

WELSH
CALVINISTIC METHODISM

A Historical Sketch.

BY
THE REV. WILLIAM WILLIAMS.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
1872.

CHAPTER XIV.

Results of the ordination —Constitution, Rules, and Confession of Faith—Home Missionary Societies for the English districts—Colleges at Bala and Trevecca—Foreign Missionary Society—General Assembly—Progress from 1850 to 1870.

THOSE who opposed the ordination of ministers were under the impression that that step would lead to very disastrous consequences. They were themselves attached to the Establishment, and supposed that the great mass of the people were more like them in this respect than they really were. The Episcopally ordained ministers had great influence over the Connexion. They were much respected and loved by the brethren universally, but it was more on account of their personal worth than on account of the precarious tie which held them to the Establishment. There was scarcely one of them who had not suffered, in one way or another, in consequence of his Methodism. It was well known that they would be more respected by men of position and authority in their own Church, and would be much more likely to obtain preferment in it, if they were to withdraw altogether from the despised sect, and this consideration endeared them still more to the people. It was to the *men* that people were attached, and not to the Church, and some of the very reasons for their attachment to the former could not otherwise than lead to unfavourable impressions with regard to the latter. Their love to these sufferers was such, that they could not feel any strong attachment to the system which was at the source of their sufferings.

When the ordination was fully decided on, seven out of the ten Episcopally ordained clergymen, who had so far laboured with the Methodists in South Wales, withdrew from them altogether, and among these there were a few of great ability and extensive influence; but notwithstanding the withdrawal of these eminent men, the great mass of the people everywhere adhered to the Connexion. Mr. Jones of Llangan, as we have seen, attracted to his church an enormous congregation. On the monthly Sabbaths several hundreds were in the habit of assembling from the surrounding country to partake of the Lord's Supper. Mr. Jones was called to his rest only a few months before the final step was taken. But what of his flock? Did they continue in their attachment to the Church after he had gone? Quite otherwise. We are well acquainted with Llangan, having been born and brought up within two miles of the place. At the time of our earliest recollection there was a small congregation assembling there, for the clergyman was somewhat of a Methodist, and held "societies" and prayer-meetings, but the churches of the surrounding parishes were nearly empty. Our own parish church was scarcely ever attended by more than the vicar, the clerk, and a couple of old women, while that of an adjoining parish was often for several weeks together without any service at all. But what had become of Mr. Jones's large congregation? We knew scores of them personally, and well remember

the tears which some of them were wont to shed when they spoke of him or repeated some of his sayings; but as far as we can recollect there was only one of the whole number, a good old sister, who kept up her connexion with Llangan church, while all the rest were connected with the Methodist chapels in the neighbourhood, such as Bridgend, Pencoed, Aburthin, Lisworney, and other places, and this was generally the case all over the country.

There were exceptions, however, and those were chiefly in Pembrokeshire, and in the southern portion of Cardiganshire. In those districts the great bulk of three or four congregations withdrew to the Church, and the chapels in which they were in the habit of assembling, to hold societies and prayer-meetings, and to hear the Word from the mouths of “exhorters,” were lost to the Connexion.

Three of the Episcopal clergymen in South Wales remained with the Methodists, namely, the Revs. Howell Howells of Trehill, John Williams of Lledrod, and John Williams, the son of the eminent reformer and hymnologist, Wm. Williams of Pantycelyn. In North Wales there had never been more than three of this class connected with the body, namely, the Revs. T. Charles of Bala, Simon Lloyd of the same place, and William Lloyd of Carnarvon; and all these continued to adhere to it.

Welsh Methodism emerged from this important crisis in its existence different, in several respects, from what it was before. It was a little, but very little smaller, and a trifle less aristocratic, for it had lost several wealthy and influential families in different parts of the country; but it was very much more compact, and more free. The men who now came to the front had already proved themselves to be able ministers of the New Testament; and they subsequently proved themselves competent to lead the Connexion, by the blessing of God, to usefulness and success. They watched over the churches, they travelled from place to place to preach the Gospel, they threw their hearts and souls into their great work, and their ministry was accompanied by rich outpourings of the Holy Ghost. God was bearing witness to the word of His grace; and in a few years the losses which had been sustained at the time of their ordination had been far, and very far, more than compensated. The leading men of the great Association were no longer with them—the fathers had gone to their eternal rest, and some of their most prominent leaders had now withdrawn from them; but there were among themselves men whom God had raised to be masters of the Assembly, and very frequently and conclusively was He pleased to give unto them evidences of His own presence. When those great men were removed, there were others equally able and devoted to take their places, and thus it was that the Connexion went on increasing in numbers and in influence; and thus it is that it has continued to progress up to the present day.

