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## Caleb Evans, Founder of The Bristol Education Society

ONE date in Church History which every Bristol student knows is 1679, the date of Eward Terrill's will which made possible the foundation of Bristol Baptist College. Actually the effective work of this Academy began in 1720 when Bernard Foskett became minister of Broadmead Baptist Church and President of the College. He was assisted by, and then succeeded by Hugh Evans, who in turn, was assisted by and then succeeded by his own son, Caleb. To Hugh and Caleb, and more particularly to Caleb, we owe the development of the work, under the auspices of the Bristol Education Society founded in 1770. Their aim was to prepare able and evangelical ministers, and this was possible because they were both able and evangelical.

Hugh Evans was a Welshman. His grandfather was a Breconshire farmer who, in Oliver Cromwell's time, passed his examination by the Triers and was recommended for the ministry in the National Church and awarded a stipend of £30 per annum. He was appointed to a living at Maesmynys, where he continued until 1660. His conscience would not permit him to comply with the terms of the Act of Uniformity, and he became a Dissenter, joining the church at Dolau and Pentre, where he became minister. He was succeeded in 1688 by his son Caleb (senior) who died in 1739. Hugh Evans was his youngest son. His mother came from a Herefordshire family distinguished in the Principality for sheltering Baptists in times of persecution. Hugh was converted as a schoolboy in Breconshire. He came to Bristol to visit a relative, and to obtain advice for a complaint in his foot. While he was here, presumably on an extended visit, he continued his studies under Bernard Foskett, who baptised him at Broadmead in 1730 when he was 18 years old. When he returned to Wales, Foskett wrote to his father advising the church to try the young man's gifts for the ministry, "for while he was at Bristol we could not prevail on him to exercise his gifts, such was his extreme modesty".<sup>1</sup> Three years later (1733) three different churches called Hugh Evans to their ministry; he became assistant minister at Broadmead. In 1739 he became a teaching elder, and at Foskett's death in 1758 he became College Principal. Dr. John Rippon, who was a student, wrote of Hugh: "His gift in prayer was uncommon — his students thought it unequalled . . . nor did any preacher know better what it was to reign over his audience, enlightening their understanding, convincing their judgment, and then kindling all their passions

in a blaze of devotion".<sup>2</sup>

Amongst his admirers was Caleb, his son: "When I was only a youth I beheld with admiration my father in the pulpit, and was delighted with the heavenly sounds which flowed from his lips. Hearing the awful terrors of the law and the astonishing grace of the Gospel, I was brought into the very dust before the throne of a holy God, and enabled to magnify the riches of free grace". Here is Calvinist theology, gripping the soul of man.

Hugh had married the daughter of a Broadmead deacon, Sarah Brown, but of a large family only Caleb and two of his sisters survived their father. Their mother is described as a woman of uncommon excellencies. She died when Caleb was 14, and his father remarried the following year another lady from Broadmead. Of his step-mother, Ann, Caleb said: "She was a most faithful and affectionate wife, a kind and tender mother, not only to her own children, but likewise to those of us she generously took charge of in our early years".<sup>3</sup>

Hugh Evans hoped his son might serve God in the Gospel, and he sought to provide him with a liberal education, sending him to Mile End Academy in London. He was baptised during his student days by Dr. Samuel Stennett in Little Wild Street. For two years he served as assistant to two or three London Baptist ministers.

Bernard Foskett died in 1758, after 38 years' service to Broadmead Church and the College. Broadmead invited Hugh Evans to become pastor and college president, and his son, Caleb, now aged 21, to be assistant. Quickly the church responded to the team ministry. The congregation, already large and reputable, felt the impact. Dr. Rippon says: "The influence of the father was apostolic; the popularity of the son was proverbial".<sup>4</sup>

In accordance with Baptist procedure, Caleb Evans was not ordained until his ministry had been put to the test — and this test lasted eight years! Hugh Evans presided, speaking of the glory of the Church, and the divine care in raising up from age to age able ministers of the New Testament to go in and out before his people and to break the bread of life. "And to have a son capable and willing to serve in the same important work fills me with unutterable pleasure. Greater joy I cannot have".<sup>5</sup>

