

THE TEARS OF CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP.

A
S E R M O N,

Preached at the Interment of

The Reverend JOHN ASH, LL . D.

At PERSHORE, in the County of Worcester,

APRIL 15, 1779.

By C A L E B E V A N S, M. A.

Published at the request of the Church.

“_____ *Quid Sapientia*
Divina praeftas? O Minervæ
Parce piis, Libitina, alumni!

Heu furda vota! atque invalidæ preces !
Non ipfa Pallas, Phoebeve tu tuos
Servas, inexpective leti
Faucibus abripies maligni.”

“The Prophets, do they live for ever ?”

B R I S T O L:

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SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF CALEB EVANS.

Though he only lived for fifty-three years, Caleb Evans lived in such a way as to be missed when he was gone. Born in Bristol, England, on November 12, 1737, he was the son of Welshman Hugh Evans (1731-1781), who was called to be the pastor of Broadmead Church in Bristol and the president of Bristol Baptist Academy after the death of Bernard Foskett in 1758. Caleb loved the Lord Jesus Christ and distinguished himself as a hard-working servant who was faithful in his generation. Shortly after his father took up his new responsibilities at Broadmead, a call was extended to Caleb who was then only twenty-one years of age, to come and serve as his assistant, which he did to the benefit of the church and particularly the Academy. He remained faithful to his Saviour until the end of his life, and when he lay paralyzed from a stroke from which he never recovered, it is recorded by John Rippon that 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 we should be called the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be” [Eph. 3:18-19; 1 John 3:1-2].

Early years and early ministry.

Caleb Evans was part of a large family, of which only he and two sisters outlived their father. He lost his mother, Sarah, when he was just fourteen years old, but had a good relationship with his father's second wife, Ann. In a sermon preached at her funeral, he described his stepmother as “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.”

Caleb grew up in Bristol at Broadmead Church and was first educated by Bernard Foskett (1685-1758) and his father Hugh Evans. Believing in the importance of more formal education and hoping that his son might want to serve God in the proclamation of the gospel, his father sent him to Mile End Academy in London in the fall of 1753. There he attended the Little Wild Street Baptist Church, which was being pastored at the time by Samuel

Stennett (1727-1795), who also baptized him.

The time of his conversion is unclear, but he does tell us that he heard and responded to the gospel as he listened to the preaching of his father. “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,” he recalled. “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.”

During his time at the Little Wild Street Church, his gifts of ministry were recognized, and upon receiving proper authorization to preach the gospel on June 12, 1757, he began preaching in another London Particular Baptist church, Unicorn Yard, where he was eventually asked to assist the pastor of that work. But no sooner was he situated there, than the call came from his father and the church at Broadmead, asking him to come and labor there as the assistant pastor, a call which he eventually accepted on March 25, 1759.

His first sermon at Broadmead as the new assistant was preached on June 17, 1759, but it was not until eight years later that he was officially recognized as an elder and co-pastor alongside his father — a decision that was unanimously approved by the members of the church on July 19, 1767, and formally accepted by Caleb on August 2, 1767. He was ordained about two weeks later, on August 18, 1767. Between the time he returned to Broadmead as an assistant, and the time when he was ordained as a co-pastor, he married Sarah Jeffries of Taunton in 1762. They had five children together before she died in 1771. Three years later he married another Sarah, Sarah Hazel, who is said to have been “the daughter of a very respectable family in Bristol.”

The Bristol Baptist Academy.

Without doubt the most important contribution of Caleb Evans to the advancement of the kingdom of God was his re-organizing of the Bristol Baptist Academy and his role in founding the Bristol Education Society in 1770. The Academy can trace its roots back to the Clarendon Code of 1661-1665, which banned Dissenters from Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Recognizing the need for educated ministers who were theologically prepared to wrestle with the issues of the day, a group of ministers led by

Andrew Gifford, Sr. met in London in 1677 to talk about what they could do to meet this challenge. Nothing concrete came out of that meeting, although the persecution which was ongoing at that time and for the next eleven years would have made it difficult for any plans to have been put into action.

