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'AN OLD AND MUCH HONOURED SOLDIER': GRIFFITH JONES, LLANDDOWROR

THIS year marks the tercentenary of the birth of Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, the greatest Welshman of the eighteenth century and one of the chief benefactors of the Welsh nation. It is curious that he should still await his modern biographer.¹ In his justly acclaimed *Crwydro Sir Gâr*, Aneurin Talfan Davies expressed surprise and dismay that no-one had been moved to prepare a creative biography or novel based on the life and work of Griffith Jones.² It may be that our traditional view of Griffith Jones as an austere, humourless and peevish man has acted as a deterrent. Methodist historians have always kept him at arm's length, possibly because he strove to temper some of the early evangelists' wilder excesses. Unlike Howel Harris, Griffith Jones did not bequeath copious documentary evidence of his thoughts and deeds, and historians have generally preferred to study the passion and drama of the Methodist movement rather than the seemingly drab world of this starchy, introspective Anglican clergyman. As a result, Griffith Jones remains a shadowy, enigmatic figure. Even the alleged portrait of him, which has adorned so many text-books, is no longer believed to be authentic. Moreover, throughout his life Griffith Jones deliberately kept a low profile, choosing to labour self-effacingly in the rural fastnesses of Carmarthenshire. The aim of this study, therefore, is to clothe the bare bones of his personality and character with flesh.³

Griffith Jones was the youngest of four sons born to John ap Gruffydd and Elinor John of Pant-yr-efel in the parish of Penboyr, Carmarthenshire. He was born sometime in April 1683. The death of his father within a year meant that his mother was faced with the unenviable task of raising and educating this frail, sickly child. When he fell prey to smallpox, he remained blind for three weeks and carried the pockmarks of that dreaded disease on his face for the rest of his life. He also suffered severe attacks of asthma, some of which were so cripplingly painful that he could scarcely drag himself

¹ The last monograph on Griffith Jones was published in 1950. Most biographies of him are brief, but there is useful material in F. A. Cavenagh, *The Life and Work of Griffith Jones* (Cardiff, 1930); R. T. Jenkins, *Gruffydd Jones, Llanddowror* (Cardiff, 1930); and Thomas Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Pioneer in Adult Education* (Cardiff, 1950). See also the perceptive essay by Glanmor Williams, 'Griffith Jones (1683-1761)', in C. E. Gittins (ed.), *Pioneers of Welsh Education* (University College of Swansea, 1964), pp. 11-30.

² A. Talfan Davies, *Crwydro Sir Gâr* (Llandyble, 1970), p. 251.

³ This article is based on Griffith Jones's correspondence, sermons and printed books. Extracts in Welsh quoted here have been translated into English.

across a room.⁴ This infirmity caused him great suffering throughout his life and persistent fits of coughing often forced him to rise before dawn. Indeed, his life became a constant struggle against illness and depression. To him, the world was a vale of tears. 'The world is a grievous affliction', he declared on the occasion of the funeral of Elizabeth Lewis of Llwynpiod in August 1742.⁵ A man of a deeply melancholic nature, he frequently gave the impression that all the worries of the world rested on his shoulders. 'Fits of melancholy often worry me',⁶ he wrote in October 1737, and although he lived to a handsome age, he prophesied frequently in the pages of *Welch Piety* that death would cut him down before the publication of the next annual report.

Many of Griffith Jones's ailments were probably psychosomatic. Nevertheless, he was clearly close to death in 1737-38. When Howel Harris visited Llanddowror in December 1738, he feared that his master's death was close at hand. 'O leave him to us a little more', was his fervent prayer.⁷ The precise nature of Griffith Jones's illness is unclear, but it is more than likely that a stone in the bladder was the major cause of his suffering. Rather than undergo the much-feared 'cut', Griffith Jones dosed himself with Mrs. Joanna Stephens's mysterious 'Medicine for the Stone'. This curious concoction of egg-shells, calcined snails, herbs, alicant, soap and honey was widely believed to be unique in its 'utility, efficacy and dissolving power'.⁸ Lest Mrs. Stephens's nostrum should fail, Griffith Jones also placed his faith in the efficacy of local herbs. He collected horse-radish roots, scurvy grass and water-cress in a bid to find some medication which would ease the pain.⁹ Only the simplest fare was to be found on his table at Llanddowror. 'Your wine and sugar is too fattening for me', he complained to Madam Bevan, 'I find plainer food the best'.¹⁰ Griffith Jones bore his illness with great fortitude and eventually recovered. In August 1739 he informed Howel Harris that 'all sickness was more tolerable than one sin'.¹¹

⁴ Henry Phillips, *A Sketch of the Life and Character of Mr. Griffith Jones* (London, 1762), pp. 22-23.

⁵ National Library of Wales (NLW) MS. 24B, un-numbered sermon.

⁶ M. H. Jones, 'The Letters of the Rev. Griffith Jones to Madam Bevan', *Trans. Carm. Antiq. Soc.*, XV (1919-21), 4.

⁷ T. Beynon, 'Howel Harris in Carmarthenshire, 1738-9', *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd* (hereinafter CCHMC), 1941, p. 2.

⁸ G. Williams, *The Age of Agony* (London, 1975), pp. 184-85; M. Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the SPCK relating to Wales, 1699-1740* (Cardiff, 1952), p. 190.

⁹ NLW, Cwrtmawr MS. 545B, p. 311.

¹⁰ *Trans. Carm. Antiq. Soc.*, 1919-21, p. 4.

¹¹ T. Beynon, *Howel Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire* (Aberystwyth, 1966), p. 12.

