

Anatomy of a Revival (2)

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A Discerning Look at Revival as an Evangelical Tradition especially as in Wales in 1904-05

PART 2: Factors in the Transition of Revivalist Methods

A number of factors propagated the transition. First, the Methodist influence as early as the eighteenth century had introduced into the circles of church fellowship the so-called “experience meeting” in which folk were encouraged to stand up and tell their peers about God’s dealings with them in day to day events.¹ Personal testimonies began to rise to a high profile as a result, and the day was coming when far from being coralled within the restricted aegis of the “experience meeting,” they would be trotted out sensationally at full public services, often taking the place of preaching. Such testimonies had all the potential for sensationalism and exaggeration, and the higher the emotions of the occasion, the greater the liability to imaginative and theatrical exaggeration.

Second, by the early nineteenth century, a veritable fund of non-biblical lyrics had circulated that had largely obliterated the psalmody of the Reformation-based traditions. Divorced from the firm anchor of the Scriptures, such unbiblical lyrics, intoned to popular tunes (some folk tunes, some ditties from the public house or music-hall), these new songs breathed a new spirit, and conveyed the emotional sensationalism endemic to the revival ethos. We might add too, that the hymns conveyed the emotional romantic ethos of the godless world around. The singing of hymns therewith became a factor in the propagation of revival. Bebbington preserves for us the testimony of one ex-Methodist from the eighteenth century England times of John Wesley that illustrates the force of this new hymnody. The man in question later lost his “faith” and was still later restored in the Church of England, his restoration being initiated by his study of the so-called rationalistic evidences supporting Christianity. This man wrote that the conversion he experienced in Wesleyan Methodism could be described as a kind

¹In Wales, this “experience meeting” was known as the “Seiat.” It fell largely into disuse in the twentieth century, but has been revived somewhat amongst certain evangelical quarters, largely under the influence of Dr. Lloyd-Jones, we understand.

of “psychological self-indulgence,” says David Bebbington. The man’s own words describe it thus:

At last, *by singing and repeating enthusiastic amorous hymns*, and ignorantly applying particular texts of Scripture, **I got my imagination to the proper pitch**, and thus I was born again in an instant.²

In Wales we see the historic testimony of the 1763 revival, which “broke out” in west Wales during the singing of one of the hymns of William Williams of Pantycelyn. Hundreds broke down and wept as this hymn was being sung, and the experience ignited an orgy of emotion that spread abroad extensively in the surrounding localities.³ Here then was a new instrument in the “revival” armoury, one too, that lent itself to extensive exploitation as it turned out, and one that was to be honed to perfection in the Moody-Sankey campaigns of the later nineteenth century. With them one sees the usage of singing groups, solos, choirs, and specialist lyrics even created for “revival” purposes, the precursors of the modern “choruses.” Bebbington outlines the trajectory of this musical development through the nineteenth century. Music, he says, “was given unprecedented prominence.” By 1860 he notes that “Richard Weaver’s artless but powerful rendering of revival melodies and the similar style of Philip Phillips, the ‘Singing Pilgrim,’ had come forth to punctuate the revivalism of those days.” And by the time of Moody and Sankey, the particular style of the latter was a “revolt against the respectability of the elaborate hymns and tunes preferred by organists.” “People,” said the Congregationalist evangelical leader, R. W. Dale, “want to sing not what they think, *but what they feel*”. The songs of Ira D. Sankey catered amply for this taste, and Bebbington can tell us, citing two authorities for it, that Sankey’s “style was valued by Moody because it was so close to that of the music hall.”⁴ Many of these songs are paragons of exaggerated human emotion, even sentimental slop in some instances, and guaranteed to reduce singers and audience to tears. Such is the power of music, astutely exploited.

Third, and closely coupled to this development in lyricism, was the effect of

²David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (USA: Baker, 1989), p. 51; emphasis mine.

³Cf. Eifion Evans, *When He is Come* (Bala: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1959), p. 12.

