

Griffith Jones (1684–1761) of Llanddowror and his ‘Striking Experiment in Mass Religious Education’ in Wales in the Eighteenth Century

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INTRODUCTION

By the mid-eighteenth century, Wales had become one of the most literate countries in the world. So remarkable was the feat that it even reached the ears of Empress Catherine the Great of Russia. Under the influence of Enlightenment thinking, Catherine placed great faith in education as a means of improvement, and after coming to the throne in 1762, she set about the task of educational reform in her realm. About two years later she sent a commissioner to Britain to report on education there, and the report she received included a glowing description of the remarkable success of circulating schools in Wales.¹ Wales would have to wait until the nineteenth century for a developed state education system, and the schools referred to in the commissioner’s report were not state schools, but rather a peripatetic system of voluntary charity schools set up in the 1730s by a man called Griffith Jones, an Anglican clergyman who was rector of the parish of Llanddowror in Carmarthenshire in south-west Wales.

THE EMERGENCE OF WALES

Griffith Jones’s schools were a major step in the

process described by one educationalist as Wales’s ‘transition from a primitive society to a self-conscious literary and articulate nation’.² In one sense, the Welsh had been a ‘self-conscious and articulate nation’ ever since Wales gradually emerged, following the demise of the Roman Empire, as a conscious entity on the western peninsular of Britain, where it formed a Romano-British remnant with its own distinct language, culture and territory, and with Christianity as a key element in that identity. Those descendants of the old Brythonic kingdoms of Britain were called ‘Welsh’ (meaning ‘Romanised foreigners’, from the word *Weahl* or *Wahl*) by the pagan Germanic-speaking peoples who had conquered much of the rest of southern Britain in the centuries following the departure of the Roman legions; but they called themselves – and indeed still call themselves – *Cymry* (from the Brythonic word meaning ‘fellow-countrymen’).³

The Welsh language, or *Cymraeg*, one of the Celtic family of languages, had evolved from the older Brythonic tongue by the middle of the sixth century and would remain the only language of the majority of the inhabitants of Wales until the nineteenth century. From its earliest periods, the Welsh language

has supported a flourishing literary tradition, one in which the threat to survival has been a constant theme, as has the more affirmative motif of praise.⁴ Initially that language and its literature were mainly oral, but they had begun to be written down possibly as early as the mid-sixth century – the earliest surviving examples of written Welsh are from the ninth century, and include a legal memorandum and poetry.⁵ Although conscious of their cultural and linguistic unity, the small kingdoms on the mountainous peninsula called Wales were never fully united politically and were gradually conquered piecemeal by Anglo-Norman invaders, a process which reached its culmination in the late thirteenth century. Despite this process of conquest, Welsh-medium literature continued to flourish in the middle and late medieval periods and included such masterpieces of European stature as the prose tales known as the *Mabinogion* and the poetry of *Dafydd ap Gwilym*.⁶

LITERACY AND THE BIBLE

Literacy is a very difficult matter to gauge with any accuracy. It increased gradually in Wales over the medieval period – especially in the small towns that dotted the country and among the clergy, the bards, the professions, and the higher strata of society. It has been estimated that by about 1630 around 15%–20% of the Welsh population were literate. However, by this period, literacy in Welsh among the higher orders seems to have been on the wane as the Welsh gentry became increasingly anglicized, especially after Wales was formally incorporated into England by the so-called Acts of Union of 1536 and 1543.⁷ This anglicization of the gentry grew apace during the seventeenth century and was well advanced by the late eighteenth century. As Janet Davies has emphasized, this ‘had profound consequences. Linguistic difference reinforced class difference. Welsh culture, which [in the Middle Ages] had been essentially aristocratic, came into the guardianship of the peasantry and the “middling sort of people” – craftsmen, artisans and the lower clergy⁸ – for while more and more of the gentry, the better-off and the ‘upwardly mobile’ lost the Welsh language and exchanged a commitment to traditional Welsh culture for the attractions and delights of the capital, London, the lower orders remained predominantly Welsh-speaking.

A feature of seventeenth-century Wales is the increasing efforts to educate the common people. One reason for this was that, because of its union with England, Wales had officially become a Protestant country in the mid-sixteenth century, following the formation of an Anglican state church independent of the See of Rome, as a result of the rift between Rome and the English crown. The Protestant emphasis on the ‘priesthood of all believers’ and the resultant emphasis that worship should be in a language understood by the people, led to the translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer into Welsh during the reign of the Tudor queen, Elizabeth I. This was a truly momentous event in the history of the Welsh language, which had far-reaching consequences. While the Acts of Union did not go as far as to suppress the native language in Wales, as happened in Ireland in the same period, one of the provisions of the Act of 1536 was to make English the official language of government and law in Wales.⁹ However, a subsequent Act of Parliament in 1563 not only ordered the translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer into Welsh, but also instructed that public worship be conducted in Welsh in those places where that language was commonly spoken. Through this, Welsh was afforded official status as a language of worship. Furthermore, translating the Bible and the liturgy into Welsh meant that a standard, high-register Welsh was heard and read regularly in all parts of Wales, thus preventing Welsh degenerating from being a language of learning and literature into a motley group of debased dialects in terminal decline.¹⁰ As one historian has said: ‘It was the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1543 which incorporated Wales into the kingdom of England; it was the Bible which helped ensure that its people were never fully incorporated.’¹¹

EDUCATION AND PIETY, 1630-1730.