In spite of the pain and discomfort which troubled Griffith Jones for most of his days, he was a man of inexhaustible energy. Contemporaries admired and feared him for his readiness to speak his mind. Sin, injustice and intolerance roused him to fury. The corruption and abuses within the established Church were a source of great concern to him. When he had occasion to defend himself before Adam Ottley, bishop of St. David's, he cursed his fellow clergymen for their sloth and immorality. He chastised those clergymen who suffused their sermons with 'empty speculations, high & lofty or quaint phrases, scholastical or controversial Divinity, above ye reach of ordinary capacities'.¹² His sworn enemy, John Evans of Eglwys Gymyn, maintained that Griffith Jones used to say that his fellow clergy were prone to dispense 'too much Porridge, and too little Meat'.¹³ The profaneness of sottish curates filled him with indignation: 'better to have ye plague in ye parish as ye continuance of a prophane profligate or a sensual epicure for a minister'.¹⁴ Deeply conscious of his own 'mean education', Griffith Jones once asserted that would-be priests in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge learnt nothing but 'drinking and smoaking'.¹⁵ He must assuredly have lost the support of many of his neighbouring clergymen by launching such blistering tirades against them. A man of unimpeachable moral character, Griffith Jones castigated sinners openly. Imbued with a strong sense of social justice, he refused to turn a blind eye to the excesses of the gentry or to flatter their tastes. He condemned their unbridled appetite for land and wealth and their remorseless pursuit of personal gratification. His criticisms were aired honestly and fearlessly. 'I was born a Welchman', he declared defiantly, 'and have not unlearned the simple Honesty and Unpoliteness of my Mother Tongue; nor acquired the Oiliness of the English Language'.¹⁶

The abrasive side of Griffith Jones's nature was also evident in his relationship with the leaders of the Methodist movement in Wales. Griffith Jones never wearied of affirming his love and devotion for the Church of England and he used his best endeavours to try to persuade the young evangelists to submit to the organization and discipline of the established Church. By the late-1730s his predicament was clear. Although he was on close personal terms with the young itinerants, their irregular behaviour was an embarrassment to him. Methodism had excited a good deal of clerical hostility and some of

¹² NLW, Ottley MS. 100, p. 5.

¹³ John Evans, *Some Account of the Welch Charity-Schools* (London, 1752), p. 59.

¹⁴ NLW, Ottley MS. 100, p. 2.

¹⁵ W. M. Williams, *The Friends of Griffith Jones* (London, 1939), p. 11.

¹⁶ G. Jones, *A Letter to a Clergyman* (London, 1745), p. 50.

Griffith Jones's enemies deliberately sought to tarnish his image by claiming that his circulating schools were Methodist-ridden. Jones feared that his former disciples were likely to damage the Church's interests and wreck his educational schemes. At the end of his tether, he berated them for their intolerance, disrespect and 'rude enthusiasm'. He abused them privately as proud railers who were guilty of 'enthusiastical & incredible fooleries'. The 'screamings and crying out' of Methodist followers deeply offended him, as did the use of 'ignorant & unfit' private exhorters.¹⁷ When Methodists asserted that Griffith Jones's emphasis on catechising and learning to read 'dried up all feeling' and quenched the heat of the flame, his emphatic reply was that presumptuous and arrogant evangelists were in danger of being drowned in the flood of their emotions. 'It is dangerous', he thundered, 'to ride on a wild, blind horse with no eyes in his head nor bridle in his mouth'.¹⁸ Daniel Rowland of Llangeitho received some rough treatment at the hands of Griffith Jones, and Howel Harris discovered that his former mentor was not inclined to pull any punches. Jones had serious misgivings about Harris's itinerant activities and constantly urged him to settle down. He wearily confessed to Madam Bevan that Harris's head was 'tinged with a little Dottage'.¹⁹ Griffith Jones, in fact, was one of the few Welshmen capable of putting such a fiery and perverse man as Harris in his place. He charged him with holding 'exceedingly erroneous, harsh, conceited & disorderly' notions and dubbed him 'a reviler, a railer, proud and haughty'.²⁰ Harris lived in dread of Griffith Jones's public scoldings. As he sat, petrified, among Jones's congregation in Llandeilo Abercywyn in March 1742, he felt a 'secret fear . . . lest Mr. Jones should point at me in his Sermon'.²¹ When Griffith Jones cornered Herbert Jenkins, the Methodist exhorter, in Llanddowror, he chastised him so fiercely that Jenkins was left mortified, shaking and speechless.²²

Yet, even though Griffith Jones vented his spleen on sinners and over-zealous and conceited evangelists alike, he never bore grudges. His earliest biographer, Henry Phillips of Sarum, rightly emphasised his forgiving temper.²³ Heated arguments with Methodist leaders at

¹⁷ NLW MS. 6137D, p. 415; CCHMC, 1939, p. 110; CCHMC, 1940, pp. 19–20; CCHMC, 1941, p. 78; G. M. Roberts, 'Griffith Jones's Opinion of the Methodists', CCHMC, 1950, pp. 53–56; T. Beynon, *Howel Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, pp. 32, 62, 115, 119.

¹⁸ G. Jones, *Llythyr ynghylch y Ddyledwydd o Gateceisio Plant a Phobl Anwybodus* (London, 1749), p. 14.

¹⁹ NLW MS. 6137D, p. 414.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; *Howel Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, p. 62.

²¹ CCHMC, 1939, p. 116.

²² CCHMC, 1916–17, pp. 12–13.

²³ *A Sketch of the Life . . . of Mr. Griffith Jones*, p. 21.

Llanddowror always ended 'in very great love'. Griffith Jones was conscious that his biting tongue earned him many enemies. 'I have liv'd long enough to know', he confessed, 'that in almost all, if not in every congregation, I have more Judges or Censors than honest Hearers.'²⁴ Whatever Griffith Jones's faults might have been, malice and vindictiveness were not among them. He made no attempt to answer the libellous accusations of his muck-raking neighbour, John Evans of Eglwys Gymyn. Such 'cowardly Assassins'²⁵ were unworthy of attention. 'Should the traveller be disturbed', he murmured disdainfully, 'by the little Animals that bark at him on his way, or stop to correct their Rudeness?'²⁶

Howel Harris once aptly described Griffith Jones as 'an old and much honoured soldier'.²⁷ For Jones viewed life itself as a battle, an eternal struggle between good and evil, between the 'opposite interests' of sin and the Devil and Christ and religion.²⁸ 'We are here . . . in the field of battle', he wrote to Madam Bevan, 'and we have many enemies to fight with; but then remember the Prince and Captain of our salvation, whose banner of love we fight under, and forget not the prize we fight for.'²⁹ One of his favourite scriptural verses was: 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James iv. 7).³⁰ He relished telling the following story to his flock of Satan's attempt to vex him. Whilst returning home one dark night the Devil mounted his horse behind him. 'Who's there?' cried Griffith Jones. 'Thy deadly enemy, as thou art mine, the Devil', was the reply. 'What is thy business with me?' asked Jones. 'To tear thee to pieces with these Claws', answered the Devil, throwing his arms over Griffith Jones's shoulders to reveal his horrible claws. Griffith Jones simply shrugged him off and completed his journey unscathed.³¹ Whenever he told and re-told this tale in the pulpit, he always urged his listeners to stand firm against Satan, for he was capable of devouring 'precious souls . . . in one morsel'.³² The wiles of Satan demanded eternal vigilance on their part. Whilst bidding the people of Llandeilo in October 1722 to 'put on the whole armour of God', he portrayed Satan as one who could appear as 'a roaring lion',

²⁴ NLW, Cwrtmawr MS. 545B, p. 185.

