

## RHYS, MORGAN JOHN (Morgan ab Ioan Rhys; 1760 - 1804), Baptist minister, author, and American settler

**Name:** Morgan John Rhys  
**Pseudonym:** Morgan ab Ioan Rhys  
**Date of birth:** 1760  
**Date of death:** 1804  
**Spouse:** Ann Rhys (née Loxley)  
**Parent:** Elizabeth Rhys  
**Parent:** John Rhys  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Baptist minister, author, and American settler  
**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Religion  
**Author:** John James Evans

Born 8 December 1760, fourth son of John and Elizabeth Rees, 'Graddfa' (a farm-house), near Llanbradach, Glamorganshire. He went to a school kept by **D. Williams** (1709 - 1784) and to Carmarthen, returning to keep a local school between 1780 and 1786. Joining the Baptist church of Hengoed, he was persuaded to prepare himself for the ministry, and having studied for a year at the Baptist Academy, Bristol, was called to Pen-y-garn, near Pontypool, where he ministered successfully from October 1787 to June 1791.

Like many of his contemporaries, Rhys saw in the French Revolution the coming of a golden age, when tyranny and Popery would be no more. He resigned his pastorate, and having established a French Bible Society in London, went over to Paris in August 1791, and secured a large hall as a *Bible* depot and preaching station. On the declaration of war he returned to Wales, and travelled far and wide establishing auxiliary societies to collect funds for printing a new edition of the French Bible for free distribution.

In February 1793 he started his Welsh magazine, *Y Cylchgrawn Cymraeg*, of which only five numbers appeared, printed at three different presses. In this, Rhys had a platform for propaganda on the slave trade, the missionary movement, disestablishment, Sunday schools and day schools, and the ideals of the French Revolution. He advocated the reform of Parliament and the abolition of class privileges, oppressive taxes, and the waste of public money by wars and bribery. Keenly interested in education, he was the first to advocate a system of Sunday schools in Wales, and the teaching of English in day schools through the mother tongue.

Disgusted with anti-liberalism in politics and religion in Britain, he resolved to emigrate to America, and landed at New York on 12 October 1794. He was welcomed there by Dr. Rodgers, provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Rhys travelled over the southern and north-western states, preaching as he went, on his favourite topics - peace, the abolition of slavery, the foreign mission, religious and political freedom. Returning to Philadelphia in 1796, he married Ann, the daughter of colonel Benjamin Loxley.

Rhys had founded a Welsh Emigration Society, and in 1798 he purchased a large tract of land in the Alleghany mountains, to which he gave the name of Cambria, and upon it founded a town called Beulah. Thither he brought many Welsh immigrants, and was exceedingly busy among them building houses, preaching the Gospel, publishing a newspaper (*The Western Sky*), establishing a library, founding a missionary society on a new plan for evangelizing Indigenous people, and a new denomination called the Church of Christ. In 1799 he removed to Somerset, Somerset county, where he successively filled several important offices. He died there on 7 September 1804, and was survived by a widow and five children.

His writings include twenty Welsh and ten English pamphlets, in addition to the magazines and newspapers that he edited. These, and especially his orations and sermons, show him to have had a consuming love of liberty, and of the weak and oppressed.

### Authors

**John James Evans**, (1894 - 1965)

Revised by the editorial team, 2024

### Sources

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## Further Reading

J. T. Griffith, *Morgan John Rhys* (Caerdydd 1912)

Wikipedia Article: [Morgan John Rhys](#)

## Additional Links

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