

A Light in the Land (Christianity in Wales 200-2000)

by Gwyn Davies

The speaker argues that Biblical, Evangelical Christianity has had a profound and lasting influence on Wales, evident in the country's names, places, and history.

Duration: 1:02:22

Scripture: Psalm 22:14, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 27:32, Luke 9:62, Luke 22:44, John 20:25

Topics: "Church History", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the history of Christianity in Wales, acknowledging both the blessings and challenges that have been faced. He mentions the presence of disagreement and lack of vision in applying faith practically, as well as periods of spiritual decline. The speaker highlights the importance of the gospel as the light of the world and the only hope for true light in Wales. He concludes by suggesting that God may be preparing young leaders to bring about a revival in the country.

Transcript

I think, I think it could be argued that Biblical, Evangelical Christianity, the only true form of Christianity, I think it could be argued that Christianity has had a greater, deeper, richer, longer influence on the nation of Wales than any other nation on the face of this earth. Well, of course, you think, well, he would say that, wouldn't he? Ladies and gentlemen, members of the jury, let me present you with some evidence. I'm not going to talk about the book.

I'm not going to give you a potted history of Christianity in Wales. I can say, if you want to know more, you can, you can buy the book. All I want to do is show you, give you some sense of the influence, the impact that Christianity has had and in some respects is still having here in Wales.

Let's look at some areas. People's names, people's names. I see one or two students, past students from the Evangelical Theological College of Wales here.

Let me ask you, what is the name of the registrar at Brintirion? Don't know? Never seen him? Mark Barnes, you remember? Ewan Rhys Jones. Can't see him. Don't think he's here.

Hope he's not here. Ewan Rhys Jones. Some of you know him.

Have you ever thought what Ewan Rhys Jones says to us? Rhys, well now, Rhys has all kinds of Christian connotations in the history of Wales, all right? But Rhys Jones. Back in the 1920s, a man called Rhys Jones established a Bible school in connection with his church in, what do I call it? I would have to say because of where I come from, Porth, right? Porth. We don't normally call him Rhys Jones.

We normally call him R.B. Jones, but his name actually was Rhys Bevan Jones. He was Rhys Jones, right? That Bible school eventually moved to Barry, all right? And became what is the South Wales Bible College. That college eventually moved to Brintirion, all right? And it's, yes, it's a coincidence that the present registrar of the college, Ewan Rhys Jones, has the same name as the person who established the college in the first place.

I think, I think it should be written into the constitution that all future registrars of the college should be called Rhys Jones. But what about his other name? What, Ewan, Ewan Rhys Jones. What does Ewan mean? Ewan is a Welsh form, one of the Welsh forms of John, yes.

One of the Welsh forms of John. What does John mean? What does John mean? John means the gift or the grace of God. So, Ewan is the gift or the grace of God.

But he's Ewan Jones. Now, Jones means John's son, all right? That's how surnames have been formed so often in Wales. They've taken the Christian name of the father, grandfather, whatever, and then added an S, if necessary.

William Williams, David Davies, David's son. So, Jones is John's son. Ewan Rhys Jones is a theological declaration.

Have you ever thought of that? His first name and his surname declare a gift or the grace of God, and not just once. John Bunyan would have called him grace abounding, all right? Grace running over. Grace in his first name, grace in his second name.

And John Jones, I mean, John Jones must be the most common name in Wales over the centuries. That's not quite as common these days. John is not so fashionable.

But you go over, take the centuries, John Jones, John Jones Tawsharn, John Elias. John Elias's name was really John Jones. But there were so many John Joneses, young John Joneses, beginning to preach up in the Llyn Peninsula when John Elias was a young man.

They told him, some of the other older Christians said, look, we don't want another John Jones. You take your grandfather's name, all right, and you be John Elias just to help us out. It wasn't a stage name, all right? He didn't decide.

The older Christians decided for him that he should be John Elias. But he was really John Jones. And there are so many John Joneses in the history of us and in the Christian history of Wales.

