



REMEMBERING 1904-05

The International Impact of the Welsh Revival

Rev. Noel Gibbard

The revival of 1904-5 was a worldwide movement. It had a tremendous influence in countries like India, Madagascar and Scotland. France and Germany benefited from the revival but not to the same extent as those three countries. In Korea, the Welsh Awakening strengthened the revival that they were already experiencing in that country.

The revival spread in many different ways:

1. Visitors to and from Wales played an important part, for example
 - a) Visitors came to Wales like doves to the window. As many as ten nationalities could be present in one meeting.
 - b) Revival children visited other countries, especially Scotland. A few went to France and Germany.
2. Missionaries were instruments of revival as in Madagascar and India.
3. The Theological Colleges like those in Wales and Spurgeon's in London.
4. The Press reports, for example, in the 'Western Mail', and 'Evening Express' were often by reporters who were zealous for the revival, including Elfed (the hymn writer), 'Awstin' and Jessie Penn-Lewis.
5. Correspondence about the revival was important for Welsh communities in London, USA and Patagonia.
6. Prayer was a vital factor. In Wales, there was prayer for other countries. In other countries, there was prayer for Wales.

Three examples are taken to illustrate the worldwide impact of the revival. The three are the work of Joseph Kemp in Charlotte Chapel, Rose Street, Edinburgh, Scotland; the work of William Fetler in Russia and Poland, and the work of J. Pengwern Jones in India.

Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh

One of the main centres of revival was Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh. The church had greatly benefited from the revival of 1859 and the visit of D. L. Moody in 1873, but by 1901 the situation had changed completely. There were just over a hundred members on the church roll and less than half of those attended the services. Many, even within the church, believed that it was a lost cause. A businessman offered to buy the building in order to turn it into a warehouse, but the faithful members turned down the offer. They decided to act by faith and call a minister.

When members of Charlotte Chapel were considering their future, a group of Baptists were meeting in the chapel to discuss denominational matters. During the discussions a reference was made to Charlotte Chapel. One of the ministers, Joseph Kemp of Hawick, prayed quietly God's mercy on the man that would go there as minister. It was Joseph Kemp himself that received the call and he accepted it. He moved from a well established church to face the challenge at Rose Street, and started his ministry in 1902. He worked so hard that by the beginning of 1905 the church advised him to take a holiday.

He went to Bournemouth, but he was only there for two days because he had heard of the revival in Wales. He hurried there like the hart panting for the waters. During the fortnight that he spent there, Joseph Kemp noted a number of things that became very significant to him. He realized the utter need to depend on the Holy Spirit and not to be man-centred in Christian work; the Spirit is able to transform congregational singing as well as preaching. Never before had he heard such singing:

"In Wales I saw the people had learned to sing in a way which to me was new. I never heard such singing as theirs. They sang such old familiar hymns as 'When I survey the wondrous Cross', 'There is a fountain filled with blood' and 'I need Thee, oh, I need Thee'. They needed no organist or choir or leader. The Holy Ghost was in their singing as much as in any other exercise."

He was delighted to share in the joy of the gospel and was never tired of hearing of Calvary.

Joseph Kemp made many friends in Wales. One of them was J. J. Thomas of Maesteg, south Wales and he went with Joseph Kemp when he returned to Edinburgh. They were welcomed warmly on their arrival, and immediately arrangements were made to hear their reports and to discuss the way to promote revival. Three conferences were held at the chapel. The first took place on 22 January 1905, and the other speakers, apart from Joseph Kemp and J. J. Thomas, were John Anderson, Glasgow, Robertson, Carrubber's Mission, Edinburgh and Peter Fleming, Duncan Street, Edinburgh. The meeting lasted from 3.30pm until after midnight. In the conference on 25 February 1905, Joseph Kemp concentrated on the characteristics of the revival in Wales, elaborating on what he had said before. He drew attention to the reality of God's presence, the spontaneous prayer and singing, the sincerity of the confessions, especially those that mentioned reconciliation between estranged parties. The conferences were held in Charlotte Chapel, but were open to those out side, and many did come, especially a zealous group from Leith.

