

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

It is also recorded of Butler that when very nigh to the close of his life, a closeness measured by minutes rather than by hours, the dying Prelate remarked to his friend and chaplain, Dr. Foster, then kneeling at the side of his bed, "that he found it a very awful thing—a very awful thing—to appear before the august Governor of the World." His friend—and Bishop Butler was never without a friend—his friend reminded him of that "Blood which cleanseth from all sin." A pause then seems to have ensued, when the dying Bishop,—Butler, the learned, the modest, the devout, the pure, the earnest, the seeker after truth, with faltering, failing lips replied, "Oh this is comfortable," and with these words the spirit of the Bishop escaped to Him who gave it. Yes—"The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God." "Oh death, where then is thy sting?—Oh grave, where is thy victory?"<sup>1</sup>

C. PRITCHARD.

---

## ART. II.—THE CHURCH IN WALES.

**I**N the remarks I made on the Welsh Church in the December Number of the *CHURCHMAN*, I called special attention to the religious revival of last century in the Principality. That revival commenced in the Church of England, but it terminated in a large secession of the Welsh people from her communion. The movement, through the force of circumstances, and under the current of events, had been drifting for years in that direction; but the secession was not finally consummated until the year 1811, when the Calvinistic Methodists set apart a certain number of their lay preachers for the ministration of the Sacraments in the Connexion. By that act they formally separated from the Church of England, and became an independent Christian community. The secession was an event of great moment; it created a new era in the religious history of the Principality, and its results were accompanied with serious consequences to the Church in Wales. On account of its importance it demands special attention, and it is my purpose in this Paper to investigate the circumstances under which it occurred.

I would observe, in the first place, that I consider that the revival was the work of the Spirit of God. I believe that the awakening which under its influence moved the masses was the breath of life which quickened souls that were dead in trespasses

---

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture recently delivered in St. Mary's in connection with the Oxford Branch of the Christian Evidence Society.

and sins. The means by which it was produced and the effects which followed it lead to this conclusion. The means that produced it was "the preaching of the Cross," which is a stumbling-block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek, but the power of God unto salvation to them that believe; and this preaching was never more conspicuous nor more appreciated than at the rise and progress of Methodism in Wales. Among the early Methodists their preachers "knew nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." There are ample proofs of this in their writings which are still extant, and in the traditions which have been handed down among the people. And where Christ is preached, there the Spirit of God may be expected to work; the ministration of righteousness—the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all that believe—is the ministration of the Spirit. So it was when men of Cyrene and Cyprus came to Antioch preaching the Lord Jesus; the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord, and the grace of God was visibly seen in its effects among them; and so it was in Wales when the early Methodists along its valleys and among its hills—in its towns and through its villages—lifted up an ensign unto the people, and said unto them in accents that could not be mistaken—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and to it the people sought. I thus believe that the awakening was the genuine work of the Spirit, because it proceeded from a genuine source—the preaching of the Cross. Then, again, the effects which the revival produced lead to the same conclusion; they indicate its origin, that it came from God. There was vitality and growth in the work; it advanced and progressed, and in its progress it gained strength, it grew and was multiplied; it had free course and was glorified. It did not degenerate into wild enthusiasm and fanatical extravagances, but settled down into sober-minded and practical piety; the truth as it is in Jesus was maintained and practised, and the fruit was true godliness. The converts at first were few and far between; they met together in their different localities for prayer and praise and mutual instruction; they were earnest and devout, and fervent in spirit; they bore in their lives marks of their conversion to God; it can be well said of them that they were the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; it could be seen that the law of God was written on the tables of their hearts, and that they served Him in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. They adorned by their holy conversation the doctrine which they professed; they abstained from sin and wickedness, and renounced worldly habits and profane customs; they observed and honoured the Lord's Day and the ordinances of religion; they

read and studied the Holy Scriptures, and inwardly digested their truths ; they gave themselves to prayer ; they set up family worship in their houses, and carefully attended to the religious training of their children and their domestics ; on stated occasions they had general gatherings at certain centres for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the celebrants were clergymen of the Church of England ; immense crowds attended these gatherings, and some came a distance of fifteen and even twenty miles to join their brethren in the commemoration of the death of their Lord. The Sabbaths on which these gatherings occurred were "high days ;" the people met and returned with the voice of joy and praise as a multitude that kept holy day ; all were satisfied with the blessings they had received, and on their return to their homes they would give vent to their feelings in songs of praises which made the rocks and the valleys and the hills around them resound with the echo ; and the theme which thrilled their hearts and kindled their song was ever the same, and it was always new ; it never lost its freshness ; it was the Lamb who had by his blood redeemed them from all iniquity, and had through his Spirit sealed the forgiveness of sins in their hearts, and had given unto them the hope of eternal life.

