

EVANS, WILLIAM (died 1589/90), a well-born cleric

Name: William Evans
Date of death: 1589/90
Parent: Ieuan ap Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: well-born cleric
Area of activity: Religion; Royalty and Society
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born in the manor house at Llangattock-vibon-Avel (Llangatwg feibion Afel), Monmouthshire; according to Clark he was the eldest son of Ieuan (called by Dafydd Benwyn, 'Siôn') ap Thomas, who was descended from an illegitimate son of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan, died 1469). William Evans held the family living (the church is in the manor park) together with a neighbouring curacy for which he was compelled in 1563 to provide a curate; he also held in 1560 the living of St. Fagans. He lived, however, at Llandaff. He was chancellor of the diocese (not of the cathedral) from 1550 till his death, and from 1558 or 1559 till his death canon and treasurer of the cathedral. He was also prebendary of Exeter (a fact noted on his tombstone - his successor was appointed in May 1590), and some have it (though the tombstone does not say so) that he was prebendary of Hereford too - a 'William Evans' was certainly prebendary of Hereford in 1560 and in 1580. According to Foster (*Alumni Oxonienses*) he graduated B.C.L. at Oxford, 18 October 1552 - his tombstone styles him 'LL.B.'. About 1558 he was suspected of tending towards Rome, but his friends the bards scout the charge; and to be sure he shows little sign of concern with theology, or indeed of any great concern with the well-being of his church - for as treasurer he must be held at least partly responsible for the dire condition of Llandaff which was revealed when bishop William Blethin made his visitation of that church in 1575. He seems to have been just a squire in holy orders. He died 5 January 1589/90, and was buried in Llandaff cathedral.

Yet there was another, and an interesting, side to his character; he was a patron of poets. Dafydd Benwyn styles him the 'Ifor Hael' of Llandaff, comparing him thus with the medieval Maecenas of that name; he tells us too that Evans kept a 'household poet,' Maredudd ap Rhoser. And the poet Sils ap Siôn has left a collection of poems in praise of the chancellor, by as many as eight bards; he also tells us that Evans was one of the two adjudicators in a contest, held at Llandaff, for the best extempore *englyn* - the kind of contest which later became known as an *isteddfod*.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

G. T. Clark, *Limbus Patrum Morganiae et Glamorganiae* (1886), 306

Browne Willis, *A survey of the Cathedral Church of Llandaff* (1719), 23, 85, 100, 196, 198, 207

Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1854), i, 421, 518, ii, 262

Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford* - it is not known on what grounds Foster says that Evans was the 'William ap Jevan' who had the living of Granston, Pembrokeshire, in 1559, and that he was vicar of Llandeloy in 1560

Lawrence Thomas, *The Reformation in the Old Diocese of Llandaff* (1930), xix, 119, 134, etc.

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 1948, indexed

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