

The Welsh Revival

THE ANGLESEY MISSION

6th JUNE – 3rd JULY 3 1905

Anglesey had been spiritually moved soon after the Revival broke out, and hundreds joined the different denominations. Many churches had gone through fervent experiences, and the young people had been captivated by the spirit of the Revival. Their prayers were expressed with such flow of fine biblical and poetical Welsh as to surprise scholars. But the island never experienced anything in its religious history like Evan Roberts's mission. It will be a salient point in its annals forever more.

For the whole month very little manual work was done. Farmers left everything and shopkeepers closed their establishments to attend the meetings. The congregations were too large for any chapel, and it was soon deemed advisable to hold the services in the open air. The enthusiasm of some of the meetings far surpassed anything witnessed in S Wales and Liverpool. Yet it was a controlled and sober enthusiasm that the holiest man could enjoy, admire, and appreciate. The singing equalled that of previous journeys, and the prayers were so earnest and intense as to sway the large audiences, and often move them to tears. Spontaneity was the distinctive mark of all the meetings. Evan Roberts was delighted in most of them and delivered some of his finest addresses, which were always appropriate to the occasions.

Amlwch, June 6-8th,

The Missioner's first words were - "Let us be careful to direct our expectations to the right quarter." These undoubtedly were expressed because of the expectant attitude of the people. On the 7th, all Amlwch and the surrounding districts were aroused, and Roberts's address on Christ's sufferings was most effective. On the 8th the enthusiasm ran much higher than on the previous night.

Cemaes, June 9th

It became evident, that it was, to a certain extent, useless to hold the services in chapels, even though some seated close upon 1,000. Hence, preparations were made to hold the meeting in the open air. Here, Evan Roberts stands for the first time before an audience on the open field.

When the Revivalist stood to address the 1,000s before him, his wonderful power of adaptation was soon in evidence. "We have met in the fields," he said, "in the fields, the great temple of nature." Some were in the fields in the dead of night, and to them the angels came. They were men at the post of duty. Let us do our duty, and the angels will come down, but if heaven were emptied of all its angels, archangels, and cherubim, and if they came to us, we would be no better off. They with all their glory cannot supply the wants of a thirsty soul."

Llanerchymedd, June 11-13th

A great number of strangers from different countries were present. The three meetings were not the same in their degree of spirituality, yet were very successful.

The thousands that poured in from Carnarvonshire and other directions made it necessary to hold the Whit-Monday, service in the open air. Anglesey had never seen anything like this concourse of people, despite its well-attended Preaching Associations. The sight at six in the evening was inspiring, and the nature of the proceedings was unprecedented in the history of the Revival.

Llanddeusant, June 13th;

Like the previous places, the service was held in the field. Thousands had come together, and the proceedings equalled any of those before in fervour and spirituality.

Llanfachreth, June 14th

Evan Roberts, with all his varied experience, never spoke in a more curious place than this. Imagine a large cobbled square, enclosed on three sides by farm buildings, and on the fourth by a tall farmhouse. Pack it tightly with human beings. Some of the farm buildings are open in the front from floor to roof, and inside on the ground and loft are from 500 to 600 people. All the windows of the farmhouses are open and occupied with spectators. Dozens are perched on dizzy heights overlooking the square. At the far end of the square stands a wagon fitted up as a platform, roofed over with sail cloth, with a pulpit in front. At the other end are large iron gates, and through the wicket-gate people have been admitted all afternoon in single file, careful record being taken of the number. It is an ideal site for an open air gathering, for there is nothing to distract attention, and in the shade of the surrounding buildings the congregation is protected from the hot rays of the sun. To all intents and purposes it is a roofless chapel, and every word uttered on the platform is distinctly heard in every part of the enclosure.

A few drops of rain fell as Evan Roberts ascended the pulpit, and at once hundreds of umbrellas were shot open. A second later they were as instantly closed. "A few drops of rain will do you no harm," exclaims the Rev John Williams "Put your umbrellas down. You are like thousands of others who put up their umbrellas to shut out the blessings of Heaven."

A little later the Revivalist in scathing language denounced the sin of hypocrisy. "Ah, you will be ready enough to sing in Heaven, you who are afraid and ashamed to open your lips in His praise on earth. Don't sing 'Hosanna' to-day and crucify Him tomorrow. What is dishonesty? Crucify Him! What is deceit? Crucify Him! What is drunkenness? Crucify Him!" His concluding words are a paean of praise for the Bible and of thanksgiving that "Its truths are living facts in the history of Wales to-day." After, an old Welsh hymn was sung with fervour and a spirit of deep devotion.