However, while nothing seemed to be happening outwardly, during this time a ruling elder at Broadmead, Edward Terrill (1635-1686), was moved by the Lord to write a will (dated June 3, 1679) that bequeathed his wealth, which was considerable, to the church for the training of future ministers. This was the beginning of the Bristol Baptist Academy, although the idea as Terrill envisioned it did not really get off the ground until a man by the name of Caleb Jope was appointed by Broadmead to train ministers and was supported by the Terrill fund from 1714-1719. He was followed by Bernard Foskett in 1720, who trained Hugh Evans, who succeeded Foskett in 1758. Hugh, in turn, as noted earlier, was joined by his son Caleb at the Broadmead Church and the Baptist Academy in 1759.

Writer, preacher and pastor.

Over the course of his life, Caleb Evans published more than 30 pamphlets and sermons. He also worked together with John Ash (1724-1779) of Pershore, who had trained under Bernard Foskett and Hugh Evans at Bristol in 1747-1748, to produce what was titled, *A Collection of Hymns Adapted to Public Worship*. It was published in 1769 and has been called “the first Baptist Hymn Book.” According to Hayden, it was a collection of hymns which attempted to give the people of God songs that expressed objective truths about God as well as selections of music that captured “the warmth of evangelical and personal experience.” Later in his life Evans also published four sermons that he preached on the atonement from 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 under the title, *Christ Crucified*.

As a preacher, Evans made sure that when he went into the pulpit he had something to say. He believed in the importance of preaching. In 1775, when preaching on the theme “Thy Kingdom Come” he said, “It is by the preaching of Christ and him crucified, accompanied with the influences of the blessed Spirit that this Kingdom is formed, subjects brought into it, the privileges of it dispensed, the laws of it enforced, the honors of it established,

the extent of it enlarged.” In light of these convictions as to the importance of preaching, it is not surprising that a contemporary said of his preaching that “it was solid and judicious, the fruit of mature thought and labor. 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.” He often preached with full notes, but there were other times when he deliberately used none. However, whether he did or did not use notes, he was always well prepared and he was particularly known for his unique ability to be able to say something worthwhile on “special occasions.” This probably can be attributed not just to his native intelligence, but to his broad reading and his keen interest in what was going on around him both in the church and in the world.^[1]

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN ASH.

Ash, John, LL.D., was a native of Dorsetshire, England. Early in life he was drawn to the Saviour, after which he united by baptism with the church at Loughwood, near Lyme. He was educated at Bristol College, in which he made remarkable progress in learning. In 1751 he became pastor of the church at Pershore. In his youth he was distinguished for his mathematical attainments, for which he was commended in the periodicals of the day. Ivimey says that "his philological works, his elaborate grammar, and dictionary are universally known and highly prized." The learning which marked his writings secured for him in 1774 the degree of Doctor of Laws. His religious opinions were Paul's, without any human additions. He lived honored for his great abilities and learning, and he died in the full enjoyment of the peace of God in 1770.^[2]

EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

The spelling of many words has been updated to modern English. However, the changing of these words has not altered the text in any way at all. A list of changes is placed here to show that this is the case.

For instance: The use of an “f” -like shape instead of a modern “s” in 18th-century English was due to the “long s” (ſ), a typographical convention where this elongated form was used at the beginning and in the middle of a word, while the “short s” (s) was reserved for the end of words and before letters like ‘f’ or ‘t’. This distinction was a functional variation, not a phonological one, and was eventually phased out by the early 19th century because printers and readers found the long ‘s’ confusing and easier to misread. Therefore, these “fs” were changed to an ‘s’. For example the word “diftreffing” was changed to “distressing”.

I pray that you are blessed by reading this sermon,

Your servant in Christ,

Hershel Lee Harvell Jr.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following discourse is merely the effusion of sincere friendship for one of the wisest and best of men. The little time allowed for the composition of it, and the tender wounded state of mind the Author was in during that time, may perhaps be considered as a sufficient apology, should any be thought necessary, for his not presenting to the public, upon such an occasion, a more regular finished discourse. It is sent to the press in the same simple form in which it was originally drawn up, and is most affectionately devoted to the family and friends of the deceased, as a humble token of respect to his memory, and a grateful memorial of his many virtues.

BRISTOL, May 1,
1779.

A S E R M O N, &c.

THE service now before me, is one of the most painful and distressing I was ever called to perform. Nor should I have ventured to engage in it, conscious that many of my honored fathers and brethren in the ministry could have performed it much better, in many respects, than I am able to do; but, called to it by the voice of a long and most endeared friendship, and by the voice of this mournful widowed society, over which my honored friend happily presided for so many years, I dared not refuse it; and I humbly hope, that my God and your God will carry me comfortably through it. Brethren, pray for me.

