

# John Evan Price and the Church in Cwmamman

*Matthew 5:11-12*

Between March and September 1847, John Evan Price moved to Cwmamman, Llandeilo Fawr Parish, Carmarthenshire, where he found employment sawing timber for the coal works. With him were his wife, Ruth Williams Price, and their four-year-old daughter, Esther Price. The family came from Brecknockshire, where they had become acquainted with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, through the preaching of William Hughes and Thomas Pugh.

John Evan Price was probably pleased with his masters and overseers at the coal works. He was disappointed, however, at the complete absence of the LDS church where he lived. It may have been his earnest request that brought the first LDS preachers to Cwmamman. The preachers, Elder John Griffiths and James Phillips (a priest) arrived in about August 1847. They were soon joined by Elder R. Davies.

The October 1847 issue of the Welsh LDS periodical *Prophwyd y Jubili (Prophet of the Jubilee)* describes the missionary work in Cwmamman:

CWMAMAN. Two elders, and one priest, have moved there to live and to work, for the purpose of being able to preach the gospel of Christ freely to those good people; and great is the hearing they have, and the cheerfulness that is shown them by almost everyone; and according to what we hear from nearly everywhere, the people, after being so long in wrangling with respect to sectarianism, are disgusted; and when they open their ears to hear this everlasting gospel, at times they shout, "This is it," and we answer, "Yes, dear friends, this is it," indeed! This is the godly religion you have searched so eagerly for; embrace it, and you shall find the treasure of treasures in it.

Although the LDS message brought a "great hearing" in Cwmamman, few were baptized. The first two converts were John Evan Price and Ruth Williams Price. John Evan Price eagerly absorbed the LDS preaching. The missionaries sold him a copy of *Hanes Saint y Dyddiau Diweddaf (History of the Latter-day Saints)*. Hot off the press, this 102-page book was published in July 1847. Hundreds of people were present when Elder John Griffiths baptized John Evan Price at 10:00 Sunday morning, September 26, 1847. Three weeks later, on October 17, 1847, the same Elder Griffiths baptized Ruth Williams Price.

The December 1847 issue of *Prophet of the Jubilee* contains a report written in late October or November:

CWMAMAN. – Elders J. Griffiths and R. Davies earnestly beseech help in preaching in these environs. The call is so great and earnest that they hardly know where to go first, and it is increasing more and more. Although only two were baptized there during the past month, yet according to the present signs, those are but the firstfruits of an abundant harvest of souls for the church of God. The masters and overseers here are also greatly praised by the Saints.

Christmas fell on a Saturday that year. The next two days, December 26-27, 1847, John Evan Price attended an LDS conference in Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan County, some 24 miles away. The hall was overflowing with listeners. At the conference Captain Dan Jones called John Griffiths to preside over the new branch at Cwmamman. Elder Griffiths reported that the Cwmamman Branch had two elders (John Griffiths and R. Davies), one priest (James Phillips), no teachers or deacons, two baptized since July (John Evan Price and Ruth Williams Price), and a total of twelve members

(the four men, probably three or four wives, and four or five children over age eight). Cwmamman was the smallest of the nineteen branches in the conference.

The conference minutes describe the state of the LDS Church in Wales:

All the Representatives testified together that all the Saints are without exception in unity, brotherly love, zealous and faithful: and that not only have we increased seven hundred and seventy six, in the last five months, but that they are increasing in gifts, good deeds, and in all godliness excellently, and they have better hopes for success in the gospel in the future than ever. There was not from among the lot one accusation against anyone, nor one unpleasant matter to bring before the conference from anywhere. Thanks be to God for such unity and faithfulness. Among who else is such to be had in our country, or in the world, in this tumultuous time?

The minutes also describe the joyful mood at the conference:

During the conference more principles were taught, and also more glorious than ever before; and judging from the attentive listening of all the crowds throughout the long and overflowing meetings, joy and a desire for divine wisdom concerning the things of God were perceived, cheerfully smiling on every face until the end of the conference. It is unquestionable that the Spirit of the God whose work this is rested on his children there in abundance, and that they went away saying they were glad to have been there.