Returned prodigals were present in great number, and in their prayers gave thanks that they had been sustained in the recent holidays from succumbing to temptation. "Gwyl Mabsant" still flourishes, and one was held on Tuesday at Bodedern close by. "Oh, praise God," ecstatically cried a middle-aged worshipper in the brewhouse loft, "this is a miracle. I, the greatest drunkard, the greatest blasphemer in Anglesey, have been permitted to spend Mabsant Tuesday praising the Lamb." "Praise Thy Name," cries another from the direction of the stables, "that Thou art giving us old reprobates strength to approach the Throne of Grace." These are examples of scores of other prayers offered. Meanwhile the audience hails the declarations with stirring selections from Welsh hymnals.

Presently Miss Annie Davies's voice rings out one of Sankey's hymns, and every other voice became silent. During the brief interval of solemn silence that followed, Miss May Roberts reads Isaiah 55, "O come to the waters," and bases upon the opening verse a winning and persuasive address.

The appeal for converts elicited dozens of ready responses. "The Lord be praised," said the Revivalist, "the Spirit is at work to-night, and the enemy is fleeing covered with wounds, but there will be too many left if only one is unsaved." Among the first to surrender was an old veteran of 82, promptly followed by a well-known medical

practitioner in the district, the son of a county magistrate. His conversion led to a scene of indescribable rejoicing. A custom in N Wales, which does not largely prevail in the South, is that of calling out publicly the names of converts as they yield, which adds no little interest and excitement to the proceedings. Thus it was found that among the converts was the wife of a man who surrendered the previous night. "Glorious!" cries the Revivalist, "we must save them in families." For those who could not summon courage to yield many touching prayers were uttered. Announcements of refusals to yield led to distressing scenes, men and women weeping bitterly. To the refusers the Revivalist addressed the solemn warning that one day they would be part of a prayer meeting of lost souls, with none to listen and none to answer. At the close 3,000 voices joined in rendering in loud solemn tones the words of John 3:16.

Gwalchmar, June 15th

Thousands came to hear him

Bryndu, June 16th

The visit was of the same character as the others in fervour.

Llangefni, June 18-19th

On the 19th, the Missioner addressed 6,000 people on the field.

Holyhead, June 20th to 23^d

There was an audience of 9,000 the first day. The following days were similar.

Brynsiencyn June 25th

Sunday morning, there were about 1,300, and in the next two meetings, the number immensely increased.

Llangefni, June 26th

He went to the Preaching Association, and addressed one of the meetings.

Beaumaris, June 27-28th.

The meetings were held within the ancient Castle, and here Evan Roberts delivered some of the most fluent addresses of the mission.

Menai Bridge, June 29-30th

Llanddona, June 30th

Yet another new experience for Evan Roberts. For the first time in his mission, he held a service in a parish church. The meeting was, announced for half-past one, but long before the church doors were besieged by a crowd which, having regard to the sparsely-populated character of the country, must have been drawn from a radius of many miles. Everything in the preliminary proceedings was similar to the services of 50 years ago. Looking at the congregation filling the church, one was strongly reminded of earlier revivals, when, for instance, the celebrated Vicar Pritchard made such royal progresses from Llandovery to St. David's filling every church on the way to overflowing.

Nonconformists were the majority of the congregation, and were impressed by the happy combination of the finer features of the Church service with the freedom and enthusiasm of Nonconformity and revivalism.

"My friends," said the Rector, "this is a great day in the old parish church of Llanddona, where the lamp of the Gospel has continued to burn brightly and continuously for 1300 long years. This is a great day here, and will, I trust, be a great

day in heaven, for it is a great day in heaven if there be but one sinner brought from the darkness to the Kingdom of Light, and there will be rejoicing in heaven and in the presence of the angels of God for one sinner that repenteth. The day for which my brethren and I have looked forward for many weeks in faith and hope has dawned, and we are to-day able to welcome our young brother, Evan Roberts, to this church.

“Someone asked why I had asked Evan Roberts to hold a service in this church. I did so because I believe him to be a special messenger sent of God to perform a special work for Christ, at a special season in this our land of Wales, especially favoured by God. We thank God that the winds which began in S Wales have been felt in the North, and that now they have blown into Anglesey.

