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# **SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL**

This Honors thesis entitled

**“The Effects of Modern History on Welsh Theology Post-1904”**

written by

**Hannah Diaz**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 20, 2015

The Effects of Modern History on Welsh Theology Post-1904

A Work of Historical Scholarship by

Hannah Diaz

Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

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The Welsh Revival of 1904 transformed the Welsh Church interdenominationally for an entire generation; however, the church has since been affected by global and local events, causing it to stray from conservative evangelical theology, and largely fragmenting believers between traditional and charismatic leanings. The principles of Welsh theology have been little studied since the revival other than isolated segments focusing on sermons, journals, or biographies of revival leaders. The Welsh Revival has become recognized as a definitive event in Welsh history but little work has actually been done to trace the effects of it until present day. This research merging both historical and Christian intellectual history has been done to fill a void in the research community. It is a result of my semester abroad in the capital, Cardiff, spent doing ministry as well as gathering sources and information for the research presented below.

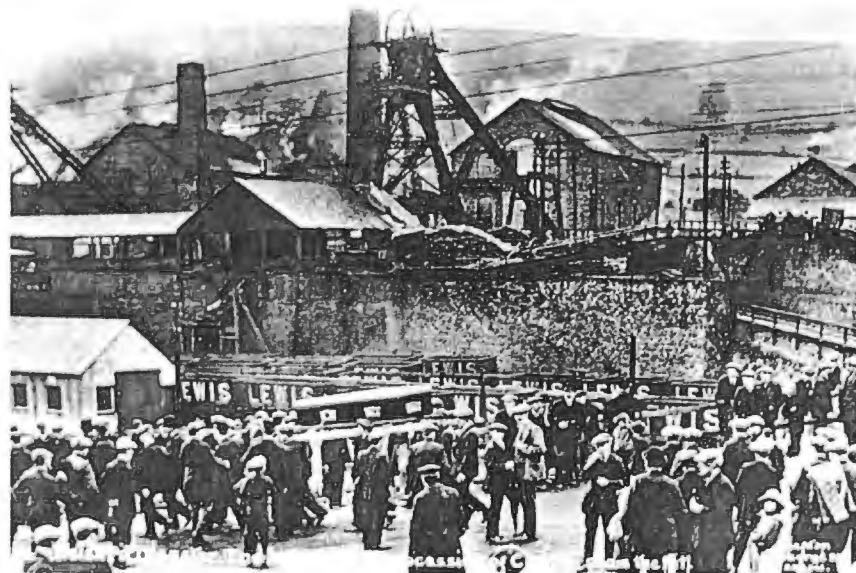
Since this rebirth of Christianity in Wales a century ago, the nation as a whole faced significant events such as World War I, the shutting down of Welsh coal mines, and the dawn of Post-Modern thought that directly influenced theological perception. Both historical and theological analysis is necessary. To not analyze the theology in light of surrounding events would be negligent in only studying the effects but not addressing the causation. However, to leave out the influence of historic events would remove the driving force of change in this particular research. Where has the Welsh church gone since the impact of the third revival in 1904 and what are the implications for new movements there today?

The church today in Wales, like much of Europe, is struggling to live to its potential. There are few practicing Christians who boldly choose to live their faith, and sadly it is difficult to do so as the Welsh perspective of Christianity is not positive. Christians are often seen as ignorant, crazy, naïve, or judgmental. This research is not intended to simply reach into history to shed light on what happened. This research is meant to allow the reader and hopefully Welsh

church leaders to look back on their past and trace the events that have led the church to the place it is now so that ministry can be refocused and the power of the gospel may reach to the nation of Wales in a new and fresh way once again.

Early Twentieth Century Wales was characterized by an age of religious expansion as well as economic growth as the predominate mining industry rapidly escalated production to match the demand for coal.