Caleb's confession of faith is very significant. First he affirms the right of private judgment in matters of religion as the undoubted and inalienable privilege of every rational, intelligent creature. "I am accountable only to God". But while the congregation has no right to impose a credal test, it is appropriate that they should be satisfied they have invited a minister who is genuine in faith and morals. Once this has taken place, the minister has the right to expect support, and the freedom of Christ to exercise his ministry. The statement which follows is

unmistakably Calvinist, yet not narrowly so. "I believe God made man in the formation and structure of whose body and in the faculties of whose soul He gave striking specimens of His exquisite skill and wisdom". (Here we may detect one who is aware of scientific developments.) His adherence to the Biblical doctrine of election is carefully worded: "I find it impossible to deny universal depravity, unless I could suppose poisonous streams flow from a pure fountain. . . . God graciously chose to display the riches of His sovereign grace and mercy, foreseeing the fall of man. He determined to rescue a certain number from the apostate race. He could have chosen all, but that He has not done so is indisputable. But we are not to understand the sovereign will of God as a capricious and wanton display of power. . . . I cannot deny the doctrine of election, notwithstanding all the dreadful representations some men have presumed to give it . . . and this is the important lesson I learn from it . . . with the deepest humility every believer ought to say, 'by the grace of God I am what I am'."

Coming to the "grand doctrine of the Atonement and Mediation of Christ", he declared "Here I see sin punished, and all the perfections of the Deity exalted, and the chief of sinners saved. Here I see mercy and truth, righteousness and truth. Here I see the Great Immanuel, Deity and Humanity reunited, and an effective way opened for a happy union between God and every believing soul. I receive therefore this glorious heart-cheering doctrine *as well worthy of all acceptance.*"<sup>6</sup> This phrase was the keynote of Andrew Fuller's book, written in 1781, and published in 1785. Both men may have derived the phrase from 2 Timothy, though Evans does not cite it as a quotation. But may we not see the possible link between Bristol and the breaking with hyper-Calvinism, which led to the evangelical Calvinism that inspired William Carey and the Baptist Missionary Society? In a paper read to the Baptist Historical Society in June 1968, Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall surveyed the way in which 18th Century Calvinism tended to anti-nomianism, "based on undue attention to logic". This Dr. Nuttall attributes in part to the influence of unordained and theologically untrained men, because they lacked a University education. "It would be worth while to enquire to what extent the Bristol Academy and Education Society fostered the movement towards Fullerism".<sup>7</sup>

The churches of the Western Association were never as rigid in their Calvinism as Particular Baptists were in areas where they were confronted with General Baptists. There were very few General Baptist churches in the West, and some of these lapsed into Unitarianism. The Somerset Confession of 1656, while clearly Calvinistic, includes as Article 34 what Lumpkin describes as one of the clearest statements on the missionary

obligation of the Church to be heard before the time of William Carey. "That as it is an ordinance of Christ, so *it is the duty of his church to send forth such men as are fitly gifted and qualified* through the Spirit of Christ to preach the Gospel to the world".<sup>8</sup> (Acts 13, 1-3, etc.) Article 25 stresses "the duty of believing Gentiles to have compassion on the Jews, because their conversion will be to us life from the dead".<sup>9</sup> It is suggested that this emphasis may have come out of the debate between the Quakers and Thomas Collier, for the Quakers in Bristol at one period in the 17th century drew off a number of Broadmead members.

Broadmead Church always had an open attitude. It was never exclusively Baptist, and was parallel to the Bedfordshire churches of the Bunyan tradition, where Baptists and Congregationalists did not separate on the issue of water baptism. But Pithay also, though always a "closed membership", reflected in the person of Andrew Gifford Senior and his successors what Dr. Champion describes in *Farthing Rushlight* as "evangelical Calvinism."<sup>10</sup> For example, Andrew Gifford would, at the close of his sermon, offer Christ to sinners. His grandson, Dr. Andrew Gifford, was a friend and admirer of George Whitfield. This evangelical Calvinism, as we have seen, is clear in the Caleb Evans' "Confession of Faith".

Benjamin Francis characterised Caleb Evans' faith in an elegy composed at his death, in which he said:

"Celestial truth shone through his inmost soul,  
Illumined, controlled, revived and warm'd the which  
He felt the doctrine of the Cross, and found  
Life, peace and joy through all his powers abound".<sup>11</sup>

And Dr. Samuel Stennett said of Caleb: "He was no bigot, for he understood the rights of private judgment, and was sensible of the weakness of the human intellect, and felt the difficulties of truly upright minds on points where they could not agree. And so far from being ashamed of the Cross of Christ, he gloried in it, for it had been the power of God to his salvation and to the increasing joy of his heart."<sup>12</sup>

John Thomas describes him as a man of real candour, who upheld the rights of private judgment, but who, once he had investigated for himself, would hold to his opinions and preach—though still remaining open to conviction.<sup>13</sup>

