

# First Service at Bootle. -- Remarkable Gathering. -- Many Converts.

by Gwilym Hughes

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*The sermon at Bootle highlighted a remarkable gathering led by Evan Roberts, emphasizing the urgency of salvation and the transformative power of faith.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:14, Matthew 7:13, Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17, John 10:9, Romans 10:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, James 5:16, Revelation 3:20

**Topics:** "Salvation Message", "Spiritual Revival"

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## Description

Gwilym Hughes preaches at the Stanley Road Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Bootle, Liverpool, amidst a magnificent gathering of thousands, including a great Welsh population. The congregation experiences a surge of spiritual fervor, with prayers, supplications, and hymns filling the air. Hughes emphasizes the choice between eternal life and destruction, urging individuals to enter through the narrow door to salvation. He paints a vivid picture of the great Physician who heals all wounds, contrasting the suffering on earth with the wholeness in Heaven. The service culminates in a powerful display of conversions, prayers for salvation, and a call to remain close to Jesus and engage in prayer and work.

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## Transcript

BOOTLE, Liverpool, Thursday, April 6, 1905.

Bootle is in Liverpool, but not of it. Skirting the city at its northern end, with New Brighton as its vis-a-vis on the opposite shore, it has a Corporation of its own, and has strenuously and successfully resisted every attempt made by the city to absorb it. For revival purposes, however, Bootle is in Liverpool. Hence this magnificent gathering to-night at the Stanley Road Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, so well known throughout Wales from its association with the Rev. Griffith Ellis, who is still its pastor. Bootle, too, has within its boundaries a great Welsh population, and here they are to-night, numbering many thousands, outside a chapel which has seating only for 850. Possibly about 1,200 are squeezed inside. They have been here since 5 o'clock. Now, at 6, the adjoining schoolroom is packed, and arrangements are being made for three or four overflow services in adjacent buildings.

This morning Mr. Evan Roberts was persuaded to leave Liverpool at an early hour. He spent the day at West Kirby, a popular resort in Cheshire, on the banks of the Dee estuary. He is being inundated with correspondence, but some of the letters addressed to him are couched in insulting terms, breathing

anything but Christian charity; others come from recent converts who are full of the joy of a newfound peace.

During the hour preceding the missionary's arrival at the meeting there are many incidents of interest, but the spiritual fervour experienced at the corresponding hour last evening is not yet apparent. I am reminded, however, that this is one of the three meetings set apart exclusively for non-adherents. As at Shaw Street, so here, the arrangement so attractive on paper has in practice been altogether ineffective. There are, no doubt, some scores of "esgeuluswyr" present, but the great majority are church members.

"There are hundreds here from North Wales," explains a minister who sits near me. "But," I suggest "If they are adherents they have no business to be here." "That is quite true but when people have travelled from great distances, you can scarcely refuse them tickets." But North Walians are not the only visitors from a distance. Over there is a deputation of Irish Protestants, headed by the Rev. C. Davey (head of the Evangelisation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland). France, too, is represented, for Pastor Parker, a Paris Wesleyan, has just been telling the congregation some wonderful news as to the spread of the revival on the Continent. Continental visitors who had heard Evan Roberts in South Wales had returned aflame with the Spirit, and the fire is now spreading there.

Would Wales he pleaded, not send a few red-hot revivalists to stir up their kinsmen in Brittany?

Suddenly we are conscious of a great increase of fervour. The spirit of prayer has fallen on the congregation, and when we least expect it a dozen are simultaneously on their feet engaged in eloquent supplications. The prayers of the women are broken with sobs. There are prayers for Evan Roberts, for those who have strayed, for those who are in the grip of demon-drink, for the salvation of Liverpool and the universe, "for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

We are in the midst of a Welsh hymn when the missionary arrives. His appearance creates a flutter and causes a diversion. The singing flags, but only for a moment. When it is renewed there is in it more heart and more of the spirit of worship than we had yet to-night experienced. Five minutes later a striking prayer by Miss Annie Davies (Maesteg) throws the congregation into a veritable tornado of prayer and praise.

The revivalist is now on his feet. A day in the fresh air has done him good. (And yet, as it subsequently transpired, this was the very day when he met with an accident which nearly cost him his life - Gwilym Hughs) He is glad to-night, and there is gladness in his eyes as he looks about him. A crush at the door gives him his text. "Thank Heaven," is his remark, that so many came in through that door to-night, but soon we shall be going out again through the same door. There are two other doors -- one leading to destruction, the other to eternal life. Once through either of those doors, there is no turning back."

