

Percy William Evans.

PERCY WILLIAM EVANS was born at Hereford on March 5th, 1882, and died on March 23rd, 1951. He received his early education at the Hereford Blue Coat School. His later Arts work was done at Birkbeck College, London. Spurgeon's College accepted him as a student and there he did his Divinity work from 1907 to 1911. He took his B.A. in the University of London, and later his B.D., with Honours in Hellenistic Greek. His pastorates were: Sutton Coldfield, 1911-1915; Horley, 1916-1921; and Tonbridge, 1920-1925.

With the consent of the Tonbridge Church, he accepted the call to be a Tutor in Spurgeon's College in 1922. On the retirement of Dr. A. McCaig in 1925, he was appointed Principal and continued in that important office to 1950. His successor was his former fellow-student and colleague, Dr. F. Cawley. Especially in the second half of his principalship, Dr. Evans was called upon to serve as chairman of many important committees, both Baptist and Free Church but, important as all these were, his major contribution lay in the theological education of his students. For twenty-five years these came under his academic and formative influence, and many of them will bear his mark to the end of their days. It is but just to say that his persistent work was done with his men; his occasional service with and for others.

In his first year as Principal, he was elected a member of the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. For the first two years he was a silent member, serving, as it were, as an apprentice in marking procedure, and learning from his seniors (many of them very grave!) how the business of the Council of the Union should be carried through. That quality of patience and humble willingness to learn from those qualified to teach served him in good stead when later on he himself was called into deliberation and decision. On such occasions, not a few of which bore weightedly on the future of the Baptist Church in our land, he revealed a sureness of touch and wide competency that earned for him the reputation that he could be trusted, especially on debateable issues that called for leadership in no small measure.

In 1934, the Centenary year of the birth of Charles Haddon

Spurgeon, the University of Edinburgh conferred on him the Degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*), at once a tribute to the great founder of the College and to his own scholarship and position in the Baptist communion.

Dr. Evans' election as President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1940 was an additional evidence, within his own communion, of the growing esteem in which he was held. It was a notable year of service, and through the assistance of his colleagues on the Faculty of the College his services were acclaimed throughout the Union.

He became a member of the Free Church Federal Council, as a representative of the Baptist Union, on its re-formation in 1941, a fusion of the old National Free Church Council and the Council of Evangelical Free Churches. He served on its Finance, Administration and General Purposes Committees, and on many other special committees set up for various purposes. He was elected Moderator in 1948. In that same year he was elected Senator of the University of London, his own University.

When the Conference of Baptist Principals was initiated in 1943, he was made its first chairman and remained a regular and enthusiastic member. He became chairman of its sub-committee appointed to prepare the draft of "A Statement on the Lord's Supper." That same Conference made him the first chairman of the Whitley Lectureship Committee in 1949, and he would have been the second Lecturer in 1952 but for his death.

The Baptist Union Council elected him chairman of the Board of Examiners for Non-Collegiate Candidates for the Ministry. He represented the Council on the Inter-denominational Committee of Christian Churches from the early days of the Second World War, a Committee that dealt with all questions relating to Free Church Service candidates, government grants, and other issues. In 1948 he was made chairman of the Home Work Fund Grants Executive Committee. On the Carey-Kingsgate Press-Board and Editorial Committee, he gave most useful service. In addition, he rendered yeoman service in the talks carried on with the representatives of the Churches of Christ in our land, exploring the question as to the amalgamation or closer co-operation of the two communions. He became a member of the Baptist Union Joint Advisory Committee for ministerial and lay-training. He was chairman of the Psalms and Hymns Trust in succession to the late Dr. Charles Brown. Along with Dr. M. E. Aubrey, he was appointed as a Trustee of the Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon, Zürich.

Particular attention must be paid to the service Dr. Evans rendered in collaboration with other Free Church leaders in the Conversations on the famous Cambridge sermon of the Archbishop

of Canterbury. The Council of the Baptist Union appointed him, along with the Rev. E. A. Payne, to serve as member of a group sent by the Free Church Federal Council on an exploratory visit to Lambeth to meet the Archbishop in January, 1947. As a result of the report submitted by them to the Baptist Union Council, it was agreed that the Council share in Conversations between the Anglican and Free Churches, and to this end Dr. Evans and the Revs. E. A. Payne and Ingham James were appointed as the representatives of the Council. Meetings began in the following May and continued at intervals until September, 1950. It was the first time Dr. Evans had shared in discussions of this nature, but he had become widely known as the Principal of Spurgeon's College and Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. Along with Principals Flew and Micklem, he stood out as one of the Free Church leaders. A speech he made in September, 1949, will remain in the memory of all who shared in these Conversations. It showed how deeply he had been impressed by many of the things said from the Anglican side.

