

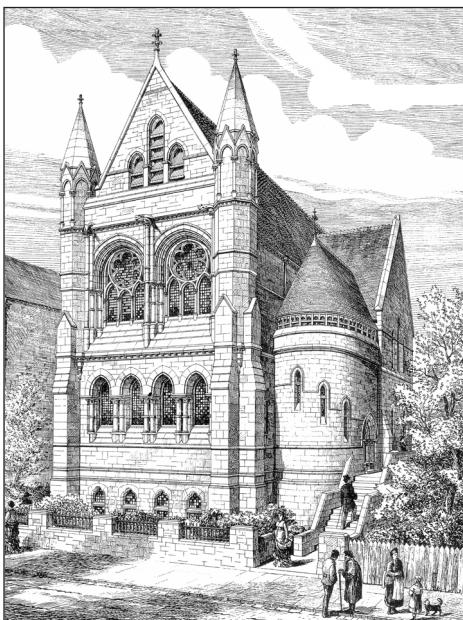


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The Revival in Cardiff

Rev. Noel Gibbard

The Revival broke out in parts of Wales without any links with west Wales, but many places were influenced by events in that area. It was from Newcastle Emlyn in Carmarthenshire that Evan Roberts returned to Loughor, followed later by two ladies from New Quay, Ceredigion. The people in Ammanford, Maesteg and Dowlais soon heard what was happening in that part of the country, and so, too, had a young girl from New Quay who was in domestic service in Cathedral Road, Cardiff. On Wednesday night, 16 November 1904, she took part in prayer at the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Pembroke Terrace (now Churchill Way). As she did so, the Spirit of God touched her heart and the congregation sensed a real presence of God. The Spirit that was working mightily in her home area was working quietly in Pembroke Terrace.



Methodist Chapel, Pembroke Terrace

Early days

Many in Cardiff had been expecting the Spirit of God to work in the city. Future revival leaders like William Edwards, Principal of the Baptist College in Cardiff, and R. B. Jones, Baptist minister in Porth, believed that the recent mission of Torrey and Alexander had prepared the way for greater blessing. The brothers John and Richard Cory, one a Baptist and the other a Wesleyan, enthusiastically supported the mission and prepared a free meal for visitors.

The prayer meeting in Pembroke Terrace chapel was a bridge between the mission and coming revival. During November also there was a renewed spirit of worship in Crwys Road Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel, many shedding sweet tears. On Sunday 20th of the month, Rev. H. M Hughes, minister of Ebenezer Welsh Congregational church, announced prayer meetings for the following week. They continued for a number of weeks and because of the enthusiastic response two meetings a day were held. On 27 November a number of the children of the Revival from the Valleys arrived in the city. One group went to Mount Stuart Congregational church and the other to Loudoun Square

Wesleyan church, arriving there at the close of the morning service. The deacons had already decided to hold a prayer meeting in the afternoon instead of the Sunday school. The visitors took part in that meeting and in the evening service. The worship was spontaneous; one would pray, and another would read the Scripture. Suddenly, someone gave out a hymn and the congregation joined in lustily. Communion was celebrated but this did not continue during the Revival services.

Other churches were experiencing a touch of the Spirit of God during November and the movement had gained momentum by the beginning of December. This is evident from reports sent to one of the Cardiff newspapers. These are examples from that report:

At Crwys Road chapel eighty converts were received into membership by Rev. H. G. Howell as a result of a month's mission. This is what John Pugh said of H. G. Howell: "I found him a veritable Stonewall Jackson, who stuck to his post morning and night, and who never gave up a position once he had his foot down."

At Heath Hall there were 9 new members and 24 inquirers, and Rev. John Thomas reported: "The revival has laid firm hold of the young people, and wonderful conversions are reported every week."

Ebenezer church reported: "Past week meetings afternoon and evening. Last Sunday morning prayer and praise", while Canton (CM) chapel stated: "[In one meeting] a lady took part for the first time; spirit of the meeting was transformed."

At Canton (Baptist) chapel, Rev. T. W. Medhurst preached on Acts 2:12, "And they were all amazed . . . saying . . . What meaneth this?" and Jerusalem (CM) chapel reported: "We had a church meeting last night the like of which we never had before."

Llandaff Road (Baptist) chapel had 10 new members and 41 inquirers, and stated: "We have had memorable times."

Windsor Place (Presbyterian) chapel observed: "No results as yet, but this is not surprising, having regard to the nature of the congregation, largely composed of Scotch people."