*The founding of the Bristol Education Society.*

A whole group of ministers and laymen was responsible for the founding of the Bristol Education Society in June 1770, including the ministers of both the Bristol churches, Pithay and Broadmead. Undoubtedly, Hugh Evans, as Principal, was behind the venture. His sermon to the Society in 1773 clearly affirms his belief in an educated and converted ministry. "The able

minister needs to possess a tolerable share of natural endowments . . . and he needs the improvements of human learning. No profession needs this more than the ministry — when such learning is sanctified and humbly devoted to the service of God. But such a ministry depends on God, whose calling should be confirmed by a man's home church, and the minister must be evangelical, one who is led into the true spirit of the Gospel, who preaches Christ and Him crucified".<sup>14</sup>

But it was Caleb who, as the younger man, was more active in rousing support for the venture which his father and he so clearly visualised — a College, well supported, and intellectually abreast of the times. Caleb toured the churches, arousing Baptists to the vision, as the Annual Reports of the 1770's clearly reveal.

Why was the founding of the Bristol Education Society considered necessary? There had been a concern for the education of Baptist ministers ever since the Clarendon Code had excluded Dissenters from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The dissenting academies provided for a general education, broader in its basis than the classical curricula of the Universities, although there was mistaken suspicion in some quarters that education was being regarded as a substitute for the Holy Spirit rather than as an ally.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of the imposition of the Clarendon Code there were between 40 and 50 Particular Baptist ministers who had previously received a University education. What of the future now the Universities were closed to them? A few Baptists sought higher education in Scotland or Holland. What opportunities could the rest expect? Here was a matter of deep concern.

Amongst these Baptists who had a concern was Andrew Gifford (Senior) minister of Pithay Church, Bristol, from 1661-1721, whom Ivimey describes as "the Apostle of the West, as he was the founder of most churches in Somersetshire and Gloucestershire".<sup>17</sup> During a lull in the persecution at the time of the Declaration of Indulgence, on the 2nd October, 1675, leading London ministers sent a letter to Bristol and to other parts of England and Wales suggesting "a meeting the following May in the metropolis with a view to form a plan for the orderly standing ministry of the Church who might give themselves to reading and study and so become able ministers of the New Testament".<sup>18</sup> Apparently there were hyper-Calvinists who even claimed that "none could pray acceptably without the influence of the Holy Spirit, and, since unconverted men were destitute of those influences, that it was not their duty to pray, nor the duty of ministers to exhort them to seek for spiritual blessings".<sup>19</sup> Andrew Gifford was certainly *not* one who shared this restricted outlook, and agreed with the London ministers. who

wrote "Christianity improves and rectifies, but it does not abolish our service to God, but it doth not in any wise make void that which was a duty before".<sup>20</sup> . . . When the Particular Baptists assembled in London in 1677 no decision appears to have been made about the educating of ministers. The meeting is chiefly significant for the Confession of Faith in which the brief section on the ministry makes no mention of the subject. Religious persecution was to continue for eleven more years.

These were the circumstances which led Edward Terrill to write his Will (dated 3rd June, 1679). Terrill was a ruling elder at Broadmead. The local context is significant. Thomas Hardcastle, Broadmead's minister, had died the previous year after a long imprisonment, and Broadmead had just called George Fownes of London as his successor. Terrill was wealthy. He was led to think of his stewardship by the generosity of two Broadmead members who had previously bequeathed from humble resources £5 each to their church. One was Margery Simmonds, a maid; the other Edward Terrill's own mother. Edward Terrill himself became possessed of considerable wealth by his marriage in 1668 to Mrs. Dorothy Heath. But with a wider vision, Edward Terrill provided not only for the poor of his church, and for its future ministry, but also for training future ministers — to quote: "for the Glory of God and the propagation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the true love and affection he hath and beareth unto the congregation of which he is a member. Mr. Terrill empowered his trustees to devote the proceeds of his estates to the maintenance of a holy, learned man, well skilled in the tongues (Greek and Hebrew), and doth own and practice the truth of believers' baptism as a pastor or teacher of the congregation".<sup>21</sup> Three half days in the week is the tutor to employ in the instruction of some young men, not exceeding twelve, members of any baptised congregation in or about Bristol for two years at the most.