This occurred after the British Industrial Revolution ending around 1840. Now that much of the UK's economy was reliant on industry from factories needing fuel,



Wales was their main source of coal to stabilize this new infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this economic growth, Wales struggled to compete financially with the remainder of the UK and resorted to local businesses, the raising of sheep, and farming to support the population. “Cardiff Coal” was known as an international commodity as a majority of the nation’s coal was shipped from the capital’s ports. In the 1850’s the Cardiff Docks were annually exporting an average of 750,000 tons of coal.<sup>2</sup> Coal mining was done in small valley towns that thrived off of this one industry, as shown in the photograph above.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Phil Carradice, *Cardiff & The Vale in the First World War* (Gloucestershire: Amberly Publishing , 2014), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Carradice, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Hitt, *We Must Never Forget What the Coal Industry Gave to Wales—And What it Took Away*, Accessed February 26, 2015, [www.walesonline.co.uk](http://www.walesonline.co.uk)

Once financial concerns did not occupy their time and efforts, the Welsh were able to focus on widely celebrating their culture as well as returning to their religious roots. Economic stability was now providing opportunity for cultural development. The Welsh began to form nationalistic pride. From the perspective of revival leader, Jessie Penn-Lewis, “Wales [was] making history—divine history—[those] days.”<sup>4</sup>

Wales has a rich revival history, with three definitive movements—the last taking hold more than the previous two. The atmosphere of 1904 was a large factor in this particular revival having more impact than the others. It has been stated that, “The first revival gave us our hymnology, the second our theology, [and] the third our educational system.”<sup>5</sup> For example, the second revival in 1859 was instigated by Humphrey Jones, a young Wesleyan minister, who came overseas after the American Ulster Revival and whose message affected much of the countryside in North Cardigan.



HUMPHREY JONES

However, this was short lived, as he was not mentally or physically capable and after four months came to a place of exhaustion, not capable to even face one more congregation.

Before Jones’s collapse, his message inspired Reverend David Morgan, who was a Calvinist Methodist minister. His tour had a larger impact, as it spanned from Holyhead in the North Coast to the capital of Cardiff in southern Wales. According to church records, it is

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<sup>4</sup> Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Awakening in Wales: A Firsthand Account of the Welsh Revival of 1904* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2011), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Penn-Lewis, 18.

estimated that his ministry converted 100,000 Welshmen and women.<sup>6</sup> Penn-Lewis agreed that, though this movement was often rightfully accused of emotionalism and mass hysteria at revival meeting. However, she suggests that the impact it did leave behind set the stage for something more. “When the wave subsided, what was left—froth? No, but higher aspirations after holiness and an intense love of learning.”<sup>7</sup> The number of churches alongside the coast of Wales doubled during this period. Though this revival in 1859 laid the groundwork in providing Biblical education to be passed on to the next generation through Sunday schools and family values. This helped create the right environment for 1904 as this generation was raised with the knowledge of and would later put this knowledge into practice.<sup>8</sup>

In more ways than one, the 1904 revival spilled out of the cultural and economic atmosphere of the early Twentieth Century. This revival was led at large by Evan Roberts, who, like many of children in Wales, grew up in the mining community. Wherever Roberts went, congregations and villages as a whole would return to the Lord in droves.<sup>9</sup> He spent much of his time touring rural areas of Wales within the valleys during this period as pubs were emptied and went out of business and families reunited. However, Robert’s life itself mirrors the religious thought during his time, as he always clung to his beliefs, but he began to question his life’s work and his values as World War I changed the nation’s attitude to that of pessimism. His obituary in *The Western Mail* (A Cardiff newspaper) says it best,

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<sup>6</sup> Penn-Lewis, 16-17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> H. Elvet Lewis, G. Campbell Morgan, I. V. Neprash, *Glory Filled the Land: A Trilogy on the Welsh Revival (1904-1905)*(Wheaton, IL: International Awakening Press, 1989), 181.

“He was a man who had experienced strange things. In his youth, he had seemed to hold the nation in the palms of his hands. He endured strains and underwent great changes of opinion and outlook, but his religious convictions remained firm to the end.”

Evan Robert’s life illustrates the Welsh Church’s approach to justifying and explaining the phenomenon of the violence of war. This violence would define a majority of British history for the next half century, as many of their young men were slaughtered and their home cities were bombed.

For the purposes of this paper, when speaking of the “Welsh Church,” I will be referring to the mass of Christians (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc...) at large within Wales at any given time, and not necessarily the institution. This is in keeping with the New Testament tradition, and specific denominations will be mentioned when necessary to specify. Tracing the theology of the Welsh Church through the lens of modern history begins in 1904 and continues to present day. In covering this mass of information, there will naturally be gaps left unexplained. Therefore, the focus for this research will remain concentrated on the life of Evan Roberts, the nation of Wales, and theological perspective of the Welsh church.

