

## 4. Visiting the Aberdare Valley

by David Matthews

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*David Matthews recounts the powerful revival in Aberdare, highlighting the transformative role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the congregation.*

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Revival Movement"

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### Description

David Matthews preaches about a powerful revival led by Evan Roberts in Trecynon, Aberdare, where unexpected divine guidance led to a transformative church service. The congregation experienced a profound spiritual awakening, with members confessing sins and surrendering to the Holy Spirit, resulting in a day-long service filled with emotional worship and spontaneous expressions of faith. The revival spread quickly, drawing crowds from neighboring churches and creating a fervent atmosphere of worship and repentance. Witnesses were amazed by the intense spiritual manifestations and the undeniable presence of God in the midst of the revival.

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### Transcript

IN THE MIDST of the Loughor turmoil, something suddenly occurred causing Mr. Roberts to stretch his spiritual wings, and increase his sphere of influence and service for the Master. A church of his own denomination in Trecynon, a suburb of the mining town of Aberdare, had read accounts in The South Wales News and Western Mail of the work of grace taking place in Loughor. For some reason, which can only be described as one of God's glorious accidents, their appointed minister for that particular weekend had canceled his engagement. Someone ventured to suggest, perhaps timidly, that the young revivalist be invited to occupy the pulpit. That was the limit of their intention. Believing that he was led by the Holy Spirit to do so, Mr. Roberts accepted. No one doubted later the reality of this divine guidance. Early Sunday morning, after having spent the whole of Saturday night conducting--if that is a correct term to use in view of what followed--the revival, he arrived practically unannounced. He was accompanied by two young lady converts mightily inspired by the revival and brimming over with the joy of the Lord.

They arrived at Bryn Seion Church quite a while before the scheduled time for the ordinary morning service. From the moment they entered the building, these young enthusiasts rehearsed and described some of the marvelous scenes witnessed in their village.

They exhorted all present to "be obedient to the Holy Spirit" when they came together for worship. It is safe to assume that not a single member of the audience had any inkling of what was about to happen in this never-to-be-forgotten service. There had been only a brief announcement in the national dailies on the

Saturday morning, giving a colorful description of the Loughor meetings and suggesting that Mr. Roberts might be leaving for Trecynon, Aberdare, very soon. "Just an ordinary weekend appointment" was the mental attitude of the church leaders as they entered the building. Imagine their astonishment when they found two young, inexperienced women facing them, and in the most moving tones beseeching them to surrender to "the leading of the Holy Spirit." They proved to be two young revival fire-brands.

The sober, sedate Calvinistic congregation that gathered in Mount Seion that morning received a shock. They looked askance when they saw their minister's place occupied by a young man, accompanied by such youthful maidens. Instead of announcing the customary hymn for the commencement of the service, one of the young women burst forth in a spiritual song expressing her new experience, tears streaming down her cheeks. The whole congregation gasped! Before the solo concluded, her partner joined her. What did this mean? was the question on every lip. Like the people in the Gospel of Mark, they felt like exclaiming, "We never saw it on this fashion before." That prim congregation breathed heavily and deeply. But the young minister in the pulpit--for such they all considered him, remained absolutely silent. They observed, however, that his body shook perceptibly as tears coursed down his pale cheeks. Then, we were told, a strange stillness fell upon the people, like the quiet presaging an electric storm. It soon broke when one of the proudest members of that assembly fell on her knees in agonizing prayer and unrestrainedly confessed her sins, creating consternation among other proud, self-satisfied, respectable members. Others followed rapidly and with such spontaneity as to cause bewilderment. How the elders gasped! All over the chapel, men and women, young and old, kneeling in the pews and aisles, claimed "the blessing." Mount Seion, for once, became a veritable Valley of Baca. The great church organ remained silent.

Immediately upon the cessation of those burning confessions, extempore hymns were sung. How the people sang! That service, commenced so inauspiciously, continued without a break all day! There was no dinner hour nor Sunday school. All the worshipers apparently were oblivious to every physical discomfort as Mr. Roberts reiterated the cry, "Obey! Obey! Obey the Holy Spirit !" with overpowering effect. When evening came, the other churches had received the news. The neighborhood seemed to have assembled in this one place, striving to enter the one comparatively small building where "the revival" was. The crush was terrible. What language could describe the scenes inside the chapel! To the carnal mind, unsubjected and unsanctified, it must have appeared to be bordering on pandemonium. The scenes are recorded here just as eyewitnesses reported them to me later.