⁴Bebbington, *Op. cit.*, p. 174; (italics mine) Bebbington notes the influence of the “romantic” movement throughout society moulding the “spirit of the age” which penetrated into religion deeply.

the new Romanticism propagating “inner light mysticism” as a philosophy. Bebbington outlines the effects of this factor, and notes the influence of poets like Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Byron. He says that their poetry was in “its quintessence ... what has been called ‘*natural supernaturalism*,’ the ability to discern spiritual significance in the everyday world.” Not only was the godless world of secular art deeply conditioned by this new ethos, all spectrums of church tradition, including the evangelicals, were “deeply touched” by the new cultural style embodied in the Romanticism conveyed by such poets, and their contemporary novelists, artists, and playwrights. Romanticism in its leading characteristics emphasised the importance of emotion and imagination coupled with a consequent focus on “moments of intense experience.”⁵ One might say that this new *Zeitgeist* was tailor-made to fit in with and boost evangelical revivalist tradition, and steer it in a way that departed more and more from Scripture. Significant too, is the fact that of the poets listed above, it was the opium-addicted divorcee Coleridge who came, via Edward Irving, to have the deepest effect on the Evangelicals. Coleridge’s work impacted and penetrated the *entire* religious spectrum in nineteenth century England, and he was probably the first to coin the term, “existentialist.” He has also been cited as possibly the first “psychedelic theologian.” His opium addiction grew out of the tensions of his marriage, and is claimed to have introduced him to a “vast uncharted spiritual domain” or realm of religious experience. He taught that all true spiritual revelation comes from within (inner light mysticism), that the Bible contains a lot of errors and useless material, and that those who adhere to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, which apparently he saw as being “dictation,” were “orthodox liars for God.”⁶ Common with Coleridge’s effects on evangelicalism, were his equal effects right across the religious spectrum, which indicates how the evangelicals had at last “grounded” themselves primarily in the “inner light mysticism” espoused in fact by all world religions. Coleridge, we are told, deeply influenced, amongst others, J. S. Mill, the philosopher and developer

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 80-81; italics mine.

⁶Cf. “Coleridge, Samuel Taylor” in *IVP New Dictionary of Theology* (IVP: Leicester, 1988), pp. 150-151. Coleridge is well known to the public for such poems as *Khubla Khan* and *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*. It is symptomatic of his influence on evangelicalism that he can merit a whole article in the pages of the dictionary cited above, whilst in that same dictionary numbers of godly stalwarts do not even get a mention. The dictionary article also notes a few other significant things concerning Coleridge, notably that he adopted Immanuel Kant’s distinction between reason and the understanding.

of utilitarianism; Thomas Carlyle, the essayist; John Henry Cardinal Newman; Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby Public School and author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*; Rowland Williams, a pioneer vicious critic of the Bible in Church of England circles who was rebutted by Dean Burgon and later dismissed; and one Fenton John Anthony Hort, the innovator and mangler of the textual tradition of the Greek New Testament.⁷ We see here then, one of many open-running fountains of iniquity of that age, who amazingly deeply affected evangelical thought and praxis. And no wonder, for evangelicalism had already aligned itself with "inner light" notions, and had "consecrated sensationalism." Foundational too, to much of the "revivalist" ethos, was the notion that in order to promote revival, you must needs speak to the world around you in the terms of that world. This meant dressing like the world, singing like the world, behaving like the world, and utilizing the methods of the world for the promotion of evangelism. Creeping up on the outside of all this is the notion that salvation, via the apprehension of the "inner light," is possible amongst religions other than Christianity. This feature has come much to the fore in all too much of modern evangelical thinking.

But again, the "inner light mysticism" was one of the wells that old John Wesley drank deeply from right at the beginning of the "revival" era. He devoured such works as Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* and the famous *Imitation of Christ* by the Romanist Thomas à Kempis, and then the mystical and heterodox works of William Law and Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*. Bebbington writes, "the most enduring mark was made by Jean Baptiste de Saint-Jure's *Holy Life of Monsieur de Renty*, a seventeenth century French aristocrat who became Wesley's most admired model of a Christian."⁸ These references are absolutely fascinating, when one thinks that the first cited, Jeremy Taylor, was chaplain to the infamous and homosexual Archbishop Laud who persecuted the Puritans and set about re-romanizing the Church of England during the first half of the seventeenth century. Fascinating too, is the reference to the Romanist Thomas à Kempis. As to William Law, he denied forensic atonement.⁹ The last named John Baptist de Saint-Jure was a notorious Romanist. Let McIntock and Strong tell us about him:

Saint-Jure, Jean Baptiste De, an ascetic author, was born, in 1588,

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

⁸Cf. Bebbington, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 16.

at Metz. At the age of sixteen he joined the Jesuits, and was superior successively of the monasteries at Amiens, Alençon, Orleans, and Paris. He was one of the Jesuits who went into England during the reign of Charles I; but the condition of the country was so unsettled that he returned to his native land. He died at Paris, April 30, 1657. He wrote several works which have been reprinted, even at the present day. We mention *De la Connaissance et de l'Amour de Jesus-Christ* (1634): *Methodes pour bien mourir* (1640): *L'Homme Spirituel* (1646): *L'Idée d'un Parfait Chretien, ou la Vie de M. de Renty* (1651): *L'Homme Religieux* (1657).¹⁰

Indeed, a *Jesuit* to boot!

