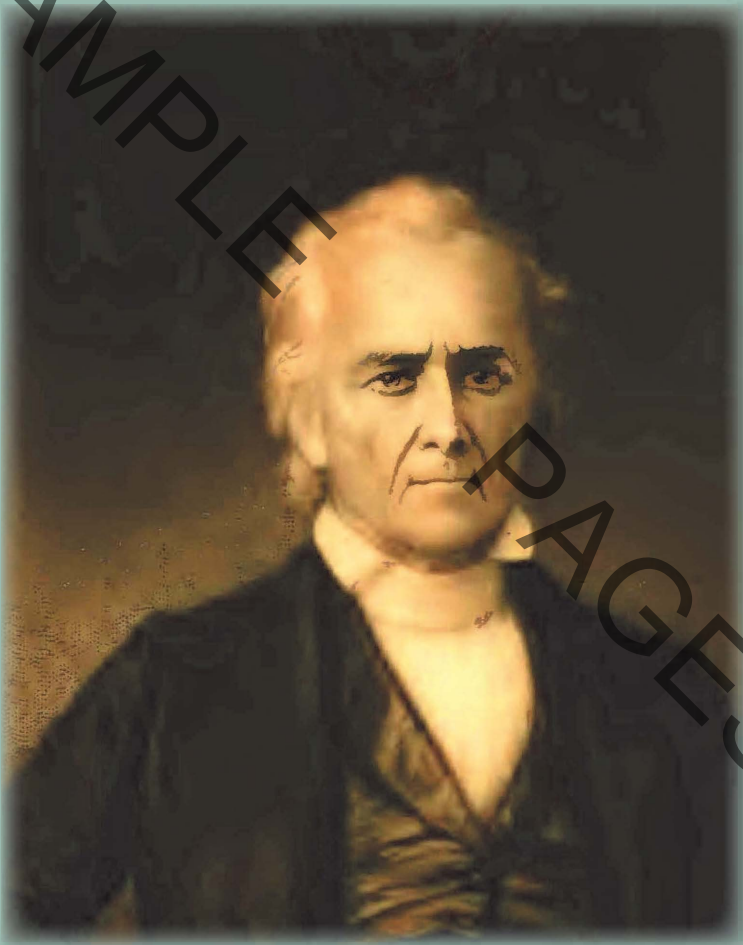


Sketch of the Life
of
Elder Humphrey Posey

FIRST BAPTIST MISSIONARY TO THE CHEROKEE INDIANS,
AND FOUNDER OF VALLEY TOWN SCHOOL, NORTH
CAROLINA



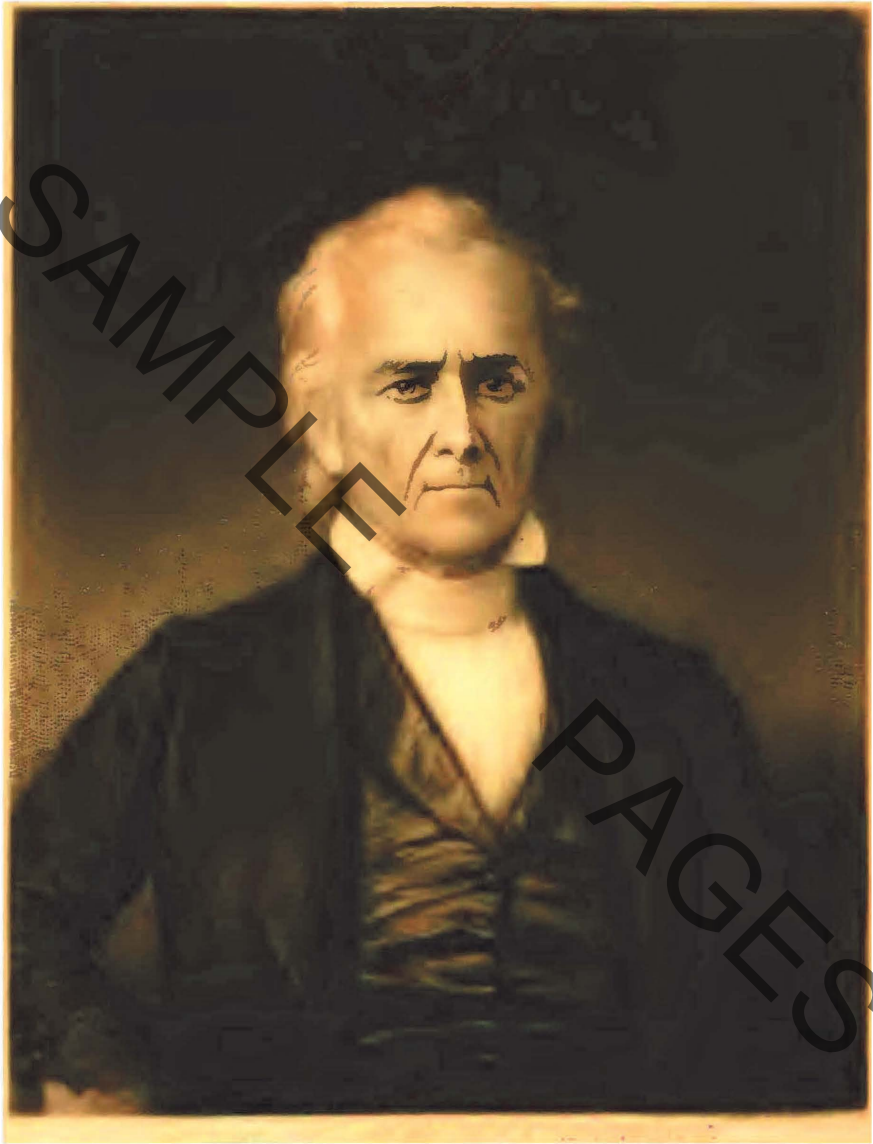
BY ROBERT FLEMING
OF NEWNAN, GEORGIA

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ELDER HUMPHREY POSEY,

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BY ROBERT FLEMING,
OF NEWNAN, GEORGIA.

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NOTICE.

THIS very brief Memoir of ELDER POSEY, has been prepared by the Author, at the request of the Western Baptist Association, Georgia. It is hoped that the numerous friends of the deceased may be interested in its perusal, and that the religion of Christ may be promoted by its circulation. But it is especially hoped, that the cause of Indian Missions may be aided, and the general cause of benevolence subserved.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

FROM the days of John the Baptist until now, the Baptists have been more famous for preaching in the wilderness, than for wearing soft raiment, and for dwelling in king's houses. They have generally been looked upon as reeds shaken with the wind, and have every where been spoken against. Many of them have been eloquent ministers of Jesus Christ, "fervent in the spirit, and mighty in the scriptures," and have "taught diligently the things of the Lord." Some of the most distinguished men which the world has ever known were in principle and profession Baptists. A record of their history has not, however, in all instances, been preserved. In this respect, the Baptists have not done justice to themselves nor to the cause they so heartily adhere to. They have probably been criminal in this