When Harris, Rowlands, and their coadjutors commenced their evangelistic labours, they had not the remotest idea of forming a separate Christian denomination, and therefore it is that the body, which was brought into existence by

the blessing of God on their ministry, found itself without a constitution, and without any rules or regulations for its government. It has all these now, but they were not made at once. They have rather grown from time to time, as the various circumstances through which the body has passed have shown the necessity for them. The form it has assumed may be designated a *modified Presbyterianism*. Each church manages its own affairs, admits or expels its members by the vote of the majority of those who belong to it; so far it is Congregational. But there is an appeal from the decision of the individual church to the Monthly Meeting of the county to which it belongs, and then there is an appeal from the decision of the Monthly Meeting to the Quarterly Association of the province. Matters relating to South Wales are finally disposed of by the South Wales Association, and so of the North; but a few years ago a General Assembly of the whole Connexion was established, and the two Associations may agree to refer matters to that body, which meets once a year, for final decision. Churches *nominate* their own deacons or elders by the vote of the majority; but they can only be *appointed* with the sanction of the Monthly Meeting of their county, and by delegates sent by that body to the place for that purpose. Monthly meetings never interfere with the internal affairs of individual churches, unless their members fail to agree among themselves, or permit some manifest irregularity. Ministers can only be ordained with the approval of one of the Associations, North or South. They are nominated by delegates of the counties to which they belong at one Association, and if approved of are ordained at a subsequent one. These representative meetings are made up of ministers and deacons, and generally the latter preponderate in numbers. There is no rule made to preserve “the balance of power” in this respect, and happily there has not hitherto appeared any necessity for it. All the chapels are the property, not of the congregations worshipping in them, but of the Connexion. A constitutional deed has been enrolled in Chancery, securing to it the possession of all its places of worship, and all the leases and other transfers of property are drawn up in accordance with the provisions of that deed. Many of the chapels are in debt, but there is not one of them mortgaged; the security to the creditor in each case being a note of hand, signed by persons appointed to do so by the Monthly Meeting of the county to which the chapel belongs. These are the parties who are under the *legal* responsibility, but the whole community is understood to be *morally* responsible for the debt of each chapel.

All this, as we have intimated, did not come at once. “Rules regarding the proper mode of conducting the Quarterly Association” were drawn up by Mr. Charles, and agreed upon in 1790. The “Order and Form of Church Government, and Rules of Discipline,” were first published in 1801; but it was not until the year 1823 that the Connexion drew up in form and published its “Confession of Faith.” The subject had been mooted in 1821, and after it had been discussed in several Associations, it was resolved to convene a meeting of delegates from

North and South Wales in connexion with an Association at Aberystwyth on the 11th of March 1823, to revise and amend, should it be deemed necessary, such “Rules” as had been already promulgated, and to draw up a “Confession of Faith.” We have before us the minutes of that important meeting, from the pen of the late Rev. Ebenezer Richard, the secretary at the time of the South Wales Association, and of which the following is a translation:—

“The delegates from North and South Wales began to assemble on Monday evening the 10th, but they did not enter upon their important work until Tuesday the 11th, when they assembled at the house of Mr. Robert Davies, Dark Gate Street, in a very convenient and commodious upper room. The proceedings commenced with reading and prayer by John Roberts, Llangwm. The committee was composed of the following brethren, viz.: The Reverends John Williams (moderator), Ebenezer Morris, David Charles, Thomas Jones, John Roberts, John Elias, John Humphreys, and Michael Roberts, with Humphrey Gwelchmai and Ebenezer Richard as secretaries.

“First, the rules and objects of the private societies were taken into consideration, and after having been carefully and deliberately considered, and after a few changes and abridgments were made in them, they were unanimously adopted. Next, our brother, J. Humphreys, read a sketch which had been written by him of the rise and progress of the Connexion; and this, with some slight alterations, was agreed upon.”

We have this sketch lying before us, and it comprises about eighteen pages duodecimo.

“Then the constitution of the body, written by Mr. David Charles, was read, and, with some modifications, adopted.

“The meeting then entered upon the consideration of the Confession of Faith. The portion from North Wales was read by the brother, John Elias, and that from the South by Ebenezer Richard. Every point and article was considered with the greatest solemnity, deliberation, and minuteness. In proceeding, selections, additions, abbreviations, and alterations were made according as it was deemed most suitable and necessary, until the whole of the articles had been gone through; and all were unanimously adopted without wrath or doubting.

