Evan Roberts and the Welsh Revival of 1904
Evan Roberts and the Welsh revival of 1904 - Part One

In one of his daily readings on the text "The night also is Thine" (Psalm 74 v16), C. H. Spurgeon reminds believers that "Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem defeat to us may be victory to Him."

During times of declension in the history of the church, the best consolation and encouragement for Christians is the sure knowledge which inspired John Morison to write the verse:

"Long hath the night of sorrow reigned,
The dawn shall bring us light:
God shall appear, and we shall rise
With gladness in His sight."

It is such confidence in God's unchanging faithfulness and power which drives His people to pray more earnestly and to strive more obediently to serve Him until He is pleased to grant another gracious outpouring of His Spirit.

When God in His sovereign providence moves in reviving power, as He did in Wales in 1904, secular observers tend to look for rational explanations, but those who experience the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit have no doubt that a divinely supernatural intervention is taking place. Similarly while contemporary accounts of the revival often regard its dramatic suddenness as inexplicable, those who had longed and yearned and prayed for the return of God's favour have the spiritual discernment to see the events of 1904 as His astounding answer to their pleadings.

Looking to God
This was indeed the experience of Christians in Wales at the end of the 19th century who had witnessed the rapid spread of worldliness and humanist ideologies, despite the progress made in some areas by agencies such as the Forward Movement. In the religious literature of the period before 1904 there were frequent expressions of concern over the deadness affecting the churches. Amongst the examples quoted by Dr. Eifion Evans in his book "The Welsh Revival of 1904", the following are typical: "a spirit of error fills the air, so that a silent subconscious influence on the minds of men attracts them away from the living God," (Evan Phillips, Welsh Presbyterian Moderator 1900); "while the church sleeps the enemy busily sows tares among the wheat, and nothing short of an outpouring of the Spirit from on high will uproot them, and save our land from becoming a prey to atheism and ungodliness," (Y Drysorfa, Nov. 1902). "The authority of the Bible and the fundamental truths of Christianity are being weighed in the balance of reason and criticism as though they were nothing more than human opinions," ("Y Cyfaill Eglwysig", Dec. 1902).

The recognition that God alone could provide the answer to this sad state was admitted by some church leaders of the day and it was gradually reflected in the increased fervency of their prayers both in private devotions and in public worship at churches in Carmarthen, Neath, Bridgend, Dowlais and the Garw, Llynfi and Rhondda valleys. The other characteristic features of their prayers were the greater sense of burden for the unconverted multitudes and the deeper longing for the Holy Spirit to descend upon them. A small number of ministers including W.S. Jones, W.W. Lewis and Keri Evans (all of Carmarthen), O.M. Owen (Penydarren), David Evans (Bridgend), Cynog Williams (Aberdare), W.N. Williams (Ammanford) and R.B. Jones (Rhondda) had independently experienced God's power transforming their preaching in the years immediately preceding 1904 and it was through the ministries of such men that Joseph Jenkins of New Quay and John Thickens of Aberaeron were challenged over the spiritual needs of their congregations.

Listening To God

Jenkins, conscious of his own inadequacy and poverty of spirit, pleaded for the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon his life and God granted him such boldness and power that his ministry began to enjoy much blessing. Together with Thickens, he arranged a series of "conferences" in various churches in the area which started in January 1904 and which were led by some of the preachers already being used by God. In the following months an intense longing for the baptism of the Holy Spirit was felt by many attending the meetings so that when Seth Joshua, the itinerant evangelist of the Forward Movement, arrived in New Quay in September, he recorded in his diary, "I have never seen the power of the Holy Spirit so powerfully manifested among the people as at this place just now.

