

2. the Story of the Welsh Revival

by Arthur Goodrich

The sermon explores the profound impact of the Welsh Revival, led by Evan Roberts, on the spiritual and social fabric of South Wales.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 9:13, Luke 15:7, Acts 3:19, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, James 4:8, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Revival History", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Arthur Goodrich preaches about the powerful religious revival led by Evan Roberts in South Wales, where the spirit of God's love and compassion transforms lives, bringing repentance, fervor, and a deep sense of faith to the people. The revival spreads rapidly through towns and villages, impacting individuals from all walks of life, including miners, publicans, atheists, and troubled souls, leading to profound conversions and changes in behavior. Evan Roberts, a humble and dedicated young man, is the catalyst for this spiritual awakening, drawing crowds with his sincere and earnest messages, emphasizing the importance of communion with God and the joy of living in obedience to His love.

Transcript

ALL South Wales is aflame with the spirit of a great religious revival. In a few weeks the fire of it has run up and down the length of the Garw Valley and the Rhondda, and has spread into hundreds of little outlying hamlets, where in steady, deadening routine the men work in the black coalpit through all the glorious days that come in that wonderful country of mountains and sunshine and clear air.

They are talking of little else in the snug little stone cottages that line the ridges like low ramparts; in the tiny shops where the women come to buy the day's supplies; in the railway carriages, and at the street corners. Every church community is stirred to the depths, and out on the edges rough miners are shaking their heads wonderingly, and are being drawn toward it until the power of it seizes them and they leave their work to attend the day meetings as well as those at night. Strong men are in tears of penitence; women are shaken with a new fervour, and in the streets small children at their play are humming revival hymns.

"And they do say that the publicans (saloon keepers) are closing," says a bent little man with a black beard, in a train to Landore, and certainly many drinking places that were crowded are empty, the frequenters being led away either by the religious workers in person, as they were at Pontcymmer, or by the irresistible spirit of the movement.

"Aye," says another, "there's something funny about it. They say you feel it as soon as you're inside the building where he's going to speak."

"He," is Evan Roberts, the young Lougher lad of 26 years, who alone among men has "fired up" the mining valleys, and who dominates the entire revival with a power which, as he says earnestly, is not from within him, but from above; the Spirit which led him to do what he has done.

In a railway carriage, men who have not seen him repeat with awe the stories they read in the papers, how he is pale-faced, and how he says his body is electrified, and how he has visions, and what a strange light he has in his eyes, and how he gets only an hour's sleep in a night, and has no watch that will keep time in his pocket, most of which is, of course, mere talk, and if true at all, true only in part.

Others, coming from their first meeting, are obviously perplexed at the man's grip upon people, and yet they themselves have felt it, and hurry away to think by themselves whether the way he has pointed for them is not best after all.

And strangers -- standing before a wayside chapel in the midst of farming land and seeing the men and women come hurrying from up and down the narrow road, or sitting in some larger building where the aisles are packed to the doors with miners and miners' sons and wives and daughters, and beyond, into the hallway, and perhaps into the street outside -- ask, as they look about at hard faces softening under the simple spell of the missionary's talk, who this young man is who can work such wonders in a few weeks, and where he came from, and how it has all come about.

For an answer to this we must go back to Lougher, a little mining town near Swansea, and back, also, a number of years, and the story of Evan Roberts, the man, explains much of the secret of his power.

Fifteen minutes' walk from Lougher station, in a district known as Gorseinon, is the little house of a hard-working, God-fearing miner. It is on a side road, and from where it stands you can look off across swampland to a great black colliery on the left, and beyond to the long range of the hills of Llanganech. The house is of stone, plastered over with cement and lime, hardened to a light brown, corduroy appearance. A gate leads to an inner path, and another gate to the front door, hidden from the road by profuse hedges and greenery.

At the back is a large garden which has to do with the story, and within, in the quaint, scrupulously clean general room, is the melodeon, beside which Evan Roberts and his brother Dan, who is helping him now in his work, sang the stirring Welsh hymns from their boyhood. And no one who has met the kindly, quiet, lovable personality of Evan Roberts' mother, or who has seen the light of her great faith in her eyes, will fail to realise how much he, and how much South Wales, and perhaps the world, owes to her.

Evan Roberts is one of her seven sons, of whom only three are now living; and in all Lougher not a word can be said against him, and no man remembers anything but good of him.

As one man, who was evidently not greatly moved by the spirit of the revival, said to me: "Whatever else can be said about Evan Roberts, he was always good, always honest, straightforward and earnest." Indeed, the feeling of Lougher for him is summed up in the words of a good woman who showed me the way to his home. "Evan Roberts, God bless him," she said; and South Wales is catching the phrase.

Women whose husbands had sunk into sordid degradation, and whom he has brought back to them out of the pit, are saying it; mothers whose sons have exchanged the public-house for the chapel, are repeating

it; friends of men like Tom Hughes, the atheist, or Aberdare, who has burned his books of unbelief and is working and praying day and night for those who, like him, belonged to the so-called Ethical Society, are saying it; and the hundreds of men and women who have found a new guide for their hesitating steps, are crying it, singing it, praying it.

It is one of those simple homes -- and there are many like it in South Wales -- about which one feels unconsciously that every stone was laid with a prayer, and every board with a hymn.

The atmosphere of it is of steady, honest toil, of frugal living, and of an unquestioning, vital religious faith. And it was in this kind of a home that Evan Roberts lived during his boyhood. It had its share of trouble; times were not always good; the family was large, and a coal miner seldom receives more money than just enough to keep his home and to do his share toward the support of the chapel; but there was always in this home that beautiful, whole-souled trust in God which crowded out any gloom from their lives.