“Then it was resolved that the whole should be read at the general meetings of the Association, at two o’clock on the 13th, and at eight on the 14th; the rules and constitution of the body to be read by Ebenezer Richard; John Elias to read that portion of the Confession of Faith which had been prepared in North Wales, and Ebenezer Richard the portion prepared in the South. This was done as resolved, and the body unanimously, and with the completest and most pleasant harmony, adopted the whole without as much as one dissentient voice or one objection. BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL.”¹

¹ Old Minutes, etc., *Drysorfa* for 1869, p. 166.

This “Confession” comprises forty-four articles, and is in every important feature in unison with the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England.

The whole of the Welsh-speaking portions of the Principality had by this time been pretty well filled with the Gospel, but those districts in which the English language prevailed continued in very much the same state as all Wales had been before the days of Howell Harris.

It is a curious fact that there are tracts of country lying far away from the border, where nothing but English has been spoken for several generations. The hundred of Castlemartin, the borough of Pembroke, the towns of Haverfordwest and Tenby, with considerable portions of the hundreds of Narberth and Roose, all in the south of Pembrokeshire, and comprising almost a third of the area of that county, have a population as English as Derby or Dorset. It is the same with Gower, in the west of Glamorganshire; that peninsula lies between the Bristol Channel and the Bury estuary, from Swansea to the Worm’s Head, and is about eighteen miles in length, and varying from four to six in breadth, and comprises sixteen parishes. These two spots, separated alike from each other and from England by many miles of country occupied by Welsh-speaking populations, have each been designated “Little England beyond Wales.” The people are supposed to be of Flemish extraction, and their presence in these parts is thus accounted for:—“About the year 1110 Henry I. admitted into England great numbers of Flemings, who by the inundation of the sea in their own country were compelled to seek elsewhere for new habitations. He planted them at first in the waste parts of Yorkshire, but upon the complaints made to him after his return from Normandy, he removed them to the country conquered from the Welsh, about Roose and Pembroke. Their posterity continue there to this day, retaining so much of their old customs as to distinguish them plainly from the Welsh, and to show that they are of foreign extraction.”²

According to Caradock of Llancarvan, Gower was peopled with English from Somersetshire. “Swansea Castle was built in the year 1099, by Henry Beaumont, Earl of Warwick, who, acting on the system of the other Norman freebooters of the age, made war upon the sons of Caradock ap Jestyn, who then held the district of Gower, in order to enrich himself with the spoils he might be able to wrest from them. After the subjugation of Gower, he brought over a colony of English settlers from Somersetshire, to whom he gave a large proportion of the lands. Their descendants yet remain here, separated by their language and manners from the native population.”³

Monmouthshire is regarded as an English county, but whatever faults it has are generally put down against Wales. The Chartist riots of 1839 occurred in

² Ashburton’s *History of England*, p. 119.

³ *Description of South Wales*, by the Rev. T. Rees, 1819, p. 726.

Monmouthshire, and resulted in a serious conflict at Newport, where several lives were lost. We believe that none took part in the affair but the people of that county, and yet that mad movement was designated at the time, and continues to be designated, “the Chartist riot *in Wales*.” On the western side of this county the people talk Welsh, and on the eastern, English; but the former language continues gradually, but steadily, to recede before the latter. The whole of Radnorshire and a part of Breconshire in South Wales have become English-speaking, and so have portions of Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire, and Flintshire in the North. The English wave having rolled over the border, is steadily progressing westward, and it is generally anticipated that it will by and bye have inundated the whole of Wales, and completely extinguished the dear old language of the country; we are afraid that this will come to pass, but it will not be just now, nor for many years to come.

Home Missionary Societies were established in the early part of the present century for the benefit of these Anglicised districts. Isolated efforts were made in North Wales as early as 1808, by Mr. Thomas Edwards of Liverpool, and others, and in 1813 a Society was formed “for the propagation of religious knowledge on the borders of Offa’s dyke.” That Society still exists under the name of “The North Wales Home Mission,” and employs from fifteen to twenty missionaries to labour among the people of the English-speaking districts.

The first impulse in this direction in South Wales was given by the Rev. D. Charles of Carmarthen, who, on his annual visits to the mineral springs of Llan-drindod, Radnorshire, was distressed in witnessing the ignorance and ungodliness of the surrounding population. By his efforts Mr. George Griffiths of Llandilo was settled as a missionary at Penybont: he only remained for a few months, and was succeeded by the Rev. D. Morgan, afterwards of Welshpool, whose stay was almost equally short. In 1821 the Rev. D. Howells of Swansea, now the oldest minister in the Connexion, was appointed to the station, and continued to labour on it with great devotedness and marked success for seven years. These efforts began in 1819, but it was not until some years later that the South Wales Home Missionary Society was formally established. One of its first missionaries was Thomas Phillips of Llandovery, who was settled at Hay, at a salary of £30 a year, and who afterwards became widely known as the Rev. Dr. Phillips of Hereford, the indefatigable and marvellously successful District Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, The South Wales Home Mission has now under its charge twenty English Stations, containing about thirty places of worship, but Penybont, and several other places which it once assisted, have now become self-supporting.