The efforts to educate the common people of Wales, which began in earnest in the period 1630–1730, are closely linked to the gradual growth of piety and puritanism, together with a deep desire to bring spiritual enlightenment to the people for the cure of their souls. During this period, in addition to instances of promoting literacy locally and more informally, in church schools, in small private schools and in the home,¹² one also finds examples of more

concerted efforts, where wealthy patrons, pious clergy and devout laity collaborated in a wider context to spread the light of the Christian gospel among the common people, through publishing affordable editions of the Welsh Bible and 'good books', and through establishing schools.¹³ During the republican period in the mid-seventeenth century, the Puritans established over sixty free schools in Wales. This was the first attempt to create a state-funded education system, but it did not survive the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. There followed in the 1670s a voluntary movement, embodied in a 'Welsh Trust' and supported by both Anglicans and Dissenters, whose aim was to establish schools and publish religious books. The eminent church historian, R. Tudur Jones, notes that 'the emphasis on Bible-reading, the promotion of godliness by means of devotional reading, the belief in the value of education, are all characteristics of pietism', and he sees this movement in Wales in the 1670s as 'the emergence of a Welsh form of pietism – concurrent with the better-known movement in Germany'.¹⁴ Following the demise of the Welsh Trust, similar educational and publishing work was continued in Wales from 1699 by the newly-formed Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), a mainly Anglican society 'clearly much influenced by the work of Pietists of Halle'.¹⁵ Like the Welsh Trust, the SPCK produced and distributed books in Welsh. However, also like the Welsh Trust, the medium of instruction in most of the SPCK's schools in Wales was English, since English was regarded generally as the language of progress, modernity and opportunity.¹⁶ This was despite the fact that most of those attending such schools were Welsh-speakers, who had therefore to learn English in addition to literacy skills and who frequently understood little of what they read in English. This greatly hampered the success of those schools and was one reason why, by the 1720s, the SPCK's schools in Wales 'had nearly all collapsed'.¹⁷

GRIFFITH JONES, LLANDDOWROR AND HIS CIRCULATING SCHOOLS

Griffith Jones (1684–1761) of Llanddowror¹⁸ was a keen supporter of the SPCK and had close links with its main patron in Wales, Sir John Philipps of Picton Castle in Pembrokeshire. Jones first came to prominence as a powerful preacher who engaged in

'field-preaching' and attracted great crowds of hearers.¹⁹ He had a passionate evangelistic zeal and a keen sense of Christian mission, as is demonstrated by the fact that in 1713 he almost went as a pioneer missionary and schoolmaster to Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) in south-east India under the Royal Danish Mission, which had close links with the Pietists of Halle.²⁰ However, he eventually declined the invitation, 'upon the prospect he had of doing more service in his Native Country than he can propose to do abroad'.²¹

Although he had taught in one or two of the SPCK's schools as a young cleric, it is the provision and distribution of affordable Welsh Bibles and other reading matter which seem to have been the main focus of Griffith Jones's involvement with the SPCK until the 1730s.²² Incidentally, in addition to books, he would also request from the Society medicines for use among the sick – and his interest in medicine is not surprising, perhaps, for someone who suffered much ill-health himself and was something of a hypochondriac!²³ However, Jones does not seem to have been active in the Society's educational efforts – possibly because he did not agree with its linguistic policy²⁴ – and it was only following the significant decline in the number of SPCK schools in Wales that he began to get involved in earnest in establishing and running schools.

Griffith Jones began setting up his charity schools in the early 1730s. He was a powerful preacher, but he had by then come to the conviction that listeners often understood very little of a sermon unless they were grounded in the basics of the Christian faith, that the best means of doing so was through catechizing, and that catechizing was much easier if people could read.²⁵ This had arisen from his own experience, for when he began questioning some of his parishioners, he discovered 'how deplorably ignorant the poor people are who cannot read, even when constant preaching is not wanting, while catechising is omitted', and how impractical it was to catechize 'while the people cannot read'.²⁶ His conclusion, therefore, was that the most effective way to dispel the spiritual ignorance he perceived around him²⁷ was to establish schools. He seems to have been spurred on especially to do so by 'a virulent outbreak of typhus in south-west Wales between 1727 and 1731, which had claimed the lives of many of his parishioners', many of whom he feared, despite his

regular preaching, had died without a saving knowledge of Christ.²⁸ There was an element of vocational training in the curriculum of the SPCK's schools, with subjects like arithmetic, agriculture and navigation being taught to boys and needlework, knitting and spinning to girls.²⁹ In contrast, the sole aim of Griffith Jones's schools was to provide basic religious instruction – to teach people to read the Bible and to catechize them in the rudiments of the Christian faith. Apart from the Bible, the main text used in his schools was the Church Catechism included in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, which concentrated on the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, while an exposition on that Catechism by Griffith Jones in the form of questions and answers was used as a textbook and constituted a simple body of divinity;³⁰ prayer and psalm-singing were also actively promoted.³¹ The purpose of the schools, Jones said, was not to teach people writing or arithmetic, nor 'to elate their minds', nor 'to make them gentlemen, but christians, and heirs of eternal life'.³²