Bebbington tells us that after 1736 John Wesley turned away from mysticism seeing it as being “too passive, introspective and anti-institutional,” but he goes on:

It continued to exercise a lifelong fascination over his brother Charles. Certain eighteenth century evangelicals were drawn back towards the mystical, especially the forms propagated by Law in his later years, *for the evangelical and the mystic shared a common attachment to experiencing the divine*.¹¹

Hence we see mysticism having an important ally in Charles Wesley, the very genius who so fanned the flames of revivalism with his hymnody. A point of further significance is that John Wesley never completely shook off his early mysticism. He might have “come out of mysticism” but mysticism never entirely came out of him. His forays into revivalism and his later theology of perfectionism are all reflections of the effects on him of his early studying and devotions. In song, therefore, and in praxis, via the Wesleys and others, “inner light mysticism” advanced to a place of prominence right across the evangelical spectrum.¹² We might note, too, here, how both the Wesley’s tended to downgrade Luther, taking issue especially with his doctrine of “justification by faith alone.” This again betrays a Jesuitical and mystical influence. One remembers that right from his

¹⁰John McLintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1981), vol. 9, p. 247.

¹¹Cf. Bebbington, *Op. cit.*, p. 38, italics mine.

¹²One remembers the vital “experience” of Wesley in his conversion, his feeling of a “heartwarming” issuing in a felt assurance that his sins were forgiven whilst in a service led by the Moravians in London. Here one finds the essence of mysticism, the lodgement of one’s faith in an inner emotional experience.

beginning, Ignatius Loyola via his “spiritual exercises” had thrown himself wholesale into “inner light mysticism,” and this feature was henceforth stamped deeply on the face of the Jesuit order.

Fourth, was the presence of women, in the vanguard of “revival” leadership. “Women,” says Bebbington, “were numerous in the [early Wesleyan revivalist] movement.” And women out-numbered men by two to one in the statistics of converts for the Bristol Methodists of 1783, and in the famous “Cambuslang Revival” in Scotland in 1742. Bebbington continues: “In the proliferating cottage meetings of early evangelicalism it was often women who took the lead in prayer and praise, counsel and exhortation.”¹³

Women preachers had been espoused right from the early days of the Methodist revivals in England and America at least.¹⁴ In an age when women were expected to give social deference to men, the advancing of women into the pulpit as singers, exhorters, even as preachers, was something of a novelty, and an exciting novelty at that. Initially, during the first waves of Methodism the lack of male preachers prompted the pragmatic usage of women exhorters,¹⁵ and this with the presence of dominant numbers of women meant that they “exercised power in disproportionate numbers at all levels of organization.”¹⁶ Wesleyan Methodist women not only spoke and preached in the meetings, thereby intrinsically challenging authority, especially the authority of men, “but they often did so in loud, aggressive voices, with dramatic gestures that demonstrated an ‘unfeminine degree of boldness.’”¹⁷ Whereas biblically, and traditionally, “women were supposed to be timid and silent; Methodist [women] exhorters were neither.”¹⁸ Strange to tell, even that popular Calvinist figure of the eighteenth century, George Whitefield, approved of women preachers. Publicly, he “welcomed female preachers as co-pastors and targeted women as his primary support group.”¹⁹

Such women included some of the “powerful English noblewomen” most of whom amongst the Methodists “gravitated toward the Wesleyan Arminian

¹³Cf. Bebbington, *Op. cit.*, pp. 25ff.

