WILLIAMS, THOMAS ('Tom Nefyn '; 1895 - 1958), minister (Presb.) and evangelist

Name: Thomas Williams
Pseudonym: Tom Nefyn
Date of birth: 1895
Date of death: 1958
Spouse: Ceridwen Roberts Williams (née Jones)
Parent: Ann Thomas (née Williams)
Parent: John Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Presb.) and evangelist
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Gomer Morgan Roberts

Born 23 January 1895 at Bronolau, Boduan, Caernarfonshire, son of John Thomas, a well-known local poet in Llŷn, and his wife Ann Williams. The family moved to the vicinity of Nefyn, and established themselves later at Bodeilas near Pistyll where he was brought up. He left Nefyn Elementary School in 1909, and worked in the Eifl granite quarry. He joined the army in 1914, and saw action in the Dardanelles, France, Egypt and Palestine, suffering great hardship and being wounded. During his service in the Middle East he met David Williams, who was one of the army chaplains. He wrote poetry at that time and his friend, William Williams of Caernarfon, published a small collection of his poems under the title *Barddoniaeth o waith Twm Nefyn* (n.d.). He returned from the war an ardent pacifist. Some years later he published *Dagrau Cain - dagrau Crist* (1935), an essay against war, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation published a pamphlet of his, *At Suvla Bay; what a soldier learnt at Gallipoli* (n.d.). He began to hold evangelical meetings locally, and he was persuaded to become a candidate for the ministry. He went to Porth school in the Rhondda Valley to prepare himself for his vocation under the guidance of R.B. Jones before proceeding to the theological colleges of his denomination at Aberystwyth and Bala. He was ordained in 1925, and that same year he married Ceridwen Roberts Jones of Coed-poeth, and they had 3 children. He received a call to Ebenezer, Tumble, Carmarthenshire, the anthracite coal district where there was much industrial and political unrest in the 1920s.

Tom Nefyn spent a stormy period at Tumble. His sermons on social matters - wages, the state of the coalminers' houses, &c. - drew much attention, and his ideas on the nature of the church and his doctrinal views were also rather new. Some of the leaders of South Carmarthenshire Presbytery doubted his orthodoxy and his case was brought before the South Wales Association. He insisted, from the floor of the meeting, that he be informed what were the doctrinal standards with which he was expected to conform. The case dragged on from one Association meeting to the next, and was given great publicity by the daily and weekly newspapers. Tom Nefyn himself published a lengthy manifesto (80 pp.) in 1928, under the title *Y Ffordd yr edrychaf ar bethau* and at the Treherbert Association (April 1928) it was declared that his doctrinal views were at variance with not only the standards of the Connexion but also with the historical faith of the Christian church. He was asked to reconsider his position and conform with the standards of his Connexion or resign from the ministry. A number of prominent ministers and laymen of the Connexion appealed against the Association's decision, and a pamphlet of plea and protest was published under the names of five of the elders of Ebenezer. At the Nantgaredig Association (August 1928) it was decided that he was to be barred from undertaking any ministerial duties, in the hope that he would be led to reconsider his position and have his place as a minister restored. His ministry at Ebenezer terminated at the beginning of September. Ebenezer church was disestablished and a church was re-established there for those who conformed with the terms of the Connexion. His supporters in Tumble came together and obtained the financial assistance of the Society of Friends to build a 'society house' in the village. Llain-y-Delyn was opened at the end of November 1929, but his supporters were disappointed when Tom Nefyn decided, after a period of rest and contemplation at the Quakers' institution at Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham, to be reinstated as a minister by his Connexion. He now felt ready to accept the ' *Shorter Declaration on Faith and Practice* ' adopted by the Presbyterian Church of Wales and he was reinstated at the Porthcawl Association in April 1931. (See *The Tom Nefyn Controversy*, a pamphlet published by the Welsh Review Co. Ltd., Tonmawr, Port Talbot (c. 1929); Tom Nefyn-Williams, *Yr Ymchwil* (1949); and E. P. Jones, *Llain-y-Delyn, Cymdeithas Gristnogol y Tymbl* (1970)). In 1932 Tom Nefyn was called to be pastor of Bethel church, Rhosesmor, Flint, and he remained there until 1937. Subsequently he moved to Gerlan, Caernarfonshire (1937-46); he had charge of the churches of Tarsis and South Beach, Pwllheli (1946-49) and of the churches of Edern and Greigwen, Llŷn (1949-58). All these years he evangelised in his own particular style. No-one was more effective than he as a missioner, not only in chapels but in village halls, hospitals and public houses and in the open-air at fairs, on street corners and along the highways. He evangelised as he went along his way, singing, preaching and counselling. It was not easy for anyone to work with him, since he insisted on having his own way; it could be said that he was a lonely man although he loved his fellow-men passionately. He contributed much to *Y Goleuad*. Like his father before him, he enjoyed writing poetry, and his poems appear in *Yr Ymchwil* and in weekly papers. He died suddenly on Sunday night, 23 November 1958, after conducting a meeting in Rhydyclafdy chapel, and his remains were interred at Edern.

Author

Reverend Gomer Morgan Roberts, (1904 - 1993)

Sources

The sources referred to above, and also W. Morris (ed.), *Tom Nefyn* (Caernarfon 1962) (1962)

personal acquaintance

[Harri Parri, *Tom Nefyn Portread* (Caernarfon 1999) (1999)]

Published date: 2001

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Roberts, G. M., (2001). WILLIAMS, THOMAS ('Tom Nefyn '; 1895 - 1958), minister (Presb.) and evangelist. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 9 Oct 2024, from https://biography.wales/article/s2-WILL-THO-1895

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