

LLEWELYN, WILLIAM (1735 - 1803), Independent minister

Name: William Llewelyn
Date of birth: 1735
Date of death: 1803
Parent: Alcie Llewelyn (née Cox)
Parent: Thomas Llewelyn
Gender: Male
Occupation: Independent minister
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born at Coity, Glamorganshire, in 1735 (christened 21 March in the parish church), eldest of the four children of a shoemaker Thomas Llewelyn and his wife Alice (Cox, of Gloucestershire), members of the congregation of **Lewis Jones** (1702? - 1772) at Bridgend. Apprenticed to a brewer in the town, he attended a night-school and began to preach; in January 1759 he went to Abergavenny Academy. He was ordained (31 August 1763) pastor at Hereford, but left there abruptly in 1763. The various accounts of his career during the following years cannot be reconciled: according to *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru* (ii, 527-8; iv, 347), he was pastor of Maesyronnen (Radnorshire) 1766-7, and Beilihalog (Gwenddwr, Brecknock) 1766 - 7 - 1773; and it is also said that he was pastor of Garn (Radnorshire) from c. 1760 onwards - but as we know, he was at Abergavenny 1759-63. One is tempted to suggest that **Thomas Rees** was correct in his first opinion (op. cit., ii, 531), that the Radnorshire Llewelyn was another man, and that his second thoughts (iv, 347) were mistaken. For it is quite certain, on the testimony of L. T. Nyberg, the contemporary Moravian 'labourer' at Leominster, that Llewelyn was pastor at Walsall in April 1769 at latest, and Brown (*Free Churches of Leominster*) says that he went to Walsall from Hereford. Llewelyn figures in the *Leominster Moravian congregation-diary* (excerpts in *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, 1935, 14-16); after the death of his wife (a daughter of John Jenkins, pastor at Bromyard) his mind became unsettled, and though nominally pastor at Walsall he wandered around, ministering to other congregations. According to **Kilsby Jones** and **J.T. J.**, Bewdley was one of these places; but quite certainly he often visited Leominster - where, besides taking duty for Rees, the invalid Independent pastor, he also occupied the pulpit of the Baptist **Joshua Thomas**. Finally, in August 1769, he resigned Walsall and succeeded Rees at Leominster, where he remained down to his sudden death (in his pulpit) on 30 January 1803; he had married again, in 1772, the daughter of one Morgan, a well-to-do shopkeeper in the town, and had had five children. It is clear that Llewelyn was a popular preacher (at any rate, in his earlier period); he is described as a man of fashionable garb, generous, and kindly, yet a strict and uncompromising disciplinarian. But it is also clear that his mind deteriorated as time went on. His friend Nyberg, in 1771, suspected him of 'Socinianism,' but indeed Socinianism was far too respectable and consistent a term for the opinions which he proclaimed later on. His wife's means enabled him to publish a row of unsaleable books (titles in **Kilsby Jones**'s article). By the time of his death, his congregation had dwindled to a loyal handful, which was afterwards ministered-to by a banker named Griffiths; **Kilsby Jones** reports that the 'services' consisted of readings from Llewelyn's books. Congregationalism at Leominster had to be started afresh in 1864 (Brown, op. cit.).

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

J. R. Kilsby Jones in *Y Traethodydd*, 1851, 78-90

Josiah Thomas Jones, *Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol o Enwogion Cymru (Aberdŷr 1867-70)*, ii, 199-200

J. Gwili Jenkins, *Hanfod Duw a Pherson Crist: athrawiaeth y Drindod a Duwdod Crist, yn bennaf yn ei pherthynas â Chymru* (Liverpool 1931), 172, 188 and the references given above

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Published date: 1959

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