thing to a greater extent than they are able to perceive. The great, and almost unparalleled increase of their numbers within the past and present century, has given rise to an era in their history which will, no doubt, mark their general character for centuries to come.

The establishment of "*The American Baptist Publication Society*" will be remembered. Through it the enlightened world may learn what the Baptists were, what they now are, and what they probably will be. But while the pages of their general history are rapidly assuming a more interesting aspect, will not the department of biography add largely to the amount of pleasure and improvement of the thoughtful, candid reader? Almost all classes feel interested in perusing biographical sketches of remarkable persons. There is a kind of charm in this department of literature, which is rarely found in any other species of history. "Many valuable observations in the conduct of human life," says a good writer, in the

Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, "may be made from the accounts of those who have been eminent and useful in the world." Indeed, the lives of wicked persons often furnish us with lessons of instruction. They point with certainty to the fatal consequences which, sooner or later, follow a life of heedlessness and rebellion against God. We may not be able to derive pleasure from perusing the sketches of an unholy life, and therefore may not feel anxious to perpetuate the memory of those who have contributed to augment the sum of human woe. Yet there still lingers in our fallen nature, it would seem, a universal consent that "*the remembrance of the wicked shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.*" Job xviii. 17. But while "the name of the wicked shall rot" in forgetfulness, "*the memory of the just is blessed.*" Prov. x. 7. It is a debt we owe to the memory of those who have given their time, their talents, and their lives to promote the best interests of our bodies and souls.