²⁵ *Welch Piety* (hereinafter *WP*) (1750-51), p. 16.

²⁶ T. Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Pioneer in Adult Education* (1950), p. 36.

²⁷ G. M. Roberts (ed.), *Selected Trevecka Letters (1742-1747)* (Caernarfon, 1956), p. 73.

²⁸ *WP* (1742-43), p. 16; NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermon preached at Llanddewibrefi on 1 September 1734.

²⁹ E. Morgan (ed.), *Letters of Griffith Jones to Mrs. Bevan* (London, 1832), p. 11.

³⁰ G. Jones, *Bedydd yr Ail-Fedyddwyr heb sail iddo yng Ngair Duw* (Llanelli, n.d.), p. 22.

³¹ J. Evans, op. cit., p. 27.

³² E. Morgan, op. cit., p. 275.

'a wolf' or 'a serpent'.³³ The true Christian was bound to commit himself to fighting bravely against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil. Like many religious reformers of his day, Griffith Jones was fond of using military imagery. When he first met George Whitefield, he told him that he was 'but a young soldier, just entering the field'.³⁴ 'Strengthen us with your grace,' was his frequent prayer, 'to suffer affliction like a true soldier of Jesus Christ.'³⁵ He cherished this verse from the work of Vicar Rees Prichard:

Be thou therefore like a soldier
In your life for ever armed,
Always watchful, ever ready,
So that Satan harm thee not.³⁶

Griffith Jones's scorn for the Devil was matched only by his implacable hostility towards the host of dissident, warring sects which were challenging Anglican citadels. He feared that the 'scores of minor sects' which were raising their 'horned heads' were likely to create a chaos of rival religious interests.³⁷ But, above all else, the fear of Popery preyed on his mind. His references to Catholicism and 'Popish arbitrary government' were almost apoplectic in their wrath. He believed that the Popish religion had its roots in hell and that 'Popish locusts' were intent on destroying the very fabric of society.³⁸ His sermons and correspondence were shot through with a virulent anti-Catholic animus and a burning Francophobia. At times of national crisis, as in 1745 and 1756, he believed that Papist enemies on the continent were preparing to invade Britain and to 'cover the fields with blood'. Unless the people of Britain bestirred themselves to defend the Reformed faith, he declared, the judgement of God would descend upon them like thunder and lightning. 'A suffering day cannot be far off', he warned. God's 'day of anger' would bring 'a worse deluge than that which drowned the world in the days of Noah'.³⁹ In October 1757 his torment was clearly revealed in the pages of *Welch Piety*:

Wars and Rumours of Wars sound loudly in our Ears. Fears and Distresses and Troubles surround and approach our Land. Engines of Destruction are formed against us. The remorseless and blood-thirsty Enemy wants only an Opportunity to cover our Fields with

³³ NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermon.

³⁴ *George Whitefield's Journals* (The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1960), p. 220.

³⁵ G. Jones, *Hyfforddwr at Orseddfaingc y Gras* (London, 1740), p. 69.

³⁶ G. Jones (ed.), *Pigion Prydyddiaeth Pen-Fardd y Cymry* (London, 1749), p. 109. Cf. G. Jones, *Cerdd Sion: sef, Traethawd ynghylch Moli Duw* (London, 1745).

³⁷ *Bedydd yr Ail-Fedyddwyr*, p. 3.

³⁸ E. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 86-87; *WP* (1750-51), p. 26; *WP* (1752-53), pp. 18-19.

Blood, and rob us of every Thing pertaining to Christianity, which to a pious Mind is dearer than Life itself.⁴⁰

A deep and abiding hatred of Catholicism was not the only sentiment which Griffith Jones shared with Puritans. His taste for piety, for instance, was always stronger than his appetite for frivolity. Like Howel Harris, he was basically a strait-laced, humourless man who disapproved of levity and mirth. It is hard to imagine him twitting his colleagues or playing a harmless practical joke. Searching for a light touch or a mischievous wink in his letters and sermons is a vain quest, for Griffith Jones was a fastidious, serious-minded man who detested any form of flippancy. Like Mark Twain, he believed that there was no humour in heaven. He urged adults and children alike not to concern themselves with worldly pleasures, to reject all wanton pastimes and to concentrate their minds on higher things. The 'barefaced Wickedness and abounding Iniquity of the Times' filled him with gloom.⁴¹ 'The pleasure and enjoyment which comes from sin', he raged, 'is nothing but a sore deceit which will turn into poison ere long.'⁴² Jones was convinced that the bustling cities of England were sinking under a deluge of sin and iniquity. He believed that London was a godless place and he had no wish to see his countrymen aping the fashions and tastes of the metropolis. The *dolce vita* of Bath was anathema to him. By the mid-eighteenth century, some 12,000 visitors descended annually on Bath.⁴³ The pump-room, chocolate houses and raffling shops attracted *nouveaux riches* as well as gouty lords and clergymen. Although Griffith Jones enjoyed the company of the godly men and women who gathered for tea in Madam Bevan's house in Bath, he was always happy to retreat from the fleshpots of Beau Nash. He feared that Bath was riddled with 'innumerable Hellish Inventions to harden the hearts of men against God'.⁴⁴

Most studies of Griffith Jones have focussed on his rôle as a pioneer in education, but he was probably better known in his own day as a marvellously gifted preacher. Howel Harris was not yet born when Griffith Jones was attracting throngs of pilgrims to hear him preach at Laugharne and Llanfihangel Abercywyn. Sometime during

⁴⁰ *WP* (1756-57), p. 7.

⁴¹ *WP* (1743-44), p. 27.

⁴² G. Jones, *Traethawd ar Edifeirwch* (Aberystwyth, 1833), p. 51.

⁴³ R. S. Neale, *Bath. A Social History, 1680-1850* (London, 1981), p. 46.