When he was about twelve his father had a serious accident. He fell and hurt his foot so badly that he was told it would be four months before he could go back to his work in the mines, for Mr. Roberts' work kept him constantly on his feet.

He was needed at the colliery, and, when they learned how long it would be before he could do all that they depended upon him to do, they came and asked him if he couldn't come with one of his boys, keeping quiet himself and getting the boy to run here and there for him. And this was the way, in which Evan Roberts first went into the Mountain Colliery -- to help his father until Mr. Roberts was well. A few shillings every week, also, the father gave the boy for his help -- the first money Evan Roberts earned.

When Mr. Roberts was able to do all of his work again, the boy was given a task of opening and shutting the doors for the cars in the mine, and after a time he became a "knocker."

When he was just old enough to understand something of what a religious life meant, he heard one of the church deacons say at one of the week-day meetings -- and he always attended these as well as the Sunday services -- that if they prayed and waited in a prayerful spirit, some time the Holy Spirit would come to them.

From that night this became the great desire of Evan Roberts' life, and he lived on gropingly, hoping, praying, believing that some day he would come into a full realisation of what was to him the one important thing in life -- complete communion with God. He had from the beginning the fundamental, implicit faith of the woman who touched the hem of His garment.

At night when he came home from the colliery, unless there was a meeting at the church, he settled down to his books, and he spent his carefully saved money for more books.

Among other things he learned shorthand, and he has what I have never seen before -- a shorthand Bible. And, indeed, in whatever he did the Bible was always his greatest book -- the one that he read constantly and with increasing insight.

As he grew older he began to take part in the meetings, and one evening, when he was away from home, he talked at a service in another town nearby. And what he said was so clear and forcible, and he said it in so vigorous and earnest a fashion, that the minister came to him after the meeting and told him that he ought to become a preacher.

Nobody at Lougher, even in his home, heard of this until someone else repeated it to them. For Evan Roberts is very silent about himself. His thought, I believe, has always been much more for the faith than for any part he himself might play in spreading it to others.

For years his life was a steady, simple routine. In the mornings he went to the mines, either at the Gorselinon Colliery or at Mountain Ash, where he worked for a time. All day long there was the hard toil that stiffened the fibre of his body, and the dealing with hard, older men, that strengthened the fibre of his soul. And at night he studied and read, and sang, and prayed, even as he worked, honestly and earnestly.

Evan Roberts, in whatever he has done from childhood, has "meant intensely and meant good." And wherever he went people of all ages liked him for his manly vigour and for his unceasing cheeriness.

He was a union man in the colliery, and there came a time when a strike threw him -- man-grown now -- out of work. He had seen enough of a collier's life to know how it saps men's vitality. He had made up his mind not to spend all of his life underground or over coal. And all the time the yearning for that touch of the Divine Hand was upon him, and he came to believe that some day he might preach the Gospel.

Many plans were in his mind, and he prayed over them all, this young man, strong-bodied, vigorous, thoughtful, with the air of youth in his blood. He thought of being a missionary, and when at last he settled upon the blacksmith's trade it was with the half-formed idea of going to foreign lands, and alternately working as a blacksmith and preaching.

In January, two years ago, he paid his uncle, who had a little country "smithy" at Pontardulais, \$6, and bound himself as an apprentice for two years. He went to work there in his usual eager way, and in a few months had made himself of great value to the smith. But the task was not that for which he was made, and he felt it quickly.

The struggle for a decision began again until one night, when he was upon his knees over it, a great light seemed to come to him, and a new elation and a new peace. That realisation which he had sought ever since he had been a mere lad was at last his, and with it new inspiration, new joy, new hopes and purposes, and his decision was made for him almost in an instant.

He would preach; he would carry to others this message that he had heard and felt. It was near the end of his first year at the smithy, and he started at once to arrange the matter of his additional year of service with his uncle, and to plan for his new work, his life-work, that he had found at last.

The minister at Lougher in the meantime arranged for Evan Roberts to preach his first sermon one Sunday evening, and when that evening had come and passed he came to the young man and said: "You're planning to go to school, and that is right. But you're a preacher now."

During the next months Evan Roberts was at home working at his books, for he had some examinations to pass at Newcastle-Emlen.

He had saved a little money, although he had always given to the chapel freely out of his comparatively small earnings -- he received \$15 a week for his work in the mines. His people were ready to deny themselves, if necessary, to help him, so that the way seemed clear for his schooling.

But while he worked hard as a student -- and, of course, his previous education had been the fragmentary, partly undirected study of a busy, ambitious young man in his leisure hours -- he was much more

concerned with that spiritual uplift which had suddenly obtained complete control of him.

Prayer became sustenance to him. "It means more to me than food," he said one night when he arose from his knees to answer the call to the evening meal.

And with this new life came new purpose and new vigour. He wrote religious verses in Welsh, -- hymns that tried to express something of what he had within him to say, -- and some of them were published and praised.

He passed his first examinations, and out of his slender purse he paid for his first term of work at the school. For a few weeks he took the stereotype courses which were mapped out for him. But the feeling came to him with growing insistence that there was other work for him to do -- active work, not a few years later, but now; not as man willed, nor as he willed, but as God willed.

At last, about November 1st, almost decided, but wavering before the importance of such a decision, he heard a sermon one Sunday evening, and came from it certain that God had called him to lead a great revival in Wales.

He went home to Lougher immediately, and opened his first meetings alone, and before the doubtful eyes of those who had always known him, and who wondered at his sudden change of plan -- this leaving the school which he had left them to enter only a few weeks before. He could scarcely have chosen a more difficult place to begin a difficult work.