This world has often been termed a wilderness. Holy writ declares we are "travelers and sojourners, as all our fathers were." It would, therefore, seem that it may be a good work to write a good biography of a good man,—to delineate the journey through this wilderness, and sketch the more useful parts for the benefit of those who may come after. Thus the young traveler may learn how to take advantage of the rough and disastrous places which he may have to encounter. He may also learn how to avoid the dangerous precipices over which his predecessors have been incautiously precipitated.

In attempting to give a sketch of the life of Elder Posey, the writer considers himself called upon, from a variety of considerations, to inform the reader, at the outset, that he is fully sensible of his inability to give to his friends that kind of production which they are desirous to see, and which they have a right, in some degree, to demand. The incidents in his life, from the mere circumstance of his

locality in the missionary field, were many and interesting. But a record of them has not been preserved, and but few, comparatively, can now be collected for the benefit of surviving friends. To gather up his numerous religious letters on business connected with his missionary career, is impossible; and his private correspondence, though somewhat extensive, has not been in many instances preserved. His diary of travels through various parts of our country, is disconnected, and of such a character as to be of little service in preparing this sketch. From what his friends have known of him, and from what the writer has obtained by the assistance of some of his worthy acquaintances and fellow-laborers in the gospel ministry, he hopes to give a history of this excellent servant of the Lord, which will be interesting and useful to those who know how to appreciate plain productions, and who desire truth, more than embellishment, in works of this kind.

The sketch of the rise and progress of

Modern Missions in Europe and America, given in the third chapter of this work, seemed indispensable. Many valuable histories of Missions have issued from the press; but who read them and where are they to be found? It is a lamentable fact, that many of our good brethren in the ministry have never seen such books as "*Choules' History of Missions,*" or "*Gammells,*" or even the little tract called "*History of the Burman Mission.*" It is hoped that the short account given in these pages, will be very acceptable to those who may not possess the works alluded to above. Posey's life was so identified with the cause of Missions, that it was impossible to give his history without giving some detailed account of the Missionary operations amongst us.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of Humphrey Posey.—Education.—Habits of early life.

ELDER HUMPHREY POSEY was born in Henry County, Virginia, January 12th, 1780. When he was about five years old, his father removed to Burke County, North Carolina, where young Posey spent his childhood and youth. He was blessed with parents who felt it to be their duty to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. His mother had been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ from her youth, and was, we are informed, a woman of considerable reading, and of very strong mind. But, best of all, she was possessed of high-toned piety. She was not merely a Baptist by profession, her head and her heart were sound in God's statutes; and she was a woman of true

Christian decision. This last mentioned trait in her character, her son Humphrey inherited in an uncommon degree. He was almost a stranger to vacillation and suspense in the performance of either his religious or secular duties. His mind, like his body, never lingered in its movements. His mother taught him, when but a child, having no spelling book, to spell and read in the Psalter; and by the time he was seven years old, he had read through the New Testament several times, without the opportunity of going to school more than twenty days. Might we not pause here for a moment to inquire whether the hand of the Lord may not be distinctly seen in this early period, shaping, through maternal instrumentality, the mind and character of this poor and obscure boy, for the great work whereunto he was afterwards called. May we not also see how the mind, like the body, becomes strong and active by early well-directed exercise. It is a fact not unworthy of notice, that Elder Posey had an excellent memory, and he was remark-

ably familiar with the word of God, which he had treasured up in his heart when he was a child; and when he was old it had not departed from him.

He was not what is usually called an educated man, having never attended school more than to enable him to read, write, and perform the simple rules of arithmetic. He never, at school, studied English grammar. He commenced teaching "*little old-field schools,*" as he used to call them, when about seventeen years old. And as he who teaches, learns faster than he who is being taught, so it was with young Posey. He had a great thirst for knowledge. Holy writ assures us, "Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." Prov. xviii, 1. This Bible truth is very strikingly illustrated in his case; for he became what may be termed a good English scholar. He wrote and spelled well, pronounced accurately, spoke grammatically, thought clearly, and reasoned forcibly. He possessed enough of good common sense to keep him, however,

from setting himself up as competent to criticise the language and pronunciation of those who had claims to scholarship. Nor was he spoiled by that disgusting dogmatism and self-importance which are so frequently found in ruinous connection with those who are self-taught and self-made, and who have acquired without merit a kind of popularity amongst their fellows. It is probably true, in some instances, that "a little learning is a dangerous thing"; but it is certainly a shallow mind that is intoxicated by shallow draughts.