Evidently the preacher has studied his congregation to some purpose. He enlarges upon the majesty of Man, quoting the Psalmist's words, I am tearfully and wonderfully made." Man could choose for himself how he would spend eternity. Heaven be praised that thousands entered through the narrow door these days, but although the door was narrow it could admit through its portals a whole world at once. Was anyone going through it to-night? It would not always be open. A time would come when it would be forever shut, when the keys would rust and the walls crumble!

A pause follows. Not a rustle is heard. Deep silence prevails throughout the building. The congregation gazes with fixed eyes upon the missionary, and the missionary reclining in his favourite attitude on the pulpit desk surveys the congregation. "But," he at last proceeds smilingly, "it is not now too late." Pointing to the

Bible, he asks. "How would you feel if God sent His angel to this service to say -- 'This (the Bible) is sealed, the meeting is over; out with you; no one again is ever to be offered eternal life?'"

Does the speaker expect an answer? Not one is vouchsafed. The revivalist presently is drawing a vivid word picture of the great Physician. It was Satan that wounded. Could they not see his scars everywhere? But the great Physician healed, and when He healed, not even an archangel could detect the scar. He was ever at work on earth. There was no need of a physician in Heaven. There, all were whole. There was another place where all were suffering, but there was no physician there.

"Some have an idea," remarks the young preacher, referring, presumably, to the doctrine of the larger hope, "that He will journey from Heaven to the other place. Would that it were true! I would willingly believe it if this (the Bible) taught it."

A little later, after the missionary had addressed himself with great power to non-adherents, the congregation burst into a great chorus of sacred song, and the wild scene of half an hour ago is renewed. A young lady on the edge of the gallery utters a touching petition. She is attired in mourning. "A short time since I lost my earthly father in this chapel. He is now with Thee, O Lord; and wilt Thou tell him that I am coming, too?" Many bitter tears are dropped. "Who is she?" I enquire. A friend enlightens me. "A short time ago her father, who was the precentor of this church, fell down dead in the pulpit pew."

The Rev. Abel J. Parry (ex-president of the Baptist Union of Wales) and the Rev. Griffith Ellis (ex-moderator of the General Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists) are next heard in fervent supplications.

Soon the great gathering is again at white heat, and at the request of the missionary, the Rev. Griffith Ellis attempts to conduct the test. His tall, commanding figure, standing erect in the pulpit, overlooks what to him from the point of vantage must seem as a seething, boiling cauldron. Hymns, prayers, testimonies, confessions, ascend from every corner of the building, and in their excitement all the members of the congregation are on their feet. It is no reflection on Mr. Ellis to say that his efforts proved utterly futile. His appeal for a moment's silence fell on deaf ears. Thrice he attempted, and at last he gracefully acknowledged defeat, and handed the reins over to the Rev. John Williams, who has now thoroughly mastered the delicacy and intricacies of such a task.

Watching his opportunity, Mr. Williams, as the last line of a hymn was reached, exclaims, "You shall sing as much as you like, but let us now find further cause for thanksgiving." At once church members raise their right arms, and then converts, singly and in batches, are discovered -- here, there, and everywhere. "Man and wife," "Three there" "Five here," "A prodigal returned," such are the few phrases we catch.

In five minutes the total reaches to 40. After all, non-adherents are fairly represented here. Suddenly a strong man utters a wail of despair. The one intelligible word he utters is "Jesus." He falls headlong in the pew, and presently is carried into the vestry by five or six men. His groans are heartrending, and the congregation is saddened and pained. The revivalist, is he equal to the occasion? "God will take care of him," he declares; "don't let your attention be distracted. Your duty is to help to save others."

A young woman's voice is heard in prayer. She has brought to the service seven young friends, who had never before been inside a place of worship. She pleads that they be saved. This at once becomes the theme of scores of other prayers. Meanwhile, Mr. Evan Roberts, as on previous occasions, is urging, encouraging, commanding members to be up and doing. Shoals of converts are again discovered. "Dioich

lddo" is sung, and sung, and sung again. Frequently he stops the refrain, and cries out, "There's another coming," and not once is his prediction falsified.

He is radiantly happy to-night, and his repartees are smart and telling. "Don't forget the names," remarks the Rev. John Williams to the workers, "it is as important for us to get their names as it is for you to offer Jesus." "Their names?" responds the missionary "you are too late, the angels have been before you."