The narrative of the path of the Welsh church post-1904 begins with the life and story of Evan Roberts. Roberts grew up in Loughor, Wales. All who knew Roberts during this period agreed he was a friendly boy with a warm disposition. He grew up in a Calvinist Methodist church and took his faith seriously at a young age. After six years of schooling, he went to work with his father in the coal mines. He would spend the day working and reading scripture in the





mines. While there, he would unabashedly speak of his faith to those much older than him and then return home to memorize scripture and remainder of the evening.<sup>10</sup>

However, the validity of the accounts of his piety by those who knew him can easily be questioned. For example, there is a story of how he was in a mining accident and his Bible was scorched from the flames, but he still continued to read it every night. There is no clear record, however, that Roberts was in a mining accident during his years working. Even the accounts of Roberts as a child make him sound as if he was perceived as a Messiah figure. A combination of the need for spiritual leadership in the church as well as his natural gift for speaking allowed him to become a leader of this movement practically overnight. Perhaps in a literal sense, he was a spiritual savior for the Welsh. And people did follow his example, as he was the leader of the new revival movement. This may explain why the theology of the Welsh Church during his life so clearly mirrors his experience and opinion. Roberts has become such a symbol and part of the revival that his experience along with the experience of the Welsh Church became synonymous.

Roberts left Loughor at the age of 26 to attend Bible school to become a Methodist minister. His plan was to return to Loughor and pastor the church in which he had grown up. However, he only lasted in school for six weeks, claiming that the material taught did not allow the Holy Spirit to move.<sup>11</sup> It is necessary to note that Roberts had a stronger charismatic leaning than the traditional liturgical congregation that started him in his faith. He emphasized the untamed power of the Holy Spirit and many of his prayer meetings would later reflect this as they would often be comprised of murmuring, shouting, speaking in tongues, and chanting.

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Penn- Lewis, 47.

<sup>11</sup> R. Maruice Smith, *When the Fire Fell: The Great Welsh Revival of 1904 and its Meaning for Revival Today* (Reno: Preparedness Publications, 1996), 41.

His charismatic leanings are also reflected in one of Roberts more commonly known works, *Hours in the Presence of God*. This is an acronym describing Robert's perspectives on prayer. As shown below, its emphasis on prayer reflects the important role prayer played in the 1904 revival. Prayer meetings were a common occurrence and are often traced as the root of the revival itself. There are endless accounts of prayer meetings calling for a mighty move of the Holy Spirit across the nation in the early 1900's preceding the revival. In fact Roberts even took part in a consistent prayer group with seven other Bible school students. *Hours in the Presence of God* (shown below) reflects this mentality as well as shows what was expected of a praying believer. This acronym reflected Robert's perspective of the relationships between God and mankind. They were to approach God boldly in asking great things on the basis of faith as well as the power of God to answer these prayers for those who love him and have pure motives.