"Where will you get the money?" asked someone.

"Money!" he cried, with that merry, boyish confidence that is part of his charm. "Never mind about the money. Look above for the money. It'll come."

At the beginning little happened. The people who came to his meetings, came out of friendliness or out of curiosity. Why should this young theological student open special meetings all unaided, and why should anyone go to hear him? And those who heard him wondered the more, for although he said little that they had not heard before, he said everything in a way that crowded conviction upon them. He told them frankly at the start that he had not prepared anything to say, but that he would only say what was put into his mind by the Holy Spirit.

Naturally, everyone talked about him, and, although few at first took him seriously, they came to hear him in gradually increasing numbers. And he seized them with a remarkable power that he had never shown before, and which he says frankly he had never felt before.

In a few days Lougher shops were closed early for the meetings; workmen hurried in late in their working clothes; evening meetings lasted far into the night; the chapel was crowded, and the road outside was lined with disappointed but waiting people. They came from miles around to hear him, and went away with old faith revived or new faith kindled. The papers began to talk of him as "a wonderful preacher"; neighbouring churches heard of him, and asked him to come to them; ministers hurried to hear him, and came away mystified at the simple power of the young man, and with a new impulse in their hearts for harder effort.

And that is the way Evan Roberts began a work which is slowly stirring the whole religious world to action.

Here is no mystic with some weird mystery to draw the morbid instincts of weak man. It is a full-blooded, hearty, young man, who has worked in the coal-mines and at the smithy, and who hammers his unambitious words home with an inspiring vigour. Here is no dreaming sentimentalist making a weeping appeal to the sympathetic hearts of women and children. It is a deep voiced, firm-jawed young man moving men hardened by rough toil.

Here is no fiery, impassioned orator, stirring people by his rhetoric at night and being forgotten, along with his words, in the morning. It is a simple, straightforward speaker, who began alone, but who already has scores of active helpers, men and women, among those the whole course of whose lives have been changed.

Here is no exhorter terrifying his hearers into belief in God's love by threats of eternal punishment. It is a buoyant, happy man trying to show in a quiet, direct way how joyful a thing Christianity really is.

Here is no quibbler over dogmas. "You haven't any new creed in mind, have you?" I asked him one night. You don't mean to have differences with the present churches in that way?"

"Oh, no," he said in his hearty way, and with a characteristic wave of his hand. "I am merely trying to show people the love of Jesus Christ as I have experienced it."

Here is no pompous prelate who condescends to advise his congregation concerning their conduct. It is a frank, sincere man, who links his arm in yours, and means "brother" without saying it.

Here is no narrow sectarian. An army of ministers of all the denominations in Wales are working with him, and his only desire is for results.

Go into one of his meetings. Every seat is taken, there are people in the aisles, and more are crowding in. They are singing -- and there is no such stirring congregational singing in the world, I believe, as in Wales -- a swinging Welsh hymn, martial and inspiring.

In the midst of a verse a tall, boyish-looking young fellow slips in almost unnoticed, and takes a seat at the front, never behind the high desk, but down upon the main floor. He sings a verse with them, and perhaps starts another, while only a few realise that this is Evan Roberts.

When the singing stops, he steps out quickly before the audience, his hands in his pockets, shoulders thrown back, eyes bright, and his mouth widened in a smile.

A single sentence catches the attention of everyone in the building, for it is at once short, quiet, and vigorous. The tone is conversational, and the eyes are friendly. He begins to pace up and down, turning to the people with short, rapid phrases, and accentuating them with tense, earnest gestures as short and jerky as his speech.

He is seldom still, but when he is you can feel the restrained intensity. The movements are not those of high-strung, nervous force, but of superabundant vital energy.

Suddenly he stops short, and looks over the congregation, where every eye is upon him, and, uttering one quick sentence, laughs aloud. And such laughter as it is, boyish, joyous, confident. A moment later he is on his knees, leaning over the railing, his hands clasped, talking confidently with his audience as if it were one friend instead of many.

After a time he is on his feet again, and a Bible is in his large hands, and then he is again leaning over the railing and calling appealingly to the congregation, perhaps with tears in his eyes. Then suddenly it is over, and he sits down.

One of the girls who has come from Lougher or Pontycymmer to help him, begins to sing, and sweet as her voice is, it is not long before the congregation joins in one by one until the room rings with the melody.

He has talked less than half an hour. It has been entirely in Welsh, and yet without understanding a word he has said you have felt the spirit of it.

The frankness, the downright earnestness, the militant sincerity have given you a feeling that you have seldom had in an ordinary church service, and through the spirit of his message, they are working in the hearts of all the people about you.

And yet those who know the language say that he has said nothing that is extraordinary; that there has been little brilliancy of phrase; that he has talked simply and cheerfully of his own experience, and has asked those who are not Christians to give themselves to God.

Certainly it has all been very quiet. There has been no loud rantings, nor spectacular displays, nor open appeals to the emotions. But what is happening?

He tramps up and down the aisle, singing with the congregation, and perhaps leading them with inspiring gestures. Now suddenly he has disappeared. In the gallery is a powerful-looking man, whose head is hidden in his arms on the back of the seat in front of him. Evan Roberts is bending over him, helping him like a brother to make the right decision.

A moment later he stands straight, his eyes flashing with joy, and cries out with joyous fervour, and then the swinging, stirring cadences of that greatest of Welsh hymns, "Diolch Iddo," which is always sung after a conversion, begins and grows in volume until they sweep another man upon his feet with an avowal of his changed life.