But that very name, as I say, is a theological declaration. Remember that when you see him next time? Mr. Jones, you are a theological declaration. And it says much for the college itself, doesn't it? A college that upholds the doctrines of grace.

And not just a modicum of grace, not just a drop of grace, but grace abounding to the chief of sinners. Am I allowed to speak about myself? Just a little bit. I have a first name.

It's not Gwyn. It's John. John, all right? John Davis.

Well, now then, John, good goodness, grace of God. From the New Testament, Davis, because some, probably back in the 17th century when names were anglicized, my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather would have been David, somebody or other, all right? And then his son became somebody, instead of somebody ap David or ap David, would have taken the anglicized form and become Davis. So David, what does David mean? God's friend, yes.

God's beloved, if you like, all right? God's beloved from the Old Testament, all right? So I am an embodiment of Old and New Testaments, all right? John Davis. John Davis. Well, there are many.

Again, John Davis is a very common name in Wales, isn't it? But I could hardly wish for a better name. John Davis was the man who revised and corrected the first translation of the Bible into Welsh, William Morgan's Bible. William Morgan lived on the road in Llanbadan for a time.

But John Davis was one of the greatest scholars of his time in Europe in the mid-17th century, and he revised William Morgan's translation of the Bible into Welsh. So the Bible we have, we call it William Morgan's Bible, but it's really William Morgan with John Davis having got his red pen out, all right, and made the appropriate corrections. But there was another John Davis, many of them, but let me name just one more.

There was a John Davis who went in the year 1800 from the little remote hamlet in North Montgomeryshire of Llangwyhange Llangwynfa, all right, the place where Anne Griffiths lived. He knew Anne Griffiths very well. He went in the year 1800 from Llangwyhange Llangwynfa to Tahiti as a missionary.

Didn't fly with Concord, didn't fly at all. It must have taken him months and months to get there. His story is remarkable.

How he translated the New Testament into the local languages. He translated Pilgrim's Progress into the native language. He translated the Westminster Catechism, Shrouded Catechism, into the native language, and so on and so on.

He was blind for the last 10 years of his life. He spent over 55 years in Tahiti. He never came back.

He never had a furlough. He never had a pension fund. I'm not saying missionaries shouldn't have furloughs and pension funds.

Don't misunderstand me. But the commitment, Mr. Andrew Bowden was saying about the commitment, as we are presenting some of these covenants, the commitment of this John Davis in going half the way around the world in order to take the gospel to the islanders of Tahiti. But then I have this middle name, Gwyn.

What does Gwyn mean? White. Yes, that's what it normally means, white. But in association with that, it then means pure.

It does. It means pure, holy, blessed. You know the Beatitudes? Blessed are the poor in spirit.

That's how they begin, isn't it? Well, in Welsh, they begin, Gwynna i byd, a trodion under a spirit. The poor in spirit have a white world, or their world is white. And so it goes through them.

Gwynna i byd, Gwynna i byd, Gwynna i byd. I am a walking Beatitude. Can you see all these names? I mean, my name is nothing special.

Plenty of Gwyns, plenty of Davises, plenty of Johns, plenty of John Joneses, and Ewan Joneses, and Rhys Joneses. Names of people echoing biblical theological truths. But then, let's go on.

What about the names of places? What about the names of places here in Wales? I think it's very difficult to go 10 miles in Wales without passing some place where there has been a testimony to the gospel in some form or other. You think about all these thans. Now, some of you are probably from England, not very familiar with the thans.

Can't even... I'm tempted to challenge you to pronounce. Yes, yes. A than.

What is a than? I feel like one of these quiz masters where you've got to accept the answer even though it's not... Yes, yes. Technically, a than is a piece of enclosed land because much of the British Isles were covered with forestry, trees, bushes, and so on. So, what the early settlers did, they would have to clear the land and then they'd enclose it to keep out the wild animals and so on.