The Spirit of God came in like a flood to Charlotte Chapel. During a period of six months a hundred and twenty-five were added to the church. A notable service was held on 16 March 1905 when ten candidates were baptized. The minister made an appeal for others to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord, and fifty persons responded immediately.

J. J. Thomas settled down well in Scotland. He was active in the meetings in Charlotte chapel, and in March accompanied Joseph Kemp to Hawick. Joseph Kemp's successor was D. M'Nicol, and, like Kemp and others, had been to Wales. The minister of Charlotte Street only stayed for a short while but J. J. Thomas stayed for a number of weeks. Back in Edinburgh, J. J. Thomas met a lady from Cardiff. She was Lilian Edwards, daughter of William Edwards, Principal of the Baptist College in Cardiff. She was training to be a missionary in India. Both J. J. Thomas and Lilian Edwards were glad to welcome a group of evangelists from Wales, led

REMEMBERING 1904-05

by Thomas Davies (Awstin) the revival correspondent of the 'Western Mail'. Awstin related the story of the revival at Charlotte Chapel and Ebenezer, Leith, whose minister, J. D. Roberts had attended revival meetings in Wales. The president of the United Free Church invited Awstin and his team to breakfast. On the following Monday most of them were responsible for meetings in Edinburgh, but a few went on to Breckenbridge and Leven Valley.

The fire kept burning at Charlotte Chapel during 1905, 1906 and into 1907, fiercely at times. According to the pastor's wife: "In 1906 the movement seemed to have found its level, and arrangements were made to re-organise the work on generally accepted church lines". On the last night of 1906 the Spirit came down powerfully once again:

"There was nothing, humanly speaking, to account for what happened. Quite suddenly, upon one and another, came an overwhelming sense of the reality and awfulness of His presence, and of eternal things. Life, death, and eternity seemed suddenly laid bare. Prayer and weeping began, and gained in intensity every moment. Soon separate sounds were indistinguishable; and as on the day of the laying of the foundation of the second temple, 'the people could not discern the noise of the shouts of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people' (Ezra 3:15). As midnight was approaching: 'Crushed, broken, and penitent on account of the defeated past, many of us again knelt at the Cross; and as the bells rang in the New Year, we vowed by God's grace to press into our lives more service for Him, to be more like Him in spirit, and walk, and win to Him our fellow-men'. Apart from the usual prayer meetings, periods of prayer were arranged, one of them lasting from 10 o'clock at night until 8 o'clock in the morning."

Joseph Kemp pinpointed three aspects of the revival:

1. A deep conviction of sin, even when the outward life appeared blameless. "Nothing has been so remarkable as the searching of heart and the revealing of the 'hidden things'. Many things thought to be right have been seen to be wrong and sinful."
2. Another feature was the prolonged intercession sometimes for hours. "Our usual seven o'clock prayer meeting, held every Lord's Day morning, has for several weeks commenced at six o'clock and continued until eight o'clock. The 5.45 p.m. meeting starts at 5.30, and such has been the power of God in the meetings that it has been impossible to get to the open air at the usual hour, the Upper Vestry and the Pastor's Vestry and the Library all crowded with praying people. Then again at 9.30 p.m. after the Lord's Day work is over, about sixty have met for prayer, and continued until after midnight. Here we have learned something of what Wales experienced of prolonged prayer meetings."
3. The third marked feature was the new spontaneity and power of the Prayer Meetings. "There is no necessity to ask any one to 'improve the time'. The stream of prayer flows on unhindered. Many who never prayed in public before have found it easy to speak to God in the presence of others. To be in such prayer meetings is a privilege of a lifetime."

Joseph Kemp could also point to the marked increase in the Bible School. When it started, just before the revival, only seven people attended, but by the middle of 1906 the attendance was two hundred and twenty two. The number of new members increased rapidly: 1902 - 96; 1903 - 117; 1904 - 134; 1905 - 175; 1906 - 120, making a total of 609 members.

William Fetler and Russia

Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis arrived in Russia in 1897, when snow was all around and state police were eyeing her closely. She took her first meeting the night after her arrival, in a large ex-ballroom in the home of Princess Lieven. She was one of many aristocrats that were experiencing a spiritual quickening during this time.

