

EDWARDS, LEWIS (1809 - 1887), for fifty years principal of Bala Calvinistic Methodist College, teacher and theologian

Name: Lewis Edwards
Date of birth: 1809
Date of death: 1887
Gender: Male
Occupation: principal of Bala Calvinistic Methodist College, teacher and theologian
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Trebor Lloyd Evans

Born 27 October 1809 at Pwllcenawon, Pen-llwyn, Cardiganshire, the eldest son of Lewis and Margaret Edward. He attended the local schools at Glanrafon, Pen-y-banc, and the Calvinistic Methodist chapel, Pen-llwyn. He was also educated at the Llanfihangel-genuau'r-glyn schools, at the school kept at Aberystwyth by [John Evans](#) (1796 - 1861), and at Llangeitho. In 1827 he opened a small school of his own at Aberystwyth, but shortly afterwards moved to Llangeitho, where he became a school teacher. Within a year he left to become private tutor to the family of John Lloyd, Pentowyn, Meidrym, Carmarthenshire.

While at Llangeitho he dedicated himself to the work of the Calvinistic Methodist ministry, and in August 1829 at the Llangeitho Association was accepted as a regular preacher of that denomination; but his desire for more education was intense, and at the Woodstock Association, October 1830, he was given permission to go to the Seceders' College, Belfast. It was, however, to London that he went. He remained there for a year (in the college which later became the University of London), but his circumstances did not permit him to stay there longer and he became a missionary at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire. There too he opened a school, but his appetite for more learning was insatiable, and he and one of his pupils, [John Phillips](#) (1810 - 1867), decided to go to Edinburgh University, October 1833, to his heroes Thomas Chalmers and 'Christopher North.' He was given permission to sit for the degree of M.A. in three years instead of the customary four, and passed with honours. In 1865 the University of Edinburgh conferred on him the degree of D.D. honoris causa.

He married, 30 December 1836, Jane Charles granddaughter of [Thomas Charles](#) of Bala, and the following year he and his brother-in-law, [David Charles III](#) opened a school at Bala, which was promptly adopted as the preparatory school for ministers of the Calvinistic Methodist denomination. It was here that he carried out his great life work by convincing the Calvinistic Methodists of the value of an educated ministry and by preaching the importance of education and culture to the whole nation. He became an outstanding leader in his denomination and was responsible for many changes, chiefly in the direction of Presbyterianism. He argued passionately on behalf of the Presbyterian system, the settled pastorate, the Sustentation Fund, a General Assembly, and English-speaking churches. He was moderator of the N. Wales Association, 1862 and 1875, and of the General Assembly 1866 and 1876; and received a testimonial amounting to £2,600 in 1875.

He was considered one of the great preachers of his day, but he himself believed as strongly in the press as in the pulpit. Great was his faith in magazines and periodicals - in 1844 he edited *Yr Esboniwr* and in 1847 helped to bring out *Y Geiniogwerth*. More important than this, however, was the establishment, in co-operation with [Roger Edwards](#) and [Thomas Gee](#), of *Y Drysorfa*, 1845, on the lines of *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Edinburgh Review*, and the *Quarterly Review*. It is impossible to estimate the intellectual growth of Wales in the 19th century without taking into account his most important books: *Athrawiaeth yr Iawn*, *Traethodau Llenyddol*, *Traethodau Duwinyddol*, *Hanes Duwinyddiaeth*, and *Person Crist*. As a theologian he was responsible for rescuing Welsh theology from the unprofitable controversies of the period. He opened the windows of the mind so that the light of knowledge - literary, historical, and scientific - could come flooding in to reanimate the 'queen of the sciences.' His essays on 'Schools of languages for the Welsh,' 1849; 'Revisers of hymns,' 1850; 'Goethe,' 1851; 'Welsh poetry,' 1852; and 'Goronwy Owen,' 1876; are important documents in the development of Welsh literary criticism. Some of his translations of famous English hymns have found a place in the hymnology of his country.

He died 19 July 1887 and was buried in Llanylic churchyard near the grave of [Thomas Charles](#). His son, [Thomas Charles Edwards](#), is separately noticed.

Author

Reverend Trebor Lloyd Evans, (1909 - 1979)

Sources

T. C. Edwards, *Bywyd a Llythyrau y Diweddar Barch. Lewis Edwards, M.A., D.D.* (Liverpool 1901), with list of writings

G. Tecwyn Parry, *Cofiant a Gweithiau Dr. Edwards* (1892)

T. R. Jones (Clwydydd), *Lewis Edwards, D.D., y Bala* (1909)

Further Reading

John Hughes, Y diweddar Barch. Lewis Edwards, D.D.: Rhai sylwadau ar ei wasanaeth a'i ddylanwad Y *Geninen*, Cyf. VI, rhif 1, Ionawr 1888, tt.1-8

John Gwynoro Davies, *Er cof: bywgraffiad o'r diweddar Barch. Lewis Edwards, D.D., Prifathraw Coleg y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd, Bala*(Bala 1887)

John Gwynoro Davies, *In memoriam: a short biographical sketch of the life of the late Rev. Lewis Edwards, D.D., Principal of the C.M. College, Balá*(1887?)

Wikipedia Article: [Lewis Edwards](#)

Works

Dr. Lewis Edwards, *Am natur Eglwys* (Caerlleon 1839)

Dr. Lewis Edwards, T. C. Edwards, *Athrawiaeth yr lawn... gydag amlinelliad o hanes bywyd yr awdwr*(Wrexham 1887)

Dr. Lewis Edwards, John Lloyd, *Detholiad o draethodau llenyddol Dr. Lewis Edwards: gyda nodiadau a chwestiynau a mynegai fywgraffyddol a chyffredinol*(Gwrecsam 1910)

Images

Parch. Lewis Edwards, D.D., Bala

Edward Williams, Dr. Lewis Edwards, Bala

John Thomas, Lewis Edwards

Evan Owen, Lewis Edwards

Ang. Doherty, Parch Thomas Edwards, Penllwyn

Jerry Barrett, Dr. Lewis Edwards

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