

The Reverend W. R. Davies vs. Captain Dan Jones

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In 1838 when forty-year-old William Robert Davies was ordained minister of the Baptist Caersalem Chapel in Dowlais (two miles from Merthyr Tydfil) he had probably never heard of the Latter-day Saints. Halfway into his eleven-year ministry at Caersalem, he would become the most vociferous foe of Mormonism in Wales. In addition to constant sermons against the new religion, Davies also published extensively in the various religious periodicals. And all of this opposition was conducted according to the established “modus operandi” for the nineteenth-century polemic.

Elder William Henshaw, the earliest Mormon missionary sent to the Merthyr Tydfil area, reported his first baptisms on 19 February 1843, just a matter of weeks after beginning his mission. Among Henshaw’s first dozen baptisms was one of W. R. Davies’s congregation, and it was no doubt this conversion that brought Davies into the arena.

In an unpublished letter in Welsh dated 6 May 1843 Davies commented on the newcomers:

There is here a new sect, the “Latter-day Saints,” as they call themselves; they baptize as we do, and that at night. They profess to be able to do everything which the apostles could do: to heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead, speak in tongues, etc., etc. Their minister has been in the house with me trying to convince me. He is having success and has baptized from 10 to 12 in the last three months. And he baptized one woman who was a member with us.¹

Ten months later, a brief article of Davies’s appeared in the March 1844 issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* [The Baptist], one of the many religious periodicals in the Welsh language then being published. Under the pseudonym of “Tabit ger y bont” [Tabit near the bridge], Davies presents a 600-word diatribe against the Mormons. The first few sentences are indicative of his approach to dealing with the Mormons during the next five years until his death in 1849 of cholera:

The foolish and mad men who call themselves “Latter-day Saints” have arrived in Pendaran [*sic*]. [Penydarren is an area contiguous to Merthyr Tydfil.] They profess to work miracles, to prophesy, to speak in unknown tongues, yea, in a word to do everything that the apostles did. I am sorry to say that a number of dregs of society are now believers. They baptize at night, and those receiving baptism must undress for them and go to the water stark naked!²

Davies then relates an attempt made by the Mormons to heal one of their sisters who was in hysterics. The first blessing was unsuccessful, so someone was sent to fetch William Henshaw, to whom Davies refers with four epithets: “the high deceiver,” “the great prophet,” “the father of them all” and “the chief apostle.” After Henshaw’s failure—this according to Davies, of course—a doctor was sent for. The physician determined that the lady had given birth to a child which had died in the process. Davies’s final comment: “I did not think there were men so stupid in Wales to believe such a heap of nonsense and presumption.”³

After the appearance of this article, Davies was a frequent contributor of anti-Mormon writings to *Y Bedyddiwr* and several other periodicals. Listed in table 1 are his published anti-Mormon writings found in the most prominent religious publications of the 1840s. The brief comments in the third column are merely an indication of the most salient characteristic of each item, and the number of words in the final column is an approximation. Table 2 is a list of published Mormon writings about W. R. Davies’s writings.

In a 1,500-word article in the April 1844 *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 2, table 1) Davies announces in a spirit of fair play his intention to give “a small account of their failure together with their successes.” It would be unfair, he says, “to falsely accuse Satan despite all his Satanness, and by the same principle it would be a pity to put the weakest side and only that before the public.”⁴ According to Davies, the Mormons were preaching in a camp meeting in Georgetown, an area of Merthyr Tydfil; there they were countered by Dafydd Oliver, a member of the Baptist church. After the Mormon preacher had finished his “foolish and devilish chatter,” Dafydd Oliver asked some questions which resulted in a “heated and fierce debate.” Oliver then “took hold of him with invincible strength, showing him to be a satanic and presumptuous wretch, trying to blind a few of the weak-headed fools who followed him, into believing that he was speaking infallibly, and was a recipient of visions and revelations from God.”⁵

The camp meeting turned into a debate, and the opponents met on two other occasions. To conclude the third and final round, James Wilkins, a Baptist minister, asked permission to address the listeners. According to Davies, the Reverend Wilkins then “demonstrated the stupidity and arrogance” of the Mormon missionaries and announced that the Baptists “would not come ever again to disturb the camp of the Saints, as they were beneath the notice of every man of common sense.”⁶