Ten years later, that is, in 1907, another person was present in that ex-ballroom, in the home of Princess Lieven. He was William Fetler, and in a remarkably short time he was known as the 'Spurgeon of Russia'.

William Fetler was born in Talsen in 1883, the son of a Baptist pastor. After leaving High School, William found work as an interpreter and then became a bookkeeper in Riga, Latvia. He had a flair for languages, as is evident from the fact that he mastered seven languages and he could speak four of them fluently. After his conversion he had a desire to preach and entered Spurgeon's College in London. There were at least six Welsh students at the College during his stay, one from north Wales (Caradoc Jones), and five from south Wales. All of them knew Fetler but Caradoc Jones was a close friend. All six students went home during the Christmas vacation (1904), having already heard and read of the revival in Wales. They became involved in revival meetings, especially Caradoc Jones in the north and Christopher Davies in the Swansea Valley, south Wales.

The students were followed by a group from the College and the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It included Thomas Spurgeon, pastor, Dr McCaig, the Principal of the College and two deacons from the church. They attended meetings at Morriston on 29 and 30 December, and other meetings in Swansea during the early days of 1905. The Morriston meeting was held in Tabernacle, seating 1,500, but that was only one third of the number that wanted to enter. Dr McCaig met Evan Roberts and asked him for a message for the students, and his reply was "Tell them to live near to God. That is the best life - near to God." William Fetler was also present in some of the revival meetings in Wales. It is not clear whether he came with the students for the vacation or with the McCaig group, but there is no doubt that he visited Wales. He was present in a meeting in Tabernacle, Hayes, Cardiff, and took part during the service. Charles Davies, the minister, was amazed at what he heard. Fetler became a friend of Evan Roberts and the visits had a lasting effect on him, "He was never the same afterwards, his great burden being that God would send revival to Latvia and Russia."

The reports from Wales made a deep impression on Spurgeon's College and Metropolitan Tabernacle, as the students of the College and the congregation at the Tabernacle were renewed spiritually, and were stirred to take the Gospel to others. Two missions were held one in April-May and the other during August 1905. Such was the power of God's Spirit in these meetings that reports referred to the 'Revival at Spurgeons.' The Welsh students contributed to the meetings in speaking and witnessing, while four of them formed a quartet to bear witness to the Gospel in song. During a period of a few months 745 conversions were recorded. A feature of these meetings was the march through the streets of London.



William Fetter

REMEMBERING 1904-05

On his arrival at St Petersburg (Leningrad), Fetler was welcomed by Princess Lieven, Baron Nicolay, Madam Tchertkoff and other believers. Meetings were still held in the ex-ballroom and Fetler was glad that there was continuing welcome for the Gospel in high places. He took charge of a small Lettish cause, holding Sunday services. William Fetler was also fully occupied during the week. Within a few months he and his people were looking for a larger hall to hold their services.

There was an emphasis on teaching and preaching, that was described as 'impassioned' and his enthusiasm 'infectious'. As an able linguist, Fetler could preach in many languages. On a Sunday he could preach in Lettish in the morning, and if an English message were given he would interpret. In the evening he could preach in Russian, and could also act as an interpreter for a German preacher. The Russians thronged to the meetings: "The men will stand patiently in long rows in the narrow aisles of his meeting-places for hours, block up the doorway and fill the ante-rooms in their earnest enjoyment of these means of grace so novel to them." Spectacular progress was made. Six hundred persons were baptized during a period of a few months, and in Rostoff twenty-five were baptized each Sunday for a period of weeks.

The prayer-halls were a dynamic influence on the religious life of Russia. They were, usually, cottages, huts or sheds, apart from a few more comfortable places on privately owned estates, and houses in the large cities. A typical prayer-hall was described:

"[It] is without ceiling. The floor is of bare earth, trodden hard by many feet through the lapse of many long years, and worn into humps and hollows. The walls are lime washed and destitute of decoration or adornment. There are rough wooden benches around and across the room. The place is usually packed to suffocation with men, women and children crowded on the seats, thronging the doorways."

The places would be scrupulously clean, and would be without icons and vodka.