Whenever later on he was called to speak on the Report, either in private or public, he made it clear that he felt it deserved and required the most careful and sympathetic consideration. On the other hand, it seems clear that he did not believe that Baptists in the main would or could go very far along the lines set out in the Report. Nevertheless, the Conversations undoubtedly gave him a new and wider understanding, perhaps a deeper appreciation, of Anglicanism and Anglicans, especially of the High Church Movement. The late Bishop Loyd of St. Albans, for instance, impressed him deeply. Nor was the impression only on his side. The Bishop of Derby (Rt. Rev. A. E. Rawlinson) in a memorial tribute in the *British Weekly* of August, 12, 1951, wrote thus: "His Anglican colleagues in the joint conferences which led up to the Report had learned not only to respect his learning but to hold the man in deep personal affection. On the occasion of their final meeting at Oxford, Dr. Evans gave on the last evening, in the Latin Chapel of the Cathedral at Christ Church, a devotional address (Jesus arrested in the Garden) which those who were privileged to hear it will long remember. The Church on earth is the poorer for the loss of a deeply spiritual teacher."

In Amsterdam, 1948, he was associated with three other Baptist Union Council representatives at the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the others being Rev. M. E. Aubrey, Mr. C. T. Le Quesne and Rev. E. A. Payne. He was a member of the section on "The Universal Church in God's Design." He also assisted in the administration of the memorable Communion Service on Sunday, August 29th, in the Nieuwe

Kirk. Among the others there who took part were Dr. Marc Boegner of France, the Rev. Benson Perkins (then President of the Methodist Conference), Dr. Hutchinson Cockburn of Scotland, the President of the Swiss Protestant Federation, and a minister from Indonesia.

In August, 1950, he attended at Cambridge the Faith and Order Commission on the Church, set up under the aegis of the World Council of Churches. There he played an important part in the drafting of its Report. He was also one of the signatories to a Report bearing the title "The Catholicity of Protestantism" presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury by a group of Free Churchmen.

Mention should be made that Dr. Evans was appointed Chairman of the special sub-committee set up by the Baptist Union Council to find a worthy successor to Dr. M. E. Aubrey, due for retirement, as the Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. That Committee came to the finding that the Rev. E. A. Payne was the man for the post. There is no doubt but that Dr. Evans' sense of his worth, plus his own friendship with him, coupled with the conversations they had together, were decisive in enabling Dr. Payne to see and feel that the call was of such a nature that he dare not put it to one side. It was a position of such grave responsibility that naturally he shrank from it, but the influence of Dr. Evans was of potent help to him in the hour when he had to decide one way or the other.

Dr. Evans was requested by the Baptist Advance Committee to get together his own team for the proposed Theological Group. This Group has hardly yet got well launched, but his appointment as Chairman was an indication of the trust reposed in his sanity and judgment by men of differing theological positions.

The Memorial Service was held on Friday, April 6th, 1951, when Bloomsbury Central Church was filled with hundreds of friends who sensed in his sudden passing a grave and personal loss. Dr. M. E. Aubrey, as Secretary and President of the Baptist Union spoke for the whole Baptist Communion of Great Britain and Ireland, as well as for many friends overseas; the Rev. H. Tebbit, Chairman of Spurgeon's College Council, gave the tribute of the Council; Dr. F. Cawley, fellow-student, colleague and successor in the Principalship, expressed the feeling of the College as a whole, whether resident or in the Ministry; and the closing tribute was made by the ex-Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, the Rev. F. Ballard, on behalf of all the Free Churches. In the Resolution, passed upstanding at a meeting of the Council of the Baptist Union held at the Baptist Church House on Thursday, 26th April, 1951, all present endorsed in

silent constrained feeling the sense that in Dr. Evans' passing the Church of Christ, in our own communion at least, had suffered no graver loss in this our day. The whole Council, typical of many other members of our Baptist Churches, paid its tribute to one whose memory will not fade so long as those present remain alive. His wide and competent work is his own appraisal.

FREDERICK CAWLEY.

The Old Meeting, Blunham, by H. G. Tibbutt. (Published by the Old Meeting, Blunham.)

Hinton Baptist Church, Chesham: 250 Years of Baptist Witness, by A. E. Webb and A. H. J. Baines (price 1s.)

Mr. Tibbutt has followed up his tercentenary volume on Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, with a pamphlet on the Church at Blunham. Four Blunham "conventiclers" were in the county gaol with Bunyan in 1665. Until 1724 Blunham Nonconformists were in membership with the Bedford Church. In that year a separate cause was established and in 1751 the present building was erected. The ministries of Thomas Craner and Martin Mayle in the eighteenth century and of William Abbott in the nineteenth century gave stability and strength to the cause and in spite of fluctuating fortunes a faithful witness is still being maintained.

In the seventeenth century Baptist witness in Buckinghamshire was subject to the tension between Arminians and Calvinists. Those in Chesham who were Calvinists were at first members of a church which included some in Hemel Hempstead and Watford and which had Samuel Ewer as minister. From 1752 to 1811 the Chesham Church, by then independent, was ministered to first by Samuel Sleaf, then by his nephew, James. In 1840, under William Payne, its membership numbered 289. New buildings were erected in 1897 and the name was changed from "Lower Baptist" to "Hinton" to commemorate connection with a notable Baptist family. Under the present minister, the Rev. J. Saunders, a vigorous witness is being given.

Both these pamphlets contain information of value to those with an interest in our history. Their usefulness would have been greater had they contained a list of the ministers, with dates, and also a clear indication as to where copies can be obtained.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.