

OWEN, JAMES (1654 - 1706), Dissenting divine and tutor

Name: James Owen
Date of birth: 1654
Date of death: 1706
Parent: John Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: Dissenting divine and tutor
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 1 November 1654 at Brynmeini, Aber-nant, Carmarthenshire, second son of John Owen. His mother, whose name is not known, was a niece of [bishop Thomas Howell](#) (1588 - 1646) and of the letter-writer [James Howell](#); Bryn was her hereditament, owned by her grandfather Thomas Howell, vicar of Conwil Elvet and Aber-nant, and previously curate of Llangamarch; Anthony Wood was in error when he said that [James Howell](#) was born at Bryn Aber-nant, for Thomas Howell was at that time residing at Cefn-bryn, Llangamarch. James Owen's brother, D. J. Owen, is mentioned in the article on [Jeremy Owen](#), and another brother, [Charles Owen](#), is separately noticed. It is noteworthy that all the (nine) children, of a pronouncedly Anglican family, were Dissenters.

James Owen went to Queen Elizabeth's School at Carmarthen. The *D.N.B.* can hardly be right in saying that he was also under the tuition of the Quaker James Picton, for Picton left Tenby when James was only four, and spent the subsequent years mostly in prison. James Owen himself told Calamy that he was under the tuition of [Samuel Jones](#) (1628 - 1697) at Brynlllywarch in 1672-3; he came afterwards under [Stephen Hughes](#) at Swansea. [Henry Maurice](#) (1634 - 1682) induced him to preach in North Wales; he stayed awhile at [Bodvel](#) and on 23 April 1676 was accused of conventicle-holding at Llangybi in Eifionydd. He escaped from Llŷn to the house of [Hugh Owen](#) (1639 - 1700), Bronchlydwr, Meirionnydd, and became [Owen](#)'s assistant - he preached Hugh Owen's funeral sermon in 1700. But in November 1676 he became chaplain to a Mrs. Baker, of Swinney, near Oswestry, at the same time taking charge of the Dissenting congregation in that town - there, on 27 June 1681, he and [Philip Henry](#) held debate with [bishop William Lloyd](#) of S. Asaph. In 1690, he opened an academy which was in high repute; none the less, he itinerated, for we find him preaching monthly at Ruthin, and afterwards at Denbigh, Wrexham, and Llanfyllin. But in 1700 he became co-pastor with Francis Tallents at Shrewsbury, removing his academy thither - for accounts of the Academy, see his biography and McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, 81-2. He died 8 April 1706; he married three times.

Although James Owen ranked as an Independent, he had leanings towards Presbyterianism, and he agreed with Richard Baxter in his low-Calvinist theology and in his moderation. His career is that of a definite Dissenter, but here again he showed willingness to compromise where principle was not sacrificed - two of his best-known works are *Moderation a Virtue*, 1703, and *Moderation still a Virtue*, 1704, in defence of 'occasional conformity.' There is a list of his works in the *D.N.B.* He did not lose contact with Wales. It was he who furnished Edmund Calamy with particulars of the Welsh 'ejected ministers.' And he published several books in Welsh: *Trugaredd a Barn*, 1687; *Bedydd Plant o'r Nefoedd* (a reply to the Baptist Benjamin Keach), 1693; a translation of the *Shorter Westminster Catechism*, 1701; and a hymnary, *Hymnau Scrythurol*, 1705 - some of the hymns were included by [Griffith Jones](#) (of Llanddowror) and [Daniel Rowland](#) in their collections.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Charles Owen, *Some account of the life and writings of the late pious and learned Mr. James Owen, minister of the gospel in Salop*(London 1709), 1709
Alexander Gordon, *Manuscript (the property of the Presbyterian Board) published by Alexander Gordon under the title Freedom after Ejection. A Review (1690-1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales*, 1917, and his article in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
T. Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales, 1654-1662* (1923), *Wales under the Indulgence*, and *Wales under the Penal Code, 1662-1687* (1925) (indexed)
Cambrian Bibliography (Llanidloes 1869) under the years noted above (somewhat confused)
A History of Carmarthenshire, ii, 415-6
McLachlan (as above)

Additional Links

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