

CHRISTMAS EVANS (1766 - 1838)

AND THE BIRTH OF NONCONFORMIST WALES

By the decade between 1815 and 1825 Nonconformity seemed destined to become the predominant religious force in Wales. Although Protestant Dissent had been a feature of Welsh religious life since the late 1630s, it was only with the coming of the Evangelical Revival after 1735 that Nonconformity became a popular and populist movement. The Revival made its initial impact almost exclusively upon the Anglican Church, but from 1772 onwards it began not only to permeate the ranks of the older, orthodox Calvinist Dissent - the Baptists and the Independents - but to transform them into something vibrant, zealous and influential. With the secession of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists from the Anglican body in 1811, evangelical Nonconformity became the single most potent religious force in the land. By 1825 it had succeeded to a remarkable degree in recreating Wales in its own form and image. The subsequent self-perception of the Welsh people only served to reinforce this conviction, that Wales, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century had become incontrovertibly Nonconformist.¹ One figure who both represented and contributed towards this religious, cultural and psychological change was the Baptist preacher, Christmas Evans.² His life spanned the years between 1766 and 1838 and his experiences personified the transformation of the older, more sober and stratified Wales when Anglicanism was the predominant religion into the new, vigorous and ultimately radical Wales of popular Dissent. He was present at the birth of Nonconformist Wales.

Christmas Evans was born at Llandysul, in what was then Cardiganshire, now a part of Dyfed, on 25 December 1766, the son of Samuel Evans, shoemaker, and Joanna, his wife. Joanna's side of the family was the more substantial of the two. She had been a Lewis, the Lewises from Cwmhwyar being a yeoman family in possession of modestly lucrative lands between Alltwalis to the south of Llandysul and Newcastle Emlyn to the west. They displayed all the characteristics of the Dissenting yeoman class of the time, combining a religious commitment to the Independent cause with financial stability bred of thrift and wise, not to say wily, management of their properties. James Lewis, Dinas Cerdin, had been set apart as minister of the Independent Church at Pant-y-creuddyn in 1706 and was succeeded there a generation later by John, his son.

If the Lewises were Calvinistic Independents of status within the community, the Evanses from Llangeler, Samuel Evans' home parish which bordered on Llandysul, were of the Arminian persuasion. Though less financially secure than the Cwmhwyar family, they were respectable and religious. Samuel's brother, also called Christmas, was an elder at the Pen-rhiw Presbyterian Church at Drefach, while two nephews became preachers, one with the Unitarian movement and another, more surprisingly perhaps, with the Methodists. Christmas Evans' roots therefore were deep in the Older Dissenting soil of South Cardiganshire.

It was quite obvious, however, that by the time of his birth Samuel and Joanna had fallen on hard times. The family situation deteriorated further in 1775 with Samuel's death. The boy was sent to work for his uncle, James Lewis, who farmed the Bwlchog, near Llandysul, described by one of Christmas Evans' early biographers as 'a cruel, selfish, and drunken man'. It was because of him that 'all his nephew's recollections of his boyhood were excruciatingly bitter and painful.'³ The fact that James Lewis belonged to the Independent congregation at Pant-y-creuddyn did nothing to inculcate in him the virtues of temperance or kindness, it seems. However, from the Bwlchog, he moved to another local farm, that of Castell-hywel, where he met both kindness and helpfulness in the person of David Davis. 'Mr David

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Davis of Castlehowel', reported the Unitarian magazine, *The Monthly Repository*, 'is an Arian and is greatly respected in his neighbourhood as a scholar, preacher and excellent man'.⁴ As well as farming, he pastored the Arminian/Arian church at Llwynrhydowen and kept a grammar school for the sons of local families. Christmas Evans, Davis' new farm labourer, began attending services at his employer's church and it was there that he made his own initial religious commitment. The lad had long been in fear of dying outside the covenant of grace:

. . . and this apprehension clung to me till I was induced to rest upon Christ. All this was accompanied by some little knowledge of the Redeemer . . . I cannot deny that this concern was the dawn of the day of grace on my spirit, although mingled with much darkness and ignorance. During a revival which took place in the church . . ., many young people united themselves with those people, and I amongst them.⁵

