

# LIFE AND PORTRAITURE

of  
CHRISTMAS EVANS

A New Translation from the Welsh  
with a  
Memoir of the Author

by

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### PULPIT POPULARITY

Mr. Evans' popularity in the pulpit was never greater than during the last few years of his life.

His descriptive powers, which were transcendent from the first, improved to the day of his death. His services were always solicited at the anniversaries of the Missionary and Bible societies in Caernarvon, and the mayor of that town once made him a handsome present for a temperance speech which he delivered there.

In 1834, he preached at the Holyhead association. His text was Hebrews 6:18. There were many seamen present; and beautifully did the preacher describe the believer's hope, "*the anchor of the soul;*" and eloquently did he set forth the necessity of its having, not a bare rock, but a rock covered with clay — not abstract divinity, but "**God manifest in the flesh,**" — in order that its hold may be "**sure and steadfast,**" securing the Christian against spiritual shipwreck amid the many storms of the world!

The last association he ever attended in Anglesea was held in the same place, in 1837. On that occasion he preached from Colossians 2:14, 15. This sermon was one of the most effective he ever delivered.

"The powerful manner," says one of his friends "in which he described the enemies, who were like unicorns and strong bulls of Bashan, and all the little elves — the great roaring lion, together with all the hosts and principalities and powers of hell, death, and the grave, giving way when Christ cried, '**It is finished,**' was indescribably grand and majestic: one might have thought that the scene was actually before the eye, and that Jesus could be then seen laying hold of the powers of darkness, casting them forth, and making a show of them openly."

## INTERESTING LETTER

We insert in this place an interesting letter written during Mr. Evans' residence at Caernarvon.

“Beloved Brother: . . . I write to you, August 6, 1836, in the seventieth year of my age, and in the fiftieth of my ministry, after conversing much with ministerial brethren, earnestly desiring to see our associational union brought into action by representatives of the churches, with a view to promote a determination:

“1. To bear each other's burden more efficiently in the denomination to which we belong. I lament the deficiency in this point, and ardently wish to see it effectually remedied.

“2. To watch over and promote a holy conversation among all the members and all the preachers in a more efficient manner, to prevent persons of unbecoming conversation from obtaining privileges in any church, when they have been excluded in another, for that would occasion spots and blemishes to appear on the bright countenance of the ministry. The associational union, in which all the churches of the same faith and order join, should be a defense of the independence of the churches through their representatives - it should also operate as a sort of check upon independency, lest it should become opposed to the general good, and frustrate the co-operation of the whole body. *That they may all be one* is the motto.

“Respecting church discipline. We cannot be certain that we are doing right by administering the same punishment to all offenders, even for the same offence; for the general character weighs heavily in the balance of discipline. Also a distinction should be made between the seducer and the seduced; and between being overcome, or falling into sin, and living habitually in sin, and following it as a slave following his master. The denial of Peter, from weakness, and without previous deliberation, was very different from the betrayal of Judas, and his intentional selling of Christ.

“The different characters of Saul, long of Israel, and that of David, required different treatment in discipline on account of their offences. The Lord's discipline upon Saul was that of a rod of iron, but upon David the correcting rod of a father, for his good, that he might be a partaker of his holiness.

“There are two things, brother, which we out to avoid in the exercise of discipline:

“1. We should avoid too great severity on the one part, and

“2. Too much leniency on the other part.

“Wisdom is necessary here to distinguish the different characters, those who require severity, and those who claim tenderness: the two are to be found blended in the principle of evangelical discipline. A difference is to be made betwixt some who may have been companions in the same crime; snatching some of them as brands from the burning. The ground of the distinction lies in the different amount of guilt which subsists between the seducer and the seduced.

“I have witnessed danger, and have sustained some harm myself, and seen harm done in churches, by exercising tenderness towards some persons, in the vain hope of their reformation. Receiving verbal testimony or mere fluent acknowledgments from their lips, without waiting for fruit in action also: some having been often accused, and as often turning to the refuges frequented by them. I never exercised tenderness towards such as these, without being repaid by them afterwards, if they had opportunity. Shimei-like, they would curse me after having shed the best oil of tenderness on their heads. There are some in the Christian church like Jezebel; and there are some in our congregations like Joab, the son of Zeruiah, that you can scarce discipline them without rending the Kingdom, until they become ripe for judgment; for they hardly ever repent, more than did Joab and Shimei; they are ultimately suddenly broken, without any danger to the church from their fall.

