

HUGHES, STEPHEN (1622 - 1688), early Nonconformist

Name: Stephen Hughes
Date of birth: 1622
Date of death: 1688
Spouse: Catherine Hughes (née Daniel)
Parent: John Hughes
Gender: Male
Occupation: early Nonconformist
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Griffith John Williams

Son of John Hughes, mercer, Carmarthen. We know hardly anything of his youth but it is possible that he attended Carmarthen grammar school. He received the living of Meidrym in 1654 and it has been said that he had been given the living of Merthyr (Carmarthenshire) earlier. He was a person of influence in the age of Cromwell.

About 1658 he is found starting on the great work of his life - the publication of Welsh books for the use of the peasantry. He issued the first part of the work of **Rhys Prichard** (of Llandoverly) in 1659 and the second part (although no copy is extant) appeared shortly afterwards. An end to the work of publishing came with the Restoration and Hughes was obliged to leave Meidrym. We know little about him in the time of persecution but it is said that he continued to preach in Carmarthenshire and that he kept schools.

He married Catherine, daughter of John Daniel, the second mayor of Swansea and it was there that he made his home from then on.

About 1670 he succeeded in resuming the work of publishing Welsh books and the third part of the work of **Vicar Prichard** appeared that year. He received the support of Churchmen and Nonconformists and published four parts of the work of the vicar, in one volume, in 1672, with in addition, *Llyfr y Psalmau, ynghyd â Thestament Newydd ein Harglwydd*, and *Catechism Mr. Perkins*. He was in London during this period and met **Thomas Gouge** and **Charles Edwards**; he co-operated with these two for over ten years. He was again in London in 1677 and published two composite volumes - *Tryssor i'r Cymru* and *Cyfarwydd-deb i'r Anghyfarwydd*. Then, in 1677-8, he was able to make a reality of one of his dreams - to issue a cheap edition of the Bible in Welsh. He produced another edition of the work of **Vicar Prichard** in 1681 and, on this occasion, gave it the title of *Canwyll y Cymru*, by which **Prichard's** verses have ever since been known. In 1683 he arranged for the publication of a booklet which was similar to the work of the vicar, viz. *Cyngorion Tad I'w Fab* by **Henry Evans**. With three other men he translated John Bunyan's famous work and this was published in 1688 under the title of *Taith neu Siwmai y Pererin*. It is evident that he did very much to help forward the plans of **Thomas Gouge** in regard to Wales whilst continuing to preach to the scattered congregations of Carmarthenshire and its surrounding district.

He died at Swansea in 1688, his will being proved on 16 July. Stephen Hughes is important not only as an apostle of Nonconformity but as one of the men who began to convert the masses in Wales into conservers of the Welsh language.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

Y Beiriniad: cyhoeddiad trimisol, er egluro gwyddoriaeth, gwlyddiaeth, llenyddiaeth a chrefydd ii (1912), 175-85

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