

Capel y Boro
Sun 7 Mar 2021, 11am

**John Bunyan:
The Pilgrim's Progress
and the rise of the
Welsh nonconformists**



**Movie trailer,
The Pilgrim's Progress (2018)**

Intrada

Welcome

Come down, O Love divine
(Biano da Siena, trans. R Littledale,
Vaughan Williams *Down Ampney*)

John Bunyan
from *The Pilgrim's Progress*,
opening

John Bunyan
Y rhyfel ysbrydol
Excerpt
(*The Holy War* edited by Parch J R
Kilsby Jones c1850, published
Mackenzie, Ludgate Hill)

Hebrews 12: 1-2

For all the saints
(William Walsham How,
Vaughan Williams *Sine nomine*)

Hebreaid 11:1-16

He who would valiant be
**A talk by John Jones on
John Bunyan**

Ralph Vaughan Williams
The Pilgrim's Progress
Prologue, "Bunyan in Prison"

Who would true valour see
(John Bunyan, Vaughan Williams
Monk's Gate)

**Talk, Bunyan and the rise of the
Welsh nonconformists**

**Mi dafla' 'maich oddi ar fy
ngwar**
(William Williams, *Ty Ddewi*)

John (Ioan) Thomas
(1770-1804?)
Excerpts, Rhad Ras

Dyro inni weld o'r newydd
(John Thomas, *St Elizabeth*)
Côr Hen Nodiant

Ralph Vaughan Williams
**Rhosymedre, "Prelude on a
Welsh hymn tune"**

John 1: 1-14

Message:
John Bunyan's Last Sermon
Preached from John 1:13, August
19, 1688 (excerpt)

Am fod fy Iesu'n fyw
(John Thomas)
Treorchy & Nelson Choral
Societies/Terry James, Richard
Elfyn Jones, 1977

Blessing

Closing music:
Stephen Adams
The Holy City
Stuart Burrows (tenor)



**Movie trailer, The Pilgrim's
Progress (2018)**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04WXIAcOtS0>

Intrada

Ysbryd y tragwyddol Dduw,
disgyn arnom ni; Ysbryd y
tragwyddol Dduw, disgyn arnom
ni: plyg ni, trin ni, golch ni, cod ni:
Ysbryd y tragwyddol Dduw,
disgyn arnom ni.

*Spirit of the eternal God, descend
upon us; Spirit of the eternal God,
descend upon us:*

*fold us, treat us, wash us, raise us:
Spirit of the eternal God, descend
upon us.*

Welcome to our service this
morning from from Capel y Boro
which celebrates the work of
John Bunyan and his influence on
Wales and the London Welsh
and on the nonconformist
movement. We opened with a
trailer for the 2019 animated film
of *The Pilgrims Progress*. Still one
of the most popular and
influential books ever written *The
Pilgrim's Progress* is the one story
the film's publicists say that can
give our children the courage to
stay on the straight path in a
culture that often stands against
them. An epic tale of a pilgrim
and his burden, we journey with
Christian as he travels from the
city of Destruction to the
Celestial City.

To give it its full title, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come* is a 1678 Christian allegory written by John Bunyan. It is regarded as one of the most significant works of religious, theological fiction in English literature. It has been translated into more than 200 languages, including Welsh of course, and has never been out of print. It has also been cited as the first novel written in English. As we will hear in John's talk the British composer with Carmarthenshire ancestry Ralph Vaughan Williams was particularly struck by John Bunyan's work and he wrote an opera on *The Pilgrim's Progress* and set one of his most famous hymns *He who would most valiant be*. We will hear both later as well as other pieces by Vaughan Williams including two more of his classic hymns the first of which we will sing now to his tune *Down Ampney*, named after the Gloucestershire village where he was born, *Come down, O Love divine*.

Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while
my path illuming.

Let holy charity

mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing:
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till Love create a place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flvKDgktutI>

John Bunyan from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, opening



First edition title page 1678

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and, as he read, he wept, and trembled; and, not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?"

In this plight, therefore, he went home and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble increased. Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife and children; and thus he began to talk to them: O my dear wife, said he, and you my children, I, your dear friend, am in myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered. At this his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head; therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed.

But the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So, when the morning was come, they would know how he did. He told them, Worse and worse: he also set to talking to them again; but they began to be hardened. They also thought to drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages to him; sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him. Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber, to pray

for and pity them, and also to condole his own misery; he would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying: and thus for some days he spent his time. Now, I saw, upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as he was wont, reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and, as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him and asked, Wherefore dost thou cry? He answered, Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgement and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.

The famous opening scene of John Bunyan's most famous book is subtitled "In the Similitude of a dream." The entire "The Pilgrim's Progress" is presented as a dream sequence narrated by an omniscient narrator. The allegory's protagonist, Christian, is an everyman character, and the plot centres on his journey from his hometown, the "City of Destruction" ("this world"), to the "Celestial City" ("that which is to come": Heaven) atop Mount Zion. Christian is weighed down by a great burden - the knowledge of his sin - which he believed came from his reading "the book in his hand" (the Bible). This burden, which would cause him to sink into Hell, is so unbearable that Christian must seek deliverance.

John Bunyan

Excerpt, *Y rhyfel ysbrydol*

The Holy War

(edited by Parch J R Kilsby Jones c1850, published Mackenzie, Ludgate Hill)



Welsh edition of *Y rhyfel ysbrydol and Taith y Pererin*, c1850

Felly efe a gydsyniodd I wneuthur felly; a'r dydd a ddaeth, a'l destyn ef ydoedd hyn – "Tor ef I lawr, paham y mae efe yn diffrwytho y tir?" a phregeth I lêm iawn a wnaeth efe ar y testyn.