<b>A</b> -nswers to prayer are the 'all in all' of your asking. Do not forget them (John 15.7)	<b>N</b> -othing doubting is a seed of true faith. A small faith, if whole, has answers. (Luke 17.6; Matthew 21.26)
<b>B</b> -urdens of prayer should be heeded, sensed, discerned, expressed and valued. (1 Samuel 12.23)	<b>O</b> -mnipotence is set in motion by faith. Therefore, is anything too hard for you? (Mark 9.23; Exodus 20.2)
<b>C</b> -alls to prayer should be obeyed. Watch for prayer. Listen to God's voice and fulfil. - (Ephesians 6.8)	<b>P</b> -rayer uses God. Command Him constantly and believingly for a performance of His will. (Luke 1.45)
<b>D</b> -evotions are highly important. They create an essential prayer atmosphere. (Matthew 6.6; Acts 11.21)	<b>Q</b> -uickness in asking follows the inevitable watching with all diligence. Do you watch? (Luke 18.3)
<b>E</b> -nergy has to be sacrificed if the Kingdom of God is to succeed. (Colossians 4.12; Acts 6.3-4 & 8)	<b>R</b> -est well in order not to miss the guidance of the Spirit towards & during times of prayer. (Romans 8.14-15)
<b>F</b> -aith in and faithfulness to prayer reap great harvests. (John 13.14-15; Mark 12.33 & 32-37)	<b>S</b> -alvation is the big thing to pray out into the world. never forget sin, sinner, Saviour. (1 Timothy 1.15)
<b>G</b> -od is the centre around which all prayer activities revolve. Remember God always. (Hebrews 5.12-140)	<b>T</b> -riumph is assured to the righteous man. Have a God-honoured conscience and heart. (1 John 3.20-22)
<b>H</b> -eavenlies are full of enemies. War with them. Be above principalities. (Ephesians 6.10-18; 2.6)	<b>U</b> -niversal prayer is expected of you. Pray for all saints, and for all nations. (1 John 2.2; John 17.21)
<b>I</b> -n all I am must pray from, and wish, and for, my whole being. You are the axe: grind it. (Acts 14.16)	<b>V</b> -ictory in life guarantees that prayer wins each time. Be violent in asking. (Matthew 11.12; Philippians 2.12-16)
<b>J</b> -esus' Christ's cross, and blood, and death, and name, make prayer possible. (John 15.5; Hebrews 10.15-24)	<b>W</b> -ords for prayer should be sought, studied, uttered & remembered. Register your prayers. (James 1.21-25)
<b>K</b> -now the will of God about wach thing you are to pray over. (Colossians 1.9; 2 Peter 1.3-15 & 6)	<b>X</b> -pect answers to all your prayers. Fan the fire of your hope. God is. Hope daily. (Hebrews 11.1-40)
<b>L</b> -ove to God and man should flow into and through each petition. let love colour prayer. (Philippians 1.7-11)	<b>Y</b> -ield yourself to prayer. Ask for apostolic enduement & grace necessary to do much in prayer. (Acts 1.8)
<b>M</b> -otive, if pure, is a secret of having much from God for God. (Exodus 17.11; Ezekiel 14.14; James 4.3; John 14.13)	<b>Z</b> -eal in wrestling with God is a wonderful force in having what you want. Burn while you pray. (1 Thessalonians 5.17)

<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Moriah Chapel, accessed September 13, 2014, <http://www.moriahchapel.org.uk/>.

This perspective can be traced through his journal back to the teachings of Seth Joshua, a Presbyterian evangelist whose primary message focused on being baptized in the Spirit. While a student in Bible school, Roberts heard Joshua speak in Newcastle-Emlyn in September of 1904.<sup>13</sup> At this particular meeting, Joshua began to pray, “Oh Lord, bend us.” Roberts was especially convicted by this message and of this experience said, “I felt ablaze with the desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Saviour.”<sup>14</sup> This would be the prayer that would change a multitude.<sup>15</sup> Due to this defining moment, Joshua (shown below) is considered to be a forerunner of the revival.

There were many other influential figures involved in the revival, but Roberts’s charisma seemed to be the glue that held the band together. His brother Dan Roberts, his best friend Sidney Evans, and their main soloist Annie Davies traveled alongside Roberts across the nation as they spread the Word of God. It was rumored that Davies and Evan Roberts were engaged; however, they were never married and Roberts remained single for the remainder of his ministry and lifetime. Davies was famous for singing



*Here is Love as Vast as an Ocean* by Welsh songwriter William Rees.

Rees was born in Northeast Wales in 1802, and at the age of three caught smallpox and lost his right eye. Despite his physical ailment, he rose to prominence in Liverpool by

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<sup>13</sup> Seth and Frank Joshua, accessed September 23, 2014, <http://www.revival-library.org/catalogues/1904ff/mardyrees.html>.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 42.

influencing education politics, and he came to be considered one of the most fruitful Welsh ministers of his time. The lyrics of the song are a clear reflection of theology during this period as it became known as the Love Song of the Welsh Revival. The song of praise is still sung frequently across Wales in present day congregations. The main concept is that through the crucifixion of Christ, God showed love to an undeserving world.

