

KOTSCHNIG, ELINED PRYS (1895 - 1983), psychoanalyst and pacifist

Name: Elined Prys Kotschnig
Date of birth: 1895
Date of death: 1983
Gender: Female
Occupation: psychoanalyst and pacifist
Area of activity: Medicine; Activism
Author: Ffion Mair Jones

Elined Prys was born on 16 February 1895 in Trefeca, Talgarth, Breconshire, the eldest of the two daughters of [Owen Prys](#), the Principal of the Calvinist Methodist College, and his wife Elizabeth (née Parry). The family moved to a new home in Lluest, North Road, Aberystwyth, when the college was relocated in 1906, and Elined went on to study at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. In January 1918, still a few months short of the end of the First World War, she staged a conference in Aberystwyth to discuss 'The Best Pathway to Peace'. Her goal, as she spiritedly explained in the press when the event was prevented from going ahead by 'hooliganism threats', was to hold a wide-ranging discussion on peace from the point of view of Christianity. The impartiality she displayed in explaining that she would have extended a welcome at the event to supporters of the war as well as pacifists is a sign of her wisdom and maturity in grappling with a question that would become central to her life and that of her peers for decades to come.

After graduating in philosophy from Aberystwyth in 1918, Elined went on to study at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she contributed an English translation of [T. Gwynn Jones](#)' nostalgic poem, 'Atgof' ('Remembrance'), to the college magazine, before spending three years in Bucharest, Romania (from January 1920) working to establish a student branch of the World Young Women's Christian Association. She found problems relating to racism in Romania, including anti-Semitism, but reported that the support for students was surprisingly if not excessively generous. It is not surprising in view of this to see Elined turning her attention during this period in eastern Europe to the less satisfactory circumstances of students and lecturers at neighbouring Russian universities; she tried to arouse the interest of the public at home in Wales in their straitened circumstances on behalf of a British appeal through an advertisement in the *Welsh Gazette* in September 1922 asking for donations of clothes. In March 1923, after returning from Romania, an account of Elined's experiences appeared in *Yr Efrdydd*, the publication of the Student Christian Movement. It seems that her voice for the cause of peace internationally following this experience led to her selection as one of the four entrusted with carrying a petition organized by the Welsh League of Nations Union from the women of Wales to their counterparts in the United States, although her name does not appear in the minutes of the meetings held as preparations intensified during 1923. On 2 February 1924, aged twenty-nine, Elined ('one of the non-official deputation') joined leader Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths or [Annie Jane Hughes Griffiths](#) (1873-1942) on board the RMS Cedric sailing from Liverpool to New York. A diary was kept of the movements of the delegation (which also included Mary Ellis and Gladys Thomas) recording the presentation of the petition at the White House to President Calvin Coolidge, together with the journey to the West Coast. By the end of March 1924, the petitioners were back in Britain, and Elined was again promoting the cause of the League of Nations. Only through the League could the danger of another war, its capacity for killing and destruction more frightening than ever, be averted, she argued, sharing the stage with Sir Harry Reichel, a member of the Executive Committee of the Welsh League of Nations, at a meeting in Llandudno in November.

A significant year for Elined came to a close with her marriage to Walter Maria Kotschnig (1901-1985), an Austrian born in Judenburg, at the Welsh chapel of the Presbyterian Church, Charing Cross Road, London, on 10 December 1924. Kotschnig had that year completed a doctoral thesis in political science at the University of Kiel, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, and it was at Kiel that the pair set up their first marital home. Elined wrote from there to her friend T. Gwynn Jones in June 1925; two months later she and her husband had moved to the 'Calvin's Town' (Geneva) following appointments for both as secretaries with the International Student Service, and were expecting their first child. In the ensuing years, Walter Kotschnig developed his career with the Service, delivering lectures and speeches on matters relating to the world of education, his concern about the threat from the National Socialists and the far right intensified by the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor at the end of January 1933. Walter and Elined responded to the crisis in the university sector by co-editing a volume under the auspices of the International Student Service, *The University in a Changing World* (1932). Developing on the Service's conferences in the dark years after the First World War, when the discussion was guided by practical considerations regarding the hardship and material suffering of students, the volume presented contributions on the higher education systems in European countries and the United States, allowing the contributors (even in the case of Fascist Italy) to identify the excellence of their systems whilst elucidating the purpose and mission of the universities in a new period in their history.

While her husband's commitment to the cause of unemployed postgraduate students and to scholars dismissed following

the Nazi Reich's law to 'restore' the professional civil service in April 1933 deepened, Elined changed direction in the years following her marriage. By the early 1930s, she was working in the field of psychoanalysis with Tina Keller-Jenny (1887-1985), a pupil of Toni Wolff (1888-1953) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). She and Walter became members of the Geneva Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends in 1927, and Elined broke new ground by establishing a group to study Jungian psychology in conjunction with Quaker beliefs, an idea to which Jung himself gave his seal of approval during a visit by the group to his home on the shores of Lake Zürich in June 1935. Elined later reported that 'Jung agreed with us on the affinity ... between Quaker ideas and experiences and his own psychology', and said 'that if he had had an early choice of Christian communities, he probably would have picked Quakerism'.