And to what words can I more suitably direct your thoughts upon this deeply melancholy occasion, or which can be more expressive of the pungent feelings of my own heart as well as yours, than to those very affecting words of the sacred historian, concerning the elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, when they took their final leave of their highly honored, their dearly beloved friend and minister the apostle *Paul*. They are recorded —

ACTS 20:37, 38.

AND THEY ALL WEPT SORE, AND FELL ON PAUL'S NECK AND KISSED HIM. SORROWING MOST OF ALL FOR THE WORDS WHICH HE SPAKE, THAT THEY SHOULD SEE HIS FACE NO MORE. AND THEY ACCOMPANIED HIM UNTO THE SHIP.

NOT to have sorrowed upon such an occasion, would have argued a more than brutal insensibility. The apostle had endeared himself to them by ten thousand acts of christian friendship during his residence among them, and they were now to see his face no more. How could they refrain from tears and lamentations upon so sad an occasion!

This last interview of our apostle with his beloved friends and brethren the elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, whom he had sent for to come and meet him at *Miletus*, and there to take their final leave of him, was affecting in the highest degree.

When they were come to him, see ver. 18 he thus pathetically^[3] addressed them.

“Ye know, from the first day that I came into *Asia*, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the *Jews*; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the *Jews*, and also to the *Greeks*, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold I go bound in the spirit unto *Jerusalem*, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save, that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. — And now, behold I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you, all the counsel of God. — Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

And when he had thus spoken, — when he had concluded this his faithful and affectionate address to them, and which they appear to have heard with the most religious and affectionate attention — before he finally parted with them, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on *Paul's* neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

After so solemn, so tender, and affecting an interview, with one whom they so highly honored, so dearly loved, and with whom they were connected by so many endearing ties; could they but have hoped again to have seen him, again to have heard his instructive voice, again to have conversed and taken sweet counsel together with him, their grief at parting might have admitted of some alleviation: but to see his face no more, to behold his venerable countenance, to hear his well known voice, in the public ministration of the word, and from house to house, warning them night and day with tears, to receive his sage advice^[4] — no more — this was a thought so cutting, so full of anguish, that it quite overcame them. They knew not how to bear it. They all wept sore, fell on his neck and kissed him, gave him the last embrace, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, this was what swelled their grief to such a flood of sorrow that it quite overwhelmed them, that they should see his face no more.

And this it is which gives such pungency, my friends, to your grief and mine upon the present occasion. — I shall see his face no more. — From my very infancy I honored him as a father, I looked up to him as a wise and prudent counselor, I loved him as a most affectionate brother. The longer and the more I knew him, the more I honored, the more I confided in, the more I loved him. In him I enjoyed “the bright complexion, cordial warmth, and elevating spirit of a friend, for twenty,” yea for thirty, “summers ripening by my side; all feculence^[5] of falsehood long thrown down; all social virtues rising in his soul; as crystal clear; and smiling as they rise!”^[6] But my heart bleeds at the thought, I know not how to realize it, I know not how to bear it — I shall see his face no more. We shall preach, we shall pray, we shall visit, we shall converse, we shall journey together, we shall unbosom our souls to each other, no more. His lifeless body is now before me, his spirit gone to return no more. I see his sable^[7] coffin, I see his gaping grave, but I do not

see, as I used to see, my honored, my amiable friend: no — I shall see his face no more.

And you my honored, my beloved brethren in the ministry; you, who walked so harmoniously and happily with him for many years; whose talents and learning you admired, whose accessibility and condescension charmed you, whose gifts and unaffected piety often edified you; you, who all truly loved him, and were as truly loved by him: you shall see his face no more. He'll pay you the friendly visit no more. He'll preach, he'll pray in your several pulpits no more. He'll join in your social religious meetings, and in your annual assembly, no more. You shall see his face no more.

