

Baptisms for the Dead

1 Corinthians 15:29

My Ancestors were Mormons.

The Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, believe: that baptism is for the remission of sins; that children under the age of eight are not accountable for sin, and therefore do not require baptism; that people age eight and upwards cannot be saved without baptism; that only the Latter-day Saints have divine authority to perform baptisms; that people can be baptized only during their mortal lives; that after death, people in the Spirit World can learn the Latter-day Saint gospel; and that mortals can be baptized in proxy for people who have died, so the dead can be saved. These baptisms for the dead are performed only in temples, the most sacred of Latter-day Saint buildings.

On 13 Apr 1886 my great-great-grandfather John Jones Williams went to Logan, Utah, with two daughters, Elvira Ann Williams Harrison and Ruth Elizabeth Williams Richardson, and a sister-in-law, Ann Williams Williams. There, in the Logan Temple, they were baptized in proxy for their dead relatives. Lists of their relatives are found in the records of the Logan Temple. The relatives were those who were dead, but lived to be at least eight years old, and were not baptized, or were thought to require re-baptism.

On 13 Apr 1886 the following relatives were baptized by proxy:¹

List #15313

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Heir/Proxy</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
Mary Price	Brecon, Wales	19 Nov 1864	Ann Williams Williams	Daughter
Ruth Williams	9 May 1835 ditto	9 May 1845	ditto	Mother
Ann Price	Carmarthen, Wales		Ruth Eliz. Wms. Richardson	Ann Wms. Wms.
Mary Williams	Brecon, Wales		ditto	ditto
Margaret Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Hannah Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Ann Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Mrs. Ann Price	ditto		ditto	ditto

List #15548

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Heir/Proxy</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
Mrs. Elizabeth Williams	South Wales		Elvira Ann Wms. Harrison	Gt.Gd. Dau
Margaret Williams	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece
2 nd Gt. Gd. Mother Williams	ditto		ditto	2 nd Gt. Gd. Dau.
Mrs. Ann Williams	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece-in-law
Mary Williams	ditto		ditto	2 nd Cou.
Elizabeth Williams	ditto		ditto	2 nd Cou.
Mrs. William Walter	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece-in-law
Mrs. Mary Jones	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece-in-law
Ann Jones	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece
Mrs. Elizabeth Rowlance	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece-in-law
Ruth Rowlance	ditto		ditto	Rel.
Dinah Davis	ditto		ditto	Gd. Niece

¹ Logan Temple records, baptisms for the dead, page 424 #15313; page 430 #15548; page 438 #15836; #15850 (FHL 177,843). I'm working from handwritten notes I had taken on 12 Feb 1986 at the Brigham Young University library. Please refer to the original to check the accuracy of my notes.

List #15836

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Heir/Proxy</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
William Williams	Llandilow, Brecon, S. Wales		John Jones Williams	Nephew
Roderick Williams	ditto		ditto	Cousin
Reese Williams	abt 1808 ditto	abt 1828	ditto	Brother
Daniel Williams	Llandilow, Brecon, S. Wales	1861	ditto	Brother
William Williams	Brecon, S. Wales		ditto	Gd. Son
Roderick Williams	ditto		ditto	Gt. Gd. Son
Reese Davis	ditto		ditto	Neph.
William Walter	ditto		ditto	ditto
Reese Walter	ditto		ditto	ditto
William Jones	S. Wales		ditto	Gd. Son
Thomas Jones	ditto		ditto	Neph.
Daniel Jones	ditto		ditto	ditto
William Jones	ditto		ditto	ditto
Thomas Rowland	ditto		ditto	ditto

List #15850

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Heir/Proxy</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
David Rowland	S. Wales		John Jones Williams	Rel.
William Davis	ditto		ditto	Neph.
Edward Davis	ditto		ditto	Rel.
William Jones	ditto		ditto	ditto
David Griffith	ditto		ditto	ditto
Thomas Williams	ditto		ditto	Ann Wms. Wms.
Thomas Morgan	Brecon, S. Wales		ditto	ditto
William Price	ditto		ditto	ditto
Isaac Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
William Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Thomas Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Samuel Williams	ditto		ditto	ditto
Reese Price	ditto		ditto	ditto
David Price	ditto		ditto	ditto
Thomas Price	ditto		ditto	ditto

I suggest that the names on these lists are trustworthy, although some names have been slightly altered: 'Reese' and 'Davis' are Americanizations of 'Rees' and 'Davies'. When those who compiled these lists could not remember a name, they had the integrity to say, for example, "Mrs. William Walter" or "2nd Gt. Gd. Mother Williams."

