

ADAMS, DAVID (1845 - 1922), Congregationalist divine

Name: David Adams
Date of birth: 1845
Date of death: 1922
Parent: Margaret Adams
Parent: John Adams
Gender: Male
Occupation: Congregationalist divine
Area of activity: Religion
Author: John Oliver Stephens

Born 28 August 1845 at Tal-y-bont, Cardiganshire, the son of John and Margaret Adams. His father, who was a bootmaker by trade, was prominent in all the cultural activities of the countryside and was also a lay preacher. David went to the grammar school at Llanfihangel, where he learned the elements of Latin and Greek, but when attendance at the Church of England was made a condition of attendance at the school he left to work in the lead mines. Three years later he returned to Tal-y-bont as a pupil teacher. In 1863 he entered the Normal College, Bangor, and in 1867 commenced teaching at Bryn, Llanelly. Later, in 1869, he went to the Normal College, Swansea, and from 1870 to 1872 was a schoolmaster at Ystradgynlais. After a period of ill health he won a scholarship to the University College, Aberystwyth, where he graduated (B.A. Lond.) in 1877. In 1878 he was ordained minister of Hawen and Bryngwenith, Cardiganshire, and it was then that he first demonstrated his courage and intellectual independence.

Before his time, Wales had not experienced that revolution in religious doctrine which, having its inception in Germany, had slowly made its way to England. Adams was the prophet of the movement in Wales, and his biographer, **E. Keri Evans**, maintains that 'the theologian of the future will give him a prominent and, it may well be, a pre-eminent, place in the development of Welsh theology which occurred at the end of the last century.'

The two outstanding features of his early ministry were his efforts to promote temperance and his invaluable services as a catechist in the Sunday schools. In 1884 he won a prize at the National Eisteddfod at Liverpool for an essay on Hegel. From that time on he sought, in his own words, to 'do away with the idea of contingency in theology and to substitute for it inevitability.'

In 1888 he moved to Bethesda, Caernarfonshire. His sermons now tended to stress the ethical rather than the controversial aspects of Christianity. He achieved success in the spheres of poetry, philosophy, and theology. In 1893 he shared the prize for an essay on 'Evolution in its relation to the Fall, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection.' He held that the Incarnation - the central fact in the history of mankind - could not be regarded as dependent on the 'accident' of man's fall, that a divine motive, logical and inevitable, informed the spiritual and material universe and permeated all history, and finally that evolution was nothing more than the means whereby this infinite Cause realized its objective historically. This is his most striking and positive contribution to the study of divinity in Wales.

In 1895 he moved to Grove Street, Liverpool, where he published his book *Paul yng Ngoleuni'r Iesu*, 1897. In this book we can trace clearly the most remarkable feature of his mind and character, namely his passionate devotion to ethics. The root of his hostility to the Calvinistic views (of arbitrary divine sovereignty, imputed righteousness, vicarious atonement, and legal justification) was his fear that all these undermined morality.

In 1913 he was chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents. In his last book, *Yr Eglwys a Gwareiddiad Diweddar*, 1914, he moves clearly forward through the Christ of history to a living, spiritual Christ who is the continuing foundation and authority of the Church.

In 1922 he learned that the University of Wales had decided to confer on him the degree of D.D. but, before this could be done, he was taken ill and died 5 July 1922. He was buried at Tal-y-bont.

Author

Reverend Professor John Oliver Stephens, (1880 - 1957)

Sources

E. Keri Evans and W. Piri Huws, *Cofiant y Parch. David Adams (Hawen)* (Liverpool 1924)
Y Dysgedydd, September 1922

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [David Adams](#)

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