At the conference, several were called to different offices of the priesthood. Among them, John Evan Price was called to be a priest. On February 3, 1848, John Griffiths ordained him to that office.

John Evan Price was fired up. He preached scores of times in Cwmamman and baptized five converts. He preached and sold books beyond Cwmamman, too, and he experienced great persecution. Some non-believers cursed and swore at the Saints. The people of Llandeilo Fawr threw rocks, rotten potatoes and turnips at him, and the religious men told all kinds of lies about him. Mobs chased him. The clergymen of various sects persecuted him in one village where he had many discussions (Llwyn-y-brain?), but in spite of all the trouble, he baptized nine people there.

From Cwmamman John Evan Price and David Williams took a trip to Brecknockshire to preach the LDS gospel to their relatives. David Williams was president of the branch at Cyfyng, some seven miles east of Cwmamman.

They walked north across Y Mynydd Du (The Black Mountain) some twelve miles to Pont-ar-llechau. There, at the home of Brother Griffith Jones, they hoped to rest and eat the lunch they had packed. The people, however, wouldn't tolerate Latter-day Saints among them. They whipped David Williams, dragged him through the mud, and threw mud on him and Griffith Jones' wife. To escape the persecution, they walked about thirteen more miles north-east to the home of John Evan Price's father's sister at Gellyrhydd. They next day was Sunday, and the missionaries preached to hundreds of people at 3:00 and to the packed house of Thomas Davies at 6:00.

The next day they crossed over from Carmarthenshire to Llandeilo'r-fân parish, Brecknockshire. The total distance they had walked was thirty-five miles. They spent all day at Bryn-melyn farm trying to convince the family of Daniel Williams (John Evan Price's father-in-law) that Mormonism was true. That night they preached at the house of David P. Davies of Tir-bach farm. There, many Old Methodists listened attentively.

Monday's efforts produced two converts. On Tuesday, Ruth Jones Williams, wife of Daniel Williams of Bryn-melyn, and their son Daniel Williams were baptized. These were possibly the first Latter-day Saints in Llandeilo'r-fân parish.

From Llandeilo'r-fân, the missionaries walked south to Trecastle to visit Brother Jonathan Joshua Thomas and his family. Brother Thomas had been baptized in October 1847. Then they crossed the mountain back to Cwmamman, trying to visit every house they could see, and selling many books.

Meanwhile, back in Cwmamman, Ruth Williams Price was pregnant with her second daughter. Ruth Price was born at 2:00 in the afternoon on April 16, 1848. The family of three became a family of four.

John Evan Price continued to preach and baptize in the environs of Cwmamman. Once he preached in Benjamin Evans' house, next door to a Reverend Davies. A daughter of Reverend Davies mocked John Evan Price and other Saints, and threw chamber lye on them. Chamber lye is a euphemism for urine, as in a chamber pot.

On July 16, 1848, Branch President John Griffiths reported that Cwmamman had one elder (himself), four priests (including John Evan Price), no teachers or deacons, two baptisms since the last conference, and a total of twelve members. It seems that Elder R. Davies and his family had gone elsewhere.

The conference president visited John Evan Price in Cwmamman, and counseled him to move his family northward to Llangadog, Carmarthenshire, in order to preach and establish a new branch. But John Evan Price didn't move immediately. Every Sunday for six months he walked 32 miles, preaching at 10:00 in Llandeilo Fawr, at 1:00 in Dyffryn Tywi, and at 5:00 in Llangadog. Then he returned home to Cwmamman. He took his food with him and ate alfresco. People were afraid to let him into their homes because he was a Latter-day Saint.

On December 31, 1848, President John Griffiths reported that the Cwmamman branch had grown to include three elders, four priests, eighteen baptisms since July, and a total of thirty-one members.

President Griffiths ordained John Evan Price an elder on May 19, 1849. On August 25, 1849 John Evan Price moved with his family to Dyffryn Tywi.