Meetings had to be registered, but many groups were unwilling to follow this procedure. Those registered were under the jurisdiction of the representative of the State, while the unregistered groups were under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod, which controlled the Russian State Church. Between 1905 and 1910 one diocese had one hundred and eighty-four prayer halls, with only twelve of them licensed, while another diocese had sixty-five halls, with only five registered. The ecclesiastical authority worked hand in hand with the police, and harassed and persecuted the believers: "Women with babies in their arms were dragged from such gatherings and thrust into rough prisons, while others were heavily fined for being present."

As one of the main leaders of the Baptist work, William Fetler was continually persecuted and prosecuted. He did, however, have permission to go to America, on the condition of a bail of £500 and that he would appear in court whenever called upon. This was a huge sum, but friends in Russia and England succeeded in raising the money. He called in London on the way, and also on his return journey, when he was warmly welcomed at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The main purpose of his visit to America was to raise money for the New Tabernacle in St. Petersburg, or, as the believers called it, the 'Gospel House'.

A plan had been drawn for a massive building, holding 2,500 people. It had a three-tier stage: the pulpit in front; then the baptistry and the space behind filled by a large coloured window, with the text, 'He that believes in Me has everlasting life.'

The giving towards the building was quite remarkable:

"There were gold and silver brooches and bracelets, silver teaspoons, civil and military decorations in cases, medals and crosses. An assortment of gold rings of design never seen in England, two plain wedding-rings, a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, a quaintly engraved silver belt-buckle from Caucasus, three beautiful silver drinking-cups, and a silver cigarette case and holder."

Also included were neck-chains and a gift from a widow of sixty oil paintings by a well-known Russian artist, Yasnoksky. It was opened 7 January 1912, but the persecution of believers continued.

Fetler turned his attention to Poland and there began a new chapter in the relationship between Russia/Poland and Wales. Arthur Harris and J. C. Williams, both from Wales, joined the Russian Missionary Society. Two other Welsh persons followed them, David Thomas Griffiths, Pen-y-groes and Sally Evans, Cross Hands. They responded to the call to Russia as a result of William Fetler's visit to Llanelli in 1921. He arrived there from Porth, where he had visited the Rev. R. B. Jones, founder of the Bible Institute in that place and a strong supporter of the Russian Missionary Society. The couple got married and left for Baranovitchi, Poland, to work with the Russian Missionary Society. Arianwen Jones from the Rhondda joined the married couple.

The three of them worked with S. K. Hine, who translated 'How great thou art' from the Russian. They also spent some time together in Berlin, and took part in long meetings led by William Fetler. S. K. Hine refers to such a meeting:

"In between these long meetings Mr and Mrs Griffiths, Miss Arianwen Jones (a strong Welsh soprano) and I sang as a vigorous quartet at Mr Fetler's meetings in the Whiemstrasse YMCA. We had lessons in Russian grammar and diction, invaluable in later years."

The two couples, the Griffithses and the Hines, left the Russian Missionary Society in 1923 to work under the auspices of the Open Brethren. Arianwen Jones continued with the Mission and worked in Poland. They kept in touch with R. B. Jones, who was invited to Riga and arranged for students from Russia and Poland to join his Bible Institute. One of them was Jacob Vagar, an ex-army officer who became an evangelist. During a period of disillusionment with life he had found a New Testament in the bottom of a trunk and the reading of it led to his conversion. He returned from Porth to work in Odessa.

William Fetler was a convinced Baptist but he had sympathy with the new Pentecostal movement. He visited the Apostolic Church in Pen-y-groes in 1933 and 1935. During his first visit he took part in the opening of the Bible School and during the second visit addressed the International Convention. He reminded the congregation that Paul, who spoke in tongues, glorified in the crucified Saviour. Christians in Russia were suffering terribly, and all Christians should be willing to take up the cross. Such was the challenge that the whole congregation got up and sang 'There is a fountain filled with blood.'