Evan Roberts is once more before the people, and he breaks in upon the singing with a few half-spoken, half-whispered words. A wave of deep feeling dashes aside something of his self-control as he begs them to "Come to Him! Come to Him!" and he sinks upon his knees in prayer, while one of the girls who have come with him sings a simple hymn in English.

Slowly the congregation has risen out of itself, out of its curiosity, out of its indifference. Something has caught them as in a rushing tide, and is bearing them on resistlessly. A minister rises as the song ends, and declares that, although he has preached the Gospel for years, he is now for the first time a Christian. There are others waiting to follow him now, men and women, some of whom have been negative Christians, and some of whom have never professed any religion.

Now it is a man who is known to the community chiefly as a drunkard; now it is a man whom you heard scoffing outside at the meeting and the missionary; now it is a woman who tremblingly whispers a few inaudible words, and sinks back into her seat; now it is a young lad of twenty, who has come out of curiosity, and will go out determined to a new, purposeful life.

Evan Roberts is everywhere -- now upon his knees beside a man in the last seat by the door; now talking in his quiet, triumphant way from half-way down the aisle; now standing before them all as a burly man

risers in the gallery, and telling him with closed eyes that he seems to see God on high confessing the man, even as the man is now confessing his God.

And always he is dominant, masterful, cheery, quiet, his power growing with his tense eagerness and his tremendous earnestness.

A cynical, indifferent critic watching any one of these meetings would be forced to admit that the young man is sincere to the core; that he descends to no trick of gesture or word or act; that he is straightforward and simple to the last degree; that he does not try to force people against their will, and yet that in some way he draws all before him, not to himself, but to the Spirit of Whom he is the avowed disciple.

And, in spite of himself, this hardened critic will feel the impulse and will say to himself, as a tough, knotty-looking man said to me in the train today: "There must be something in it." And by that admission he does what Evan Roberts wishes him to do -- he forgets the speaker, the mere agent, and reaches for that lifting Hand to which the missionary is trying to lead everyone he meets, and to whom he talks.

Go to Evan Roberts outside of a meeting if you can find an opportunity between the sessions that begin in the morning, and continue in the afternoon, and again at night, and last until early in the morning again, with only a brief hour for hurried meals; meetings that are sometimes held in three different towns in one day, with a considerable railway journey between each.

Go to him, I say, and talk with him. He is exactly the same man you have seen in the chapel, the same tense, manly man of the sort who grow upon one, and who are more admirable the closer one is to them.

"What is your message?" I asked him one quiet Sunday noon, as we were on our way to enjoy the whole-souled hospitality of a rugged Welshman and his kindly wife. He had locked his arm in mine, and his face beamed with "goodwill towards men." He half-stopped as if to poise his thoughts.

"It's very simple," he said, with a quaint Welsh accent that makes his English very attractive.

"I have found what I believe to be the highest kind of Christianity. I want to give my life, God helping me, to lead others, many others, to find it. Many have found it already, thank God, and they are doing what I am doing, in a large or little way, as God gives them light. And that is all there is to the revival, and all there is to me, my friend."

He had spoken slowly, as if weighing the words. He paused for a second, and then throwing all his pent-up feelings into a single exclamation, in a way that gives complete conviction of the man's utter sincerity and abandonment of itself.

"Oh," he cried in a long breath, his eyes bright with happiness, "it is great. I have always wanted to do this, but I didn't know it, I wasn't sure of it till God showed me the way."

There is no such thing as evasion in him. If he likes what is said by someone else he says so, and shows it frankly. If he is not interested he shows his indifference with the same sincerity. His tongue is not a loose one, and he is slow to talk of himself or of the work he himself is doing, but the spirit of the man is as boundless as his energy, as determined as his confidence. He is a Welshman, and proud of it.

He loves his own language, and laughed his inspiring, boyish laugh often at my clumsy attempts to speak the words and phrases he put into my mouth. He goes upstairs, and I can hear him talking vigorously with

another man of about his own age, who a few weeks ago came to his meetings, and who is now one of his most helpful assistants. He ran up the stairs, and he comes running down, singing at the top of his deep, resonant, bass voice.

"My voice is all right today," he cries, with his merry laugh. "Last night it was bad, but it was given to me again to-day for my work."

The short respite is ended, and we start back for another meeting at a different chapel. He strides along, stopping now and then to speak to people in the many groups that are walking down the middle of the road -- as they usually do in Wales -- towards the same destination. Up every hilly side street they came, and they do not hold themselves aloof from him as if he were different and greater than they.

It would be difficult for anyone to hold himself aloof from this buoyant, simple, honest young man, who is working with them, not over them; who is leading them, not from some comfortable seat at the rear, or in some place of glory before them, but by their side, helpfully, mightily.

I watch that swinging, tall, big-boned figure, his decisive gesture, his firm jaw and steady, smiling mouth, and the fire of youth and of religious consecration in his eyes. I hear the resounding laughter and see the flash of clear, even teeth under his lips.

I feel the unassuming simplicity, the boyish ingenuousness, the commanding sincerity, and see how at one he is with the people, catching a hand here and grasping an arm or shoulder there in open-hearted friendliness, carrying his enthusiasm, his confidence, his dominating, cheerful spirit into their hearts. And inevitably I say to myself: "Here is a true 'sky-pilot,' who knows the course and who is giving himself that others may learn it."

It was said to me that he was not resourceful enough; that he has not had enough education; that he is naïve, untrained, a mere boy. It may be so, and some of this is, of course, evidently true. But I never knew a man to whom education added kindness, or goodness, or fervour, or strength of soul; resourcefulness often becomes cunning. The Apostles of the New Testament were, some of them, humble fishermen who became "fishers of men."