David Davis encouraged his young convert both to study and to preach. He taught him the rudiments of grammar and after a few months Evans began exhorting the Dissenting congregations in the vicinity. He plagiarised both his first sermon and his first public prayer, the one from the works of the high church Anglican, Bishop Beveridge, and the other from the prayer manual of the low church Anglican, Griffith Jones, rector of Llanddowror.⁶ This did him no harm at all as he soon gained a reputation for being a competent, if not unusually gifted, Dissenting preacher. He was invited to preach not only by the Arminian Presbyterians but by the Independents and Baptists, and it was among them, at the Pen-y-bont Baptist Church at Llandysul, that he was forced to consider the doctrine of baptism. Brought up a paedo-baptist, he was challenged by a member in the Baptist Church to justify the practice of infant baptism from the New Testament.

I carefully examined the Scriptures to mark down every passage that mentioned infant baptism, for I believed there were hundreds of such there. But after a careful perusal, I was terribly disappointed to find none of that character there. I met with the circumcision of children, the naming of children, the nurture and admonition of children . . . but not one verse about the baptizing of infants.⁷

The upshot of this research was that he rejected paedo-baptism in favour of the primitive Christian practice of believer's baptism by total immersion. He presented himself for immersion at the Aberduar Church, Llanybydder, in 1788, and by so doing he severed his connection with the Presbyterians. Despite all his subsequent changes of opinion, Christmas Evans remained a Baptist for the rest of his life.

As a Baptist, Evans attended that movement's annual Welsh Association which was held in 1789 at Maes-y-berllan in Breconshire, now Powys. Among those present were representatives from the small North Wales Baptist community who were appealing for ministerial help. Instead of returning to Dyfed, Christmas Evans, by now an unattached 23-year-old preacher, responded to the challenge and left with them for Gwynedd. He preached in both Merioneth and Caernarfonshire, 'till I got down into the extreme corner of the county called *Lleyn*.'⁸ The Baptists there were few in number and socially insignificant, but they needed the services of a pastor. By now Christmas had felt the mission call and was glad to offer himself to be their minister. He was set apart for the ministry at a service in Ty'ndonnen, Botwnnog parish, in August 1789.

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It was then that a transformation occurred in his whole style and manner of preaching. The powers of the Evangelical Revival which had affected the Methodist witness within the Anglican Church since 1735, and which had begun to permeate older Dissent since the mid-1770s, now gripped Christmas himself.⁹ For the first time he became an effective evangelist, being able to count converts in scores and not in single figures: 'I baptized about fifty during that first year at Ty'n-y-donnen, and we had eighty in fellowship during the second year there.'¹⁰ From being a conscientious but unremarkable preacher, whose style was edifying but hardly exciting, he became the focus for overt revivalism. According to the local recollection years later, 'Great power accompanied his ministry in those days. His hearers would weep, wail and jump as though the world were igniting round about.'¹¹ However the psychological aspects of this emotional revivalism are to be explained, it was its lasting effect upon the moral and spiritual state of converts which made it genuine in Christmas Evans' eye. (Because he had lost his left eye as a young man during a high-spirited skirmish among friends returning from Llandysul fair, he came to be known widely, especially outside the Principality, as 'the one-eyed preacher of Wales'). Similarly, it was the permanent moral effect upon the rising generation of Welsh Dissenters, like their Methodist neighbours, which made revivalism such an important phenomenon in the religious history of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Wales.¹²

From Llŷn Christmas Evans crossed over into Anglesey becoming pastor of the island's single though multi-congregational Baptist church in 1791. He brought the revivalist spirit with him and soon the small fellowships found themselves flourishing. The blatant populism which characterised revivalist religion was not to everyone's taste, and for the next decade the North Wales Baptists were forced to choose between the traditional ways of the older, quiet, more refined and cerebral Dissent and the newer charismatic evangelicalism. The leader of the traditionalists was John Richard Jones, a somewhat cold Calvinist from Llanfrothen, Merioneth, and for a few years Christmas Evans was much influenced by him. Jones' reaction to the new movement was bitter and extreme, and the more fractious he became the more he alienated not only Christmas Evans but the majority of the North Wales churches. Following what can only be termed a mystical experience on Cader Idris in 1800 during a journey to South Wales,¹³ Evans broke his links with the traditionalists and wholly endorsed the popular revivalism. The significance of this was immense. It was the new evangelicalism and not the older Dissent which was to transform nineteenth-century Wales. Whereas the older tradition withered, the Nonconformist Wales which had appeared by about 1820 was the child of the popular movement.