¹⁴Cf. Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 156ff.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 158

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 161.

camp.”²⁰ One salient example is the notable Sarah Crosby, who from the 1760s conducted an itinerant ministry over twenty years and at times preached as many as four sermons a day. Whitefield and Wesley knew her and approved of her, and all this despite the fact that the woman had, previous to embarking on her ministry, been deserted by her unapproving husband.²¹

Their presence as such was guaranteed to electrify even further the emotional atmosphere of a revival meeting whether the organisers consciously intended it or not. At the time of the rise of revivalism in the eighteenth century, the first waves of Romanticism were beginning to affect society. Spreading from the continent to England, Romanticism was changing the attitude of ordinary folk toward marriage. Historians identify this period as “the crucial point of transition in which a new culture of romantic love began to replace traditional matrimony determined by community and parental involvement.” The result was that a definite parallel seemed to ensue between “being born again” as a religious experience, and “falling in love” as an erotic experience. A new discovery of female sexuality was emergent, colouring all of life and emotion. This set a whole societal ethos which spilled over subconsciously into the churches. Hymns and sermons began to dwell on “love” and the “experience of divine love” in what some witnesses of those times actually called “amorous” terms. Evangelicalism and its sibling, “revivalism,” were born in the womb of this social revolution.²²

In the Welsh revival of 1904-05 women were to be found as leading lights in the pulpit supporting the revivalist Evan Roberts. They were, for the most part, pretty women, fashionably dressed, with attractive personalities and who also had excellent talent as singers, indeed, as preachers!

This preponderance of women throughout revivalism is further evidence of the “romantic” roots of the revival movement, for by nature, they are much more deeply affected by the passionate, and the emotional, than are men, the latter tending to be more cerebral and reserved. The sexual imbalance found in revivalism is indicative therefore that something erotic or quasi-erotic was at work. Mass hysteria is a well-known phenomenon amongst large groups of women, particularly young

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161. Stout adumbrates briefly that “not surprisingly” there were marital problems amongst early Methodist leaders. John Wesley’s own marriage was a fiasco. How he continued, in defiance of Scripture, to officiate as a teaching elder in the churches is testimony to the loose attachment of these revivalists to the requirements of the divine Word whenever it so suited them.

²² There is some salient evidence, hinted at by Stout, that whilst Methodism publicly sublimated and suppressed open sexuality, the resultant repression of the natural urges already unnaturally inflamed by the new Romanticism actually spilled over into their religious ethos and expressions.

women. One has but to look carefully at the audience of a pop concert in the modern world to find this fact illustrated, where in such instances hundreds, sometimes thousands, of young women manifest utter abandonment to crazed emotions simply at the sight of one of their favourite male “pop” idols.²³ In fact, I have seen teenage girls and young women virtually swooning before a handsome evangelical evangelist, and the parallel with the pop star is disturbingly close. That such young women tend then to cluster around a revivalist is no wonder. And thence that numbers of young men are attracted is again, no wonder. It just happens to be so that young men are not nearly so prone to be swept away into emotional hystericism, and more likely to exercise a critical spirit. Hence lesser numbers of them are influenced by the tempest of revivalist fervour.

Fifth, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century came the theology and practice of that arch-Pelagian Charles Grandison Finney, with his “new measures.”²⁴ Finney organised the “anxious seat” method, in which new converts were exhorted to come to the front of the meeting and make profession of their faith, a practice that still characterises much of evangelicalism to this day. In addition, Finney was able to deploy certain personal characteristics he had developed, the virtually hypnotic stare, the sustained emotional harangue, and the branding of local ministers and elders as failures and hypocrites because their churches were (by Finney’s standard) “dead.” This contagious egocentric wrote voluminously, and his literature on “revival” amounted to being a manual of “how-to-do-it.” Fundamental to his teaching was the idea that God has given His Spirit to the Church like He gives sunshine and rain to the world, and if you do not have revival in your church it’s because you are not making use of the spiritual bounty God has given you. Application of the correct techniques therefore would indubitably produce revival. The candid nature of his pronouncements is a clear indicator that this whole “revival” business is indeed propagatable any

²³Consultation with anyone involved with theatre management will confirm that on the nights of “pop” concerts the wild antics of the largely young and feminine audience can be disturbing, with, we would say, disgusting and unmentionable consequences.

²⁴On Finney and his aberrations, see Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875* (USA: Evangelical Press, 1990). Further useful exposures of this high-horsed wonder can be found in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (USA: Baker, repr. 2000), vols. 7-8, which deal with “Perfectionism.” Warfield reveals that Finney himself came to admit that “the converts of my revivals are a disgrace to Christianity.” There were plenty of them, if Finney’s idolisers are telling the truth when they claim he converted some quarter million people every year for I don’t know how many years (I have seen 40 years in one claim!).

place, any time, by mere human intervention. And Finney proved it by doing it. But of course, his very “success” shouts loud that there is nothing divine about any of it.