“Another timid friend asked me what will the Bishop say. Well, my friends, the Bishop of Bangor has said nothing to prevent to-day’s meeting. The heart of the Bishop of Bangor and of each of the other Welsh Bishops beat in fullest sympathy with this movement, and are animated by the spirit of this blessed Revival. He may recall the parable of those who sought entrance at the portals of heaven, and who when they said they were Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists, Congregationalists, or Churchmen were refused admission as those distinctions were not recognised in heaven. But when they called themselves Christians, they found the portals thrown wide open. And this Revival is the same, in that it recognises no distinction of sect. Evan Roberts does not ask you to join this church or that, but calls on all to come to Jesus, and that is why I so earnestly desired his presence here this day. Some may worship better in chapel than in church, others better in church than in chapel. To all such I would say seek Christ’s Presence, and worship in the place where you find your spirit best in harmony with the spirit of Christ, whether in church or chapel. And now may God bless this His young servant, and raise many like him to perform similar work.”

It is hardly necessary to say that such an address sounded strangely in the ears of many, and left a profound impression upon the audience.

Evan Roberts then said, “The Kingdom of God must conquer. Let us each see that we place no obstacles in the way, for, though the obstacles be swept aside, woe betide those who cause them. I thank God that heaven is so near to us this day.

“It was last September that I was privileged to attend a service in a parish church, and heard the prayer, ‘Quicken Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years.’ But I little thought then that the prayer was about to be answered in so remarkable a manner. And this meeting may largely help that work. Each may go away carrying blessings sufficient for all eternity. But if we foster a single sin it may prove an effectual hindrance to that blessing. Have you ever thought that your happiness depends upon your nearness to God, and that sin estranges you from God? Look at that drunkard in his once happy home. How do his little ones greet him? Do they run joyously to meet him? No; but each one hides from the father whom they long to love. Look at the blasphemer. Do you seek his companionship? You turn from him in disgust. Thus do evil habits estrange friends on earth, and equally keep God from us and us from God. We have prayed here to-day to our Father in heaven. If He is our common Father then are we all brothers and sisters and members of God’s own family? In our earthly domestic life family ties are often broken, but in God’s family the tie is to last forever and ever. Why then should Christians who are brethren in the family of God, maintain, as they now do, so great a distance the one from the other?

Our God is a God of happiness and of joy. People may ask why at our meetings do we break out into public rejoicings. The answer is simple and sufficient, it is because

people have there found God. Again I thank God for this service, We shall shortly part from each other here, but let us each and all strive to be found in the company where there is to be no parting.”

The meeting was tested and a number of conversions were recorded. A couple of women, however, said they were not ready to submit. “What,” said Evan Roberts, Think of it. A Physician offering health, and the sick saying he is not ready to take it, a kind friend offering to relieve another of an oppressive burden and the heavily-laden one replying he is not ready to be relieved of the burden pressing him to the earth. My friends, you are ready enough, don’t refuse because you are not good enough. Christ wants you just as you are. The physician does not want the healthy, but the sick. Will you who think you are well pray God to open your eyes to see your imperfections? It is the devil trying to hold you back. He has a rope of three strands binding you. The first is to tell you that you are not ready, the second that your feeling is not ripe, and the third that you cannot hope to live up to your profession if you submit now. That is how the devil keeps you prisoner until death when he makes you forever his own, when he can laugh at you for all eternity. But, thank God, Christ also has a rope of three strands. All you have to do is to seize it He wants you first to ask Him to take you as you are. That makes your present right. He wants you to ask Him to forgive your sins. That makes the past forever forgotten. He wants you to ask Him for strength for the future. That makes your future safe. This three-stranded rope of salvation is enough for past, present and future of every sinner.”

The meeting again being tested produced several additional converts, and an unusually impressive service was happily closed in triumphant songs of praise.

Menai Bridge, July 1st

Despite a wet and cold evening, another great crowd was awaiting Evan Roberts in the open. The meeting lasted several hours. Evan Roberts was accompanied by his sister, Annie Davies, Sydney Evans and Sam Jenkins, the latter charming the crowd by his sweet rendering of Gospel songs. A number of converts were again recorded.

Tabernacle, near Red Wharf Bay, July 2nd

Llanfair P G, July 3^d

The marvellous Anglesey mission closed with one of its most enthusiastic meetings.