⁴⁴ NLW, Cwrtmawr MS. 545B, p. 37.

his youth he experienced a profound conversion which left him consumed with a burning conviction that he had been singled out by God to be of service to his people. Filled with a strong sense of mission, he vowed to rid his land of superstition and ignorance.⁴⁵ So great was his urge to save souls that it could not be contained within the bounds of his own parish. He preached in churchyards, fairs and market places, and people flocked in their hundreds from neighbouring counties, the border country and even north Wales to witness his rousing sermons. John Dalton of Clogyfrân believed that his listeners sometimes numbered a thousand, whilst Sir John Philipps reckoned that his audiences were closer to 3–4,000.⁴⁶ When John Evans, Eglwys Gymyn, went to hear Griffith Jones preach in Laugharne church, he failed to reach the church door because of milling crowds.⁴⁷ On the first Thursday in April 1714, Llanwenog church was so full of hearers that the doors broke.⁴⁸ According to Benjamin Simon, large numbers of Dissenters flocked to his services, and Edmund Jones, 'the old Prophet', was convinced that Griffith Jones was 'one of the most excellent preachers in Great Britain'.⁴⁹

Save perhaps for Daniel Rowland, Griffith Jones had no equal in the pulpit in Wales. Clad in his great coat and long cravat, he cut an impressive figure. He was a fluent, powerful preacher whose eloquent and moving sermons forced his hearers to 'feel their blood thrill within them'.⁵⁰ Bored by the tedious homilies of their ministers, people tramped miles to hear a man who had become a legend in his own lifetime. Griffith Jones seldom minced his words in the pulpit. His wrath descended on sinners 'like a flaming Meteor'. 'Oh! miserable people', he would roar, 'hoodwink'd with stupidity & wallowing with greediness in ye filth of sin.'⁵¹ 'Oh sinner! sinner!' he thundered in Llansteffan church in March 1713, 'sin is not a matter for jest. It is a dreadul thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'⁵² His sermons were peppered with admonitions against drunkenness, idleness, lust and debauchery, and his lurid descriptions of hell were designed to send shivers of apprehension down the spines of the sinful. 'Consider what it will be like to be boiled in the huge cauldron of God's wrath', he warned, 'what it will be like to burn

⁴⁵ J. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 14; M. Clement, *Correspondence*, p. 57.

⁴⁶ Clement, *Correspondence*, p. 72.

⁴⁷ J. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ NLW, Ottley MS. 1627.

⁴⁹ G. H. Hughes, 'Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, a Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg', *Yr Eurgrawn*, 154 (1962), 155; D. A. Jones, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror* (Wrexham, 1923), p. 118.

⁵⁰ *A Sketch of the Life . . . of Mr. Griffith Jones*, p. 7.

⁵¹ NLW, Ottley MS. 100, p. 8.

⁵² NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermon; NLW MS. 85A, sermon preached on 3 March 1735.

in the unquenchable fire, in the fiery furnace, in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone?'⁵³ When a house was burnt to the ground in his neighbourhood in January 1736, his instinctive comment was: 'what about the conflagration of the Last Day?'⁵⁴ However, the dreadfulness of judgement and hell was by no means his perennial theme. He preached with passionate conviction on faith and repentance. 'Flee to Christ', was his exhortation, 'flee to your greatest friend.' According to his earliest biographer, 'Christ was all to him'.⁵⁵ Tears often flowed down his cheeks as he begged sinners to wage war on sin and follow Christ's call.

As he preached and counselled from house to house in Llanddowror, Griffith Jones spoke often of the 'heavenly call' which he had experienced as he tended his sheep on the hillsides of Cilrhedyn. Acutely aware of his divine appointment, he warned his parishioners that people who had not been 'born again' were 'feeding on husks with pigs'.⁵⁶ He feared for the fate of 'myriads of poor ignorant souls'⁵⁷ and spared no pains in reminding them that Christ had come into this world in order to save the souls of men. According to Howel Harris, one of his favourite sayings was 'None but Christ, none but Christ's Blood'.⁵⁸ This was his message to underprivileged hearers in Cilgerran church on New Year's Day, 1733:

You may be poor, and may continue to be so, and yet go to Heaven in the end; you may be sick or in prison, and continue thus, and yet go to Heaven when you die; you may be lacking in knowledge and scholarship and yet go to Heaven when you leave this world: but without this change and without becoming a new creature it will be impossible for you ever to enter Heaven.⁵⁹

Griffith Jones called for repentance in a direct, sonorous and often homespun style. His sermons were adapted to the needs of 'vulgar sorts', for his overriding sympathies were with poor ignorant people who 'must launch forth into the dreadful Abyss of Eternity and perish for want of knowledge'.⁶⁰

Although being labelled 'the Methodist Pope' filled Griffith Jones with fury, there is no doubt that he influenced the early careers of the

⁵³ G. Jones, *Cyngor Rhad yr Anllythrennog* (London, 1737), sig.A4r. Cf. G. Jones, *Galwad at Orseddfaingc y Gras* (London, 1738), p. 68.

⁵⁴ *Trans. Carms. Antiq. Soc.*, 1919-21, p. 71.

⁵⁵ NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermons preached at Llangynog in 1734 and St. Clears in 1738; NLW MS. 4495A, sermon preached on 28 August 1743; *A Sketch of the Life . . . of Mr. Griffith Jones*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ G. Jones, *Cyngor Gweinidog o'r Wlad i'w Blwyfolion* (London, 1769), p. 14.

⁵⁷ *WP* (1740), p. 32.

⁵⁸ T. Beynon, *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier* (Caernarfon, 1958), p. 40.

⁵⁹ NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermon.