The field of these Societies’ operations continues to enlarge with the spread of the English language. There is likewise a continuous stream of English people coming over to the manufacturing districts and large seaport towns, which makes it necessary to provide religious means in the English language in those

places. This is done largely by other denominations, and the Calvinistic Methodists are making strenuous efforts in that direction. The latter labour, in this respect, under the disadvantage of not having "brethren in England" on whom to fall back for aid. They have expended an enormous sum, we believe more than a quarter of a million sterling, upon places of worship within the last twenty-five years, and there remains a heavy debt on many of those sanctuaries. This incubus is being gradually removed, and when it is gone, the Connexion will find no difficulty in making all the necessary provision to meet the spread of the English language. In the meantime, the need of such efforts is becoming increasingly felt, and there is more being done in the two provinces of the Principality than, under the circumstances, could have been expected.

The Welsh Methodist Connexion existed for upwards of a century without a College of its own, though it never was without some men who had received a collegiate education. For many years it had among its ministers a few who had been trained for the Establishment. Some were educated at the Countess's College at Trevecca, and afterwards at Cheshunt, while others went for a time, either at their own expense or by the assistance of kind friends, to superior schools at Chester, Liverpool, and other places. There were a great many in the Connexion who, to say the least, were not favourably disposed towards a college-training for ministers, and they found some apology for their feelings in the fact that some of their most popular and efficient preachers were not collegians. They were men who had studied hard, and had acquired by their own unaided exertions more of those qualifications which are essential to the efficient discharge of the duties of the ministry, than some who had received a collegiate training. While they themselves deplored their want of early advantages, there were not a few of their brethren who thought that they did quite as well, if not better, without them. But early in the present century, the want of an institution for the training of ministers became increasingly felt; and the first movement towards securing that object was made in North Wales, in the year 1817. It was resolved to open an academy at Llangollen; a house was taken for the purpose, and Mr. Owen Williams, a very pious and talented young man from Anglesea, who had distinguished himself as a scholar, was chosen to be the tutor. He was sent to Hoxton Academy to more fully prepare himself for the important charge; but while assiduously pursuing his studies at that place, he was taken ill and died. Some years later, Mr. Evan Rowlands, a young man of earnest piety, good education, and superior talents, was chosen for this purpose. He went to Belfast to complete his studies; but the brethren were again doomed to disappointment, for Mr. Rowlands's health broke down, and he was taken away.

After many unsuccessful attempts on the part of the Connexion to procure this first requisite of a College, the Great Master was at length pleased to provide tutors in every way qualified for the work. The Rev. Lewis Edwards, M.A., who had studied and taken high honours at Edinburgh, was led to settle at Bala,

through marrying the grand-daughter of the renowned Thomas Charles. Her brother, the Rev. David Charles, B.A., returned from Oxford about the same time, and the two brothers-in-law joined to open "The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Theological Institute," at Bala, in 1837, and the North Wales Association, held at Carnarvon in September 1839, adopted this Institute as a College for the Connexion, and decided upon rules for its management and measures for its support.

The few survivors of the Trevecca "family," who were now the owners of the "house" which had been built by Howell Harris, presented this commodious edifice to the South Wales Association for the purpose of a College, and efforts were therefore made on the part of the brethren in the south to have the Institution that was at Bala removed to this place; but the northern friends could not be brought to assent to this proposal, and it was ultimately agreed that Mr. Edwards should remain at Bala, and that an additional College should be opened at Trevecca, to be presided over by Mr. Charles. Soon after his departure for the south, the Rev. John Parry was appointed to succeed him at Bala. That Institution has been growing in importance from year to year, and is still carried on successfully under the charge of Dr. Edwards and Mr. Parry. For many years it was supported by annual subscriptions from individual friends and collections in the churches; but these sources of revenue proving uncertain and precarious, the Rev. Edward Morgan of Dyffryn suggested that a fund, which would be adequate for the permanent endowment of the College, should be at once collected. It was acknowledged by all that this was a grand idea; but then came the question, Where was the man to be found that would put it in practice? Mr. Morgan undertook the gigantic task, and in about five years collected £25,000 from the Calvinistic Methodists of North Wales and of three or four large towns in England. When this had been done, it was resolved to collect another fund to erect a College building worthy of the Institution and of the Connexion to which it belonged. This edifice cost about £8000, and Mr. Morgan had succeeded in collecting the greater part of this additional sum, when he was called to his rest, on the 9th of May 1871, and when he was only fifty-three years of age. Few men devoted as much time and energy as he to the outward interests of the Connexion; and yet he preached as if all his mind and soul had always been entirely concentrated on the studying of sermons. For many years he struggled against very bad health, but his indomitable spirit raised him above all difficulties and disadvantages. Battling for breath, he worked on and worked hard, and continued to do so to the very last.