Edward Terrill was sensitive about the reproaches brought against Baptists by Presbyterians that their ministers were not brought up in the University. Commenting on Thomas Ewins, Broadmead's first minister, whom he valued highly, he slips in the qualification: "though he had not the original tongues".<sup>21</sup> In persuading Thomas Hardcastle to come to Broadmead in 1671, he argued that he would be "more use in Bristol where there were so few learned men of our persuasion by contrast to London".<sup>21</sup>

Immediately after the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 representatives of 100 Particular Baptist Churches assembled in London. Meeting after the long period of persecution, it is significant that the Assembly expressed concern that many churches were neglecting to maintain their ministers, so that

they were "incumbered with worldly cares, and that churches were not giving adequate encouragement for the raising up of an able and honorable ministry for time to come".<sup>22</sup> The Assembly resolved to raise a fund through the free will gifts of the churches, collected weekly and remitted quarterly. The three-fold purpose of the fund was (1) to relieve ministers of the necessity for following a secular calling, (2) to sponsor ministers for pioneer ministries where the Gospel has not yet been preached, (3) to assist those members that shall be found in any of the churches that are disposed for study, have an inviting gift and are sound in fundamentals in obtaining to the knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Ministers were to be allowed "a comfortable maintenance according to their ability". Also we note: "It is a shame for men to wear long hair or long periwigs, and especially ministers (1 Cor. 11,14) or strange apparel (Zeph. 1,8)."<sup>23</sup> The question was asked "Would it be advantageous for our brethren now in the ministry to attain to a competent knowledge of Greek, Latin and Hebrew tongues, that they may be the better capable of defending the truth against oppressors?". Answer: resolved in the affirmative.<sup>24</sup>

The 1691 Assembly reported that several pious and hopeful young men had been assisted in their acquirement of learning, and some had been sent forth to visit the churches. In the next year the appeal was made to the churches to "look among yourselves for some godly men inclined to the ministry". The 1693 Assembly, held in Bristol, did, however, find it necessary to correct any misapprehensions that "the design was to promote human learning or acquire parts above or make them equal with the gifts of the Spirit".<sup>25</sup>

In the West country support for the National Fund was immediate, e.g., the Pithay Church in Bristol sent £30 by the hands of Andrew Gifford; Plymouth collected £27, and promised £9 per annum, to be entirely disposed of in the education of young ministers. They nominated Richard Sampson, one of their members, and he was maintained at Bristol under the tutorship of an Oxford man, Mr. Thomas, who had been ejected from Cromwell's State Church. Sampson, who went on to exercise a great ministry at Exeter, is listed as the first student of Bristol College, though he was not apparently maintained by Terrill's fund. After the death of Mr. Thomas in 1693 students appear to have been sent to academies in London, Taunton and Tewkesbury.

After some years of searching, Broadmead appointed Caleb Jope to undertake the training of ministers. He was paid from the Terrill bequest from 1714-9, but the venture was unsuccessful for some unknown reason (possibly Jope's personality).



Broadmead was glad to find a successor in Bernard Foskett, who came from Henley-in-Arden in 1720. The National Fund of the early 1690's does not appear to have been sustained, but a revival of concern was manifest in 1717, when the Particular Baptist Fund and the Bristol Baptist Fund were both established. But even so only a few men, less than a dozen, were being educated in Bristol. Students were leaving before they had completed their courses because money had run out. Yet there was a shortage of Baptist ministers.

How adequate was the *quality* of education given at Bristol in the mid-18th century? Hugh Evans is naturally loyal to his Principal, and was warm in his praise. Dr. Rippon, who studied at Bristol just before 1770, said "If it be conceded that Foskett's method of education was limited rather than liberal, severe rather than enchanting, employing the memory more than the genius, the reason more than the softer powers of the mind . . . in a word, if it is granted that Mr. Foskett is not the first of tutors . . . it is a debt of honour to acknowledge that some good scholars and several of our greatest ministers were educated by him".<sup>26</sup>

*The aims of the Bristol Education Society.*<sup>27</sup>

The aims of the founders of the Bristol Education Society in 1770 were two-fold to put the work on a sound financial footing, and to make possible a more liberal type of education. For Hugh and Caleb Evans there was no dichotomy between the devotional and the academic. Learning and personal faith go together. But no education is a *substitute* for a living Christian faith. In April, three months before the Bristol Education Society was founded, Caleb Evans gave an address to the students, the manuscript of which the College still possesses. Here are some extracts: "Reflect on your views in devoting yourselves to this sacred employ. Was it merely to have an opportunity of pursuing different branches of literature to which you had perhaps a strong inclination? Was it that you might lead an easy, genteel life, which you might be ready to support a minister's life to be? Was it to obtain popular applause and fame, which you might fondly hope your abilities would procure you? Or was it from the principle of unfeigned love to Jesus Christ and to the souls of men? The question the Lord put to Peter, 'Lovest thou me?' is a question I would earnestly entreat you to consider. Let me exhort you to the vigorous pursuit of your studies in general. There is scarcely any branch of knowledge but what may be useful. Whatever hath a tendency to enlarge our ideas of the divine perfections, to give us a clearer view of the meaning of Scripture and enable us to express our thoughts . . . is worthy of the attention of every candidate for the ministry".<sup>28</sup>