⁶⁰ *WP* (1740), p. 32.

young Methodist evangelists. He was Daniel Rowland's spiritual father. Howel Harris acted as superintendent of his circulating schools for a short period, and he confessed to Jones in 1736 that he looked upon him 'with an Eye of a Child to a Father'.⁶¹ Howel Davies served as a curate under him.⁶² Mali Francis, wife of William Williams, Pantycelyn, affirmed that Griffith Jones was her chief adviser 'in all things appertaining to her soul'.⁶³ Elizabeth Williams often brought her celebrated son, Peter, to hear Griffith Jones preach at Llanddowror.⁶⁴ Rhys Hugh, the spiritual father of Thomas Charles, was a member of his congregation.⁶⁵ In many ways, Llanddowror was as much a cradle of Methodism as Llangeitho and Trefeca. Williams Pantycelyn was convinced that the ground in which Methodism grew had been tilled in readiness by the rector of Llanddowror.⁶⁶ It was under Griffith Jones's guidance that Methodist evangelists, notably Howel Harris, learned to preach from the pulpit. Jones's style and zeal were an inspiration to them and they treasured his pearls of wisdom. It was Griffith Jones who taught Howel Harris not to repeat himself in his sermons and to talk of 'repentance' whenever the phrase 'to be born again' caused offence to his hearers.⁶⁷ Even as late as May 1770, Howel Harris was still telling the story of the five foolish virgins in the manner which Griffith Jones had taught him thirty-four years previously.⁶⁸ And although Griffith Jones was always anxious to avoid the taint of Methodism, he still joined the evangelists on preaching tours. In 1748, at the ripe age of 65, he embarked on a celebrated itinerary through Wales in the distinguished company of Lady Huntingdon, Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland and Howel Davies. During this famous tour, Griffith Jones preached a remarkably powerful sermon in a large field in Trefeca. His text was 'What shall I cry?' (Isaiah xl. 6) Many listeners were so deeply convinced of their misery and guilt that they cried out 'in the most awful manner'. When some of them were questioned later by Lady Huntingdon, they claimed that they had been so strongly convinced of their sinful condition that they feared that God would never have mercy upon them.⁶⁹ Thomas

⁶¹ G. T. Roberts, 'Howel Harris: Ymgeisydd am Ordeiniad', *Gwanwyn Duw*, ed. J. E. W. Davies (Caernarfon, 1982), p. 135.

⁶² G. M. Roberts (ed.), *Y Deffroad Mawr* (Caernarfon, 1973), pp. 89-90.

⁶³ G. M. Roberts, *Y Pêr Ganiedydd (Pantycelyn): Trem ar ei Fywyd* (Aberystwyth, 1949), p. 96.

⁶⁴ G. M. Roberts, *Bywyd a Gwaith Peter Williams* (Cardiff, 1943), p. 13.

⁶⁵ CCHMC, 1950, p. 56.

⁶⁶ W. Williams, *Saith o Farwnadau* (Swansea, 1854), p. 7.

⁶⁷ CCHMC, 1941, p. 480.

⁶⁸ CCHMC, 1947, p. 103.

⁶⁹ *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (London, 2 vols., 1839), I, 84-86.

Morgan of Henllan was not alone in believing that Griffith Jones's words from the pulpit came forth 'with power as of a man of God'.⁷⁰

Griffith Jones's talents lay not only in his gifts as a popular preacher but also in his ability to win the sympathy and affection of common people. His primary concern was the salvation of the poor, those whom he liked to call 'the vulgar and low People'. Like John Wesley, he felt a real sense of responsibility for the underprivileged. The economic plight of under-nourished common people disturbed him. He fretted whether they had enough bread to eat and clothes to wear, or whether they were sufficiently strong to withstand the ravages of diseases such as typhus, smallpox and dysentery. Griffith Jones always had a word of comfort and encouragement for the poor and he would often question them in detail about their spiritual needs, their health and living conditions. He tempted poor people to church with doles of bread and he clothed the needy. He prepared herbal remedies and ordered exotic assortments of pills, ointments, drugs and life-enhancing cordials from London for the benefit of his sick parishioners. Griffith Jones despised those clergymen who referred to the poorest classes as 'vermin' and 'pests',⁷¹ and he devoted much of his time to raising the lower strata of society out of their ignorance. His concern for the fate of the poor deepened when south-west Wales was struck by an appalling typhus epidemic between 1727 and 1731. This 'nervous kind of fever' proved especially virulent among the poor, and Griffith Jones was fearful that many of the adults and children who were struck down would die without ever having known Christ.⁷² He resolved, therefore, to 'lift up my Cry for the Poor'.⁷³

One of Griffith Jones's favourite maxims was 'ignorance is the mother and nurse of ungodliness'. He rebutted the notion that ignorance was 'the opiate of the poor' and set about establishing an effective and popular system of education. His experience as a teacher in schools established by the S.P.C.K. had taught him that few poor families could afford to keep their children at school and that teaching monoglot Welsh children through the medium of the English tongue was sheer folly. Constantly alert to the need to

⁷⁰ NLW MS. 5456A, dated 4 August 1744.

⁷¹ *WP* (1743-44), p. 5.

⁷² Clement, *Correspondence*, pp. 153, 163; G. H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, 1660-1730* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 136.

⁷³ *A Letter to a Clergyman*, p. 68.

eradicate ignorance and arrest the drift to immorality, Griffith Jones established a new educational enterprise based on circulating schools. The advantages of this system to the hewers of wood and the drawers of water are well-known.⁷⁴ Either during the day or at night, children and adults alike were given the opportunity to learn to read the bible and the catechism. For the first time in their lives, tenants, labourers, men-servants and maid-servants were given the opportunity to acquire reading skills. Griffith Jones viewed his schools as a rock of order and stability in the seething cross-currents of religious and political life. Thus, his pupils were indoctrinated with the hallowed virtues of obedience, resignation and humility. His schools cemented social bonds by encouraging deference and preaching the virtues of the vested interests of the *ancien régime*.

Although *Welch Piety* was as much an exercise in public relations as an annual report, it provides ample testimony to the success of the venture. The acquisition of reading skills clearly opened up new cultural horizons for common people. Bespectacled old women attended regularly and often wept because such privileges had not been available during their youth. A blind young woman who had become so proficient in the catechism and scriptures was employed as a teacher by Griffith Jones.⁷⁵ Although back-breaking labour in local coal-mines sapped the strength of Llangyfelach colliers, many of them still insisted on attending night-school 'to learn their Books'.⁷⁶ A six-year-old child shamed his parents by urging them to say grace before beginning their meal and to kneel in prayer before retiring at night.⁷⁷ Benjamin Morgans, vicar of Trelech, painted a vivid portrait of an old man of seventy-one, with his spectacle on his nose and his catechism in his hand, striving to master the alphabet.⁷⁸ Some of the descriptions of pupils aged between five and nine who suffered from smallpox are models of pathos. Many of them died with great dignity, 'shewing an awaken'd concern for their Souls . . . some of them wished and longed to die, to be with Christ'.⁷⁹ Hearing poor children at prayer moved John Kenrick, rector of Llangernyw, to tears: 'they seemed even beautiful in their Rags, while they thus learnt to put on Christ Jesus'.⁸⁰ These striking cameos, couched in adoring tones by clergymen and schoolmasters,

⁷⁴ The virtues of the itinerant system are discussed in detail in T. Kelly, *Griffith Jones*, *passim*.

