

THE SOUND OF MARCHING

**A personal account of a work of God in Wales
from 1945 to 1952**

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A lecture given at the Bala Ministers' Conference
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‘The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees’ (AV)

‘The sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees’ (NIV)

(2 Samuel 5:23)

THE SOUND OF MARCHING

It is a pleasure to be here tonight, and I trust that God will make it a blessing to us. On my way in, somebody asked me to which century the 40s and 50s referred. Since I was asked to speak about them because I had lived through the period, I thought you'd all agree that it was the twentieth!

So, 'the sound of the wind - or the sound of marching - through the tops of the mulberry trees' is a glance at Wales in the 40s and 50s. We could say more, but a glance is all we have time for.

Let me tell you the sources for this lecture first of all:

Excuse Me, Mr Davies, Hallelujah! by Geraint Fielder

Cofio Hanner Canrif: Hanes Mudiad Efengylaidd Cymru 1948-98 by Noel Gibbard (history of the Evangelical Movement of Wales) - *Now also in English:*

The First Fifty Years: A History of the Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1946—98.

O! Ryfedd Ras, by J. Elwyn Davies

Various articles in Y Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd and The Evangelical Magazine of Wales

In addition, my own recollections, and information from people whom I have phoned or to whom I have written during the last six months.

The period I want to concentrate on is from 1945 to 1952. It would be wrong to think, however, that nothing was happening in Wales before 1945 from an evangelical point of view, so I'll begin with a brief sketch of the situation that prevailed during the years between the 1904 Revival and the 1940s.

From 1904 to the early 40s

After the 1904 Revival, a plethora of Gospel Halls and Missions arose in Wales in addition to the Brethren Assemblies that already existed. The Revd Brynmor Jones in his last book, *How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings* - which reached him in proof stage shortly before his death - maintains that 50 per cent, of these Mission Halls and Gospel Halls began with expulsions from the traditional denominations after the Revival. Another 25 per cent, he says, withdrew voluntarily in search of a more welcoming atmosphere and the more free and fervent worship they had known

during revival days. The remaining 25 per cent were set up a little later in the 20s: these included the Elim group of churches established by George and Stephen Jefferies and W. B. Hutchinson, and the Apostolic Churches that were established by Pastor Daniel Williams and centred in Penygroes, near Ammanford. Now the main centres for all these churches lay in the industrial belt of South Wales. There were far fewer in North Wales. These Gospel Halls and Free Missions varied considerably in quality, but they possessed an evangelistic zeal that meant that to people generally in their areas the doctrine of the new birth was not unknown. They were a forthright people. Let me illustrate this. My wife and I were once taken by David Shepherd to see his father, Tom Shepherd, who was a close friend of Evan Roberts. As soon as we went into the house, the first question was, "Have you been saved?" And on receiving our replies, he detailed the time, the hour, the day and the date when he and Evan were converted.

Tom Shepherd belonged to the Penyrheol Mission (now Penyrheol Free Church). An Evangelical Times article in March 1939 described the men who founded this Mission in 1908 as follows: 'They were quite outstanding Christians in their holy living, childlike trust in the Scriptures, fearless rebuke of evil, intense prayerfulness, godly raising of their families, and vital interest in the worldwide mission of the Church.'

Now the same can be said of several other Gospel Halls. Certainly a number of these missions experienced times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The general teaching was Arminian, and there was a strong emphasis on the second blessing - the Keswick teaching of those days was prevalent, with its stress on the need for consecration, or surrendering, as an experience separate from conversion. That was the general emphasis. It should be added, however, that some of the Pentecostal and Apostolic groups caused unnecessary offence by the way they claimed to have been saved, giving the impression that they were boasting rather than pointing to the Lord Jesus.

The denominations

What about the mainline denominations during this period? Here, liberal theology was gradually spreading; the social gospel was also very popular and, on the Welsh language scene especially, there was a strong emphasis on cultural

activities. And yet most of the 1904 converts had remained within the denominations. Some ministers who had been blessed in the Revival had continued preaching faithfully, but there was often tension in their churches. When I asked a young girl in the 1940s how things were in her chapel in Llanelli, the answer I received was, “Oh, some have seen the light, but the rest of us are normal.” The denominational chapels varied enormously; there were pockets where men of strong evangelical convictions were to be found, including pastors and deacons, especially among the Baptists.

On the whole, preaching festivals were very popular, especially in Welsh, and a number of well known preachers were associated with particular sermons which they hawked around Wales. Often, the things that characterised such sermons were a clever play on words and lengthy, flowery illustrations. The preacher could take it for granted that his congregation had a fairly wide knowledge of the biblical narratives, though not necessarily of doctrine. Some preachers were very dramatic.

Let me mention one: Philip Jones of Porthcawl. He was born in 1855 and often spoke of the ‘fifty-niners’ he had known (referring, of course, to those who were converted in the 1859 Revival). Philip Jones preached until he was nearly ninety; he was undoubtedly used of the Lord and was very influential.

When I was in the fifth form at Gowerton Grammar School in the early 1940s, our History Master said to us one day, ‘Philip Jones is preaching at Pontarddulais this week! You must go and hear him; you’ll never have another chance; it’s better than going to the pictures.’ I don’t believe he was thinking of our spiritual benefit! But Philip Jones was noted for his dramatic power and his control of the Welsh *hwyl*.

For those who do not understand what Welsh *hwyl* is, let me explain. It was a series of *contrived and premeditated cadences*, so that the rise and fall of the voice took on a musical aspect so much so that one Welsh composer, Matthew Williams, composed a hymn tune on the basis of Philip Jones’s *hwyl*, which he had heard on the radio in 1940. And last week a lady played the tune for me and sang the hymn to that *hwyl*!

Well, I went to Goppa Chapel to hear him and he lived up to his reputation. He and other popular preachers of the period had mastered the art of dramatic preaching and were, in one sense, performers. And yet Philip Jones and some

others had a real concern for souls. In the ministry of these men the *hwyl* was used of God, but others simply tried to copy the style. Later, I understood perfectly why Dr Lloyd-Jones said that he was not a typical Welsh preacher. Expository preaching in those days, brethren, was very rare indeed.

