

THOMAS, ISAAC (1911-2004), minister (Independents) and college lecturer

Name: Isaac Thomas
Date of birth: 1911
Date of death: 2004
Spouse: Sybil Thomas (née Jones)
Child: Mari Thomas
Parent: Mary Thomas
Parent: Ifan Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Independents) and college lecturer
Area of activity: Education; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: John Tudno Williams

Born 15 February, 1911, in Pantyffynnon farm, Y Tymbl, Carmarthenshire, the youngest of the five sons of Ifan and Mary Thomas. He was educated at Llechyfedach Primary School, Upper Tymbl, and Llanelli Secondary School for Boys. He entered the University College, Cardiff, in 1929, and graduated with honours in Classical Greek in 1933. He moved from there to the Memorial College, Brecon, to follow the BD course and to prepare for the ministry. Because he was forced to spend nearly a year in the Sanatorium at Talgarth recuperating from tuberculosis he was not able to complete his course of study until 1938. In that year he was ordained as minister at Bethania, Treorchy. In 1943 he was appointed as a part-time lecturer in Church History at the Memorial College, Brecon, and he became a full-time Professor within two years. He transferred to the Chair in New Testament in 1950. He was the first to be appointed to the Department of Hebrew and Biblical Studies in University College, Bangor, to teach through the medium of Welsh, taking up his appointment in 1959. Eventually he was promoted to a senior lectureship and retired in 1978.

By dint of his particularly detailed research over many years he became the prime authority on the history of the translation of the Scriptures into Welsh. His volume, *Y Testament Newydd Cymraeg 1551-1620*, appeared in 1976, which earned him the DD degree of the University of Wales, and then he completed his studies in the field by the year of the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of [Bishop William Morgan's](#) translation in 1988, *Yr Hen Destament Cymraeg 1551-1620*. He was awarded the Vernon Hull Memorial Prize by the Board of Celtic Studies twice for these masterpieces of research. [Professor J. E. Caerwyn Williams](#) wrote of him: 'He completed a task which sorely needed to be done, and he effected it in such a way that it will never again be needed to be done, so that all interested in Welsh and the Welsh Bible will be indebted to him.' He also published bilingual books which conveyed the results of his researches in a less detailed and technical manner: *William Salesbury and His Testament* to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the first full translation of the New Testament into Welsh in 1967, and *William Morgan and His Bible*, for the celebrations of 1988. In addition he published a number of articles in composite volumes and journals detailing his researches. He did much of this work whilst holding the Margaret Eilian Owen Fellowship in the National Library from 1973

to 1985. He was invited to read a paper outlining his research to the International Society for New Testament Studies in Durham in 1978. He was a member of the Panel for the translation of the New Welsh Bible from the outset in 1964 until it was completed in 1988.

He wrote other books in addition: *Hanes Cristnogaeth* (1949), *Arweiniad Byr i'r Testament Newydd* (1963), *Elfennau Groeg y Testament Newydd* (jointly with [Owen E. Evans](#), 1975), and *Trosom Ni: Nodiadau ar Drefn y Cadw yn yr Ysgrythurau* (1991). A Festschrift, *Efrydiau Beiblaidd Bangor 3* (ed. [Owen E. Evans](#)), was presented to him on the occasion of his retirement in 1978. His papers are in Bangor University Archives.

He married Sibyl Jones, Treorchy, and a daughter, Mari, was born to them; she died at the age of forty in 1984. His wife, Sibyl, died 1 February, 2004, and Isaac Thomas died in Bangor on 23 May, 2004.

Author

John Tudno Williams

Sources

Ieuan Davies, *Gwerthfawrogiad o Fywyd a Gwaith Dr. Isaac Thomas (1911-2004)* (2010)

Gwilym H. Jones, '[Cyfarch y Dr. Isaac Thomas](#)', *Y Traethodydd*, 2001, 197-208

John Tudno Williams, 'Isaac Thomas', *Diwinyddiaeth*, lv, 2004, 5-7

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