For thirty-five years Christmas Evans laboured in Anglesey. The 150 church members who had invited him to be their minister in 1791 had risen to 1,000 by 1826. There had been two waves of revivalist activity, the first between 1791-2 when he arrived and the second between 1814-15, the latter beginning, significantly, when he was absent from the island on his annual preaching tour of South Wales. Even apart from these sudden awakenings, the history of the Anglesey Baptists during the first quarter of the nineteenth century was one of steady growth. Along with his daily routine of pastoral work and pulpit preparation, he set much store by the effectiveness and popularity of the Anglesey Baptist Association. Every year the principal exponents of the new evangelicalism among the South Wales Baptists were invited to the Association meetings, Titus Lewis, J. P. Davies, Joseph Harris 'Gomer', John Jenkins, and many more,¹⁴ thus binding the Welsh Baptist movement tightly and establishing its character firmly as a revivalist body. 'The annual association in Anglesey', he wrote in 1817, 'has ten to fifteen thousand attendants upon whom the Spirit is regularly poured out, much to our amazement. May Jesus Christ's name be

praised.¹⁵

Neither Evans' reputation nor his labours were confined to the isle of Anglesey nor to his home church. Ever since 1791, when he had undertaken a singularly successful preaching tour to South Wales, Christmas Evans' name had become synonymous with peripatetic preaching in the dramatic revivalist style. He visited the two southern Associations, that of Dyfed in South West Wales and Glamorgan and Gwent in the South East, being invited almost annually to exhort the congregations there gathered. Before the close of the eighteenth century, he had become well known in Baptist circles throughout the breadth of Wales and had become a truly national figure. His reasons for travelling so widely and often were not wholly selfless. By preaching for the larger South Wales congregations he could augment his insignificant salary of £17 per annum, sell his by then increasing range of tracts and published works, and collect towards the building and upkeep of the island's meeting houses. 'It must be numbered among the anomalies of Welsh religious life', wrote D. M. Evans, the second of Christmas Evans' English biographers, 'that it combines an insatiable appetite for sermons with a marvellous disregard for the temporal comforts of the preachers.'¹⁶ Be that as it may, Evans enjoyed his annual trips to South Wales and further afield, and was much heartened to observe the way in which Nonconformity was transforming the religious life of the people.

By 1823 he had reached fifty-seven years of age, having spent thirty-two years of active ministry on Anglesey. He was the undisputed leader of the island's Baptist community. 'For about thirty years', wrote David Rhys Stephen, 'the whole affairs of the churches in Anglesea went in his groove and were controlled by his spirit.'¹⁷ The last thing he expected at this juncture was that his authority would be challenged. Certainly he had become, in the absence of strong indigenous leadership, autocratic. And, with the constant influx of new converts, it was equally obvious that the centralized church pattern which he had inherited three decades previously was becoming unworkable. He suggested late in 1823 that the island's single church should become four separate churches: 'We have failed, by trying to work the whole farm, to do justice to any single part of it.'¹⁸ His suggestion was accepted and the Holyhead and the Amlwch branches moved to secure new pastors. Holyhead called as minister William Morgan, a native of Pembrokeshire and student of the Baptist Academy at Abergavenny, while Amlwch invited one of its own members, Hugh Williams, Morgan's fellow student in the Academy, to take over the ministry. Morgan was ordained without incident on 19 April 1825, but before Williams' ordination could take place Evans had been prevailed upon to interrupt the proceedings. He had now been convinced that the presence of two young academy-trained ministers, whose Calvinism was a good deal less restricted than his own, would be fatal to the churches' well-being. It was insinuated darkly that everything for which he had striven for thirty years would be jeopardized. With immense tactlessness he withdrew his earlier suggestion, which had already been acted upon in Holyhead, and demanded obedience to the single centralized church structure. The Amlwch Baptists were scandalized. They had already invited Hugh Williams to become their pastor and they had no intention of rescinding their decision. He would be ordained either with Christmas Evans' permission or without it. For the first time ever Evans found himself being challenged by his own people. He did not know how to react.