Thus, as it seems to me, the effects which the revival produced give ample proofs of its Divine origin ; they show that it was the work of God ; the tree is known by its fruit ; and the fruits of this revival were clusters of grapes, the sight of which makes it clear to the eye that the "noble vine" which bore them was "wholly a right seed."

In the movement Lay-Agency was powerfully at work ; it was one of the principal means which advanced and sustained its progress ; it was full of life and activity ; it had force and vigour which bore down all opposition and carried all before it ; it worked in various ways, and its influence was felt in all the religious exercises of the people ; but the work in which it chiefly distinguished itself was lay preaching. Among the converts men appeared who spoke and taught publicly in the congregations ; they were called, in order to distinguish them from the clergymen who had originated the movement, exhorters, and they were many ; they sprang up in all parts of the country, and attended to the spiritual wants of the congregations that had been gathered in their neighbourhoods ; they sustained and extended the work in distant localities which the clergymen were able rarely to visit ; and the clergymen found them in districts surrounding their homes willing and useful helpers in their work. They were for the most part mechanics and labourers ; some few of them were small tradesmen and tenant farmers, and fewer still were petty schoolmasters in country villages. They were men of no learning ; very few of them were sufficiently acquainted

with English to enable them to read with profit English authors ; but they were well versed in their Welsh Bible ; they knew much of it by heart, and could quote it with fluency ; they could readily apply passages out of it to the subjects of their discourses ; their work was labour of love ; it was work and no pay ; they received little or nothing from the congregations towards their support, but their hands ministered to their necessities. Their heart was in their work, and they pursued it with diligence and perseverance, and materially contributed to the success of the movement.

Among the exhorters, as they were called, some few arose to the highest eminence as Welsh preachers. I may mention as an instance John Elias, who was born in Carnarvonshire, but resided most of his days in Anglesea. He was a man of low origin, but of great self-culture and refinement ; in diction and action he was a finished orator ; in principle and bearing he was a perfect gentleman ; in his life and conversation he was a genuine Christian ; as a preacher of the Gospel he moved and acted among the people as "a man of God." He descended to the grave and entered into rest June 8, 1841, aged 69 years, "full of honour." Churchmen and Nonconformists strove together in generous rivalry to show their last respect for him, when a procession, extending one mile and a half in length, and computed to consist of ten thousand people, followed, on the day of his funeral, his remains to their resting-place in the churchyard of Llanfaes, near Beaumaris. Another man of kindred spirit, but cast in a different mould, was Ebenezer Morris, native of Cardiganshire, who died in 1825, at the early age of 56 years. He was not, like John Elias, a studied orator, and he did not possess his refinement as a speaker ; but he was born an orator, and his oratorical powers were of the first order ; he had a fine countenance, full of life and fire ; his eyes and his look spoke volumes ; he possessed a ready utterance, and was never at a loss for a word ; he had a voice of great compass and variety, and he had perfect mastery over it ; he could modulate it with the greatest ease, and adapt its tone to the subject he handled. At times his sentiments burst forth like flashes of lightning, which electrified his hearers, and his eloquence rushed on like a mountain torrent which carried all before it ; and he was never more eloquent or powerful than when he descanted on the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His atonement. He wrote little ; there was found hardly a scrip or a scrap of writing in his study after his death, and when this fact transpired, a friend of his made the remark that his sermons were "offshots," and he might have added— but by the remark I must not be understood to depreciate due preparation for the pulpit, but to show the peculiarity of the man and the effects of his preaching—that they were "offshots" that did great execution in the enemy's camp. At the time of his

