Meeks, George Vandevere, and Francis Callaway, Sr.

In June 1816, Elder Cleveland having resigned, I was called to the care of the church as pastor, which I accepted, and at my request Brother Gray was called to assist me. In October 1816 I settled again in Franklin County, Georgia. In May 1817 I accepted a call from a church in Pendleton District, South Carolina. In Franklin I settled a new place, had to work very hard, had but little means, not even able to buy necessary books, education limited the future looked very dark indeed. But I concluded to set apart Saturday and Sunday for the churches and do the very best for them that was in my power. In the fall of the same year I accepted a call from the Gustanula Church, Franklin County, Georgia, twelve miles from home. About two years afterward, I accepted a call from Double Branch church, Franklin County, nine miles from home. Brother John Sandige, a worth minister and member of that church, assisted me greatly in the work. I served the church seven years; fifty new converts were added and the church much strengthened. I resigned the care of the church and was succeeded by Brother John Bramblett, whom I had baptised.

About that time there began to be some trouble about the missionary question, and a great many preachers, as well as members, declared their opposition to missions. Not being very quick to take sides without investigation, I had but little to say on the subject for some time, occupying a kind of neutral ground.

In 1821 I commenced itinerant labours, notwithstanding the surrounding circumstances seemed to be against it. I fell in with Elder Jerimiah Reeves and Jesse Mercer, on their way to a general meeting. They gave me a pressing invitation their section and to engage with Brother Reeves in a series of appointments among churches. I accepted the invitation and went, and laboured with him for some time. I was cordially received where we laboured, by the brethren, but when our labours closed they sent me home with a feeling sense that I was not poorer by having left my home affairs and gone among them to preach.

About the year 1826 I accepted a call to the Vans creek church in Elbert County, Georgia. This church had, for about 40 years, the services as pastor of Elder Disier Thornton. It was about 30 miles from me.

About 1824 a most powerful revival commenced in Poplar Springs church and continued several months, between 70 and 80 person professed conversion and were baptised into the fellowship of the church.

In the year 1828 I resigned the care of all the churches that I had been serving, except Vanscreek. I accepted the care of the Cloud's Creek Church in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, and moved into the vicinity of the said church in 1828, about ten miles from Lexington. In January following I also accepted a call from Brushycreek Church in Madison County, Georgia, and had a week day appointment at Beverdam Church. I continued to go once in two months to Poplar Springs Church. The Lord was with me and blessed my labours abundantly and I baptised during the year over 150 persons.

In 1830, resigning the care of Beverdam and Poplar Springs, I took charge of Broadriver Fork Church in Madison County, Georgia.

During the year 1833 a great revival was in the Vancreek Church, during the progress of which over 200 persons were baptised, among whom were Benjamin Thornton, once a class leader in the Methodist Church. He is now an accepted Baptist preacher, still living and laboring in that section of the country."

During the year 1834, looking at the wants of a growing family, having then seven daughters and two sons, to provide for, and the country I was living then in being very much work, I bought land in Chambers County, Alabama, where I now live. Making two trips, my removal was completed in January 1835. Pretty soon after settling in the county I took the pastoral care of the church at Lafayette. In March following, the Antioch church near me was constituted and I took charge of it. Settling in a new country decided not to confine myself to any other churches for the present. I devoted about half of my time to visiting destitute neighborhoods, aiding in the constitution of new churches, etc. Among which was Countyline church, Chambers county, which I also took charge of as pastor.

In the spring of 1836 I assisted in the constitution of the Concord Church, four miles east of Salem in Russell County, Alabama, and took the care of it. Soon after which the Creek Indian War was inaugurated, which broke out in May and continued several months. During the continuance of hostilities everything was deranged so that very little could be done with the churches. But when the Indian trouble ceased prosperity abounded all through the country, of which the churches shared a part, and many were added to them. At the close of 1836 I gave up the Lafayette Church and Brother Benjamin Lloyd took charge of it. I was then called to supply the Columbus Church, Georgia, once a month, during the year 1837. In rendering this service I had to travel 44 miles. After closing my labours at Columbus I preached a short while to the Sardis church in Chambers County, when the church called Brother John Humphries.