During his two years in Cwmamman, John Evan Price sawed lumber for the coal works. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, became a priest and then an elder, preached everywhere he could walk, distributed LDS literature, and endured humiliating persecution. He and his wife, Ruth Williams Price, augmented their family with the birth of their second daughter. They came to Cwmamman with one child and left with two.

John Evan Price and Ruth Williams Price were the first Mormon converts in Cwmamman. They burned with the fire of inner vision, and despite cruel resistance, their sacrificial efforts were at least partially responsible for twenty baptisms in Cwmamman, and other conversions within a thirty-five mile radius. John Evan Price was an energetic and intrepid foot soldier for his cause. His name continues to bring cursing to the lips of some, and blessing to the hearts of countless others.

## NOTES

Sources for this report include: (1) "A Brief Sketch of the Life of John Evan Price: Written by Himself, Translated from the Welsh Language by Mary Deer Davis." (<http://www.welshmormonhistory.org/index.php?/resources/view/974>). (2) "Diary of John Evan Price." Edited by Esther J. Carpenter and Ruth Price Sorenson. The "diary" is an edited version of the "Sketch." (<http://www.welshmormonhistory.org/index.php?/resources/view/209>). (3) *Prophet of the Jubilee*, translated and edited by Ronald D. Dennis, published 1997 by Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University. (4) *Zion's Trumpet: 1849 Welsh Mormon Periodical*, translated and edited by Ronald D. Dennis, published 2001 by Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University. (5) *Welsh Mormon Writings From 1844 to 1862: A Historical Bibliography* by Ronald D. Dennis, published 1988 by.

This report overlaps some of my prior reports. See them for additional notes.

Take care not to confuse Llandeilo Fawr with Llandeilo'r-fân. The former is in Carmarthenshire, and the latter in Brecknockshire. Both are named after St. Teilo.

It's possible that Esther Price never moved to Cwmamman with her parents. In the 1851 census she is enumerated as an errand girl with her maternal grandparents, Daniel Williams and Ruth Jones Williams, at Bryn-melyn farm, Llandeilo'r-fân parish, Brecknockshire. The records don't tell how long she had been living there. However, in 1850, shortly after her eighth birthday, John Evan Price baptized Esther Price in the town where he lived. Therefore, it's likely that Esther Price stayed with her parents until that time, and went

to her grandparents' home in late 1850 or early 1851.

The August 1847 issue of *Prophet of the Jubilee* reports that John Griffiths and James Phillips had been called to preach in Cwmamman, Carmarthenshire. John Evan Price may have been one of those who called earnestly for preachers (**bolding** is mine):

#### ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PREACHERS

In addition to those who were there already, the following persons have gone or will go shortly to the following places:

*Monmouthshire.* – Robert Evans, William Davies, and Chason Thomas.

*Caernarfonshire.* – Eliezer Edwards, and Lewis Jones.

*Denbighshire, and Marionethshire.* – Abel Evans.

*Flintshire.* – John Jones.

*Cardiganshire.* – Several are on the verge of going soon.

*Carmarthenshire.* – Benjamin Jones, Howel Williams, John Roberts, Morgan Richards, and John Floyd.

*Pembrokeshire.* – E. C. Mitchell, J. Morris, John Davies, and John Price.

***Cwmaman.* – John Griffiths and James Phillips.**

*Cyfng.* – David Isaac Jones, and Daniel Williams.

We are pleased to understand that several other brethren are arranging their circumstances preparatory to going out to warn their fellow-nation, and to invite them into the kingdom of God. Dear brethren, be diligent, purchasing the time, for the days are evil. Now is the harvest, and we hope that no one will be caught sharpening his sickle, especially those of our brethren who have no worldly or family cares in their way. **We receive frequent and earnest calls from many places where no one has ever preached, in the different counties, for preachers to preach to them the word of life:** and, O brethren, those of you who can go, do not let them call in vain; rather send your names to us, and we shall inform you of such places. May the Lord give success and blessing to whoever obeys this call.

