

LEWIS, JOHN DANIEL VERNON (1879 - 1970), scholar, Independent minister, author, tutor and theological college principal

Name: John Daniel Vernon Lewis

Date of birth: 1879

Date of death: 1970

Parent: Ann Lewis (née Daniel)

Parent: Thomas Jones Lewis

Gender: Male

Occupation: scholar, Independent minister, author, tutor and theological college principal

Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing; Religion; Scholarship and Languages

Author: Evan Lewis Evans

Born at Pentre Estyll, Swansea, 13 June, 1879, son of Thomas Jones Lewis and Ann Daniel his wife, originally of Glascoed Fach, Llanarthne. His parents emigrated to the U.S.A. when he was a young boy and his father soon afterwards undertook a course in Bangor theological college, Maine. He spent most of his subsequent life in the ministry in America, at Green's Landing, Mount Vernon and East Andover, except for a short period when he was the minister of the English Independent chapel at Porthcawl, Glamorganshire. Although his father tried to persuade his son to come to America more than once, he could not be induced to leave the home he had made with his grandmother and his aunt, Rachel Rees. The father died in Paxton, Connecticut in 1922.

The young man was interested in three things from his early days, the Sunday school, his school lessons and the *eisteddfod*. He was obviously talented and he won the recitation contest at the Llanelli national eisteddfod in 1895 with 78 competing. He did outstandingly well at school - the elementary school at Brynhyfryd and Swansea Grammar School. He won a scholarship to University College, Cardiff (1898-1901) and graduated B.A. with first-class honours in Semitic studies. He obtained the degree of B.D. Wales after studying at Brecon Memorial College (1901-04), only the second person to achieve this from one of the Welsh Congregational colleges. Whilst a student there he was awarded the essay prize at the 1903 National *Eisteddfod* on the subject, ' *Perthynas daearyddiaeth Palesteina a hanes y wlad*' under the adjudication of [Edward Anwyl](#) and [T. Witton Davies](#).

Two important awards decided his future course of study; the Pusey and Ellerton Scholarship to Mansfield College, Oxford, followed by the Proctor Travelling Scholarship which gave him the opportunity of studying in Leipzig with Rudolf Kittel and other scholars. As well as completing the requirements of the Oxford M.A. he was nominated by Prof. D.S. Margoliouth, Prof. of Arabic, to be a member of the select group of the Royal Asiatic Society (M.R.A.S.). The University of Wales recognised his work and scholarship by awarding him an honorary D.D. in 1963.

He was called to Park Road Independent church, Liverpool in 1909. After ten years there he moved to the English church at Salisbury Park, Wrexham. In 1921 he was invited to Gibeia chapel, Brynaman and he spent a fruitful period there (1921-35) until he returned to his old college at Brecon as a professor. He was an able and eloquent preacher, able to adjust easily to his congregation. He was offered the principalship of Camden College, Australia in 1932 but in that year he became a part-time lecturer in the Hebrew Department of University College, Swansea.

In 1934 he followed [D. Miall Edwards](#) in the Chair of Christian Doctrine and Ethics at Brecon. In 1943 he took responsibility for teaching Hebrew and Old Testament studies until his retirement in 1957. He was principal of the college from 1950-1952. He was the author of an authoritative book on the psalms which, although strongly recommended by the Clarendon Press, could not be published because of lack of funds.

He translated some of Karl Barth's sermons into Welsh and he was prominent in interpreting Barth's work as well as that of Brunner and Oscar Cullman in Wales. He lectured on their work to the students of Carmarthen Presbyterian College and to the Calvinistic Methodist churches in London. As well as being the dean of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Wales (1949-52), he was also an examiner for the B.D. degree (1932-36). He wrote many monographs for *Y Geiriadur Beiblaidd* (1926) and articles for journals in Wales and England.

After retirement from the college in Brecon, he lived for a while in Aberllefenni before moving to Machynlleth. He died at his son's home at Machynlleth on 28 December 1970 and was buried in the cemetery at Machynlleth. After his death his papers were given to N.L.W. His main publications are: *Dysgeidiaeth y proffwydi* (1923); *The Word of God in theory and experience* (1943); *Crist a'r greadigaeth*, Chairman's address to the Welsh Union of Independents (1952); *Diwinyddiaeth heddiw a phregethu*, a radio lecture (1954); translation of *Lehrbuch der Neuhebräischen Sprache* (1956); editing *Requiem Mass in C Minor* Cherubini, with a translation from Latin into Welsh (1938); *Bydd melyn fy myfyrdod: detholiad o lyfr y*

Salmau (1949); *Llyfr y Salmau: cyfieithiad Cymraeg (I-XLI), ... gyda nodiadau ar y testun Hebraeg* (1967); *Mawl i'r Goruchaf, emynau a chyfieithiadau* (1962); editing *Grand Mass in C Minor* Mozart, with words in Latin and Welsh (1965); *Astudiaethau: y gelfyddyd o gyfieithu'r Ysgrythur*, Dyfnallt Memorial Lecture (1967); *Golud yr oesoedd*, sermons (1970).

Author

Reverend Dr Evan Lewis Evans, (1898 - 1978)

Sources

Blwyddiadur yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg, 1972


Pennar Davies (ed.), *Athrawon ac Annibynwyr* (1971) (1971), 79-88

The Brecon and Radnor Express, 23 August 1956

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