In the fall of 1839 Brother Lloyd united with the anti-missionary when I took the care of the Lafayette church and continued nearly two years, and was succeeded by Brother Reuben Thornton, of Russell County.

In 1841 I was called to the care of Longcane Church, Troup County, Georgia, in which service I continued until 1848. In 1844 I gave up Concord Church and continued in the service of three churches. In the fall of 1852, I gave up all the churches that I had been serving being then sixty years old. Concord Church, however, failing to secure a pastor, I continued to preach for it for some time.

In 1853 I declined to honor of presiding over the Liberty Association any longer, having served it as moderator for about 18 years in succession.

I continued to preach as occasions offered but did not serve churches as formerly. After remaining thus for a while, spending a good part of my time at home, I accepted the appointment of the Tuskegee Association of missionary and colporteur, in which service I continued three years.

I was then employed as missionary to the city of Montgomery, Alabama and entered upon that service that service in March 1858; In December 1860 the Second Baptist Church of Montgomery was constituted with 27 members and was increased during the year to 51 members. And the church has just commenced to build a house of worship.

Now I wish to say to my children that in the commencement of my ministry I labored under great disadvantages, which you could not know, and probably have never thought much about. Being very poor in this world's goods, at the commencement of my ministerial services, and spend so much of my time away from home, trying to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and receiving so little aid peculiarly from the churches, I found it very difficult at times to get along and supply the wants of my family. And, while I suffered in mind and heart often times, your mother was the greater sufferer, though she never complained, and frequently seeing my perplexity, would speak words of encouragement, which was like a healing balm poured in upon my troubled mind. She was indeed a comfort and a helpmate to me. As you begin to grow up, I was sorely pressed in mind because of the fact that I was unable to educate you as I desired. This was a subject of much anxiety to me and I resolved if possible as you grew up to give you at least two years at school, which in the providence of

God, I was enabled to do, and even much more for my boys, through the kindly assistance of my brethren and friends, among the most prominent of whom were: T. C. Russell of Tallapoosa County, Alabama; Noah Callaway of Chambers County; G. H. Traylor of Troup County, Georgia; & C. H. Cleveland of Dallas County, Alabama, for which I feel grateful toward them, and you should hold them in kindly remembrance as long as you live. May God abundantly bless those of them that are living, and posterity of all of them that live after them. But my greatest desire of you has been for your souls' welfare, and I trust that my many prayers for you have been heard. For your worldly benefit I tore myself loose from dear brethren and friends in east Georgia and settled in the wilds of that part of Alabama, that was then a new country and sparsely settled, hoping also that I might be useful in the cause of my Lord and Master, in building up His cause in that new country, and in my efforts to do so I feel that I have been greatly blessed. And now my desires run out to your children that whatever position in life you may come to occupy, or of this world's goods you may acquire, that you fail not to impress upon them that fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the duty of man.

And now my race is almost run, and it is very gratifying to me to be able to say that the Lord has blessed me, and He has so blessed my labours that I have been enabled to enjoy a good degree of religious comfort, and to share in a good degree of success in my ministry and to be greeted with a hearty welcome wherever I have gone upon my mission. The hearts and homes of my brethren have been opened to me.

Since giving up the care of churches, nearly ten years ago, I have laboured in the Master's cause as duty seemed to indicate, during which time I have had almost unremitted health and strength of both body and mind, and have had no cause to complain about my worldly affairs, but have been so blessed temporally, that I have had no need to give much thought to those things. And above all, I feel that the Lord has blessed my labours abundantly to the glory and honor of His holy name, over which I can but rejoice and say blessed be the name of the Lord, now and forever, Amen.

FRANCIS CALLAWAY