And then within that piece of enclosed land, they would place the church. And of course, the than, although technically it means the enclosed land, because they built the church on that piece of enclosed land, yes, it then came to mean the church. So, you are right.

Yes, yes. How many thans are there in Wales? No, then. No, then.

No, then. Do I hear a hundred? Do I hear a hundred? Anybody give me a hundred? A hundred? The lady in the purple hat there, a hundred? Right. Any advance on a hundred? Any advance on a hundred? Two? Sorry? Five hundred? Well, somebody's read the book.

Five hundred to you, sir. Yes. Well, over five hundred actually.

Now, one has to say, I won't go into the reasons for this now, one has to... Not all of them are genuine thanai, but most of them are. Most of them recall not just a church, but usually it's than something or other, isn't it? Than Badarn down the road is the church of Padarn. The church established, founded, what would you say today? Planted by Padarn.

Padarn's church. This was the church planted by Padarn. And so Llandaulo would be the church planted by Tylo and so on and so on.

And the length and breadth of Wales, you have these thanai, churches planted by even what we would call evangelical Christians. And it's amazing, isn't it? Over 500 of them, perhaps less than 500 if you exclude some that are not genuine articles, but still a large number of them. They might cause the non-Welsh here to splutter a bit as they try to pronounce it, but really these thanai, they are witnesses, they are testimonies to the work of God in days gone by.

This is a place where so-and-so established a church, planted church, usually back in the sixth century. Let's go for a trip. Let's go for a trip.

I live in Aberystwyth, but I teach in the college at Brinterion in Bridgend. Come with me as I journey down to Brinterion. I come out of my house up in Pemparce.

I can more or less, not quite because they built a roundabout just by the house and they built a fence, but still I used to be able to until five or six years ago, look down on Llanbadan where there's been a testimony to the gospel since the sixth century. Paddan lived in the sixth century, established that thanai all those years ago. All right, so that's a good start, but I don't go that way.

I go on the start to go on the road to Aberaeron. That takes me through Llanfairion and then Llanhwstyd. I can take a shortcut in Llanhwstyd and go over the mountain.

The first place I come to when I go over the mountain is a place called Nebo. What is that? What's the connection? What happened at Nebo? Yes, Moses was buried at Nebo. All right, why do they call this little hamlet just on the hill above Llanwstyd? Why do they call it Nebo? Well, because there's a chapel in the middle of the hamlet.

And I find this, there's some symbolic significance here, isn't there? The chapel was built first and then the houses grew up around the chapel. And so the village took its name from the chapel that was at the very center of the community. Right? So the people living in the hamlet, they said, we are people of Nebo because the chapel physically and spiritually was right there at the heart of that community.

Well, I don't stop. I've got work to do. On through Nebo and up, go up and up and up and up to a place called Trichrig.

Well, it's not, it's not a place, just I happen to know that's what, that's what it's called. Trichrig really means three peaks. All right, there's nothing there except a man who sells, on the top of the hill, sells secondhand Volvos.

Why? Well, I, yeah. But Trichrig, there was a man called James Hughes and he, as was common in the first half of the 19th century in Wales, he had a Bardic name and his Bardic name was Iago Trichrig. Right? And what James Hughes did, he moved to London, spent much of his life in London, but what he did besides writing some quite remarkable hymns, he produced a Bible commentary in Welsh.

Right? The one, the version I got, four quite substantial volumes. You can get any other editions too, eight volumes or twelve volumes or whatever. It's a remarkable work because what he did, writing in the first half of the 19th century, what he did was go to all the best English commentators and summarise them.

Right? Take the best bits out of them and bring them all together and publish them in this massive commentary. So you don't need to get, you don't need to buy Matthew Poole, let's say. Right? Because James Hughes has summarised, he's got the best bits out of Matthew Poole and put them in his, and the best bits out of Doddridge and the best bits out of Gies and so many other commentators as well.

