

Zion's Trumpet: 1849 Welsh Mormon Periodical

INTRODUCTION

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The press played an important role in the rapid growth of Mormonism in Wales from 1845 through 1848. Although the appearance of Captain Dan Jones's first pamphlet in April of 1845 did not have an immediate effect, the publication of David William's caustic response to it in December of that same year touched off a war of words between the Welsh Mormons and their many critics that lasted for well over a decade.¹

The various religious periodicals of the time were generous with their columns for anti-Mormon articles, but they systematically refused space for the rebuttals sent to them by Dan Jones. The only logical solution in Jones's estimation was for the Mormons to establish their own Welsh-language periodical. The *Millennial Star* then being published in Liverpool was of little use to the Welsh since the vast majority of them knew no English.

With fewer than eight hundred Mormons in mid-1846 Wales, printing and circulating a monthly publication was a daunting task. But in July 1846, with the full cooperation of Dan Jones's older brother John, an ordained Congregationalist minister with his own press in the little village of Rhydybont, Carmarthenshire, *Prophwyd y Jubili* (Prophet of the Jubilee) came to do battle with anyone who would dare to oppose or to criticize the Mormon movement in Wales.

Every month for the next two and a half years the *Prophwyd y Jubili* served as the official organ of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Wales. Then, in the December 1848 foreword to the third and final volume of this

¹ See my *Welsh Mormon Writings from 1844 to 1862: A Historical Bibliography* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1988], 13-16.

unique periodical, Dan Jones announced that it would no longer be published: *“Not because he cannot come to you again, is the cause for his suspension; but we consider that by now he deserves to go to his ‘resting place,’ since he has run his race, and kept the faith.”*

Jones announced that in its place a new periodical, *Udgorn Seion* (Zion’s Trumpet), would commence publication. The new title was probably inspired by the words from Joel 2:1 *“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain.”* The “trumpet” was to be blown in Wales instead of in Zion, and the alarm was to be sounded for the faithful to leave “Babylon” (Wales) and to gather to “Zion” (Salt Lake City, Utah). By way of emphasizing the urgency to leave Wales, a new Biblical motto was to be adopted: *“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”* (Revelation 18:4).

In the December issue of *Prophwyd y Jubili* (191) a more detailed explanation was offered for the appearance of *Udgorn Seion*:

We consider the name appropriate for the work that it will do, for its chief purpose will be to proclaim the remarkable news and the interesting counsels that proceed from that godly source in Zion, so that all her children scattered throughout Wales can drink from her streams, to quench their thirst through the wilderness of Babylon homeward; and we hope that as the weary traveler thirsts for the water of the cool fountain on the way, that the Saints, and all the subscribers, will every new moon long for the voice of the Trumpet to sound forth the happenings of Zion in their ears, and its guidance for their footsteps temporally and spiritually.

SEE

<https://archive.org/details/ProphwydYJubili18461848/page/n575/mode/2up>

At this point Captain Dan Jones was coming to the end of his first mission to Wales and was making preparations to travel to the Mormon “Zion” in the

Rocky Mountains along with over three hundred of his compatriots who had converted to Mormonism. To replace him as editor of the periodical and to be in charge of all Mormon publishing in Wales, Jones named John Davis, whom he labelled “a faithful man” and a “master Welsh printer” (*Millennial Star* 11:40). The circulation of the periodical was to be increased to two thousand and its size would be eight pages longer than the issues of *Prophwyd y Jubili*.

During the next five years John Davis would live up to both labels given him by Dan Jones. In addition to being editor of *Udgorn Seion* Davis would also publish two hymnals, numerous pamphlets and poems, and Welsh translations of The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.² And when Davis was released from his publishing responsibilities at the end of 1853 it was Captain Dan Jones, back on his second mission to Wales, who would take his place.

Born 7 June 1822 in Carmarthenshire, John Davis was just twenty-six years old when he became editor of *Udgorn Seion*. His conversion to Mormonism two-and-a-half years earlier had been greatly influenced by his typesetting and proofreading of Dan Jones’s pamphlets that were printed on the Reverend John Jones’s press where Davis was employed at the time. Despite his youth and his short time in the faith, however, John Davis proved abundantly able in his editorial duties and in his articulate defense of Mormon doctrine.

Davis’s omnipresence throughout the first volume of *Udgorn Seion* reveals his many faces: the face of sarcasm with a touch of self-righteousness in his anti-tobacco campaign that begins on page 115; the face of spirituality as he relates how a child miner was healed by the laying on of hands of “an elder” (most likely Davis himself) on page 120; the face of sophistication and articulation in his careful analysis of the spiritual gifts in answer to observations made by an

² All of these are regarded as scripture by the LDS Church.

“Observer” in a Baptist periodical beginning on page 67; the face of superciliousness combined with justifiable anger in his crisp comments about the “conceited rhymester” on page 212; and the face of humor in the brief anecdotes throughout.

Davis’s extraordinary ability as a writer has gone undiscovered to the present largely because he expressed himself in a language that disappeared from the Mormon world within a few decades of his conversion. But this ability is transparent even in the English translations of his writings, easily recognized as being on the same level with those of Parley P. Pratt and Orson Pratt – two people he greatly admired. Davis’s dexterity revealed in his Welsh translations of the Mormon standard works is nothing short of brilliant and awe-inspiring, especially when taken into account that all three were translated and published in a time period of about eighteen months. Here again Mormon historians have ignored this accomplishment because of the language barrier.

The first and second numbers of *Udgorn Seion* were printed in Carmarthen where Davis had his own press and where he had printed the final two numbers of *Prophwyd y Jubili*. By March 1849 Davis had moved the press and his own personal effects to Merthyr Tydfil where for the first time the Mormon press would be in the same place as the Mormon leadership in Wales. No longer would it be necessary to transport the materials each month to Carmarthenshire for printing.

The full text of this book *Zion’s Trumpet: 1849 Welsh Mormon Periodical* (translated and edited by Ronald D. Dennis), which contains all of the 1849 issues in translation, can be accessed online at:

<https://archive.org/details/ZionsTrumpet1849WelshMormonPeriodical/mode/2up?view=theater>

Several years of *Udgorn Seion* in the original Welsh can also be found at <https://archive.org> using the search term *Udgorn Seion* or *Zion's Trumpet*.