Sixthly, from the 1870s onward in England the Keswick “Higher Life” movement began to gain an ever-increasing momentum. This movement was, let it be said, somewhat pelagianised right from the start, but give it its due, it did emphasize preaching, of a sort, at least. But it propagated the view that one can accept Christ as Saviour without accepting Him as Lord, and that most Christians of the day were only in the first category. Keswick preachers denominated such Christians as “carnal” Christians, and their ministry was to trumpet a call to holiness, in which the “carnal” Christian would move entirely by faith and not by “effort, conflict, or endeavour” into the “higher” and sanctified state in which he accepted Christ as Lord as well as Saviour.²⁵ This teaching stated that a second transitional crisis experience needed to be experienced. Earnest converts were urged to seek the post-conversion “sanctification” experience which came ultimately to be called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Reception of the Spirit pulled one up into the “higher life” zone of sanctification, and one might also thereby become empowered by the Spirit for service. Gathering ground, notwithstanding the discovery of its leading preacher being found out in a morally compromising situation with a young woman other than the one he was married to (strange kind of sanctification this), the Keswick movement was impelled world-wide by such renowned pulpiteers as F. B. Meyer of England, and from Wales itself, Rhys Bevan Jones, pastor of the 1000-seater Porth Baptist Tabernacle in the Rhondda Valley, and founder of the South Wales Bible College.²⁶ Through various personalities, including that of Jones and Meyer, Keswickism was deliberately spread into Wales in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The upshot was that in meetings where its ethos was paramount, large numbers of folk, especially the young, were exhorted to pray for reception of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The “experience meetings” became “seeking meetings,” and manifestations of the spirit were duly expected and reported. Whilst the Keswick men, like Meyer and Jones, would themselves never have countenanced the sidelining of preaching, what they were teaching was going to explode quite naturally

²⁵On Keswick as a factor in the emergent evangelical and revivalist tradition, see Bebbington, *Op. cit.*, chapter 5, “Holiness to the Lord.”

²⁶Now the South Wales Bible College at Bryntirion, Bridgend, run by the Evangelical Movement of Wales, who major on revivalism.

into a practice that would indubitably downgrade preaching, and even eclipse it altogether in the more extreme manifestations.²⁷

Seventh, and most regrettably, was the perversion of the sacred gospel. Paul is quite clear and unequivocal in his letter to the Galatians, that any departure from the strict content and application of the biblical gospel is “accursed.”²⁸ This is frightening language. And it is frightening to behold the gradual perverting of the gospel under the influences of Wesleyanism, revivalism, Keswickism, Modernism, and Arminianism. Eventually, through the middle years of the nineteenth century, these factors were to eclipse Calvinism altogether across most of the western world. Evangelicalism became a perversion of the gospel. This process began in the mid-eighteenth century, in that heady period of revivalism impelled by the emotional and histrionic preaching engendered principally by Methodism. A vitriolic insistence on universal atonement was logically bound to take the edge, at least, off the gospel of forensic atonement, and ultimately ruin it. Baxter, in the Puritan period of the seventeenth century, had initiated an assault on forensic atonement.²⁹ Law had continued it.³⁰ And John Wesley drank deeply from Baxter’s well of perversion, to the extent that Bebbington can say that Baxter was effectively Wesley’s mentor.³¹ In the eighteenth century therefore, a massive anti-Calvinistic trend was set by the Wesleyans, such that stalwart Calvinists of that period were slandered and labeled “hyper-Calvinists,” and this not just by the Wesleyan faction, but by a large phalanx of so-say Calvinists themselves.³² Bebbington says,

Evangelical Calvinism was also moderate in that it rejected stronger views of God’s control of human destiny ... Evangelicals generally

²⁷The influence of the Keswick “holiness” faction in Wales is usefully traced out in Brynmor P. Jones’ *Voices From the Welsh Revival* (Evangelical Press of Wales, 1995) which treats the effect of the holiness preachers on the 1904 revivalist Evan Roberts.

²⁸Cf. Galatians 1, esp. verses 8-9.

²⁹Cf. the recently published Ph.D thesis of James I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Paternoster, 2004).

³⁰Bebbington writes that Law “explicitly repudiated the idea that Christ suffered in our stead” (*Op. cit.*, pp. 15-16).

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 34-35. Bebbington refers to Nuttall’s researches that show “a tradition that runs from Richard Baxter in the mid-seventeenth century through Philip Doddridge in the early eighteenth to evangelicals ...” (p. 34).