Conventions

Now men like R. B. Jones of Perth tried to provide for the converts of the 1904 Revival by arranging mini—conventions on the style of the Keswick-in-Wales in Llandrindod. Such conventions were held in Porth, Pontypridd, Barry, Bridgend, Llanelli and Ammanford. The one in Ammanford was the brainchild of the Revd Nantlais Williams, who was converted in the 1904 Revival when already Minister of Bethany Calvinistic Methodist Church in Ammanford. He was anxious to establish a Welsh Convention for Welsh speakers, and this ‘Ammanford Convention’ is the only one that continues to the present day. ’

Nantlais, as he was known to everyone, was himself a very forthright man. I remember him coming to preach at the annual ‘Big Meetings’ in my home chapel in Pontarddulais, the English Presbyterian Chapel or Swansea Road Chapel, and his opening words to a very sedate congregation were, ‘You are not a Christian if you are not converted.’

In all these local conventions at that time it was the emphasis of the Keswick convention that generally predominated. The one exception would be those convened by the Brethren Assemblies. I remember attending one of their Easter conventions in Llanelli, when for a whole week J. M. Davies, one of their missionaries, led us right through the Epistle to the Romans. Their emphasis was dispensational and premillennial, which was the view generally accepted at that time among Christians in South Wales. And a very popular edition of the Bible then of course was the Scofield Reference Bible.

I remember how disturbed I became when later I heard Dr Lloyd-Jones say in one of his famous asides in a sermon preached in Llanelli, ‘And you who read your Scofield Bibles, don’t forget that the notes are not inspired.’ I eventually came to see the truth of that, and had a lot of un-learning to do, as I had heavily marked and inwardly digested those notes in the copy my father had given me for my twentieth birthday.

But was there no movement of the Spirit of God in the mainline denominations between 1904 and 1945? Yes, there was, here and there. For example, in 1937 there was a spiritual breeze in the Llanpumsaint, Cynwyl, Llangeler and Carmarthen areas, when Roy Hession and Idris Davies preached there. But it was localised.

What happened in the 1940s?

And this brings me now to my main theme. What actually happened in the 1940s? Was there anything new or different? Yes, there was. There was a marked movement of God's Spirit among young people - and I emphasise the word 'young'. It began amongst students, and the account of what happened in the colleges is well documented by Geraint Fielder in his book. I don't propose to describe the work in the colleges, but hope to concentrate on the effects outside the colleges in the community at large - though the two are closely intertwined.

One should note that, under God's providence, at that particular period a high percentage of the student population was from Wales, and they spent most of their vacations in their home towns and villages. Among those students, two names stand out in relation to what I have to say: Glyn Owen and Gwyn Walters. Both were converted after hearing the preaching of Idris Davies, a teacher in the primary school in Ammanford and an evangelist greatly used at that time.

Both of them, while students at Cardiff, took part in the students' evangelistic campaign in the city of Cardiff in 1940, when many people young and old came to know the Lord; and again in the Rhondda in 1941, when all the preaching services were conducted by the students. Glyn Owen was already manifesting a remarkable gift for open-air preaching. In 1944 a campaign was held on a much smaller scale in Carmarthen, with Leith Samuel as the main preacher rather than the students. Only one person was known to have been converted, and that was Gwyn Walters' sister Megan (now Mrs Glyn Davies).

And yet, in one sense, that campaign at Carmarthen proved to be the turning point, for on their journey home on the bus Gwyn Walters and Huw Davies (a Llanelli boy who was a medical student in London) discussed the significance of the fact that so many of the students involved were from Llanelli and district. The upshot was that they decided to meet regularly during their vacations to pray for Llanelli.

But the burden of prayer for Llanelli did not begin with them. Now this has not been documented anywhere before, so I want you to pay particular attention to it, please. For some time already, at Caersalem Welsh Baptist Church, the minister W. M. George - who had come to Llanelli in 1932 and was a Calvinist in his doctrine had been conducting a monthly prayer meeting to seek the Lord's blessing on the town. Meetings were arranged in the morning, afternoon and evening, so that there would be opportunity for the shift workers in Llanelli's many tinplate works to attend one of them, and they were open to people of all denominations. Yes, brethren, there were fathers in the faith in Llanelli in those days, and some mothers too! One lady had for many years had a burden to pray for the Lord's blessing among students.

Now it was to this group of pray-ers that Gwyn Walters turned to seek prayer support when he and the other Llanelli students felt the pressure of the Holy Spirit upon them to arrange an evangelistic campaign in the town in the summer of 1945. And so, during the Christmas and Easter vacations they met for prayer in the home of W. M. George and in other homes, as well as meeting in their colleges during term-time to pray specifically for this campaign.

Llanelli Campaign, 1945

When it came to the summer of 1945, they borrowed the largest chapel building in Llanelli, Zion Baptist, and felt an inward conviction that they should ask for the use of the main chapel, which could hold a thousand people, rather than the vestry, holding only 700.

From the very beginning God's hand was upon that campaign in a remarkable way. Two Llanelli Grammar School boys, who were in the sixth form and were close friends, were converted on the Sunday night before the campaign started. Having talked to some of the student team members, they both returned home and had no peace in their respective homes until they had cried to the Lord for salvation. Those two were Hugh Morgan and John Thomas, both of whom - notice this - had been taught by a very godly man in their Sunday school class. I think that is significant.

Each morning of the campaign, the team met for prayer in Caersalem, and each day two open-air meetings were held: one 4 pm. and one at 9 pm. The main

preaching meeting was at 7 pm. Attendance at the main meeting rapidly increased, so that by the third night the chapel was packed. On that night, the preacher was not a student as on the other nights, but Mr Arnold Aldis of the Medical School at Cardiff. He preached with an unction he had never known before, and there was a great sense of quietness in the meeting.

The open-air meetings

But it was the open-air meetings that were most remarkable. Gwyn Walters sister Megan kept a diary of the daily events, and in an article in *Y Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd* (Summer, 2000) she wrote:

What remains in my memory regarding those meetings is the strange silence that came over the town. Everything so quiet, so quiet. Those who preached I and those who gave testimonies simply gave themselves to the Lord in their speaking, and there were no gimmicks of any kind. Our feeling that week was that the town was our possession, and the presence of the Lord was something of which we and others were very aware.

