

## MORGAN, THOMAS (1720-1799), Independent minister

**Name:** Thomas Morgan  
**Date of birth:** 1720  
**Date of death:** 1799  
**Spouse:** Margaret Morgan  
**Spouse:** Sarah Morgan (née Phillips)  
**Child:** Thomas Morgan  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Independent minister  
**Area of activity:** Religion

Born 7 January 1720 at Dyffryn-uchaf near Groes-wen, Eglwysilan, Glamorganshire - in 1783 he had a brother, Morgan Thomas, living at Gwerngeiwn, Pontypridd. He was converted by **Howel Harris** in 1738 or 1739; throughout his life he spoke highly of **Harris**, and for some years he mingled with the Methodists of his countryside, such as **John Belcher** and **Thomas William** of Eglwysilan. He joined (1739) the Independent church at Watford, Glamorganshire, and began to preach; we know that he preached at Marshfield, Monmouth, in June 1741. In September 1741, against the wish of **Edmund Jones**, he went to the school kept by **Samuel Jones** (fl. 1715-64) at Llanddarog, Carmarthenshire; but in January 1743 moved to the grammar school kept by **Samuel Thomas** at Carmarthen; on 19 October he entered the Academy there at its re-opening by **Evan Davies** and **Samuel Thomas**. His diaries give us a lively picture of the Academy, at work and at play. Morgan was a hard worker, and became a sound scholar; with **Evan Davies** he became very friendly, but never warmed to **Thomas**. He was still a Methodist, and would wander around to hear **Harris** and **Rowland**, **Howel Davies**, and **Williams of Pantycelyn**, when these happened to be in the neighbourhood. But he became increasingly critical - found flaws in 'Pantycelyn' and even in **Rowland** as preachers, and foregathered more and more with **Philip Pugh** and **Christmas Samuel**; indeed, he had parted with Methodism by the time he left Carmarthen. Yet, despite his friendship with his Arian fellow-student, **David Lloyd** (1724 - 1779), one cannot agree with **Walter J. Evans** that Morgan became an Arminian - a Calvinist, though a 'low' Calvinist, he remained throughout his life. But his scholarly temperament bred moderation. He was a wide reader, and between 1745 and 1765 contributed frequently to the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

On 25 June 1746 he was ordained pastor of the large and far-flung congregation of Henllan Amgoed, Carmarthenshire. He was perfectly happy and successful there, but his stipend was totally inadequate, and though he tried to run a farm on his wife's dowry, he hardly succeeded - from 1752 on he lived at Laugharne. He competed in 1757 with **David Jardine** for the tutorship at Abergavenny, and in 1759 the Calvinistic party tried to get him made tutor at Carmarthen rather than **Jenkin Jenkins** - two pretty sound indications of his Calvinism. In April 1760, 'because I cannot maintain my family,' he removed to Delph, Yorkshire, where hyper-Calvinists bothered him, and thence (1763) to Morley, where he was troubled by Methodists. He had half-promised (1763) to accept a call from Pwllheli, where his father-in-law had been pastor, but withdrew - and he refused a call to Bridgend. He was in vain begged (1766) to return to Henllan. There was talk, in 1777, of appointing him co-tutor with **Jenkins** at Carmarthen, and in 1779 of his succeeding **Jenkins** there, but he wisely discouraged the suggestions. In 1795 he was paralysed, and resigned his charge; he died at Morley 2 July 1799. Together with the diaries of **Edmund Jones**, and indeed perhaps in an even greater measure than those, the papers and diaries of Thomas Morgan, now in N.L.W., are our most valuable materials for the history of Welsh Independency in the second half of the 18th century, and of its relations with Methodism.

Morgan was twice married: (1) to Sarah, youngest daughter of **Daniel Phillips**, minister at Pwllheli; she died 18 June 1764; (2) to Margaret, widow of the Lewis Phillips who had been (1748-68) co-pastor at Henllan.

His son, THOMAS MORGAN (1752 - 1821), librarian of Dr. Williams's Library, was born at Laugharne 26 December 1752. He went to Leeds Grammar School and to Hoxton Academy, and became minister at Abingdon and afterwards in various London churches - unlike his father, he was no Calvinist. From 1777 till 1799 he was a member of the Presbyterian Fund Board, and in 1804 became **Dr. Williams's** Librarian. He died, still in office in 1821 - on 2 February says **Jeremy**, but on 21 July according to his obituary notice in the *Monthly Repository*. He had a degree of LL.D. from an unspecified university. He was one of the contributors to the *General Biography* edited by John Aikin (on whom see *D.N.B.*).

## Sources

NLW Archives: **Henllan Manuscripts: NLW MS 5433C-NLW MS 5439D**

*Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru*, iii, 341-3, 360-1

Thomas Rees, 'Thomas Morgan a'i Amserau,' in *Y Beiriniad: cyhoeddiad trimisol, er egluro gwyddoriaeth, gwlyddiaeth, llenyddiaeth a chrefydd*, ii (1861) and iii

*Y Cofiadur*, 1923, 9-21 (excerpts from Morgan's papers)

*Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd*, xvii, 89-104

*A History of Carmarthenshire*, ii (consult index)

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