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 63-65, under the heading “Moderate Calvinism.” Here Bebbington notes that there was a “certain reserve in their allegiance” to Calvinism on the part of certain Calvinist leaders like Jonathan Edwards, John Newton, and Andrew Fuller.

repudiated the traditional Calvinist doctrine of reprobation, that God had destined certain souls to hell. Instead [they held that] human beings were considered guilty of causing their own perdition by failing to respond to the gospel.³³

Again, those “Calvinists” who were on “the modern side” had, continues Bebbington, “a rationale for urgent evangelism, the so-called invitation system.”³⁴ Charles Simeon went so far as to say to John Wesley that there was no real difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. By 1815, Simeon could preach a sermon in Dublin “condemning the Calvinist system as ‘unfair and unscriptural.’”³⁵ And throughout the period of the eighteenth century revivals Whitefield, the Calvinist, was prepared to shut up and not preach on predestination, and he ever and anon accounted Wesley as a great man of God. Everywhere, Calvinism was being eroded away in England, a process that was eventually to be exported to Scotland and Wales, with most deleterious results in those countries.

Under this trend, the content of the Gospel sermon was changing, even in Calvinist Scotland. By the 1870s, Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall drew attention to this change in the gospel preaching when he noted that evangelists were by then dissociating the death of Christ from the person of Christ. Instead of “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” the new gospel was a proposition thus: “If you believe that Jesus died for you, you’ll be saved.” Of this novelty, says Kennedy:

To believe that Christ died for me, because He died for all, is to ‘believe a lie’; but even were it true, of what advantage could this faith be of to me? His dying for me, because for all, secures nothing to me. And to believe this, is something else that to believe in Christ Himself. It is in effect, making his death a substitute for Himself.³⁶

The Scriptures are clear and adamant. Saving faith believes that *Jesus is the Christ of God*. And not any “Jesus,” but only the Jesus revealed through Holy Writ. Until He is believed, it makes no coherent sense to believe “that He died for me.” For until I perceive, via Scripture, who Jesus is, and the excellency of His person, and His fitness to be the Christ, how can I possibly know the true

³³*Ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 64

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁶Cf. John Kennedy, *Man’s Relations to God* (James Begg Society, repr. 1995), p. 50.

Scriptural conviction of sin, and then go on to see Him as the only possible bearer of my sin?³⁷ But under the rush of modern evangelism, perverted by Arminian undertones, heralding of Jesus as the Christ of God is downplayed, and “save-a-soul” sermons are broadcast without proper explanation of who Christ is, what sin is, why Christ is the one true saviour, and so on. In other words, the Arminian gospel is a false gospel, an accursed gospel. And this is the gospel that was propounded fervently and with mass hysteria through the hurricane rush of the revival movements. Fanned with imaginative, impassioned preaching, emotional excess, and all the other accoutrements of the revivalist repertoire, converts could be manufactured en masse.

As the nineteenth century progressed, preaching of any kind began to take a less and less prominent part in revivals. The Second Evangelical Awakening began in the USA in 1858 in a prayer meeting. This revival swept across the USA and eventually leaped the Atlantic to find amenable hosts in Britain. Mass prayer meetings and hymn-singing were now coming to the fore, and the preaching all too often no more than a harangue or a series of exhortations. The theological mongrelization between Calvinist and Arminian was accelerated. In Wales, this revival was stirred up by a Welsh Wesleyan preacher newly returned from scenes of revival in the USA. Humphrey Rowland Jones quickly established Finneyistic practices in his itineration around the principality, and recruited as his right hand man, the Calvinistic Methodist Dafydd Morgan, who evidently could see nothing incongruous about a Calvinist cooperating with an Arminian to propagate a revival.³⁸ When this riot of fever-pitched excess had run its course, Morgan simply dropped back to being what he really was, a rather ordinary preacher with little depth to his theological repertoire. As for Jones, this Wesleyan Semi-Pelagian finally came right out with the full implications of a belief that he had some kind of apostolic anointing of the Spirit. Finding himself in the pulpit at Queen Street Methodist Church in Aberystwyth, he prophesied that the Holy Ghost would descend in bodily form near the town at such a time and date, and usher in the millennium. When the

³⁷Cf. John Owen, *Works* (Edinburgh: Banner, repr. 1968), vol. 10, pp. 314-316. Owen here specifically repudiates the idea that “the first thing which any one living under the means of grace is exhorted to believe [is] that Christ died for him in particular.”