Although they had been in the church all through the day without respite, the evangelists continued through the evening service as unwearied as they were in the morning. Evidently "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" was assuredly quickening their "mortal bodies," delivering them from any traces of fatigue. News of the meetings sped on lightning wings. Consternation took hold of the inhabitants of Trecynon and Aberdare. In agitated whispers and subdued dismay, groups meeting in the streets was the query on every lip. Time alone would give the answer.

Wednesday night came before I contacted "the revival" for the first time. It happened this way: A young man possessing a fine voice was preparing for one of the great contests which have been extremely popular among the Welsh people for generations. For some time I had been coaching him and correcting his deficiencies in voice production. I did not dream that I would meet him that evening under very different circumstances. After his departure, a friend of mine, a professor of music, called at my room very unexpectedly. Usually the evenings were his busiest times; business people crowded his studio for music tuition. Strangely enough, some of his pupils failed to turn up on this particular date, and he came to see if

I would accompany him to the theater, or enjoy a quiet stroll.

After a little consideration, my thoughts turned to the revival meetings which were occupying so many serious minds in the neighborhood. I quietly suggested that we go to the scene of the mysterious services. Immediately, to my surprise, he acquiesced, and we both began to walk, and to discuss the reports appearing in the Daily Press concerning Mr. Roberts. Usually when we met, which was often, we talked of the great composers of bygone days, debating their qualifications or disqualifications. Cantatas, operas, oratorios, sonatas came under survey and delightful hours passed. But tonight it was "the revival." This was very unusual for, although we were both members of the same large church, neither of us was by any means spiritual.

However, we walked and talked of the revival, and our conversation was perhaps unwise, because neither of us had ever witnessed a revival. Our opinions were, therefore, worthless. Like many others who lived before us, we freely ventilated our vain thoughts. Then something happened. My friend decided that he would proceed no further. My persuasive powers availed nothing. After lengthy debate, he decided that he would return to his studio. Equally obstinate, I determined that nothing would hold me back. Although "the revival" brought blessing to thousands of his compatriots, the Spirit of God, as far as one could impartially discern, left my friend severely alone. There was no evidence that "the powers of the world to come" had affected him in the least. Had I turned back with him, would I be writing these reminiscences?

When I reached the precincts of Ebenezer Congregational Chapel where Evan Roberts was that evening, I discovered that every avenue of approach to every chapel in the neighborhood was filled with eager people; hundreds were clamoring vainly for admittance to one of the places of worship. Here was an unprecedented sight! Into this swirling mass I found myself projected. Patience ultimately caused me to reach the vestibule of the chapel where Mr. Roberts was and where at the far end of the room sat a deacon who knew me well. Seeing my dilemma, he beckoned to me, proffering me his chair. Knowing that this was my only hope of gaining admittance, and especially of securing a seat, I pushed through the throng in the aisles, until I reached his chair. That generous deacon, so I learned afterwards, had been there for fourteen hours without a break!

With my back to the pulpit, I witnessed a sight that made me feel faint. Confronting and surrounding me was a mass of people, with faces aglow with a divine radiance, certainly not of this earth. For one brief moment my faith staggered, and criticism arose in my mind. But it soon vanished. Critical analysis could not survive such a dynamic atmosphere. One section of the congregation was singing, "O! the Lamb, the Bleeding Lamb." In another part of the building scores were engaged simultaneously in prayer, some were wringing their hands as if in mortal agony, while others who had received "the blessing" were joyous in their new-found experience. Welsh and English were extravagantly intermingled in this service. Language clashes are non-existent where the Holy Ghost is we-eminent. With awe and fear I gazed upon this scene. Some of the things that reached my ears will never be forgotten.

On the gallery confronting me was the young man who that evening had been coached for the great singing competition for which he had been preparing for months. Could I believe my eyes? Were my ears also deceiving me? With extended arms, his beautiful voice ringing clear and reaching the utmost extremity of the enormous building, he was praying and crying aloud, "Mercy! Mercy! Mercy !" Just that one word! How had he managed to get into the building? What power was constraining him to cry aloud?

There was no denying the reality of that yearning, passionate exclamation. Another soul in another part of the church exclaimed in stentorian tones that vibrated, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" (Song of Sol. 2:11, 12). Who could deny it? A young woman with beautiful countenance and an exquisite voice challenged, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him." She clapped her hands for joy. An elderly deacon announced with rapture, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." A Presbyterian minister, his countenance pale as death, stood on his feet and recited: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Who is this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save" (Isa. 63 :1). Underneath the gallery a young man, stammering, drew tears from all eyes as he cried, "W-w-w-hat m-must I d-do t-to be s-s-s-aved ?" repeating the solemn question until he must have nearly fainted with fatigue. A most pathetic sight! One realizes the limitations of his human vocabulary when attempting to describe these scenes.

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