In the following week Joshua had engagements to conduct services at Newcastle Emlyn, before attending the next "conference" at Blaenannerch, and it was during the meetings at the former place that he again experienced the first "mercy-drops" of blessing. Several years earlier Joshua had felt "it laid upon his heart to pray to God to go and take a lad
from the coal-mine or from the field, even as He took Elisha from the plough, to revive His work". That prayer was to be answered by God in the next few days at Newcastle Emlyn and Blaenannerch in such a remarkable way that the lives of thousands were to be transformed as a new and glorious awakening swept through Wales.
When Seth Joshua began his week of meetings at Newcastle Emlyn in September 1904, for the first few days there seemed to be none of the blessing he had experienced during the previous week in New Quay. Then on Tuesday 27th he recorded in his journal, "A large number were blessed this evening. Some students received blessing and confessed salvation. The Lord will certainly move this place. The yearning is here among the people".

Joshua had a deep sense of assurance that God would soon reveal His mighty power and the students he mentioned were from the local ministerial preparatory school conducted by John Phillips. It was amongst these young men the Holy Spirit was already at work, for on the following day one of them named Sidney Evans became stirred by the conviction that although he was preparing for the ministry, he had not fully yielded himself to Christ. After much striving and heart-searching, Evans was moved to declare openly his complete submission to the Saviour in the evening meeting and as Joshua noted later that night, "Souls were melted and many cried out for salvation. Praise the Lord for this evening service".

But the working of the Holy Spirit was not confined to Joshua's meetings at Newcastle Emlyn. Another student, Evan Roberts was present at the service on Tuesday evening, but on the following day he had arranged to attend the two-day "conference" at Blaenannerch together with a party of his fellow students. Roberts was already twenty-six years old and had only just begun his first term of ministerial training at Newcastle Emlyn. His comparatively late entry was due to his reluctance to undertake a formal course of instruction which he felt might quench his zeal, and because of this he had worked for more than ten years as a collier and then a blacksmith. From his boyhood in his home chapel of Moriah in Loughor, Evan Roberts had known a compelling desire to honour God in every aspect of his life and to serve Him faithfully. This had increased to the point where he was constrained at last to leave his employment and prepare for the ministry. In explaining his decision to a friend, Roberts wrote,

"... On examination I find the following motives constrain me: (1) The passionate longing of my soul for ten years which I cannot quench... (2) The voice of the people of God... (3) God's infinite love together with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Last Sunday night while thinking about the greatness of the work and the danger of my dishonouring God, I could not but weep. And I prayed that the Lord should baptize you and me with the Holy Spirit". This letter and other writings by Roberts at the time revealed a characteristic which was common to many who were seeking God so earnestly, namely that the deep longing of their hearts was inseparably linked with an unshakeable confidence that a visitation of the Holy Spirit would be granted. This willingness to take God's promises on trust and to look to Him to honour His Word was also experienced by the prominent leaders in the religious awakenings in Wales of 1859 and 1735.

God Draws Near

Another experience which Evan Roberts shared with those in earlier revivals was an overwhelming sense of God's presence drawing near to him. This moment of intimate
communion was granted to Roberts in the spring of 1904 and can be best described in his own words.

"One Friday night last spring, when praying by my bedside before retiring, I was taken up to a great expanse - without time and space. It was communion with God. Before this I had a far-off God. I was frightened that night, but never since. So great was my shivering that I rocked the bed, and my brother, being awakened, took hold of me thinking I was ill. After that experience I was awakened every night a little after one O'clock. This was most strange, for through the years I slept like a rock, and no disturbance in my room would awaken me. From that hour I was taken up into the divine fellowship for about four hours. What it was I cannot tell you, except that it was divine. About five o'clock I was again allowed to sleep on till about nine. At this time I was again taken up into the same experience as in the earlier hours of the morning until about twelve or one o'clock... This went on for about three months".

By the time Roberts began his studies at Newcastle Emlyn, the process of preparation wrought in his heart by the Spirit was almost complete. In the sovereign providence of God, the meetings led by Seth Joshua which took place during the second week of term continued this work to the point that on the opening day of the Blaenannerch conference Roberts described his spiritual condition as "waiting for the fire to fall". The main sermon that day was preached by Rev. W.W. Lewis of Carmarthen on the text "among whom ye shine as lights in the world," (Phil. 2 v15) and his message was endued with an unction which Rev. John Thickens, the organiser of the conference, believed could only have been God-given.

