

PENRY, JOHN (1563 - 1593), Puritan author

Name: John Penry
Date of birth: 1563
Date of death: 1593
Spouse: Eleanor Penry (née Godley)
Parent: Meredydd Penry
Gender: Male
Occupation: Puritan author
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Religion
Author: Robert Tudur Jones

Son of Meredith Penry of Cefn-brith, Llangamarch, Brecknock. He matriculated from Peterhouse, Cambridge, 11 June 1580, and graduated B.A. 21 March 1584. He was at S. Alban's Hall, Oxford, from 28 May 1586 and proceeded M.A. at Oxford 11 July 1586. His concern about the lack of preaching ministers in Wales is expressed in his first book, *A Treatise containing the Aeqvity of an Humble Svpplication*, which was presented to Parliament in the session lasting from 15 February to 23 March 1587 by Edward Dunn Lee and Job Throckmorton. Penry was arrested in consequence of Whitgift's opposition to the book and he appeared before the Court of High Commission, but was later released. On 5 September 1588 he married Eleanor Godley of Northampton.

In the beginning of 1588 Penry became interested in Robert Waldegrave's secret printing press. His second book, *An Exhortation vnto the Gouvernours, and people of hir Maiesties countrie of Wales ...*, appeared from this press in April 1588. Attempts to apprehend the author failed. A third book by Penry, *A Defence ...*, was published in August 1588. The search for the secret press was intensified after the issue of *The Epistle ...*, the first of the 'Marpelate Tracts.' Penry's precise relation with 'Marpelate' has never been satisfactorily explained. At various times the press was in London, at Fawsley, and at Coventry, and besides printing more Marpelate tracts produced Penry's *Supplication* in 1589. Waldegrave now broke his connection with the press and John Hodgkins took his place. The press was moved to Wolston Priory, but Hodgkins was arrested and in 1589 Penry fled to Scotland. The archbishop's officers searched the house of the Godleys in Northampton.

In 1590 Penry produced *A Briefe Discovery* in answer to the attacks of Richard Bancroft on the Scots Church. He re-entered England in September 1592, and allied himself with the London Separatist followers of Henry Barrow. The vicar of Stepney betrayed his whereabouts and he was arrested 22 March 1592/3 at Ratcliff, and imprisoned in the Poultry Compter. At the time of the preliminary examinations before the magistrates, Young and the Vaughan brothers, he wrote his '*Declaration of Faith and Allegiance*.' The public examination took place in the Old Bailey before sundry magistrates on 5 April 1593, followed on 10 April by an examination before Henry Fanshawe and Richard Young. His first appearance before the King's Bench took place on 21 May but he was returned to prison. He made a hasty appeal to [Burghley](#) and obtained an interview with him, but to no effect. His trial at the King's Bench opened on 25 May 1593 when he was indicted under the Act of Uniformity (1 Eliz. cap. 2). His private papers as well as his public writings were used in evidence against him. He was condemned to death and executed at S. Thomas a Watering on 29 May 1593. He left a widow and four young daughters.

Author

Reverend Principal Robert Tudur Jones, (1921 - 1998)

Sources

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A. Gordon in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, ii, 115

Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1813–20), i, col. 592

Theophilus Jones, Edwin Davies, Joseph Russell Bailey, *History of the County of Brecknock* (1909-1930), i, 118

A. Peel, *The Notebook of John Penry, 1593* (London 1944)

Dover Wilson in *The Library* (London 1912)

Further Reading

David Edward Pike, [John Penry's Letters from Prison](#)

Wikipedia Article: [John Penry](#)

Sound and Film

Teledu Annibynwyr: [Dydd John Penri](#)

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