Right? So as I get up to the top of the hill, I was looking at his commentary last week because I couldn't find what I wanted in all the other commentaries, the specific modern English commentaries I had on this particular book. I thought I'll turn to James Hughes. And yes, yes, I found what I wanted.

Right? So I gave him a little salute as I go down the hill. As I go down the hill, I come to the village of Talsarn. Just on the outskirts of Talsarn, there's a sign.

To the left, Llangeitho. Llangeitho, the ministry of Daniel Rowland, where somebody else grew up. Who else grew up in Llangeitho? Dr Lloyd-Jones.

Yes, yes, yes. So I've given James Hughes a salute with my right hand. So I give Llangeitho a salute with my left hand.

Right? Talsarn. Well, Talsarn, of course, is of no, as far as I know, no significance whatsoever. But there is another Talsarn up in North Wales that we associate with John Jones.

John Jones Talsarn. It must be on the book stall, Hugh Kinsey, wasn't it? Book by John Aron, a translation, The Atonement Controversy, which is taken from, translated from, the biography of John Jones Talsarn, recently published by the Banner of Truth in English, translated by John Aron, a native of Aberystwyth here. All right.

So this Talsarn that I go through sets bells ringing, right, about the other Talsarn and the John Jones who came from there and who was a key figure, not always to be recommended, but still a key figure in the development of Christianity in Wales in the first half of the 19th century. Right. I've got to leave this shortcut now.

I get back onto the main road, if you can, if you can call it the main road, and down into Lampeter. But of course, Lampeter is really a Llan, all right? Lampeter is a corruption of Llanbeddwr Pont Steffan, so there's a Llan there as well. So I go through Lampeter and the suburb of Llan, and then off again.

As I go about five or six miles out from Lampeter, on the left-hand side there's a chapel there at a place called Farmers, right, where Timothy Richard, one of the most famous Welsh missionaries ever, went to China in the second half of the 19th century. That's where he came from. Problems with his theology, right? It wasn't as good as it might have been.

There was another Welsh missionary called Griffith John from Swansea who went to China at more or less the same time, and he was a good man. Yes, he was. But still, you can't help but admire Timothy Richard's pioneering spirit leaving, like John Davis, leaving this remote part of rural West Wales to go to China and to find himself in the company of the leading figures of China, which perhaps affected his theology a little bit.

But still, it was an amazing thing for him to do, when you think of what happened to him when he got there. But then, just down the road, you get into Pimcote. What's Pimcote? Five saints.

Oh yes, not just one saint. We've got a plurality of elders here. There are five saints in this place, right? Okay.

Isn't that great? Five saints. They want to honour. Was it five saints who planted the church, or did they want to honour five saints? I don't know.

But the very name, five saints. Just after Pimcote, I turn off another shortcut. This is worse than the first one.

It is a shortcut, but the road is back. But just after I turn, I come to, again, a very small place called Creager Bar. Yes, yes, we have an organist here.

Yes, we do. What is Creager Bar? Where does it set more bells ringing? Creager Bar, among other things, but Creager Bar is the name of the tune to which, in English, people normally sing Vernon Hyams' hymn, I Saw a New Vision of Jesus. It's a majestic tune, isn't it? But in Welsh, it has rather different connotations.

It's the tune for the great funeral hymn, O Ffrunio Car Salem, which speaks of the joy and the peace that the believer has in heaven with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And it's a glorious tune to a glorious hymn. So, as I go through Creager Bar, I start singing.

I start singing. I don't know what people would think coming here if they saw me coming the other way. The only consolation is the road is so bad that they're probably concentrating on the road and can't see me or hear me singing.

By the time I finished that hymn in Welsh, I've arrived in Tallyllacha or Tally. Now, what's special about Tally? What's special about Tally? Some clever person here will say that in Tally is one of the very few pre-monastic abbeys in Wales. You knew that, didn't you? And if you look, it is quite striking.

It's in ruins now, but what remains is quite striking. But I don't really salute that. Tally is famous for something else.