⁷⁵ *WP* (1740), pp. 26–27.

⁷⁶ *WP* (1756–57), p. 16.

⁷⁷ *WP* (1743–44), pp. 9–10.

⁷⁸ *WP* (1753–54), p. 29.

⁷⁹ *WP* (1746–47), p. 6.

⁸⁰ *WP* (1750–51), p. 52.

testify to Griffith Jones's gifts as an organizer. He called for the highest possible standards of service and dedication from his teachers, urging them constantly to hunt out evil living and to preach the virtues of toil, honesty and obedience.

The fact that Griffith Jones's venture was entirely dependent on charitable donations is a further indication of his ability to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. For Wales in this period was a poor, pastoral country, with a surplus of unskilled labourers and a dearth of truly wealthy men. Griffith Jones might claim that 'the Lord shall provide' (Jehova Jireh), but without ready funds to provide books, employ teachers, hire inspectors and school-rooms he could not hope to succeed. During his career he saw nine bishops come and go in St. David's, not one of whom saw fit to acknowledge, let alone support or praise, his enterprise. 'Shame on such bishops', wrote William Morris, 'Oh that St. David knew what sort of colleagues are sitting on his throne.'⁸¹ Unlike their spiritual leaders, however, the Welsh clergy were unstinting in their generosity and goodwill. His association with Sir John Philipps of Picton Castle and Madam Bridget Bevan of Laugharne, moreover, enabled him to enter the charmed circle of polite life in south-west Wales and Bath. As Allan Ramsay's portrait reveals, Madam Bevan was a handsome lady of exquisite poise and breeding. Steele's epigram to Lady Elizabeth Hastings—'to love her was a liberal education'—would have been equally apt in the case of Madam Bevan. Howel Harris was a starry-eyed youth when he first met her, and her sophistication and piety led him to confess that 'twas a taste of Heaven to be with her'.⁸² Griffith Jones, too, doted on this lady bountiful. 'I thank you, dear Madam, for the advantages of your friendship', he wrote in July 1736, 'it is no mean privilege to have a devout and judicious friend to vent a little of one's concerns to.'⁸³ His wife, Margaret, was a solitary, withdrawn woman, and there is no doubt that Madam Bevan answered his frustrated emotional and spiritual needs. Griffith Jones shared all his confidences with her, spent hours thinking about her, and often read and re-read her letters to him.⁸⁴ In turn, Madam Bevan gave the most generous financial support to Jones's circulating schools and helped to stiffen his resolve for the rest of his days.

⁸¹ J. H. Davies (ed.), *The Letters of Lewis, Richard, William and John Morris, 1728-1765* (2 vols., Aberystwyth, 1907-9), I, 288.

⁸² R. Bennett, *The Early Life of Howell Harris* (London, 1962), p. 60.

⁸³ E. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁸⁴ NLW, Cwrtmawr MS. 545B, pp. 186b, 187-89, 255b, 258.

Griffith Jones also relied heavily on English philanthropists. One of the most significant social developments in Hanoverian England was the growth of a self-made, moneyed professional middle class whose overriding concern was to acquire wealth.⁸⁵ Griffith Jones was not above flattering these well-to-do men in modish spas like Bath.⁸⁶ According to John Evans, Griffith Jones 'strokes their Heads, calls them his fine Boys; flatters, cokeses them; gives them sugar plums'.⁸⁷ But in calling on wealthy peers and the *nouveaux riches* to assist him in reforming the lives of the lower orders, Griffith Jones was equally adept in pricking their consciences. He reminded them often that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for an unmerciful rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁸ He sent shivers down their spines when he reminded them of the 'terrible judgements hanging over their heads'.⁸⁹ Similarly, he shamed sponsors and parents alike by pointing out the likely effects of their parsimony and selfishness:

Will not myriads of children have cause to testify sorrowfully against them, to tear them to pieces if possible, wringing their hands and crying out in the bitterness of their souls, and spitting out the most awful curses against them before the Judge with a horrible, ugly voice, saying 'Cursed be the womb that gave us birth and the day that we were born from such graceless parents! They were the means of making us into sinners and children of the devil.'⁹⁰

If Griffith Jones could, at times, be excessively obsequious, he was never reluctant to curse miserly men.

His methods clearly bore fruit. In 1740 he claimed to have received £100 each from two bountiful gentlemen, together with a gift of £30 each from two well-bred ladies. Sir John Thorold donated twenty guineas each year, and generous sums were forthcoming from bankers, physicians and scientists.⁹¹ But it is worth stressing, too, that he relied heavily on the pennies of the poor. Joshua Jones, vicar of Llanfihangel-ar-arth sent a guinea ('my poor hatling'), and an anonymous maid-servant insisted on donating a year's wages to assist her hero's cause.⁹² In February 1757 the parishioners of Aber-nant collected the sum of £6 2s. 4½d. to support the work of

⁸⁵ See the excellent analysis of this development in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1982), pp. 201–68.

⁸⁶ Cf. W. M. Williams, *The Friends of Griffith Jones* (London, 1939), *passim*.

⁸⁷ J. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁸⁸ *WP* (1750–51), pp. 10–11.

⁸⁹ NLW MS. 24B, un-numbered sermons; G. Jones, *Hyfforddiad i Wybodaeth Jachusol o Egwyddorion a Dyledswyddau Crefydd* (London, 1741–46), *passim*.

⁹⁰ *Llythyr ynghylch y Dyledswydd o Gateceisio*, pp. 35–36.

⁹¹ G. Jones, *An Address to the charitable and well-disposed* (London, 1741), pp. 12–13; G. J. Thomas, 'Madam Bevan's Will', *Trans. Carm. Antig. Soc.*, LXVIII (1939), 46.