³⁸For the course of these events in Wales in the years 1858-60, see the very sympathetic and supportive account given in Eifion Evans, *When He is Come*. Evans notes how Morgan experienced the necessary “baptism” of “power from on high” at 4. a.m. when he awoke, and, so he claimed, found himself “suddenly able to remember everything of a religious nature that I had ever learnt or heard.”

time and date passed without any sign of the Divine Paraclete, Jones evidently experienced some sort of breakdown, withdrew from the public light, and lapsed into obscurity.³⁹ The man was a blatant false prophet, and as such he is but an open case of what really lurks at the heart of all those evangelicals who imagine they carry the apostolic anointing of the Spirit ... the belief that they have a “hot-line” to God, and are direct recipients of supernatural revelation from Him. Such is the spirit that animates hymn-writing with its crass audacity to challenge the lyrics of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Psalms. Yet, for all this, Humphrey Rowland Jones is fondly and kindly remembered even by modern Welsh Calvinistic evangelicals as a true “revivalist” and “man of God.”

Strange to tell, that in the years immediately following this “revival,” the spiritual state of Wales, far from manifesting an abundance of strong preachers and strong churches, was stamped with apostasy from the truth. Through the influences of their greatest evangelicals of the day, like Lewis Edwards and his son, Thomas Charles Edwards, the virus of modern rationalism was eating deeply into the fabric of Welsh theology and Welsh preaching.⁴⁰ By the year 1887, Thomas Charles Edwards could write,

No doubt Calvinism, though it contains truth, is not the whole truth ... *There is none amongst us now that would not acknowledge that there is some measure of truth in Arminianism.*⁴¹

Far from filling the pulpits with stalwart defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints, the age saw a swelling stream of “modernists,” for whom Scripture was no more than the old lore of ancient tribes, a mass of contradictions stitched together and punctuated by a morass of unbelievable myths such as the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. Yet, even those who veered into this course could yet entertain a welcome for the notion of “revival!” Their modernist theology, of course, did not necessarily rule it out. Far from it, these pulpiteers were able to maintain a veneer of evangelicalism, because their method of interpretation of the Bible allowed them to regard the so-called Bible “myths” as conveying truth in a metaphorical sense, rather than in a literal. Suffused with “God-is-lovism” these purveyors of error yet believed in a God of some sort, and

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁰On the effects of Edwards father and son, and the rise of modern rationalistic theology in Wales, see John Aaron’s “Introduction” to Owen Thomas, *The Atonement Controversy in Welsh Theological Literature and Debate 1707-1841* (Great Britain: Banner, 2002).

⁴¹Quoted by John Aaron in *ibid.*, p. xxxvi; italics mine.

that He did, by His Spirit, mightily influence people in churches in various ways from time to time. And one of those ways was “revival.” And of course, the old “hywl” (a sort of powerful, emotional speech), being no more than a purely natural phenomenon, could be utilised, and was utilised, by modernist preachers as well as, and one might say, as effectively as, those preachers of the evangelical sort. Again, as we have seen above, in that both evangelicalism and modernism shared the same epistemological basis, that is “inner light mysticism,” the two factions had common foundations. In practice they tended to work together, and appreciate each other. Hence it was that not only Arminianism and Amyraldianism initially prevailed over Calvinism, but finally modernism prevailed mightily over all forms of evangelicalism.

One such modernist preacher, scholar and author, was J. Vyrnwy Morgan (DD), who, as it happens, was an important eyewitness and critic of the 1904-05 revival. He presented his critique of this revival to the public in a volume of some 280 pages in the year 1909, and an examination of this work indicates quite indubitably the curious blend of evangelical and modernist that could be found in Wales in those days.⁴² He exemplifies too, how one holding such theological views as his could yet be a believer in, and a supporter of, revival. Dr. Morgan was highly critical of the revival of 1904-05, yet he was not hostile to revival as such, for in his mind true revival was of that kind manifest in Wales in the past times of the earlier Calvinistic Methodist preachers. In short, he believed in revival as an effect of the correct kind of preaching. His own deviation on this issue was one of the first kind we isolated, one in which the deployment of the “hywl” and emotional oratory was viewed as being inspired by God. Morgan had spotted however, the incipient change-over to a totally new ethos, the modern revival he witnessed in 1904-05 was a manifestation of Finneyistic “new measures” and the use of means other than preaching to deliver the emotional “kick.” By this time, of course, the influence of the Methodist “experience” meetings was beginning to tell. Personal testimonies before the congregation became sensational highlights of the public revival meetings. Added to this the influence of Moody and Sankey had introduced choruses, subjectivistic “gospel” ditties, “sacred” solos, choirs, and high-power prayer meetings filled with mystical gravitas. Morgan saw all this, and discerned between two distinctly different revival theologies and

⁴²J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Welsh Religious Revival 1904-5: A Retrospect and a Criticism* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1909).

their praxis, rejecting forthrightly the later development.⁴³ For him this later development in revivalism was bogus, and in fact could be attributed to nothing more than natural sensationalism and emotion.