Until the massive industrial developments which began towards the end of the eighteenth century, Wales was a sparsely populated country of scattered rural communities, whose total population never reached 500,000. A poor, mountainous country with bad communications, it had no towns of any size and no major centres of learning and commerce. Part of the problem with the SPCK's schools, as with those of the Welsh Trust before them, was that they tried to apply solutions to rural Wales which were more fitting for urban England.³³ Griffith Jones adopted a different pattern, one far more conducive to the Welsh situation. In contrast to the schools of the Welsh Trust and the SPCK, which were fixed, and located mainly in the small market towns, Griffith Jones's schools were circulating ones, generally held for three months in a particular neighbourhood, and using cheap, simple accommodation such as a barn or a farmhouse, a cottage or a church building, after which time the schoolmaster would move on to another district. This put the schools within easier reach of the scattered rural population. Furthermore, they were held mainly during the winter months, a slacker period for the workforce in the pastoral economy which dominated Wales at the time. That workforce included adults and children. Griffith

Jones's schools catered for all ages and for both sexes, and night classes were held for those who could not attend during the day. Very importantly, Welsh was used as the medium of instruction in Welsh-speaking areas. It was, Jones argued, as absurd to teach 'our Welch people Christian knowledge in English, a language they do not understand, as it would be to teach it to the poor English people in French'.³⁴ English-medium schools, he said, took three or four years to teach Welsh-speaking children to read some easy parts of the Bible in English, and that very imperfectly without understanding what they were reading, whereas his Welsh-medium schools could teach them to read in their native tongue in three or four months. This had financial consequences also. Poor people could not afford to stay long at school; and in terms of running costs, 'for the same money there could be but one taught to read English for twelve that are now taught Welsh'.³⁵ His were charity schools. Schooling was free, and Griffith Jones made great efforts to raise financial support from benefactors, many of whom were from England.³⁶ This included publishing a series of annual reports in English called *Welch Piety*. Its title was probably suggested by *Pietas Hallensis*, August Hermann Francke's account of charity schools in the vicinity of Halle, and is indicative of Pietist influences on Griffith Jones. Indeed, one author has described Jones as combining in himself 'the spiritual Pietism of Spener and the more active and challenging aspects of Franke's development of Pietism'.³⁷

Griffith Jones's circulating schools proved remarkably successful. They have been described as 'the most striking experiment in mass religious education undertaken anywhere in Great Britain or its colonial possessions in the eighteenth century'.³⁸ As has already been noted, through these schools Wales became in the mid-eighteenth century one of the most literate countries in the modern world. Indeed, it is estimated that by the time of Jones's death in 1761 over 200,000 of the Welsh population had learned to read through these charity schools, and that at a time when the total population of Wales was only about 480,000.³⁹

GRIFFITH JONES AND METHODISM

In many ways Griffith Jones was the father of the Methodist Revival, that powerful evangelical awakening which began in south Wales in the 1730s

and which would radically transform the spiritual and cultural landscape of Wales by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although nicknamed ‘the Methodist Pope’ by his enemies, Griffith Jones’s relationship with the leaders of the Methodist Revival was a rather uncomfortable and ambivalent one in many respects, not least because he feared that any suggestion that he supported religious ‘enthusiasm’ would lead to a loss of support for his circulating schools among Anglican clergy and wealthy patrons. However, the link between his charity-school movement and the progress of the Methodist Revival is striking. Methodism was frequently strongest where Griffith Jones’s circulating schools were most popular. The great Methodist hymn-writer, William Williams of Pantycelyn, was adamant in his elegy to Griffith Jones, that it was through Jones that revival light first began to break out in Wales; and the early Methodist historian, Robert Jones of Rhos-lan, likened Griffith Jones’s charity schools to a cock-crow heralding the dawn of the Methodist Revival.⁴⁰

Carmarthenshire is a good case in point since that county was, in the mid-eighteenth century, a stronghold of both the circulating-schools movement and the emerging Methodist movement. After Griffith Jones, the next great name in the history of voluntary religious education in Wales is, without question, a man called Thomas Charles (1755–1814). Although he is usually known as ‘Thomas Charles of Bala’, a town situated in the centre of north Wales, he was actually born and raised in south-west Wales, in Carmarthenshire, within a stone’s throw of Llanddowror.⁴¹ Charles was strongly influenced by both Griffith Jones’s charity-school movement and the Methodist Revival. Like Griffith Jones before him, Thomas Charles was a skilled organizer, and he would be pivotal in continuing and developing the influence of both the charity-school movement and the Methodist Revival into the nineteenth century.

Gwladys Jones, in her excellent, pioneering volume, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (1938), is right in claiming: ‘It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance and effect of the charity school movement upon the history and character of the Welsh people.’⁴² Griffith Jones’s prime concern was the spiritual enlightenment of the Welsh, and he and his educational movement were crucial in making the

Bible and orthodox Protestant Christianity central to the lives of an increasing number of Welsh men and women as the eighteenth century progressed; but his work had other long-term consequences for Welsh life and culture which he would probably not have foreseen, nor sometimes even welcomed. In many ways, the flourishing of Methodism and evangelical Nonconformity, the preservation of the Welsh language, the strengthening of Welsh national identity, and the growth of radicalism⁴³ – factors which between them created the radical, Nonconformist, Welsh-speaking culture that characterized much of Welsh life by the mid-nineteenth century⁴⁴ – can all be traced back to his charity-school movement. It is certainly no exaggeration to describe Griffith Jones as ‘one of the prime makers of modern Wales and one of Britain’s most notable educational pioneers’.⁴⁵

GRIFFITH JONES: AN ENLIGHTENMENT FIGURE ?

