

LIFE AND PORTRAITURE

of
CHRISTMAS EVANS

A New Translation from the Welsh
with a
Memoir of the Author

by

Joseph Cross

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CHAPTER THREE

HIS LABORS

LABORS IN LĒYN

In 1790, Mr. Evans attended the Baptist association at Maesyberllan, in Brecknockshire. Some ministers from North Wales persuaded him to accompany them on their return. He found the Baptist people at Lĕyn in Caernarvonshire few and feeble. They earnestly besought him to remain with them, to which he at length consented. He was immediately ordained a missionary, to itinerate among several small churches in that vicinity.

Now he began emphatically to **“live by faith of the Son of God.”**

The burden which he had borne so long, rolled away like that of Bunyan's Pilgrim. He received **“the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”** From this time, a wondrous power attended his preaching. Many were gathered into the church, as the fruit of his labor.

“I could scarcely believe,” says he, “the testimony of the people, who came before the church as candidates for membership, that they had been converted through my ministry. Yet I was obliged to believe, though it was marvelous in my eyes. This made me thankful to God, and increased my confidence in prayer. A delightful gale descended upon me, as from the hill of the New Jerusalem, and I felt the three great things of the kingdom of heaven, righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

During the first year of his labors in Lĕyn, he was united in marriage to Miss Catherine Jones, a pious young lady of his own church, and a very suitable companion. After this event, his duties were increasingly arduous. He frequently preached five times during the Sabbath, and walked twenty miles. His heart was full of love, and he spoke with the ardor of a seraph.

Constant labor and intense excitement soon wore upon his health. He became feeble, and his friends were apprehensive of consumption. Through the mercy of God, however, he was spared; gradually recovered his strength; and performed, through the remainder of a long life, an incredible amount of ministerial labor.

VISIT TO SOUTH WALES

Mr. Evans naturally felt a strong desire to see his friends in South Wales. During his second year at Lëyn, thinking it might benefit his enfeebled health, as well as refresh his spirit, he determined to make them a visit. He was unable to procure a horse for the journey, and the small societies to which he preached were too poor to provide him one. So he set forth on foot, preaching in every town and village through which he passed. His talents were now developed, and he had **“received an unction from the Holy One.”** All who heard him were astonished at his power. His old acquaintances regarded him as a new man.

A great awakening followed him wherever he went. Hear his own language:

“I now felt a power in the word, like a hammer breaking the rock, and not like a rush. I had a very powerful time at Kilvowyr, and also pleasant meetings in the neighborhood of Cardigan. The work of conversion was progressing so rapidly and with so much energy in those parts that the ordinance of baptism was administered every month for a year or more, at Kilvowyr, Cardigan, Blaenywaun, Blaenfids, and Ebenezer, to from ten to twenty persons each month. The chapels and adjoining burying-grounds were crowded with hearers of a weekday, even in the middle of harvest I frequently preached in the open air in the evenings, and the rejoicing, singing and praising would continue until broad light the next morning. The hearers appeared melted down in tenderness at the different meetings, so that they wept streams of tears, and cried out, in such a manner that one might suppose the ole congregation, male and female, was thoroughly dissolved by the gospel.”

“**‘The word of God’** was now become as **‘a sharp two-edged sword, dividing asunder the joints and marrow,’** and revealing unto the people the secret corruptions of their hearts. Preaching was now unto me a pleasure, and the success of the ministry in all places was very great. The same people attended fifteen or twenty different meetings, many miles apart, in the counties of Cardigan, Pembroke Caermarthen, Glamorgan, Monmouth and Brecknock.

“This revival, especially in the vicinity of Cardigan, and in Pembrokeshire, subdued the whole country, and induced people everywhere to think well of religion. The same heavenly gale followed down to Fishguard, Llangloffan, Little New-Castle, and Rhydwylym, where Mr. Gabriel Rees was then a zealous and a powerful preacher. There was such a tender spirit resting on the hearers at this season, from Tabor to Middlemill, that one would imagine, by their weeping and trembling in their places of worship, and all this mingled with so much heavenly cheerfulness, that they would wish to abide forever in this state of mind.”

The fame of this “wonderful work of God” spread through South Wales on the wings of the wind. An appointment for Christmas Evans to preach was sufficient to attract thousands to the place. In a very short time he had acquired greater popularity in Wales than any other minister of his day.

SETTLEMENT IN ANGLESEA

On Christmas day, when Mr. Evans was forty-six years of age, he removed from Lëyn to the isle of Anglesea. According to his own account, “it was a very rough day of frost and snow.”

Unencumbered with this world's goods, and possessing the true apostolic spirit, he “commenced the journey on horseback, with his wife behind him,” and arrived on the evening of the same day at Llangewin.

Whatever the motive of this removal, it was certainly not the love of money. His salary in Anglesea was only £17 per annum, and for twenty years he never asked for more. He had learned, with the apostle, “**having food and raiment, therewith to be content.**” He found his reward in his work. The privilege of preaching Christ and saving souls, with him, was preferable to mountains of gold and silver.

On his arrival in Anglesea, he found ten small Baptist societies, in a lukewarm and distracted condition; himself the only minister, and no brother to aid him within a hundred and fifty miles. He commenced his labors in earnest. One of his first movements was the appointment of a day of fasting and prayer in all the preaching places. He soon had the satisfaction to realize an extensive revival, which continued under his faithful ministry for many years.

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