

EVANS, JOHN (1628 - 1700), Puritan schoolmaster and divine

Name: John Evans
Date of birth: 1628
Date of death: 1700
Spouse: Katherine Powell (née Gerard)
Child: John Evans
Parent: Matthew Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: Puritan schoolmaster and divine
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

Born at Great Sutton, near Ludlow. His father, Matthew Evans, rector of Penegoes (near Machynlleth) and son of a former rector, was ejected from his living in 1650 by the Puritan Commissioners for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales. The son had meanwhile matriculated (6 March 1647) at Balliol College, Oxford, but was ejected by the Parliamentary visitors in May 1648 and secretly ordained the same year (28 November) by Roger Mainwaring, the deprived bishop of S. Davids. Changing his views (to the chagrin of his father), he was appointed, 23 March 1653, to take charge of the school set up by the commissioners at Bala, with a salary of £35 a year and a licence to preach. He was critical of the Protectorate, signing the remonstrances of 1654 and 1655, and in consequence had some trouble over recovering arrears of pay, but in 1656 the Council of State ordered payment of two years' arrears and in 1657 he was elected by the bailiffs and burgesses of Oswestry (on the Protector's personal direction) to the headship of the municipal school there, from which his predecessor had been ejected for delinquency. The latter was reinstated in 1660, and Evans joined Rowland Nevett, the deprived Puritan vicar, in ministering to the Dissenting congregation there, and with **Vavasor Powell** in sustaining similar conventicles at Llanfyllin and Llanfechain. For this he was denounced in 1669 under the Conventicle Act; Palmer (*Nonconformists' Memorial*, 1775, ii, 645) makes him also pastor of the Wrexham Independents from 1668. He formed a close friendship with **Powell** and after the latter's death (1670) and that of his own wife he married Powell's widow.

Under the Declaration of Indulgence he was licensed (May 1672) to preach to the Independent congregation at Wrexham that had first gathered round **Morgan Llwyd**, now meeting in a barn rented from **Edward Kenrick**, while the minister lived in the house in which **John Jones** the regicide had formerly accommodated **Llwyd**, and still belonging to the regicide's son. The revocation of the Declaration reduced Evans to poverty, which he relieved by selling much of his library and by acting as tutor to the children of gentlemen of rank in the district. Their protection, and especially that of lady Eyton (widow of Sir Kenrick Eyton of Eyton Isaf), saved him from persecution. In 1681 **William Lloyd** (1627 - 1717), bishop of St Asaph, made strenuous efforts to bring him to conformity, challenging him to public disputations; on his refusal he was fined and outlawed. He continued, however, to minister to his congregation, to which from 1689-91 the Presbyterians (who had worshipped separately under the Indulgence) were joined. From 1691 (when the Presbyterians withdrew and formed the New Meeting) Evans's congregation included Independents and Baptists, he himself (according to one account) inclining towards the latter in his later years. Declining health and loss of memory made it necessary for him during these later years to devolve most of his pastoral duties on assistants.

He died 19 July 1700, and was buried in the Dissenters' graveyard at Wrexham. He left, by his second wife, a son, **John Evans** (1680 - 1730), and, by his first, a daughter, who married Timothy Thomas (friend of **Matthew Henry**) and whose son Timothy became an Independent minister at Pershore.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

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