Remember that this young man of twenty-six, in the freshness of his zeal and with absolutely honest unselfish purpose, gave up his schooling and, all alone, began to hold meetings under no auspices except that of the Spirit which was with him.

And that in a few rapid weeks he lifted all South Wales upon a wave of religious thought and feeling; that he has turned hundreds of lives that were well-nigh useless into great usefulness and unmeasured happiness, beside bringing a new life into thousands of other hearts and lives; that he, a Methodist in training but under no denominational leading strings, has brought together all the Non-conformist churches of that section into a solid phalanx working for single, simple purpose.

All men honour the convictions and the strength of a real man. This is a real man. And he has an added Power which men can feel but cannot fathom.

There is a simple hymn that is sung in revival meetings in America that typifies the spirit of Evan Roberts' revival in Wales. "There is sunshine in my soul." A preacher in Swansea is reported to have said that, although he had not attended any of the meetings, he had read about them in the papers, and he added that he considered the appeals "barbarous."

If this preacher ever hears Evan Roberts, and I hope he will, he will be ashamed of himself; for Roberts talks chiefly of God's love and of the great joy of living in obedience to that love. As to his appeal, it is simple and direct, and is seldom characterised by a great demand upon his hearers' emotions.

None of the hundreds of dramatic scenes that have occurred in these meetings have come while Roberts has been talking. They have come afterwards, and often a considerable time afterwards. And Evan Roberts, I believe, has said that he is glad that this is the case, for it proves that it is not Roberts, the man, his magnetism, or his personality that is so great an influence, but rather the Spirit at work in the meetings.

A few times, indeed, so greatly has he been moved by his own strong feeling, he has lost control of himself and has broken down in the midst of his appeal.

"But I mustn't do that," he said to me frankly. "It has a mere emotional appeal, and its effect is temporary and does not do the good I want to do. I don't wish to move men temporarily. I want to convince them permanently. But the Spirit will guide me."

He has something of the same feeling about the hymn singing, I am told. Much as he loves it himself, and music is in him to his very fingertips, he feels -- I judge both from the hearsay and from watching him break into the midst of the singing when, in a way they have in Wales, they repeat over and over the same stirring melody -- that too much singing moves only surface emotions and takes the congregations' mind from the deeper influence of prayer and close communion with God. He believes completely in the efficacy of prayer, and he has for many years spent a considerable amount of time daily upon his knees.

Indeed, one of the great differences between this revival and some others is the comparative quietness of method, if it can be called method. The "sunshine" of it is another. There is nothing spectacular about the man or about any of his helpers.

His talk is simple and forcible; the young women converts who sing, sing simple, appealing hymns that suggest the happiness of Christianity; and I saw day after day an entire audience caught in the spell of the fresh young voices' sweetness and the tenderness of the songs' sentiment, and the evident feeling of the young singers who were using the best means they had been given to add their message to his, until there was scarcely anyone whose eyes were not wet, and yet many eyes saw some things the clearer for the sudden mist.

And if some of the local ministers are too zealous occasionally in trying to force those who are least moved, that is not part of Evan Roberts' intention, and it only serves to show how ministers as well as people have been seized by his impelling force.

What Evan Roberts has done, and is doing, seems wonderful when one remembers how this revival began, and how it has grown; but the man's confidence, not in himself, nor in any human power he has, but in the guidance of a Spirit from above is boundless.

"If you can do this in a few weeks," I asked him one day, "what will you do in a lifetime?"

"We'll change the world," he cried, and his face was aglow with the joy of his hopes. "We'll change the world. I believe it."

Do not think that he meant this as a boast, for he did not, nor as personal pride in his achievements. It is only his entire trust that the whole world will be brought to God, and his belief that he will be one of the

forces by which men will be converted to that new life that means everything to him. And, indeed, his success elsewhere can scarcely be more surprising than what he has already done.

"Will you go to London?" I asked him more than a month ago. "Certainly you will finish the work here first."

"I have already had three invitations to London," he said. "I shall go whenever the Spirit guides me, but I should rather work here now."

When Roberts leaves a town he leaves often one or two young converts, and some of the young women whose singing at his meetings began naturally as a result of their new religious experience. And in this way the movement is not dropped suddenly when he goes, but continues while he travels on to spread it elsewhere.

Ministers, too, who have caught the fire from him, go back to their churches in places where Roberts has not yet been heard, and begin more meetings. So great has become the demand upon his time, that one preacher has taken from him all the worry of plans, and is arranging his itinerary, and is seeing to all the details of his movements.

"I believe it's merely a money-making affair," said a man, scoffing at the revival in the hall of a mining town hotel. And that reminds us of the question Evan Roberts was asked at Lougher when he began his meetings: "Where will the money come from?"

I have attended a number of his meetings and I have not seen a collection taken, although I believe there have been collections to defray travelling expenses.

But railroad fares are not large in that country where the mining towns are only a few miles apart, and the churches where he speaks can afford to pay these, and to entertain him and those who come with him, at their homes. And this is all Evan Roberts is concerned with, to get enough money to carry on the work.

There have been religious charlatans, commercial prophets in both senses and with both spellings, but this is not one. He is seeking honestly not money or personal fame, but the glory of God. I say, not fame, or notoriety. The man would scarcely talk with me when I told him frankly I was a journalist.

"I do not care for interviews," he said quickly. And it was only when he realised how the true story of what is happening in Wales might stir the religious thought and feeling of men the world over that he made free to talk.