death he could count his converts, not by hundreds, but by thousands. I have named these two distinguished men, who, as to their character and abilities, would have been an ornament and a blessing to the ministry of any Church, as the most prominent among the lay-preachers who were set apart in 1811 for the ministration of the sacraments in the Connexion—one in North and the other in South Wales. At an Association held at Bala, in the month of June of that year, John Elias and other seven, representing congregations in the six counties of North Wales, were thus qualified, as it was said, for the full work of the ministry; and so were Ebenezer Morris and other twelve, representing congregations in the six counties of South Wales and Monmouthshire, at an Association held in the following month of August, at Landilo-vawr, in Carmarthenshire. The Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, was present on both occasions, and took a prominent part in the ceremony; he was the guiding spirit in the transaction; imposition of hands was not used, but the act was done by the vote of the people, which was taken by the lifting up of hands. The event brought matters to a crisis; it completed the separation of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists from the Church of England; it cut asunder the last tie which attached them to the Church of their fathers.

The reason which led them to take this grave step is given in a pamphlet, which they published in 1823, containing the history, constitution, rules of discipline, and confession of faith of the Connexion as agreed upon at Associations held that year at Aberystwith and Bala. In it I find the following passage which I translate from Welsh to English:—

“Because the number of the clergymen of the Established Church discharging their ministry in our midst is not equal to the increase of the Body and the extent of the work, and in consequence the number of the churches to administer the sacraments and the ordinances to the whole Body in its different branches, and because there is great inconvenience to the churches in towns in England, through want of the administration of the holy ordinances, without seeking ministers of other denominations to administer them to them—because of these reasons, and several others, we see it proper and necessary to set apart a proper number of exhorters in the different counties, to assist the clergymen who at present minister in the Body, in the administration of the ordinances.”

In this extract we see the circumstances in which the Connexion, or, as they called themselves, the Body, was placed, and the ground on which it stood when the step was taken. We see that it was taken as a matter of necessity and expediency; little attention was paid to the principle which it involved or the ulterior consequences to which it naturally led. A necessity had indeed arisen; I readily admit this; no one can deny it; and a remedy was required.

The clergymen who administered the sacraments in the Connexion had become fewer in number. Rowlands himself had been dead for twenty years, and his two earliest and most prominent fellow-helpers—Williams, of Pantycelyn, the poet, and Peter Williams, the commentator\*—were also dead, and death had made other gaps in their ranks, and those gaps were not filled up or likely to be filled up by fresh recruits from the clergy of the Church of England. The celebrations of the Lord's Supper at the different centres took place after long intervals, and the distance some had to come to attend them was very great, and in the meantime the congregations had increased, and were multiplied; a difficulty had thus arisen, and it became necessary to provide a remedy. The remedy adopted, however, was of doubtful expediency; while it attempted to remove one evil it created other, and, as some thought, greater evils; it cut the knot instead of loosing it. Its adoption was not unanimous in the Connexion; far from it; many strenuously opposed it, and feelings ran very high in the discussions which it excited at Associations and other gatherings; unpleasant, if not unseemly, scenes often occurred. One of its most determined opponents was the Rev. David Jones, Rector of Langan, or as he was known among the people, "the Evangelist of Langan." He had thrown his lot early among the Methodists, and he was now an old man; his hoary head, which in his case had been found in the way of righteousness, was his crown of glory. He had run his race faithfully; he had maintained a consistent course; he was still "fat and flourishing, bringing forth fruit in his old age;" his doctrine still dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, as the small rain on the tender herb, or as the showers upon the grass. He was noted as an Evangelist, and the Gospel in his mouth retained its sweet savour until his tongue became silent in the grave; he was loved and respected, honoured and revered among his brethren.

