

**MEMOIR OF  
JACOB CREATH, JR.**

## CHAPTER I.

Elder William Creath, the Father of Jacob Creath, Jr. —  
 Samuel Creath, his Grandfather — Birth of Jacob Creath  
 — His Mother — Her Name, History, and Character.

Elder William Creath, of Mecklenburg County, Virginia, the father of Jacob Creath, was born on the twenty-third of December, 1768, during the passage of his father and mother from Dublin, Ireland, to Nova Scotia. His father, Samuel Creath, and his mother, were also from Dublin. Her maiden name was Susan Moore.

By education and profession they were Presbyterians. He lived and died a member of that organization. His son William was, of course, educated in the same faith, and continued in the same body until A. D. 1787, when, upon profession of his faith in Christ, he was immersed by Elder Henry Lester, and joined a Baptist congregation in Granville County, North Carolina, under the pastoral care of Elder Thomas Bass.

After his baptism he lived and studied theology with Elder John Williams, a Calvinistic Baptist preacher, of Charlotte County, Virginia. Even at so late a period of the world's history as this, young preachers were informed that "special preparation for the performance of their public duties was unnecessary, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit, on such occasions, would directly communicate to their minds all the thoughts and words which were requisite." The subject of this brief sketch acted upon such suggestions, but found, after a few experiments, that he could always speak most

intelligently, eloquently, and profitably to others on subjects which he had thoroughly matured by previous reflection. In Brother Williams he found a talented, pious man, and a true friend.

During the last twenty years of his life, Elder Creath traveled extensively, preaching in North Carolina, Maryland, and the middle and lower parts of Virginia. He kept a record of his travels, embracing dates, places, persons, and occurrences. It is to be regretted that this is not accessible, so that full justice might be done to the character of one who stood high among his brethren, and was instrumental in turning “many to righteousness.”

He was the contemporary and friend of John Leland, Robert B. Semple, Andrew Broaddus, sen., Elder Courtney, Benjamin Watkins, Ely Clay, John Kerr, Richard Dabbs, Robert T. Daniel, James Shelburne, David Barrow, A. W. Clayton, and Lewis Lunsford. His arguments were powerful, and his appeals to the heart irresistible. A deist of his acquaintance once remarked that “there were but two things that could make him cry—the one was shaving with a dull razor, the other was hearing William Creath preach.” A member of Congress observed, that “he was the only man he ever heard who could deliver a three hours’ speech without saying something that was not worth hearing.”

He was five feet ten inches in height. His complexion was florid. His eyes were dark, and full of fire. His hair was black as a raven. His form was admirably proportioned. He was strong and active. His temperament was “the sanguine.” His attachments, and resentments, too, were, by nature, ardent and lasting. Such men always have devoted friends and bitter enemies. He was not an exception to the rule. He was a thorough-going Baptist

preacher, of the Calvinistic school. He asked no quarter from the Pedobaptists and Armenians, and he gave none.

Elder Jacob Creath was his second son. He was born on the seventeenth of January, 1799, on Butcher's Creek, Mecklenburg County, Virginia, six miles from Boydtown, the county-seat. When he was quite young his father removed from the upper to the lower end of the county, and settled on Taylor's Creek, six miles from the Brunswick line; one mile and a half east of the public road leading from Richmond and Petersburg, to North and South Carolina; twenty miles north of Saint Tammany Ferry, on the Big Roanoke River; and ten miles from Gee's Bridge, on the Meherrin River. The county was fifty miles long, and thirty broad.

His maternal ancestors were Virginians, of English descent. His mother's name was Lucretia Brame, the daughter of Thomas Brame, of Mecklenburg County. She was a woman of sound physical constitution, strong common sense, great energy of character, decided, prudent, candid, and modest. She never permitted her children to utter a vulgar word in her presence.

She gave birth to sixteen children. And with but little help from her husband, who spent the most of his time in preaching, with meager pecuniary returns, she nursed, fed, clothed, and educated all of them but three. She could read and write, and was well acquainted with the Bible. On Lord's days she required her children to read it to her, and to commit portions of it, and beautiful hymns, to memory.

When her husband was from home she maintained prayers in her family. She trained her children to obey her. Her house was a home for Baptist preachers, from Maine to Georgia. After her

husband's death, she continued a widow to the end of life. During that period she supported and educated her six youngest children; and enjoyed the unutterable delight of beholding five of her nine sons devote themselves to the glorious work of the gospel ministry.