Perhaps there is no better example of a town which has both felt the thrill of revival interest, and which has continued its results long after the first impulse died away, than Aberdare.

Evan Roberts was still at Lougher in the midst of his most crowded meetings, where he worked day and night, slept little, ate little, and threw his entire vitality into his new achievement.

It so happened that the Methodist preacher at Trecynon, on the edge of Aberdare, sent word one week that he could not occupy the chapel pulpit on the following Sunday.

In that country many of the preachers are itinerant to a greater or less degree, preaching in one chapel a certain number of times and spending the remainder of their time doing the same work elsewhere. The people of the little church had little time in which to find a substitute.

Someone, however, had heard that the man named Evan Roberts, who was said to be doing remarkable things at Lougher, was a fine preacher as well as a revivalist. At the last moment they wrote, asking him to speak at Trecynon on Sunday, and received an answer that he would come.

Sunday morning at church time no preacher appeared, and it was not until the congregation had waited drearily, spasmodically singing hymns, for a long time, that a young man, with a springy step and an entire lack of gloomy solemnity, came in with five young women, and, to their surprise, made his way to the front.

For a half hour he talked to them in his characteristic way, saying more or less conventional things in a way that somehow gripped their hearts and made them sit straight and then lean forward, so as not to lose either a word or a particle of that enthusiastic spirit.

Then some of the girls who had come with him sang, and the coldness of the people was half melted as they joined in and sang with Welsh voices and Welsh fervour.

Evan Roberts stopped at Trecynon during the week, carrying on the same sort of work with the same inspiring, hearty zeal that had brought all Lougher to the Moriah Chapel. And, as at Lougher, men came to scoff at the "boy-preacher who saw visions," and before they left their first meeting had given their lives to Christian work.

All the churches were at work quickly, and religious power swept over the town like a mighty wind. People went to hear Evan Roberts, and stayed to drop to their knees before God.

All sorts of men and women, from Tom Hughes, the atheist, to young girls whose lives were waiting for a hand to mould them, stood up before crowded pews and told, with a simple eloquence that no one at Aberdare knew they possessed, what new, bright light had come to them.

One hardy miner, who had gone out of curiosity, came out hurriedly at about eleven o'clock and went home and to bed. Shortly after midnight he arose, dressed himself, and went back to the meeting to cry out that God had saved him, and that he couldn't sleep until he had declared publicly for Him.

And then, when the people were filling three good-sized chapels every night, and when, far down toward the centre, people standing still in the clear, quiet, moonlit night, heard the martial swing of their triumphal hymns, and, wondering, felt, even there, the stir that was in the air; when dozens of men's lives and women's lives were being changed every day, remade in determination at least in a few hours, Evan Roberts went away because he was needed more elsewhere. His brother, Dan Roberts, however, came in his place.

I attended two meetings there, weeks after Evan Roberts had gone. One afternoon, just outside the little chapel in Roberts' town, across the railroad from Trecynon, I met an elderly Englishman who had just left the meeting.

"I was afraid I'd never feel that way again," he said to me, "but I have now. I've been through three pretty strong revivals, but I never was moved in my life as I was this afternoon. I haven't been so happy since I was a boy." There were tears in his eyes, but his mouth was smiling joyously. I left him standing there looking up at the sunset light about the high hills, and blessing God in his heart.

Within was a strange scene. It was all disorder. About the altar-rail knelt a line of people praying for forgiveness.

Directly before me one of the Christian Endeavour workers was sitting with his arm about a man who was evidently just from work, whose head was sunk upon his arms, and whose great body was shaking with emotion, while his friend chanted to him in low, almost uncanny monotony "the old, old story." At the left a young lad of twenty, his eyes closed, his face upturned with a rapt look, was talking in high, loud voice, rapidly, confidently, although until three days before he had always feared to talk before people, even a few, casually.

In the gallery the largest, strongest-looking man in the room had thrown himself forward and was sobbing in his hands; while a little, sad-faced woman and a sturdy, apple-cheeked girl -- his wife and daughter probably -- put their arms about him as if to drag him on to better things. Behind, a little man with a large voice was singing alone one of the less familiar Welsh hymns, and he seemed entirely oblivious of the crowds about him. All this was happening just as I went in.

Now a quaint, pitiful little figure in black kneels, and in quavering words, scarcely above a whisper, begs that her boy may be brought to God; and then a hush falls upon nearly all as a young man comes hurrying up the aisles, self-conscious, but with his jaw set tightly, and kneels down beside her. Then her arms grope their way about his broad shoulders, and until after I have left the chapel they remain there, mother and son, in tears and happiness.

Meanwhile the audience bursts quickly into that stirring, swinging hymn that follows conversion -- music that, I think, caught me in its sweeping melody with more resistless power than any song and any singing I have ever heard.

To me no oratorio society, no group of trained professional singers that it has been my good fortune to hear, sing as well as almost anyone of the Welsh congregations I heard sing at the Roberts meetings, and here and there were wonderful individual voices, backed by great musical temperament.

Suddenly, as the long hymn ends, the little woman and the young girl beside the man in the gallery leap to their feet in joy and wave their hands. Again the triumphant hymn, louder, now rumbling bass and strong tenor weighing evenly with the simple but mighty air. In all this time I have not heard a word from any of the three ministers, except the usual expressions of joy and the picturesque Welsh words of encouragement.

And this is another way in which the Roberts meetings differ from any other revival meetings I have attended.

The people are the meeting, not the preacher, once his short talk is ended, though his spirit remains to fire them to congregational rather than individual leadership.

