

REES, THOMAS (1869 - 1926), principal of Bala-Bangor Independent College

Name: Thomas Rees
Date of birth: 1869
Date of death: 1926
Gender: Male
Occupation: principal of Bala-Bangor Independent College
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Richard Griffith Owen

Born 30 May 1869 at Dolaeron, Llanfyrnach, Pembrokeshire. His parents were not married and he was brought up by Benni and Mattie Rees of Waunfelen, Crymych, who, being Independents, entrusted his religious teaching to Antioch chapel, although his mother's family were staunch Baptists. Until he was 10 years of age he attended Bethel day school at Mynachlog-ddu, but later, when the family moved, went to schools at Blaen-ffos and Hermon. In February 1884 he was admitted to church membership at Antioch. Before he was 13 he went to work with local farmers, but it was soon discovered that he was more interested in books than in the land. At the beginning of 1888 he was employed in a coal-mine at Aberdare, where he found a more congenial atmosphere both in the mine and, more particularly, in Ebenezer chapel, Trecynon, where he began to preach, 19 October 1890. He had, by this time, started to attend Whitland school, which was then kept by the Rev. Lewis Evans, and when the latter gave it up Rees went to the Old College School at Carmarthen, which was kept by Evan Jones. In June 1891 he was admitted at the top of the list to the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, and the following year passed the London matriculation. He also won the Drapers Company scholarship (£35) and entered University College, Cardiff, where he graduated B.A. and, in 1896, M.A. (London) in philosophy. While he was there he also won the [Dan Isaac Davies](#) scholarship in Welsh. According to principal [Viriamu Jones](#) he was the ablest student who had been in Cardiff up to that time. In October 1896 he won a scholarship (£60) to Mansfield College, Oxford, where A. M. Fairbairn was principal. There he won the Mill Hill prize and the Dr. Williams scholarship (£50) and graduated with honours in theology in 1899. In February 1899 he was appointed to the chair of divinity at the Memorial College, Brecon, and in May of the same year was ordained minister and given supervision of Bethania and Ebenezer churches at Capel Uchaf, near Brecon. He threw himself into the public life of Brecknock as a whole-hearted Liberal, and was co-opted a member of the county education committee, of which he subsequently became chairman. He was appointed principal of the Bala-Bangor College, 14 April 1909, which appointment he held until his death.

He had set his heart on raising the standard of theological studies in Wales and so strengthening the ministry; and he succeeded in rousing the interest and enlisting the support of [Sir Harry Reichel](#) in his efforts to get the charter of the University of Wales changed so as to allow theology to be recognized as a subject of study. In 1922 the University College of North Wales was granted a supplementary charter and the Bangor School of Theology was established.

In the course of the 1914-18 war he came into great prominence throughout the country as an uncompromising pacifist, and suffered persecution for his opinions. He was appointed editor of *Y Deyrnas*, a monthly published by a number of pacifists from October 1916 to November 1919.

The University of London recognized his work, *The Holy Spirit*, by conferring on him the degree of Ph.D. He was responsible for the idea which resulted in the appointment of the departmental committee 'to enquire into the place of Welsh in the system of education in Wales, etc,' but he died before he could make any contribution to the report. He was editor of *Y Dysgedydd* from November 1924. His outstanding editorial achievement, however, was the work he did as editor-in-chief of *Y Geiriadur Beiblaidd* (November 1924 - October 1926), and it is generally recognized that the success of this work was due to his energy and diligence. He died in London, 20 May 1926, and was buried in Glanadda cemetery, Bangor.

In addition to pamphlets, essays, and magazine articles, he published: *Duw: Ei Fodolaeth a'i Natur*, 1910; *Esboniad ar yr Epistol at yr Hebraeid* (two volumes), 1912, 1913; *The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience*, 1915; *Cenadwri'r Eglwys a Phroblemau'r Dydd*, 1923; *Gwleidyddiaeth yng Nghymru*, 1924; *Paham yr wyf yn Brotestant, Ymneilltuwr, ac Annibynnwr*, 1911.

Author

Reverend Richard Griffith Owen, (1890 - 1973)

Sources

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