Yn y lle cyntaf efe a ddangosodd beth oedd yr achos o'r geiriau hyn, sef bod y ffigysbren yn ddiffwrwyth. Yna efe a ddangosodd beth yn gynwysedig yn yr ymadrodd, sef edifwch neu anghyfanedd hefyd-dra hollol. Efe a ddangosodd hefyd trwy awdurdod pwy yr oedd y farn yma cael ei chyhoeddi – a hyny oedd gan Shadai ei hun. Ac yn ddiweddaf, efe a ddangosodd yr achos o'r peth, ac yna fe ddibenodd ei bregeth. Ond yr oedd efe yn berthynasol iawn yn ei gymhwysiad, yn gymaint ag y darfu iddo wneuthur I Mansoul druan ddych-rynu; canys y bregeth hon, yn gystled a'r un flaenorol, a weithredodd lawer ar galonau gwŷr Mansoul; ie, a gynorthwyodd yn ddirfawr I gadw yn effro y rhai a ddihunaid gan y pregethau a aethai o'r blaen. Felly yn awr nid oedd ond ychydig neu ddim l'w weled neu l'w glywed trwy yr holl dref ond tristwch, a galar, a gwae.

Yn awr, ar ol y bregeth, hwy a ymgasglasant yn nghyd, ac a ymgynghorasant pa beth oedd oreu l'w wneuthur. Ond, ebe y pregethwr rhaglwiol, ni wnafl ddim o'm pen fy hun, heb ymgynghori â'm cymydog, Mr Ofn-duwiol; canys os darfu iddo ef o'r blaen ddeall mwy o feddwl ein Tywysog na nynt, ni wn I nad yw, yn gwybod mwy yn awr, sef yn awr pan yr ydym drachefn yn troi at ddaioni. Felly hwy a alwasant ac a anfonasant am Mr. Ofn-duwiol, ac efe yn ebrwydd a ymddangosodd; yna y dymunasant arno amlygu yn mhellach ei farn yn nghylch yr hyn ydoedd oreu iddynt ei wneuthur. Yna y dywedodd yr hen ŵr boneddig fel y canlyn: - Fy marn I yw, ar fod l'r dref hon, Mansoul, yn ei dydd hwn o gystudd, ddanfon desieb gostyngedig at eu Tywysog Emmanuel, yr hwn y pechasoch yn ei erbyn, ar fod iddo, yn ei ffafr a'l ras, weled bod yn dda ddychwelyd atoch drachefn, ac na byddo iddo ddal dig yn dragywydd.

John Bunyan made a deep impression among the devout Welsh for a century or more after his unique career. You only have to look at the number of editions of the author, and for Bunyan a special compilation of all his works printed in Wales alone between 1677 and 1931 shows the impressive total of 188 titles (no fewer than 58 of "The Pilgrim's Progress") in various languages. For a land with only a little over a half million inhabitants and with only two cities with over five thousand population in 1800, this is a record hard to equal, demonstrating an extraordinary devotion to a single author.

A copy of the 1688 edition of "Taith neu siwrnai y pererin" ("The Pilgrim's Progress") translated by Stephen Hughes is one of the 73 works by John Bunyan in the collection of the National Library of Wales. Many Welsh editions of "Taith y Pererin" also included a novel written in 1682 four years after "The Pilgrim's Progress," "The Spiritual War" or "The Holy War," "Y rhyfel ysbrydol." Like "The Pilgrim's Progress" this was very influential on the Welsh nonconformist movement. The copy we have found containing both books is edited by a Parch J R Kilsby Jones and published by Mackenzie, of Ludgate Hill near St Paul's London around 1850.

The full title of "Y rhyfel ysbrydol" is "The Holy War Made by King Shaddai Upon Diabolus, to Regain the Metropolis of the World, Or, The Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul." This novel, like "The Pilgrim's Progress," is written in the form of an allegory, and tells the story of the town "Mansoul" (Man's soul). While this town is perfect and bears the image of Shaddai (Almighty), it is deceived to rebel and throw off his gracious rule, replacing it instead with the rule of Diabolus. Mansoul has rejected the Kingship of Shaddai, but he sends his son Emmanuel to reclaim it.

Hebrews 12: 1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame,

and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Vaughan Williams's hymn, "For all the saints" was written by the Anglican Bishop of Wakefield, William Walsham How, in 1864. It was based on Hebrews 12 :1-2.

For all the saints, who from
their labours rest,
who thee by faith before the
world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever
bless'd.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their
refuge, and their might,
thou, Christ, the hope that put
their fears to flight;
'mid gloom and doubt, their true
and shining light.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Oh, bless'd communion,
fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory
shine,
yet all are one in thee, for all are
thine.
Alleluia, alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in
the west.
Soon, soon to faithful servants
cometh rest.
Sweet is the calm of paradise the
bless'd.
Alleluia, alleluia!

But lo! There breaks a yet more
glorious day;
the saints triumphant rise in
bright array,
as God to glory calls them all
away.
Alleluia, alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from
ocean's farthest coast,

through gates of pearl streams in
the countless host,
*all praising Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost.
Alleluia, alleluia!