The evening meeting was similar, and lasted far into the morning, a joyful meeting with its greatest enthusiasm just before it closed. This was a month after Evan Roberts first stirred the Aberdare people, and suggests that he stirred not merely the surface but the depths. And it is the same elsewhere.

The stories that might be told of the experiences, the deeds, and the sayings of individuals among the congregations in the Welsh revival -- dramatic scenes, of tender pathos, lightning bits of humour -- are already numbered in thousands and tens of thousands. And each one has served as added fuel to this religious flame, which, like the fires that sometimes have swept the prairies and the forests of the Western States, has gone beyond the power of men to stop, and must determine its own destiny.

Every night and every morning they are repeated in the mines and the shops, on the streets, and in the tidy little homes of Wales. The newspapers bear them on where Evan Roberts is only a name, and a single vital incident often carries the spark which sets new fires burning fiercely.

A clergyman, so one story goes, is standing in the open street with a collier. They have just come from a meeting.

"A good meeting," says the clergyman, "afire with enthusiasm. But what will happen when the fuel is exhausted?"

"Fuel," cries the Welshman "No fear of Wales running out of fuel. You'll be an archbishop before this light goes out." And then and there he raises his voice in prayer for the doubting clergyman.

Up in Ebenezer Chapel at Trecynon at midnight comes a well-known man, and the people stop singing and stare at him in amazement. He is an atheist. "I have burned my books that said there was no God," he says. "I was shipwrecked and the waves were gathering fast about the plank which alone stood between me and hell. But God called to me and I came to Him and was lifted out of destruction." Tom Hughes, the atheist, knows what he means when he sings "Throw out the life-line."

A certain collier in Cilfynydd has been "cropped" for "filling dirty coal." In anger and with threats he tells the officials that he will make trouble for them. He'll have it taken up by the union, and the union will make the officials understand what they can do and what they can't do. He goes to hear Evan Roberts, and he comes from the meeting in a totally new spirit.

"I'm not going to say anything to the union," he tells the officials, "and I'll go back to work. And what's more, you won't have to talk about dirty coal in my trams again."

"We've prayed for this awakening," cries a workman at one meeting. "We've seen the devil's worst often; but now, at last, we are seeing Christ's best."

A certain gambler is owed £100. After one meeting he goes to a clergyman and offers to give money to the church and to the cause.

"I can't take gambling money," says the preacher as gently as possible.

The gambler is bitterly disappointed. He has no money except "gambling money." He goes away and refuses the £100 owed him as a gambling debt.

A young woman trembling with emotion rises at Pontycymmer. Everyone knows her. Only a short time ago she was a leading figure in the police-court. "Can anyone as bad as I am be saved?" she asks. "Certainly," cries the missionary. "No one of us is too bad to be saved." Tears roll down the woman's cheek. "No one has fallen lower than I have," she declares. "He saves me. Come to Him, all the rest of you," Is it a wonder that people all about her, who have sins of their own, and hesitate to confess them, are weeping, or that the whole audience is suddenly moved.

Throughout this section of Wales in every town there are clubs formed for men. Ostensibly they are for social intercourse, but in reality, as far as I have been able to learn, many of them are little more than select drinking places, and houses where the members can evade the law against public drinking on Sundays.

Listen to these two confessions at Ammanford. The first is from a middle-aged man holding a baby in his arms: "I used to spend three or four pounds in a single evening at the bar. I'd give my wife and children a few stray shillings now and then. I'd steal coppers from my child's money-box and spend them for beer. I was seldom sober. But, thank God, that's done with."

Another man follows him quickly when he sits down: "I've been the worst kind of a drunkard," he says. "And what's more -- and this is something my wife here never knew until now -- I served three years in jail as a professional thief. Now I am really happy for the first time in my life."

A farmer near Lougher, it was said, in the early days of the revival, sent one of his men with a load of turnips to the town. This man had been converted to a new life at one of the first meetings. On the way to Lougher a woman met him and begged him to join her in prayers for her husband.

The man left his cart and went with her. An hour later the farmer, coming by, discovered the cart standing by the wayside and watched over by two children. Inquiring the way to the house, he followed the servant and in a few moments he, too, was kneeling in prayer beside his servant and the good woman.

One man, a workman, asked where he was going by some of his friends, remarked with a laugh that he was going down to see that "crazy-man," Evan Roberts. Before the meeting was over he had risen, trembling, to his feet and had asked the people to pray for him.

Here is a seafaring man telling of a wreck from which he was saved by a life-line, and the entire congregation throws itself unrestrainedly into the hymn, "Throw out the life-line."

Here are a pugilist giving up his "profession," a postman getting leave of absence to attend meetings, a policeman remarking that people are going mad over the revival, and then after attending one meeting joining the "mad people" at whom he jeered, a racing man burning his racing clothes, a notorious "rough" asking prayers for his "pals," a girl throwing her arms about another girl whom she had refused to speak to for a year, a school at which prayer meetings have temporarily replaced some of the study, and colliers working in the pits kneeling in prayer beside their trams.

These only suggest the changes in men's hearts and lives that are being made by the tens of thousands in Wales. What is doing it? Come to Ynishir. A chapel is well filled with expectant people. They are singing Welsh hymns as they wait the coming of the missionary of whom they have heard so much, and whom they have never seen. Now and then some fervent church-member, who until Evan Roberts began to stir the churches went about his religious duties with little life or animation, prays in chanting monotone for the Spirit to descend upon this meeting, or quotes with gentle voice "The Lord is my Shepherd," -- I heard a dozen men do this at various meetings, -- or rises to his feet and, one hand raised while the other covers his eyes, tells what God has done for him.