Furthermore, it is perhaps not amiss to argue that Griffith Jones was a significant Enlightenment figure in eighteenth-century Wales, and not only of spiritual enlightenment. This may seem rather a strange claim for someone who excluded everything from the curriculum of his schools except the principles of the Christian faith, whose whole mission in life turned around that revealed, biblical faith, and who has been accused of not having ‘thirst for culture’. Those are the words of one of the most eminent authorities on eighteenth-century Wales, R. T. Jenkins, who claimed that ‘Griffith Jones’s sole purpose in going to school was to fit himself for his work as a clergyman – not love of knowledge for its own sake, nor thirst for culture. He was like his friend, Sir John Philipps, who tried to remove the heathen Latin poets from among the subjects studied at Eton, and to substitute Latin books on religion.’⁴⁶

Although Wales produced some significant Enlightenment figures, such as the philosopher, Richard Price (1723–91),⁴⁷ the general tendency has been to emphasize that their main contribution and influence was outside Wales, and that Wales itself remained little affected by the Enlightenment, partly because of the increasing dominance of evangelical Christianity. However, in recent years, this view has been tempered somewhat, with one literary historian, for example, commenting thus in a perceptive

overview of life and thought in eighteenth-century Wales: ‘In the realm of ideas one might well at first sight believe that the rays of the Enlightenment reached Wales much attenuated, if they reached the Welsh-speaking population at all; but, in fact, partial acceptance of the new cultural climate – or reaction against it – is never far beneath the surface. Newton and Locke shimmer in unexpected places.’⁴⁸ Moreover, it has been argued that the tendency to juxtapose the Enlightenment and the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century as two diametrically opposed forces, of reason versus revelation, is too simplistic, and that there is actually a rather complex relationship between them, not simply one of polarization and conflict, to such an extent that it could be claimed that the two were in some ways wedded.⁴⁹ One prominent Welsh literary critic has maintained recently, for example, that there were two Enlightenments at work in Wales during the eighteenth century, a ‘subjective’ one which placed ‘self’ and ‘mankind’ centre-stage, and a more ‘objective’ Enlightenment, where divine revelation was central and where the believer’s intellect and reason operated within the context of revealed truth and were subject to it.⁵⁰

A plurality of ‘Enlightenments’ is the subject of a recent book by the American historian, Gertrude Himmelfarb, entitled *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments*. Her purpose in that volume, she says, is to engage ‘in a doubly revisionist exercise, making the Enlightenment more British and making British Enlightenment more inclusive’.⁵¹ In it she argues that, while the study of Enlightenment has traditionally focussed on France, that French Enlightenment – where reason was given ‘the same absolute, dogmatic status as religion’, and ‘was not just pitted against religion, [but was] defined in opposition to religion’⁵² – was predated by a British Enlightenment which had a rather different character and was without the same ‘animus to religion’.⁵³ She also contends that, ‘To bring the British Enlightenment onto the stage of history, indeed, the center stage, is to redefine the very idea of Enlightenment. In the usual litany of traits associated with the Enlightenment – reason, rights, nature, liberty, equality, tolerance, science, progress – reason invariably heads the list. What is conspicuously absent is virtue. Yet it was virtue, rather

than reason, that took precedence for the British, not personal virtue but the “social virtues” – compassion, benevolence, sympathy.’⁵⁴ As a result, Himmelfarb argues, the mainstream of British Enlightenment sought to create in Britain ‘an age of Enlightenment’ that was not ‘an age of reason’ but rather ‘an age of benevolence’, brought about not by revolutionary change to the political order, but by reform and the promotion of social virtue and responsibility.⁵⁵

After asserting that the eighteenth century ‘was, *par excellence*, the age of benevolence’ in English history, Gwladys Jones adds that the charity school was the ‘favourite form of benevolence [...] of the pious and philanthropic men and women of eighteenth-century England [...] and] the most striking of the many social experiments of the age’.⁵⁶ Gertrude Himmelfarb, in her work, includes charity schools within the compass of her British Enlightenment, as examples of ‘benevolence and compassion’,⁵⁷ and even more inclusively, she argues that the prominent English Methodist leader, John Wesley, should be included within this benevolent British Enlightenment, in part because Methodism shared that Enlightenment’s social ethos⁵⁸ – and the Methodists were indeed far more concerned with social welfare than is often recognised.⁵⁹ Interestingly, Himmelfarb argues that mainstream British Enlightenment showed far more concern for the common people than did the radicals of the French Enlightenment and their British counterparts, and one example she uses for this is the comparative lack of involvement by the radicals in educating the poor, and indeed in philanthropic enterprises and practical reforms in general.⁶⁰ In contrast, in the second half of the eighteenth century, ‘the very word “philanthropist” [...] became very nearly synonymous with “Evangelical”’.⁶¹ And certainly, if one considers an emphasis on virtue and benevolence and a concern for the common people as hallmarks of the British Enlightenment, then Griffith Jones ticks all the boxes.

He certainly showed great compassion – indeed love – for the poor people of Wales. They were not, to him, ‘vermin’ and ‘pests’, as they were to some of his fellow Anglican clergymen and to Enlightenment figures such as Diderot and Voltaire,⁶² but immortal souls for whom he showed concern, not only for their spiritual, but also for their physical needs, providing

them with bread and clothes and medicines.⁶³ The scribes and pharisees of Christ's day, said Griffith Jones, preached only to the rich and treated the poor with contempt instead of pitying and teaching them, which 'is ever the way where the spirit of Christ is not in the heart'. By contrast, Christ himself 'came into the world professedly "to preach the Gospel to the poor"'; and Jones saw his role as following Christ's example among the poor people of Wales, for 'wretchedly poor and ignorant, as they are, and quite destitute of all worldly treasures, they are yet capable of being enriched with the hidden treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge.'⁶⁴ Noble words, indeed!

