

At Anfield. -- a Chant of Praise. -- Features of the Mission.

by Gwilym Hughes

The mission in Liverpool, led by Evan Roberts, was a success, with a deep and intense feeling among the congregation, and a call to whole-hearted dedication to God.

Scripture: Psalm 133:1, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 25:21, Luke 15:20, Acts 2:1, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Philippians 2:3, James 4:8

Topics: "Revival Movement", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Gwilym Hughes preaches at Anfield Road Chapel in Liverpool, where the mission led by Mr. Evan Roberts is met with great enthusiasm and success. The city was prepared for the mission through a thorough house-to-house canvass, revealing 4,000 prodigals who were rediscovered. Special gatherings for non-church goers are organized as a feature of the mission, showcasing the deep and intense spiritual atmosphere prevailing in the city. The congregation experiences a powerful outpouring of the Spirit, with prayers of dedication, praise, and a call for whole-hearted commitment to God.

Transcript

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LIVERPOOL, Thursday, March 30, 1905.

Disappointing as was last night's meeting at Princes Road Chapel to those familiar with revival scenes in South Wales, the Liverpool people express themselves delighted with it. They regard it as an unqualified success. "Mr. Evan Roberts made an excellent first impression" is the phrase we hear on all sides, and this view is amply confirmed by the Liverpool and Manchester morning papers, all of which find in the Princes Road gathering ample justification of the renown which the revivalist has won. "We did not anticipate," said a leading local minister to me to-day, "witnessing in Liverpool anything like the stirring scenes you have had down South. I question whether our people here are capable of any extraordinary ebullition of feeling, and we do not desire it; but there prevailed at last night's meeting a deep and intense feeling which was unmistakable, and the revival, we feel confident, is taking a firm hold of the city."

In a conversation with the Rev. John Williams, of Princes Road, to-day, I was told something of the manner in which the city had been prepared for the coming of the mission. A house-to-house canvass of

so vast a community as Liverpool is surely a task that would not be lightly undertaken by any body or association, no matter how highly organised, but the Welsh Free Churches of Liverpool, having conceived the idea, did not rest until it was carried into execution. The work was divided between the churches, and for many days one thousand canvassers were daily at work. Not a house was left unvisited, either in Liverpool or the suburbs, including Birkenhead and Garston, and at each the inquiry was made, "Are there any Welsh people here who do not frequent places of worship?" In the result, as previously stated, 4,000 such prodigals were discovered.

While this work was in progress, the canvassers met every Sunday night for prayer, and at one of these meetings someone conceived the happy idea of organizing during the mission special gatherings for this class of non-church goers. I hear to-day that three such meetings have been arranged in three different parts of the city, and they will be held next week. These meetings, every one of which Mr. Evan Roberts is anxious to address, are expected to be the feature of next week's programme.

Mr. Evan Roberts, I ascertained this morning, is in the best of health and spirits, and is deeply grateful to the Liverpool committee for the very excellent arrangements made for his comfort. The address of the house (No. 1 Duc's Street, Princes Park, the residence of Mrs. Edwards) in which he resides during his stay in the city is kept a profound secret, and he is thus enabled to enjoy rest and freedom, and to escape the unwelcome attentions of the army of inquisitive callers who had been dogging his footsteps in other places. I very much fear, however, that the secret will soon become public property, for as I passed the house this morning I observed a crowd of the curious ones in the immediate vicinity watching the carriage which had just arrived to take the revivalist out for his morning drive.

To-night's meeting is held in the northern end of the city, the chapel selected for the missionary's visit being that of Anfield Road, opposite Stanley Park. Simultaneously three similar gatherings, all crowded, were held in other chapels in the vicinity. Commodious as is the chapel at Anfield Road, for it will comfortably accommodate 1,200 people, it proved hopelessly inadequate to house the enormous crowd that besieged all the entrances at 6 o'clock. Three minutes later every inch of room within was occupied. Then the doors were finally closed, and the pastor (the Rev. Owen Owens) conveyed to those within, a message from the chief constable of Liverpool that no one was to leave the building until the close of the proceedings. This precaution, it was explained, was necessary so as to avoid crushing and panic.

It was an inspiring audience, typically Welsh, with a slight sprinkling perhaps of other nationalities. The spirit, of idle curiosity so painfully evident at Princes Road was to-night markedly absent; and ten minutes after the congregation was admitted I could detect nothing to distinguish the meeting from the finest revival gathering seen even in the Rhondda and the Garw. The Rev. Dr. Abel T. Parry, D.D., of Rhyl, an ex-president of the Welsh Baptist Union, had scarcely finished reading the introductory chapter ere a lady under the gallery was heard in earnest supplication. She was immediately followed by two young men, one a mere boy, and both prayed with irresistible power. Their theme was one of praise that in this revival the young men of Liverpool had been deeply immersed in the baptism of the Spirit. This elicited loud and fervent "Amens" from all parts of the building, and presently the "gorfoledd" found adequate vent in hymn after hymn. During the brief intervals between the stanzas we heard the music being repeated by a choir of apparently many thousand voices clustered in the streets on three sides of the building.

Let us glance around. While the congregation is yet singing, fully half a dozen persons in as many pews up and down the building are engaged in prayer, and as the music ceases we hear their voices, pitched in a quaint and musical monotone, betraying their North Wales origin. All of them are apparently blissfully

unconscious of their surroundings. Like Jacob, one is wrestling for the blessing; another, striking an altruistic note, pleads for the baptism of the Spirit upon all and sundry, but especially upon Evan Roberts, "Thine honoured servant."

