

## JONES, JOHN RICHARD (1765 - 1822), Sandemanian Baptist minister

**Name:** John Richard Jones  
**Date of birth:** 1765  
**Date of death:** 1822  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Sandemanian Baptist minister  
**Area of activity:** Religion  
**Author:** John Thomas Jones

Born at Bryn Melyn, Llanuwchllyn, Meirionnydd, 13 October 1765. He was educated at the school kept by Thomas Davies (1751 - 1781), then minister of the ' Old Chapel,' and was originally a member of the Independent church there; he began to preach there, but changed his denomination and was baptized by **Henry Davies** (1753 - 1825) of Llangloffan, at Trawsfynydd, 7 June 1788. He was ordained, 4 November 1789, minister of Ramoth chapel in Llanfrothen, Meirionnydd (the focal point of the Merioneth Baptists) and its branches. Between 1789 and 1798 he was one of the foremost preachers of his denomination and was regarded both in North and South Wales as one of the leaders of the Particular Baptists. He then came upon the works of the Scotsman, Archibald Maclean, in which he found what he considered to be a fair exposition of New Testament teaching and a better portrayal of the simple Christianity of the Apostolic church. He now sought to revert to the sacraments and rites of the Early Church, to emphasize the intellectual side of faith, to abjure the popular style of preaching with its Methodist fervour and its perpetual use of parables, and to frown upon the ecstatic 'jumping' of the congregations. Between 1795 and 1798 **Christmas Evans** was of great assistance to him in spreading his ideas, and when, at the 'great debate' held at Ramoth towards the end of 1798, J.R. Jones seceded from the 'Babylonish' Baptists of Wales and formed his own connexion, the ' Scottish Baptists,' it was **Christmas Evans** who felt the blow most keenly. J.R. Jones recruited a considerable following (they numbered at least 350 in 1807) and his connexion still survives in the districts round Harlech, Ffestiniog, Glyn-ceiriog, and Rhosllannerchrugog. For twenty-four years he was his people's general, tirelessly walking over his widespread 'parish,' refusing on conscientious grounds to accept any salary, and faithfully spreading the truth as he saw it. Of his five published books, three are collections of hymns (by himself and other writers) while two deal with the principles and tenets of his connexion. He was a man of brilliant, many-sided ability, interested in every branch of knowledge. He was, to some extent, conversant with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, was something of an engineer, took an interest in mathematics, and, all his life, practised in his own way as a country doctor. There is evidence of his melodious voice and of his ability as a singer, and he was acquainted with the rudiments of music. At least one of his hymn-tunes, ' Ramoth ', is still familiar. He delighted in the art of poetry and was the religious teacher of the poets **Robert ap Gwilym Ddu** and **Dewi Wyn**. To convince, to argue, to expound the Scriptures, to discipline the will - these were the outstanding characteristics of his teaching and preaching. It was in his nature to be positive, dogmatic, and certain of his own mind, but he was also strong in his convictions, self-sacrificing in his services to his people, and imbued with a profound piety. **Ap Vychan** (Robert Thomas, 1809 - 1880) said of him: ' he was the greatest man ever nurtured in Merionethshire.' He died 27 June 1822.

### Author

John Thomas Jones

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