The Rev. W. O. Evans asked the stewards to go among the crowds in the far corner of the building in search of those who surrender. "You church members," cried the missionary, "do your duty, and don't let the stewards rob you of your crowns." Next we hear another voice declaring, "A brother here feels he cannot come to-night." The missionary promptly replies, "Cannot Why not? He has only to say, Jesus, take me," and he is for ever linked to Heaven."

How many converts? It is not safe to estimate. But ten minutes ago the Rev. John Williams announced the total as approaching 60. Since then many more have been declared. "Converts," cried the missionary, as the service terminates, "keep close to Jesus! Be great in prayer, and throw yourselves into work!"

This has been throughout a remarkable service. After all, these experiments in gatherings for non-adherents are worth repeating all over Wales.

Liverpool Minister's Estimate. -- "A Chosen Vessel of the Lord."

In view of the public interest taken throughout Wales in Mr. Evan Roberts's Liverpool meetings, and in order to correct, if possible, certain misconceptions which have been formed by some writers and others in North Wales who have not seen the revivalist or understand his methods, an important letter was to-day (Thursday, April 6) sent to the Welsh Press signed jointly by the Rev. John Williams, Princes Road, Liverpool, and the Rev. Thomas Charles Williams, M.A., of Menai Bridge. The Rev. John Williams is the senior secretary of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist General Assembly, and one of the hon. Secs. of the Liverpool Revival Committee, while the Rev. T. Charles Williams is one of the most eminent pulpiteers of Wales. The letter was in Welsh, and the following is a translation.

"We desire to take advantage of your columns to remove, if possible, some wrong impressions which are evidently being spread throughout the country with reference to Mr. Evan Roberts's mission in Liverpool. We observe that some are suggesting that his 'silence' in the meetings causes them to become practically disappointing, while others will have it that his health is so affected that he ought not to have been pressed to fulfill his engagement in this city. We are glad of the opportunity to emphatically deny both these assertions. Mr. Roberts's mission in Liverpool is proving a success far beyond any expectations. The assemblages are enormous, many chapels are filled nightly, and it would be easy to fill many more. The enthusiasm is increasing, and we are fully convinced that the spiritual effects of this mission will be felt for generations. And it is not alone among the Welsh people that the interest is being felt. The Lord Mayor has sent offering the young revivalist, on behalf of the city, any official welcome that he would be willing to accept. All are eager to welcome him, and, more than all, the Spirit of the Lord undoubtedly sustains him amongst us.

"Mr. Roberts's methods of conducting the meetings are the same here as in South Wales. He perhaps is the very first to adopt such methods. He has no programme of any sort, and we do not know that he ever prepares his addresses. It is the people who carry out the meetings, not he. And he constantly emphasises the need of all learning to rely on the Spirit and not on man. Therefore, notwithstanding that

he himself may be silent, the meetings are never at a standstill and the reins are entirely in his hands, and his control is perfect. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that he is altogether silent. In the meetings held by him at Shaw Street and the Toxteth Tabernacle, all he said showed the greatest taste and keenness, and it was manifest that he was endowed with such natural gifts of oratory that it would not have been a tax upon him to have taken the whole meeting.

"But what is remarkable in him is his wonderful power to change with a few phrases the whole tone of the meeting. At the Tabernacle on Monday, for instance, the proceedings became utterly flat; there was not a breath of life in anything. Mr. Roberts had been speaking very strongly for about 20 minutes at the start, but afterwards he sat down and appeared as if taking no notice of anything for about an hour and a half. He got up suddenly when the meeting was at its lowest point, and in less than five minutes the place had become awful to be in it -- hundreds praying and praising simultaneously.

"We are fully convinced that he is an extraordinary man, not alone on account of the call he has received and the Divine countenance so clearly vouchsafed to him, but also on account of his natural mental powers. He is different from everybody, and he should not be judged by our ordinary standards. The exceptional insight that he possesses and the paroxysms he is subjected to prove an obstacle to some. We do not profess to be able to go into this question. But one thing is certain -- that most of the things said by him here while under this inspiration have already been verified. He is undoubtedly 'a chosen vessel' prepared of God for a specific work at a special emergency, and it rests upon us, as those trying to promote the Kingdom of God, to be wide in our sympathies and sparing of our criticism, to pray much on his behalf and on behalf of his work, and to glorify God in him."

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