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0515d6n>

Hebreaid 11:1-16

Ffydd yn wir yw sail y pethau yr
ydys yn eu gobeithio, a sicrwydd
y pethau nid ydys yn eu gweled.
Oblegid trwyddi hi y cafodd yr
henuriaid air da. Wrth ffydd yr
ydym yn deall wneuthur y
bydoedd trwy air Duw, yn
gymaint nad o bethau gweledig y
gwnaed y pethau a welir. Trwy
ffydd yr offrymodd Abel i Dduw
aberth rhagorach na Chain; trwy
yr hon y cafodd efe dystiolaeth ei
fod yn gyfiawn, gan i Dduw
ddwyn tystiolaeth i'w roddion ef:
a thrwyddi hi y mae efe, wedi
marw, yn llefaru eto. Trwy ffydd
y symudwyd Enoch, fel na welai
farwolaeth; ac ni chaed ef, am
ddarfod i Dduw ei symud ef:
cans cyn ei symud, efe a gawsai
dystiolaeth, ddarfod iddo ryngu
bodd Duw. Eithr heb ffydd
amhosibl yw rhyngu ei fodd ef:
oblegid rhaid yw i'r neb sydd yn
dyfod at Dduw, gredu ei fod ef,
a'i fod yn obrwywr i'r rhai sydd
yn ei geisio ef. Trwy ffydd, Noe,
wedi ei rybuddio gan Dduw am y
pethau nis gwelsid eto, gyda
pharchedig ofn a ddarparodd
arch i achub ei dŷ: trwy'r hon y
condemniodd efe y byd, ac a
wnaethpwyd yn etifedd y
cyfiawnder sydd o ffydd.

Trwy ffydd, Abraham, pan ei
galwyd, a ufuddhaodd, gan fyned
i'r man yr oedd efe i'w dderbyn
yn etifeddiaeth; ac a aeth allan,
heb wybod i ba le yr oedd yn

myned. Trwy ffydd yr ymdeithiodd efe yn nhir yr addewid, megis mewn tir dieithr, gan drigo mewn lluestai gydag Isaac a Jacob, cyd-etifeddion o'r un addewid: Canys disgwyl yr ydoedd am ddinas ag iddi sylfeini, saer ac adeiladydd yr hon yw Duw. Trwy ffydd Sara hithau yn amhlantadwy, a dderbyniodd nerth i ymddwyn had; ac wedi amser oedran, a esgorodd; oblegid ffyddlon y barnodd hi yr hwn a addawsai. Oherwydd paham hefyd y cenedlwyd o un, a hwnnw yn gystal â marw, cynifer â sêr y nef mewn lliaws, ac megis y tywod ar lan y môr, y sydd yn aneirif.

Mewn ffydd y bu farw'r rhai hyn oll, heb dderbyn yr addewidion, eithr o bell eu gweled hwynt, a chredu, a chyfarach, a chyfaddef mai dieithriaid a phererinion oeddynt ar y ddaear. Canys y mae'r rhai sydd yn dywedyd y cyfryw bethau, yn dangos yn eglur eu bod yn ceisio gwlad. Ac yn wir, pe buasant yn meddwl am y wlad honno, o'r hon y daethent allan, hwy a allasant gael amser i ddychwelyd: Eithr yn awr gwlad well y maent hwy yn ei chwennych, hynny ydyw, un nefol: o achos paham nid cywilydd gan Dduw ei alw yn Dduw iddynt hwy: oblegid efe a baratôdd ddinas iddynt.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving

approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and 'he was not found, because God had taken him.' For it was attested before he was taken away that 'he had pleased God.' And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, 'as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.'

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had

been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Bunyan's most famous hymn "He who would valiant be" or "Who would true valour see," recalls the word of Hebrews chapter 11.

He who would valiant be A talk by John Jones on John Bunyan



One of the John Bunyan windows, Bunyan Meeting Free Church, Bedford

John Bunyan was a 17th century writer and Puritan preacher best remembered as the author of the Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He was a tinker by trade like his father, mending pots and pans, from the village of Elstow, a few miles south of Bedford. He became interested in religion after his marriage, his wife being a pious woman, attending non-conformist groups in Bedford before becoming a renowned preacher.

After the Restoration and return of King Charles II to the throne in 1660, a turbulent time in

English history, the time of Oliver Cromwell and the English Commonwealth, and the eventual re-establishing of the supremacy of the Church of England, Bunyan spent the next 12 years in jail for refusing to give up preaching a different form of worship. And it was during this time he began to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the most published books in the English language, widely regarded as one of the most significant works of Christian fiction and the first novel written in English. It's presented as a dream sequence by a narrator that centres on a journey from this world to Heaven.

And the celestial city, for him at least, was London. Let's not forget that the Great Fire occurred in 1666 and a new city with 40 new churches designed by Christopher Wren were erected in the following decade, which must have been quite amazing.

Bunyan's preaching brought him often to London where he was befriended by no less a figure than the Lord Mayor, Sir John Shorter, born in Southwark, who presented him with a silver walking stick. Sir John apparently owned a large dock in Southwark and was variously described as an Anabaptist, a Presbyterian and a member of the Independent Conventicle. Bunyan in fact died on his way to London at the age of 59 after contracting a fever and was buried in Bunhill Fields, the non-conformist burial ground near Jewin. His last sermon was published by a Southwark comb-maker Charles Doe in 1692 and there is a memorial window to him in Southwark Cathedral. The window, designed in 1900, shows

Christian, the hero of Bunyan's poem, standing at the foot of the cross. Another strong connection with Southwark is that Bunyan preached to large crowds in Zoar Chapel in Southwark St. All the best non-conformists were clearly in Southwark!



