



THE  
HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS  
IN  
RADNORSHIRE



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THE  
HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS  
IN  
RADNORSHIRE.

*WITH A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF  
NONCONFORMITY IN THE COUNTY.*

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THE BAPTIST CHURCHES AT GLASBURY,  
LLANDILO, AND PAINSCASTLE.

THE half-yearly meeting of the old association of Baptist churches was held at Painscastle in November, 1891. By the request of the Baptists of Painscastle, I gave the following account of the rise and progress of the Baptist cause in the neighbourhood :

The Baptist cause at Painscastle sprang from the Baptist cause at Llandilo Graban. The parish of Llandilo Graban is bounded on the south side by the river Wye. Llandilo lies between the parishes of Aberedw and Llanstephan. There is a very steep ascent from the river Wye to Llandilo Church and to all the upper part of the parish.

The Llandilo rocks, which can be seen from the train on the Mid-Wales Railway, are very romantic in appearance ; they rise almost perpendicular to a great height.

The Baptist chapel is about two miles from Erwood Railway-station, on the Mid-Wales Railway. The ascent up the hill is very difficult for persons who are not strong. The chapel is on the side of the road which leads from Llandilo to Painscastle, Gladestry, and Kington. In the year 1831 there were a few Baptists in the parish of Llandilo ; one of them was Mr. B. Jenkins, of Llangwy, a small farm which stood where the railway-station now stands at Erwood. Mr. Jenkins was the owner of the farm which he occupied. When I was beginning to preach, I lodged several times under the hospitable roof of Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins. When I was a student, I walked on a winter's day from Pontypool to Erwood ; I crossed the river Wye in the boat at nine o'clock at night, and lodged in Mr. Jenkins' house.

The names of the other Baptists in Llandilo at that time were : Reese Evans, of Newhouse ; Ebenezer Lewis, of Cwmgiver ; Thomas Prosser, of Llanarchcoidllan ; Margaret Loyd, of Courtrober ; and David Edwards, of Garth. There was no Baptist cause at that time in Llandilo. The few Baptists named above made an effort to raise a cause. Mr. Edwards, who was pastor of the Baptist church at Erwood, on the Breconshire side of the Wye, preached at

several places in Llandilo. Mr. Richards, pastor of the Baptist church at Penyrheol, who was a relative of Mr. Jenkins, of Llangwy, preached in Llandilo. Mr. Daniel, the Baptist minister of Builth, who afterwards went to America, also preached in Llandilo. That eminent minister, the Rev. John Jones, of Newtown, preached sometimes at Cilliafarm. Mr. Jarman (of Newbridge), Mr. Jones (of Rock), and Mr. Jenkins (of Dolau, Nantmel), visited Llandilo and preached the Gospel there. These good men, like many ministers in olden times, did not confine their labours to their own churches or their own neighbourhoods; they strove to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond them.

The chapel at Moriah Llandilo was built by the Primitive Methodists in the year 1830. There was a heavy debt on the chapel, and the members being but few, they were obliged to sell it. Mr. B. Jenkins, of Llangwy, bought the chapel, for the use of the Baptists who were in the neighbourhood. Mr. Jenkins and the other Baptist friends contributed the money required to pay for the chapel. After the removal of Mr. Edwards from Erwood in the year 1836, Mr. John Jenkins, of Painscastle, preached for the Baptists in Llandilo. Mr. Jenkins was pastor of the Baptist church at Moriah Llandilo until his removal from Painscastle in the year 1839. Mr. Jenkins was succeeded by my half-brother, Thomas Jones. He was set apart to the pastoral office at Moriah in December, 1840. The ministers who took part in the ordination service were the Revs. W. Jenkins (Dolau), E. Brunt (Bwlchysarnau), W. Richards (Penyrheol), and my father.

A few persons had been added to the church under the ministry of Mr. Jenkins, of Painscastle, but the cause was in a low state. Under the ministry of T. Jones there was a revival, and many converts were added to the church. In September, 1841, I attended a revival meeting at Moriah; sermons and addresses were delivered during the day. There was a religious awakening in the neighbourhood. In the year 1842 there were forty members at Moriah, and a good congregation for the neighbourhood.