Let me quote the words of Eluned Thomas, John Thomas's wife, then a girl 17 and converted at the beginning of the campaign. This is what she said in *The Evangelical Magazine of Wales* (August 1998): 'When I think how exceptionally shy and timid I was, I was amazed that I, so recently converted, had the courage to speak to strangers with deep passion about my new-found faith. I can only explain any of this in terms of God being there.'

These open-air meetings were held in the busiest part of the town, at the outdoor bus centre next to the Regal Cinema and the Ritz Dance Hall; the team stood with the Roman Catholic Church behind them. The police were most co-operative, even moving the bus parking places to make it easier for them to hold the open-air! People were flocking out of the pubs to listen. Glyn Owen said,

The people simply would not disperse for hours, and more than once the police asked the leaders to urge the crowds to go home to their beds and sleep. More than once the students were found seriously talking with individuals and praying with them as the dawn of the next day was approaching.

On the last night of the campaign, a drunken soldier was threatening one of the student leaders, John Griffiths, a Llanelli boy and a medical student at Barts, and he could not move because of the density of the crowd. Gwyn Walters, seeing the situation, prayed in Welsh, 'Lord, as you did in the Red Sea, open the way'. Immediately, the crowd parted and Gwyn went up to John Griff and led him out, the crowd closing in behind them at once. Gwyn's comment was that it was as if a knife had come out and cut through that crowd.

A new thing

Well over a hundred people were converted in that campaign, including the parents of some of the team members. One lady converted at the campaign told me recently that what made her attend the meetings was that another girl said to her: 'You really ought to go; all the meetings are being held by young people.' And that was it! As she said to me on the phone, 'We had never heard young people testifying before to what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for them. All the preachers we had known were middle-aged.' It seems that God at that time used peer pressure in a very merciful way.

This was the new thing that had not been seen on that scale since the 1904 Revival, and older people recognised this and were themselves drawn to the meetings and to the Lord. It is little wonder that Gwyn Walters, towards the end of his life, said regarding this campaign, 'I regard it as the most significant event of my life.'

Spiritual nurture

Now what about the spiritual nurture of these converts? Members of the prayer group that I mentioned earlier were particularly helpful in their prayers for the converts and in their personal advice to them; they also invited them frequently to their homes. In addition, after the campaign a weekly Saturday night Bible Study was arranged in Caersalem for the converts, and this was taken by the students themselves. As the members rapidly increased in number, it was divided into two groups, one of which was taken by Gwyn Walters (who at that time, together with Glyn Owen, was in the Theological College of the Calvinistic Methodist Church (Presbyterian) in Aberystwyth). Gwyn would arrange his preaching weekends in

the Llanelli area so that he could lead this group, and he took them through the IVF Doctrinal Basis. The meetings averaged one hundred in attendance.

Later, the meeting was taken over by W. M. George, who gave himself most sacrificially to teaching the group. He would speak for an hour, and this was followed by very beneficial question times. He dealt with Genesis 1-3, the Tabernacle and the Epistle to the Ephesians. The meetings continued for a number of years. One friend of mine told me recently how he and his wife, who were in those days a courting pair of teenagers, used to travel on the bus from Clydach each week to those meetings. Over 20 per cent of the converts went full-time Christian service.

Now we need to remember, of course, that there were other groups conducting campaigns at that time. (By the way, 'campaign' was the 'in' word in those days: not missions or outreaches, but campaigns.) Among such groups in the 1940s the National Young Life Campaign was particularly prominent, and people were converted through them. But this campaign in 1945 in Llanelli had a plus element to it which made it unique.

Campaigns in 1946

The following summer was a busy time for the students, for they conducted campaigns in several villages around Llanelli. I will concentrate on the two of which I have personal experience.

But, first of all, at this juncture let me briefly digress. I myself had not been aware of the 1945 campaign in Llanelli, and there was a reason for this. I had been converted in the late 1930s through an Indian evangelist who preached in my home church in Pontarddulais, but I had then been left with no Christian fellowship among people of my own age. The only spiritual input that I recollect receiving was through one of our elders, Mr J. T. Capp, who visited our home almost weekly. He had been converted from a very worldly life and was a great Bible student, always opening up the Word when visiting and giving frequent testimony to his own experiences of the Lord. He became my spiritual mentor.

It was this man who heard Glyn Owen preach in the open-air meeting at Llanelli in 1945 and told him, 'You are coming to Pontarddulais next year.' People didn't refuse Mr Capp!

Well, that year (1946) Gwyn Walters, John Griff, Omri Jenkins (whom we are glad to have here with us) and I. D. E. Thomas (Isaac Thomas), together with others, came to conduct a week's campaign at the English Presbyterian Church in Swansea Road, my home church. At that time I was a student at Swansea University and, although still a regular church attender, had drifted away from the Lord. I remember clearly the first night of that campaign. Gwyn Walters chaired the meeting and Gwilym Rees preached on the verse, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' The Lord graciously met with me that night and restored me. What was more, I realised that all these young people had had the same conversion experience that I'd had some seven or eight years before. I was so excited, and the next day I was out with them distributing tracts.

It must have appeared to the team that not much had happened in Pontarddulais that week. Yet one girl was converted, and another Christian girl was discovered. The former of these wrote to me earlier this year saying, 'I'd never come across that type of teaching before and, as you know, it changed I things for me.'

Ammanford

In a fortnight's time, the team was conducting another campaign in Ammanford, and to that I went. That was a campaign that was greatly owned of God. Despite initial hardness, after much prayer by the team members there was a breakthrough and many were converted.

One of the outstanding features of that campaign was the fact that among the converts were two ministers. One of them has written saying, 'Although I had been minister at Bethany for two years, I regarded this campaign as the turning point of my ministry and as the root of my subsequent interest in all aspects of evangelical work.' This was J. D. Williams - father of Gwynn Williams - who succeeded Nantlais in Bethany. (Nantlais ministered there from 1900 to 1944, and 'J. D.' followed on.)