Davies further mentions that wherever the Saints went among the Baptists they were met with defeat. But when they went to the “men of the sprinkle” (as Davies called the Independents, because of their mode of baptism), the Mormons finally scored a victory and baptized “an intelligent

Table 1
Published Anti-Mormon Writings of W. R. Davies

1.	1844 Mar.	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 99–100	Account of a failed healing	600 words
2.	Apr.	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 123–24	Some successes and failures	1,500 words
3.	1846 Mar.	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 91–93	A reply to a letter supposedly written by Abel Evans and William Henshaw	1,700 words
4.	Mar.	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 111–12	The supposed healing of William Hughes's leg	650 words
5.	Mar.	Separate pamphlet	"The Latter Saints. The substance of a sermon given on the miracles."	20 pages
6.	June	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 23	Comments about the "forged" letter	750 words
7.	1847 Jan.	<i>Seren Gomer</i> , 7–8	Zeal without knowledge	2,000 words
8.	July	Separate pamphlet	A nonextant reworking of no. 5	
9.	Sep.	<i>Y Tyst</i> , 199–201	Why the Latter-day Saints should be called "The Nineteenth-century Satanists"	1,800 words
10.	Dec.	<i>Seren Gomer</i> , 368	Predictions about the Mormons	600 words
11.	Dec.	<i>Seren Gomer</i> , 375–76	A warning to the Welsh about the Mormons	800 words
12.	1848 Jan.	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 16–17	Quotes from other sources	850 words
13.	Feb.	<i>Y Drysorfa</i> <i>Gynnulleidfaol</i> , 37–38	Quote from the <i>Ottawa Free</i> <i>Trader</i> (identical to second half of no. 14)	450 words
14.	June	<i>Y Drysorfa</i> <i>Gynnulleidfaol</i> , 168–70	A variety of Mormon offenses	1,900 words
15.	June	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 209–11	Arguments against baptism for the dead	1,500 words
16.	July	<i>Seren Gomer</i> , 201–2	The failure of the Mormons to cast out evil spirits	1,300 words
17.	1849 Aug.	<i>Seren Gomer</i> , 248	Effect of the cholera on membership	250 words

Table 2
Published Mormon Writings about W. R. Davies's Anti-Mormon Writings

1.	1846 Feb.	<i>Atebyddy Gwrthddadleuon</i> , 22	Identification by Dan Jones of W. R. Davies as the person behind the pseudonyms	200 words
2.	May	<i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 193–94	A letter of clarification by Abel Evans and William Henshaw	170 words
3.	July	<i>Prophwyd y Jubili</i> , 22–28	Refutation of Davies's accusations in <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> for March 1846	3,000 words
4.	Sep.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 70–78	A review of Davies's pamphlet (first installment)	4,000 words
5.	Sep.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 78–84	In defense of Evans and Henshaw	3,200 words
6.	Oct.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 107–9	A review of Davies's pamphlet (second installment)	1,100 words
7.	Nov.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 128–31	A review of Davies's pamphlet (third installment)	2,000 words
8.	Dec.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 156–60	A review of Davies's pamphlet (fourth and final installment)	2,000 words
9.	1847 Mar.	A separate pamphlet	A refutation of Davies's article in <i>Seren Gomer</i> , January 1847	12 pages
10.	Aug.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 120–23	A refutation of Davies's reworking of his pamphlet	1,900 words
11.	Sep.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 134–37	Conclusion of no. 10	1,750 words
12.	Nov.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 171–73	Benefits of Davies's persecution	1,200 words
13.	1848 Feb.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 21–23	A supposed dialogue between Davies and his "slugger"	1,200 words
14.	Mar.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 45–46	Announcement of the baptism of Rees Price, Davies's "right-hand man"	250 words
15.	Mar.	<i>Y Drysotfa Gynnulleidfaol</i> , 76–78	"An observer" defends Mormonism against the attacks of W. R. Davies	1,300 words
16.	June	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 88–90	A satire of Davies's baptizing of apostate Mormons	1,450 words
17.	Sep.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 131–33	Testimony of Rees Price, W. R. Davies's "right-hand man"	1,000 words
18.	Dec.	<i>Prophwyd</i> , 187–88	Testimony of Job Rowland, a convert to Mormonism from Davies's congregation	300 words
19.	1849 Sep.	<i>Udgorn Seion</i> wrapper, 3	Announcement of Davies's death	30 words

and gifted young man, a deacon in the Sunday school.” This was probably Abel Evans, who became a powerful missionary for the LDS faith. Evans’s family members were initially opposed to his conversion, but within a few days they also converted. Davies concludes: “Had they been Baptists, they would have won the battle.”⁷