As you go through the very small village, the way I'm going down to Bridgend, on the left-hand side, there's a little stone building, sometimes used to garage a car, I see as I pass. What was it? Anybody know? In days gone by. It was a smithy.

It was a smithy. And a man called Thomas Lewis was the blacksmith there. And as far as I know, Thomas Lewis only ever wrote one verse.

What a verse. Do you know, Myron Jones? Yes, you do. Yes, you do.

It's a verse that speaks of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a verse that's dripping with scriptural imagery and with heartfelt devotion. But it's also a hymn that takes its picture, as well as from scripture, takes its pictures from the life of the smith.

Only one verse speaks about the sweat, sweat as drops of blood. But something the smith of all people would know about, speaks about the nails. Again, something the smith would make.

Speaks about the plow making a furrow in the back of Jesus Christ. Yes, that is the imagery. But linking that then with the whipping of his back.

And of course, he would have made plows, amended plows and so on. Speaks about the heart melting. Well, working in a smithy like that, your heart would have melted.

Your body would have melted too. He takes this imagery and then applies it to what the Lord Jesus Christ experienced on the cross. It really is a remarkable verse.

Just this unknown smith working in that little stone building that you pass on the left-hand side. Anyway, I'm going to be late for my lecture, aren't I? On we go. There's a sign too.

Yes, which is another word for Jerusalem. Like with Nebo, the community takes its name from the chapel in the middle of the community there. Then I come down into Llandaulo.

Tylo lived the same time as Paddan. They were colleagues. Tylo established this church in Llandaulo.

Just on from Llandaulo, just over the bridge, there's a sign for Bethlehem. There is. I know a friend of mine lives in Bethlehem.

I think it's still true. It was true until very recently anyway, that at Christmas time, you could take your cards to the post office in Bethlehem and the postmaster would stamp them Bethlehem. Now this may have changed because the post office likes to reorganize itself quite often, doesn't it? But I think it's still true.

You can take your cards and he'll stamp them so that your friends and family can get their cards from Bethlehem. But I can't go to Bethlehem. I got other things to do.

I got a turn just after Llandaulo. And I go along another road now that takes me to Carmel. I've been to Nabal.

I've seen the signs to Salem and Bethlehem, but now it's Carmel. What happened in Carmel? Yes, Elijah and the prophets of Israel. So I sail through Carmel and you're thinking you almost see Elijah there.

And then down on the left hand side, I can see Penegros. What's Penegros famous for? The apostolics, the headquarters of the apostolics that came out of the 1904 revival. But then the sign says Penegros on the left, but on the right, it says Maisabont.

Maisabont, I'm now in the land of the mission halls, the famous mission hall in Maisabont. And then on into Crosshands. Well, Crosshands doesn't sound very romantic, does it? But something happened in Crosshands in the early 1950s.

People like Sylvan Jones, people like Ivion Evans, people like Gareth Davis, from that era were converted at that time. You wouldn't say there's a revival. Well, that's how you define revival.

You wouldn't say it wasn't a nationwide sweeping revolutionary revival, but the Holy Spirit worked at that time in that place. I get to Crosshands and a sigh of relief, I'm on the dual carriageway. So off we go.

Right, speed up a bit now. First place I get to on the dual carriageway is the start of the motorway. But I don't regard it as the start of the motorway.

I regard it as the end of the motorway. I think the M4 has greater significance, symbolic significance, than any other road in Britain. Where does the M4 begin? London.

London it begins. London, the city, the smoke, the center of all sophistication, the hub of the media and so on. It starts, where does it go? Where does it lead to? Pont Abraham, yes.

Doesn't that tell us something I find very, very precious? It's as if the road says, I'm fed up with London, I want to get out of London as soon as I can. I want to go to Pont Abraham. Have you ever thought of Pont Abraham? Pont, bridge, right? Abraham's bridge is Pont Abraham.