Now notice the parallel between I. D. Williams's experience and that of Bethany's previous minister, Nantlais, in the 1904 Revival. In describing the outbreak of revival in Bethany, Nantlais says this: 'Many fell at the feet of Jesus, but I had not fallen yet.' But fall he did, and he was able to say, 'For me, time was divided in November 1904. From now on, it was always *before the Revival* and

after the Revival. Quotation from Nantlais' book: '*O gopa Bryn Nebo*'. You will not be surprised that Nantlais fully supported that 1946 campaign in Ammanford, and so also did another very well-known minister in the town, Dr Tegfan Davies of the Christian Temple.

The Annanford campaign was also characterised by very powerful open-air meetings; these were held in the school yard adjoining the main road. But the one thing that stands out in my memory was the night when the student preacher did not correctly divide the Word of Truth. During the last hymn Gwyn Walters, having been told by Glyn Owen, 'You are going to deal with this: I am going downstairs to pray', went up into the pulpit and at the close of the hymn asked everybody to sit down. 'We have not heard the gospel tonight', he said, and then proceeded to preach the gospel. Many people didn't like it, but I was told that the person who was most blessed was the student preacher himself. God gave great courage in those days, and also discernment as to the right thing to do.

Nurture

Following on from those two campaigns in Pontarddulais and Ammanford, a weekly Friday night meeting was held in Ammanford, with about fifty attending, and a weekly Saturday night meeting in Pontarddulais, which consisted of a much smaller group. Visits were made from one to the other, and members from the Llanelli group often came to help in both; While in the two meetings, of course, we were always helped by the ever youthful Idris Davies.

In Pontarddulais our numbers gradually increased, as the Lord added to us young people converted through a variety of unconnected occurrences during the following months. Early on, we were convinced that there should be another campaign in 1947, and for ten days this time. Gwyn Walters agreed to come, as well as Glyn Jenkins (who, as you know, is still going strong in his ninety-fourth year). Other team members came from Llanelli, Cydweli and the Penyrheol Gospel Hall, as well as members of the Christian Union at Swansea University.

Pontarddulais, 1947

That 1947 campaign was owned of God in the conversion of many people, including the father, mother and sister of the young girl who had been converted

the previous year. For a month beforehand, an after-church prayer meeting was held on Sunday nights, and this was most enthusiastically supported by the local Apostolics. Prayer meetings were held each morning of the mission, and were supported by the minister of the chapel, W. R. James.

And once again the open-air services were quite remarkable. They were held at the Black Horse Square, which faced the road bridge over the Llwchwr River (the River Loughor) and formed the county boundary between Glamorganshire and Carmarthenshire. Across the bridge on the Glamorgan side was the Dulais Square, and both squares contained a number of public houses. Our very powerful loudspeaker carried across both squares, and people were coming out of the pubs, placing their beer mugs on the adjacent walls and listening intently. People were even able to hear from nearly a mile away!

I remember seeing one man, in the midst of shaving, sticking his head out of the window and then forgetting to carry on with his shaving! One young man listening on the Dulais Square became very disturbed about his spiritual condition; he went home and was converted at home. He and his wife were later to be among the founder members of the present Noddfa Evangelical Church, Pontarddlais (an AECW church).

There is no doubt that as a result of this campaign Christians - including my own parents - were blessed and received a clearer understanding of the gospel. From now on, before each college vacation the Church Secretary would ask me, 'Who can you get to fill the pulpit this time?' And another person with the same question to a number of us was Sidney Evans, brother-in-law of Evan Roberts, then retired from his missionary work in India and in charge of a small chapel in Penyrheol. Throughout this period following the 1945 Llanelli campaign, many opportunities were given to us in the mainline denominations to testify and to preach, and evangelical pastors, elders and deacons welcomed us.

Following on from the 1947 campaign in Pontarddlais, our Saturday night meeting was greatly augmented and continued for about fifteen years. Certainly the friendships formed during these campaigns have lasted throughout the years, for in addition to our weekly meeting we visited one another's homes, where the conversation was always around the Word of God and the cause of the gospel both at home and abroad. Remember, brethren, that many of us belonged to churches

where there was no clear and regular gospel ministry. Consequently, our weekly fellowship meetings and our frequent visits to each other's homes were very important. It was also a time when very few people owned a telephone, and so it was not possible to have a chat in that way. There is no doubt that we had a deep love for one another and a real concern for each other's spiritual development.

What of North Wales?

Well, now it is time to glance at what was happening in North Wales. Here in the following account four names are going to recur frequently. They are the names of Elwyn Davies, Herbert Evans, Arthur Pritchard and Emyr Roberts.

What was happening in the colleges in North Wales has been well documented both by Geraint Fielder and by Noel Gibbard in their books. One must remember that in North Wales there had not been the evangelical witness that had existed in the South. There were not many mission halls, and the number of evangelical ministers in the traditional denominations was very small. But here also the Holy Spirit moved in a new way. It happened a little bit later than in South Wales - and I want you to notice later how the work in both places coalesced. Here in North Wales the Holy Spirit moved in a new way among students, and in a very surprising manner, because it was outside the perimeters of the IVF.

Elwyn Davies

I refer to the conversion of Elwyn Davies, who was a leader of the Bangor SCM (the Student Christian Movement which, as you know, was a liberal movement). Although he had been present at one of the meetings of the 1945 campaign in Llanelli, and had also attended a TSF conference in Cambridge when Dr Lloyd-Jones was one of the speakers, he had not yet experienced the new birth. It was at an SCM retreat in the Easter of 1947 - notice the date - at Plas-y-Nant, Betws Garmon, that he came to faith, having already for some time been convicted of pride in the midst of his endeavours to help the needy. Coming back to university at Bangor, he began testifying and explaining the gospel. Conversions began to take place and the gospel became a talking point.