Roath (Bible Christian), Grangetown (Baptist), Albany road (Baptist) and Tredegarville (Baptist) had been influenced by the Revival and had received inquirers from the Torrey-Alexander Mission that had just been held in Cardiff.

Meetings

In a matter of weeks, Tabernacle Hayes, and Ebenezer Union Street, became two of the main Revival centres. They were conveniently placed for those coming from all directions, from the home countries and from overseas. A mixed multitude was present to witness the wonderful works of God at Tabernacle, according to one correspondent:

"There were almost as many nationalities as on the day of Pentecost, English, Irish, Scotch, Welsh, Jews, French, Swedes, Greeks, Italians, negroes and mulattoes, soldiers in uniform, civic dignitaries, learned professors, ministers of the Gospel, wealthy merchants, noted journalists - surely St Peter himself hardly looked out on a stranger or more varied throng."

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Many nationalities and persons from all classes of society were brought together through the movement of the Spirit.

Tabernacle and Ebenezer were Welsh language churches, and the language could be predominant in many of the meetings that were held there. The Welsh singing especially appealed to the visitors in spite of the fact that they did not understand the language. English only services were held, in Wood Street (English Congregational) for example, and both languages were used in many meetings. In Tabernacle itself there were prominent men that were active in the Revival and there is no doubt that this was a great help to the spread of the movement in Cardiff. They were able to give the lead to the people generally. Some of the men were Charles Davies, the minister of Tabernacle; William Edwards, Principal of the Baptist College when it was in Haverfordwest, when it moved to Pontypool and when it came to Cardiff in 1893. Charles Davies was born in Llwynhendy, Llanelli, and was a noted preacher, reference being made to his 'passionate evangelicalism'. Edward Thomas is a most interesting character. He was an outstanding public figure, member of all kinds of committees, religious, educational, political and cultural. He was a man that read his Bible regularly and rejoiced at the coming of the Revival, especially 'pan fyddai Magdaleniad yn dod at draed y Gwaredwr' (when Magdaleniad came to the feet of the Saviour).

All ages were also present in the meetings, not forgetting the children. One Saturday afternoon in Tabernacle a children's service was held, that is, the children taking responsibility for the meeting. Very often a child's prayer or testimony could deeply move a congregation. In Wood Street, a young lad got up to speak and quoted Scriptures clearly and fluently, rejoicing that he had been able to speak to so many concerning their salvation.

Singing was one of the obvious characteristics of the Revival. Congregations and soloists made use of the old Welsh hymns and the more recent hymns from Sankey. The favourite soloist in Cardiff was the fifteen-year-old Annie May Rees, daughter of a phrenologist in Llanelli, but she was a member in Libanus, Gorseinon. Very often she sang 'Dyma Feibl annwyl Iesu' (Here's the dear Bible of Jesus) to the tune 'The last rose of summer'. In one meeting at Ebenezer, Mary Davies, Gorseinon, and May John, from the Rhondda joined her. The same week Annie May Rees went to Wood Street where there was a congregation of 2,500. This meeting was in English and the correspondent added the comment 'That is, Cardiff English'. On another occasion in Tabernacle, when Annie May Rees was present, a separate meeting was taking place on the gallery. Professor Davies, Rev. Lae and Ifano Jones (Librarian) were having a 'spirited debate' with a few atheists. According to one report one or two of them professed conversion.



Rev. R. B. Jones, Porth

Dewi Michael, from Cilgerran, Ceredigion, and John Devonald took part as soloists. Devonald was a member of the Treorchy Male Voice Choir. He took part in a baptismal service in Tabernacle. After the usual time of singing, Charles Davies preached on "If you love me keep my commandments" [John 14:15]. Ten candidates were baptized and the meeting continued for another hour. Glenelg Grant was another person that contributed musically to the Revival. His choir would take part in meetings.

Visiting preachers helped to further the Revival. Campbell Morgan visited Roath Wesleyan church. Not only was he a help in Wales, but he returned to relate the story in London, and crossed to America where he shared the experiences of the Revival. R. B. Jones, Porth, the preacher of the holiness of God, made his contribution, and Cardiff was the home of Seth Joshua. He was away for long periods but when he would come back to Cardiff, he attended the meetings and preached occasionally. For example he refers to a meeting that was held in Canton: "Tonight I visited Salem Welsh Church, Canton. Some were church members without assurance. It was a blessed meeting and several came out for Christ."