The first Baptist meetings held in Painscastle of which I have any account were conducted by Mr. Jenkins, al-

ready mentioned. Mr. Jenkins held meetings in his own house; this was before the year 1839. Mr. Jenkins did not administer the ordinance of baptism at Painscastle. When my half-brother, Thomas Jones, was settled at Moriah, he began to preach in the village of Painscastle. He preached first at Whitehall, then at Trewilod, and at Pendre. Mr. Williams lived at Trewilod, and Mr. Price at Pendre. My brother was rather a rigid Baptist. He was preaching one Sunday morning on the subject of baptism, when Mr. Loyd, an Independent minister, contradicted him during the delivery of his sermon. A warm, but probably unedifying, debate followed. There was not so much talk then as there is now about the Baptists and the Congregationalists amalgamating. If they do ever amalgamate, they will have to meet at the river and shake hands. In the meanwhile, until that good time comes, let them be as friendly as they can, feeling that they are serving one Divine Master and journeying towards one heaven.

The first baptism in connection with the ministry of my brother in Painscastle took place at Trewilod; the candidate was Mr. Williams, of Lloyney. Other baptisms followed. A Baptist church of nine members was formed in Painscastle. A chapel was built for the little flock of Baptists in Painscastle. The chapel was opened in the year 1848. The ministers who preached at the opening services were the Revs. Enoch Price (Maesyberllan), David Davies (Dolau, Nantmel), and myself. I was then minister of Gladestry and Evenjobb. The site for the chapel and burial-ground was bought for the sum of £25. The cost of the chapel was £180. The trust-deed is dated January 13, 1848; the trustees were James Williams, Thomas Williams, David Williams, John Griffiths, James P. Tuck, and James Lewis. The chapel was put in trust for the use of the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists.

I give a brief account of the rise and progress of the Baptist cause in the village of Glasbury. The village of Glasbury is situate in a very beautiful valley on the banks of the Wye. This valley is one of the most picturesque and pleasant in the Principality. The village of Glasbury has three chapels—one Baptist, one Congregationalist, and one Wesleyan. The Baptist chapel is on the Breconshire

side of the Wye, near the end of the bridge; it is a good substantial building, capable of seating about 350 persons.

Although the Baptist chapel at Glasbury is on the Breconshire side of the river, the Baptist cause originated, partly at least, on the Radnorshire side of the river. This is my reason for giving an account of the rise and progress of the Baptist cause at Glasbury. The first Baptist meetings of which I have been able to obtain any account were held in a farmhouse called Llwymperdury. John Jenkins, a member of the Baptist church at Penyrheol, managed Llwymperdury Farm for a Mr. Pugh, of Killkinning. Mr. Pugh must have been a liberal-minded man; he allowed John Jenkins to hold meetings in the farmhouse at Llwymperdury. John Jenkins was the father of the already-named John Jenkins, who lived in Painscastle, and preached there.

The Rev. W. Richards, of Penyrheol, preached at Llwymperdury. Some persons went from the neighbourhood of Llwymperdury to Cefntombach, near Erwood, to be baptized. John Jones, who was afterwards a student in the Baptist Academy at Abergavenny, was one of these. I remember having seen this young man in the neighbourhood of Rock; he was said to have been a very pious and promising young man. He died either before he left college or very soon after.

When John Jenkins left Llwymperdury, he was succeeded by Thomas Davies, who came from Herefordshire. Thomas Davies became a Baptist. This was about the year 1830. Thomas Davies removed from Llwymperdury to Killkinning, where he was farm-bailiff for twenty-two years. Meetings were held at Killkinning and Talymawr on alternate Sabbaths. Mr. Meredith, who was a Baptist, lived at Talymawr. The Revs. J. Jones (Rock), W. Jenkins (Dolau), and E. Price (Maesyberllan), preached occasionally at Talymawr. A quarterly meeting was held there. At one time there were about thirty Baptist members in the neighbourhood. They wished to build a chapel, but they could not obtain a site.