Despite the huge success of his educational

project, Griffith Jones's work would not have had the long-term effects on Welsh society and culture that were described earlier without the subsequent work of Thomas Charles in building on the success of Jones's charity-school movement, initially through his own circulating schools and then, crucially, through the strong Sunday-school movement he promoted. As has already been noted, Thomas Charles was heavily influenced by Griffith Jones, but there are also a number of significant differences between them. Furthermore, if Jones may be regarded as an Enlightenment figure, then that is even more true of Charles, partly because he was an heir not only of Griffith Jones but also of William Williams of Pantycelyn – but that is another story.⁶⁵

NOTES

- 1 M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 313–14; R. M. Jones and Gwyn Davies, *The Christian Heritage of Welsh Education* (Bridgend, 1986), p. 15.
- 2 Charles E. Gittins, 'Foreword', in [Charles E. Gittins (ed.)], *Pioneers of Welsh Education* (Swansea, [1964]), p. [8].
- 3 E. Wyn James, "'The New Birth of a People": Welsh Language and Identity and the Welsh Methodists, c. 1740–1820', in Robert Pope (ed.), *Religion and National Identity. Wales and Scotland c. 1700–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 14–15, 31. See also John Davies, *A History of Wales*, revised ed. (London, 2007), chapter 3; Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415–1642* (Oxford, 1993), p. 451.
- 4 A. M. Allchin, *Praise Above All: Discovering the Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1991).
- 5 Janet Davies, *A Pocket Guide: The Welsh Language* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 10; Huw Pryce, 'The Origins and the Medieval Period', in Philip Henry Jones and Eiluned Rees (ed.), *A Nation and Its Books: A History of the Book in Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1998), p. 6. (This volume is the standard introduction to the history of book production and libraries in Wales.)
- 6 Dafydd Johnston, *A Pocket Guide: The Literature of Wales* (Cardiff, 1994), chapters 3 and 4; Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, chapter 6.
- 7 Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, pp. 429–37; Glanmor Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff, 1997), pp. 30–1, 211, 281, 299–300; J. Gwynfor Jones, 'Y Ficer Prichard (1579–1644): Ei Gefndir a'i Gyfraniad i'w Gymdeithas', *Y Traethodydd*, 149 (1994), pp. 239–40; William P. Griffith, 'Humanist Learning, Education and the Welsh Language 1536–1660', in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language Before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff, 1997), pp. 291–2, 294–8, 306; William P. Griffith, 'Schooling and Society', in J. Gwynfor Jones (ed.), *Class, Community and Culture in Tudor Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 107–9. See also Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge, 1998).
- 8 Davies, *A Pocket Guide: The Welsh Language*, p. 22; cf. Glyn Tegai Hughes, 'Life and Thought', in Branwen Jarvis (ed.), *A Guide to Welsh Literature c. 1700–1800* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 4–5.
- 9 Williams, *Wales and the Reformation*, p. 106.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 405–6.
- 11 Eryn M. White, *The Welsh Bible* (Stroud, 2007), p. 154.
- 12 R. Tudur Jones, 'The Puritan Contribution', in Jac L. Williams and Gwilym Rees Hughes (ed.), *The History of Education in Wales*, vol. 1 (Swansea, 1978), pp. 38–9; Mary Clement, 'Eighteenth Century Charity Schools', in *ibid.*, pp. 55–6; Mary Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales 1699–1740* (London, 1954), pp. 7–8, 17–21.
- 13 On these efforts, see R. Geraint Gruffydd, *'In that Gentle Country ...': The Beginnings of Puritan Nonconformity in Wales* (Bridgend, 1976); James, 'The New Birth of a People', pp. 35–6; Jones, 'The Puritan Contribution'; D. Gwenallt Jones, *Y Ficer Prichard a 'Canwyll y Cymry'* (Caernarfon, [1946]); [John Ballinger and J. Ifano Jones], *The Bible in Wales* (London, 1906), chapters 3 and 4; Eryn M. White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language 1650–1800', in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language Before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff, 1997), pp. 317–24; Thomas Richards, *A History of the Puritan Movement in Wales* (London, 1920), chapter 15; R. Tudur Jones, 'Relations between Anglicans and Dissenters: The Promotion of Piety, 1670–1730', in David Walker (ed.), *A History of the Church in Wales*