Power From On High

The party of students including Evan Roberts arrived on the second day in time for the early morning session which was again led by Lewis. The meeting was closed in prayer by Seth Joshua and as he implored God to have mercy upon them and make them submissive to His Will, Evan Roberts felt one phrase of the prayer burning in his heart - "0 Lord, bend us". The words remained indelibly impressed on his mind throughout the interval for breakfast and afterwards when the meeting was resumed, the power of the Holy Spirit became so compelling that Roberts fell to his knees in tears. The truth of Romans 5 v8, "But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us", flooded his whole being and caused him to plead with God to bend him to His will. After this he experienced a profound sense of peace, followed by a feeling of great "compassion for those who must bend at the judgement". Finally, in Roberts' own words, "the salvation of the human soul was solemnly impressed upon me. I felt ablaze with a desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Saviour".

After that "most terrible and sublime day" at Blaenannerch, Evan Roberts was irrevocably committed to serving God in whatever way he was called. His life was in God's hands and the flood of revival blessing was about to be released.
A WORK OF GOD

In the days following the Blaenannerch Conference in September 1904, the compelling power of the Holy Spirit which had been so manifestly revealed at the meetings, filled the life of Evan Roberts to such a degree that he was barely aware of time passing. The hours he spent in Bible study, prayer and worship seemed to be but brief moments as feelings of joy and peace flooded his soul at the thought of what God had in store for him. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, "Before I came to Newcastle Emlyn I thought it would be hard to put aside the long hours of fellowship with God, but I have been pleasantly surprised. If I found pleasure in the exercise before, I now have the purest joy upon earth ... I cannot tell how happy I feel, because God is at work so powerfully in my life".

Roberts wanted to be ready to launch out whenever God called him and he therefore invited a group of young co-workers from New Quay and Newcastle Emlyn to help in taking the gospel to every part of Wales. At the same time he found that God was graciously preparing him for the tasks ahead and he wrote, "I have received three great blessings: 1. I have lost all nervousness. 2. I can now sing all day whereas before I was hindered by some physical impediment. 3. I had become as hard as flint even though, remember, the supreme desire and sole aim of my life was to serve God - but, praise be to God, at Blaenannerch I was bent low, so low that I had to cry out 'Praise Him!' How easy it is to give thanks now!"

THE POWER OF GOD

It was also during these weeks that Roberts experienced heavenly visions of a mighty in-gathering of souls to the number of one hundred thousand and he was given the assurance of faith to claim this as a promise which God would not deny. Roberts soon began to know yet more of the mighty power of God in his life and ministry. During a meeting at Capel Drindod in Cardiganshire he was deeply constrained that all present should give honour and praise to the Saviour and he poured forth with prayer which transformed the service in such a manner that one of the congregation recalled later, "It burst through to the hearts and consciences of many, Christ was glorified from that moment: it was an extraordinary meeting. For Roberts the experience did not end with the close of the service. He found it was impossible to sleep when he returned his lodgings, and wrote in awe in his journal, "The room was full of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring was so overpowering that I had to shout and plead with God to stay His hand."

Although Roberts was busily occupied with the services in surrounding districts of Cardiganshire, it was the people of his home church at Loughor who were laid on his heart with a conviction which he knew could only be attributed to the Holy Spirit. The time of preparation was over and at the end of October he wrote to his friends in New Quay informing them of his decision; "I am this morning about to return home for a week among the young people. The reason for this is that the Holy Spirit wills it ... I implore you in the name of our Lord Jesus to remember us especially at Moriah, Loughor. Meetings will be held every night for a week. Ask all the young people to remember us."
The prospect of commencing a work amongst his own friends and relations could easily have daunted the young evangelist, but he could not forget the visions of vast multitudes of people rushing towards the never-ending torment of hell while God granted a season of grace during which a hundred thousand would be saved. It was this conviction which sustained Roberts throughout the revival which followed, as he later testified, "Full of the promise which that vision conveyed, I went to Loughor, and from Loughor to Aberdare, and from Aberdare to Pontycymmer. And what did I see. .? The promise literally fulfilled."