*Here is love, vast as the ocean  
 Loving kindness as the flood  
 When the Prince of Life, our Ransom  
 Shed for us His precious blood  
 Who His love will not remember?  
 Who can cease to sing His Praise?  
 He can never be forgotten  
 Throughout Heav'n's eternal days  
 On the mount of crucifixion  
 Fountains opened deep and wide  
 Through the floodgates of God's mercy  
 Flowed a vast and gracious tide  
 Grace and love, like mighty rivers  
 Pour incessant from above  
 And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice  
 Kissed a guilty world in love.*

*Let me all Thy love accepting,  
 Love Thee, ever all my days;  
 Let me seek Thy kingdom only  
 And my life be to Thy praise;  
 Thou alone shalt be my glory,  
 Nothing in the world I see.  
 Thou hast cleansed and sanctified me,  
 Thou Thyself hast set me free.  
 In Thy truth Thou dost direct me  
 By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;  
 And Thy grace my need is meeting,  
 As I trust in Thee, my Lord.  
 Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring  
 Thy great love and power on me,  
 Without measure, full and boundless,  
 Drawing out my heart to Thee.*

*Here is Love as Vast as an Ocean* emphasizes the grace of God.<sup>16</sup> The song also emphasizes the call of the Christ follower to respond with devotion to God because of his vast love and grace. It is a song of praise that speaks to what God has done for mankind and what mankind's rightful response should be. This hymn is suitably the Love Song of the Welsh Revival as it not only speaks of the love of God that is "without measure, full and boundless" but it also shows the appropriate response of love as it says, "Who can cease to sing his praise?" Understanding the perception of God as a loving God, full of grace, who has reached down to the world is crucial to understanding why the Welsh responded so quickly to the message preached

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<sup>16</sup>Smith, 55.

in 1904. The Welsh are an estranged people group within the United Kingdom—to hear that they were wanted by a mighty God was revolutionary. This understanding will change in the next ten years as the Welsh will question God’s intentions to bless the nation during WWI and WWII.

Another factor that allowed the revival to spread quickly was that much of the preaching and worship was done in the heart-language— Welsh. The Welsh language has Celtic roots and is still commonly spoken today within more rural parts of the country such as the Valleys in the South. One Welsh hymn that is rooted in the revival is Calon Lân [a pure heart]. It is stated below in both the original Welsh and its English translation with the chorus in italics.

Welsh (Original)	English
<p>Nid wy'n gofyn bywyd moethus,            Aur y byd na'i berlau mân:            Gofyn wyf am galon hapus,            Calon onest, calon lân.</p> <p><i>Calon lân yn llawn daioni,            Tecach yw na'r lili dlos:            Dim ond calon lân all ganu            Canu'r dydd a chanu'r nos.</i></p> <p>Pe dymunwn olud bydol,            Hedyn buan ganddo sydd;            Golud calon lân, rinweddol,            Yn dwyn bythol elw fydd.</p> <p>Hwyr a bore fy nymuniad            Gwyd i'r nef ar adain cân            Ar i Dduw, er mwyn fy Ngheidwad,            Roddi i mi galon lân.</p>	<p>I don't ask for a luxurious life,            the world's gold or its fine pearls,            I ask for a happy heart,            an honest heart, a pure heart.</p> <p><i>A pure heart full of goodness            Is fairer than the pretty lily,            None but a pure heart can sing,            Sing in the day and sing in the night.</i></p> <p>If I wished for worldly wealth,            It would swiftly go to seed;            The riches of a virtuous, pure heart            Will bear eternal profit.</p> <p>Evening and morning, my wish            Rising to heaven on the wing of song            For God, for the sake of my Saviour,            To give me a pure heart.</p>

The emphasis of this hymn was to reassure believers that, regardless of the fact that they may be poor on earthly standards (a majority of them were poor miners), their riches were found in Christ and a pure heart that desires God alone. This is an important theological perspective to take notice of as the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel of promising monetary riches to those

who serve God will later begin to take hold in several sects of Protestant Welsh theology by the 1960's. This hymn became so engrained in Welsh tradition from the revival that it is now associated with the Welsh Rugby Union. Shown below, two men are covered in the Welsh national flower (the daffodil) about to attend a rugby game at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff's City Centre. The lyrics to Calon Lân are in their hands as an expression of team and national pride. This demonstrates how the revival has been influential in Welsh tradition, impacting life outside the church.