Arrangements were made for the visit of Sidney Evans and Sam Jenkins. Sidney Evans was from Gorseinon (born in Morriston). He was with Evan Roberts at Newcastle Emlyn and later married Mary, Evan Roberts' sister. Sam Jenkins was a member in Trinity (Calvinistic Methodist) Llanelli and met Evan Roberts at Loughor on 12 November 1904. In December they came together to begin their journeys through Wales. A committee, chaired by William Edwards with Thomas Hughes, minister of Minny Street (Welsh Congregational) as secretary, prepared the way for the visit. Meetings were held at Tabernacle, Ebenezer and Severn Road. The popular hymns at Ebenezer were 'Diolch Iddo' (Praise him), 'I Galfaria trof fy wyneb' (I turn my face to Calvary) and 'Guide me O thou great Jehovah'. Sam Jenkins thrilled the congregation with 'Saving a rebel like me' and Sidney Evans' theme was 'Looking to Jesus'.

Denominations

Numerous denominations were involved in the Revival: Calvinistic Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, Salvation Army, the Anglican Church and the Quakers. It is no surprise that the Quakers are included. They had an evangelical wing at home and also abroad in Brittany and Madagascar. In Cardiff they held meetings in Charles Street after their usual services. A welcome visitor was John Owen Jenkins (1856-1944), from Pen-y-bont, Radnorshire. He was a leading public figure in the county, a county councillor, president of the Agricultural Show and member of the Court of the University of Wales. Like Evan Roberts, Jenkins emphasized obedience to the Holy Spirit. If He prompted them to rejoice, then they should do so.

Within the Diocese of Llandaff there was much revival activity in Rhymney, Blaenavon, Treherbert, Caerphilly and Cardiff. A team of missionaries arrived at St David's, Cardiff, early in 1905. It included the Vicar of Skewen and Canon Camber Williams. The Vicar joined with Nonconformists in Revival services in Skewen and his own church was also greatly blessed. Camber Williams was the Home Missioner for the Diocese of St David's and was holding services in west Wales before November 1904.

Camber Williams was prominent in meetings during the Revival. He would combine the set liturgy of the Church of England with a time of open worship and introduced popular Revival hymns to the meetings. Sometimes the set part would be forgotten because of the intensity of the emotion. That happened after the Third Collect in one of the meetings, when the hymn 'Cof am y cyflawn Iesu' (Remembrance of the righteous Jesus) was sung and the spirit of praise gripped the whole congregation. One of the missionaries started preaching on the text 'Why do you halt between two minds?' [1 Kings 18:21] but the singing started again with 'A welsoch chwi Ef?' (Have you seen Him?). When the singing finished the missioner continued with his sermon, but not the one based on the original text, rather a message based on the hymn concentrating on the theme of the cross. The following evening there was more appeal to the mind, but the warmth of the previous night was lacking.

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Crowd problem

Numbers could create problems in many ways. It is known that 700 professed conversion during the Revival in Cardiff. Those within reach were visited, given a New Testament each and if they were not linked to a church were urged to do so; 100 were received into membership at Tabernacle, and they can be accounted for, but there is little information as to what happened to the other 600. Some were from other churches, some with no church connection and many were from outside Cardiff. It is known that Tredegarville (Baptist) were careful in receiving members, stating: "We do not admit members rapidly into our church fellowship, but take a little time and examine and test the candidates." Other churches in Cardiff were not so careful in receiving candidates into membership and this was also true of other parts of Wales.

Crowds could create problems during processions and during services. Opponents of the Revival would interrupt the singing while the children of the Revival were holding an open-air service or marching the streets. Some of the Christian workers met with a number of drunkards in Canton. They persuaded one of them to attend the meeting being held in Salem. They half carried him to the chapel, but his friends got angry and followed the company, shouting at the revivalists. Inside the chapel they got hold of copies of Scriptures and threw them at the worshippers. During a meeting in the Theatre Royal two men got up to leave, but were asked, politely, to remain until the singing started. They expressed their disapproval by getting hold of the steward by the neck. During the scuffle, one of them ran out, but the steward managed to hold the other one down until the police arrived. There are examples of physical opposition in other parts of Wales as well.

Response to need within and outside the Church

Attempts were made to meet with the needs of converts. Charles Davies emphasized the importance of the Bible that provided food for the newly born babies. A Bible study was commenced at Roath church and an interdenominational group met in the YMCA. Down on the Docks John and Richard Cory held prayer meetings and Bible studies and John Cory would give a pocket Bible to each one that registered for the study. Christian Endeavour meetings were revived and new branches opened. At Wood Street the numbers were doubled during the Revival and a new branch was established at the Primitive Methodist church, Roath.