The eighteenth century was a time of intellectual and political

ferment. The growth of scientific knowledge, in astronomy, in medicine, and in the explorations of men like Captain Cook, who set foot in Australia in 1770, (the year the Bristol Education Society was born,) continued to expand the horizons of men's minds. It is interesting to think of some of the books that influenced Caleb Evans' generation. *Christianity not Mysterious* by Matthew Tindal, the so-called "Bible of Deism" appeared seven years before Caleb's birth; Butler's *Analogy* was published just before his birth. When Caleb was 20, David Hume wrote his *Natural History of Religion*, Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared in 1776, as also did Tom Paine's *Common Sense*, which stimulated radical politics in the American Revolution. In the year of Caleb's death, Paine's *Rights of Man* defended the principles of the French Revolution.

In this situation of ferment some in the churches relapsed into a cold intellectualism. Christianity was equated with respectable morality. Bishop Butler of Bristol told John Wesley that his pretending to extraordinary revelations and to enthusiasm was "a horrid thing, a very horrid thing". Many Presbyterians and General Baptists became Unitarians. Others, especially Particular Baptists took refuge in their orthodox Calvinistic theology, and retreated from involvement in any dialogue with the world. But it was the glory of the Dissenting Academies that they did not shrink from the challenge of new thinking. The inclusion of scientific subjects in the curriculum marked them as more progressive educational institutions than Oxford and Cambridge, which clung to the ancient classical traditions. The work at Bristol Academy fits into this robust outlook. Caleb and Hugh introduced their students to languages and logic and rhetoric. But they also included elements of geography, astronomy and natural philosophy "To enlarge and elevate their conceptions of the work of God and His great and glorious perfections". Until recently the College retained some of the scientific instruments used in the classroom.

Caleb Evans urged the College Committee to build up a good library and he raised the money for this purpose. Dr. Andrew Gifford and Dr. Llewellyn were two of the earliest benefactors, and they both bequeathed their own valuable libraries in 1784. It was hoped by Gifford that Bristol College would apply for a Charter as a University, but "the modesty of the present tutors would not permit them to go forward with so vast a design". But it was significant that Morgan Edwards, a student under Foscett, founded Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A. This University conferred on Caleb Evans a D.D. in 1789, and King's College Aberdeen, similarly honoured him with a D.D. in 1790.

Dr. Caleb Evans realised that if the mind is to grow, there

must be freedom and leisure for scholars. In his sermon to the Society in 1775 he expresses again in his own way what his father had said two years before about the need for educated ministry, and then, addressing the subscribers, he added: "Are any singled out by churches of Christ as persons they hope God may own and bless? You kindly invite them, dropping their secular pursuits, to come and sit down under the friendly shade of your patronage, that the way of God may be expounded to them more perfectly". Benevolent, generous design indeed! God has blessed it and will bless it!" Behind the appeal for money is the challenge to provide future ministers with the leisure and the freedom to grow in knowledge and in faith.

*Other Baptist Education Societies.*

The Bristol Education Society set a pattern which others soon followed. William Staughton, a student under Caleb Evans, became an influential Baptist minister in Philadelphia, and founded the Philadelphia Education Society which promoted ministerial education in the Middle States.

In Wales for 40 years Trosnant Academy educated Welsh students for the Baptist ministry, and some of them came on to Bristol for further training. From 1770, when it closed, until 1807 Bristol provided for the needs of Welsh candidates for the ministry. (There were complaints that the teaching in Bristol was hampered because several students did not have much knowledge of English.) In 1807 an academy was opened at Abergavenny, and Caleb's widow donated £10. Micah Thomas, a student of Bristol, became the first tutor. This is now Cardiff Baptist College. John Fawcett was not a "Bristol man" but he was invited to become Principal, though he declined, and he stimulated the formation of the Northern Education Society in 1804 which became Rawdon College, and Dr. William Steadman, the first Principal, was a student under Caleb Evans. In London early attempts to provide for ministerial training proved unsuccessful, but in 1809 the London Education Society, which invited one of Dr. Ryland's students, Solomon Young, to become the first Principal, set in motion Regent's Park College. It was John Sutcliffe's entry to Bristol College in 1772 that led Dan Taylor to form an Education Society for the General Baptists.