⁹² *WP* (1753–54), p. 45; T. Beynon, *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier*, p. 34.

educating the poor, whilst their neighbours in Cynwil Elfed raised £5 18s. 7d. in 1758.⁹³ When the itinerant scheme was first launched, Griffith Jones had less than forty shillings in his pocket. By pandering and reproving the rich, he ensured a regular flow of funds. Moreover, his shrewd business nose enabled him to keep costs to a bare minimum. The whole scheme, he boasted, was 'husbanded in the most frugal and saving Manner'. According to his calculations in 1742, it was possible to teach between eight and ten poor persons for as little as twenty shillings.⁹⁴

Griffith Jones's attitude towards his native land has often been misinterpreted. Like most Welshmen, his loyalties were first and foremost to his own locality. He is always referred to as Griffith Jones *Llanddowror*. The Taf valley was his spiritual home and he laboured tirelessly on behalf of his parishioners for over fifty years. He had none of the wanderlust which characterized Howel Harris, for instance, and he was always happy to retreat from bustling city life. He preferred the muddy lanes of rural Carmarthenshire to the fashionable streets of Bath. In his own locality, Welsh was his natural, every-day language, and it is hard to accept the argument that his attitude towards his mother tongue was simply pragmatic and utilitarian. Many Englishmen despised the Welsh language as 'a gobble in the throat', an 'unpleasant Gibberish' and an 'uncouth ungenteel lingua'.⁹⁵ Moreover, their antipathy towards Welsh was being increasingly shared by the Welsh gentry; bewitched by English fashions and habits, they no longer took pride in their native tongue. But Griffith Jones's admiration for the Welsh language is writ large in his letters. Well-versed in the notions of leading antiquarians like Edward Lhuyd, Paul Pezron and Theophilus Evans, he believed that Welsh was a sister language to Hebrew and that its survival had been nothing less than providential. Those who sought to hasten its extinction, he argued, were flying in the face of 'the decrees of Heaven'.⁹⁶ Apart from insisting that Welsh should be the chief medium of communication in his schools, Griffith Jones also promoted the use of Welsh by composing or translating over thirty Welsh books, mostly catechisms and works of piety. As a writer, he has been sadly underrated. Not only did he write lucidly, but he also

⁹³ *WP* (1756-57), p. 24; *WP* (1757-58), p. 34.

⁹⁴ *WP* (1751-52), p. 23; *WP* (1750-51), p. 13; *WP* (1742-43), p. 4.

⁹⁵ G. H. Jenkins, *Thomas Jones yr Almanaciwr, 1648-1713* (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 109-10.

⁹⁶ *WP* (1740), pp. 47-49.

sprinkled his texts with Welsh proverbs such as 'Digrif gan bob aderyn ei lais' (Every bird finds his own voice amusing) and 'Ni cheir gwllân rhywiog ar glun gafr' (One need not expect to find fine wool on a goat's thigh).⁹⁷ Deeply sensible of the purity and antiquity of his native tongue, he extolled its virtues publicly: 'she has not lost her Charms, nor Chasteness, remains unalterably the same She was Four thousand years ago; still retains the Beauties of her youth, grown old in Years, but not decayed.'⁹⁸

Nevertheless, a practical, down-to-earth man like Griffith Jones was well aware that fulsome tributes to the primaeval dignity of the Welsh language were unlikely to persuade hard-headed English gentlemen to unloosen their purse-strings. Utilitarian arguments were also needed to fortify his case. He rightly stressed that the Welsh language acted as a barrier against the evils of deism, irreligion, libertinism and vice. It protected innocent peasants from 'Atheism, Deism, Infidelity, Arianism, Popery, lewd Plays, immodest Romances, and Love Intrigues'. He also claimed that there were strong economic reasons for preserving the language. If labourers and tenant farmers—the backbone of the pastoral community in rural Wales—were instructed through the medium of English they might rebel against their allotted life of unremitting toil, desert their callings and seek a new world across the seas. Mass emigration would have a calamitous effect on the Welsh economy and might accelerate the decay of manners. Griffith Jones had no doubt, therefore, that the most natural and effective way of implanting the basic principles of the Christian religion in the minds and hearts of the vulgar sorts was through the medium of their native tongue. 'Welsh is still the vulgar Tongue', he declared defiantly, 'and not English.' Sniping at those to whom the Welsh language was anathema, he asked: 'shall we be more concerned for the Propagation of the English Language than the Salvation of our People?' That riddle had been posed ever since the earliest days of Protestantism, but Griffith Jones was the first Welshman to solve it effectively. Finally, the fact that Griffith Jones saw fit to quote the alleged reply of the old man of Pencader to Henry II of England, namely, that there would always be someone to 'answer at the last Day for the greater Part of this Corner of the World', demonstrates clearly his faith in the future of the nation.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ G. Jones, *Hyfforddwr at Orseddfaingc y Gras* (London, 1740), pp. xxxv, lxi. See also G. H. Hughes's discussion of Griffith Jones's links with Welsh literature in *Yr Eurgrawn*, 1962, pp. 153–62.

⁹⁸ *WP* (1740), p. 51.

⁹⁹ *WP* (1740), pp. 37–49; *A Letter to a Clergyman*, p. 44.

During the period 1650–1800, literacy rates accelerated swiftly in many European countries. But it is likely that only Lutheran Sweden and Finland succeeded in teaching the majority of its people to read. In 1686 a church ordinance was issued, bidding all subjects to ‘learn to read and see with their own eyes what God bids and commands in His Holy Word’. Within the household unit, every person above the age of five was enjoined to learn to read and understand the catechism, the scripture and scriptural verses known as the *Hustavla*. The system proved an enormous success: by 1700, many parishes boasted 90 per cent literacy among both men and women.¹⁰⁰ Griffith Jones’s teaching methods were not dissimilar, but the crucial difference between the Welsh and Swedish systems was that Jones relied mainly on formal schooling rather than on domestic instruction. Moreover, it is worth bearing in mind that the established Church in Wales did not throw its weight behind Griffith Jones’s venture; his educational system remained essentially a private enterprise run on a shoestring. His achievement, therefore, is all the more remarkable. Between 1737 and 1761, 3,325 schools were established in 1,600 different places in Wales. It is probable that at least 200,000 children and adults learnt to read fluently in these schools (in a period when the population of Wales was around 450,000). ‘By degrees’, rejoiced Robert Jones, Rhos-lan, ‘the free schools spread to most parts of Wales, and great were the blessings which followed.’¹⁰¹

Prior to the 1730s, the phenomenal increase in the number of printed books in Welsh had helped to nurture the spread of literacy among middling sorts in Wales.¹⁰² Griffith Jones’s achievement was to offer equal opportunities to underprivileged and deprived boys and girls, men and women to receive free education. He created a literate Welsh peasantry. Common people were now able to read their bibles, comprehend the catechism, and give a decent account of their faith. Further dividends were reaped. The number of ordinary people who subscribed to Welsh books increased enormously.¹⁰³ By favouring the Welsh language as the medium of education, Griffith Jones helped to keep his native tongue alive. His venture revitalized church life. Clergymen all over Wales testified that the number of worshippers had increased, that communion was being administered

¹⁰⁰ G. Parker, ‘An educational revolution? The growth of literacy and schooling in early modern Europe’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 93 (1980), 218–19.