Pont, something useful, isn't it? But something symbolic as well, isn't it? And something symbolic from a Christian standpoint. The Lord Jesus Christ as the bridge, if you like, between us and God. And that's having all kinds of social implications as well for our Christian lives.

We need to be bridges and so on. I don't need to tell you this, do I? But not just any bridge, this is Abraham's bridge, Abraham's bridge. London impersonal, nobody knows anybody else.

But the road leads to Pont Abraham, a specific person, right? Abraham, who is this Abraham? Don't know. But you know who the biblical Abraham, Abraham was? A man of faith, a man who walked with gods, right? I like Pont Abraham. Yes, yes.

You can stop at the services, they probably know nothing about this and the services, but you can still stop there and see there's something, right? This is something precious. But I got to go. Cross over the River Lacha, right? The River Lacha comes out in the sea at Lacha, Kas Lachor.

Who came from Kas Lachor? Who came from Lacha? Evan Roberts, Evan Roberts, right? Go on, Swansea. Well, all the Christian associations you've got in Swansea and so on, I can't stop with them. Too many, too many, I can't, right? But I bypass Swansea on the motorway, go over the bridge, over the River Neath.

What's down in the bottom there? What's down in the bottom? Llanfawel in Welsh, Britain Ferry in English. Whose family came from Britain Ferry? You can go on. Matthew Henry is a remarkable man, but Philip Henry had a son.

You know his name? Matthew Henry. Yes, yes, yes. And you can't cross over the new, this fine new bridge over there, over the Neath Estuary and so on, without looking down into Swansea.

Without thanking God for raising up Philip Henry and Matthew Henry and all the influence of Matthew Henry throughout the world. Anyway, I still haven't arrived. Port Talbot, hang on, Port Talbot, Sandfields.

And I'm not thinking just of Mr. Arthur Murray here. I'm not thinking only of Mrs. Lynnae Thomas here, but I can just see the top of Bethlehem, Sandfields, where Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a minister. But it's a motorway, so I can't look too long at these things.

Eventually, I find myself in the college. I find myself, it's been a spiritual odyssey, isn't it? And where am I? Bridgend, Brinterion. I find that quite remarkable, because just down the road from the college at Brinterion is Llanuiddid Fawr.

Llanuiddid Fawr. Ilsted was another one of these saints, but he was a super saint, if you like. He was one of the first of them.

He established a theological school at which many of these saints, probably David himself, studied, gained theological instruction before they went their different ways to plant these churches the length and breadth of Wales. Have you ever been to Llanuiddid Fawr? You won't find it marked on a map, which is a terrible tragedy, because Ilsted, as one of the great heroes of Wales, without Ilsted's pioneering theological work, these saints would have been at a loss. But you won't find Llanuiddid Fawr on a map.

This is part of the tragedy, that when people from another country came to Llanuiddid Fawr, they couldn't pronounce it. And they turned Llanuiddid Fawr into Llantwit Major. Do you see it? They turned Ilsted into a twit.

A man of dignity and honour and so on. A man who deserves to be remembered with gratitude. But what is really remarkable about this? Where is Llanuiddid, I refuse to say Llantwit Major, right? Where is Llanuiddid Fawr? Where is it? It is a stone's throw, or rather, hang on, two stone's throw, two stone throws, two stone's throw, three stone, well, it is down the road from Bryn Tyron.

Ilsted was there round about the year 500, let's say. We are there now, 1500 years later, teaching more or less exactly the same things. I find that thrilling.

The providence of God, the hand of God, the gospel doesn't change. Isted knew and served and loved and honoured the Lord Jesus Christ and taught about him and the truths of his word and so on. And that is what we are trying to do, 1500 years later, just up the road.