And you, my dear friends, the members of this church, once, and for almost eight and twenty years, his beloved charge, the flock over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer; you, among whom for so long a period, he went preaching the kingdom of God, shall see his face no more. It was your honor and happiness to have such a minister, to be blessed, and that for so many years, with such a wise, faithful, affectionate, pious, and truly excellent a pastor. You knew his uncommon worth, and highly prized him. You all affectionately loved him, and you were equally loved by him. He was happy, I know he thought himself peculiarly happy in his connection with you. Ye were his glory and joy. O that ye may be the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus! Ye know after what manner he was with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations. And how he kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying to all that heard him, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. You well remember him from Sabbath to Sabbath in the place in which I now stand, judiciously conducting and fervently animating your devotions. You remember him in prayer, in which he so much excelled, pouring out his very soul to God, in awful adoration, deep humiliation, lively faith, ardent supplication, and fervent thanksgiving and praise. The copiousness, variety, and fervor with which he discharged this part of his sacred office, have often deeply affected you, I might have almost said melted your hearts within you. Nor can you forget with what plainness, with what simplicity, and yet at the same time with what evangelical strength and energy, he preached to you the terrors of the law, and the precious promises

of the gospel; alarming the secure, warning the presumptuous, instructing the ignorant, comforting the contrite, and saying to them that were of a feeble heart, be strong, fear not. He kept back nothing that was profitable for you, but rightly divided the word of truth, and gave to saints and sinners their portion in due season.

“His general method,” (to use his own words, when speaking in his late excellent performance, of the character of *Eugenius*,) “was, not to hunt after anything foreign to the subject, nor, indeed anything that may be supposed to lie deep in the text. But rather to pursue the leading ideas, and enforce the obvious meaning, with all the power of a genuine and unaffected oratory.” This method, as he very properly adds, “may not always tickle the ears, or gratify the curiosity of the hearers; but it is, we apprehend, the best calculated to inform the understanding and reach the heart.”

And, blessed be God, it did reach the hearts as well as inform the understandings of many. Ye are witnesses. You have often felt the power of the word preached by him, relieving your consciences, conquering your corruptions, purifying your hearts, enabling you to overcome the world, to rejoice in tribulation, and filling you with that joy and peace in believing, which are unspeakable and full of glory. No small number of you, are the seals of his ministry.

There is a pleasing variety in the gifts of ministers as well as in the tastes of hearers, and the Lord is pleased to overrule and bless them all, in different parts of his church, for the one great purpose of edifying the body of Christ; till at length all the grand designs of providence and grace shall be accomplished, and the people of God shall all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

Nor have you been animated, edified and comforted alone, by his judicious and affectionate ministry of the word, but you have often been greatly affected and edified also by his solemn administration of the gospel ordinances. You will not easily forget the gravity, the dignity, the fervor of his

soul, when he stood by the baptismal font, poured out his heart to God in prayer, and then descended and most solemnly devoted you to God there.

And can you ever forget him at the sacramental board? Have not your hearts often burned within you while he has been speaking to you of that love which passes knowledge! While he has been speaking of the sufferings of the Savior, and the glory that shall follow! I have repeatedly had the singular pleasure of joining with you upon these occasions; and I found it good to be there.

In your more private meetings for prayer and religious instruction, with what familiarity and condescension, with what propriety and pathos did he speak of the things of God to you, and pray with and for you! How often, upon these occasions, has his face shone as with a divine lustre, and his heart glowed with holy fervor!

Nor can you be unmindful of him in your respective families, where he was so acceptable a visitant, not only in seasons of affliction to soothe and comfort you, but to brighten and animate, upon more pleasing occasions, your social circles of cheerful but rational and pious friendship. But why do I thus lengthen the sad narrative? What must be the close of it, but — you shall see his face no more. In the pulpit, at the baptismal laver, at the table of the Lord, at your private religious meetings, and in your domestic circles of society and Christian friendship, — you shall see his face no more.

“No more the well-known features trace,
No more renew the fond embrace.”

To part with such a friend, such a minister, such a pastor, though it were only for a time, must to an affectionate people, and such you truly are, be very affecting: but to part with him forever, to see his face no more, there's an anguish in this thought which no words can represent. But so it is, the awful decree is past; here lies your breathless Pastor, and you shall see his face no more.

You also that were hearers, and hearers only, in this congregation; that in times past, some of you from your youth up, heard the gospel from the lips of our deceased friend and brother, and sat stately^[8] under his ministry: you shall hear his voice and see his face no more. Have you neglected the great

salvation he so often set before you, and the importance of which he so awfully impressed upon you? Has his ministry been the savor of death unto death to you? It can now then be never made the savor of life unto life. You shall see his face no more. You shall never again see him, till you see him at the bar of God. And, should you continue as you are, should you live and die impenitent and unconverted, how will you bear to meet him, as an awful witness against you, there! And yet, in the present mortal state, as you too well know, you shall see his face no more. In the town, in the surrounding villages and neighborhoods, where he so often dispensed the word of life, his face shall be seen no more.