By Christmas 1825 the situation among the Anglesey Baptists had become so inflamed that the church's quarterly meeting decided to call in an arbitration committee from the Denbighshire Association. Evans agreed to the move in the belief that his current opinion would be vindicated. He was mortified to be told that the original plan of decentralizing the church should be adhered to and that Hugh

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Williams should be ordained forthwith. There was by now little that he could do to prevent this occurring. After having restrained himself up to and during the ordination itself on 7 April 1826, he vented his true feelings in a letter to his colleagues in the eldership:

You see . . . how the friends from Denbighshire have been of such a blessing to the young zealots, lacking in experience of the enemy's ways, within our branches.

Their action was an act of treachery. This was 'Revolution! Revolution!' and as such it should never have been countenanced.¹⁹ The contents of this letter were immediately made known, thus making Evans' position virtually untenable. He would have no choice but to resign the pastorate.

On 2 August 1826, now a widower aged sixty years, he left Anglesey for what he believed would be the last time. Fortunately for him, he had received a call to pastor the Baptist church at Caerphilly, Glamorgan, near the county border with Monmouthshire. He left, though, with a heavy heart. Over thirty years of hard work and esteem seemed to have been squandered. It was not all gloom, however, at least not in far-off Glamorgan. 'I well remember', wrote David Rhys Stephen, a native of South East Wales, 'the wonderment and gladness with which the report was propagated and received. "CHRISTMAS EVANS IS COME." "Are you sure of it?" "Yes, quite sure of it"; he preached at Caerphilly last Sunday. That I know from a friend who was there.'²⁰ The natural excitement of having one of the best-known preachers in Wales come among them was compounded by a genuine spiritual awakening among the members which coincided with his arrival. He wrote to a friend in November 1826:

I have never before been as comfortable as I am since having arrived here. There is great excitement throughout the whole forest. We have received 7 backsliders and 36 new converts into membership . . . There are 16 in the fellowship meeting waiting to be baptized the next time and signs of many more. The breeze is blowing in Caerphilly village and the Bedwas vicinity . . . The older brothers and the old sisters are as though they have been anointed with the choicest oil, and remember those whose special days of the Almighty 25 years ago . . . There is no jumping or overt rejoicing but quiet weeping and much singing. The meeting house has become much too small these last two months especially . . . I have never seen such a time as this.²¹

By early 1827 140 members had been added to the church. Whatever painful memories remained following the Anglesey débâcle, they were erased by the immediate success of the Caerphilly ministry. When in January 1828 some of his former Anglesey colleagues attempted to entice him back to undertake the island's ministry once again, his reply was curt:

I could never contemplate leaving this tranquil place in which the Lord has provided so many seals to my ministry, and set out into the Bay of Biscay . . . We have a church here of two hundred members of whom many are gifted in prayer. They hold meetings throughout the locality, not like so many dry doctors but like those who have experienced the things of heaven . . .²²

This spiritual happiness was augmented by temporal happiness. Already in receipt of a more substantial salary than ever before, Evans - who had lost his first wife,

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Catherine, in 1823 - married Mary Jones, a family friend from his Anglesey days, on 24 April 1828. By then he was 62 years old and his wife 35.

The fact that Christmas Evans' Caerphilly ministry was characterized by a religious awakening only served to emphasize the nature of new-born Nonconformist Wales. It was the religious impulse rather than cultural or political interests which was of chief significance in the nation's life, and the form of religion through which the people expressed themselves was unashamedly extrovert. If the content of the popular evangelicalism of the new Dissent was orthodox Calvinism, its style and ethos was warmly emotional. As for Evans, despite the deep satisfaction which was his during the initial eighteen months of his ministry in the Rhymney Valley, he was not destined to remain there long. 'In my opinion', wrote David Rhys Stephen, 'he was not at this time of life with his previous experience as the pastor of the churches of a whole county, the best adapted to be the successful and happy pastor of a single church of long standing and addicted from habit to much self government.'²³ The previous pastor had delegated all responsibility except for the pulpit ministry to the church's officers, so whereas Evans had formerly been solely responsible for all aspects of church life including discipline, he now found himself responsible for only one aspect of that life excluding discipline. He found this situation increasingly difficult to bear. However, before it was allowed to deteriorate he was called to cross Caerphilly mountain and serve the Baptist cause in Cardiff which was in need of strong leadership and a firm pastoral hand. Rather than remain in Caerphilly and risk causing dissension between himself and his church officers, he chose in 1828 to accept the invitation to the Cardiff pastorate. He explained his circumstances to the managers of the Particular Baptist Fund in a letter dated 29 January 1829:

I am now preaching at the Baptist Church at Cardiff about eight miles from Caerphilly. The minister of this church Robert Pritchard fell most horribly into immorality and the interest was shooked [sic] to the very foundation. The deacons of this church desired me to come to them to try to rise the ca[u]se as it pleased God to be the case at Caerphilly.²⁴

As it transpired he only partially succeeded 'to rise the cause' of the Baptists in Cardiff. He provided the church with strong leadership which indeed helped it through its initial difficulties. The days of dramatic increases were, in his case, over. 'There was, I am informed, a considerable abatement in the power of his preaching after he became resident in Cardiff', recorded David Rhys Stephen.²⁵ It was not that Christmas Evans was unhappy there. The evidence is that he was very much at peace with himself, writing, preaching and publishing. But never more would he experience the excitement of a spiritual awakening or be the instrument of reviving a local congregation.

By 1832 he yearned to return to North Wales. The breach between him and the Anglesey Baptists was by then virtually healed. He did not return to the island, however, but to the town of Caernarfon, to what was, in effect, a retirement pastorate. By then his reputation as a preacher was secure. Wales had been transformed and in the new Wales there was no-one esteemed more highly than the Nonconformist preacher. It was during one more preaching tour to South Wales that the end came. Having undertaken a journey, beginning on 23 April 1838, ostensibly to defray the expenses of the Caernarfon meeting house, Christmas Evans, along with Mary, his wife, and a young colleague, travelled first to the Gwent Association, held at Argoed near Tredegar, and then westwards to Pontypridd. By then the rigours of the journey were getting the better of him and he was forced to stop and rest. He arrived at Swansea on Saturday, 14 July. The morning service at Bethesda, the town's

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Welsh chapel, went tolerably well the following day, but by the evening service, held at Mount Pleasant, the English chapel, it was obvious that Evans was very sick indeed. He was taken to the home of the Bethesda pastor, Daniel Davies, but all the doctor could say when he was called was, 'I am afraid it is quite useless to give him anything with a view of saving his life.'²⁶ His last words, recorded by Daniel Davies, were destined to become part of Welsh Nonconformist legend for a century or more: 'Wheel about, coachman, and drive on!'²⁷ Christmas Evans died at about 4 a.m. on 19 July 1838. He was 72 years old. He was buried in the churchyard of Bethesda Chapel in Swansea.

Christmas Evans embodied the profound religious, cultural and social transformation which created 'Nonconformist Wales'. A native of the rural South West he spent years in North Wales before moving to the South East when that area was undergoing significant industrial expansion. Through his annual pilgrimages between North and South, East and West, Nonconformist Wales was knitted tightly together. No-one travelled further, more frequently or more extensively than he and by so doing he provided his denomination with a truly Welsh national identity.

Just as he spanned the country geographically, he also spanned two cultures and two separate centuries. Despite his obvious early disadvantages, he had nonetheless inherited the traditions of the Older Dissent. That was a minority movement, sober, fairly cerebral and marginal to Welsh religious life. By 1815 the Older Dissent had vanished. It had been replaced by the new evangelicalism, zealous, popular and extrovert. It was through the newer Nonconformity that the common people of Wales found an outlet for their joys, sorrows and some of their deepest aspirations. As well as exemplifying this cultural transformation, Christmas Evans did as much as anybody to facilitate and popularize it.