*Social Responsibility.*

Caleb Evans was a younger contemporary of John Wesley, born two years before Wesley's work began at Kingswood and Bristol. They died in the same year, 1791. They faced the same political and social challenges, and though Wesley's involvement in social and philanthropic work ranged more widely, many of their activities were parallel. The industrial revolution was increasing in its momentum towards the end of their lives. Both were concerned about poverty and ignorance. In a letter in 1786 Broad-

mead church reported on developments at Downend.<sup>29</sup> Here the "preaching of the gospel in a populous but ignorant neighbourhood" which had been undertaken for years in borrowed buildings now necessitated the opening of a commodious place of worship. But before this social work had been done the Broadmead letter to the Association reports: "We have established a school at this place for the education and clothing of 40 poor children, and united with other congregations in another school for the education and clothing of 100 poor children, and we cannot help expressing the wish that similar plans might be adopted throughout our churches. The utility and importance of such an institute cannot easily be estimated, and, were there a general disposition in all to strive together, they might be more easily established than is imagined by those who can never make the experiment".<sup>30</sup> This modesty conceals the initiative and personal involvement of the minister of Broadmead who directed the project, and who was involved in other schools too. He was one of the founders of the Broadmead Charity School which cared for 20 boys and girls, and every week he visited the school to pray with the children and instruct them. All his social concern sprang from a pastoral heart, as many tributes on the occasion of his death testify. "He was always ready to show kindness of heart, not waiting to be asked, but was foremost with his advice, his purse, and his prayers in every design calculated to relieve distress, instruct the ignorant, give ease to the pained, and health to the sick, to sooth the miseries of age and rescue giddy youth from the early habits of vice".<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Francis in his elegy pays similar tribute:

"Philanthropy diffused through all his soul,  
Planned his fair life and aggrandised the whole.  
In him the husband, parent and the friend  
Their various charms were ever seen to blend.  
His hand relieved the sons of want around;  
The fatherless in him a father found.  
The friendless widow and her infant care  
Were sure his aid and sympathy to share".<sup>32</sup>

It is characteristic of his breadth of outlook, to which the evidence points throughout his life, that the children at the school at Downend attended Divine worship at the parish church under the instruction of persons professing the established religion. From his confession of faith onwards a remarkable charity of spirit characterises his attitude to other denominations. Indeed, the rules of the Bristol Education Society expressly provides for non-Baptists to share its lectures. Anglicans were among the early subscribers to the funds of the Bristol Education Society.

*Political Liberty.*

Caleb Evans was not merely concerned with private charity. Some evangelical philanthropists of the 18th and early 19th centuries have been accused of a patronising attitude to the poor and of "blind spots" in their approach to larger social issues. Not so Caleb Evans. In 1775 he preached on the theme of "Constitutional liberty", at the time when republicanism was being advocated by some, particularly under the impact of radical politicians in the American colonies and in Britain. "The only civil liberty we desire is that constitutional liberty to which we have been called, and of which it is the glory of the illustrious house of Hanover to be the guardians. But the liberty to which we as Britons and Protestants are called is not civil but religious liberty".<sup>33</sup> He expressed the hope that the provisions of the Act of Toleration would be yet further improved to allow every conscientious man "to sit quietly under the shade of it without fear of disturbances". Again, at the centenary of the 1688 revolution, Broadmead listened to a peroration by their pastor on "British Freedom Realised",<sup>34</sup> based on a text from Ezekiel, "I will overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it". The sermon clearly argues that, in accordance with New Testament principles, "Christians should not resist a good king or seek to overthrow a government that has minor imperfections". But when civil and religious liberty are denied "to submit to a wicked hereditary tyrant is not only not our duty, but it is a great sin". Thus the preacher praised William III and George III, but took his stand with those who opposed James II and resisted the Jacobite plots.

At the revolt of the American colonies in 1775, John Wesley used all his influence to achieve a peaceful settlement, and deplored the use of force. He came out with his "Calm Address to our American colonies". To some this seemed quietist and Tory-reactionary. Wesley argued that there was no tyranny in the British Government imposing taxes on the Colonists, who had accepted the British Charter, even though they had no representative in the Houses of Parliament. Caleb Evans published a reply, under the pen-name of Americanus (1778) "Taxation and representation are inseparable. This position is founded in the laws and statutes going back to the reign of Edward I. Forty shillings a year freehold gives an Englishman a voice in the legislation of the country, and why should we deprive of this privilege our fellow citizens in America".<sup>35</sup>

Thus Caleb Evans was in line with progressive opinion, though he resisted the more extreme radicalism that advocated republicanism. As a Dissenter, he must have been aware of his political disabilities, and elsewhere he took his part in the Western

Association's call for a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. But he does not intrude any special pleading in his letter to John Wesley.