Isn't it remarkable? Anyway, that took a long, that is a long journey, isn't it? Wherever you go in Wales, wherever, I could have gone a different way altogether, all right? Wherever you go, there are these links, somehow or other, some way or other, with what God has done, either in place names or with people who lived here or were converted there or whatever. You can't, you're surrounded, the very place names so often tell us, either the Llans or places like Pimsaint or whatever, or Nebo, Carmel, Salem, Bethlehem, they tell us something about the influence of Christianity on this land. Very briefly, something else, the literature of Wales, the literature of Wales.

Very interesting, back in the 6th century, we have the first examples of literature in Welsh. We have the present day geographical boundaries of Wales, political boundaries of Wales, being more or less formed, you know, a bit rough, but yes, yes, you can see Wales as a recognisable entity. That was exactly the time when all these saints were planting these churches up and down the land.

It was a time of revival, and these things come together. From the very earliest literature in Welsh, up until the 20th century, every single person writing in the Welsh language would have considered himself, herself, to be a Christian. I have to say, they weren't necessarily Christians, but they would have considered themselves to be Christians.

Dafydd ap Gwilym, a native of this area, he used to go regularly to Llanberdan church. Why did he go to Llanberdan church? Anybody know? To see the girls. Hang on, is this being taped? Yes, well, I have a feeling that, and I'm not altogether happy, well, it might be true that some people come to this conference in order to see the... You didn't hear that, you didn't hear that, all right? In one of his poems, he says, my face towards maiden fine, my back to pure Lord divine.

But he's there, he's in Llanberdan church, and although you wouldn't say that Dafydd ap Gwilym, perhaps, well, certainly one of the greatest poets in Europe during the Middle Ages, you wouldn't say Dafydd ap Gwilym was an orthodox Christian. You wouldn't say that there'd be an announcement on Friday, perhaps, that the speaker at next year's annual conference of the evangelical movement of Wales will be Dafydd ap Gwilym. No, you wouldn't do that.

And yet, in his poetry, he's obviously aware of the reality of God, and he's also aware of the failings, the abuses, so evident in the Catholic church at that time. And you also find quite remarkable descriptions of Christ's sufferings on the cross. And so it goes on up until the 20th century.

Now, 20th century, it changes. You begin to get the liberals, and the doubters, and then the atheists. So 20th century Welsh literature is a different kettle of fish altogether.

Although there are still many, many people writing in Welsh who are influenced by Christianity, Christian themes, certainly Christian vocabulary, even today. But it is a privilege to study Welsh literature. You can study it in the college here.

Over the last 20 years, there have been two evangelical Christians who've been professors of Welsh in the university here. I can hardly think of a greater privilege in academic terms than studying Welsh literature under their guidance. Because wherever you turn in Welsh literature, there are biblical themes.

I said they may not be always be discussed from an evangelical standpoint, but they are there. You can't avoid them. They hit you.

Anyway, there are many other things I could mention, of course, as regards this influence. Buildings, statues, monuments, things like that. The way in which the Bible has influenced the Welsh language, our present-day vocabulary.

I suppose if you were to have a top 10 of greatest Welsh people ever, seven or eight of them would probably be Christians. If you were to ask me, what were the great periods in the history of Christianity in Wales, I'd have to say, well, that sixth century. It was a time of revival.

The very number, the sheer number of these llanau, something remarkable happened, didn't it? The length and breadth. It's not that they're concentrating in one area, but they're being founded, being planted all over the place. And then the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, another golden age that we associate with Methodism.

But of course, Methodism spilled over, overflowed among the Baptists and the Congregationalists and even into the established, well, the first Methodists were Anglicans and remained Anglicans for many years. So Methodism affected the other denominations as well. These were golden ages.

And if you were to ask me, was there anything special about these golden ages, I'd have to say two things. One would be grace. Grace.

And I say that because one of the things that the age of the saints, right back in the sixth century, that that stood for was, can you take it at this time of the afternoon? Anti-Pelagianism. Pelagius, some say, may have been Welsh. He was certainly British.

And British in that he lived first half of the fifth century. In that period, it wouldn't have included just the people living in Wales, but it would have included the people from whom the Welsh were ultimately descended. So he was British and may well have been Welsh, although not necessarily living in Wales.

