

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM (1717 - 1791), Methodist cleric, author, and hymn-writer

Name: William Williams
Date of birth: 1717
Date of death: 1791
Spouse: Mary Williams (née Francis)
Child: William Williams
Child: John Williams
Parent: Dorothy Williams (née Lewis)
Parent: John Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: Methodist cleric, author, and hymn-writer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Poetry; Religion
Author: Gomer Morgan Roberts

Born in 1717 at Cefn-coed, Llanfair-ar-y-bryn, Carmarthenshire, son of John and Dorothy Williams. His father was a ruling elder in the Cefnarth Independent church. He was educated, with a view to becoming a doctor, at Llwyn-llwyd Academy, but while he was there he heard **Howel Harris** preaching in Talgarth churchyard and was completely converted. He joined the Established Church and was ordained deacon in 1740, working as a curate for **Theophilus Evans** at Llanwrtyd, Llanfihangel, and Llanddewi Abergwesyn until 1743. In that year he was in some trouble in the bishop's court and the bishop refused to ordain him priest. He thereupon cast his energies into the Methodist movement, and he became one of its chief leaders in Wales. He married, c. 1748, Mary Francis of Llansawel and went to live at his mother's old home, Pantycelyn. His eldest son, WILLIAM, was a curate in Cornwall for many years; his second was **John**. William Williams was busily engaged all his life in supervising the societies, and in travelling and preaching from one end of Wales to the other. He died 11 January 1791, and was buried at Llanfair-ar-y-bryn.

'Williams of Pantycelyn' was the chief hymn-writer of the Methodist awakening in Wales, and much of the success of Welsh Methodism must be attributed to the popularity of his hymns. These were published in books and tracts in the following order: *Aleluia* (in six parts between 1744 and 1747, and in one volume in **1749**); *Hosanna i Fab Dafydd* (in two parts, **1751** and 1754, and an English collection, *Hosannah to the Son of David*, 1759); *Rhai Hymnau a Chaniadau Duwiol*, 1757; *Caniadau ... y Môr o Wydr*, 1762 (with reprints in 1763, 1764, and **1773**); *Ffarwel Weledig* (in three parts, 1763, 1766, and 1769, and in one volume under the title *Haleluia Drachefn*, c. 1790; *Gloria in Excelsis* (in two parts, **1771** and **1772**), together with an English collection of the same name, 1772); *Ychydig Hymnau*, 1774; and *Rhai Hymnau Newyddion* (three little collections in **1781**, **1782**, and **1787**). These hymns were important not only from the point of view of the nation's religious life but as a valuable contribution to its literary culture.

He also wrote two long poems: *Golwg ar Deyrnas Crist*, **1756** (2nd imp. 1764), and *Bywyd a Marwolaeth Theomemphus*, 1764 (2nd imp. 1781). The first of these poems is an attempt to evaluate the divine purpose in the creation, while the second is a study of the soul's progress in the world and of the various experiences which befall it. He wrote about twenty-eight elegies, some of them very ordinary, while others - such as those upon Lewis Lewis, Grace Price, **Howel Harris**, and **Daniel Rowland** - occasionally reached a high standard. He published a number of prose books: *Llythyr Martha Philopur*, 1762, and *Atteb Philo-Evangelius*, 1763; *Crocodil Afon yr Aipht*, 1767; *Tri Wyr o Sodom* - a kind of novel, 1768; *Liber Miscellaneorum*, 1773; *Ductor Naptiarum: Neue Gyfarwyddwr Priodas*, 1777; *Templum Experientia, Apertum*, 1777; and *Pantheologia, Neu Hanes Holl Grefyddau'r Byd* - a laborious work published in parts between 1762 and 1778. There is no room here to list his translations from English, or the lesser books and tracts which he wrote in prose and verse. Between 1744 and 1791 his name appears on nearly ninety books and booklets, and this will give some indication of the extent of his literary labours. He is remembered today because of his hymns, but recently fresh interest has been taken in his poetry as a whole, as well as in his prose. He was the first romantic poet in Wales and, as such, he exercised considerable influence not only on his contemporaries but on his successors.

Author

Reverend Gomer Morgan Roberts, (1904 - 1993)

Sources

Y Drysorfa, January 1813

Edward Morgan, *Ministerial Record or, Brief account of the great progress of religion under the ministry of Rev. W. Williams, of Pantycelyn, Carmarthenshire* (London 1847)

J. R. Kilsby Jones, *Holl weithiau prydyddawl a rhyddieithol y diweddar Barch. William Williams, Pant-y-Celyn* (London 1867)

N. Cynhafal Jones, *Gweithiau Williams Pant-y-Celyn* (Holywell 1887), i

Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd, iii, 35; xxxiii, 2

J. H. Davies, *Rhestr o lyfrau gan y Parch William Williams Pantycelyn a argraffwyd rhwng 1744 a 1800* (Carmarthen 1918)

Saunders Lewis, *Williams Pantycelyn* (London 1927)

details of manuscript sources, etc., will be found in G. M. Roberts, *Y PŴr Ganiedydd [Pantycelyn]. Cyfrol 1 Trem ar ei fywyd; Cyfrol 2: Arweiniad i'w waith* (Aberystwyth 1949, 1958)

see also under [Williams, Roger \(1667-1730\)](#)

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 77A: Barddoniaeth](#)

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 78A: Emynau](#)

NLW: [The Printed Works of William Williams, Pantycelyn](#)

J. Morgan Jones a W. Morgan, *Y Tadau Methodistaidd (1895-1897)*, i, 141-178

Coflein: [William Williams Pantycelyn tomb and memorial, Llanfair ar y Bryn](#)

Coflein: [Williams Pantycelyn Memorial Chapel, English Presbyterian and Calvinistic Methodist, Llandoverly](#)

Stephen James Turner, *Theological themes in the English works of Williams Pantycelyn*, M.Th. Thesis, Univeristy of Wales Aberystwyth, 1982

Wikipedia Article: [William Williams Pantycelyn](#)

Sound and Film

Teledu Annibynwyr: [Wiliam Williams Pantycelyn](#)

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