Interestingly, at the same time on the east side of North Wales the Holy Spirit was at work outside college influences. In April 1947, the NYLC under David

Shepherd was conducting a campaign in Mold. This led to the formation of the Mold Christian Youth Fellowship, which met weekly. It was as a result of these activities that Gwilym Roberts came to know the Lord, and by the end of the year he himself organised a Welsh language campaign, with the support of the local church council, to be held in the largest chapel in Mold. The missionary was Isaac Thomas, who was then in his first pastorate in Glanamman, but he was prevented by a funeral from being present for the first meeting. He suggested to Gwilym, therefore, that he should ask this young student from Bangor, Elwyn Davies, to come over to speak. That was what happened, and Elwyn's word of testimony had quite a profound effect on many people. More young people were converted as a result of the preaching services on the following nights.

Herbert Evans

Meanwhile, what was happening at the university in Bangor was having repercussions outside the student campus. The person who was the vital link in this respect was Herbert Evans of Gellilydan near Trawsfynydd. He had been converted in 1944 while working in the Civil Service in Llandudno. He then went to the Bangor Normal Teachers' Training College and linked up with the very small Christian Union in the university, during the time that Elwyn Davies was active in the SCM.

In the summer of 1946 Herbert visited South Wales and was present at the Ammauford campaign; and it was here that I first met him. Then, because of a breakdown in his health, he left college temporarily and came to live with his sister in Bala. Soon he discovered some real spiritual interest among the family and friends of Mari Davies (now Mari Jones, whose husband John is welcomed here tonight). Mari, who is known to many of you as the author of *In the Shadow of Aran* and *In the Shelter of the Fold*, was from Pant-y-Neuadd Farm and, strangely enough, her own spiritual interest and that of others had been aroused through the Oxford Group (or Moral Rearmament Movement). Herbert realised that this Movement was not emphasising the root of the gospel, and he had many discussions with the Davies family of Pant-y-Neuadd and others. It was he who introduced to them other evangelical young people, and gradually a small fellowship began to meet in the home of one of them.

It so happened that by then Glyn Owen was in his *pastoralia* year at the Calvinistic Methodist College in Bala (Coleg y Bala, on the brow of the hill), and he was able to help them. Herbert also managed to arrange for other speakers to come, including Elwyn Davies from Bangor. So we begin to see something of the amazing pattern that the Lord was weaving in those days. Throughout the winter of 1947-8 this fellowship in Bala met weekly, to study the Bible and to pray for the campaign they proposed to hold at Easter 1948, for which they had secured the support of the local church council. In preparation for this they agreed to meet for a retreat at Tyn-y-coed, Dolgellau in early January 1948.

The Dolgellau retreat

Herbert Evans was the convenor of this retreat, and he made sure that both students and people from outside the college were invited to attend. The main speaker was T. Arthur Pritchard, a theological student at the Calvinistic Methodist College in Aberystwyth. He had been converted in 1941 through conversations with Owen Thomas of Llwynypia, who had come a holiday to Garndolbenmaen, where Arthur was living at the time.

Twenty-six people gathered together in Dolgellau, from the Thursday to the Monday. The first two days were very hard, and by Saturday morning it was felt that someone or something was hindering the blessing. That morning, therefore, was spent in prayer for the removal of the hindrance. Then two persons confessed that they were guilty of resisting the Spirit by their attitudes. Immediately the atmosphere changed and the Holy Spirit came upon them in a remarkable way. Two girls were converted. The blessing continued on the Sunday, even though Arthur Pritchard was away at a preaching engagement in Abersoch.

Then, in the middle of the Sunday night, Arthur Pritchard in his lodgings at Abersoch and Herbert Evans at Dolgellau were both awakened at the same time by the Spirit and given a great burden of prayer. Both knew that the victory had been granted over Satan and that more blessing was to follow. In the prayer meeting on the Monday morning Elwyn Davies prayed, pleading the promise of Luke 11:13: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" And as

he did so, he was so filled with the love of God that he sat down crying and laughing at the same time. And the same thing happened to Herbert Evans.

Then, later, as Arthur Pritchard spoke on Romans 6, the Holy Spirit came upon them in a way that is difficult to describe. Many were convicted and converted, and once again there was this strange mixture of crying and laughing and rejoicing in the love of God. Mari Davies's brother Bryn commented later, 'We have been in a revival.'

Plas-y-Nant

This retreat had a profound effect on the development of the work among the students in Bangor, and so they arranged another retreat at the end of January, to be held at Plas-y-Nant. Once again care was taken not to confine it entirely to students, and Elwyn Davies invited Mari and others to come. Elwyn himself was the speaker this time. His theme was 'the conversion of a sinner', and he expounded the significance of the cross of Christ. Once again there was a very marked anointing on the meetings. Dr Geraint Gruffydd has remarked that the retreat proved to be a spiritual revolution for him and for most of the leaders of the SCM in Bangor (though, sadly, not for all).

The Bala Campaign

But instead of tracing the development of the work among the students and colleges in Bangor, let us move on to the Bala Campaign led by Isaac Thomas at Easter 1948, for which the Bala Fellowship had prayed right through the winter. After an initial hardness in the meetings, midway through the campaign the Holy Spirit came down upon the congregation and worked mightily in the hearts of a large number. Many were convicted of sin and it was necessary to arrange after-meetings for anxious seekers. In these after-meetings Elwyn Davies spelt out clearly the way of salvation.

So great was the blessing that it was felt imperative to continue the campaign for another week. It is true to say that the whole town was, as it were, electrified as it heard the gospel preached in power and endorsed by the many testimonies given both in word and song. Isaac Thomas's comment was: 'It was the closest to revival

that I have experienced.' The local newspaper reported all the proceedings most sympathetically.

A significant development

Stemming from that campaign in Bala was a development that ultimately proved to be of great significance. On the last day, the leaders went to the owner of *Gwasg y Bala* (the Bala Press) to ask whether he would accept an order for 1500 copies of the first issue of a proposed bimonthly Welsh magazine, *Y Cylchrawn Efengylaidd* (The Evangelical Magazine). This was a venture of faith: having no capital and no financial backing, they proposed that they would pay for the first issue when they ordered the second. To his great credit, the owner of the Press agreed to this.