The initial doubts and uncertainties which greeted his return home were not easily overcome but Roberts secured the co-operation of the ministers at Moriah and Pisgah in Loughor and at Libanus in Gorseinon to hold a week of meetings in their churches. From the start he stressed that the experiences which he and his companions had known at New Quay, Newcastle Emlyn and Blaenannerch were due entirely to the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, and that his deepest wish was that the people of Loughor should be blessed with the same visitation of the Spirit. To that end Roberts made it clear that all unconfessed or hidden sin had to be brought before God for forgiveness and cleansing in the blood of Christ before the Holy Spirit would be granted in their lives. The second necessity was submission to the baptism of the Spirit in complete and unquestioning obedience.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

These conditions were consistent with God's promises given in the Biblical teaching on revival and on the first night at Moriah any who were unwilling to submit to the Holy Spirit were allowed to leave the meeting. As a result only the seventeen young people remained with Roberts as he led them in worship and prayer for nearly three hours, pleading that God would graciously break down any hardness of heart which might be holding them back. One by one, the small group which included Evan Roberts' brother and three sisters, felt the convicting power of the Spirit coming upon them as they began to confess their sins, to plead for mercy and to magnify the Saviour in prayers of rejoicing and praise.

The meeting confirmed that Roberts was not mistaken in the assurance he had felt in Cardiganshire that God would not confine His blessing merely to that area. Though he admitted to further moments of doubt over the need for such meetings in Loughor, Roberts knew that he had to continue until revival had come in all its fulness. He had intended the meetings should last for just one week, but as each night passed, the sense of God's presence grew so strong that those present were reluctant to have the services concluded, and a few remained behind to continue in prayer when the rest went home. By friday the attendance included worshippers from numerous congregations in the town, and twenty remained to pray until 11.30 p.m. Roberts wrote, "...we could have gone on all night... I believe there is to be a blessed revival in the near future." The "mercy drops" that had been experienced at Loughor were indeed but the forerunners of the showers and then the floods of blessing which were to follow.
As the week of meetings at Loughor in November 1904 came to an end, Evan Roberts had to consider whether to continue them or to return to his studies at Newcastle Emlyn. Preparation at college lay close to his heart, yet Roberts knew he could not desert the work at Loughor while the Holy Spirit was so evidently present in the meetings. His dilemma was partly resolved by the invitations he received to conduct further services in Gorseinon, but more importantly by the still greater signs of blessing which attended the meetings.

Congregations were increasing every evening, services were continuing for four or five hours as people were moved to plead for mercy and pardon, and men remained behind afterwards until the early hours of the morning, praying that the Holy Spirit might work on amongst them.

Roberts felt there was no other course but to hold a second week of meetings, not confined to Loughor however, but including Libanus and Brynteg chapel in Gorseinon where the blessings of revival were also being experienced to some degree.

Without any advanced publicity to advertise them, the services were so well-attended that by the following Wednesday people were standing in the vestibule listening through the open doors of the church. Roberts claimed no credit for himself for the remarkable drawing power being displayed, as he wrote the next day in a letter, "It is enough to know that God filled the place. Keep praying fervently. The Kingdom is bound to succeed in spite of what anyone says or does."

The next evening the service was held at Brynteg church and many people went straight from their places of work in order to be in good time for the commencement. An account by a newspaper reporter who joined the meeting two hours after it started, was published in the Western Mail on Saturday 12th November, giving his impression of the occasion:

"The meeting at Brynteg congregational church on Thursday night was attended by those remarkable scenes which have made previous meetings memorable in the life history of so many of the inhabitants of the district. The proceedings commenced at 7 o'clock and they lasted without a break until 4.30 o'clock on Friday morning. During the whole of this time the congregation were under the influence of deep religious fervour and exaltation. There were about 400 people present in the chapel when I took my seat at about nine o'clock. The majority of the congregation were females ranging from young misses of twelve to matrons with babies in their arms. Mr Roberts is a young man of rather striking appearance. He is tall and distinguished looking, with an intellectual air about his clean shaven face. His eyes are piercing in their brightness, and the pallor of his countenance seemed to suggest that those nightly vigils are taking their toll on him. There was however no suggestion of fatigue in his conduct of the meeting. There is nothing theatrical about his preaching. He does not seek to terrify his hearers, and eternal torment finds no place in his theology. Rather does he reason with the people and show them by persuasion a more excellent way. I had not been many minutes in the building before I felt that this was no ordinary gathering. Instead of the set order of proceedings to which we were accustomed at the orthodox religious service, everything here was left to the
spontaneous impulse of the moment. The preacher too did not remain in his usual seat. For the most part he walked up and down the aisles, open Bible in hand, exhorting one encouraging another, and kneeling with a third to implore blessing from the throne of grace.

A young woman rose to give out a hymn which was sung with deep earnestness. While it was being sung several people dropped down from their seats as if they had been struck, and commenced crying for pardon. Then from another part of the chapel would be heard the resonant voice of a young man reading a portion of the scripture. While this was in progress there came from the gallery an impassioned prayer from a woman crying aloud that she had repented of her ways and was determined to lead a better life henceforward. All this time Mr Roberts went in and out among the congregation offering kindly words of advice to kneeling penitents. He would ask them if they believed, the reply in one instance being, "No, I would like to believe but I can't. Pray for me". Then the preacher would ask the audience to join him in the following prayer: "Anfon yr Yspryd yn awr, er mwyn Iesu Grist, Amen" (Send the Holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen). This prayer would be repeated about a dozen times by all present, when the would be convert would suddenly rise and declare with triumph, "Thank God I have now received salvation, never again will I walk in the way of sinners". This declaration would create a new excitement and the congregation would joyously sing:

\[ \text{Diolch iddo, diolch iddo, Byth am gofio llwch lawr.} \]

I suppose this occurred scores of times over the nine hours that the meeting was protracted. A very pathetic feature of the proceedings was the anxiety of many present for the spiritual welfare of members of their families. One woman was heartbroken for her husband, who was given to drink. She implored the prayers of the congregation on his behalf. The story told by another woman drew tears to all eyes. She said that her mother was dead and that her father had given way to sin, so that she was indeed orphaned in the world. She had attended the meetings without feeling her position, but on the previous day, while following her domestic chores, the Spirit had come upon her bidding her to speak. And she did speak, her address being remarkable for one who had never spoken in public before. Yet another woman made public confession that she had come to the meeting in an attitude of idle curiosity but, that the influence, of the Holy Ghost worked within her, causing her to go down on her knees in penitence. It was now long past midnight, but still there was no abatement in the fervour of the gathering. Fresh fuel was added to the religious fire by Mr Roberts who described what had appeared to him as a vision. He said that when he was before the throne of grace he saw appearing before him a key. He did not understand the meaning of this sign. Just then, however, three members of the congregation rose to their feet and said that they had been converted. "My vision is explained", said Mr Roberts ecstatically. "it was, the key with which God opened your hearts".

One of the most remarkable utterances of this remarkable night was that of a woman who gave a vivid description of the vision which she had seen the previous evening: "I saw",
she said, "a great expanse of beautiful land, with friendly faces peopling it. Between me and this golden country was a shining river, crossed by a plank. I was anxious to cross but afraid that the plank would not support me. But at that moment I gave myself to God and there came a great wave of faith and I crossed in safety".

At 2.30 o'clock I took a rough note of what was then proceeding. In the gallery a woman was praying and she fainted. Water was offered her, but she refused this, saying the only thing she wanted was God's forgiveness. A well known resident then rose and said that salvation had come to him. Immediately a thanksgiving hymn was sung, while an English prayer from a new convert broke in upon the singing. The whole congregation then fell upon their knees, prayers ascending from every part of the edifice, while Mr Roberts gave way to tears at the sight. This state of fervency lasted for about ten minutes. It was followed by an even more impressive five minutes of silence, broken only by the sobs of strong men. A hymn was then started by a woman with a beautiful soprano voice. Finally Mr Roberts announced the holding of future meetings and at 4:25 o'clock the gathering dispersed. But even at this hour the people did not make their way home. When I left to walk back to Llanelly I left dozens of them about the road still discussing what is now the chief subject of their lives. They had come prepared with lamps and lanterns, the lights of which in the early hours of darkness were weird and picturesque."