In adumbrating his view of these modern revivals Morgan tells his readers the amusing, but instructive story of one Knud Rasmussen, of the Danish Literary Expedition.⁴⁴ Rasmussen was born and raised in Greenland, a Danish protectorate. There, Rasmussen gained an “intimate knowledge of the manners, legends, and religious beliefs of the Eskimo[es].” Those people had at that time—a hundred years and more ago—their own kind of religion, somewhat primitive and vastly lacking in our Christian knowledge of the Divine. Yet they held to the existence of certain supernatural forces. Rasmussen “described a revival in Greenland; and the curious thing about it is, that it won over the Christian catechist to the native faith of the Eskimo.” The leaders (in this revival of the Eskimo religion) claimed “like the Welsh revivalist of 1904-05 to have seen visions, and to have had heavenly dreams ... the Eskimos also sang hymns, wept, and were seized with spasms of longing for eternal life ...”

Rasmussen continues,

When one or other of the disciples, without any reason whatever, wanted to weep, the whole gathering would break out into a terrible crying. And when suddenly some person in the assembly threw himself down on his face, and began to laugh, all the rest did the same. And sometimes they would laugh till one would think they could never be serious again ... the assembly would sometimes be seized with such a longing for eternal life that they would begin to jump up and down where they sat ...

The reader should keep the above description, of a revival of a pagan religion, well marked in his memory. He will encounter stranger things later in this series of articles. It is evident that one does not have to be an evangelical in order to believe in revivals. One can be a modernist. Or indeed, one can be an Eskimo. For our purposes, what is important here is that Morgan was a passionate believer that what to him was a “real revival” had been gathering pace in Wales for perhaps two years before the “outbreak” of 1904, that the subsequent world-acclaimed “outbreak” was false, and that it actually killed off the “real” revival.⁴⁵

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. xi-xiii.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 141.

This was an astute observation. Morgan noted that the revival tradition had bifurcated. We might say that whereas initially “revivalism” was a perversion of the Scriptural ordinance of preaching, this second development was a perversion of the perversion, and had taken a second and significant further step, a giant step, away from the controlling influence of Scripture. Morgan is right in seeing *two* “revival” traditions clash in the events of 1904-05, but wrong in believing that one of those traditions was true, and the other false. They were both false. How this turned out in that revival we shall (DV) examine in Part Three.

“JUMPERS, a designation applied to some Welsh religionists of the [eighteenth century] who introduced into their worship the practice of dancing and jumping. John Wesley wrote from Wales, “There is [at Lancroyes] what some call a great reformation in religion among the Methodists; but the case is really this: they have a sort of rustic dance in their public worship, which they call religious dancing, in imitation of David’s dancing before the ark” [June 27, 1763].

This practice started with the Welsh Methodists, and was confined to a small circle. It was at first simply one of the bodily manifestations which followed the fervent preaching of the Methodists. In favour of the more formal practice two passages were quoted, “David danced before the Lord with all his might ... Michal saw David leaping and dancing before the Lord” (II Sam. 6:14-16), and “Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy” (Luke 6:23).

William Williams [1717-1791], the [most] famous Welsh hymn-writer ... *advocated and adopted the practice*. The jumping usually followed the sermon, and was *preceded by the singing of a verse of some hymn, which was repeated again and again, sometimes forty or even more times*. The jumping was *accompanied with all kinds of gestures, and often lasted for hours* ... In the middle ages the sect called the Dancers indulged in the same odd religious rite; [as did] the Shakers” (Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* [1891], vol. 2, pp. 1214-1215; italics H. L. Williams).

Calvinistic Methodist, William Williams’ *Hosannah to the Son of David* (1759) and *Gloria in Excelsis* (1772) together contain 121 hymns. *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* “is now known or supposed to have been completed by him in 1773, from the beginnings of another Welsh evangelist, Peter Williams, who wrote the first stanza and part of the second somewhat earlier” (cf. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 2533).