The aims of the Magazine were to present the Christian faith to our fellow Welshmen and Welshwomen, to build up Christians in the faith, and to provide news of what the Lord was doing in Wales. The first issue to appear was dated November/December 1948, and it was sold for one shilling (5p) by young Christians who hawked it up and down throughout the length and breadth of Wales.

Early in 1949 the Editorial Committee accepted a suggestion that they should approach the organisers of the National Eisteddfod of Wales, asking permission to set up a tent on the Eisteddfod field to sell the *Cylchrawn* and other Christian literature. Consent was given, and so at Dolgellau in August 1949 there began a testimony to the gospel on the Eisteddfod field a testimony that has continued up to the present day.

Emyr Roberts

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1948 and the spring of 1949, campaigns had continued to be held in numerous places: in the South, at Llwynhendy, Glandybie and Penygroes; and in the North - just listen to this list - in Glascoed, Felinheli, Nantperis, Cwm-y-Glo, Tudweiliog, Llansannan, Carrog, Llanymawddwy, Coedpoeth, Mold, Llanfairfechan and Trefor. Incredible, the amount of work they did! Some of these were for only two or three days, while others were for longer periods. The Llwynhendy campaign lasted for twelve days; the one at Trefor was extended to three weeks, and it is the Trefor one I want to mention particularly.

At this campaign, led by Elwyn Davies and Arthur Pritchard, the striking feature, both in the evening meetings in the chapel and the daytime visits to the Quarry, was the quiet seriousness with which the message was heard. Among the many who were converted was the young minister of the local Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Emyr Roberts, who was later to become a key figure with Elwyn Davies and Arthur Pritchard in the development of the work.

Eisteddfod at Dolgellau

That summer Emyr Roberts became a member of the team that manned the Literature Tent on the Eisteddfod Field in Dolgellau. There were thirty five of us in that team. It was not a purely student team by any means: people came from all walks of life, all of them young people, and we stayed at Tyn-y-Coed Christian Guest House. Each morning before going to the Eisteddfod Field we held a prayer meeting and were led in a Bible Study by the Revd Ieuan Jones, an ex-CIM missionary, at that time in charge of a Forward Movement Hall near Llanelli.

Now this was the first time that a large number of South Walians and North Walians had co-operated in a venture of this kind. Although the campaigns in South Wales had been held in English, many of us were Welsh-speaking and were able to join with our Welsh brethren in the North, all of whose campaigns had been conducted in Welsh.

There were certain notable features during that Eisteddfod at Dolgellau. One of these was the conversion of a young lady as she was competing in one of the main solo competitions on the Eisteddfod stage. She had been attracted to our company earlier in the week and had been impressed by one of the prayer meetings. While singing 'I know that my Redeemer liveth', she was given a strong sense of God's presence and an assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ was her Saviour. She won the competition, the adjudicator commenting that a new dimension had entered her singing as she proceeded. I remember her coming from the Eisteddfod tent straight to our tent on the field and saying, 'It was your fellowship that did it.'

I can never forget Emyr Roberts's comment back in the guest house that night. Lying on his bed, laughing and kicking his feet in the air in exuberance, he said, 'We think that we can do things for the Lord; but here the Lord takes a woman on

to the stage of the National Eisteddfod of Wales and saves her there, and then tells us, “That’s how I do things!””

The other notable event was the open-air service held late on the Thursday evening. It was conducted in the town square and continued until 10.30 pm. The crowd of people who were listening were then all invited to a *Noson Lawen* (a merry or joyful evening) in Bethel Chapel. Now the *Noson Lawen* is a cultural get-together in Wales, when members of the audience participate in storytelling, singing, etc., and sometimes there is a guest speaker. Traditionally, such meetings were held in barns or large farmhouse kitchens; then, later on, in halls. But it was an intriguing innovation for Eisteddfod members to be invited to a *Noson Lawen* in a chapel! And so they flocked in on that night - quite dramatically so.

Various members of the team sang and gave testimonies, and the whole evening was brought to a close by our guest speaker. He was Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was on holiday in the vicinity, and who spoke on the joy of the Lord from Philippians 4:4 - “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” The sermon began at 11.30 and finished just after midnight.

The Welsh media

This meeting had quite a profound effect. Much of it was described by a Welsh littérateur on a BBC Welsh radio programme, in a way that brought our witness to the attention of the Welsh nation. Much was made of the fact that we were young and that we were Welsh - not a movement that had come into Wales from outside. He said, ‘We cannot but recognise and feel that something is moving silently through the lives of the youth of Wales in these days - and that something has come to the Eisteddfod field and activities.

The correspondent in the Welsh weekly newspaper, *Y Cymro* (The Welshman), was even clearer in his comments. He wrote at length, saying:

There came to the Eisteddfod a number of young people proclaiming the gospel and testifying in revival terminology that something had happened to them, and that the gospel was the greatest thing in the world . . . A new emphasis was heard in Dolgellau this year, an evangelical emphasis . . . behind all this it is obvious that there are signs of a religious awakening in the Welsh nation. There are young people throughout Wales to whom something has happened. They say

they have received mercy, and there are *seiadau* (fellowships) of such people meeting on Saturday nights.

He concluded the article by giving an explanation of the gospel.

One can certainly say that the Evangelical Movement of Wales can trace its origins to the publication of the first issue of *Y Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd*, and to the remarkable series of events during the National Eisteddfod of Wales at Dolgellau in 1949.

Seiadau

Now let me say a word about these *seiadau* or fellowships that were so influential in the building up of young Christians in the faith: At that time we were not known under the name of EMW, but rather as '*pobl y Cylchgrawn*' (the people of the Magazine), and the *seiat* was referred to as '*Seiat y Cylchgrawn*' (the Fellowship of the Magazine). I wish to refer specifically to the one saint of which I have personal experience.

But first let me briefly digress again. In September 1948, I came to North Wales to teach in the high school in Llanfyllin, a small town 22 miles from Bala, on the other side of the Berwyn Mountains. Some of you will know that it was isolated geographically, at the end of the railway line from Oswestry; boasting four trains a day, five on a Saturday, and no daily bus service to anywhere!