But the tenderest part of the present service as yet remains untouched. How shall I address the dear afflicted family of my deceased friend! It is a task, I fear, too hard for me. Methinks I hear you his late beloved wife, and nearly related to one of the most amiable of women that once stood in that dear relation to me; I hear you, with whom he walked for so many years in the most perfect conjugal love and friendship; you that I know was dear to him as his own soul; the wife of his youth, the friend of his bosom, the affectionate partner of all his cares and pleasures, his joys and sorrows; the tender mother of his numerous hopeful offspring; methinks I hear you secretly moan and cry — Pity me, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me! It has so indeed. Touched you in the tenderest part, touched every trembling fiber, if I may so speak, of your inmost soul. When such “friends part, 'tis the survivor dies.” But he that has wounded is able also to heal you. He that has cast you down, can, and I doubt not will, support and raise you up. But I mean not to accuse your tears, I mean not to reproach your grief. You may, you must sorrow, most of all, to think that your friend, your husband, your pastor, your earthly all, lies enclosed in a coffin, will soon be hid in the grave before you, and, that you shall see his face no more! Your children around you may, and cannot but mingle their tears with yours. Their beloved father, their honor, their delight, their joy is gone, forever gone. They shall see his face no more. No, they shall receive his paternal instructions, they shall hear his parental prayers for them, they shall listen to his conversation, they shall behold his amiable example, they shall hear his well known voice, they shall see his face no more.

My dear young friends, we all pity you from our hearts, we all pray for you,

and we hope and trust that your father's God will be your God, for ever. Some of you, your deceased parent had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing [him] walk in the truth. O that the rest may follow in due time, and in the stead of the deceased father, may the children rise up to call the Lord blessed! May you be the joy of your amiable and still surviving mother, and with her, meet your departed father in the worlds of bliss, and be happy for ever! — But you are now in sorrow; you ought to be so; and we are all come here to sorrow, to weep with you. On such an occasion, Our tears become us, and “our grief is just.” The elders of *Ephesus* when they parted with *Paul* wept sore; nor do we find they were reproved for it. And the source of their sorrow was like ours. They sorrowed most of all, we read, for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more. And are not these the words which the providence of God now speaks to us? Ye shall see his face no more. Affecting thought! this is the united language reverberated from us all — We shall see his face no more. We need not be ashamed to weep over the dead body of such a man, such a christian, such a minister, such a friend, such an ornament to society, such a blessing to the church and the world; our divine Master, upon such an occasion, wept before us. He not only wept over a perishing *Jerusalem*, but he wept over the grave of his friend *Lazarus*. Jesus wept. And his affectionate disciples when they heard of *Lazarus's* death, immediately said, *let us go and die with him*. That is go and bewail his death, and sympathize with his bereaved friends. And how did *David* weep over his brother *Jonathan*! But should there be any marble heart in the present assembly, ready to think I have exceeded upon the present occasion, I shall seek no other apology than that which the friendly *Jews* made for my beloved Master before me — *Behold*, say they, John 11:36 *how he loved him!*

But is there no ray of comfort to penetrate the awful gloom with which we are overspread? Is there no light to pierce the surrounding darkness? Blessed be God, there is.

1. Though we are constrained mournfully to say of our departed friend, that we shall see his face no more; yet we have reason to be thankful for our past enjoyment of him, and for all that God was pleased to do in, and for, and by him.

Let us not, because he is now taken from us, forget to be thankful that he was ever given to us. He was a burning and shining light, and we rejoiced in his

light, though it could be but for a season. But let us be thankful for what we did enjoy. Thankful for the great talents, learning, grace, gifts, and amiable dispositions God was pleased to give him; that he saw fit so long to continue him, and to do so much good by him.