- (Penarth, 1976), pp. 79–102; Jones, *The Charity School Movement*; Clement, 'Eighteenth Century Charity Schools'; Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*; Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, 1660–1730* (Cardiff, 1978); Scott Mandelbrote, 'The Bible and National Identity in the British Isles, c.1650–c.1750', in Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (ed.), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 170–3.
- 14 Jones, 'Relations between Anglicans and Dissenters', p.89. See E. Wyn James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', in Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (ed.), *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 233–6, for the role of popular didactic and devotional verse, such as that of Rhys Prichard (the 'Old Vicar' of Llandovery), in promoting piety.
- 15 Glanmor Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff, 1979), p.203.
- 16 Having said that, it should be noted that attitudes towards Welsh were far more positive than those towards the Gaelic of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man – see Mandelbrote, 'The Bible and National Identity in the British Isles', pp. 157–81; cf. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p. 323: 'There is, running through the demands of [Welsh religious reformers] for Welsh Bibles and literature, an appreciation of their native language, and a faith in its intrinsic worth, which is not to be found among the reformers of Highland and Irish life.'
- 17 Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 203.
- 18 On Griffith Jones and his work, see F. A. Cavenagh, *The Life and Work of Griffith Jones of Llanddowror* (Cardiff, 1930); R. T. Jenkins, *Gruffydd Jones, Llanddowror* (Caerdydd, 1930); Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 297–314; W. Moses Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety* (Cardiff, 1938); Thomas Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education* (Cardiff, 1950); Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*; Mary Clement, 'The Welsh Circulating Schools', in Jac L. Williams and Gwilym Rees Hughes (ed.), *The History of Education in Wales*, vol. 1 (Swansea, 1978), pp. 57–69; Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, chapter 9; Geraint H. Jenkins, "'An Old and Much Honoured Soldier": Griffith Jones, Llanddowror', *The Welsh History Review*, 11:4 (December, 1983), pp. 449–68; Gwyn Davies, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Athro Cenedl* (Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, 1984); White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language', pp. 324–37; White, *The Welsh Bible*, pp. 62–7. For his date of birth, which was probably 1684 rather than the more frequently cited 1683, see Emlyn Dole, 'Trichanmlwyddiant Geni Griffith Jones', *Y Traethodydd*, 139 (1984), pp. 196–9.
- 19 Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, p. 56; Mary Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the S.P.C.K. Relating to Wales, 1699–1740* (Cardiff, 1952), pp. 71–2; Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 16–19.
- 20 E. D. Evans, 'A Providential Rescue? Griffith Jones and the Malabar Mission', *The Journal of Welsh Religious History*, 8 (2000), pp. 35–42.
- 21 From the abstract of Griffith Jones's letter to the SPCK, dated 22 November 1713, recorded in the Society's log-books – see Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the S.P.C.K. Relating to Wales*, p. 62.
- 22 For details of the SPCK's Welsh Bibles published during Griffith Jones's involvement with that society, see Mandelbrote, 'The Bible and National Identity in the British Isles', pp. 172–4; [Ballinger and Jones], *The Bible in Wales*, chapter 5.
- 23 Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, pp. 76–7; Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, p. 22; Jenkins, 'An Old and Much Honoured Soldier', pp. 449–50, 459.
- 24 Clement, 'Eighteenth Century Charity Schools', pp. 50–1; Clement, 'The Welsh Circulating Schools', pp. 58, 61. For Griffith Jones's extremely positive attitude towards the Welsh language and his arguments for its use as a medium of instruction, see James, 'The New Birth of a People', pp. 24–7.
- 25 Jones and Davies, *The Christian Heritage of Welsh Education*, p. 53; White, *The Welsh Bible*, p. 66.
- 26 Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, pp. 20, 28–9; cf. pp. 69–70, and Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, p. 40. Although the 59th Canon of the Established Church required that children, servants and apprentices be catechized every Sunday, in practice by Griffith Jones's day the vast majority of rural parishes in Wales only catechized during Lent – see Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales*, pp. 74–84. Griffith Jones's emphasis on catechizing in his schools was, therefore, in one sense 'merely a revival and extension of [an] ancient [but neglected] clerical duty' (Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, p. [5]). The local clergyman also had the right of 'keeping school' in a parish, if he chose to exercise it – see Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, pp. 7–8.
- 27 For example, in 1714, he told his bishop that he believed that, although the established state religion was Christianity, 'some of the inhabitants of south-west Wales knew less about Christ than several followers of Mohammed' (White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language', p. 324; cf. Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 15, 26).
- 28 White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language', p. 324; Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the S.P.C.K. Relating to Wales*, p. 163.
- 29 Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, pp. 4–5; Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p. 294. There was less emphasis on practical subjects in the SPCK's schools in Wales than in their schools in England, Scotland and Ireland, and the focus in Wales was firmly on agriculture rather than the 'Mechanick's Trades'.
- 30 Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 40–1.
- 31 On Griffith Jones's promotion of metrical psalms and