The press report also contained references to interviews with Evan Roberts which give an indication of his views on what was taking place at that time.

"At the close of the remarkable service, I had a short interview with Mr Roberts. This was at the unearthly hour of 4.30 a.m., after I had gone through a unique seven hours experience. In answer to my question Mr Roberts said that the only explanation of what was now taking place in Loughor was that the Spirit of God was working among the people. Recently death in a very terrible form has come home to the people of Loughor in the wrecking of the express train, and I inquired of Mr Roberts whether that might account for their readiness to receive the message. He did not, however think that was at all likely. Asked as to whether he intended devoting himself entirely to mission work in the future, Mr Roberts said that in that matter he was in the hands of God."

"In the course of a conversation with our representative on Friday afternoon, Mr Roberts said that he believed we were on the verge of one of the greatest revivals that Wales had ever seen. All the signs of this were present. It was time for us to get out of the groove in which we had walked for so long. He himself was converted twelve or thirteen years ago and ever since then he had been praying for the Holy Ghost to come upon him. That it had come he was certain. It was one thing for a man to be converted and quite another to receive the baptism of the Spirit. The meetings they had had were glorious experiences. When they opened a meeting they had no idea when it would conclude only one thing could be said, and that was that it would not conclude until some definite point had been gained. Asked how many converts had been made, Mr Roberts said that he did not call it conversion, nor did he believe in the counting of heads. Some people had said that he was doing good work. It was not his, however. He was simply an instrument in the hand of God, and he wanted man to receive the joy of religion, as he had found it. Our fathers had
their religion and too often it made them gloomy. In those cases the joy of religion had never been experienced."

The meetings led by Roberts on the following two evenings were again favoured with mighty movements of the Holy Spirit, and he was convinced that he should continue the work at Loughor while God was granting such extraordinary blessing. He wrote to Sidney Evans in Newcastle Emlyn informing him of his decision not to return to ministerial school and added, "Perhaps we shall have to go through the whole of Wales. If so, thank Heaven! What a blessed time! I am perfectly content and blissfully, happy with enough work from morning till night.'

Within two days Roberts received an invitation to preach at Bryn Seion chapel in Aberdare and he accepted without delay. God was indeed calling him to go through the whole of Wales - for the work of revival was only just beginning.
When Evan Roberts accepted the invitation to conduct the Sunday services at Bryn Seion chapel in Trecynon, Aberdare on 13 November 1904, he was firmly convinced that God intended to bless that area even though there had been no previous signs that revival was impending. Such was his assurance of imminent blessing that he promptly arranged further meetings for the following week in several chapels in Trecynon and sent for a group of his friends from Loughor to assist him. His boldness was soon justified, for on the first evening after an unpromising opening, the meeting took a remarkable course which was fully reported in the "Western Mail" of 15th November.

"Modest almost to the point of despair was the beginning made by the Evan Roberts revival mission at Trecynon on Monday evening, and the omens pointed to orthodox quietness rather than the exuberance of emotional fervour which has characterised in such a remarkable degree the revival services at Loughor. When the service was timed to commence at Ebenezer chapel the empty pews were more numerous than the people and there was a coldness in the air which boded ill for a successful meeting. Those that know Trecynon, a little village which nestles on the borders of Aberdare, with its traditions of religious zeal, will be most surprised to know that Ebenezer was not besieged on such an occasion, and, perhaps at the same time, they will best appreciate the remark of a village stoic that "the fair at Aberdare was a powerful counter attraction".