However, the dates are less trustworthy. Rees Williams was born on 20 Jun 1811 (not 1808), and he was buried 18 Sep 1829 (not 1828). Daniel Williams, the brother of John Jones Williams, died in September 1862 (not 1861).

Some relationships are also incorrect. John Jones Williams claimed to be a grandson of William Williams and a great-grandson of Roderick Williams. I suggest that he inverted the two. The records show that he was certainly a grandson of Roderick Williams, and he might have been a great-grandson of William Williams. Also, Elvira Ann Williams Harrison called herself a second cousin of Mary Williams and Elizabeth Williams. The records show no such second cousins, but they do show Mary and Elizabeth as first cousins, once removed. These lists, then, must be used with caution. Nevertheless, as incomplete and inaccurate as these lists are, they are important in researching the Williams family history.

The places of birth should not be overlooked. All of the relatives on the four lists were born in South Wales. That's good to know. Other records confirm that Uncle William Williams, cousin Roderick Williams, and brothers Rees Williams and Daniel Williams were born in Llandeilo'r-fân (misspelled Llandilow).

A fact that may prove most helpful in future research is that John Jones Williams stopped claiming 'Llandilow' as a birthplace when the list came to his grandfather and great-grandfather, Roderick Williams and William Williams, and to his uncles Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter. They were born in Breconshire, he claims, but not necessarily in Llandeilo'r-fân. It seems likely, then, that Roderick Williams moved to Llandeilo'r-fân sometime between his birth (before 1740) and 1761, when he served as Church Warden. It seems likely, also, that Elizabeth Evans moved to Llandeilo'r-fân sometime after the birth of Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter (in the 1760's or 1770's) and before her marriage to Roderick Williams on 28 Feb 1778.

A New Hypothesis

In the recent past, I hypothesized that Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter were sons-in-law of either Roderick Williams or Elizabeth Evans. Having examined the Logan Temple lists more closely, I recant that hypothesis. The record states that Elvira Ann Williams Harrison was a grandniece-*in-law* of Mrs. William Walter. Therefore, William Walter must have been a son, not a son-in-law, of Elvira's great-grandparent.

Because it is unlikely that Roderick Williams would have a son with the surname Walter, Elizabeth Evans must have been the mother of William Walter by a previous marriage. Because of their common surname, it seems likely that Rees Walter was a full brother of William Walter. Under certain circumstances, Welsh naming patterns could account for Rees Davies as a full brother, too. If not a full brother, he might have been a half brother or a brother-in-law.

The International Genealogical Index (IGI)² shows a William Walter, christened 3 Mar 1766 in Llanfilo, Breconshire, son of Walter Vaughn & Elizabeth. The IGI also shows a Rees Davies, christened 5 Aug 1766 in Lanbister (?), Breconshire, son of James Davies & Elizabeth Morgan. These are not very satisfactory matches for my family.

Mindful of the fact that the IGI is an imperfect index to incomplete and sometimes hard-to-read records, it might be worthwhile to comb the Bishop's Transcripts of some Breconshire parishes for these names. Apparently, the surname Walter (or Walters or Waters) is most highly concentrated in southeast Carmarthenshire, in the Hundred of Iscennin,³ which is just across the border from southwestern Breconshire. I suggest searching Bishop's Transcripts, first of Llywel, Breconshire, and moving southward along the border between Breconshire and Carmarthenshire.

Conclusion

These lists of baptisms for the dead have been generally neglected. However, when examined closely and carefully, they reveal valuable clues about the Williams family history. I have barely begun to follow up on these clues.

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² The International Genealogical Index (IGI) is available at www.familysearch.org.

³ John & Sheila Rowlands, *The Surnames of Wales* (1996, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.).