When the question of ordaining lay-preachers to meet the wants of the Connexion was broached, he assumed an attitude of determined opposition to it, and he maintained that attitude to the day of his death. There can be no doubt that his convictions on the subject were very deep, and that he looked upon it with the

---

\* Mr. Peter Williams, strange to say, was excommunicated from the Connexion a few years before his death, after he had preached with the Methodists from forty to fifty years, on the charge of Sabellianism, broached in his exposition of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. His commentary was the first that appeared on the Welsh Bible; it consisted of notes, containing general reflections at the close of each chapter; it became deservedly popular. Three editions came out in the author's lifetime, numbering eighteen thousand copies. He also wrote a laborious concordance of the Welsh Bible, and it was the first that appeared in the Welsh language.

gravest concern. When at a meeting of the Association at Langeitho, of which he was chairman, a proposition was made that a day of prayer and fasting should be set apart to ask the Lord for guidance in the matter, he exclaimed, "Brethren, do not pray me out of the world!" It is said that on his way to Langeitho on this occasion he called on his friend Mr. Griffiths, Vicar of Nevern, who himself had preached for many years among the Methodists, and who as firmly opposed the innovation as Mr. Jones. He belonged to the second generation of preachers, and was not behind any of them as a public speaker. Knowing that the question was to be discussed at Langeitho, he advised his aged friend not to proceed on his journey, saying that further opposition was useless, but Mr. Jones replied that he would go, and that perhaps the advocates of the movement would hearken to the voice of an old man. He did go, and did speak, but the voice of the old man was not heeded; he called on Mr. Griffiths on his return, and said, "They have broken my heart!" When he reached home he was confined to his bed, and died within a fortnight. When a man of deep piety and sound judgment like Mr. Jones, who had been a burning and a shining light among the Methodists for half a century, opposed the movement, supported as he was by men of the same stamp and spirit as himself, we can now well contend, without incurring the charge of bigotry or narrow-mindedness, that the expediency adopted to meet the difficulty that had arisen was a doubtful remedy.

I have no documents before me which explain the special ground on which Mr. Jones and others maintained their opposition to the movement; but there can be little doubt that the main reason which influenced their action in the matter was their reluctance to become seceders from the communion of the Church of England.

At one of the monthly meetings in Pembrokeshire, when a layman from St. David's broached the question, Mr. Griffiths, of Nevern, said—"You want to become Dissenters." In this remark I see the pith of the matter. Mr. Jones, of Langan, Mr. Griffiths, of Nevern, and others who sided with them, were unwilling to become Dissenters; they were determined to live and to die in communion with the Church of England. They believed her to be a true branch of the Holy Catholic Church; they knew her to be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ—a repository of the oracles of God. If the food found in her pulpits was dry and insipid, they would say with Wesley that "her desks supplied bread of the finest of the wheat;" although their fathers and themselves had been harshly and cruelly treated by those who sat in the uppermost seats in the Church, yet they drew a distinction between the Church and her unwise and worldly rulers; they knew she had the seed of truth, and they expected the

blessing of God yet to rest upon her, and they were not disappointed. It was so; the history of the Church in Wales within the last fifty years indicates great revival of religion within her pale. God has arisen, and has had mercy upon her. He has taken pleasure in her stones, and has favoured her dust; He has raised up from among her own children those who have built her old waste places, and have raised up the foundations of many generations. They can well be called the repairers of the breach and the restorers of paths to dwell in; the wilderness and the solitary places have been glad for them, and the desert in many a parish church through the Principality has blossomed as the rose. For all this we are thankful, but we expect more; we long to see things yet greater than these.

And, again, the opponents of the separation, as we have seen, adhered to the Church. They would say—Forsake her not, for there is a blessing in her. But this is not all; I can say more, and go a step further. I can venture to affirm that even its advocates raised no objections to her which they advanced in justification of their action. In the authorized account which they give of the transaction, they say nothing against the doctrine of the Church or her form of Church government, they prefer no complaints against her Liturgy as to its substance or its form, and they utter not even a whisper against her union with the State as the Established Church of the country. The theory of separation of Church and State is a later growth; it was unknown to them, but it runs riot among their descendants of the day. It is an exotic plant in their midst, foreign to the principles and consciences of the first, and the second, and the third generation of Calvinistic Methodists. Those of the first generation—and they were the purest—were at one with the great Puritan divines of the seventeenth century on the question, and they as strenuously as Hooker and his school maintained the theory of the establishment of religion by civil Governments on Evangelical and Protestant principles. On the points which I here enumerate, the advocates of the separation are silent, but there is one point on which they have spoken—they complain of the lack of discipline in the Church; they affirm that it wounded the conscience of their brethren to receive the elements at the Lord's Supper from the hands of ministers who in their opinion had not been awakened and converted to God; and to meet at the communion rails of their parish churches men and women who perchance had been excommunicated for immorality from their own societies. Evil livers in all Churches are roots of bitterness, and should not be endured; they are offences and stumbling-blocks to the children of God, and by careful discipline they should be removed; but when the Methodists advanced the immorality that prevailed in the Church as ground of their