John Bunyan window at Southwark Cathedral

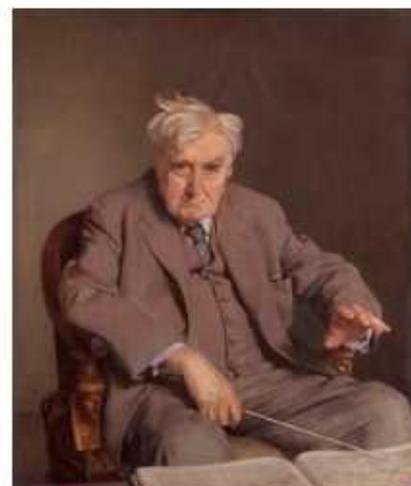
Interesting in this respect is the role played by a Welshman, Vavasor Powell, a near contemporary of Bunyan and a powerful preacher who lived in Montgomeryshire but came to London to preach many times. Like Bunyan, he was imprisoned for many years and, like Bunyan, also buried in Bunhill Fields.

Bunyan's most famous hymn is *He who would valiant be* which

recalls the word of Hebrews chapter 11.

The hymn was modified by Percy Dearmer, a clergyman with a Christian Socialist conscience, for the 1906 English Hymnal, of which the composer Vaughan Williams was the music editor. His hymn tune, *Monks Gate*, was adapted from a folk song from a village called Monks Gate in West Sussex.

Ralph Vaughan Williams's contribution to British hymnology was enormous in terms of our musical heritage. As music editor of the English Hymnal he came into close contact with a wide range of musical traditions – he unearthed old versions of tunes, wrote original tunes and arrangements of folk songs – not bad for a self-proclaimed atheist who later drifted into what his wife called “cheerful agnosticism”.



Ralph Vaughan Williams by Sir Gerald Kelly, 1958 © National Portrait Gallery

In order to understand his contribution, it's important to know something about his background and upbringing. On his father's side, he came from a family of clergymen and judges. His great grandfather, John Williams, was a barrister from

Carmarthen, his father the Vicar of Down Ampney in Gloucestershire. His mother was a great granddaughter of Josiah Wedgwood and therefore a niece of Charles Darwin. But, not untypical of their day, they were Christian socialists involved in radical causes such as the anti-slavery movement and electoral reform. Vaughan Williams himself was outspoken in his frequent calls for co-operation between social classes, national cohesion and the needs for musical amateurs. In short, he had a deep-seated social conscience and practised what he preached. In this respect, he came to value the Church of England as an integral part of the national community. He had an education conventional of his time and class – Trinity College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music – and was well connected through his family and enjoyed a modest private income. The only post he ever held for an annual salary was as church organist and choirmaster at St. Barnabas in Lambeth.

His involvement began in earnest with his discovery of the sacred music of English Tudor composers: Tallis, Gibbons and Byrd, further enhanced by his abiding interest in native folksong.

Vaughan Williams was approached by Percy Dearmer, the chairman of a committee of clergymen that wanted to create a supplement to the standard English hymn book which they felt was somewhat out of date. Through his work on this ground-breaking hymn book, Vaughan Williams significantly raised the standards of English

hymn singing, enriching and rejuvenating an important national musical tradition. His tunes entered into the musical life of a vast number of congregations that treasure them to this day.

Then, in 1951, for the Festival of Britain, he was commissioned to write an opera, premiered at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and the subject that he chose was Bunyan's book.

Here is the opening of Vaughan Williams' opera, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which he described as a Morality:

Ralph Vaughan Williams
The Pilgrim's Progress
From **Prologue, "Bunyan in Prison"**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo7F4muL4X4&list=OLAK5uy_m1WvAjUhVBbB_d5sd8Tb8F4LCh_rym46Q

Let's sing Bunyan's *He who would valiant be*, to Vaughan Williams's hymn tune, *Monk's Gate*.

Who would true valour see,
let him come hither;
one here will constant be,
come wind, come weather;
there's no discouragement
shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent
to be a pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round
with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound,
his strength the more is.
No lion can him fright:
he'll with a giant fight,
but he will have the right
to be a pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
can daunt his spirit;
he knows he at the end
shall life inherit.
Then, fancies, fly away;
he'll not fear what men say;
he'll labour night and day
to be a pilgrim.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVIM4_gan4E

Talk, *Bunyan and the rise of the Welsh nonconformists*

Religious freedom for dissent was accompanied by a steady rise in literacy, which prepared the way for massive changes. The Toleration Act of 1689 finally allowed religious freedom to the hard core of Dissenters who had come into existence during the time of Oliver Cromwell. They defiantly adhered to their beliefs during the years of persecution following the restoration. The first chapels in Wales were built during this period, with one of the most famous examples being Maes-yr-Onnen near Glasbury, Powys.



Maes-yr-Onnen, one of the first chapels, c1690s

Much of the development of Dissent was possible because of the steady rise in literacy. This was given a boost by the 1650 Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel. Before the Toleration Act there were increasing numbers of religious books available. In

Welsh, notable books published during the 1680s were *Canwyll y Cymry* ('The Welshman's Candle') by the Vicar Prichard, and the first Welsh translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. The last work in particular was to be very influential on prominent figures in the Welsh Methodist revival later in the 18th century including Howel Harris (1714-73), Daniel Rowland (1713-90), and William Williams Pantycelyn (1717-1791).

John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666), written while he was imprisoned in Bedford jail for nonconformity with the Church of England, similarly relates the process of his own conversion for the encouragement of his local, dissenter congregation. It testifies graphically to the force, both terrifying and consolatory, with which the biblical word could work upon the consciousness of a scantily educated, but overwhelmingly responsive, 17th-century believer. The form of *Grace Abounding* has numerous precedents in spiritual autobiography of the period, but with *The Pilgrim's Progress* (the first part of which appeared in 1678) Bunyan found himself drawn into a much more novel experiment, developing an ambitious allegorical narrative when his intent had been to write a more conventionally ordered account of the processes of redemption. The resulting work (with its second part appearing in 1684) combines a careful exposition of the logical structure of the Calvinist scheme of salvation with a delicate responsiveness to the ways in which his experience of his own world (of the life of the road, of

the arrogance of the rich, of the rhythms of contemporary speech) can be deployed to render with a new vividness the strenuous testing the Christian soul must undergo.

