

JONES, DAVID (1789? - 1841), Baptist historian

Name: David Jones
Date of birth: 1789?
Date of death: 1841
Gender: Male
Occupation: Baptist historian
Area of activity: History and Culture; Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born probably at Carmarthen, in 1789, according to his tombstone, but in 1791 according to his own statement (*Bed. Deheubarth*, 443); his father died in 1800. Baptized by **Titus Lewis** in February 1804, he began preaching in 1811. Towards the end of 1812 he went to Merthyr Tydfil as a printer, but his energies in establishing an English Baptist church there led to neglect of his work, and dismissal. In October 1813 he entered Abergavenny Baptist Academy, remaining there till the end of 1815 or the beginning of 1816; he did well in his examinations. On New Year's Day 1817, at Tabernacle, Carmarthen, he was ordained to be an itinerant minister; he is found itinerating in Herefordshire till about the end of 1819; by 1822 (and until 1828) he was in Derbyshire. In August 1828 he founded an English Baptist church at Abersychan, Monmouth, but removed c. February 1830 to Bethania (English) church at Haverfordwest. He was not comfortable there, and towards the end of 1832 he took charge of the Pithay (Welsh?) church at Bristol. For years after 1834 he was without charge, living at Carmarthen and itinerating - in 1835-6 he preached at Association meetings in North and South Wales.

In 1836 he began to travel to collect materials for a history of the Baptists in South Wales - the first instalment of the book appeared in September 1837 and the last in April 1839. He had little money, and subscribers defaulted, with the result that he could not pay his printer and was imprisoned for debt; he was in gaol at the beginning of February 1840, but for how long is not known. On his release he was inducted as pastor of the English Baptists at Rhymney, where he died 26 July 1841; he was buried in the Baptist burial-ground at Tredegar, and left a widow and several children in straitened circumstances.

This luckless man is today remembered neither for his writings in *Y Greal* nor for his elegy on **Samuel Breeze** but for his 852-page *Hanes y Bedyddwyr yn Neheubarth Cymru*. This work has from the beginning been severely criticized - for its uncritical reliance on 'sources,' its untidy arrangement, its insufficiency of cross-references, its lack of an index, which makes for trouble when one is trying to follow a minister's career (that of David Jones himself, to give one instance). Again, down to 1788 it is for the most part a mere reproduction of the work of **Joshua Thomas**. Yet it is quite indispensable for a student of its subject, and is still (in view of the fact that **J. Spinther James** left his work unfinished) the only general history of the Baptist denomination in South Wales for the half-century after 1788.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

This note, with the exception of the second paragraph, is merely a summary of the long article by E. T. Jones in *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, 1932

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