John Evan Price probably saw this notice in the November and December *Prophet of the Jubilee*:

#### NEXT GLAMORGAN CONFERENCE.

It is intended to hold the above Conference in the Cymreigyddion Hall in Merthyr, Sunday and Monday, December the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, that is the first days after Christmas.

The Conference minutes were edited and published in the January 1848 issue of *Prophet of the Jubilee*. See that publication for a fuller account of the conference.

It appears that John Evan Price's autobiography was written in later years, and not as a diary. He wrote that the conference was in January 1848, but the periodicals prove that it was in December 1847. Also, it appears that he couldn't remember the name of a "Little Town."

Following is a chart of places John Evan Price preached while living in Cwmamman. The place names are arranged in the order they occur in the texts. There are three columns:

**(1) Evans.** The first column is from "A Brief Sketch of the Life of John Evan Price: Written by Himself, Translated from the Welsh Language by Mary Deer Davis." It was copied by Ann Maria Roderick, and copied again by Edith Evans, who acknowledged that many of the place names were misspelled, but she preserved the misspellings as she found them.

**(2) Carpenter.** The second column is from the so-called "Diary of John Evan Price." It was copied with place names corrected by Esther J. Carpenter and Ruth Price Sorenson.

**(3) Williams.** The third column is my own attempt to correct the place names, along with their co-ordinants. I'm particularly proud of locating Pontbren Araeth, Pont-ar-llechau and Gellyrhydd. I'm still baffled by Mynydd Pistill, Llevinherdican (Llwynbrain?), Byrnyaceluce (Bryn-y-caerau?), and other places.

<b>(1) Evans</b>	<b>(2) Carpenter</b>	<b>(3) Williams</b>
Cumamon	Cwmamman	267500,213500 Cwmamman
Gaoterfaur	Gwider-Fawr	271500,214300 Gwter Vawr (a.k.a. Brynamman)
Waincregurwain	Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen	270500,211800 Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen

Cwrntorch	Cwm Twrch	276500,210500	Cwm-Twrch
Rystradgyralais	Ystradgynlais	278700,210400	Ystradgynlais
Cwmgorse	Cwmgors	270400,210600	Cwmgors
rosin (and)	Cross Hands	262900,212400	Cross Inn (?) (a.k.a. Ammanford / Rhydaman)
Llanbey	Llandibie	262000,215500	Llandybie
Gorselas	Gorslas	257000,213800	Gorslas
Little Town	Litlr Town (?)		(some "little town"?)
Myrther	Mynydd Pistill		(?)
Pistell	Mynydd Pistill	262800,217000	Pistyll-canol or Pistyll-bach (?)
Groselas	other places	257000,213800	Gorslas
Bnprenareth	Ponprenarth	266200,223800	Pontbren Araeth
Llandilorfan	Llandilorfawr	262900,222300	Llandeilo Fawr
Llevinherdican	Llwynbrain	273700,232800	Llwyn-y-brain (?) (too far?)
Byrnyaceluce	Bryn-y-caerau		(?)
Abugorleob	Abergorlech	258400,233600	Abergorlech (?) (too far?)
Pantarlbacha	Pentre Bach	272900,224400	Pont-ar-llechau
Gilynth	Gellyrith	282500,236200	Gellyrhydd
Gillingwearth	Gilligwecrith	282500,236200	Gellyrhydd
Llandilorfan	Llandeilorfan	289600,234700	Llandeilo'r-fân
Tracastall	Trecastle	288000,229200	Trecastle
Masnara	Maesquarre	264115,211790	Maesquarre Road, Ammanford (?)
[not mentioned]	Forge		(?)
[not mentioned]	Rhosmaen	263900,223900	Rhosmaen
Llanfatog	Llangadock	270600,228300	Llangadog
Llangstog	Llangadock	270600,228300	Llangadog
[not mentioned]	Dyffryntawi	274200,229000	Dyffryn (?) (a village in the Dyffryn Tywi region)

The story of John Evan Price and Ruth Williams Price will be continued....

© June 21, 2008

Kyle D Williams  
215 W. High St.  
Woodbury, TN 37190  
(615) 464-7558  
liberty@hotcom.net