The difference between eighteenth and nineteenth-century Wales is to be found at exactly that juncture. Evans was born in the mid-eighteenth century, a century whose pleasures as well as whose woes were found fairly near the surface. He died well into the nineteenth century, a time of rapid religious, industrial and economic expansion. He witnessed great changes and could not help being amazed: 'Perhaps there has never been such a nation as the Welsh who have been won over so widely to the hearing of the gospel. Meeting houses have been erected in each corner of the land and the majority of the common people, nearly all of them, crowd in to listen.'²⁸ There was no-one in the parish of Llandysul in 1766 who could ever have foreseen such a thing. 'There is virtually no other nation, whose members have, in such numbers, professed the gospel so widely, in both South Wales and the North.'²⁹ This was the newly created Nonconformist Wales.

There were two forces especially, in Christmas Evans' opinion, which had caused this change. One was the strength of the preached word and the other was revivalism. 'There was something exceptional about the preaching of those days that it succeeded in turning a nation of Sabbath breakers and persecutors into a nation who came together to hear the Word of God.'³⁰ The preaching which had characterized both Dissenters and Anglicans previously had been lifeless and ineffectual, formal and cerebral:

Davies *bach* [he said on his deathbed], the talent of the periwigs [*dawn y perwigau*] is returning to Wales you mark my words. That talent was dry and stilted, it made all the listeners fall asleep.

Many of the old Presbyterians and the Baptists were able preachers but their style was so cold and lifeless that it froze everything that it touched. When Rowlands from Llangeitho and

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David Jones, Pont-y-pool and others like them began preaching as though fired from heaven, the old periwigs were forced to pack their goods and dismantle their stalls for there was no-one left to listen to them in neither fair nor market from Holyhead to Cardiff.³¹

Daniel Rowlands was the Methodists' most effective preacher in the new style: direct, challenging, engaging and hugely popular in the best sense. Jones from Pontypool was the first Baptist to employ the same style and thus effect a similar change among Dissenting ranks. It was this style of preaching which filled the meeting houses, which drew thousands to the Methodist Associations and the Baptist assemblies, and which nurtured an inordinate appreciation among the common people for the spoken word. The Older Dissenting preachers, dull and unexciting, replete in their eighteenth-century periwigs, were cast aside in favour of the new-fire oratory of a new generation of Nonconformists.

This revolution in the style and effectiveness of the preached word was supplemented by the occurrence of revivalism.

Showers of blessing fell upon the churches regularly. They often fell quite unexpectedly and when they did they were invincible. The awakenings would affect scores of people at a time causing them to shake, weep and cry what must I do to be saved? They would coincide with the spirit of prayer and supplication and a conviction of utter unworthiness and the need for being reconciled by Christ's blood. When these showers fell hundreds would be added to churches within a year . . . God's work prospers more in a single sabbath following these awakenings than from a year's preaching.³²

With these awakenings invigorating and supplementing the preaching of the word, the victory of the New Nonconformity was assured. It was through methods like these that 'Nonconformist Wales' was created. There was no-one whose contribution to its creation was more marked than Christmas Evans himself.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales, A Concise History, c.1485-1979*, Cambridge 1984, pp.272 ff.; D. Gareth Jones, *A History of Wales, 1815-1906*, Cardiff 1989, pp.75-95.
2. The best English biographies of Christmas Evans remain the earliest, viz. D. R. Stephen, *Memoirs of the Late Christmas Evans . . .*, 1847, and D. M. Evans, *Christmas Evans: A Memoir*, 1863. In Welsh W. Morgan's *Cofiant, neu Hanes Bywyd, y diweddar Barch. Christmas Evans, Caerdydd, 1839*, and David Owen 'Bleddyn', *Christmasa, neu Rai o Nodweddiion Neillduol y Diweddar Barchedig Christmas Evans, Caerfyrddin 1861*, are essential reading.
3. Stephen, op.cit., p.2.
4. *The Monthly Repository*, 1811, p.690.
5. Stephen, pp.6-7.
6. William Beveridge (1637-1708), *Thesaurus Theologicus*, 1711; Griffith Jones (1683-1761), *Dwy Furf ar Weddi, 1737*.
7. Stephen, p.12.
8. *Ibid.*, p.23.
9. D. Densil Morgan, "Smoke, Fire and Light": Baptists and the Revitalization of Welsh Dissent', *BQ* 32, 5, 1988, pp.224-232.
10. W. Morgan, *Cofiant . . .*, p.17.
11. *Grealy Bedyddwyr*, 1829, p.321.
12. cf. Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*, Edinburgh 1985.
13. D. M. Evans, *A Memoir*, pp.104-6.
14. Each is listed in *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, 1969; cf. T. M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, Swansea 1977, pp.92ff.
15. *Grealy Bedyddwyr*, 1905, p.298.
16. D. M. Evans, op.cit., p.147.
17. Stephen, p.66.
18. J. Spintner James, *Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, vol.4, Caerfyrddin 1907, p.427.
19. *ibid.*, p.433.
20. Stephen, p.112.
21. Owen Davies, ed., *Gweithiau y Parch. Christmas Evans*, vol.1, Caernarfon 1898, p.cxxi.
22. The letter is transcribed in full in D. Densil Morgan, *Christmas Evans a'r Ymneilltuaeth Newydd*, Llandysul, forthcoming.
23. Stephen, p.128.
24. Letter dated 29 January 1829, Gratz Collection,