Despite exhaustive searches in *Y Bedyddiwr* and numerous other religious periodicals of that era, I have located no other writings for Davies until two years later in March 1846. Much excitement was caused among the Mormons when they read a supposed challenge (no. 3, table 1) sent to W. R. Davies by two Mormon missionaries, Abel Evans and William Henshaw. The 250-word letter is dated 10 January 1846, and has numerous grammatical and spelling errors in Welsh. It contains this challenge to Davies:

We . . . are sending you this letter to compel you as an honest man to come to the field to defend that which you said previously, to face the public next Thursday night, the fifteenth of this month, and make yourself known to the public. If you come, our celebrated Apostle, Capt. Dan Jones, will be there to face you. . . . Your absence will be proof of your heresy.⁸

In his lengthy response Davies refuses to accept the challenge for the following five reasons:

1. The persons who address me are beneath my consideration.
2. The names that you give yourselves are too low to scorn, such as “the only true church of Jesus Christ,” “our celebrated Apostle Captain D. Jones,” etc.
3. The mad, presumptuous doctrines which you proclaim are beneath the consideration of every man who has common sense.
4. One of your objectives is to have a “fair” in order to gather together foolishness, but chiefly to try to collect money.
5. I completely and decidedly refuse your offer out of true respect for the inspired counsel of God through the mouth of one of his holy apostles, who counseled by saying in 1 Timothy 6:5, “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth . . . from such withdraw thyself.”⁹

Davies recommends to Dan Jones that he go back to being a captain of his fishing boat or whatever he was captain of, and he recommends to William Henshaw that he return to his birthplace in Cornwall and make fools of the Cornishmen. Davies then shows how bad the Mormons were by relating several incidents which he says had transpired in Wales: the failure of Henshaw’s blessing to a woman in labor, the failure of another Mormon who had promised to heal all the children of Dowlais, and the incarceration of a young Mormon lad who had stolen from the shop of his future father-in-law.

In a brief note that precedes the challenge and Davies's answer, the editor of *Y Bedyddiwr* comments:

Because of the impudence of these fiends who erroneously call themselves "Saints," and because of their continual attacks on the believers and the non-believers in the mining areas, and due to the fact that they have charmed many of the little children and the unstable, and because of their insult on the heavenly ordinances through their sinful imitation of them, we give space to the following correspondence which took place between them and the Rev. W. R. Davies, Dowlais. We must confess that Mr. Davies's letter to them is quite clumsy, but in view of the inferior knowledge and morals of those whom he addresses, perhaps it would be difficult to do better.¹⁰

Elders Evans and Henshaw claimed that the letter above their names in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* was a forgery. They immediately sent a letter of protest to the editor of the periodical and stated: "We testify in soberness and truth in the presence of God and men, that we did not write nor did we cause to be written the aforementioned letter, or any other writing ever to that man."¹¹ The editor printed their letter in the May 1846 issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 2, table 2), the only time a Mormon protest was allowed to appear in any of the contemporary religious periodicals. But the editor had the last say in the matter in this note following the letter: "Whether the letter referred to is false or authentic, the writing is very much like the writing of this letter. They are so similar that everyone who saw them decided at once that it was the same hand which wrote the two letters."¹²

W. R. Davies responded to the forgery accusations in the June issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 6, table 1) claiming that he had witnesses to prove he had received the letter through the mail and stating: "I consider it to be your responsibility as the editor and publisher of a monthly periodical (for the sake of religion and your fellow nation) to publish the tricks of these satanists every now and again."¹³

With the "forged" letter and Davies's response in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 3, table 1) was a letter that had appeared in the 9 December 1845 *New York Sun*. The letter is dated 20 November 1845 and is attributed to Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife. It contains her supposed admission that she never really believed in her husband's visions and revelations. Emma Smith had written to James Arlington Bennett, probably the real author of the letter, that it was a forgery, but her disclaimer did not appear in the *New York Sun* until 25 January 1846. Nothing further appears to have been said about the letter, however, by the opponents of Mormonism in Wales or by the Welsh Mormons themselves. Whether the full story was known by either side in Wales is unclear. It may well have been W. R. Davies who had submitted to *Y Bedyddiwr* the supposed letter of Emma Smith.