## CHAPTER II.

The First School he attended — His Attainments — Second School and Acquirements — Other Educational Advantages — A full account of his Conversion commenced.

The subject of these memoirs was long styled Jacob Creath, jr., to distinguish him from his uncle, Jacob Creath, who died “full of years and honors” at Lexington, Ky., during the month of March, 1854. When very young he learned the letters of the alphabet, and to spell and read, at a school taught by Joshua Stanley, three miles from his father’s house.

The second school of which he availed himself was one taught by Jones Gee, under whose profound instruction he not only made progress in reading and spelling, but also acquired the indispensable art of writing. At the age of eight or nine years he was required to make additional valuable attainments in the line of an education by taking his position at the plow-handle and on the wagon, and maintaining it for ten or twelve years.

He read at night by the light of the blazing brush-pile. And if he enjoyed that luxury during the day, it was while his faithful brutes were resting or feeding. In this manner he carefully read and studied the New Testament. In his twenty-second year he commenced the study of English, Latin, and Greek grammar.

At a very early period in life his attention became aroused to his immortal welfare. In those days it was inculcated that people must pass by Mount Sinai, and hear a certain amount of its thun-

der, before they could possibly catch even a glimpse of Mount Calvary. They were instructed that “they could do nothing; and yet that they would be certainly damned, unless something was done.” He underwent what in those days was denominated “a great law-work.”

“I strove as hard,” he remarks, “to observe the laws of Moses as though I had been a Jew.” He desired most sincerely to be a Christian; but knew not how to become one. And from none of the teachers of that day, however distinguished, could he obtain the desired information. He exerted himself to secure the favor of God, by his good deeds; and sometimes thought he had almost succeeded, when, all at once, some gust of wrong feeling would drive him from his course, and disperse all his hopes of divine friendship.

He tried to drown his sorrows in infidelity, but his conscience would not allow him to become an infidel. The sword of Truth had pierced his soul too deeply for that. He believed the Bible to be the Word of God, and “Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God,” as firmly as now; but the preachers told him “*that* was historical faith,” “and would by no means answer his purpose; and that his only chance for salvation consisted in being born again.” But how to attain that all-important boon, the deponents testified not. Thus was he left in the dark, without either pathway or guide. “Had I been told,” says he, “to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, repent, and be baptized for the remission of my sins, I could have been a Christian at ten years of age, as easily as at seventeen.

“I never saw the day when I did not desire to be good and please God, my Maker. I often withdrew to retired places, and prayed to him that I might see a great light shining around me,

like Saul of Tarsus; or hear a voice informing me that my sins were pardoned. Under these circumstances nature sometimes gave way, and I went to sleep on my knees, overwhelmed with the dreadful consideration that I was forever lost.

“In this state of mind I had alarming dreams. One of them was peculiarly impressive. I imagined that ‘the day of judgment’ had come. The human race were assembled on a vast plain. The Saviour occupied a narrow pass between *them* and heaven, through which only it could be entered. And no one could enjoy that unspeakable privilege but those on whom He conferred a white ball, as a token of his favor. An older sister and myself approached him together. On her he bestowed the pledge of his love; and she passed away from me into the realms of unfading beauty, glory, and bliss. *Me* he repudiated.

“I was devotedly attached to my sister; and when I found that we were permanently separated, and that hell was my immortal portion, I awoke screaming, in a paroxysm of terror. Although it is more than fifty years since this incident occurred, the original impression still remains. When I found that the scene was merely a dream, I went earnestly to work to secure my salvation, lest the vision should ultimately prove awful reality.”

## CHAPTER III.

History of his Conversion continued and completed — A  
Narrative of Thrilling Interest.

In April, A. D. 1817, the Meherrin Baptist Association met at Ready Creek meeting-house, in Brunswick County, Virginia, about thirty miles from his father's house. His father and other preachers were expected on the occasion. "I concluded," says he, "to attend the meeting, with the faint hope of obtaining some relief from my protracted mental agony.

