EVANS, JOHN (1858 - 1963); minister (Congl.) and professor at the Memorial College, Brecon

Name: John Evans
Date of birth: 1858
Date of death: 1963
Parent: Eleanor Evans
Parent: David Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Congl.) and professor at the Memorial College, Brecon
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: William Thomas Pennar Davies

Born 12 May 1858 at Erwan Fach, Llangrannog, Cardiganshire, son of David and Eleanor Evans. He had very little formal education in childhood though he did for a while attend the school held by ' Cranogwen ' at Pontgarreg. After the 1868 general election the family was ejected from their home because the father had voted for the Liberal candidate, and they moved to Pant-teg farm near New Quay. When he was 12 years old he was apprenticed to a shopkeeper in Llangrannog. Three years later he went to work in a grocer's and clothier's shop in Beaufort, Monmouth. About 1877 he decided to become a candidate for the ministry and delivered his first sermon in Maen-y-groes chapel, near New Quay. He went to the school kept by C.H. Hughes in the vestry of Tywyn (Congl.) chapel, New Quay, and in 1881 he became the first pupil of that school to be accepted by London University. He went to New College, London, where Samuel Newth was principal, to prepare himself for the ministry, graduating B.A. in 1884 and A.T.S. in 1886. He was an assistant teacher at the school of Watcyn Wyn at Ammanford before being invited to minister at Painscastle and Rhos-goch churches, Radnorshire, in 1887. In 1894 he moved to take charge of the English church in Glamorgan Street, Brecon. After the death of John Morris, principal of the Memorial College in that town, in 1896, he was invited to lecture on Hebrew for a while there (while continuing as pastor of the church). When the faculty of theology was established in the University of Wales he was invited to lecture on church history for a year in 1901 and the invitation was renewed annually until he was appointed full time professor in 1905 and at the same time made financial secretary of the college (until 1942). He retained his chair until he retired in 1943 and received the title Professor Emeritus.

He accepted modern forms of scholarship in discussing the Bible and Christian history. His theological liberalism may be perceived in his commentary on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, *Epistol Cyntaf Paul at y Corinthiaid* (1926). He wrote an article on the Independents in the neighbourhood of Painscastle and Hay for *The history of Congregationalism in Breconshire and Radnorshire* (ed. Joseph Jones; 1912) and he was among the contributors to the Independents '*Llyfr Gwasanaeth* (1926). He also contributed to *Y Tyst* and *Y Dysgedydd*. He was chairman of the board of governors of Brecon grammar school, 1921-31. Through his quiet faith and gentle personality he came to be regarded as the college's unambitious and unjealous 'man of God'. Everyone knew of his love of Brecon and Brecknockshire and in 1957 he was honoured with the freedom of the borough. He preached for the last time in Tredomen chapel, near Brecon, 11 November 1962. He was unmarried and died 1 January 1963 in his lodgings in Brecon, his home for many years. In a few months' time he would have reached the age of 105. He was buried in the town cemetery when snow lay heavy on the ground.

Author

William Thomas Pennar Davies, (1911 - 1996)

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personal acquaintance

Additional Links

Wikidata: Q20746812

Published date: 2001

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Davies, W. T. P., (2001). EVANS, JOHN (1858 - 1963); minister (Congl.) and professor at the Memorial College, Brecon. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 3 Oct 2024, from https://biography.wales/article/s2-EVAN-JOH-1858

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