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- Yale University Library; microfilm copy in Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.
25. Stephen, p.140.
26. John Rowlands, *Cofiant y Parch. Daniel Davies DD, Llanelli 1879*, p.179.
27. *ibid.*, p.181.
28. Owen Davies, ed., *Gweithiau . . .*, vol.2, Caernarfon 1899, p.13.
29. *ibid.*
30. *ibid.*,
31. John Rowlands, *op.cit.*, p.180.
32. Owen Davies, *op.cit.*, p.14.

D. DENSIL MORGAN *Sub-Dean, School of Theology, University of Wales, Bangor.*

THE GLASS HOUSE AND GLAZIERS' HALL

Two Seventeenth-Century Baptist Meeting Houses - Or One?

Anyone writing in a minority language has to be prepared for his work to go unnoticed, even though his scholarship may be highly respected. This has happened to Thomas Richards, whose English books on Welsh Puritanism are widely known but whose Welsh essays, many of which were published during the quarter of a century he spent as editor of *Trafodion . . .* (the Transactions of the Welsh Baptist Historical Society) remain unknown to English scholars, even though some of them contain material which is of interest to English Baptists.

A case in point is his identification of two distinct Baptist locations in London in the mid seventeenth-century, the one known as the Glass House, the other as Glaziers' Hall. English Baptist historians, both ancient and modern, give the impression that the Glass House and Glaziers' Hall are variant names for the same place. Thus, when a reader looks up 'Glaziers' Hall' in the index of W. T. Whitley's *Baptists of London*, he is directed to the article which concerns the 'Glass House'. In his *History of English Baptists*, Joseph Ivimey states that John Miles and Thomas Proud 'attended with a Baptist church meeting at Glaziers'-hall and from thence called the church at the Glass House' (Vol.I, p.235). B. R. White echoes this in his 1987 essay, 'The London Baptist Calvinistic Leadership, 1644-60' (*Faith, Heritage and Witness*, ed. J. H. Y. Briggs, pp.42-3):

The covering letter which the London churches sent with the copies of this material from Ireland was addressed from 'the Glasshouse, London'. One of the London Calvinistic Baptist Churches had met at the Glaziers' Hall in Broad Street since 1649 . . . John Miles and Thomas Proud had been sent out from Glaziers' Hall in 1649.

However, if Thomas Richards is correct, Whitley, Ivimey and White err and this last quotation contains at least three inaccuracies:

- i) Glaziers' Hall was *not* in Broad Street;
- ii) the Baptist congregation which met there was *not* Calvinistic;
- iii) it was *not* the church meeting at Glaziers' Hall that sent forth Miles and Proud to minister in Wales.

Thomas Richards examined the relationship between the Glass House and Glaziers' Hall in an essay entitled 'William Rider', published in *Trafodion . . .* 1950. His interest in the subject was aroused by a December 1655 minute in the Llanwenarth Churchbook which expressed the church's concern about the meaning of Hebrews 6.1-2 and in particular the reference to laying on of hands. The Llanwenarth Church had circulated other churches about the practice and in response had received a visit