- hymn-singing, see James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', pp. 240–1, 243. Singing was also a feature of the SPCK's schools in Wales, but in their schools in England, singing was generally denounced 'because of its alleged disruptive social and political influence' (Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p. 294). Griffith Jones published books of instruction on prayer and encouraged learning set prayers as patterns for use in personal and family devotions. Griffith Jones's publications are listed in Eiluned Rees, *Libri Walliae: A Catalogue of Welsh Books and Books Printed in Wales 1546–1820* (Aberystwyth, 1987). For a detailed discussion of his publications, see Gruffydd Lewis, 'Astudiaeth ar ysgolion Griffith Jones yng nghyd-destun addysg Gymreig oddi ar y Diwygiad Protestannaidd' (unpublished MPhil thesis, Cardiff University, 2005).
- 32 Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, pp. 64–5. There was opposition to the charity schools in some quarters, where it was argued that educating the labouring classes would lead to them aspiring above their station, thus endangering the established order. The best-known proponent of that argument was the philosopher, Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733). Sending children to school, he said, encouraged idleness and diverted them from useful labour. According to Mary Clement, Mandeville argued that for society to be happy 'a requisite number of people should be ignorant as well as poor [...] "It is manifest", he writes, "that in a free nation where slaves are not allowed, the surest wealth consists in the multitude of laborious poor"' (Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, pp. 16–17; cf. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 86–7). The claim that charity schools were a threat to the social order explains, perhaps, why Griffith Jones went out of his way to emphasize that his schools' sole purpose was for religious enlightenment. Perhaps this is also why he presented the argument that one of the benefits of the Welsh language was that it deterred upward mobility. Addressing the English benefactors of his schools in 1739, he says: 'Wherein is the benefit of retaining the Welsh tongue? [...] If all of us spoke the same tongue with you, the common and labouring people would soon desert their callings in low life here [in Wales], and seek abroad for better preferments in English countries' (Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, pp. 42–3). However, we also see Griffith Jones presenting much nobler reasons for preserving the Welsh language – in particular because of its antiquity and beauty; that it had 'grown old in years, but not decayed' (Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, p. 51) – and it is not difficult to agree with W. Moses Williams that Griffith Jones's suggestion that his movement would not cause any great change in the established order of things, was probably emphasized 'with his eye on his aristocratic public' (Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, p. 10), and that his fuller vision was one which regarded his schools as a means of bettering the lot of the common people in this life as well as in the next. Certainly such statements as the following, made by Griffith Jones in 1750, seem to confirm this: 'With how much inward delight and satisfaction, vastly superior to all perishing enjoyments, vastly greater than all that the kingdoms of this world and their glory can afford, may you sometimes call to mind the many thousands of poor perishing wretches, that, by the grace of God, through your means [in supporting the charity schools], have been set in the way to be happy for ever in the everlasting world, as well as to lead a more comfortable, honest, and useful life in this' (Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, pp. 67–8).
- 33 Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 203.
- 34 Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, p. 65.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 36 Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 43–5.
- 37 Hughes, 'Life and Thought', p. 14; cf. Evans, 'A Providential Rescue?', p. 36; Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, p. 16; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris 1714–1773: The Last Enthusiast* (Cardiff, 1965), pp. 24–7, 71–2. For Franke's relations with the SPCK, see Clement, *The S.P.C.K. and Wales*, pp. xii, 44, 51, 72. It is interesting to note that Griffith Jones showed a particular concern for the 25,000 Protestants expelled from Salzburg in 1731 – see Clement (ed.), *Correspondence and Minutes of the S.P.C.K. Relating to Wales*, pp. 167, 235, 307.
- 38 Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 136; cf. p. 200.
- 39 White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language', p. 331; Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 45–7.
- 40 Jenkins, 'An Old and Much Honoured Soldier', pp. 451–2, 457–9, 466; Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 30–5; Robert Jones: *Drych yr Amseroedd* (Trefriw, 1820; ed. by G. M. Ashton, Caerdydd, 1958), p. 29.
- 41 It is striking that the Llanddowror area also had close connections with the Puritan and Nonconformist minister, Stephen Hughes (1622–88), the so-called 'Apostle of Carmarthenshire', who was a key figure in the promotion of literacy in Wales in the seventeenth century and played a central role in the publishing work of the 'Welsh Trust' (although he strongly opposed the Trust's English-medium policy in its schools in Wales) – see Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 280–1, 284–5, 323; Jones, 'Relations between Anglicans and Dissenters', pp. 82–4, 86–9; Geraint H. Jenkins, 'Apostol Sir Gaerfyrddin: Stephen Hughes', *Y Cofiadur*, 54 (1989), pp. 3–23. One of Griffith Jones's predecessors as rector of Llanddowror, Robert Holland (c. 1556/7–1622?), who had strong Puritan leanings, was also an important promoter of Christian literature in yet an earlier generation – see James, 'The New Birth of a People', pp. 35–6.
- 42 Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p. 321. It is worth noting that Dr Gwladys Jones also published an