Yet another article (no. 4, table 1) that appeared in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* was a very sarcastic one entitled “A Miracle! A Miracle! At Last!” Using still another pseudonym, “Quick-yn-Dwr” [The literal translation is “quick in the water,” but its meaning is unclear], W. R. Davies heaps ridicule on the Mormons for claiming that miracles had occurred among them in Wales. One specific instance Davies discusses in his article is that of William Hughes, a convert to Mormonism whose leg had been broken at the mine where he worked. The Mormons asserted that Hughes’s leg had been miraculously healed as a result of a blessing given by some of their missionaries, but Davies states that when the doctor went to check on his patient, “To [the doctor’s] surprise some fool had taken off the bandage which he had put [on the leg] the day before. . . . And after being asked, the sufferer confessed the whole thing, and to this day the fool-headed wretch has not gotten better, and he is being supported by the Merthyr parish.”¹⁴

The number of Mormon converts in Wales by early 1846 had grown to nearly five hundred, most of them in South Wales. The reins of leadership of the Welsh Mormons had been given to Elder Dan Jones, often known as Captain Dan Jones. [Dan Jones, a Mississippi riverboat captain, was the recipient of Joseph Smith’s last prophecy just prior to the Martyrdom when the Prophet told him that he would live through the events of Carthage and return to Wales to fulfill the mission to which he had previously been called.] Dan Jones was outraged at Davies’s attack on the Mormons because of the William Hughes case, especially since Davies had not even taken the trouble to travel the two miles separating Dowlais and Merthyr Tydfil to gain personal knowledge of the situation before sending his letter to *Y Bedyddiwr*. Elder Jones immediately sent his own letter to the editor of the periodical, a letter which contains a detailed testimony from William Hughes himself and affidavits from Mormon and non-Mormon eyewitnesses to the miraculous healing. Jones was further outraged at the editor’s refusal to print the letter. This injustice constituted one of the principal motivating factors in Jones’s establishment of *Prophwyd y Jubili* (Prophet of the Jubilee), the first Welsh Mormon periodical. Volume 1, number 1, of this publication appeared in July 1846, only four months after Davies’s article in *Y Bedyddiwr*. And one of its main contents is a six-page refutation of Davies’s charges (no. 3, table 2). That which the editor of *Y Bedyddiwr* had refused to print is also included. Crying out against the “corrupt depths of humanity” made evident by the Baptist publication, Dan Jones writes: “I confess that we have never before seen a treatise half as large as this published, especially in a periodical which professes to be religious, but not more than one statement of it was truth, in some corner or another.”¹⁵ Jones invites the reader to count with him Davies’s lies and then presents a series of quotations from Davies’s article, showing the fallacy of each one.

He expresses further outrage at Davies in a six-page article in the September *Prophwyd y Jubili* (no. 4, table 2). Among many other observations, Jones points out that Davies proves himself devoid of common sense—after all, Davies had stated that the doctrines of Mormonism were beneath the consideration of every man who had common sense, but then he proceeded to consider them. Jones also has a few comments about the periodical willing to print Davies's writings: "What, to offer us *Y Bedyddiwr* as true! . . . Is that not the sinkhole into which you have spewed the contents of your foul insides for years, and would you wish us to sully our noses in your stinking liquid? Oh, no!"¹⁶

March 1846 was a month of considerable activity for the Reverend Davies. In addition to the "forged" letter and his answer to the challenge in *Y Bedyddiwr* and his article on the supposed healing of William Hughes's broken leg, Davies also published a twenty-page pamphlet (no. 5, table 1) entitled *Y Seintiau Diweddafi Sylwedd pregeth a dradoddyd ar y gwyrthiau, er mwyn goleuo y cyffredin, a dangos twyll y creaduriaid a alwant eu hunain yn "Seintiau y Dyddiau Diweddaf"* (The Latter Saints. The substance of a sermon which was delivered on the miracles, in order to enlighten the public and show the deceit of the creatures who call themselves "Latter-day Saints").

In the foreword to this pamphlet Davies laments that the Welsh, after "withstanding the beast of Rome" and other "false" religions, would lower themselves to believe the "unreasonable rubbish and deceit" of the Latter-day Saints. Making no effort to conceal his chauvinism, he asks, "Is it an ignorant, unlearned and disreputable Englishman from Cornwall . . . together with a few unlearned and disreputable creatures who possess the knowledge and the secret of the heavenly kingdom?" The pamphlet is a combination of two major ingredients: scriptural arguments to show the needlessness of miracles and ad hominem attacks to show that the Latter-day Saints were a bunch of "weakheaded and ignorant dolts."