¹⁰¹ Robert Jones, *Drych yr Amseroedd*, ed. G. M. Ashton (Cardiff, 1958), p. 104.

¹⁰² G. H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society*, pp. 308–9.

¹⁰³ G. M. Richards, ‘Yr Awdur a’i Gyhoedd yn y Ddeunawfed Ganrif,’ *Journ. Welsh Bibliog. Soc.*, X (1966), 18; E. Rees, ‘Pre-1820 Welsh Subscription Lists’, *ibid.*, pp. 106–19.

more regularly, that hearers were praying earnestly, and that age-old sins such as swearing, drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking were less prevalent.¹⁰⁴ It is clear, too, that were it not for the labours of Griffith Jones, Methodism would not have borne so splendid a harvest in eighteenth-century Wales. 'It was in Llanddowror', Williams Pantycelyn admitted, 'that this light first broke forth.'¹⁰⁵ In many parts of Wales, Methodism gained its strongest foothold in precisely those communities where the circulating schools were most popular. In Carmarthenshire, for instance, at least one-third of the county's farmhouses entertained both circulating schools and Methodist societies.¹⁰⁶ In Caernarvonshire, too, Methodism flourished best in communities like Clynog, Edern, Llanaelhaearn, Llanarmon and Llanengan, where children and adults flocked happily to the itinerant schools.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, with hindsight, we can see that the circulating schools were a Pandora's box. By indoctrinating the masses, Griffith Jones hoped to check the threat of social revolution. In time, however, his pupils would be reading Welsh versions of Tom Paine as well as the scriptures.

No churchman in eighteenth-century Wales was as highly revered, even loved, as Griffith Jones. A man of great personal dignity and charisma, he assumed the rôle of a patriarch. In 1746, Howel Harris referred to him as 'an old man, an old saint, an old minister and a Father in Israel'.¹⁰⁸ Lewis Morris of Anglesey spoke with affection and respect of 'old Gruffydd Siôn of Llanddowror'.¹⁰⁹ George Whitefield claimed that among the 'burning and shining Lights' in the Anglican and Dissenting ministry, 'Mr. Griffith Jones shines in particular'.¹¹⁰ Griffith Jones was able to attract talented men and win their affections. It is significant that his teachers, though miserably paid and often much-maligned, deemed it a privilege to assist him in his work. Griffith Jones recruited authors and poets of the calibre of Morgan Rhys, Dafydd Wiliam and Ioan Siencyn to teach both children and adults. Such was his influence that zealous Dissenters such as Jenkin Morgan, Richard Tibbott and Evan Williams were

¹⁰⁴ There is a mass of evidence to this effect in the pages of *Welsh Piety*.

¹⁰⁵ W. Williams, *Saith o Farwnadau*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ T. Beynon, *Howell Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, p. 233.

¹⁰⁷ J. G. Parry, 'Stability and Change in mid-Eighteenth Century Caernarfonshire' (unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1978), p. 333.

¹⁰⁸ T. Beynon, *Howell Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁹ W. M. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ *George Whitefield's Journals*, p. 231.

prepared to accept communion in the Church of England in order to pass muster before Church authorities. Moreover, Llanddowror became a Mecca for eager young pilgrims. John Thomas of Rhayader walked thirty-five miles in order to meet Griffith Jones and immediately fell under his spell: 'his manner of speaking and his appearance won my heart and it was as though I looked upon an angel of God'.¹¹¹ Although there was constant friction between Griffith Jones and Methodist evangelists, the rector of Llanddowror opened his door wide to them. He was prepared to discuss and argue—often late into the night—on topics as diverse as private exhorting, the Moravians, Erskine's sermons and the hymns of Daniel Rowland.¹¹² Howel Harris visited Llanddowror frequently in order to share his secret thoughts and beg favours from his mentor. Harris never forgot the counsels and censures which he received and, as Richard Bennett shrewdly remarked, 'he needed the severity of Llanddowror to salt other people's applause'.¹¹³ Whenever Harris was overcome with melancholy and depression, he often consoled himself by reciting over and over the words of Griffith Jones: 'May God be your God forever'.¹¹⁴ The founder of Welsh Methodism rarely left the vicarage of Llanddowror without shedding tears; 'parted in great love' was a common entry in his diary.

Following his wife's death on 5 January 1755, Griffith Jones settled in Madam Bevan's home at Laugharne. By this time he had become increasingly moody and cantankerous. Even the balmy breezes of Cefnsidan brought him little relief from crippling attacks of asthma. Madam Bevan's servants refused to revere his grey hairs and dubbed him 'Old Peevish'. It was natural, perhaps, for a man who had selflessly devoted his life to winning souls now to feel frustrated. 'I must bear Witness to the Goodness of God', were his parting words on his death-bed to Benjamin Morgans of Trelech.¹¹⁵ Saving souls had been the ruling passion of his life. Having served the established Church for over fifty years, Griffith Jones died, aged seventy-seven, on 8 April 1761. He was buried in the chancel of Llanddowror church. Madam Bevan's last wish, before her death in 1779, was to lie at his side.¹¹⁶ Griffith Jones, sang Morgan Rhys in

¹¹¹ Ioan Thomas, *Rhad Ras*, ed. J. Dyfnallt Owen (Cardiff, 1949), p. 46.

¹¹² CCHMC, 1940, p. 12.

¹¹³ R. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹¹⁴ T. Beynon, *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier*, p. 47.

¹¹⁵ *A Sketch of the Life . . . of Mr. Griffith Jones*, p. 22.

¹¹⁶ W. J. M. Gilchrist, 'Griffith Jones "Persis"', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, XIV (1978), 37.

his elegy to him, had won imperishable glory: 'while the sun continues to shine, his name will never fade'.¹¹⁷ With one of Griffith Jones's favourite aphorisms we may appropriately take our leave of him:

If there is comfort at the end of a day well spent, how much more at the end of such a life?¹¹⁸

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¹¹⁷ M. Rhys, *Marwnad . . . Y Parchedig Mr. Gryffydd Jones* (Carmarthen, 1761), p. 3.

¹¹⁸ E. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 371.