"At the close of the last discourse, on Lord's day, James Shelburne, the father of Silas Shelburne, invited persons present, 'in distress of mind, to come forward and be prayed for,' observing that 'all who did so at the last Association, a year ago, had obtained a hope, and been baptized, and that some of them were now preaching the gospel,' instancing his own son, Silas, and James Jeffries. While he was thus addressing us, the thought occurred to me that I could not live another year under the mental anguish which I had so long endured, and that the present moment might be the only opportunity which God would ever afford me of fleeing 'from the wrath to come.'

"Influenced by this consideration, and overwhelmed with solicitude and sorrow, I pressed through the densely-packed audience that I might enjoy the benefit of their prayers. There was great rejoicing among the preachers, both on my own account and my father's. They prayed very fervently for my salvation; and taking it for granted that their prayers would be answered, wel-

comed me to the enjoyment of God's favor. My perturbation of mind was somewhat assuaged, but permanent relief was not afforded.

“Soon after this my father asked me if he might publish that I would be baptized at the next church meeting, on Wilson's Creek, three miles from his home, on the third Lord's day in May. I remarked that ‘I would prefer to wait a little longer as I did not wish to deceive either myself or others.’ He answered, ‘Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.’ I authorized him to do as he desired.

“The appointed time having arrived, and candidates for church membership having been invited to present themselves, I, alone, went forward. Few at that time cared for their souls. My father then said to me, ‘My son, will you begin and tell what the Lord has done for your soul?’ I replied that ‘I had not much to tell; but that any question which he would propose, I would endeavor to answer.’

“His first interrogatory was, ‘Have you seen yourself to be a sinner?’ I responded, ‘I have long seen and known that I was a sinner.’ ‘Do you think,’ he continued, ‘that you can save yourself?’ ‘By the deeds of the law,’ I replied, ‘no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God.’ ‘On whom,’ says he, ‘do you depend for salvation?’ I answered, ‘On Jesus Christ; for there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved.’ ‘Do you wish,’ he added, ‘to be baptized?’ ‘My coming here,’ I observed, ‘was the best evidence of that.’ ‘Do you,’ he remarked, ‘from this time forward intend to live the life of a Christian?’ My answer was, ‘With God's help, I intend to do so until death.’

“My examination having proved satisfactory, they ‘received’ me. And the next day, being Lord’s day, my father immersed me in the presence of a vast multitude of people; including school-mates, intimate friends, and neighbors. When I emerged from the water, I possessed what had never fallen to my lot before, ‘the answer of a good conscience toward God.’ I felt tranquil as a summer’s eve. My ‘peace’ was ‘as a river.’ I ‘rejoiced with joy indescribable and full of glory.’ I knew of no words that more appropriately expressed my state of mind than those of an uninspired poet. They are as follows:

“How happy are they, who their Saviour obey,  
And have laid up their treasures above!  
Tongue can not express the sweet comfort and peace  
Of a soul in its earliest love!

‘This comfort of mine, since the favor divine  
I have found in the blood of the Lamb;  
Since the truth I believed, what a joy I’ve received!  
What a heaven in Jesus’ blest name!

’Tis a heaven below my Redeemer to know;  
And the angels can do nothing more  
Than to fall at his feet, and the story repeat,  
And the lover of sinners adore!

‘Jesus, all the day long, is my joy and my song;  
Oh that all to this refuge may fly!  
He has loved me, I cried. He has suffered and died  
To redeem such a rebel as I.

‘On the wings of his love, I am carried above  
All my sin, and temptation, and pain.  
Oh! why should I grieve, while on him I believe?  
Oh! why should I sorrow again?

'Oh the rapturous height of that holy delight,  
Which I find in the life-giving blood!  
Of my Saviour possessed, I am perfectly bless'd,  
Being filled with the fullness of God!

'Now my remnant of days will I spend to his praise,  
Who has died me from sin to redeem.  
Whether many or few, all my years are his due;  
They shall all be devoted to him.

'What a mercy is this! What a heaven of bliss!  
How unspeakably happy am I!  
Gathered into the fold, with believers enrolled!  
With believers to live and to die!'

“I continued to praise God and rejoice. I was ‘diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ Many a happy Lord’s day did I spend, while yet a youth, both before and after my baptism. The hard toil to which I was subjected during the week did not render less sweet the rest of the sacred day.”

This is a sample of the material contained in  
*Memoir of Jacob Creath, Jr. with the Biography of*  
*Elder Jacob Creath, Sr.*  
by Phillip Donan

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