William Henshaw, the "disreputable Englishman from Cornwall," as Davies calls him, had gone to Davies's home in Dowlais on one occasion shortly after beginning his mission in the Merthyr Tydfil area. Davies mentions the event in his private correspondence of 6 May 1843 but offers further detail in his pamphlet: "The false prophet of Pendarren [*sic*] called at my home some time ago and began to assert and debate his miracles, etc. [He claimed] that he and his brethren possessed every power which the apostles possessed. I listened attentively for a time, but at last I tired of his arrogance, and I asked him to speak with me in the Welsh language, since the Holy Ghost would teach him an answer without his having to meditate (Luke 21:14). But instead of speaking in tongues, I received (as I knew I would), 'I can't speak Welsh, sir.'"¹⁷ Then Davies sent his daughter to the druggist to buy some poison which he offered to Henshaw so that he could

prove the scripture, "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mark 16:18). Henshaw's refusal to drink the poison was proof to Davies that his guest was a false prophet.

In the September issue of *Prophwyd y Jubili* (no. 5, table 2) Dan Jones gives a differing account of the meeting between Henshaw and Davies. According to Jones, Davies had invited Henshaw to his home and had even offered him the opportunity to become his assistant preacher. Henshaw refused the post and the poison that was offered him. Jones devoted over half the twenty-eight pages of the September issue of his periodical to counter Davies's offensive, and he finished the task with a dozen more pages spread over the October, November and December issues (nos. 6, 7, and 8, table 2).

In November 1846 a third party entered into the Jones-Davies polemic about the Hughes leg-healing incident. In that month *Seren Gomer* (The Star of Gomer), another Baptist periodical, carried an article entitled "Sel heb wybodaeth" (Zeal without knowledge). Surprisingly, the article is pro-Mormon, a truly unusual phenomenon in the religious periodicals of that time. The writer of the article, known only by his pseudonym "Cethlydd y Don" (Songbird of the Ton), bears witness to the Hughes miracle and says of the opponents of Mormonism: "If they had the . . . Queen's seal on their girdle, I am certain that they would put the Latter-day Saints through the same experience that Stephen had, and many of their pastors would hold their coats."¹⁸

Davies, in a 2,000-word article printed in the January 1847 *Seren Gomer* (no. 7, table 1), denies that the enemies of the Saints had any such inclinations and then proceeds to ridicule "Songbird of the Ton" for claiming that Hughes's leg had been miraculously healed:

You know perfectly well that some from here and from other places have gone every step to Merthyr just to see the man [William Hughes]; and after going to all the trouble, instead of seeing the man up and around, to their disappointment they found him sick with a large lump on his leg; and if anyone doubts the fact, they can see him in that condition now; at least he was like that for the space of six or seven months after the false prophets laid their hands on him.¹⁹

Some dates here are important: Hughes received blessings from the Mormon elders on 18 and 21 January 1846. Davies's estimate of "six or seven months" of illness would have expired in August; his *Seren Gomer* article is dated November 1846 (though not published until January 1847). Consequently, it is curious that he should issue an invitation for all to go to Merthyr Tydfil to see the "still-ailing" Hughes. Curious also is the short poem with which Davies ends his article:

You, Latter-day Saints,
 I shall follow you forever,
 If you can work miracles,
 The same as the apostles of our God;
 But know this—if not—if deceivers
 Or men without power in the work,
 I shan't come one inch to follow you,
 For your journey will end in hell.
 You have been heard preaching in Wales;
 But not one miracle has been seen;
 According to every indication and sign,
 Your name will fall in disgrace:
 The same as to Southcoate and Courtney,
 And Martha and Mary of the white mantle,
 Will happen to you, I believe,
 The "Latter days" will come to an end.²⁰

Davies signs his article with a new pseudonym—"Gwcw y Don" (Cuckoo of the Ton).