The same theme is seen even more prevalently in the immediate years after the revival. Everyday life was beginning to change as the Welsh were adopting a new set of values. Jessie Penn-Lewis's testimony of the revival, *The Awakening in Wales*, stated that, "Football teams were disbanded because the men had been converted and had other attractions now...a theatrical company felt it

necessary to depart, as there was no hope of audiences, for 'all the world' was praying."<sup>17</sup>

Many political meetings were moved to other



dates as Parliament members attended revival meetings instead. There is also a famous tale that the mules working in the mines had to be retrained as they would no longer respond without the men shouting profanities. The most notable change in daily life, however, was the rejection of

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<sup>17</sup> Penn- Lewis,81.

alcohol. Pubs were shutting down from lack of business and the Miners' Association even began to hold conferences away from alcohol-licensed locations.<sup>18</sup>

The fallout from the revival spread internationally in the following years. The most commonly known revival that was spread in direct relation was the Pentecostal Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. Welsh missionaries then travelled all over the world, concentrating their efforts primarily in India and Korea.<sup>19</sup> This has often been mirrored with the *diaspora*, or scattering, of Christians in Acts after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on all Christ followers.<sup>20</sup> The church in South Korea, currently a primarily Christian nation, even now credits the Welsh for sharing with them the gospel. They now frequently send their youth to Bible colleges within Wales before they enter the ministry.

Though the Welsh Revival of 1904 had lasting global impacts, the revival within Wales quickly came to an end at the dawn of World War I. R Maurice Smith stated, "The reality is that [it] 'lasted' for roughly two years in Wales, spread to nearly every country and continent, and lit worldwide fires of revival which burned until the outbreak of World War I."<sup>21</sup> War squelching revivals is a recurring theme in history, such as the Second Great Awakening coming to an end at the beginning of the American Civil War. Perhaps this is due to a general disenchantment with religion or maybe it is a result of redefined priorities.

Regardless, the end of the Welsh Revival on account of WWI is unique, in that this was the first time for a war such as this to envelop the entire world in conflict and tension. The idea was so new that even President Woodrow Wilson deemed it as "the war to end all wars." It was a shock to many new believers. They had just learned of a loving and merciful God but began to

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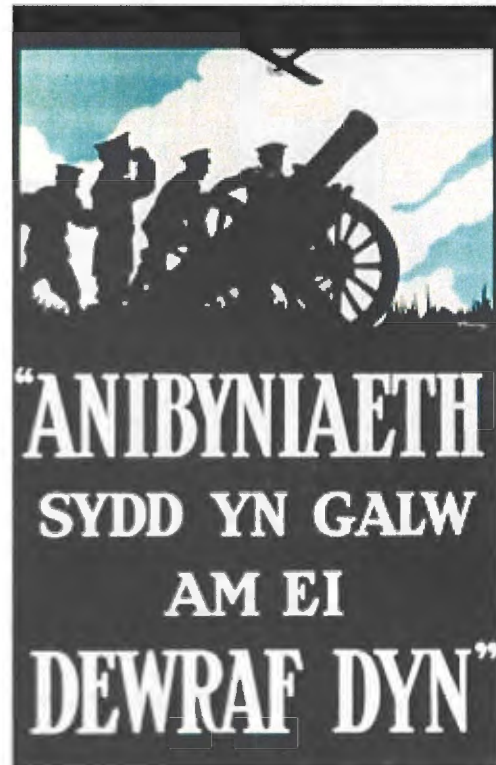
<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: IL, Intervarsity Press, 1950), 39.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, 108.

seriously grapple with how such reckless violence could exist in a world that a good God created. The general values of Welsh society changed during this time to match the climate of the remainder of the world. A famous piece of Welsh WWI propaganda (shown to the right) states that, “Independence calls for the bravest of men.”<sup>22</sup> There was a shift in masculine convention as a true man was now not necessarily pious like the revered Evan Roberts, but he was brave and willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of Wales.



And sacrifice their lives they did. During WWI, it is estimated that 956,703 British men died in the Great War and roughly 10% of these men were identified as Welsh.<sup>23</sup> The nation vigorously began to work to provide for the demands of war. When Britain declared war in August of 1914, Cardiff immediately began to ship out more coal to provide for troops.<sup>24</sup> Welsh nationalism shifted focus from the revival to their involvement in the war, as crowds cheered spiritedly for their marching troops. The optimistic nature of the Welsh during the revival faded as they came to grips with death and realities of the war.