“I perceive that the Scriptures make a difference between one that falls into sin, and one wallowing in it; between one overtaken by a party of marauders, and dragged into the camp, and made drunk at supper, and one like Judas, going to the party, and being secretly one of them, having pistols as they had: such are hypocrites. I have many times been the advocate of the fallen, and in a variety of instances have observed this operating beneficially for the church. Sometimes I have found those who had been spared upon their own verbal contrition, blessing God for his long forbearance of them, and also their spiritual brethren, who had in a manner set their bones; as the Scripture hath it, **‘Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.’**

“We should be careful that discretion and love be in exercise, though in strife and contention it is not always an easy matter to do this. When the beasts of dissension get loose from the caravan, Satan sometimes drives them through the streets of Zion, that they may enter the houses of the inhabitants; and like the lioness that escaped from the keepers at Shrewsbury, and attacked the foremost horse in the carriage;\* so contentions frequently attack the leaders, in order to stop the carriage of the ministry as it travels on in the labors of the pulpit. In the midst of the noise of strife, the man of God must raise his voice to heaven for courage and tenderness, so that the oil of Christ's love to the souls of men may be found in the oil-flagon of reproof, which is poured on the head; for if anger and revenge enter in, they will drop, like the spider in Germany, into the pot, and that will prevent the salutary effect of the oil, because the poison of wrath is mixed with it. The righteousness of God cannot be fulfilled in this manner in the discipline. O! Brother, who is sufficient for these things, without constant help from heaven? How awful is this place! This is the house of God and the gate of heaven — and here is a ladder by which we may climb up for help; and a school in which we may learn how to conduct our selves in the house of God.

\* Such an accident is said to have occurred at Shrewsbury, in England, a few years ago.

“You cannot but be conscious, brother, of the great difficulty there is not to speak unadvisedly with our lips, as did Moses whilst drawing water for the rebellious Israelites. The rebellion of the people had embittered his spirit, so that his obduracy stood like a cloud between the people and the tenderness of the Lord, when he was showing mercy upon them by giving them water. Moses upbraided their rebellion instead of showing mercy, as the dispensation of God now required; a dispensation which contained in it a secret intimation of the great mercy to be shown by the death of Christ on the cross. Their strife was the cause of embittering the spirit of Moses, yet he should have possessed his soul in patience.

“There are two things, brother, which you should observe:

“First, you will be called upon to attend to causes of contention; and you will find persons so hardened, that you will not be able to obtain weapons in all the armory of God's word that will terrify them and make them afraid of entering their old haunts. Such are persons without faith and without the fear of God and the love of Christ influencing their minds; and though you warn them of the consequences of their contentions, that they are likely to deprive them of the privileges of the house of God, and thus forfeit the promised land, yet they stand unmoved, nothing terrified, for they value the flesh-pots of Egypt and their livelihood there, more than the manna and the land of promise. You cannot frighten them by speaking of the danger and loss of the immunities of the church below, or that above; Esau-like, they will sell their birthright as Christian professors for a mess of pottage. A man who has no money is not afraid to meet with robbers in the wood; but the individual that has gold to lose will be cautious and watchful, lest he should be robbed of his property. On a night of great storm, when ships are broken to pieces and sinking, a person who has no share in any of them will not tremble or feel any concern on their account. Thus there are some men concerning whom it is impossible to make them dread going out among the rapacious beasts of backslidings, and no storms can keep them in fear. Their spirit is one with the marauders, and they have no care, for they have nothing to lose in the tempests that blow upon the cause of the religion of Christ. These are the tares, or the children of the wicked one, in the church.

“Secondly, for your own encouragement, brother, I remark that you will have to attend to the exercise of discipline, and to treat with persons that may be alarmed, and made to tremble at the word of God, and not rush on presumptuously in their evil course. These are professors who possess white garments, and the gold of faith, and eye-salve from the unction of the Holy One. These individuals are rich in faith. They are afraid of revolutions and upsettings of the constitutional order of the new covenant, for they have funds invested in the stocks of God's kingdom. They are afraid that any storm or rock of offence should come in the way of the gospel ship, for their treasure is on board of it, and they have an interest in it. They dread the thought of walking unwatchfully and licentiously, lest they should be robbed of their riches, and forfeit the fellowship of God in prayer, lose the light of his countenance, and his peace in the means of grace, and lest they should be deprived of their confidence in the merits of Christ and a good conscience. They have denied themselves, and have pulled out the right eye, lest they should not be acceptable before God. They dread harboring in their bosoms the old guilt and former doubts.

They are cautious not to give a night's lodging to such miscreants as anger, revenge, lust, and things which are of the earth; for they know that these are robbers, and if they have any indulgence they will steal away the *title-deeds* of assurance to the inheritance. They are well aware, also, that they will sustain the loss of a pure conscience, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which, as a golden chest, is a preserver of our confidence immovable unto the end. It is possible, brother, to manage and discipline such professors. They have something to lose; consequently they will not flee from their refuge, lest they should be destroyed. *Keep that which thou hast.*

“David lost for a season the enjoyment of the above blessings; but he was cleansed with hyssop, had his spirit renewed, and his riches were restored to him by faith's view of the Messiah, for which he vowed to sing aloud forever and ever. He prayed, after this, to be delivered from presumptuous sins, lest he should be imprisoned a second time by a party so wicked and detestable. May the spiritual gift be kindled in you, Brother.

“Grace be with you forever and ever.

“Affectionately,

Christmas Evans.

Caernarvon August 5, 1836.”