Instead of finding an eager throng outside of the chapel (writes one of our representatives), I was surprised to see only some half-dozen groups of miners and their wives and sons gathered together just as is their wont on the occasion of the ordinary weekly prayer meeting. Later in the evening the reason for this sparse attendance became obvious. The service had been started so early that workmen had not been given sufficient time to go to their homes from their work and change their working clothes for those they considered better fitting a religious service. While the few who had seated themselves in the chapel awaited the arrival of the young revivalist, an elderly man seated beneath the gallery offered up a prayer, and a young man who was seated in another part of the building recited the words of the popular Welsh hymn, "Disgwyl rwyf hyd yr hirnos" the last two lines of which were being repeated when the five young ladies from Loughor who have played so prominent a part in the mission with their speech and song walked up the aisle and seated themselves on the 'set fawr'. One of them possessing a sweet mezzosoprano voice of singular tenderness sang 'Happy Day', and the early coldness was already beginning to thaw under the influence of the intensifying fervour with which the refrain was sung and sung again.

The melody was in full swing when Mr Roberts took his seat beneath the pulpit. Before uttering a word he approached the old man who had been the first to pray, and grasped his hand. The building by this time was filling rapidly. Evan Roberts looked pale but was full of animation. While another hymn was being sung he walked up and down the aisle, swinging his arms and clapping his hands. At times he gave a short, sharp spring off his right foot, and smiled joyously on the people around him. There was no conventionality, no artificiality or affectation in his manner. The expression on his open, attenuated and distinctly intellectual face was that of a man with a mission, and reminded one of so
many portraits to be found in Welsh homesteads, of men who were leaders in the two
previous religious revivals in Wales.

Speaking in Welsh, he discarded the stereotyped preface so commonly in vogue among
preachers in the principality, and straightway declared the faith that was in him. He had
not come there, he said, to frighten them with a discourse on the terrors of everlasting
punishment. His belief was that the love of Christ was a powerful enough magnet to draw
the people. That was his own personal experience and he had found a joy which was far
beyond human expression. No one but the true believer knew what it was like to have a
light heart and unalloyed happiness. Denominationalism did not enter into his religion.
Some people said he was a Methodist. He did not know what he was. Sectarianism
melted in the fire of the Holy Spirit, and all men who believed became one happy family.
For years he was a faithful member of a church, a zealous worker, and a free giver. But
he had recently discovered he was not a Christian and there were thousands like him.

It was only since that discovery that a new light had come into his life. That same light
was shining upon all men if they would but open their eyes and hearts. Reverting to
sectarianism, he said that whilst sect was fighting against sect the devil was clapping his
hands with glee and encouraging the fight. Let all people be one with one object, the
salvation of sinners. Men refused to accept the Gospel and confess because, they said, of
the gloom and uncertainty of the future. They looked to the future without opening their
eyes to the infinite glories of the present. They talked of the revival of 1859, why? There
would be perpetual revival if men would only keep their hearts open instead of closing
them to every influence. If anyone had come there that evening to make an impression,
he advised him or her to refrain. Unless they felt that they were moved to speech or song
let them keep their peace. He did not come there to glorify himself. Glad tidings had
come to Loughor regarding a mission among gipsies in their encampment near that place.
The soul of a gipsy was of no less value than that of any other human creature.

Such was the substance of Mr Roberts' address. He spoke for an hour and a quarter under
evident restraint and in a quiet confident style. He made no attempt at rhetoric and was
never at a loss for a phrase or a word. Those who might have come to scoff and did not
remain to pray must, at any rate, have been deeply impressed by the profound earnestness
of the young man, and there is no doubt his absolute sincerity and conviction.

Immediately he had resumed his seat two elderly women rose simultaneously, one
speaking in Welsh the other speaking in English. The voice of her who spoke the latter
language rang out clearly and a common thrill trembled through the assembly as a breath
of wind runs across the sea. Her last words were, 'I love my master because I know what,
He has done for me, and then she fell back in the pew. A young woman came forward
with the Bible in her hand and was preparing to read when Mr Roberts asked the people
to sing "Duw mawr y rhyfeddodau maith", the stirring words of which were repeated
several times. After reading a portion of scripture the young woman knelt down in prayer,
and an impassioned fervour spread into all parts of the crowded chapel.
After some more singing led off by one of the five young ladies from Loughor, an elderly man gave some reminiscences of the great revival of 1859. "I am a child of that revival", he said. He told his hearers how in those stirring times publicans took down their signboards, how people gathered in the woods and the open fields to worship.