John Pengwern Jones in India

John Jones was born in North Wales in 1859, a year of revival in the whole of Wales. He is distinguished from other John Joneses by the added name Pengwern. He was educated at Trefeca College and ministered in several places before leaving with his wife, Janie, for Sylhet [Bangladesh] India, in 1887. They left to work with the foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. In a matter of days Janie was

REMEMBERING 1904-05

taken ill and died of a cholera. She was lapped in a mat and buried in the grave of four other Welsh persons. This was the most discouraging beginning possible for any missionary starting work in a foreign country. Supported by his fellow-missionaries, Pengwern Jones settled down and committed himself wholeheartedly to his work. He remained there for forty years.

Revival

Reports of revival scenes in Wales had reached India before the end of 1904, and it led to the setting up of a number of prayer meetings for revival. In January 1905, that remarkable woman, Pandita Ramabai in Mukti, heard of the Welsh revival. Pandita and her band of workers prayed for revival and God answered their prayers by visiting them by His Spirit in June of that year. In the northeast there were tokens of revival during February and a great blessing was experienced during the month of March. Throughout 1905 there were reports of revival from different parts of India. J Pengwern Jones was a key figure in the revival, and was also a vital link between India and other countries, especially Wales. By means of publications such as *India Awake* and *Friend of Sylhet*, he gave information concerning revivals and stimulated prayer for their spread in India and throughout the world. He published detailed reports of events in India, including the beginning of the revival in the Khassi Hills [Meghalaya]: "When they heard of the Revival in Wales - they felt more of a desire than ever for the Spirit and Prayer Meetings were held almost every evening and proved to be very refreshing; the Christians were revived, new voices were heard in prayer, and sometimes two or three would pray at the same time". God had given the people of India an object lesson, "To us in other parts of India, this is what the Revival in the Khassi Hills is, and calls very loudly on all the churches throughout India to stir themselves and to be ready to receive the King." In another report from the Mawphlang District, J. Pengwern Jones wrote:

"In some churches the quiet but powerful influence of the Holy Spirit is being felt welding the Christians together and cleansing the church from hidden sins. A deep spirit of humility prevails, and the people draw near to the throne of grace with greater reverence, realizing more than ever before the holiness of God, and the sacredness of prayer. The prayers have also changed, there is a depth and unction in them which I have never felt before, and the burden of souls seems to have come upon them, how they appeal to God on behalf of their relatives and neighbours and God is answering their prayers. Last week, two well-known drunkards - men who had spent their lives in sacrificing to demons, were received into the Mawphlang Church in direct answer to the prayers of their children who were already Christians."

Occasionally, J. Pengwern Jones would refer to the popular hymns of the revival in India, including translations from the Welsh into English, Khassi and other Indian languages. In one issue of *The Friend of Sylhet* the editor included a translation of one of William Williams, Pantycelyn's hymn, "Rwy'n dy garu ti a'i gwyddost":

*Yes, I love Thee Lord Thou knowest,
Yes, I love Thee Saviour dear,
More than all the world together
Oh I love Thy voice to hear.
Thou hast written
This, Thy love upon my heart.*

Conventions

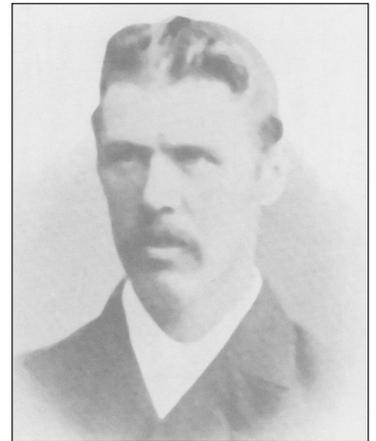
Whenever possible, J. Pengwern Jones would be present at revival meetings, in Sylhet, Khasia Hills, Calcutta or northwest India. He was thrilled to be present at south Arcot at the end of 1905, to work with Bishop Robinson and Bishop Warne. The missionaries felt hardness amongst them and formed two groups to pray for the Spirit of God to come and melt their hearts. The following afternoon, the volume of prayer was deafening, and many responded to the call to consecrate themselves anew to the Saviour. As they came forward they sang a Bengali revival hymn:

*"Rejoice and be glad! It is sunshine at last!
The clouds have departed, the shadows are past."*