When Thomas Davies removed from Killkinning, the meetings were held at a place called the Well. The Well, which is called Funnungynid Well, is a noted spring. About the year 1859 the tenant removed from the house in which

the meetings were held. The house was shut up, and the meetings were discontinued for about two years. When the meetings were discontinued the Baptist cause declined.

I once saw Thomas Davies, and conversed with him. He was then very aged and infirm. He died several years ago. I have no account of the date of his death, nor where he was buried. His work deserves to be remembered. He kept his house open for the worship of God and the preaching of the Gospel.

In the year 1861 Mr. Nichols took a warehouse in the village of Glasbury for the purpose of holding Baptist meetings. One of the first ministers who preached in the warehouse was the Rev. J. W. Evans, of Kensington, Brecon. A church was formed, consisting chiefly of members from the Radnorshire side of the Wye. Their first pastor was a Mr. Morton, a student from Pontypool College. After labouring at Glasbury and Penyrheol for a short time, Mr. Morton went to America. The second pastor of Glasbury Baptist Church was a Mr. Jones, a student of Pontypool College. In the year 1866, Mr. Piercy, of London, gave a site for a Baptist chapel in the village of Glasbury. Mr. Piercy was induced by the late Sir S. M. Peto to show this kindness to the Baptist cause at Glasbury.

The foundation-stone of the chapel was laid by the Rev. J. W. Evans, of Brecon. The late Dr. Emlyn Jones, the late Mr. Forster, of Hereford, and myself, preached on the occasion. About £400 was subscribed by friends in the neighbourhood towards the building fund. The entire cost of the chapel, including a small house for the minister, was about £900. Many friends contributed liberally. Mr. Parry, of Glanwye, a nephew of the late Mr. Meredith, of Talymawr, took a very active part in procuring subscriptions towards the chapel fund. He acted as treasurer. Mr. Parry was a generous helper of the Baptist cause at Glasbury for a number of years. The new chapel was opened in the year 1867. The late Dr. Thomas, of Pontypool, and the late D. D. Evans, of Newport, preached on the occasion.

The next pastor at Glasbury and Penyrheol after Mr. Jones was Mr. Howell. He was a Pontypool student. He had been settled some time in Liverpool previous to his coming to Glasbury. Mr. Howell was the faithful and successful

pastor of the churches at Glasbury and Penyrheol for twenty years. He had a long and painful affliction, which ended in his death. Mr. Howell has left a hallowed memory behind him. He was succeeded in the pastorate of Glasbury and Penyrheol by Mr. T. G. James, a student from Pontypool College. After a short pastorate Mr. James removed to Bassaley. The present pastor of Glasbury and Penyrheol is the Rev. J. L. Williams, a student from the Baptist College, Pontypool.

We must return for a short time to Llandilo and Painscastle. There is not much to be said concerning the church at Painscastle apart from the church at Moriah Llandilo. Both churches have had the same pastors from their commencement. In the year 1845 my half-brother, Thomas Jones, removed from Llandilo to New Wells, near Newtown. The next pastor at Llandilo and Painscastle was the Rev. E. Owen, of Builth. Mr. Owen, who was a lively, energetic preacher, sustained the pastorate of both churches until the year 1855, when he removed to Sarn, near Newtown. For the next two years the churches at Llandilo and Painscastle were under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. Havard, formerly of Maesyrrhelem. When Mr. Havard succeeded the Rev. James Jones, of Rock, as pastor of the church at Franksbridge, he was followed at Llandilo and Painscastle by Thomas Phillips, who had recently commenced preaching. Mr. Phillips commenced his ministry at Llandilo and Painscastle in the year 1860. He retained the pastorate of both churches until the year 1866. The ministry of Mr. Phillips was attended with considerable success in both places. His lively and energetic style of preaching was adapted to the neighbourhood. After the removal of Mr. Phillips, who went to Snailbeach, in Shropshire, the two churches were supplied for some time by the Rev. William Probert, of Newbridge-on-Wye.