- important study of Hannah More – M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge, 1952). Thomas Charles – Griffith Jones’s key successor in the charity-school movement in Wales – moved in the same evangelical circles as Hannah More.
- 43 Cf. Jenkins, ‘An Old and Much Honoured Soldier’, p. 466: ‘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.’
- 44 Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 215; Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 321–5. That radical, Nonconformist Wales was epitomized in the construct of ‘*y werin*’ (= ‘the ordinary people’), a formative myth (akin to the English ‘gentleman’ or the American ‘cowboy’), which by the nineteenth century was presenting the Welsh as being in essence a nation of democratically-minded, patriotic, clean-living, hard-working, common people, devoted to religion, culture and education, and with clear social aspirations for ‘improvement’. (See Prys Morgan, *Background to Wales* (Llandybie, 1968), chapter 5; Prys Morgan, ‘The Gwerin of Wales: Myth and Reality’, in Ian Hume and W. T. R. Pryce (ed.), *The Welsh and Their Country* (Llandysul, 1986), pp. 134–52.) The charity-school movement was an important node in the development of this myth.
- 45 Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 216.
- 46 Jenkins, *Gruffydd Jones, Llanddowror*, p. 11. Griffith Jones received grammar-school education at Carmarthen where, it is claimed, he ‘made great Proficiency in the Latin and Greek Languages, and other Branches of Learning’. However, like many Welsh clergyman of that period, he did not proceed to university. Indeed, it appears that he did not hold the university education of his day in particularly high regard and was reported as declaring ‘that there was *nothing* learnt at our *Universities*, but *Drinking and Smoaking*’. (See Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, pp. 6–7.)
- 47 Griffith Jones was acquainted with Samuel Price (1676–1756), an uncle of Richard Price – see Cavenagh, *The Life and Work of Griffith Jones of Llanddowror*, pp. 20–1. Samuel Price was a Dissenting minister who co-pastored a church in London with the famous hymn-writer, Isaac Watts. Samuel assisted in his nephew Richard’s education. It is interesting, also, to see a number of prominent scientists and physicians among the supporters of Griffith Jones’s circulating schools – see W. Moses Williams, *The Friends of Griffith Jones: A Study in Educational Philanthropy* (London, 1939), chapter 2.
- 48 Hughes, ‘Life and Thought’, p. 1; cf. R. George Thomas, ‘The Enlightenment and Wales in the 18th Century’, in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 24–27 (1963), pp. 1575–91; R. J. W. Evans, ‘Was There a Welsh Enlightenment?’, in R. R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *From Medieval to Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 142–59; Prys Morgan, ‘Romanticism and Rationalism in the Life of Iolo Morganwg’, in T. M. Charles-Edwards and R. J. W. Evans (ed.), *Wales and the Wider World* (Donington, 2010), pp. 139–56; Robin Okey, ‘Wales and Eastern Europe: Small Nations in Comparison’, in *ibid.*, pp. 184–217.
- 49 See D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London, 1989), chapter 2; Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 61–3; Brian Stanley (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Richmond, 2001); Mark A. Knoll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Leicester, 1994), chapter 4; Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (ed.), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham, 2008).
- 50 See the references in my discussion of another Welsh educational pioneer of the eighteenth century, the radical Baptist, Morgan John Rhys (or Rhees) – E. Wyn James, ‘“Seren Wib Olau”: Gweledigaeth a Chenhadaeth Morgan John Rhys (1760–1804)’, *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes y Bedyddwyr*, 2007, pp. 19–20. On the relationship between reason and revelation in Welsh Methodism in the eighteenth century, see the chapter ‘The Bible and the Great Awakening’ in Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch: The True Nature of Religious Revival* (Bridgend, 1996), which also includes a chapter on the personal devotion of Griffith Jones, Llanddowror.
- 51 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments* (London, 2008), p. 6.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- 53 *Ibid.*, pp. 38–41, 51.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 115, and cf. Gordon Brown’s comments in his introduction to the book, pp. x–xi. Himmelfarb argues that radicals such as Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Tom Paine and William Godwin have more affinity with the French Enlightenment than with the British one (pp. 93–4).
- 56 Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p. 3. See also Eryn M. White, ‘Piety and Charity in Eighteenth-Century Wales’, *The Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 2 (2007), pp. 45–58.
- 57 Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity*, p. 140.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 59 See, for example, Irv A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley’s Theological Challenge to Slavery* (Ontario, Canada, 2006). The Welsh Methodists also showed social concern from the early days of that movement. For example, within a year of his conversion in 1735, the Welsh Methodist leader, Howel Harris, was planning to found an orphan house, inspired by that of Franke in Halle – see Richard Bennett (translated from the Welsh by Gomer M. Roberts), *Howel Harris and the Dawn of Revival*, 2nd English ed. (Bridgend, 1987), p. 86; Nuttall, *Howel Harris*, pp. 26–7, 71–2. One weakness in Gertrude Himmelfarb’s book is that it is too

- Anglocentric. A good example of this is her treatment of Methodism, where she does not seem to realize that Welsh Methodism was an indigenous movement which ran parallel with English Methodism but was not a part of it. Another weakness is that she does not distinguish sufficiently between the Arminian Methodism of Wesley and the Calvinistic Methodism of Whitefield and the Welsh Methodists (see, for example, Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity*, p. 117).
- 60 Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity*, pp. 142–3, 154–6, 170–81.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- 62 Jenkins, 'An Old and Much Honoured Soldier', p. 459; Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity*, pp. 154–6, 171–2, 176–7, 179–80.
- 63 Jenkins, 'An Old and Much Honoured Soldier', p. 459. See also Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales*, p. 213, where Glanmor Williams emphasizes that Griffith Jones shared the Puritans' 'profoundly practical concern, that strong sense of humanitarian obligation, that determination to make society fit for the elect to live in, which was die-stamped on the Calvinist ethic'.
- 64 Williams (ed.), *Selections from the Welch Piety*, p. 107.
- 65 I have tried to tell aspects of that story in a number of places, including the following: E. Wyn James, 'Welsh Ballads and American Slavery', *The Welsh Journal of Religious History*, 2 (2007), pp. 59–86 (also available electronically in the 'Welsh ballads' section of Cardiff University Library's Special Collections and Archives website); *idem*, "'Blessèd Jubil!'" Slavery, Mission and the Millennial Dawn in the Work of William Williams of Pantycelyn', in John Kirk, Michael Brown and Andrew Noble (ed.), *Cultures of Radicalism in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2013), pp. 95–112, 194–202; *idem*, 'Bala and the Bible: Thomas Charles, Ann Griffiths and Mary Jones', *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*, 15:2 (2007), pp. 185–200 (also available electronically on the 'Ann Griffiths Website'); *idem*, 'Pererinion ar y Ffordd: Thomas Charles ac Ann Griffiths', *Cylchgrawn Hanes: Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, 29–30 (2005–6), pp. 73–96; [*idem*, 'The Longing and the Legacy: Liturgy and Life in the Hymns of William Williams of Pantycelyn', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 55 (2019), pp. 61–70].