The interest in connecting Jung's analysis with Quaker beliefs became increasingly central to Elined's work following the emigration of the family (Walter, their three children, and herself) to the United States in the autumn of 1936. (It had become impossible to remain any longer in Europe due to Walter's outspoken criticism of Hitler's government.) They settled in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Elined and her husband became interested in local efforts to establish a Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Elined was appointed clerk to the new Monthly Meeting in October 1938, and she and Walter were among the founders when this evolved into a Meeting linked to the American Friends Fellowship Council on 26 February 1939. A period of war looming once again, humanitarian work was inevitably central to the activity of the Monthly Meeting in its early days. The group benefited from Walter's knowledge of politics and his background as an Austrian citizen; and Elined turned her attention once again to rallying in favour of the League of Nations (the USA continued to reject membership of the League which had been founded at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1920). She also assisted Mary Robbins Champney (d. 1950) in her campaign on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee to accommodate Dutch refugees who were living in poverty in New York. Parallel to these developments, Elined and Mary Champney's common interests as Quakers and psychologists gave rise to a plan to hold a conference to discuss the link between the two fields. It was realized in the first Friends Conference on the Nature and Laws of the Spiritual Life held in Haddonfield, New Jersey, over the 1943 Easter weekend, with Elined as chair. When the name was changed to the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology three years later, *Inward Light*, a journal dating back to the summer of 1937, originally produced by mimeography, was designated the official publication of the Conference. In 1950 Elined was appointed editor of *Inward Light*.

Walter Kotschnig was appointed a specialist on international organization to the US government service in 1944 and the family left Northampton, moving to Chevy Chase, Maryland, an area of north-west Washington D.C. Elined continued to develop her parallel interest in psychoanalysis and in the work of the Quakers. She spent a further period at the Jung Institute in Zürich following the war in order to qualify as a psychoanalyst and became the first Jungian specialist in the Washington area. Collaborating in 1967 with Revd Robert E. Marston, Senior Minister of Christ Congregational Church, Silver Spring, Maryland, she started a local chapter of the C. G. Jung Working Group, in order to formalize the process of sharing Jung's ideas regarding psychology and psychiatry. A record of her activity and development as a psychoanalyst can be seen in her publications, particularly in the form of authorial (and editorial) contributions to *Inward Light*, and in extant papers and correspondence, including correspondence with Jung from her time in Switzerland and after her emigration to the USA. A central element for her was to challenge the attachment of contemporary Quakers to the 'Light Side' of their experience through their commitment to silence at the expense of an examination of the 'Dark Side'. '[S]ilence must be more than non-communication, patience more than Micawber-like waiting for something to turn up', she wrote in 1969; 'Time will heal only if we cooperate'. For Elined, 'cooperation' meant exploring the depths of the psyche to reach a better understanding of the two extremes of conflict and tranquility, whether that be within the individual, in a relationship between husband and wife, or (it can be suggested, bearing in mind her dedication to the cause of peace between the two World Wars) in the interdependence of the nations. For the woman, Jungian psychoanalysis offered an awareness of an identity complete without dependence on a male partner. In 1968, in a rich study with reference to the traditions of ancient Greece as well as the teachings of the Bible, she discussed the concept of 'periodic virginity' from an anthropological, mythological and psychological point of view, presenting it as a metaphor for the complete psychological state of the Self. This material was presented in an address to the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology on 1 June 1968. Elined was now over seventy years old, and the recording made of her speech shows her engaging warmth as a speaker, the listeners expressing their appreciation through numerous bouts of collective laughter. By then she was well-established among the Jungian Friends in the United States as a 'great tree', her roots deep and the network she had fostered extending far beyond her geographical location, as her secretary and former pupil Lucille Eddinger pointed out in a commemorative essay published in a special issue of *Inward Light* in 1984.

Elined died at the Friends Senior Residence in Pennswood Village, Newtown, Pennsylvania, on 30 June 1983. She was survived by her husband and two of her children, her closest family with whom she could not nonetheless share the secret of her native country, 'because custom & "yr hên iaith [the old language]" debar them forever from entering in' (letter to T. Gwynn Jones, 1938). Although she lived in exile from Wales for over sixty years, she always had 'a permanent and deep "hiraeth [longing]", of which I hardly ever speak, because it hurts too much & is of no use anyway', she told Gwynn Jones in a confiding moment. At the same time, she felt that her gains from exile counterbalanced her losses, and did not want to

change a thing. The appreciative remembrances of Lucille Eddinger and others such as Helen Griffith record the part she played in the exciting and beneficial amalgamation of Quaker beliefs and Jungian psychoanalysis, and testify to the high respect and admiration she had come to command in her adopted country.

Author

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