In the year 1867 the Rev. G. H. Llewellyn, of Erwood, took charge of the church at Llandilo. Mr. Llewellyn left Erwood in the year 1872. The Rev. Thomas Havard supplied the church at Llandilo again for about twelve months. In the autumn of 1873 Mr. W. Jenkins, of Tredegar, was invited to become pastor of the churches at Llandilo and Painscastle. In a few months after he came to reside at

Painscastle he was ordained. The brethren Llewellyn, of Maesyberllan; Howell, of Glasbury; Phillips, of Erwood; and myself, took part in the ordination service.

Mr. Jenkins was useful both at Llandilo and Painscastle. In December, 1878, Mr. Jenkins, like his predecessor, Mr. Phillips, removed to Snailbeach.

The next pastor of Llandilo and Painscastle was the Rev. John Phillips, from Pembrokeshire. Mr. Phillips remained with the two churches between two and three years. He was succeeded by Mr. David Powell, of Haverfordwest College. During Mr. Powell's ministry a new chapel was built at Llandilo. The chapel cost £562. It was opened in November, 1884. Mr. Powell removed from Llandilo and Painscastle to Dolau and Rhayader. The Rev. T. James, the present pastor of the two churches, commenced his pastorate in January, 1887. He has remained longer in his first pastorate than some young ministers do in the present day. There is a Sabbath-school both at Llandilo and Painscastle. There are upwards of seventy members in each place.

Some years ago I was informed, by a respectable aged man, a native of Llandilo, that there was not so much Sabbath-breaking in the neighbourhood as there was when he was a youth. He recollected a time when football-kicking and other sports were common on the Sabbath-day. He had lived to see a considerable improvement in the observance of the Sabbath in the neighbourhood of Llandilo. There is room for further improvement in that neighbourhood and in every other neighbourhood.

Originally the chapel at Llandilo had no burial-ground. In the year 1844 the church purchased a piece of land for a burial-ground. The person of whom they bought the land was Mr. Thomas Jones, of Llanbachowey. The burial-ground is close to the chapel. It is of great importance that Baptists should have burial-grounds belonging to their chapels. The ministers of the Established Church are not allowed to read the Burial Service over the unbaptized dead. Parents are often put to grief by the refusal of the clergy to read the Burial Service over their unbaptized infants whom Christ has taken to Himself.

The Baptist churches whose history I have now given

are not so ancient as the Baptist churches in some other parts of the county. There was a Baptist cause at Glascwm more than two hundred years ago. There were Baptists worshipping at Pentre, near Newbridge-on-Wye, more than two centuries ago. The first Baptist chapel at Dolau, Nantmel, was built in the year 1760. The first Baptist chapel was built at Nantgwyn in the year 1792. The ministers whose names we have mentioned in the history of these three churches were in labours more abundant. Radnorshire is greatly indebted to the evangelistic labours of these men. They travelled far over hill and dale, in winter as well as in summer, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ unto their fellow-men who were in great darkness. Their names and their work deserve to be had in everlasting remembrance.

The annual meeting of the old association of Baptist churches was held at Llandilo in the year 1875.

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#### THE BAPTIST CAUSE AT GLASCWM AND NEW RADNOR.

THE Rev. J. Thomas, of Leominster, does not tell us when the Baptist cause began at Glascwm and New Radnor. Nonconformity began in this district about the time of the Restoration of Charles II. in 1662. Mr. John Weaver, who was born in or about Ludlow, educated either at Oxford or Cambridge, examined by the Triers, was appointed in 1653 to preach in the church at New Radnor. He continued there until 1660, when he was ejected. He then removed to Knill, where he remained until 1662, the year of the passing of the Act of Uniformity, by which more than two thousand godly ministers were driven out of the Church of England. Mr. Weaver was among the number. After his ejection this good man preached to a private congregation in those parts until after the year 1687, when he removed to Hereford. Mr. Weaver preached to a congregation in Hereford until his death in 1712, at the age of eighty years. Mr. Thomas says that after Mr. Weaver's removal to Hereford there were Dissenters scattered through