

WILLIAMS, ISAAC (1802 - 1865), cleric, poet, and theologian

Name: Isaac Williams
Date of birth: 1802
Date of death: 1865
Spouse: Caroline Williams (née Champernowne)
Parent: Anne Williams (née Davies)
Parent: Isaac Lloyd Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric, poet, and theologian
Area of activity: Poetry; Religion
Author: David Jenkins

third son of Isaac Lloyd Williams (1771 - 1846), barrister, son of Isaac Williams, vicar of Llanrhystud, Cardiganshire, who married Anne, elder daughter and co-heiress of Matthew Davies of Cwmcynfelyn, near Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, was born there on 12 December 1802. As his father's professional duties kept him in London for the greater part of each year, Williams spent his early childhood in Southampton Street, Bloomsbury, London. In 1817 he went to Harrow, where he became conspicuous for his skill in Latin verse. On 3 June 1882 he entered Trinity College, Oxford, and it was while spending that summer's vacation at Cwmcynfelyn that he met John Keble at Aberystwyth. They did not, however, become very friendly until the following year when Williams won the chancellor's prize for a Latin poem on the subject 'Ars Geologica'. He suffered a serious illness because of over-work and was obliged to content himself with a pass degree, which he obtained on 25 May 1826; proceeding M.A. in 1831, and B.D. in 1839. In December 1829 he was ordained deacon, and licensed to the curacy of Windrush-cum-Sherborne, Gloucestershire.

On 30 May 1831 he obtained a Fellowship at Trinity College, and the following year went into residence as a tutor in philosophy. In 1833 he was made dean of the college. He was rhetoric lecturer from 1834 to 1840 and vice-president of his college in 1841-2. Soon after his return to Trinity College he became curate to John Henry Newman at S. Mary's, Oxford. They became very firm friends, and when the Oxford Movement threatened the unity of the Church, Isaac Williams quickly proved himself to be one of the Movement's most able leaders. With the publication of his tract *Reserve in communicating Religious Knowledge* (no. 80 in series *Tracts for the Times*), he made a number of enemies. He wrote a good deal of verse and translated a few poems for a volume entitled *Lyra Apostolica* (Derby, 1836) which he published jointly with Froude, Newman, and Keble. When Keble retired from the chair of poetry at Oxford in 1841, Williams was generally considered his likely successor. However, after much bitter wrangling he decided to withdraw, and James Garbett was appointed. Much embittered by the defection of some of his friends he withdrew from Oxford and from public life.

On 22 June 1842 he married Caroline, third daughter of Arthur Champernowne of Dartington House, and settled in Dartington as curate to Thomas Keble. There he remained until 1848 when he removed to Stinchcombe near Dursley where he died on 1 May 1865. He was buried in its churchyard where a monument was erected to his memory, and by

public subscription a stained glass window, as a memorial of him, was placed in Trinity College chapel. His widow died on 1 February 1886. Six sons and one daughter were born to them.

Isaac Williams published about thirty-seven works including *Thoughts in past years*, 1838; *Hymns translated from the Parisian Breviary*, 1839; *A Sermon [on Rev. xxi, 2-3] preached at the consecration of the Church of Llangorwen*, 1841; *The Gospel narrative of Our Lord's Ministry*, 1848, 1849; *A Harmony of the Four Evangelists*, 1850; *Plain sermons on the latter part of the Catechism*, 1851; *The Apocalypse, with notes*, 1852; *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels for the Sundays and Holy Days*, 1853; *Female characters of Holy Scripture*, 1859; *The Beginning of the Book of Genesis, with notes*, 1861; *The Characters of the Old Testament*, 1869; *Devotional Commentary on the Gospel Narrative*, 1870.

Author

Dr David Jenkins, (1912 - 2002)

Sources

The Autobiography of Isaac Williams ... throwing further light on the history of the Oxford Movement. [With "A Sermon of Thomas Keble's, sent by Isaac Williams to J. H. Newman, no doubt on the occasion of the death of Newman's mother."]

(London New York 1892) (ed. Sir G. Prevost), 1892

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

The Welsh Outlook, 1933

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Isaac Williams](#)

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