

JONES, DAVID BEVAN ('Dewi Elfed ', 1807 - 1863), minister (B, and Church of Christ and Latter Day Saints - Mormons)

Name: David Bevan Jones
Pseudonym: Dewi Elfed
Date of birth: 1807
Date of death: 1863
Child: Aneurin Jones
Parent: Hannah Jones
Parent: John Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (B, and Church of Christ and Latter Day Saints - Mormons)
Area of activity: Religion
Author: David Leslie Davies

Born 1807, son of John and Hannah Jones, Gellifahren, Llandysul, Cardiganshire, and baptized 30 June 1807. He became a member of Pen-y-bont (B) church, in the parish of Llanfihangel-ar-arth, c. 1822, but was raised by Ebeneser church, Llandysul to preach. He ministered to Seion (B), Cwrtnwydd, Cardiganshire (1841-46); Jerusalem, Rhymney, Monmouth (1846-48); and Gwawr, Aberaman, Glamorganshire from about the beginning of 1849. He completed the task of building Gwawr chapel for the church which had been incorporated in June 1848. Dewi altered the chapel lease, deleting the name of the **Rev. Dr. Thomas Price** (1820 - 1888) and a friend of his and adding his own name and that of a supporter. This was the beginning of the dispute between the two but underlying the disagreement was the accusation that Dewi used his standing as a Baptist minister to promote the tenets of the Saints; denigrating his fellow-ministers; denying the unity of the Trinity and the unique nature of the *Bible* on salvation; preaching the possibility of miracles directly from the hands of those who received the Spirit; teaching millenarianism and calling himself an apostle. It is not certain how or when Dewi came under the influence of Mormonism. But even before he left Rhymney it was rumoured that he fostered unorthodox ideas, leaning towards Unitarianism. An investigation was held by the Glamorgan Baptist Association at Aberdare, November 1850, and he and the congregation of Gwawr were excommunicated from the Association. In 1851 Dewi went to William Phillips, president of the Saints in Wales, and received (with four others) Mormon baptism in the river Cynon, 27 April 1851, in sight of a crowd of about 2,000, before returning to the chapel where he was inducted as a priest of the church of Latter Day Saints. This was a climax of the Mormon mission in Wales, leaving them with a chapel, a baptised minister and wide publicity. A legal controversy ensued between the Saints and the Baptists, and in the 1851 summer session of the Glamorgan assizes a verdict was reached in favour of the Baptists. In November 1851 the Baptists organised a march of 2,000 supporters under the leadership of **Price** to repossess Gwawr chapel because Dewi Elfed had refused to surrender the building to them despite the court decision.

Dewi Elfed was sent by the Saints as an eloquent and well-known missionary through Glamorgan and Gwent to spread the faith. In October 1852 he was appointed treasurer of the mission; and in January 1853 he was appointed president of the Llanelli Assembly, with his son Aneurin as secretary. He moved to Swansea in August 1854 on his appointment as president of the West Glamorgan Assembly. This coincided with the decision of **Daniel Jones** (1811-1861) to move the headquarters of the Welsh Saints from Merthyr to Swansea in September 1854. Dewi Elfed's presidency came to an end in July 1855 when he was accused of financial fraud and was excommunicated. Although he was reconciled with this church and its leaders in April 1856, he was never again given office in the administration of the Welsh Mission. Instead, advantage was taken of his indisputable gifts as a preacher and a keen debater and he was sent throughout south Wales to reinforce the faithful and seek new converts.

He was married by 1833 and had five children. In May 1860 he emigrated with his wife and their two youngest children on board the *William Tapscott* from Liverpool to New York, where they stayed for two years before travelling for four months across the prairie with other pioneer Mormons, arriving at Great Salt Lake Valley in October 1862. He settled in Logan, about a hundred miles north of Salt Lake City, but died of tuberculosis in May or June 1863.

He published *Eos Dyssul* (1838); *Cân newydd yn dangos niweidiau meddwod* (n.d.); and *Serch Gerdd* (n.d.). His work appeared mainly in the Baptist and Mormon periodicals, (*Seren Gomer* and *Udgorn Seion* in particular); but the zenith of his literary career came undoubtedly with his later polemic prose, promoting the mission of the Saints and satirising Nonconformity in the fiery correspondence between him and **Thomas Price** in *Yr Amserau* and *Udgorn Seion*.

Dewi Elfed had his share of troubles and was one of the most colourful characters of the controversial Mormon mission in Wales in mid-19 c. Through his preaching, writing and debating and his hymns he contributed extensively to their missionary effort. But his chief contribution was his own conversion, since he was the only minister from among the main nonconformist denominations to become a member of the Saints. He was undisciplined, with the capacity to agitate both friend and foe. His life demonstrates the fierce enmity confronting the Saints in Wales at that time; but also the surprising dedication and discipline of the Welsh Mormon Mission in the middle of the 19 c.

Author

David Leslie Davies

Sources

D. L. Davies, 'From a Seion of Lands to the Land of Zion: the Life of David Bevan Jones' in Jensen and Thorp (ed.), *Mormons in early Victorian Britain* (Salt Lake City 1989), 118-141

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [David Bevan Jones](#)

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