*The Anti-Slave Trade Movement.*

Wesley and Caleb Evans were, happily, on the same side in their opposition to the Slave Trade although I have not discovered direct co-operation, most probably because Wesley used his influence in London, whereas Evans worked in Bristol. The three centres of the trade were London, Bristol and Liverpool, although towards the end of the 18th century Bristol's interest had declined, due to economic rather than ethical reasons. Manufactured goods left Bristol for West Africa, where they were used to purchase negroes, who were then shipped under appalling conditions across the Atlantic. The third 'leg' of the journey involved carrying cargoes of tobacco and sugar, from the West Indies chiefly, back to Bristol. In the summer of 1787 Thomas Clarkson was sent by the Anti-Slave Trade Society in London to collect evidence to present to Parliament. In Bristol he found ready co-operation, especially from the Quakers, but also from Anglicans and Dissenters. At the "Seven Stars" and other public houses he interviewed sailors who related the brutality with which the negroes were treated on the middle passage from Africa to America. Clarkson writes in his account of his visit to Bristol: "The hearts of those who were concerned in this traffic usually hardened, that I readily believe any atrocities which might be related. It made my blood boil within me. It gave new springs to my exertions".<sup>36</sup> When Clarkson moved on to Liverpool the local citizens continued the cause, and in January 1788 a meeting was held at the Guildhall, sponsored by the Lord Mayor and chaired by a former Sheriff. "The list of prominent supporters" included the Deans of Bristol and Gloucester, Caleb Evans and J. P. Estlin, prominent dissenting ministers".<sup>37</sup> Clarkson mentions "Mr. Hughes, a clergyman of the Baptist Church"—presumably Joseph Hughes of the Pithay Church who became a tutor at the College.

The committee concerned with the abolition of the trade came into strong conflict with Bristol merchants and others who, forced to admit the existence of barbarous conditions on the slave ships, tried to divert attention to the making of laws to regulate, but not abolish, the trade. But in favour of abolition 1,000 signatures were collected. The Western Association in 1788 passed a resolution and voted £5.5.0 to the funds of the National Committee, and it was to Caleb Evans that Granville Sharp wrote thanking the Association. The conflict in Bristol continued, and doubtless, but for his illness leading to his death in 1791, Caleb Evans would have exerted a more conspicuous influence.

*Writing and Preaching.*

More than 30 publications, mostly pamphlets and sermons, were published by Evans. Special mention may be made of his collaboration with Dr. John Ash of Pershore, another Bristol College man, in publishing a collection of hymns adapted for public worship. First published in 1778, it went into nine editions. One of the later publications was *Christ Crucified*, four sermons on the Atonement based on 1 Corinthians 1, 23-24.

Concerning his preaching, it was said "it was solid and judicious, the fruit of mature thought and labour. He did not offer God that which cost him nothing . . . his discourses were mostly on weighty and serious subjects, composed with judgment in the best order, delivered with manly dignity and becoming warmth and zeal".<sup>38</sup> Sometimes he preached from full notes, sometimes without any — this was a matter of policy — but he was always well prepared. Stennett says he excelled in prayer, and was particularly remarkable for the pertinence and fullness of matter upon special occasions.<sup>39</sup> Incidentally, he advised his students against "preaching prayers, a mere narration and now and then a petition tacked on . . . This is not leading but misleading the devotions of the congregation".

As a pastor and leader of his people he was well respected and faithful, hardworking. "His manner was grave, not formal, animated but not affected, commanding but not assuming".<sup>40</sup> The Broadmead minutes reveal a very delicate situation at church meetings a few months before his last illness. Young Robert Hall, who had been assistant minister for seven years, resigned, stating: "My opinion on some points of religion and moral speculation are different from the church", but the correspondence makes it abundantly clear that Hall had no clash of opinion with his senior colleague. "The Pastor has my approbation and applause". A church meeting followed at which members suggested that Hall should be re-invited as assistant minister. Caleb told the meeting: "Rather than that I should overawe or influence the meeting, I wish to withdraw from the chair". This was agreed, and John Harris, the senior deacon who was currently Lord Mayor of Bristol, took the chair. There were several meetings, and much division of opinion about procedure. But Robert Hall's acceptance of a call to Cambridge closed the matter for Broadmead.

Caleb Evans was married twice. In 1762 he married Sarah Jeffries of Taunton, "whose amiable character endeared her to all who had the happiness of her acquaintance". She had five children. She died in 1771. Three years later Caleb married Sarah Hazel "the daughter of a very respectable family in Bristol". His mother's name was also Sarah.

For several months before he died in August 1791, at the relatively early age of 54, Caleb lay paralysed by a stroke.