There was disagreement in Cardiff concerning the 'Institutional Church'. A number had been established in England, especially in Sunderland and Nottingham. The minister of the English Congregational church in Caerphilly had spent some time in Sunderland, and influenced by what he had seen there, formed an 'Institutional Church' in Caerphilly. The aim was to unite the emphasis on personal salvation and the emphasis on social activity. God's love is made known in the reconciliation between man and God but that love must be active in society. It was emphasized that social action should be grounded in worship. A suggested programme for such a church was Bible study, games, time for reading, physical recreation and music. Sir Alfred Thomas, MP, a member in Tabernacle, Cardiff, supported the venture at Caerphilly. On the other hand, Charles Davies and William Edwards were wary of anything that they thought would threaten the place of study, prayer and worship.

The Revival made missionaries of believers. They were always ready to give reason for the hope that they had. Individuals and groups also ventured out as evangelists and a good number of both individuals and groups left Cardiff for districts in England, Scotland and Ireland. Most of them went to Scotland and included among the leaders was

'Awstin' who was responsible for reporting the Revival in the "Western Mail". Lilian Edwards, daughter of William Edwards of the Baptist College, acknowledged her debt to the Revival and it was one of the influences that led her to work with the Baptist Missionary Society in India. Caradoc Jones of Rhos, Wrexham, was greatly blessed in the Revival. In 1907 he commenced his ministry in Gabalfa Church, but he had a burning desire to go to Brittany. The opportunity came in 1920 and he worked there for forty years. He was forty-five years of age when he left the first time. After a period of internment during the war he returned to Brittany in 1946, at the age of seventy.

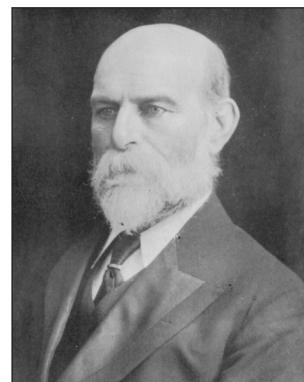
Many individuals and churches were conscious of the need in society in general. The Revival made them outward looking. William Edwards and his wife attended to this work enthusiastically. Mrs. Edwards was a gifted person, an able speaker and singer, prominent in the public life of the city. She marshalled the forces in Tabernacle. She arranged for workers to visit homes in the area and made appeals for help. On one occasion she received a sack of potatoes, a sack of peas, different kinds of food and five pounds in money. A good and easy way of helping those in need was to provide soup for them. Mrs. Edwards made the arrangements, workers would come with their jugs and take the soup to those that needed it. The children were remembered and for a period hundreds of them received help in this way. On one occasion as much as twenty-eight gallons of soup was distributed.

William Edwards, his wife and others were grieved that a number of men and women were walking the streets, many of them without a home. A wandering, shabby looking man attended a meeting in Tabernacle, a meeting that was the means of his conversion. His inner man was adorned by grace, but William Edwards believed that the person should look well, outwardly. The Principal gave him one of his suits to clothe him. The Principal would also on occasions set aside a room in the College, where someone could sleep before moving on to another place.

It was more difficult to deal with the prostitutes of the city. Many of them attended Revival meetings, but even if they professed conversion it was almost impossible to find a home for them. The Christian workers eventually succeeded in finding room for six of the converted prostitutes. The Forward Movement workers in Cardiff had new opportunities during the Revival. The Movement had already been discussing the need for a rescue home in the city, and their dream was realized during the Revival. According to a report of the Women's Branch of the Forward Movement:

"The present religious revival had brought the churches face to face with an important social problem. In Cardiff alone there were 2,000 to 3,000 fallen women. Fifteen of these were brought into a revival meeting a few months ago. Shelter was sought for them for the night, but only two could be taken in, and those in the Salvation Army shelter."

Something had to be done quickly. On 30 November 1905 a Rescue Home, named 'Treborth', was opened in Grangetown and later moved to Cowbridge Road. It was



William Edwards,
Principal of the Baptist College

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named Treborth in thanks for the support of Mrs. Davies, Treborth, Menai Bridge, who supported the venture. She contributed two sums of money to the work, one of forty pounds and another worth two hundred pounds.

Mrs Tydfil Thomas, wife of the Rev. John Thomas of the Forwards Movement, was the efficient secretary. She was the daughter of "Ael-y-brynn", Dowlais and sister to J. Young Evans, Trefeca College. The father and mother had welcomed Evan Roberts to Dowlais during his visit in January 1905. Two sisters of the Forward Movement and a matron were appointed. At the end of two and a half years the secretary was able to report that "63 girls had in all been resident for some years in the Grangetown Treborth Preventive Home. Some are doing well in service; others had been placed in other homes and some had been restored to friends."