He was fond of vocal music, and was well acquainted with the principles of that science. When young, his voice was very good, and, "singing with the spirit and with the understanding also," he had great power over his congregations. How desirable that a minister should possess this gift, and cultivate it!

In his person, Elder Posey was over the ordinary size of men; with fair complexion, and clear blue eyes, he might be considered handsome. But he was more than

this; he was dignified and commanding in his personal appearance,—always easy and affable in his intercourse with others,—never phlegmatic nor morose.

Many young men of the present day, should they ever cast an eye over these pages, will probably be surprised to find that with opportunities so poor he should rise to so much distinction. But in reference to difficulties, it may be truly said of him—

“Where some see mountains, he but atoms sees.”

Naturalists tell us that the wings of the ostrich are not adapted to flying. Their structure authorizes the conclusion, and facts establish it—*the ostrich cannot fly*. So it is with some minds; they cannot rise above difficulties—never can expand, nor mount, nor soar. But the kind Creator gave the subject of this biographical notice a mind of superior make—fitted for almost any exigency. Fixed in its purpose, it grasped and mastered whatever came within its reach. Having to “work for a living,” his body and his mind were both greatly

benefited. The one was healthful and vigorous, the other clear, active, and energetic. No dull nor sluggish movements characterized neither the one nor the other. Indeed, his soul and his body seemed to be made for each other.

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CHAPTER II.

His Marriage.—Conversion.—Impressions on preaching.—His Ordination.

THE subject of this Memoir was a few days more than twenty years old when he married. This marriage would not be considered by Dr. Franklin a misfortune; though some green philosophers of the present age might deprecate early marriages. He selected a pious wife, though himself, at that time, not professing to be a converted man. He believed the Bible was a revelation from God, and he acted upon that belief. As a lover of wisdom, he sought a wife of whom he could say, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Prov. xxxi. 26. A sensible man will always endeavor to select such a wife. "She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life." Prov. xxxi. 12.

Among the papers left by Elder Posey, is found, in his own handwriting, a brief account of his religious experience. It will be proper to give the reader this account just as he has left it, that he may have a correct specimen of his style in writing; while it will exhibit his views of the work of the Holy Spirit upon his heart in an interesting and instructive manner. He says:—

“My parents taught me very early the danger of sin, and I had serious thoughts about a future state when very young. Sometimes I was afraid to go to sleep, on account of the dread I had of the judgment’s coming and finding me unprepared; and I was often terrified with dreams, so that I never could be said to enjoy fully ‘the pleasures of sin.’ Still, I put off seeking the salvation of my soul until I was about eighteen years old. I often promised to reform, but I as often broke my vows. Now the subject was brought home to my conscience with so much power, that I began to retire into secret places to pray—became very much dejected, but in a short

time my distress left me, and I became quite calm. This continued several years, during which time I never could allow myself to go into open sin, (and I will here state that I was preserved, somehow, so that I never swore a profane oath in my life, to my knowledge,) but still my mind was carnal. At about seventeen years of age, I began teaching 'little old-field schools,' and also vocal music, in Greenville District, South Carolina. In the Spring of 1799, I went into Union District to follow the same occupation. On the 28th day of January, 1800, I was united in marriage with Lettice Jolly, then a pious member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. I taught school, that year, in the same community, and in 1801 removed into Greenville District. All this while my mind was occasionally deeply affected. Some time about the end of this year, after I had gone to bed, I fell into a doze, and I was addressed so plainly, that I rose hastily up in my bed, believing some human being had spoken to me in these words: '*Without you repent carefully you*

This very brief Memoir of Elder Posey was published in 1852 and has been republished at the request of outstanding Baptists of our generation because of the amazing accomplishments of Humphery Posey.

It was prepared by the Author, Robert Fleming, at the appeal of the Western Baptist Association, Georgia. "It is hoped that the numerous friends of the deceased may be interested in its perusal, and that the religion of Christ may be promoted by its circulation. But it is especially hoped, that the cause of Indian Missions may be aided, and the general cause of benevolence sub-served."

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The front cover picture is Humphrey Posey.