They are singing again when Evan Roberts comes in quietly, listening with a happy smile on his lips to the swelling tide of melody. Up in the gallery there is a group of young people and children and unconsciously they are leading the singing with their fresh young voices. Roberts' eyes, wandering keenly about the room and, to use a figure, shaking hands with every other pair of eyes they meet, light upon these enthusiastic children and his smile broadens.

I could listen to such singing all night," he declares when the fifth "repeat" has been finished. And again the music rises triumphantly.

"Mae'r etifeddiaeth i ni'n d'od,

Wrth Destament ein Tad."

A moment later the missionary is talking in his jerky, whole-hearted, inspiring way, with the hymn as a text, saying simple, pithy things that appeal strongly to the people before him. Suddenly he turns to the children in the gallery.

"Will you go out into the streets of Ynshire and sing that hymn there as you have sung it here?"

There is immediate and inspiring response.

"If you will," cries the missionary, his face alight, "the people here must be hard if they don't yearn for Christ as they listen."

The meeting goes on. Miss Rees is talking in Welsh now, and singing in English that simple hymn, with its catching melody, in which all can join:

"Looking this way, yes, looking this way,

Loved ones are waiting, looking this way."

Now Mr. Roberts is calling beseechingly to the people to stand up for God.

"He that is not with me is against me." Where do you, each of you, stand. Are you for Him or against Him. Be men and tell us."

No one could describe or explain how the climax has come, but here it is. Gradually the pool of human hearts has been stirred deeper and yet deeper, and now the flood of confession, of contrition, of penitence for the past, of aspiration for better things, bursts out in every part of the hall. There are men on their feet and women on their knees all about us, talking freely of what they have done, of what they have been, and of what they mean to do and be; or praying plaintively for forgiveness for themselves and for those who are dear to them.

"Diolch Iddo," "Thanks to Him," rolls out a mighty chorus.

Come to Ferndale. Trehondda Chapel is filled with all sorts of people, all creeds and no creed, many grades of education and no education. Already the indefinable stir that we have seen grow so often and so inexplicably has begun.

Evan Roberts speaks: "Let us see what God's Spirit will do for us in a quiet meeting. It did wonderful things at Lougher when no one sung or spoke."

A few moments later all are kneeling in five minutes of silent prayer. The crowded room is still except for quick gasps of sobbing breath from those who are deeply moved. Here and there a half audible voice is mumbling inarticulate prayer. Deeper yet grows the silence and more impressive. Wrinkled faces are upturned, and unseeing eyes look upward. Heads are bowed in folded hands. Shoulders are convulsed with emotion, and lips are moving from which no sound comes.

Still the preacher gives no sign. Gradually a single low voice is heard in all parts of the chapel, singing sweetly the hymn, "Have you seen Him?" in Welsh. For an instant there is the stillness of listening with

bated breath; then slowly other voices join in singing until the building rings with thrilling melody. It is as if they have burst from prayer into song.

And this is a scene of the revival which so respected a paper as the Lancet, evidently without investigating it except through the reports of the sensational papers and its own prejudice, calls "a debauch of emotionalism," "a hysterical outburst," marked with "scenes of disorder."

Come to Treorky. We shall have great difficulty in getting into this meeting unless we are very early. So great is the interest that the football game in the afternoon has been played before an assemblage that was only three or four times the size of the team in the field.

A man stops us outside and points to the packed vestibule and the waiting, disappointed people outside. "That's the most remarkable thing I ever saw," he says. "It's the first time I ever saw a church where they had to hang out a 'standing room only' sign. Most always you can occupy a whole row in the stalls free, and here I'd pay a guinea for a seat and I can't get it! It's amazing, that's what it is, amazing."

He talks like a theatrical man, and he is evidently a stranger for anyone who has attended Evan Roberts' meetings knows that this is the rule and not the exception wherever he has gone. He turns away before we make any appreciable impression upon the almost solid wall of people standing at the door, and goes off down the street shaking his head.

Evan Roberts is already speaking when we have worked our way to a place where we can hear. He is talking pleadingly, with manly pathos and deep feeling, about the agony of our Saviour. As he talks we seem to see the picture of Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and to understand something of His suffering.

Suddenly a sweet, girlish voice breaks in on the missionary's quick speech. The words are Welsh, but the voice is tense with emotion, and the liquid sweetness of it holds the entire congregation taut and motionless.

The verse ends and the speaker proceeds with his moving description. Suddenly the voice breaks in again. It is Annie Davies. We can see her now.

The words are Welsh still, but we have heard them so often that we understand them. "Jesus only," sings the thrilling voice, and stops short. Her hands cover her eyes and the girl is sobbing unrestrainedly. "Oh, Jesu, Jesu," she moans, "for me." There is a moment of silence, broken only by pent-up sobbing. Now the entire congregation is singing, and singing mightily, and there are tears in our eyes. And we have come merely as onlookers.

Whether his share in the work be great or little, I think Evan Roberts cares as little as any human person can care, so long as the work is done. No one of all those who have watched him more closely and continuously than I have, have seen a single sign of any tendency in him to place himself ahead of any of his co-workers. The people have done that, and he accepts the large opportunity gladly.

Personally, I think I have never met a man who appealed to me as being so completely consecrated to his cause as this young man of twenty-six years, trained in the colliery and at the "smithy." When one thinks of it, no young man of his years and native environment could have endured against so strong a tide of personal success unless he had an enduring grip upon mighty moorings.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/arthur-goodrich/2-the-story-of-the-welsh-revival/>

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