The College at Trevecca was opened in 1842, and Dr. Charles conducted it alone for twenty years. His self-sacrificing zeal and unwearied application to the onerous duties of his position, made that College a great blessing to the Connexion in South Wales. In the year 1862 Dr. Charles found it necessary, to the regret of the friends, to resign the presidency of the College, and as it was

resolved not to open it again without two tutors, the difficulty of coming to a satisfactory arrangement in this matter led to its being closed for more than three years. There was one highly-qualified tutor whose services could be secured, but the difficulty was to find a second. At length all difficulties were surmounted and the College was re-opened in September 1865, with the Rev. William Howells, then of Liverpool, as president, and the Rev. J. Harris Jones, Ph.D., as classical tutor. The College remains under their able superintendence, and is eminently successful. Before the institution at Trevecca was first opened, a fund of six thousand pounds was collected in South Wales towards its support; but the success of Mr. Morgan led the South-Walian friends to resolve to raise their fund to an equal amount to that of Bala, and this is now being successfully carried out by the Rev. Edward Matthews of Cardiff, the Moderator for the present year of the General Assembly.

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists were among the most zealous of the friends and supporters of the London Missionary Society from its very beginning; but in 1840 they resolved to establish a Foreign Missionary Society of their own. They fixed upon two fields of operation, one on the Kassian Hills in Bengal, and the other in Brittany. The Rev. Thomas Jones was the first sent to Kassia. He found tribes of people without any form of religion and without a written language, but he soon mastered their tongue and reduced it to writing. Though some unhappy circumstances led to the withdrawal of Mr. Jones from the Society a few years before his death, he proved himself a most able and zealous worker. He was followed by the Rev. William Lewis, who laboured with much success among these tribes for twenty years. He has now retired to his native country in broken health, but has since his return completed the translation of the whole of the New Testament into the Khassee language. Several other missionaries have gone out to the same field, and, though the mission has met with some serious difficulties, God has blessed it with remarkable success. There are now on those hills five missionaries, fourteen native teachers, and fourteen churches, connected with which there are between five and six hundred communicants, and candidates, while there are about eight hundred children in the schools.

The Rev. James Williams was sent out to Brittany, and settled at Quimper, where he laboured hard for many years as minister, colporteur, or anything else that could further the interests of the Gospel. A chapel was built at Quimper and another at l'Orient. Mr. Williams's state of health compelled him some time ago to retire, but the mission is still carried on, and M. Braud labours now at the former place and M. Rouffet at the latter. There are on the two stations between ninety and one hundred communicants.

We have spoken throughout of two Associations, one in North Wales and the other in the South. Those have been to all intents and purposes two separate organizations, quite independent of each other. Ministers from the South would

attend the North Wales Associations, and *vice versa*; but the brethren from one province did not feel that they had a right to take part in the business deliberations of the other. The two sections felt that they were one, and neither would take an important step without consulting the other; but there was no meeting held at which the whole body was represented. For a long time this deficiency was felt, and a few years ago measures were taken to supply it. After a conference of ministers and others from the two provinces, and a lengthened correspondence between the different Associations, it was resolved to establish a General Assembly of the whole Connexion, to hold its meetings alternately in the North and the South. The first meeting was held at Swansea, in May 1864, and the eighth at Liverpool, in May 1871. This annual gathering is becoming increasingly important, and will, no doubt, ultimately become that which their General Assemblies are to the other Presbyterian bodies—the legislating body for the whole Connexion.

One hundred and thirty-five years have now passed away since the rise of Welsh Methodism, and we are glad that we can state that the Connexion as it increases in years does not show any symptoms of decay. Its progress during the last twenty years of its existence has been more marked than in any similar period from the beginning. The following figures will show the advance which it has made during that period:—

	1850.	1870.	Increase.
Ministers,	172	419	247
Preachers,	194	354	160
Chapels and preaching places, 848		1,126	278
Communicants,	58,678	92,735	34,057

Truly can we say, “The Lord has done great things for us.” There remains yet much to be done, but He is among us still, and with Him all things are possible.