Evan Roberts’s mental and physical health began to collapse as he questioned much of his ministry prior to the war. Jessie Penn-Lewis and her husband took him under their roof in Leicester and nurtured him during these days of angst. Roberts was easily swayed by Penn-Lewis as she convinced Roberts that much of the revival was mere spiritual deception. Roberts

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<sup>22</sup> Carradice, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 20.



along with Penn-Lewis published *War on the Saints*, which is infamous for crediting much of the religious fervor, the spiritual decline and Robert's physical collapse to demonic influence. Roberts would later recant his co-authorship of this work, but not after the damage to his ministry had been done.

As Roberts declined, so too did the church's faith. The reality that many bright young men with great potential were sacrificing their lives in the trenches began

to sink in to the Welsh mentality. An excerpt from *The Penarth Advertiser* captures this mentality:

"Death is no respected of persons, and on the battlefield high and low, rich and poor share the same risks. We regret to announce the death of the Hon Archer Windsor-Clive, second son of the Earl and Countess of Plymouth, who died from wounds received at the Battle of Mons. He was only 24 years of age and a brilliant future apparently lay before him, but duty called and, along with his regiment, the Coldstream Guards, he manfully took his part, and like a hero fell."<sup>25</sup>

The optimism that God could save faithful men from spiritual death had become overshadowed by the overwhelming stench of physical death.

The church during this time began to focus on God's healing powers as well as Christ having ultimate victory over all darkness. Churches as well as schools began to open their doors as hospitals for wounded soldiers, and were involved in all parts of the war, finding any way they



Photo by Stuart Richmond

Jessie Penn-Lewis.  
1888 - 1925

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<sup>25</sup> Carradice, 54.

could serve their young men overseas.<sup>26</sup> It is common today for churches to have a WWI memorial on their premises. On Armistice Day on November 11, 1918, most churches hosted thanksgiving services to praise God for victory over the Central Powers.<sup>27</sup> This demonstrated a reversal of values as their religion became another element that defined their nationalistic pride.

In the mind of the average Welshman, God was on their side. He had moved in their country in powerful ways in 1904 and given them victory in 1918—though not without consequences. In 1929 the Great Depression hit the UK. Wales felt the effects of the coming economic crisis early after the coal mines began to close in the 1920's due to a combination of the stress of WWI, the General Strike of 1926, and Nationalization.<sup>28</sup> With their primary

livelihood gone, the Welsh fell largely onto government welfare and there was a mass population shift away from the Valleys towards larger cities such as Swansea and Cardiff. Just as the revival grew out of a growing economy, the revival ended when the economy crashed. Even today there are entire mining ghost towns left in the valleys as well as strips of low budget



government housing that has since been built for remaining inhabitants. Suicide rates began to soar in these regions as well as the lingering process of the vacating of dying churches that had only been built 30 years before. These rates are even considered to be the highest in the UK

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Nick Shepley, *The Story of Cardiff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014), 181.

today.<sup>29</sup> The average village in the Valleys today has multiple abandoned church buildings, as shown in the photograph above.

In more urban areas, it is common to see these abandoned buildings turned into libraries, art centers, shops, and restaurants. There are many concrete examples of this. In Cardiff Bay, there is an art centre that has been created out of a bygone Norwegian church planted by coal traders. Also in downtown Cardiff, there is a fine dining restaurant named “Chapel” that is made from an old and since closed Welsh church. Glenwood Faith Community Church in Cardiff has done something positive with this system. They partner with one of these existing arts centres called The Gate in downtown Cardiff.<sup>30</sup> The building in which it functions was a church that has since died after the revival. Here they host Christian as well as secular plays, concerts, and galleries. This allows Christians to use their rich heritage to reach out to artists and patrons within Cardiff in a way in which they can meet and connect outside of their church services, which may be seen as intimidating. This is evidence of the rich Christian heritage of Wales being used in a positive manner to further the kingdom of God today.