His achievement owes scarcely anything to the literary culture of his time, but his masterpiece has gained for itself a readership greater than that achieved by any other English 17th-century work with the exception of the King James Bible. In the 17th and 18th centuries there were cheap book versions, at two or three pence each, for the barely literate, and there were elegant editions for pious gentlefolk. It was the favourite work of both the self-improving artisan and the affluent tradesman. Yet it was below the horizon of polite literary taste.

In the opening paragraphs of *The Holy War*, which we heard read earlier, John Bunyan, explaining how it was his "lot to travel," came upon "a fair and delicate town, a corporation, called Mansoul. A town for its building so curious, for its situation so commodious, for its privileges so advantageous ... that I may say of it, ... There is not its equal under the whole heaven." As the allegory of Mansoul unfolds it refers to the spiritual struggle depicted by Bunyan in *Grace Abounding* to the Chief of Sinners. Behind the allegory, then, lie Bunyan's activities in London as well as his inner religious experience. His associations with London nonconformists in the years prior to his writing of *The Holy War* (1682) can be determined, and they show him cooperating with the most influential nonconformist ministers, several of whom had

held high positions (as Bunyan's "true men") in the Cromwellian era. The struggles of these men in an era of persecution and occasional indulgence are reflected in the pages of *The Holy War*, which therefore represents not only the spiritual conflict of one man but also the historical experience of an underground faith.

The ministers depicted in the allegory as the four captains can tentatively be identified as George Cockayne, George Griffith, Anthony Palmer, and John Owen. George Griffith (1601–66), was Bishop of St. Asaph. And John Owen (1616–83) was an English nonconformist church leader of Welsh descent, theologian, and academic administrator at the University of Oxford. Owen was respected by many of the nobility, and during 1674 both King Charles II and his brother King James II assured him of their good wishes to the dissenters who had bene persecuted or jailed. Charles gave Owen 1000 guineas to relieve those on whom the severe laws had pressed, and he was able to procure the release of John Bunyan, whose preaching he admired.



John Owen helped to procure the release from jail of John Bunyan

But let's turn to how Bunyan inspired the great nonconformists of Wales and the Methodists of the eighteenth century Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland and William Williams Pantycelyn? One of the themes pursued in Welsh hymns of the time is the journey of the Christian from the fragile and perishing world of humanity to the Heavenly City. The path is strewn with snares and difficulties of all kinds. The journey of life is a common metaphor, of course, but Bunyan's work invested it with a special significance for the Christian believer. The believer becomes the Christian pilgrim, making his or her way through the desert of this world, avoiding fleshly temptations and Satan's darts wherever possible. Well before the end of the eighteenth century, Welsh Calvinism had developed a characteristic system of social and psychological structures. At the centre of this system was the concept of the Christian as pilgrim, inherited from Bunyan, whose *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1676) had long been assimilated into Welsh culture in its translated version as *Taith y Pererin* (1688).

We are shortly going to sing *Mi dafla' 'maich oddi ar fy ngwar* by William Williams. E Wyn James says of this hymn: "In structure this hymn develops robustly from sin to salvation. Pilgrimage is suggested by the oblique reference in the first verse to the scene in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* where the burden of sin is loosed from off the shoulders of the pilgrim as he approaches a wayside cross. The cross of Christ is literally at the heart of this hymn, being depicted in the

middle verse; and the biblical allusion to Revelation 19:8 ('for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints') gives further depth to that depiction. But although he is not referred to once by name, it is the Saviour himself, and the matchless beauty of the Beloved, which is central to the hymn from start to finish.

The emphasis is on the visual, and while such gazing means that there is an objectivity at work to a degree, the mood is extremely subjective throughout. In the original Welsh the rhythms and word patterns combine to create an evocative atmosphere and a consummate whole. Each verse is a single sentence which develops effortlessly, reaching a climax in the last line; and like movements in a symphony, each verse not only reaches its own climax, but leads on from verse to verse to the ultimate climax where the believer is in highest heaven gazing sensuously on the Beloved's unsurpassable countenance."



William Williams, Pantycelyn

Mi dafla' 'maich oddi ar fy ngwar

wrth deimlo dwyfol loes;
euogrwydd fel mynyddoedd byd
dry'n ganu wrth dy groes.

Os edrych wnaif i'r dwyrain draw,
os edrych wnaif i'r de,
ymhlith a fu, neu ynteu ddaw,
'does debyg iddo fe.

Fe roes ei ddwylo pur ar led,
fe wisgodd goron ddrain
er mwyn i'r brwnt gael bod yn
wyn
fel hyfryd liain main.
Esgyn a wnaeth i entrych nef
i eiriol dros y gwan;
fe sugna f enaid innau'n lân
i'w fynwes yn y man.

Ac yna caf fod gydag ef
pan êl y byd ar dân,
ac edrych yn ei hyfryd wedd,
gan' harddach nag o'r blaen.