The Temperance Movement benefitted from the Revival. Within the churches there was a change of attitude concerning fermented wine. A few years before the Revival, Tabernacle church had refused to use non-fermented wine, but one Sunday morning in January 1905, Alfred Thomas, MP, proposed that they should do so and no one opposed the motion. The Revival had an impact on the life of the city generally. There was a decrease in the number of prosecutions for drunkenness in Cardiff before 1904, but the Revival confirmed that trend. In Glamorgan County as a whole there was a decrease from 1904 to 1907. There were twenty-two fewer Beer and Alehouses in the city in 1909 than in 1903. There is no doubt that the Revival had a beneficial influence but it is also known that the customers were returning slowly to the public houses by the middle of 1905.

Education also demanded the attention of the Revival leaders. The burning issue was the Education Act of 1902 that demanded Nonconformist financial support for Church of England schools. Bitter arguments and heated meetings took place throughout the whole of Wales. Among the leaders of the opposition in Cardiff were William Edwards and Charles Davies, Edward Thomas (Baptists), H. M Hughes (Congregationalist) and Richard Cory (Wesleyan). Three of them took part in a 'Passive Resisters' Meeting in early May 1905. William Edwards led in prayer and H. M. Hughes and Richard Cory were among the speakers. Richard Cory declared defiantly that he would resist to the last, even if he had to sell his goods.

Lloyd George came in early June to address representatives from the whole of the county. Two meetings were held, one chaired by Alfred Thomas, MP and the other by Edward Thomas (Cochfarf). Two other Cardiff men took part, William Edwards and J. Morgan Jones, minister of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church in Pembroke Terrace. In Cardiff, as in other parts of Wales, the enthusiasm of the Revival meetings was carried into educational and political meetings. Lloyd George believed that the Revival 'is a great factor in this crisis' and one historian was of the opinion that the Revival had a 'profound' influence on social issues. 'Profound' is too strong a word, but there is no doubt that the influence of the Revival was felt in society.

Revival leaders had to face the challenge of socialism. Many of them, politically, were Liberals, and Liberal principles joined with Christian convictions made them critical of this new teaching. A minority did support the Independent Labour Party as it claimed to be based on Christian principles. The majority, however, were critical. William Edwards acknowledged the good intentions of the socialists and he himself argued for better living conditions in the city. It was good to give soup to the needy but there was need also to get rid of the slums, but socialism was not the answer. According to William Edwards: 'It confuses cold,

stiff, ecclesiasticism with the Gospel of Christ, and the denial of the Labour's legitimate aspirations with the creed of Christianity'.

Comments

Many characteristics of the Revival were common to Cardiff and other parts of Wales. They included a sense of the presence of God, within and outside the church, and numerous conversions that restored the emphasis on the new birth and assurance. Throughout the country there was enthusiastic congregational singing and the soloist had a prominent part in the meetings.

In Cardiff itself there was a remarkably high number of visitors. It is surprising how many found their way to Bala and Llanerchymedd but there was a concentration of people in Cardiff, which helped the Revival and also created problems at the same time. The opposition could be physical at times.



Queen Street, Cardiff, on a Sunday morning in 1904.

Being a large city and port, Cardiff could influence a wide area, in terms of receiving visitors and also through those that left Cardiff for other countries. One person commented that "to move Cardiff is to move the world". That was true industrially because so many countries were provided with goods from Cardiff. It was also true spiritually.

Cardiff in south Wales and Rhos in north Wales are the two outstanding examples of social activity during the Revival. Many were clothed and fed and the children were cared for in many ways. It is a pity that this work did not continue. Many children of the Revival were reluctant to think of any need apart from that of personal salvation. Consequently, the social emphasis was left to the theological liberals and their social gospel. The children of the Revival in many places missed an opportunity to create an evangelical social programme.

Cardiff was most fortunate in its leaders. Many of them were prominent public figures. They were within the church and respected by the people. When we think of the present situation there is a marked contrast. Many of the leaders are outside the church and within the minority group in the churches there is very little desire for revival. It will be interesting to see what happens in the churches after the present celebrations have come to an end.

Lastly we make the point that Evan Roberts never visited Cardiff, but there was revival in the city. The media has given much attention to him. The place of others in the Revival has been acknowledged but no real attention given to them. We must not be sidetracked by discussions concerning Evan Roberts. God is still able to revive His church. He knows how and when, but we do pray for Him to visit us.

(Transcribed from an address given on 11 October 2004)