Dan Jones did not delay in answering all the charges of "Cuckoo" but published a twelve-page pamphlet entitled *Amddiffyniad y Saint yn ngwyneb camgyhuddiadau y rhai a alwant eu hunain yn "Gwcw y Don"* (A defense of the Saints against the false accusations of those who call themselves "Cuckoo of the Ton" [no. 9, table 2]). Jones is at his polemical best in this pamphlet as he combines logic and sarcasm to show Davies's wrong conclusions about the Latter-day Saints. He quotes Davies's comment about Mormon miracles:

And I take this opportunity, as if under oath in the presence of my final Judge, to inform you, together with all the readers of the *Seren*, that to this point not one miracle or anything like a miracle has been worked by them anywhere in Merthyr or its environs.²¹

Jones uses Davies's strange pseudonym as a vehicle to show the fallacy of the foregoing statement:

At first, we thought that it was the little cuckoo that we had in our hands, but then it turned into a profaning magpie; after that we thought perhaps the strange bird was a parrot until it became a rapacious kite; but by following him, lo and behold, he proclaims himself a little god—sufficiently omnipresent and omniscient to fill every place from Merthyr and its environs, at least, night and day! Please forgive us for venturing to doubt a single word of that, for we know that we are criticizing the assertions of one so omniscient; for surely he must be to so assert or to ask "all the readers of the *Seren*" to believe his unique witness as to what is NOT done in so big and populous place; yes, before he would take his oath so sober before his judge (for he admits that even he has a judge despite the heights he has reached; and pity him when he stands before him! We would not want to be in his shoes for the universe) about that which, except for his omnipresence, he is unable to know!²²

Hardly a month would go by in 1847 without an attack by W. R. Davies or a defense by Dan Jones appearing in print, and the verbal exchanges from the pulpits were doubtless even more frequent.

In the February 1847 issue of *Seren Gomer* a columnist by the pseudonym of “Mathetes” published a 3,000-word review of Davies’s twenty-page pamphlet that had appeared nearly a year earlier (no. 5, table 1). The reviewer comments on a few grammatical errors that would need to be corrected in a second edition of the pamphlet, but he had found no errors in logic or doctrine. Davies, in Mathetes’s estimation, had performed a noteworthy service in warning the Welsh to beware of such a “disgraceful, shameful, and illogical movement” as the Mormons.²³

Although I have found no extant copy, it appears that there was indeed a second edition of Davies’s pamphlet. The only reference I have found to it is in Dan Jones’s eight-page review of it in *Prophwyd y Jubili* for August and September 1847 (nos. 10 and 11, table 2). Judging from Jones’s comments, the pamphlet was made into some sort of catechism for the young people of the Baptist Sunday schools. In addition to numerous objections, Jones was distraught that Davies continued to stoop to name-calling in place of arguing doctrinal issues.

Davies’s favorite name for the Saints was “Satanists.” And in the September 1847 *Y Tyst* (*The Witness*), an Anglican periodical, Davies carefully explains why the Mormons should be called “Nineteenth-century Satanists” instead of Latter-day Saints (no. 9, table 1). The first reason he gives is that they cast devils out of each other, unlike the Apostles of old. His second reason is that the last (or “latter”) days had not arrived as yet. His third reason is that the Mormons, unlike the early Christians, defend themselves with arms.

Davies signs his article “Tobit ger y Bont,” a pseudonym that he had used three years earlier. His last sentence is this: “I hear them bragging throughout the country that many of the members of the Baptists in Caersalem [Davies’s chapel in Dowlais] have joined with them. I can assure you that this is not true, with the exception of one old lady.”²⁴

About this time the Reverend Edward Roberts, a Baptist minister from nearby Rhymni, joined Davies in his crusade against the Mormons. Together they planned to give the “home stoke” (apparently an expression meaning “coup de grace”) to Mormonism.²⁵ Davies invited Roberts to give a special lecture in this campaign at Caersalem Chapel.

Dan Jones attended the lecture and describes the evening in a letter dated 29 September to Mormon Apostle, Orson Spencer:

The scene was truly picturesque. . . . It was in a Baptist chapel, one of their collegians being the hero. The big seat was crowded with reverends, etc., from far and near, and although they exacted sixpence for admission, yet the

chapel was crowded with anxious listeners, who, with opened mouths, eagerly anticipated to hear the funeral sermon of Mormonism. I seated myself in front, and took notes of his topics, and were you to see the fingers and eyes that evidently marked me as a gone case, you would have thought that I had seven horns, if not as many heads, and every time that the harlequin would strike the pulpit with his paw, and cry "Down with Mormonism!" etc., in the midst of the echo of cheers, I had time and opportunity to inspect nearly all eyes in the place. . . . I had sent one of my placards (publishing that I should reply the following evening . . .) to the chairman, with a request for him to read it at the close, but he refused to read it, and when one of the Saints asked him, I was replied to in the negative by one of them jumping on top of the seat in front of me, and in front of a seatful of the reverend divines, with his fist in my face, and gnashing his teeth, and in the attitude of sending me to the judgment, apparently, if I said a word.²⁶