separation from her communion on the plea that they were founding a community that would be purged from the plague of moral corruption, they were, in my opinion, weaving a rope of sand; they were indulging in pleasant ideas indeed, but they were ideas which the subsequent history of their own communion shows that they never realized. As a matter of fact it can be safely said that at the present day the communicants of the Church of England will bear comparison on points of morality and virtue with those of the Calvinistic body; the original plea of separation on this head has disappeared. And thus I cannot help thinking, that if the advice of "the Evangelist" of Llangan had been taken, a wiser policy would have been pursued, and better results on the permanent interest of religion in the Principality would have been produced.

Things were looking up in the Church; she was awakening to her duties and her responsibilities. Good Bishop Burgess had been appointed to the See of St. David's, and his diocese covered the whole of South Wales, except a portion of Glamorganshire, and he was a man of thorough Christian spirit. A bishop more devoted to his work never wore a mitre; and the work which more specially distinguished his episcopacy in South Wales was the intellectual and moral improvement of the clergy. To this object he applied his entire energies, and his efforts resulted in the erection of St. David's College, Lampeter. He laboured to remove the scandal of which the Methodists complained, and his influence for good was felt throughout the parishes of his vast diocese. And if the Methodists had continued to communicate in their parish churches, instead of isolating themselves into separate religious communities, the improvement which was then appearing in the Church would have been expedited and extended; the leaven of true religion and virtue would have more thoroughly permeated the masses of the people; the bigotry and party zeal, the strife and envy, which contending sects produce would not have been engendered; and the spirit of "truth, unity, and concord" would have more universally prevailed among Christian people throughout the country. And in this they had the example of Howel Harries, whose memory they held in the highest esteem, before their eyes. He preached daily to his people at Trevecca, and gave them religious instruction, but he took them to the parish church for communion; and they attended the services of the Church on Sundays, and took special interest in them. A place was allotted them in the gallery, where they formed a choir for the service. This practice might have been followed through the country with better and happier results than those which the separation produced. Religion and virtue would have been equally spread among the people, and the spirit of disunion and discord would have been avoided.

Then, again, an important principle was involved in the act of separation, and I cannot help thinking that that aspect of the question was not sufficiently weighed and considered. The Methodists separated from a Church the doctrines of which they did not repudiate. Separation in such a case amounted to schism; it cannot be justified on the authority of our Lord and His Apostles; it is contrary to that spirit of unity and forbearance which is so strongly and frequently enforced on the attention of Christian believers in the New Testament. There is no parallel between the separation of the Methodists from the Church of England, and the separation of the Church of England from the Church of Rome at the Reformation. The Church of England repudiated the doctrinal corruptions of the Church of Rome, and entered her protests against them in her Articles of Faith. The Methodists did not repudiate the doctrines of the Church of England, or utter a whisper against her tenets in their "Confession of Faith." The Church of England can stand up, take her Articles in her hand, and tell the Church of Rome—"Renounce the doctrines against which I protest in these Articles, and the middle wall of partition between us will be broken down"; but the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales cannot stand on the same ground and use the same language to the Church of England. They cannot take their "Confession of Faith" in their hands, and say to the Church—"Renounce the doctrinal errors against which we here protest, and the cause of our secession will disappear." In their "Confession of Faith" there is no protest; the Church, on the contrary, can ask them to look into her Articles, and to their own "Confession of Faith," and to compare them, and then say, "We are one—one in faith and the hope of our calling; we build on the same rock, and we are refreshed with the same breezes; we believe in the same Saviour, and we are renewed by the same Spirit; we sail in the same direction, and we seek the same country." The Calvinistic Methodists, at the time of the separation, were one with the Church as to the fundamentals of religion, and it would have been a blessing to the country if their motto had been—"Unity, forbearance, and strength," and not "Schism, strife, and weakness."

J. POWELL JONES.