*I will throw my burden off from my neck
While feeling divine anguish;
Guilt like the world's mountains
Turns to singing at thy cross.*

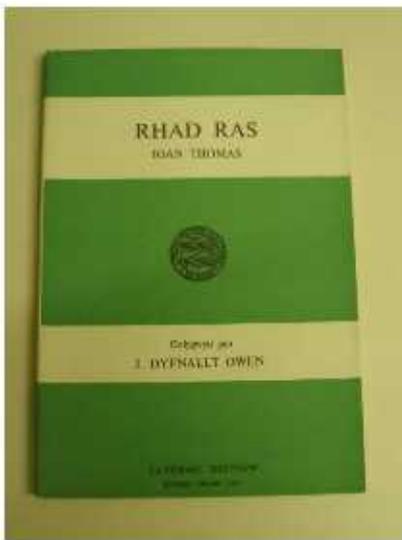
*If I do look to the distant East,
If I do look to the South,
Amongst those who were, or those
to come,
There is none like him.*

*He put his pure hands wide apart,
He wore a crown of thorns
That the filthy might become white
Like comely fine linen.*

*He has ascended to the height of
heaven
To intercede for the weak;
My soul will suckle completely
To his breast in a while.*

*And then I will be with him
When the world goes on fire,
And look on his comely
countenance,
A hundred times more beautiful
than before.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tQ0PHIWjyk>



The poet, archdruid and minister John Dyfnallt Owen who died in 1956, said perhaps the most eloquent expressions of the spirit of the Welsh religious revival of the 18th century are: a) the hymns of William Williams (Pantycelyn), such as the one we have just heard, and: b) a book called *Rhad Ras* written by the Congregational minister, and hymn writer John Thomas. Published in 1810 *Rhad Ras* may be called the first Welsh autobiography. If John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) relates the process of his own conversion for the encouragement of his local, dissenter congregation *Rhad Ras* or *Free Grace* was to do something similar in recording the conversion of John Thomas, though this was a more directly autobiographical approach to a spiritual journey than a Christian allegory or novel. But like Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, *Rhad Ras* was for the encouragement of a dissenter congregation.

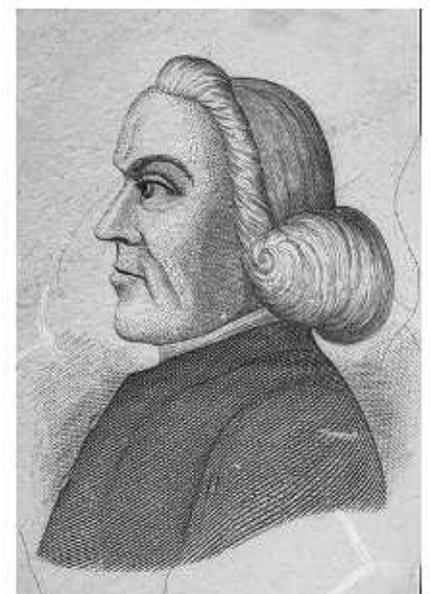
It is rags to riches story, that of the second-generation Methodist turned Independent preacher Ioan Thomas, or John Thomas. The story deals with his personal journey from illegitimacy,

poverty, rejection, fear, and insignificance into hope, life and kingdom fruitfulness within the context of the Methodist Revival or the Great Awakening in Wales. Born among the poorest of the poor, God's hand seems to have been upon him from a very early ages, and thanks to direct contact with three of the greatest of the Methodists of the previous generation, he himself joined their ranks and became one of the most powerful of the Welsh revivalists of the Great Awakening, who travelled all over Wales, and even preached at the invitation of the Countess of Huntingdon in her network of churches in the south east of England, with great effect. Revival breaking out as a result of his preaching was something which he experienced on several occasions, and he became much sought after as a speaker. Yet today he is almost completely unknown outside of Wales, and even in his native country he seems increasingly to be overlooked.

Born in 1730 in the parish of Myddfai, Carmarthenshire, John Thomas came from a poor family but received short periods of schooling in the neighbourhood of his home and learnt to read Welsh. He worked on farms, reading the Bible, *Cannwyll y Cymry*, and *Taith y Pererin* in his leisure hours. He heard Howel Harris preach in the house of Sieffre Dafydd, Llanddeusant (1745), an experience which shook him to the core. John Thomas described in *Rhad Ras* this experience of Howel Harris preach aged just 13:

"I wanted to go in spite of everything, even though I did not

know or understand quite what carried me, nor why I was going, but I went with as strong a desire as I had felt many times in my favourite activities; it was a desire I had never felt before when going to listen to a sermon (to the house of Jethro Dafydd Ifan in Llanddeusant). Howel Harris's appearance won my affections; it seemed to me that at times his countenance shone (like the face of an angel); and his preaching of the law was very challenging. I remember he said words such as these: 'You may often have turned the pages of the Bible for forty years, and yet you know no more of God than a dog or a pig; you may often have been on your knees praying, thinking yourself to be a very religious man, but you have never really prayed from your heart; and unless God has your heart, He will yet see devils tearing to pieces your soul and body when you come to die, and at the day of judgement; my arrows are sharp; May God fire his words into your heart like bullets!' As I thought about these words, I realised that he was describing me.'



Howel Harris vividly remembered preaching by a 13-year-old John Thomas in *Rhad Ras*

John Thomas later went to Llanddowror as man-servant to the Rev. Griffith Jones and stayed there two years. At the invitation of Howel Harris he went to Trevecka; by this time his greatest delight was in attending religious meetings and societies, in preaching, and exhorting. For some years he taught in some of Griffith Jones's circulating schools in South Wales.

Liking the Congregational church system, he joined that body and on the recommendation of some Congregational ministers, he was received into the Academy at Abergavenny in 1761. Here he devoted more time to preaching than to his studies. He was ordained in 1767, as minister of Rhayader, Cae Bach, Llandrindod, and Garn by Edmund Jones, Isaac Price and, Richard Tibbott. According to his *Confession of Faith*, 6 April 1788, he was then minister of Rhayader and Llandrindod Wells. His ministerial life was tempestuous. He left Radnorshire in 1794 and made his way to Llangathen, Abergwili, and Carmarthen, where he died. It is not known when exactly he died - according to *Rhad Ras* he was alive in the winter of 1803-4, other sources maintain that he lived until 1810 or 1811. His personality was highly complex, says Dyfnallt, he was warm spirited and exceedingly aware of sin. He published between 1758 and 1788 one of our best-known hymns which we will hear later and translated many of John Bunyan's tracts. Before we hear one of John Thomas's hymns here is an excerpt from *Rhad Ras* or *Free Grace*, that records his preaching in both south and north Wales.