No one is in charge. The conduct of the meeting is entirely in the hands of the congregation. The spontaneity of the proceedings is delightful. Prayers and hymns follow absolutely without interval, and, as in South Wales, we occasionally have a dozen people simultaneously on their feet. Last night Mr. Evan Roberts -- he has I see, just arrived, he is now in the pulpit, though his arrival has created no commotion -- the revivalist, was taken aback by the lack of warmth at the Princes Road service, and asked whether the Spirit worked differently in the North from the way He worked in the South. Surely such a query would to-night be quite out of place. The ladies are now very much in evidence, and striking and beautiful are some of the prayers they offer. "The Pentecost that was lost through unbelief must come again," exclaims one, while the next pleads that the Lord should make them "all Marys, all prostrate at the feet of Jesus."

Shortly all eyes are fixed on the pulpit. Miss Annie Davies is singing the revival love song,

"Dyma gariad fel y moroedd,

Tosturiaethau fel y lli'!

T'wysog 'bywyd pur yn marw,

Marw i brynu'n bywyd ni!

Pwy all beidio coflo am dano?

Pwy all beidio traethu'i glod?

Dyma gariad nad a'n anghof --

Tra bo'r nefoedd wen yn bod!

In a second or two she is complete mistress of the congregation. All seen enraptured by the vocalist, who, despite her glorious voice, evidently thinks more of her theme than of her art. She sings as one inspired. The line "Dyma gariad nad a'n anghof" ("Love that cannot be forgotten") is rung out again and again at the top of her voice with telling effect, and, presently, in contemplation of His love thus extolled, hundreds are silently weeping. A Wesleyan Methodist minister from Paris offers prayer in English for France; Gipsy Smith's brother-in-law, Mr. Evens, offers another for the salvation of the world, and other Englishmen and Englishwomen follow their example.

Why this silence of the missionary? It is nine o'clock; two hours have elapsed since he took his seat in the pulpit, but he has not yet uttered a word, nor has his face been once lit with a smile. Half an hour ago he bent his head and hid his face in his hands; now, as the congregation are absorbed in a rousing rendering of the Welsh Christian war march, "Marchog Iesu yn llwyddianus," he seems to be rousing himself from a reverie and to be taking an intelligent interest in what passes around.

A young fellow in the gallery has been praying for a downpour of the Spirit. It was this that brought Mr. Evan Roberts at last to his feet. "No," he exclaimed, "don't ask the Spirit for the downpour, for we shall not get it. The Spirit will not come in all His fullness until a place is prepared for Him." Hence, he continued, the need for whole-hearted dedication of self -- body and soul -- to the service of God. Some prayed for a

revival, and yet closed the doors of their own hearts against it; others were ready to do great things for God, but refused to do the lesser things for Him. They must learn to do the lesser things before they would be permitted to do the greater things. Was that meeting a success? Yes, perfectly; but Jesus had not been given all the glory that it had been possible to give Him, nor yet as much glory as He desired to have. They must not rob God of His glory. They must make up their minds to give all for God or all for the Devil. Each one of them must attract people to Jesus or repel people from Jesus. Which was it to be? In many Christian hearts Jesus reigned, while the will, the affection, the intellect, had not all been subjected to Him. There was need to rub the rust off many a follower of Christ. God needed workers, not men. Jesus was the greatest worker the world had ever seen, and he who would be like the Master must be ready to be bent, and to be humiliated, even as the Master was.

For fully five minutes after the revivalist had suddenly ceased speaking, there is a silence that can be felt. Evan Roberts, bending over the pulpit desk, glances up and down the silent, solemn congregation with face now smiling, now sad, his solitary remark being,

"I have stopped, because I feel that now in this chapel scores are weighing themselves in the balance." Eventually the painful silence is broken by a touching prayer from the gallery for Universal peace, universal salvation." "Thou hast saved the Welsh, O Lord," ran one of the phrases, "save also the English, and the Scotch, and the Irish," and the congregation after a loud "Amen" breaks forth into a fervent and ecstatic rendering of "Diolch Iddo."

A little later the delicate task of testing the audience is conducted by the Rev. Owen Owens. On this occasion church members are asked not only to stand up, but to raise the right arm, and at once we see a whole forest of arms uplifted. "Up with them," cries the missionary, "up even unto Heaven if necessary; remember the arms that were once extended on the Cross." Are there any arms down? Only a few. Two, three, four converts are announced in rapid succession, and after each announcement the revivalist, who is now as eager and boyish in manner as he was wont to be at the beginning of this historic movement, leads the audience in a great chant of praise.

"Here is one who doesn't want to give in," The voice comes somewhere from the far end. "He won't? " asks the revivalist, "Let him beware lest the cry soon be that he shall not." Another man was said to decline because "he knew too many of the tricks of some who were church members." "It will be every man for himself in the great day to come," was the revivalist's response, "Do you find any fault with God?"

It was close upon 11 o'clock when the meeting terminated, and a similar gathering held in the adjoining hall was simultaneously brought to a close. These Anfield meetings, if I mistake not, mark the beginning in Liverpool of a movement destined to prove as marvellous as that witnessed even in South Wales.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gwilym-hughes/at-anfield-a-chant-of-praise-features-of-the-mission/>

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