

## JONES, MICHAEL (1787 - 1853), Independent minister and first principal of the Bala Independent College

**Name:** Michael Jones  
**Date of birth:** 1787  
**Date of death:** 1853  
**Child:** Michael Daniel Jones  
**Parent:** Mary Jones  
**Parent:** Daniel Jones  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Independent minister and first principal of the Bala Independent College  
**Area of activity:** Education; Religion  
**Author:** Richard Griffith Owen

Born at Neuadd-lwyd, Cardiganshire, in 1787. His parents, who had meantime moved into a little cottage called Ffosybontbren, turned to religion late in life; his father, Daniel Jones, a Llanybydder man, was, at the time of his death, a member of the Wesleyan congregation at Capel-y-ficer, while his mother, Mary Jones, had joined the Calvinistic Methodists at Ffos-y-ffin. He started life as a farm labourer, became a stone-mason, and after his brother, Evan, had helped him to get a little schooling went to Lampeter where he was trained as a book-binder. In 1807 **Thomas Phillips** (1772 - 1842) admitted him to full membership at Neuadd-lwyd, and it was he who urged him to start preaching. He then went to the school kept by **David Davis** of Castellhywel, working now and then to pay his way, and for a time himself keeping a school at Neuaddlwyd. After about two years he was admitted to Wrexham Academy to study first under **Jenkin Lewis** and later under **George Lewis**. In 1814 he was ordained as successor to **George Lewis** at Llanuwchllyn.

At that time the Welsh nonconformists of every denomination were seething with theological controversies, and it was not long before the ministry of Michael Jones provided the setting for one of the fiercest of these - the 'Controversy of the Systems' as it was called. Ever since the days of **George Lewis** the Presbyterian 'system' had operated in the Old Chapel, and this was the cause of the whole bitter struggle. Interwoven with this question of church government were various doctrinal disputes such as those between Higher and Lower Calvinists. In consequence, the church was split into two parties - Michael Jones's party and the 'Old People's' party. He was accused of ignoring the principle of Presbyterianism in the government of the church, of being an Arminian, of denying Original Sin, of putting his trust in the 'power of man,' and of affirming the universality of Redemption.

On 11 November 1821 the 'Old People' left the church; other ministers were called in to attempt to bring about a reconciliation, and, after they had failed in their efforts, a law-suit was started for possession of the chapel. The 'Old People' won, and Michael Jones and his party left the Old Chapel for nearly ten years, during which time they worshipped at his home at Weirglodd Wen, whither he had moved from the manse. In 1839 the two parties were reconciled and he moved back to the chapel.

In 1842 Michael Jones went to Bala to take charge of a new seminary for the training of young candidates for the ministry - this was later known as the Independent College. It had been started originally in 1841 at Weirglodd Wen, Llanuwchllyn, where he also kept one of **Dr. Daniel Williams's** schools. He died 27 October 1853, and was buried at Rhosyfedwen, the Old Chapel burial ground.

### Author

**Reverend Richard Griffith Owen**, (1890 - 1973)

### Sources

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Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Owen, R. G., (1959). JONES, MICHAEL (1787 - 1853), Independent minister and first principal of the Bala Independent College. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-JONE-MIC-1787>

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