Speaking for the second time, Mr Roberts said that policemen in Loughor were having an easy time, and the publicans deploring the loss of customers. He knew of one young man who had left a public house with the remark, "I am going to hear that lunatic" meaning him (Mr Roberts). That man came to the service and left a penitent convert. Another man had suddenly dropped on his knees in front of a pint of beer inside a Loughor public house.

During the remainder of the night men and women broke forth in prayer and song, and a meeting that had opened so coldly was in a white heat of religious enthusiasm before the last word had been said.

By the time the meetings at Trecynon came to an end, there were many other places in Wales where the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work and Roberts realised that careful discernment was required on his part to ensure that he went wherever God wanted him to be. The revival was continuing to spread in South Cardiganshire where his friend Sidney Evans and ministers such as Rev Joseph Jenkins had busily engaged in conducting meetings in a widening circle of towns and villages from Cardigan to Tregaron. Similarly the area around Loughor was experiencing intense spiritual awakening and when Rev. Jenkins fulfilled a preaching engagement at Ammanford on Sunday 6th November he found the response so encouraging that he immediately arranged further meetings for the following week. It was during these gatherings that the prayers for a visitation of the Holy Spirit were answered as conversions occurred nightly. A week later a mission previously arranged by the Forward Movement of the Calvinistic Methodist church was due to begin in the town and after the first meeting, the leader, Seth Joshua noted "There is a wonderful fire burning here. The ground is very prepared, thank God." The Sunday services conducted by Joshua were some of the most remarkable he ever experienced and he wrote of them, "Even in the morning a number were led to embrace the Saviour. In the afternoon the blessing fell upon scores of young people" while in the evening, "Numbers confessed Jesus, but it is impossible to count".

At the same time places in North Wales were experiencing the touch of God's power, particularly at Bethesda where a mission led by Rev Hugh Hughes was mightily blessed, the Nantlle valley which became the centre for the evangelistic outreach of Evan Lloyd Jones, at Rhos where Rev. R.B. Jones held a mission which resulted in a flood of conversions, and even in small villages such as Egryn, near Harlech where Mary Jones the wife of a local farmer was greatly used in bringing over seventy of her neighbours to faith in Christ.

Evan Roberts was not directly associated with many of the events taking place in Wales and claimed no credit for them, for he well-knew that the out-pouring of grace was from God alone and he trusted that the Holy Spirit would guide him to the places of God's
As a result when he left Trecynon, he felt constrained to visit the Garw valley and hold meetings at Pontycymmer, Pyle, Bridgend and Abergwynfi where he even visited the coal-mines early in the morning to speak to the miners coming up from the night shift who were not able to attend the usual evening services.

The following weeks saw revival breaking out in place after place and sweeping through towns and valleys in a manner that defied human explanation and confounded sceptics of all kinds. To the criticism and opposition which were raised against he revival, Roberts wisely refrained from replying and neither did he associate himself with places where he believed counterfeit movements were at work. He had always recognised that one day the tide of blessing would recede and he continued urging people to pray for God to work on until February 1905 when he felt compelled to rest from the intense activity which had so completely absorbed him since the previous November. There is good reason to believe that in Wales alone the 100,000 souls for whom he had entreated God, had been added to His kingdom, while the consequent effects of the revival spread to many other parts of Britain and into the wider context of church and missionary development throughout the world. In his foreword to the book 'The Welsh Revival of 1904' by Eifion Evans, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated that it was his hope and his prayer that reading about the events of that time would "lead many so to realise anew and afresh the glory and the wonder of the power of God that they will begin to long and to yearn and to pray for another 'visitation from on high' such as was experienced in 1904-05".