In addition, there was only one public telephone in the town. Furthermore, before long I discovered that in that small town of 1,000 population there was an almost total ignorance of the real meaning of the gospel. It seemed not to be preached in any of the four denominational chapels, nor in the Anglican church. There was one retired farmer who preached occasionally in the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel I attended, and he knew the grace of God, but he was the only one with whom I could converse meaningfully and seek advice.

Consequently, I experienced a sense of spiritual isolation and loneliness that is difficult to convey to you this evening. In such circumstances - apart from the Word of God, of course - the *Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd* proved to be a lifeline, as did Dr Lloyd-Jones's monthly Westminster Record and the CIM's *China's Millions*, which also came monthly.

Chester

But a year later, in September 1949, Arthur Pritchard came to his first pastorate in Llanrhaeadr-ym-mochnant, six miles from Llanfyllin. Soon he realised that there were a number of Christians like myself, scattered over a very wide area and totally bereft of Christian fellowship. Consequently, before very long he established a monthly Welsh *seiat* on a Saturday afternoon at the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in St. John's Street, Chester. That was 40 miles away, which may seem very strange to you. But to that *seiat* came numerous young Christians from north-east Wales, Llangollen, Wrexham and the surrounding villages, as well as from the Wirral and Liverpool - and even one from Shrewsbury!

Each month I would travel to Llanrhaeadr-ym-mochnant in the school bus on a Friday night, and on the Saturday go down with Arthur to Chester. The safest proved to be a spiritual oasis for me and for all of us, and we would not miss it for anything. I was talking to one of its former members quite recently on the telephone. Speaking quite fervently, she reminded me how deep and sweet the fellowship was, and how we delighted to meet and encourage one another.

But there was more to it than that, for Arthur Pritchard had the gift of probing spiritual problems and discerning wrong emphases, and then applying the appropriate remedy from the Scriptures in the way that William Williams, Pantycelyn, must have done in his Society meetings. In so doing, of course, Arthur was bringing us back to our spiritual roots in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, whereas, before, many of us had absorbed a mixture of Brethren and Keswick and Arminian teachings, as well as denominational waffle.

Pwllheli and Caernarfon

But other *seiadau* were also arising elsewhere, and on a weekly basis. One began in 1949 in Pwllheli, for there had been quite a stirring of the Spirit in the area of Trefor and Tudweiliog in the Lleyen Peninsula, and there was a great desire to hear the Word of God. Emyr Roberts, the newly converted minister of Trefor, became one of its leaders. Dr Lloyd-Jones came to preach in Pwllheli at that time and there was fruit to his ministry.

A weekly *seiat* had already begun in Caernarfon in 1948, and from 1949 onwards its numbers were greatly augmented. Young people would come from

Brynrefail, Penisarwaun, Beddgelert, Llanberis and Deiniolen. Once a month they would visit other *seiadau* in Pwllheli, Porthmadog and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The Caernarfon *seiat* was helped greatly when Isaac Thomas moved from Glanamman to his second pastorate in Caernarfon, and this saint was supported by a couple of older families who had come to faith in the 1930s through the Jeffrey brothers.

In April 1950 a week's campaign was held in Caernarfon, with Idris Davies from Ammanford and a well-known Baptist minister, Emrys Davies from Swansea, among the preachers. This campaign was greatly owned of God, and one who was there (and who still lives in Caernarfon) wrote an account of this period in a church magazine. She says that the outstanding meeting of the whole campaign was the Saturday night open-air meeting on the *maes* (the town square) when Elwyn Davies preached with great power. She adds: 'I had thought of Elwyn as one who had a particular gift for personal work, but that night his voice reverberated across the *maes* and the usual noise and bustle ceased, and there came a great quietness when everybody stood still. Yes, God was anointing his Word once again.

Now one further means by which we encouraged one another in those days was by frequent correspondence, and the letters were not chit-chat. We might not have had the benefits of a telephone, but the postal service was very efficient and letters always arrived the next day. The letter-writer *par excellence* was Herbert Evans, who corresponded regularly with every lonely Welsh-speaking Christian known to him. He also kept in touch with the various *seiadau* and arranged rallies.

Emily Roberts and Aber-rhiwlech

The next stage in the development of the work was God's call to Emily Roberts, who had been one of the team in the Eisteddfod at Dolgellau. The call was to relinquish her post as a teacher in order to promote the sale of the *Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd* throughout Wales. This was a real step of faith, which God honoured. A cottage was provided by Christian friends for her and her sister Wena at the foot of Bwlch-y-groes in Llanymawddwy, and to this cottage, Aber-rhiwlech, they both came early in 1950. It was at Aber-rhiwlech that the *Cylchgrawn* was packed and posted to all parts of Wales.

Then in 1951 a car was purchased for Emily and she began travelling in earnest, visiting ministers in all parts of Wales and getting them to appoint a distributor for

the *Cylchgrawn* in their chapels. She also visited the various *seiadau* and kept notes of the topics discussed in them. Within a couple of years the *Cylchgrawn* circulation had risen to 3000 copies per issue - a truly remarkable achievement for a Welsh-language religious publication!

Emily and Wena's home at Aber-rhiwlech (though an isolated place) also became a popular venue for Christians to spend a weekend or a few days, enjoying true Christian fellowship and ministry. I myself remember once on a Friday afternoon catching the school bus from Llanfyllin as far as Lake Vyrnwy, then the school car up to the top end of the lake, then walking the seven miles over the mountain, along a road that had disintegrated during the war to nothing more than loose stones, and finally down Bwlch-y-groes to Aber-rhiwiech. It meant returning before 6 am on Monday morning, accompanied by Gwilym Humphreys, who was at that time a farm servant. It wasn't easy to get a farm servant released for a few days, but Arthur Pritchard had told me, 'Don't forget to bring Gwilym back with you!' Gwilym got his release for a few days, and so back we went, catching the school car and school bus to Llanfyllin. And then, after that, Gwilym had a further six-mile walk to Llanrhaeadr!

Now why did we do it? Well, my dear brethren, we were parched, spiritually parched, and we were desperate to see one another and to have fellowship with one another, and to read the Word of God with people who believed the Word of God. That was the reason why: there was a hunger and a thirst that had to be satisfied.