John (Ioan) Thomas
(1770-1804?)
Excerpt, *Rhad Ras*
(*Free Grace*)

Among various meetings in North and South Wales, I shall name two remarkable ones. As I was speaking one afternoon in Llanfynydd village, Carmarthenshire, many broke out blessing the Lord. It was a joy to me to see many children coming out and going to the village praising the Lord, and exalting his name like a host, as if they were going to take the village before them. Then they fell down to pray in the village, and then got up, and exhorted the people who were watching them, and praising the Lord. They would fall down to pray in some other part of the village, and get up praising and blessing the Lord. These words came to mind: out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou perfectest praise.

Another time I came to a meeting in a house in the parish of Clynnog-fawr in Caernarfonshire, where hundreds of people had gathered together. I went to the pulpit and stood in front of the crowd. I felt in my soul that the presence of the Lord would fill the place, and as I went to prayer I was given an indication of that, for it seemed that the Lord came down to those people as a strong and powerful wind in the middle of their singing of 'Amen'. They cried out, rejoiced and blessed the Lord.

I was able to speak a little on Ephesians 2, verse 13, ('But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought nearby the blood of Christ.') until

they took over what I was doing and continued the petitioning themselves until my soul melted with the wonder of the love of God, and like David I was ready to dance in front of the ark, under a feeling of his dear presence in my soul, but my bodily strength was gone so I could barely speak any more. The crowd of people, old and young, men and women, and children were drunk on the love of God, shouting out his praise because of his loving redemption of them. Indeed, it was similar to the day of Pentecost here that weekend. The Lord knew about my troubles at this time, and he was feasting my soul, so that living in the midst of tribulation I have been able to rejoice.

Dyro inni weld o'r newydd
mai ti, Arglwydd, yw ein rhan;
aed dy bresenoldeb hyfryd
gyda'th weision i bob man:
tyrd i lawr, Arglwydd mawr,
rho dy fendith yma nawr.

Ymddisgleiria yn y canol,
gwêl dy bobol yma 'nghyd
yn hiraethu, addfwyn lesu,
am gael gweld dy wŷneb-pryd;
golau cry' oddi fry
chwalo bob rhyw gwmwl du.

Deued yr awelon hyfryd,
effaith Ysbryd gras, i lawr;
llifed atom afon bywyd
dardd o dan yr orsedd fawr:
Arglwydd da, trugarha,
y sychedig rai dyfrha.

*Grant us to see anew
That thou, Lord, art our part;
May thy lovely presence go
With thy servants to every place:
Come down, great Lord,
Give thy blessing here now!*

*Shine thou in the midst,
See thy people here together
Longing, gentle Jesus,
To be able to see thy countenance;
Strong light from above
May it scatter every kind of black
cloud.*

*May the lovely breezes come,
The action of the Spirit of grace,
down;
Let flow to us the river of life
Which issues from under the great
throne:
Good Lord, have mercy,
Water those who are thirsty!*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvj_zfEamIU&list=OLAK5uy_lIEJOwxfam_zmGRDihlo84D_-XFLM5XY&index=2

**Ralph Vaughan Williams
Rhosymedre, "Prelude on a
Welsh hymn tune"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kymjPJTUftY>

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning
with God.
All things were made by him; and
without him was not anything
made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was
the light of men.
And the light shineth in darkness;
and the darkness comprehended
it not.
There was a man sent from God,
whose name was John.
The same came for a witness, to
bear witness of the Light, that all
men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was
sent to bear witness of that Light.
That was the true Light, which
lighteth every man that cometh
into the world.
He was in the world, and the
world was made by him, and the
world knew him not.
He came unto his own, and his
own received him not.
But as many as received him, to
them gave he power to become
the sons of God, even to them
that believe on his name:
Which were born, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, nor of
the will of man, but of God.
And the Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among us, (and we
beheld his glory, the glory as of
the only begotten of the Father,)
full of grace and truth.

Message:

John Bunyan's Last Sermon
Preached in London from John
1:13, August 19, 1688 (excerpt)



John Bunyan by Thomas Sadler, 1684 ©
National Portrait Gallery

"Which were born, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, nor of
the will of man, but of God." —
John 1:13

The words have a dependence
on what goes before, and
therefore I must direct you to

them for the right understanding
of it. You have it thus, —"He
came to his own, but his own
received him not; but as many as
received him, to them gave he
power to become the sons of
God, even to them which believe
on his name; which were born,
not of blood, nor of the will of
the flesh, but of God." In the
words before, you have two
things—

First, Some of his own rejecting
him when he offered himself to
them.

Secondly, Others of his own
receiving him, and making him
welcome. Those that reject him
he also passes by; but those that
receive him, he gives them power
to become the sons of God.
Now, lest any one should look
upon it as good luck or fortune,
says he, "They were born, not of
blood, nor of the will of the flesh,
nor of the will of man, but of
God." They that did not receive
him, they were only born of flesh
and blood; but those that receive
him, they have God to their
father, they receive the doctrine
of Christ with a vehement desire.