### **TOUR THROUGH THE PRINCIPALITY**

In April, 1838, when Mr. Evans had been about four years in Caernarvon, the church under his charge received notice to pay up the £300 yet due on their house of worship. He took a tour through the principality, to collect money for this purpose. Before he set out, he wrote a circular to his brethren, which was published in the Welsh Magazine. We make the following extract:

“The term of the lease of life has expired in my case, even three score and ten years, and I am very much afflicted. I have purposed to sacrifice myself to this object, though I am afraid I shall die in the journey, and fear I shall not succeed in my errand for Christ. We have no source to which we can now repair, but our own denomination in Wales, and brethren and friends of other communities that may sympathize with us. Brethren, pray with me for protection on the journey — for strength and health this once, on occasion of my bidding farewell to you all — pray for the light of the Lord's countenance upon me in preaching, pray for his own glory, and that his key may open the hearts of the people to contribute towards his cause in its present exigency. O, help us, brethren, — when you see the old brother, after having been fifty-three years in the ministry, now, instead of being in the grave with his colleagues, or resting at home with three of them who are yet alive — brethren Lewis of Llanwenarth, Davies of Velin Voel, and Thomas of Aberduar \* — when you see him coming, with the furrows of death in his countenance, the flowers of the grave on his head, and his whole constitution gradually dissolving; having labored fifty years in the ministry in the Baptist denomination. He comes to you with hundreds of prayers bubbling as it were from the fountain of his heart, and with a mixture of fear and confidence. O, do not frown upon him! — he is afraid of your frowns. Smile upon him by contributing cheerfully to his cause this once for all. If you frown upon me, ministers and deacons, by intimating an irregular case, I am afraid I shall sink into the grave before returning home. This is my last sacrifice for the Redeemer's cause.”

\* The three are since dead; the first two named died before Mr. Evans, and Mr. Thomas since.

In this journey, he was cordially received everywhere by the churches, and very successful in raising money. At no former period of his life was his popularity so great as now.

Wherever he preached, the place was thronged at an early hour; and frequently multitudes remained without, unable to obtain admittance.

### MONMOUTHSHIRE ASSOCIATION

During this tour, he attended the Monmouthshire Association, and preached his last associational sermon.

In his introduction, he described a man whom he had seen in Caernarvon, throwing a few beans to a herd of swine that followed him, and thus enticing them to the door of the slaughter-house, where they were to be slain; and said that, in a similar manner, with one temptation after another, Satan allures deluded sinners to the very gates of hell, where they are to be tormented forever and ever. He spoke of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, as a great electrical machine; Christ turning the handle; Peter placing the chain in contact with the people; and the Holy Ghost descending like a stream of ethereal fire, and melting the hearts of three thousand at once!

Perhaps no sermon that Mr. Evans ever preached evinced more vigor of intellect, more power and splendor of genius, than this; and seldom, if ever, had he a more perfect command over the feelings of an audience. But the effort was too much for him, and he was afterward confined to his room by illness for a week.

### LAST SERMON, SICKNESS, AND DEATH

Following this indefatigable man of God, we find him, on Sunday, the fifteenth of July, notwithstanding his late illness, at Swansea, preaching like a seraph, on the Prodigal Son in the morning, and in the evening on the words of Paul — **“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,”** &c.

The next evening he preached in the church at Mount Pleasant. He said he had taken his pulpit model from the day of Pentecost. He described the event of that memorable day, as a great naval battle between Emanuel and the Prince of Darkness.

**“The captain of our salvation”** sent out twelve little boats to engage the whole fleet of hell. For a time all was enveloped in fire and smoke, and the issue of the day seemed doubtful; but when the conflict ceased, and the cloud cleared away, it was ascertained that the twelve little boats had captured three thousand of Satan's ships of war.

When the preacher sat down, he said, *“This is my last sermon.”* And so it was.

That night he was taken violently ill. The next day he lay in a partial stupor, taking but little notice of his friends.

The third day he seemed somewhat better. On the morning of the fourth day, Thursday, he arose and walked in the garden. Toward evening he sunk again, and grew worse during the night. At two of the clock on Friday morning, he said to his friends: — “I am about to leave you. I have labored in the sanctuary fifty-three years; and this is my comfort and confidence, that I have never labored without blood in the basin” — meaning, evidently, that he had not failed to preach **“Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”**

After a few more remarks of a similar character, he repeated a Welsh stanza, expressive of his firm trust in the Redeemer; and then, as if he had done with earth, and desired to depart, exclaimed in English — “GOOD-BYE! DRIVE ON!” He now turned over, and seemed to sleep. His friends tried to rouse him. It was too late. The angelic postillion had obeyed the order. The chariot had passed over the everlasting hills.

Thus died Christmas Evans, at the house of his friend, Rev. Daniel Davies in Swansea on July 19th, 1838 in the 73rd year of his age and the 54th of his ministry. His life was blameless, and his end was peace. “This honor have all his saints!”

### **FUNERAL SORROW**

His funeral took place four days after his death. Never before was there such a funeral in Swansea, never such a concourse of mourners. The people came in crowds, and wept their way to the grave as if they had been following the bier of their father. The melancholy tidings of his departure read through the principality, and the fountains of sorrow were everywhere unsealed. In Anglesea, especially, the grief was deep and universal. There he had spent more than half of his ministerial life, and hundreds owned him as their father in Christ. The Baptist pulpits were all clothed in mourning, and funeral sermons were preached throughout the principality.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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