RHYS, WILLIAM JOSEPH (1880 - 1967), minister (B) and author

Name: William Joseph Rhys
Date of birth: 1880
Date of death: 1967
Spouse: Annie Lydia Rhys (née Morgan)
Spouse: Bessie Gwen Rhys (née Morris)
Parent: Esther Rees
Parent: Thomas Rees
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (B) and author
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Religion
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Born 12 February 1880, son of Thomas and Esther Rees, Pen-y-bryn, LlangyfelachLlangyfelach, Glamorganshire. He and his two brothers - M.T. Rees, Meinciau and D.H. Rees, Llandudno Junction - became ministers. His father was related to Morgan Rees who had been instrumental in establishing Salem Church, Llangyfelach in 1777, whilst his mother was of the lineage of Moses Williams, Llandyfân. On leaving school he worked in a grocer's shop in Abergwynfi, but after being urged to enter the ministry, he went to Gwynfryn School, Ammanford, in 1901 and Bangor Baptist College (1903-06), where he came under the powerful influence of the Revival. He became pastor of Horeb, Maenclochog, and Smyrna, Puncheston, Pembrokeshire (1906-25), and Dinas Noddfa, Landore, Swansea (1925-47), finally retiring to Gelli, Rhondda.

He began taking an interest, it appears, in the history of his denomination when he was about fifty years old. For the 30 years following the publication in *Seren Gomer* (1934-35) of a histo ry of the Baptists at Landore, he wrote articles regularly for *Seren Cymru*, *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, and *Seren Gomer*, and supplied a chronicle of church events regularly to the latter periodical from 1954 until he had a stroke in 1966. He also contributed to *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. He won prizes both for his work on Baptist social leaders in Wales and for his voluminous essay on the life and work of James Spinther James (NLW MS 12603D). He was commissioned to write a history of the Baptist College during its term at Llangollen and Bangor; and biographies of Welshmen who were trained at Bristol Baptist College. He published *A Brief History of the Baptists in Wales* (1956), and *Penodau yn hanes y Bedyddwyr Cymreig, 1649-1949* (1949), which is a valuable, reliable sourcebook on the history of his denomination. Histories of about 50 churches were written or edited by him, including a dozen or more standard works such as *Hanes Seion, Treforus, 1845-1945*, and the last one which he wrote, namely the history of Noddfa, Treorchy, where he was a member.

He married (1), in 1910, Bessie Gwen Morris (died 6 March 1960), Treorchy; and (2), 1961, Annie Lydia Williams, the widow of David Pryse Williams, minister (B), Treherbert. He died 22 October 1967 at his home, Y Wenallt, 14 Bute St., Treherbert.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

The Baptist Union of Wales Handbook and Diary, 1969, 364, 377

Seren Gomer, 59 (1967), 89-90

Seren Cymru, 1 December 1967, 5

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