One must also mention the Welsh hymns and choruses that Emily Roberts composed, for they became very popular among both young and old. The words and tunes were simple, but they contained a strong evangelistic challenge and they all had a good doctrinal content.

An ongoing work

Well, now then, one must not ignore the fact that during all this period there was blessing elsewhere also. In the late 40s and early 50s in Swansea, the Lord was blessing the Youth for Christ rallies organised by Emrys Davies of Swansea and Luther Rees (Neville Rees's father). In the 50s also there were unforgettable open-air in Neath, and preaching rallies in the area organised by Luther Rees and I. B. Davies (Andrew Davies's father). In the Denbigh area also, an NYLC mission in

1951 was greatly blessed when a number of young people from the village of Llanefydd and surrounding areas were converted. So there was a work going on - vaster than I can possibly quote and cover in this one lecture.

The years 1951-2 witnessed a few more noteworthy campaigns. In 1951, in Abertillery, crowds thronged to the preaching meetings, and on the final Saturday night the local cinema was taken over for a preaching rally. Then, in early 1952, God again blessed in a remarkable way at a campaign in Foel-Gastell, near Crosshands. This had been organised by a number of students, including Noel Gibbard, Gareth Davies, Eifion Evans and Leslie Jones. The last three were all members in the chapel at which H. H. Williams was pastor, a man whose ministry was greatly blessed during these years.

The previous week, the meetings at Foel-Gastell had been announced throughout the district by means of an amplifier, and the gospel declared at the same time. During the campaign week there was widespread blessing, both in the open-air and in the chapel meetings. The presence of God was felt to such an extent that it was difficult to leave at the end. Even after leaving the chapel, many were found sitting on the gravestones and asking team members the way of salvation, one of these being Sulwyn Jones. Another converted at that time was Edmund Owen.

The converts met regularly at H. H. Williams's church on a week night and he proved to be to them a father in the faith. I remember, during vacation from school-teaching, going up to some of the meetings conducted by H. H. Williams.

Cynhadledd y Cylchgrawn

That summer of 1952 saw the first of the annual conferences. These later became known as Evangelical Movement conferences, but for the first three years it was called *Cynhadledd y Cylchgrawn* (The Magazine Conference). The first of these conferences was held at Coleg y Bala (the Calvinistic Methodist Theological College in Bala), from August 11 to 14. All of us who attended were given hospitality in local homes; that was the pattern in all the early conferences.

The main speaker at this first conference was Arthur Pritchard, and he took as his theme 'The Lordship of Jesus Christ', basing his observations on Luke 9:23 - 'And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and

take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ Quite a detailed summary of his talks are given by Noel Gibbard in his book *Cofio Hanner Canrif* (Now also in English: *The First Fifty Years: A History of the Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1946-98*).

His main emphasis was on the absolute necessity of dealing firmly and daily with our sins and our sinful tendencies as believers, and consecrating our minds to the service of the Lord. He emphasised that it must not be sanctification for the sake of sanctification, but sanctification for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That conference was of particular blessing to me. Arthur Pritchard must have made reference to Romans 6. I had never really understood the implications of that chapter, and I remember going down beside the stream that runs below Coleg y Bala and reading and re-reading the chapter until its significance did dawn upon my soul in a way I had not known before. It was an important milestone in my spiritual pilgrimage.

Now during that conference, in the various meetings taken by both Elwyn Davies and Emyr Roberts, the need for revival was a recurrent theme, and it struck a chord in our hearts, for we had had a foretaste of it. This was enhanced one afternoon when we had a visit from William Nagenda of Uganda, who brought us a challenge with his account of the East African Revival. (At the time, he was speaking at a conference in Abergele conducted by Roy Hession.) William Nagenda emphasised over and over again that We should fix our minds upon Jesus and look to him.

The needs of Wales lay heavily on our hearts and minds during that week, as they had for a long time, and so we readily agreed that we could not leave Bala without an outreach to the town. Two meetings were therefore arranged: one open —air meeting and one in a chapel.

Now let me sum up the conference for you by quoting the words of Elizabeth Lloyd-Jones (Lady Catherwood), in *Y Cylchgrawn Efengylaidd* of October/November 1952. This is what she wrote:

I could only rejoice increasingly from the first meeting onwards at the excellent sense of unity amongst us. We were all at one also in our realisation of our need for a personal revival, and together we all felt real longing for the Lord to visit our country in power once more.

In conclusion

Let me now briefly conclude. You may wonder why I have stopped at 1952. It is certainly not because nothing happened after that year, but a pattern was now being established, and we were beginning to enter a period of planned consolidation in addition to continued evangelism.

In the following years we see the name 'Evangelical Movement of Wales' being adopted; an office established in Elwyn Davies's home in Bala, with Mair Jones being appointed as secretary (a long-time serving secretary); the beginning of camps under the inspired leadership of Morwen Thomas (Mrs Vernon Higham); the publishing of an English Magazine; the establishment of an English Conference, and the establishment of this Ministers' Conference.

Meanwhile, the men who had led the early campaigns were already in the ministry. Gwyn Walters and Glyn Owen were both in churches in Cardiff, and Wynford Davies, who had participated in the 1945 Llanelli Campaign and the Ammanford Campaign, was in Tonypany. In 1953 John Thomas began his ministry in Sandfields, Aberafan, and Hugh Morgan in Gelli, Rhondda. Others were soon to follow.

Campaigns and rallies were then organised by them (the ministers), and many of these were greatly blessed. For example, the Nantymoel and Ogmere Vale Campaign in 1954. The work was spreading into schools also, and numerous SU groups were formed and rallies arranged. Every part of the story is not a success story. There were a few notable failures and drop-outs, even among those who had been greatly used. But these were few, very few.

Basically, the work was developing, and in some places developing rapidly. But: the initial wave of blessing that had given rise to it all was passing, and I would suggest that the period 1945 to 1952 really represents the years when we heard 'the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees'. That was when we were given grace to 'bestir ourselves'. And the work has gone on up to the present day, as our presence here tonight bears witness but we are all aware that we are in desperate need of a fresh visitation. May God graciously grant it to us!

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