

ELIAS, JOHN (1774-1841), Calvinistic Methodist minister, and famous preacher



Name: John Elias
Date of birth: 1774
Date of death: 1841
Spouse: Ann Bulkeley (née Williams)
Child: John Elias
Parent: Jane Jones
Parent: Elias Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: Calvinistic Methodist minister, and famous preacher
Area of activity: Religion
Author: John Edward Hughes

Christened 6 May 1774 (his date of his birth is not known), his parents being Elias and Jane Jones, Brynllwyn (or Crynllwyn) Bach, Aber-erch, near Pwllheli. He received a religious upbringing from his grandfather, John Elias, and when he began to preach he adopted his grandfather's name. He was admitted exhorter at Christmas 1794 and soon his fame as a preacher spread throughout Wales. For a brief period he attended the school kept by [Evan Richardson](#), Caernarvon. On 22 February 1799 he married the daughter of Richard Broadhead, Tre'r Gof, Cemaes, Anglesey, and went to live in Anglesey, making his home in Llanfechell, near Cemaes, where his wife kept a shop. He was ordained in 1811 (at the first ordination service of the connexion). His wife died 2 April 1828. On 10 February 1830 in Saint David's Welsh church, Liverpool he married the widow of [Sir John Bulkeley](#) of Presaddfed, Bodedern; her maiden name was Ann Williams, of Aberffraw, and she was of humble antecedents. After this marriage he moved to Fron, Llangefni, where he died 8 June 1841; he was buried 15 June at Llanfaes, near Beaumaris.

As a preacher, he was undoubtedly the most popular and powerful of the age in Wales. He had the most profound convictions of the truths of the gospel, a thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures (without a shade of doubt as to their literal infallibility), and with a logical mind to use them to the purpose of his preaching. He had a virile imagination, exceptional gifts of oratory, a strong face, and a powerful voice. In preaching he taxed all the resources of his mind and body, making effective use of his arms and especially his forefinger, and because of his vehemence, ardour, and deep seriousness he had a wonderful effect on his hearers. Because of his popularity as a preacher and his great oratorical powers, he became a foremost leader in the connexion, and since he was a man of strong will, an inflexible mind, and imperious nature, he could not be easily opposed. He entertained ultra-Calvinist views on Election and the Atonement. For a time he preached what was called a 'limited' Atonement, i.e. that the merits of the death of Christ exactly balanced the sins of the Elect, and of them alone; and he opposed men like [Thomas Jones](#) (1756 - 1820) of Denbigh and [John Jones](#) (1796 - 1857) of Tal-y-sarn, whose views were more liberal.

He played a prominent part in the drawing up of the Confession of Faith (1823) and the constitutional deed (1826) which

incorporated all property (such as chapels) as the property of the connexion as a whole; and it was on his advocacy that this property-right was tied up with belief in the strict letter of the Confession. As a politician he was conservative in his views and he opposed every movement towards freedom of thought and action, e.g. the Catholic Emancipation Act and the Reform Bill of 1832. He called the supporters of these measures 'rebels,' while some of his opponents dubbed him 'the Pope of Anglesey.' To the end of his life he looked upon the idea 'vox populi, vox Dei' as a proof of infidelity. As a social reformer his zeal for temperance and purity of morals brought his powerful preaching to bear on many customs of the times and was thereby the means of putting down many corrupt and degrading practices such as wakes, hiring-fairs on Sundays, etc. He was a keen supporter of the Bible Society and travelled far and wide to establish branches of it, and also of the London Missionary Society. In spite of his conservatism, we find him in his later years advocating better education for the ministry, and he encouraged [Lewis Edwards](#) to open a school at Bala (1837) to this end. His published works are listed in the *Cardiff Welsh Library Catalogue*.

His brother was

DAVID ELIAS (1790 - 1856),

Born at Brynllwyn Bach, 16 June 1790, began to preach in 1815 and was ordained in 1835. He opened a school at Holyhead in 1817, but afterwards lived at Bryn-du, moving thence to Pentraeth, where he kept a shop. Of melancholic temperament, he was a stern preacher; like his brother, he was a hyper-Calvinist - he published *Yr Arfaeth Dragwyddol* (Caernarvon, 1847). David Elias died 29 May 1856, and was buried at Pentraeth. His son, [John Roose Elias](#), is separately noticed.

Author

Reverend John Edward Hughes, (1879 - 1959)

Sources

W. Pritchard, *John Elias a'i Oes* (Caernarfon 1911)

Owen Thomas, *Cofiant y Parchedig John Jones, Talysarn* (New York 1868)

R. T. Jenkins, *Hanes Cymru yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg, Volume 1, 1789-1843* (Cardiff 1933)

Further Reading

J. Morgan Jones a W. Morgan, *Y Tadau Methodistaidd (1895-1897)*, ii, 410-485

Edward Morgan, *A memoir of the Rev. John Elias, of Anglesea* (Liverpool 1844)

Edward Morgan, *Valuable letters, essays, and other papers of the late Reverend John Elias, of Anglesea* (Carnarvon 1847)

Additional Links

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