Davies probably continued to preach vehemently against the Mormons during 1848; however, his anti-Mormon writings dwindled. He sent some material from *The Christian Messenger* which was published in two periodicals in January and February (nos. 12 and 13, table 1) and also published a 1,900-word article in a Congregationalist periodical in June (no. 14, table 1). For their part the Latter-day Saints during 1848 had something to say about the Reverend Davies roughly every other month in *Prophwyd y Jubili*, their own periodical. Certainly the Mormons must have felt triumphant as they reported the baptism of Rees Price, a Baptist Dan Jones called "Davies's right-hand man."²⁷

At this point Jones even began to describe how the opposition from Dowlais had benefited the proselyting efforts of the Saints. Although it would be difficult to determine to what extent there was cause and effect, Mormon convert baptisms in Wales did in fact soar to 1,000 during 1847 and to over 1,500 during 1848. In the December 1848 issue of *Prophwyd y Jubili*, Job Rowland, one of Davies's former members, relates how Davies had helped him gain a testimony of Mormonism:

I was with the Baptists for thirteen years. As soon as the Saints came to these areas our teachers, especially Mr. W. R. Davies, began to persecute them and hate them, saying all manner of evil against them. Mr. Davies said one time in our house that his desire was to do the same with their elders as was done to Joseph Smith, that is to kill them. That, together with many other things prompted me to look into their principles.²⁸

William Howells, a lay minister with the Baptists prior to his conversion to Mormonism in 1847, also gave credit to W. R. Davies for helping him to see the light:

I knew hardly anything about the Saints or their religion until the Rev. W. R. Davies came to Aberdare to show their deceit; and to my surprise, the more he pounded his Bible on the pulpit and shouted, "Great fraud, devilish hypocrisy, and miserable darkness of the Satanists of the latter days," the more the principles of the Saints shone, like rays of divine truth, to the point

of making me begin to believe that if these men were satanic, that his “satanic majesty” had more of the divine truth of the Bible than did the religion which I professed.²⁹

In February 1849 when Elder Dan Jones left Wales with a group of over three hundred Welsh Mormon converts headed for their “Zion” in Salt Lake City, he no doubt felt victorious in his three-year-long battle with W. R. Davies. Davies’s congregation, however, continued to be a sizable one in spite of a few desertions. His pen fell silent after June 1848, and he died of cholera in September 1849. Others would oppose Mormonism in Wales over the years, but none with quite the same vehemence or constancy as did the Reverend W. R. Davies.

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1. W. R. Davies to William Jones, 6 May 1843, Cwrtmawr Collection, National Library of Wales. All quotations in this study except one from the *Millennial Star* are translations from Welsh to English. The foregoing and all subsequent translations are mine.

2. *Y Bedyddiwr* 3 (March 1844): 99.

3. *Ibid.*, 100.

4. *Y Bedyddiwr* 3 (April 1844): 123.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 124.

8. *Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (March 1846): 91.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 90.

11. *Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (May 1846): 90.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (June 1846): 232.

14. *Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (March 1846): 112.

15. *Prophwyd y Jubili* 1 (July 1846): 24.

16. *Prophwyd y Jubili* 1 (September 1846): 78.

17. Davies to Jones, 6 May 1843, Cwrtmawr Collection.

18. *Seren Gomer* 29 (November 1846): 343.

19. *Seren Gomer* 30 (January 1847): 7.

20. *Ibid.*, 8.

21. *Amddiffyniad y Saint* (Merthyr Tydfil: D. Jones, 1847), 9.

22. *Ibid.* Capital letters are Jones’s.

23. *Seren Gomer* 30 (February 1847): 47.

24. *Y Tyst* 2 (September 1847): 201.

25. *Seren Gomer* 30 (October 1847): 318.

26. *Millennial Star* 9 (15 October 1847): 318.

27. *Prophwyd y Jubili* 3 (March 1848): 45.

28. *Prophwyd y Jubili* 3 (December 1848): 187.

29. *Udgorn Seion* 1 (May 1849): 93.