A man of a clearer head, a sounder heart, or of a more amiable, steady, happy temper, the world has seldom known. In his younger years he was particularly attached to the study of the mathematics, and made a distinguished figure in the periodical publications of that day. He was a native of *Dorsetshire*, and in early life joined himself to a Baptist Church at *Loughwood* in that county, then under the pastoral care of that truly original genius, and eminent servant of God, the Rev. *Isaac Hann*, to whom he was related. By this church he was encouraged to devote himself to the Christian ministry, and with that view recommended to the seminary of religion and learning in *Bristol*, then under the direction of that learned and holy man of God, the Rev. *Bernard Foskett*. Here he continued for several years, and made such proficiency in the several branches of knowledge he attended to, as did the greatest credit to himself and his worthy tutor. At the close of his studies, a vacancy being made in this congregation by the death of the Rev. Mr. *Cooke*, at that time and for many years before your worthy and affectionate Pastor; our honored friend was invited to preach as a candidate, and, after full trial of his ministry and manner of life was affectionately invited to succeed in the pastoral office. He was accordingly ordained among you, as some of you can remember, in the summer of the year 1751; and, blessed with a remarkable share of health and spirits, continued with scarcely any interruption, in the assiduous, faithful, affectionate and successful discharge of the various important duties of his station, character and office, almost to his dying day. The last Sabbath but one which he spent on earth, was employed in his beloved work of preaching the gospel among you; and he received a speedy and gentle dismissal from his work to his reward. The two last subjects he ever preached on were somewhat remarkable. The one was from these awful words. *Prepare to meet thy God!* The other; *Be pleased O Lord to deliver me, O Lord, make haste to help me.*

In his sentiments he was found, rational, liberal, and strictly scriptural; and in his preaching, plain, practical, powerful, and thoroughly evangelical. His ideas of the great plan of providence and grace were uniform, grand,

extensive, and truly noble. And these ideas he earnestly desired to impress upon the hearts of his hearers. He was happy in his union to you, as a sensible, pious, candid, peaceable and affectionate people; and I know you thought yourselves honored and happy in your connection with him, as your friend and Pastor.

Nor were his labors confined to you only, but extended to the world in general, and the youth of the rising age in particular. By his learned writings, which in 1774, procured him the honorable diploma of Doctor in Laws, though dead, he yet speaks, and will continue to speak, I doubt not, to distant ages. His philological works, I mean his celebrated grammar and dictionary, are so well known, and universally esteemed, that they are greatly above my humble encomiums.^[9] And I am sure, it is impossible to read his sentiments on education, without admiring the justness of thought, and propriety and elegance of language which distinguish that useful performance.

But the work which in my humble opinion will do the greatest honor to his feelings as a man, and his piety and liberal spirit as a Christian, as well as to his abilities as a writer, is that which he scarcely lived to see published, but which you well knew him to be the author of, and which is now presented to the world under the title of *The Dialogues of Eumenes*. Here you have a fine moral picture of the author's heart. In this work there are such a variety of characters introduced, such natural and beautiful descriptions, such moral and religious instruction, such pathetic and tender scenes, that I scruple not to pronounce it one of the most entertaining and at the same time instructive performances that was ever addressed to the youth of this or any age. Some of the sheets of it I never have read, and I believe never shall read, without a moistened cheek and a heaving heart. But little did I think when weeping over the death of a *Sophron* and *Clementina*, I should so soon be called to weep over the grave of the author of that instructive, and highly pathetic narrative. But let us be thankful he was spared so long, and enabled to do so much. Let us adore the hand of God in his removal; let us remember and imitate everything that was amiable in him; and prepare, under the influence of divine grace, speedily to follow him. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Can He err in his proceedings, or be mistaken in any of his dispensations? How impious the very thought! In the moral, and in the natural world, it were Atheism not to believe, that there is not a single event

takes place, but, as far as it relates to the Divine Being, to the great Supreme, it is perfectly, it is absolutely right. There is a noble and comprehensive sense in which it may be truly said in the language of the poet — “Whatever is, is RIGHT.” Yes, religion teaches us, even when weeping over the grave of a beloved friend, to sing of the righteousness of the Lord, and to adore his wise unerring providence. It teaches us, humbly and meekly to say, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord*. Yea sometimes it enables us triumphantly to cry out, in the midst of the greatest sorrows, in unison with the blessed above, — *Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Just and true are thy ways O King of saints! He will keep them in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on him*. This leads me to add,