However, most old church buildings that are still functioning are made up of elderly congregations struggling to keep the doors open. Even Moriah Chapel, the congregation in which Roberts grew up, is now primarily composed of a small number of senior citizens who now keep the doors open for the sake of historical preservation.<sup>31</sup> There is a general theme of loss as the Welsh believers today wistfully look back on the revival and are praying for God’s spirit to fall and move in powerful ways across their land once more. One possible explanation for the conclusion of the revival is that WWI simply came too soon. Having only ten years to

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<sup>29</sup> Wales Online, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/latest-figures-suicide-shows-welsh-6723705>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.thegate.org.uk/>

<sup>31</sup> Moriah Chapel, <http://www.moriahchapel.org.uk/>.

take hold, the effects of the revival might have had more longevity if they had not been so quickly snuffed out.

Another influential factor on the church was the emergence of post-modern thought. With the dawn of textual criticism, many Anglican churches began to be filled by liberal, non-evangelical theologians who did not recognize Christianity as a life-permeating faith. Instead, the Anglican Church became merely another service offered by the state for the purpose of christenings, weddings, and funerals. Vicars were beginning to call into question the power of Biblical Word, thus moving further from the life-changing impact of Biblical text that had spread in 1904. Christianity lost its power to permeate and change and became a mere aspect of culture.

Due to these events, the Protestant Church had become weak thus leaving it theologically vulnerable. In the 1980s and 1990s many charismatic extremists began to preach the “health, wealth, and prosperity gospel,” as well as make grand promises of knowing God’s will and how the church needed to align itself to receive his blessings. Many Welsh justified the years of war and economic strife by adhering to this thought and believing they simply had done something wrong in not preparing themselves to receive God’s promises. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” This began to be frequently quoted as they optimistically hoped for a bright future for the Welsh church that had



been on decline since 1914. Many charismatic churches began strange practices in hopes to recreate the environment the revival in 1904 came out of. Wild prayer meetings with loud shouting in tongues, those being slain in the spirit, and mad laughter became common place.

There was even a movement where people would lay their bodies across the grave of Evan Roberts trying to absorb the Holy Spirit that filled him.<sup>32</sup>

Often in charismatic theology, it is considered wrong to assume that the Spirit of God cannot move in mysterious ways; therefore, in religious fervor, many believers with good intention will adopt strange practices that are not Biblically tenable. These practices are observed by unbelieving Welsh men and women and thus creating a widening rift between the general population and the church.

There are currently several evangelical churches in Wales that are growing within the cities of Swansea and Cardiff as a new attitude of loving others and meeting the immediate needs of the surrounding community has been adopted. The Welsh Revival of 1904 was influential in changing the cultural priorities and way of life for an entire decade. Many of its remnants today can be seen in Welsh tradition, laws (such as grocery stores closing by 2 on Sundays), and the church's hope for the future of their nation. Churches across Wales today are calling out to God and praying for a new revival to move across their land. As the schism between the traditional Anglican and the Charismatic Movement widens, if there is to be a new revival there must be a middle ground theologically to bridge the gap and return to the revival that broke denominational boundaries. However, just as Evan Roberts has faded into Welsh history, so has the Welsh Revival of 1904. Christians in Wales are earnestly seeking God in prayer, putting away their transgressions, and submitting to God in faith that God will once again breathe on their land.

By starting today and tracing the events back to 1904, it is apparent how the church in Wales finds itself in the current position today. Rather than merely living in their past, the church in Wales needs to find a way to bring their past into the future in a new and relevant way.

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<sup>32</sup> In multiple interviews with church pastors Alex Ashton and Rob Burns in Bridgend and Cardiff, Wales, I learned about these charismatic leanings and about recent church events. I was unable to verify this with official statistics or sources, but, perception as well as their involvement in current church activity provides credibility.

Through reclaiming the influence of Christianity a century ago in their nation, these communities of Christians can bring about a new and fresh way to make a positive impact on their nation.

As shown, the Welsh Revival of 1904 transformed the Welsh Church interdenominationally for a generation before WWI. However, the church has since been largely affected by global and local events, as the effects can be observed in the life of Evan Roberts, who gave his life and ultimately his sanity for the growth of the Welsh church. He has since been viewed as a Messiah figure, having sacrificing everything. In more recent times, the church has left conservative evangelical theology, and Christians have been largely fragmented between traditional and charismatic leanings. The hope for the future of the Welsh church lies in the hands of Christians who are ready to sacrifice and follow in the footsteps of Evan Roberts and ultimately, Christ, whom they live to serve.

*“O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” –Habakkuk 3:2*

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