First, I will shew you what he
means by "blood." They that
believe are born to it, as an heir
is to an inheritance; they are
born of God; not of flesh, nor of
the will of man, but of God; not
of blood—that is, not by
generation; not born to the
kingdom of heaven by the flesh;
not because I am the son of a
godly man or woman. That is
meant by blood, (Acts 17:26),
"He has made of one blood all
nations." But when he says here,
"not of blood," he rejects all
carnal privileges they did boast
of. They boasted they were

Abraham's seed. No, no, says he, it is not of blood; think not to say you have Abraham to your father, you must be born of God if you go to the kingdom of heaven.

Secondly, "Nor of the will of the flesh." What must we understand by that? It is taken for those vehement inclinations that are in man to all manner of looseness, fulfilling the desires of the flesh. That must not be understood here; men are not made the children of God by fulfilling their lustful desires; it must be understood here in the best sense. There is not only in carnal men a will to be vile, but there is in them a will to be saved also—a will to go to heaven also. But this it will not do, it will not privilege a man in the things of the kingdom of God. Natural desires after the things of another world, they are not an argument to prove a man shall go to heaven whenever he dies. I am not a free-willer, I do abhor it; yet there is not the wickedest man but he desires some time or other to be saved. He will read some time or other, or, it may be, pray; but this will not do—"It is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shews mercy;" there is willing and running, and yet to no purpose; (Rom. 9:16), "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, have not obtained it." Here I do not understand as if the apostle had denied a virtuous course of life to be the way to heaven, but that a man without grace, though he have natural gifts, yet he shall not obtain privilege to go to heaven, and be the son of God. Though a man without grace may have a will to be saved, yet he cannot have that

will God's way. Nature, it cannot know anything but the things of nature; the things of God knows no man but by the Spirit of God; unless the Spirit of God be in you, it will leave you on this side the gates of heaven—"Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It may be some may have a will, a desire that Ishmael may be saved; know this, it will not save thy child. If it were our will, I would have you all go to heaven. How many are there in the world that pray for their children, and cry for them, and ready to die; and this will not do? God's will is the rule of all; it is only through Jesus Christ, "which were born, not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now I come to the doctrine. Men that believe in Jesus Christ to the effectual receiving of Jesus Christ, they are born to it. He does not say they shall be born to it, but they are born to it; born of God, unto God, and the things of God, before they receive God to eternal salvation. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now unless he be born of God, he cannot see it. Suppose the kingdom of God be what it will, he cannot see it before he be begotten of God; suppose it be the Gospel, he cannot see it before he be brought into a state of regeneration; believing is the consequence of the new birth, "not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

First, I will give you a clear description of it under one similitude or two. A child, before it be born into the world, is in the dark dungeon of its mother's womb; so a child of God, before

he be born again, is in the dark dungeon of sin, sees nothing of the kingdom of God, therefore it is called a new birth; the same soul has love one way in its carnal condition, another way when it is born again.

Secondly, As it is compared to a birth, resembling a child in his mother's womb, so it is compared to a man being raised out of the grave; and to be born again is to be raised out of the grave of sin—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." To be raised from the grave of sin is to be begotten and born; (Rev. 1:5), There is a famous instance of Christ—"He is the first-begotten from the dead, he is the first-born from the dead;" unto which our regeneration alludeth,—that is, if you be born again by seeking those things that are above, then there is a similitude betwixt Christ's resurrection and the new birth; which were born, which were restored out of this dark world, and translated out of the kingdom of this dark world into the kingdom of his dear Son, and made us live a new life; this is to be born again; and he that is delivered from the mother's womb, it is the help of the mother; so he that is born of God, it is by the Spirit of God. Amen.

Am fod fy lesu'n fyw,
byw hefyd fydd ei saint;
er gorfod dioddef poen a briw,
mawr yw eu baint:
bydd melus glanio draw
'n ôl bod o don i don,
ac mi rof ffarwel maes o law
i'r ddaear hon.

Ac yna gwyn fy myd
tu draw i'r byd a'r bedd:
caf yno fyw dan foli o hyd
mewn hawddfyd hedd
yng nghwmni'r nefol Oen
heb sôn am bechod mwy,
ond canu am ei ddirfawr boen
byth gyda hwy.

*Because my Jesus is alive,
Live also shall his saints.
Despite having to suffer pain and
bruise,
Great is their privilege:
It will be sweet to land yonder
After being from wave to wave,
And I will bid farewell soon,
To this earth.*

*And there I will be blessed
On the far side of the
world and the grave:
I will get to live there
praising all the time
In peaceful pleasure
In the company of the heavenly
Lamb
Without mention of sin any more,
But a song about his immense
suffering
Forever with them.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxXR1Ij40PI>

Blessing

John Bunyan said our prayers are three-fold. They are made "in the Spirit", and "with understanding" and with approaching "the Throne of Grace"
So in the words of John Bunyan let our "Prayers be a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for such things as He has promised, for the good of the church with submission in faith to the will of God." Amen.

Closing music:
Stephen Adams
The Holy City
Stuart Burrows (tenor)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNYmyH95ufU>

Readers:

John Bunyan
from *The Pilgrim's Progress*,
opening
Mark Salmon

John Bunyan
Excerpt, *Y rhyfel ysbrydol*
Mark Walter

Hebrews 12: 1-2
Rowenna Hughes

Hebraid 11:1-16
Megan Evans

He who would valiant be
A talk by John Jones on
John Bunyan
John Jones

Talk, *Bunyan and the rise of the*
Welsh nonconformists
Neil Evans

John (Ioan) Thomas
Excerpts, *Rhad Ras*
Joshua Games

John 1: 1-14
Wyn Davies

John Bunyan's Last Sermon,
(message), blessing and links
Neil Evans

Producer Mike Williams