Rippon records: "During these months his mind in general was much taken up with the employ of heaven, though he also continued a lively interest in his lifetime affairs. In humble abasement of spirit he did often speak of himself as a fallen, depraved creature. But when he contemplated his privileges as a redeemed, regenerate sinner, his joy was unutterable. With rapture he exclaimed 'O the breadth and length, and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that he should be called the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'"<sup>41</sup>

## NOTES

1. John Rippon, *Essay on Bristol Academy* (1795) *Rippon's Register* II p.434.
2. John Rippon, *ibid*, p.435.
3. Caleb Evans, *Sermon on death of Mrs. Ann Evans* (1776) p.23.
4. John Rippon, *op. cit.*, II p.442.
5. Hugh Evans, *Address at Caleb Evans' Ordination* (1767) p.5.
6. Caleb Evans, *Confession of Faith* delivered at his ordination (1767).
7. G. F. Nuttall, *Baptist Quarterly*, XXII (1968) p.425.
8. W. L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, (1969) p.212.
9. W. L. Lumpkin, *ibid*, p.213.
10. L. G. Champion, *Farthing Rushlight*, (1961) p.5.
11. Benjamin Francis, *Elegy on the death of Caleb Evans* (1791) *Rippon's Register* I p.248.
12. Samuel Stennett, *Sermons on death of Caleb Evans* (1791) p.29.
13. John Thomas, *ibid*, p.53.
14. Hugh Evans, *Sermon before Bristol Education Society*, (1773) p.66ff.
15. Hugh Evans, *ibid*, p.36.
16. See Samuel How, *The Sufficiency of the Spirit's Teaching without Human Learning* (1639).
17. James Ivimey, see also R. E. Cooper, *From Stepney to St. Giles*, (1960) pp.14ff. *History of English Baptists*, Vol. II (1814) p.547.
18. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I (1811) pp.415-20.
19. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I (1811) p.417.
20. E. B. Underhill, *Broadmead Records*, (1847) p.xcii.
21. A. Dakin, *Bristol Baptist College 250 years 1679-1929* (1929) p.14.
22. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I p.479.
23. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I p.495.
24. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I p.500.
25. James Ivimey, *ibid*, Vol. I p.528. See also R. E. Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp.15-19 and *Baptist Register* II pp.418-20.
26. John Rippon, *op. cit.*, II p.426.  
(1969) Obtainable from Bristol College.
28. See John Rippon, *Register* I pp.345-51.
29. Broadmead Records of this period (unpublished MSS).
30. Western Association Letters, 1784.
31. John Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.54.
32. Benjamin Francis, *op. cit.*, p.249.
33. Caleb Evans, *Sermon on Constitutional Liberty* (1775).
34. Caleb Evans, *British Freedom Realised* (1788).
35. Caleb Evans, *Letter to Mr. Wesley* (1775).
36. Thomas Clarkson, *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplish-*



- ment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (1880) Vol. I pp.292-367.
37. Peter Marshall, *The Anti-Slave Trade Movement in Bristol* (1968) p.6.
  38. John Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.55.
  39. Samuel Stennett, *ibid.*, p.28.
  40. Samuel Stennett, *op. cit.*, p.39.
  41. John Rippon, *op. cit.*, II p.447.

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## Reviews

*Die Mennoniten.* Herausgegeben von Hans-Jürgen Goertz. Die Kirchen der Welt, Band VIII. Evangelisches Verlagshaus, Stuttgart, 1971. 286pp. DM 32.

MENNONITES and Baptists belong to the same ecclesiastical family. They may not unfairly be described as cousins, Mennonites coming of an older branch. Of recent generations Baptists have had few contacts with them. In the 17th and 18th centuries correspondence was fairly frequent and friendly, though fitful. It was a sound instinct which led the founders of the Baptist World Alliance to invite their relatives to London in 1905 and to include them in the statistics, which were then compiled. I was glad to be able to have Mennonite fraternal delegates with us at the Golden Jubilee Congress fifty years later.

The relationship gives added interest and importance to this volume, which is one of the series on the Churches for which Dr. J. D. Hughey produced a Baptist contribution some years ago. The volume has other significant features. It is a symposium and the contributors are most of them younger scholars, who are playing leading roles in a Mennonite "renewal" movement, the source of which may be described — using a Biblical analogy — as a redigging of the old wells.

The heart of the volume is in two main sections, the first treating of the main Mennonite doctrines, the second describing the geographical range and variety of the community. The historical background is provided by an introductory essay by Heinhold Fast, editor of a valuable book of documents connected with the left wing of the Reformation. A closing essay by Paul Peachey, who has studied the sociological origin of the Swiss Brethren, looks to the future in the framework of the Ecumenical Movement.

A determination to relate Mennonites to their Christian brethren is evident throughout. Walter Klaassen, a Canadian, who after studying at McMaster University spent three years at Regent's Park College, writes on "Word and Spirit" and does