Another popular hymn was the "Glory", in Bengali -

*"When all my troubles and trials are o'er —
That will be glory, glory for me."*

Darjeeling also had its convention, but the most popular was held at Sialkot [Pakistan]. The foundation of the convention was laid in 1904 and the work confirmed in 1905. The main themes of the convention were growth in holiness and the work of the Holy Spirit. These themes were close to the heart of the organizers McChene Paterson (Scottish Presbyterian), George Turner (YMCA), Ihsan Ullah (Anglican Church) and John Hyde -



John Pengwern Jones

'Praying Hyde', a Presbyterian. J. Pengwern Jones was drawn very close to these men, especially McCheyne Paterson and Praying Hyde. Paterson read Mrs. Penn-Lewis's works and had a photograph of Evan Roberts on his desk. During the Sialkot meetings Praying Hyde's bed was placed between that of J. Pengwern Jones and Dr. Griswald. On one occasion the Welsh missionary noticed that Hyde's bed had not been used at all, as he had spent the night in prayer.

On another occasion he spent the best part of a day in prayer and shared with J. Pengwern Jones some of his most personal experiences during that time, "Let me tell you, what a vision I had — a new vision of Christ". The Welshman gives his response, "I shall never forget his words as they gave me a new vision of Christ - I could not keep the tears back. At times I felt that it could not be true, that Christ had ever suffered so much for me - How I wish I could repeat it as Hyde brought me step by step to see Christ that evening." There were three aspects to the vision. First of all, Christ becoming man; secondly, Christ becoming a slave; and lastly, Christ becoming like a dog, that is a 'pariah dog', an Indian dog to be kicked around by men. The two of them wept for a long time as they meditated on Christ's suffering.

A feature of the prayer meetings at Sialkot was the "burden of prayer", that is, a specific burden was laid upon the heart of an individual or a group of believers. When the burden was given it was described as "Gethsemane", but it would lead on to Calvary and Pentecost. The missionary describes such an experience:

REMEMBERING 1904-05

“At the last service, or rather after the last service, almost all the Missionaries and some of the Indian Christians moved towards the Prayer Room and there we had a memorable time together. God was evidently in our midst, what earnest prayers were offered, what anguish some passed through on account of the hardness of hearts, but when an Indian sister asked for prayer on behalf of a near and dear relative, that the Spirit of intercession seemed to be poured on all present, and many had an insight into the agony of Gethsemane which can never be forgotten. How one after another prayed for that misguided sinner. Some of us realized for the first time how the sins of an entire stranger could become a real burden to us. On the heart-rending cries of any present for that person, many wept like children, others groaned under the burden and most of us had the assurance that God had heard our prayers.”

Mention is made of other features of the meetings. Many had come in a critical spirit, but were soon convicted of their wrong attitude and sought the forgiveness of God. Numerous visions were experienced which were given, according to the believers, “directly by the Spirit of God”.

As in other countries, revival brought its problems in India. They were made more complicated by the arrival of Alfred Goodrich Garr from America. He was one of the first persons to be baptized in Azusa Street [1906], where dancing, shouting, visions and speaking in tongues had been evident.

The Garr meetings in India had the same features. J. Pengwern Jones acknowledged that someone could speak in tongues, and he did not doubt the sincerity of Garr. The Welshman could not, however, accept the claim that speaking in tongues was the initial proof of being filled with the Spirit. There was a danger of making a show of the gift and made the point that a similar phenomenon was found in other religions.

J. Pengwern Jones believed that disagreement concerning tongues and the fullness of the Spirit was giving Satan an opportunity to work. He was “playing his best cards”. He urged believers to shelter in the mercy seat, adding that “These things goeth not out without prayer and fasting”.

Men of spiritual discernment are always needed in times of revival. With his spiritual eye J. Pengwern Jones could see change and development in India. Discussing the Khassi revival, he described the early period when the Spirit came in like a flood. It was, however, channeled in such a way that a deeper work of grace became evident in the lives of believers. In the later period more emphasis was given to preaching, meetings were quieter but the fervency in the prayers was still indescribable. A revival, he claimed, can be assessed by the change in the lives of believers, their concern for lost souls, the impact of the revival on society in general and the response to the material needs of others.

[Transcribed from an address at Heath Church on 18 October 2004]