

AMBROSE, WILLIAM (Emrys; 1813 - 1873), Independent minister, poet, and littérateur

Name: William Ambrose
Pseudonym: Emrys
Date of birth: 1813
Date of death: 1873
Parent: Elizabeth Ambrose
Parent: John Ambrose
Gender: Male
Occupation: Independent minister, poet, and littérateur
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Poetry; Religion
Author: Richard Griffith Owen

Born 1 August 1813 at Bangor, the only son of John and Elizabeth Ambrose. His great grandfather John Ambrose, a bootmaker, came from Ireland to Holyhead in 1715; one of his sons, Robert, became the second minister of the Baptist congregation at Bangor. Robert Ambrose had two sons - Robert, father of the **Rev. W. R. Ambrose** of Tal-y-sarn, and John (father of Emrys) - and a daughter (mother of **John Ambrose Lloyd**). Emrys's father was one of the earliest members of the Baptist congregation at Bangor. His mother was at one time a member of Ebenezer under **Dr. Arthur Jones**, but left with others to found another church, Bethel (1843-55); she died in 1853. The family lived in the Penrhyn Arms Inn (which later became the first home of the University College of North Wales) from 1813 until 1823, and it was there that Emrys was born. He was educated first at Friars School and later at Holyhead in the school kept by **W. Griffith** (1801 - 1881).

Some time about 1828 he was apprenticed to a draper in Liverpool, where he became a member of the Tabernacle, Great Crosshall Street, of which **John Breese** was the minister. In 1834 he moved to London to work in a shop in the Borough Road. He joined the Boro' church, where he began to preach and to take a delight in writing poetry. Two years or so later he returned home with the intention of setting up in business on his own account in Liverpool. In the meantime, however, he accompanied **William Williams** (Caledfryn, 1801 - 1869) on a preaching tour through Llyn and Eifionydd. In the course of this tour he preached at Portmadoc and as a result was invited to take pastoral charge of the church there for a year. He accepted the invitation, and at the end of the year, on 7 December 1837, was ordained full minister of the church, where he remained until he died 31 October 1873. He was buried in Capel Helyg graveyard, Llangybi. In 1879 a memorial chapel at Portmadoc was erected in his memory.

He was a very notable personality in the Independent denomination, especially in North Wales, where he founded several churches - in particular, those of Penrhyndeudraeth, Penmorfa, Criccieth, and Beddgelert. He was also for many years the North Wales representative of the Bible Society and this brought him into close contact with other churches. He was joint editor of *Y Dysgedydd* from 1853 to 1873, and it was in this periodical that his articles on the Welsh Independent Colleges were published in 1862 under the pseudonym Phineas, articles which caused considerable agitation concerning the college at Bala and resulted in the so-called 'War of the Two Constitutions' (1877-85) see **Michael D. Jones**. It was in this monthly, too, that his well-known recollections of his ministry were published.

He is given an honourable place among the poets and littérateurs of the 19th century. He began to compete in the eisteddfodau at an early age and won many prizes, but it was in the Aberffraw eisteddfod of 1849 in the competition for the best *awdl* on 'The Creation' that he really came into prominence. Of the three adjudicators **Eben Fardd** considered that the *awdl* sent in by Emrys was the best, but **J. Richards** (1795 - 1864) maintained that **Nicander** should be awarded the prize, and though the third adjudicator, **Joseph Jones**, failed at first to agree with either of his colleagues, he later changed his mind and voted for **Nicander**, who was accordingly chaired. The controversy continued to rage in the press for a long time, and it is now considered that Emrys was unfairly treated. His poetical works include some pieces which have earned a permanent place in our literature, among them being some hymns. A volume entitled *Gweithiau y Parch. W. Ambrose* (a selection of his sermons) was published in Dolgellau (1875). Later, in 1876, two more volumes were published under the editorship of **Gwilym Hiraethog**, namely, *Gweithiau Rhyddieithol y Parch. William Ambrose, Porthmadog*, and *Ceinion Emrys*. There is a volume *Emrys* in the series 'Cyfres y Fil.'

Author

Reverend Richard Griffith Owen, (1890 - 1973)

Sources

Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru, iii, 213, 267, iv, 477

Y Dysgedydd, January and February 1874

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Lewis, *Can'mlwyddiant y Tabernacl hanes Eglwys Y Tabernacl, Bangor, o'i chychwyniad yn Lon Pobty, yn y flwyddyn 1804, hyd agor y Tabernacl Newydd, ar Lon y Garth, yn y flwyddyn 1905; ynghyda pheth o hanes Dinas Bangor, a hanes cychwyniad yr enwadau ymneilltuol yn y dref* (1907)

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John Ambrose Lloyd. *History of his life and works*. Written in English by his son, C. F. Lloyd â€¦ Translated and edited by Elfed (Wrexham 1921)

The North Wales Gazette, 20 November 1823

Further Reading

T. Morgan, *Enwogion Cymreig 1700-1900* (1907), pp.10-11

Wikipedia Article: [William Ambrose](#)

Images

Daniel Jones, *Rev. William Ambrose*

John Cochran, *Revd. W. Ambrose Port Madoc*

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