2. Though our friend and brother is dead, and we shall see his face no more, yet God ever lives. Though ministers die as well as their people, Jesus the great Head of his Church ever lives, and because he lives, Christians, ye shall live also. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He that has provided for you pastors after his own heart heretofore, is able to do the same again. Let your trust be in him; your eyes, your hearts lifted up unto him! He will never leave nor forsake you. His language is, *Lo; I am with you always even unto the end of the world!* And he can make up the loss we have sustained, to us all. Let this then be our consolation. Though you my honored friend that stood in the nearest relation to the deceased may be ready with a bursting heart to say — My HUSBAND is dead — And you the dear children of the deceased, Our FATHER is dead — And we that were connected with him in the ministry, Our beloved BROTHER is dead — And you the members of this church — Our dear PASTOR is dead — and we shall see his face no more! Yet still God ever lives, Christ ever lives, and though we have lost a fruitful stream of felicity, the fountain remains the same. Let us go to this fountain and drink and live for ever. Let us cast our burden upon the Lord, for he will sustain us. He will be the Judge of the widow, the Father of the fatherless, and he will provide for the destitute. The fathers in ages past where are they? And the prophets, do they any of them live for ever? But the great head of the church lives for ever, and because he lives, as we have observed, his people shall live also. Let us then delight ourselves in the Lord our God, and he will give us the desire of our hearts. Trust in him, and He will bring it to pass.

3. Finally, in the third and last place. Though we shall see the face of our friend no more on earth, we hope to see, and be with him, in a far happier state, in heaven.

We do not sorrow as those that are without hope. As, our honored friend lived, so he died in the Lord. He received the sentence of death in himself, when his disorder was pronounced incurable, with true christian dignity and composure. O Lord, these were his words, Thy will be done! Soon after, he calmly settled his temporal affairs, devoutly resigned his soul into the hands of that Jesus whom he had long faithfully preached, and sincerely loved, took the last leave of his weeping family and friends around him, and then patiently waited till his change came.

To a minister who expressed to him his hope that he was resigned and happy in the near prospect of his approaching dissolution, he replied, — “Perfectly so; I am waiting for my discharge.” And to several of his friends and brethren around him, he was heard cheerfully to say — “We have been friends in the flesh on earth, and I hope we shall be friends in the spirit, in heaven.” To one of his friends he expressed his concern that he had not more glorified his God and Savior on earth, but added with apparent joy and pleasure — “But I can glorify him in heaven.” To one of his brethren who said to him that he had promised himself great happiness in the enjoyment of his company, he replied, “Yes Sir, and so had I, but it is now all over.” But I hope, my dear Sir, replied his friend, Amidst all, you can say, It is well. He replied, “Yes, it is well, I do not wish myself in other hands, nor things otherwise than they are.”

When he was in his last moments, just before he expired, he seemed to have his soul absorbed in some great contemplation, I had almost said vision of the Deity. His words were — “It is the great principle of life, from whom all others proceed.” He repeated them distinctly again; and then his change came, and he sweetly breathed his last. It may be almost literally said, he fell asleep in Jesus. *But I heard a voice from heaven*, says the inspired apostle, *saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.* To depart and be with Christ is far better than to be here. To the christian, to die is gain. Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord. And though we must now sorrowfully commit the precious dust before us to the repose of the grave, accompanying our friend not to the ship, but to the tomb; yet at the appointed

season, the trumpet shall sound, the graves shall be all burst open, and the dead arise. And then, at the resplendent morning of the resurrection, this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible incorruption, and death be swallowed up in victory. *O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory!* Are we Christians? — We shall go then, and we know not how soon, to our departed friend, though he shall no more come back to us. Yes, we shall hail him again in the realms of immortality and bliss, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. We do not, we cannot sorrow as those that have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. And *when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also, together with all the pious dead, shall appear with him in glory!* Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words.

THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] The British Particular Baptists Vol. V, Particular Baptist Press, (Springfield, Missouri, 2019), pp. 115, 116, 117, 118, 123, 124. — Ed.
- [2] Baptist Encyclopedia by *William Cathcart*, D.D., *Philadelphia: Louis II. Everts*, 1883, p. 44. — Ed.
- [3] *Pathethically*, “pathetically, in a way that arouses pity, especially by displaying vulnerablity or sadness”. — Ed.
- [4] *Sage advice*, “wise, thoughtful, and sound guidance or recommendations, usually coming from someone with deep experience, good judgment, or profound knowledge, like a mentor or respected elder, offering practical insight for making good decisions or navigating life's challenges”. — Ed.
- [5] *Feculence*, “foulness, filth, and impure”. — Ed.
- [6] Dr. Young. — Caleb Evans.
- [7] *Sable*, “black, gloomy”. — Ed.
- [8] *Statedly*, “regularly or at fixed times”. — Ed.
- [9] *Encomiums*, “a formal expression of high praise; eulogy”. — Ed.