A lot of debate about this. But Pelagius taught essentially, there is no such thing as original sin. Our nature is not infected by sin.

And really, all we need to do is live as well as we can and ask Jesus Christ for a bit of a leg up, you know, to help us to be what we should be. And he was opposed, of course, by Augustine. And he was opposed in Wales.

A man was sent over from the continent called Germanus. The Welsh form is Garmon. If you ever have a son, call him Garmon.

Call him Garmon. Because Garmon was sent over to combat Pelagianism. And we know that David, Saint David, warned his fellow countrymen against the dangers of Pelagianism.

What we need is not a bit of help from Jesus Christ. What we need is grace. If we don't receive grace, we are done for.

So this was one of the essential messages of the age of the saints. And then, of course, of Methodism, as we know with Methodism and spilling over into the other denominations. This emphasis on what God has done for us in what we couldn't do for ourselves.

But the other emphasis then was on zeal. How these early saints traveled up and down Wales planting churches and how some of the other... Well, they went from Wales over to Cornwall and to Brittany and to Ireland. They went from Ireland to France and Italy and Iceland.

They traveled with the gospel. The grace of God had so taken hold of them that they wanted other people to know and to experience that grace too. So these two great themes, you have exactly the same in the end of the 18th century, the beginning of the 19th century.

That's why John Davis went to Tahiti. That's why David Jones went from... If I'd gone another way, I would have gone from just beyond Aberaeron. There's a tiny place called Knoyd.

Well, there's a monument to the missionaries who went from this tiny place to Madagascar and suffered all kinds of deprivations and persecutions and so on. And yet took the gospel to Madagascar. What drove them? Well, God had mercy upon them and they wanted to tell other people about this glorious Savior who had come to them.

So two great periods, right? The 6th century, the end of the 18th, early 19th, two great themes, grace and then this evangelistic zeal arising from the grace of God. You get it in Wales itself in the 18th century with Malach Howell-Harris, you know, dragged through the streets of Bala, shot at in Machynlleth. You get him preaching in Hay-on-Wye.

You've been to Hay-on-Wye? What's Hay-on-Wye famous for? Books, books and more books, right? Howell-Harris preaching in Hay-on-Wye, right? And the crowd throwing stones at him and his companion and his companions hit in the eye and his companion eventually dies, a martyr, the first Methodist martyr in Hay-on-Wye. But this was what was happening. I'm not arguing that this has been a glorious and uninterrupted story of triumphs and conquests and so on.

There have been weaknesses. Yes, there have. Christianity by its very nature acknowledges the reality of sin and of indwelling sin.

And you see indwelling sin, if you see it in your own life and you see it in other people now, you can see it in other people in history too. Yes, good men made serious mistakes. Good men sometimes disagreed and fell out among themselves.

There's been sometimes a lack of vision in applying the faith in practical terms. And there have been periods of great spiritual decline. Somebody did say when they heard I was going to give this little talk this afternoon, the story of Christianity in Wales from Pelagius to Rowan Williams.

Yes, there's been a dark side, still is a dark side. But that's what makes the present situation so poignant because God has blessed this land so much in days gone by. And when you look around you now, you feel, oh, it makes you want to go down to the Severn Bridge or any of the other means of entry into Wales with a can of spray paint, right? And, you know, Croeso i Gymru, welcome to Wales, and to spray underneath Ichabod.

The glory has departed. And yet, who knows? Isn't it quite remarkable in these days that we find that the Christian gospel is flourishing in other countries? And that some of these, we know people tell us that in some of these other countries, they are praying for Wales. And that some of these countries to which we've sent missionaries in days gone by, they are now beginning to send missionaries to us.

And who knows? Who knows? Will God answer some of those prayers? Will God honour some of those missionaries who are starting to come here to tell us the gospel? To tell us the gospel? We don't need. Oh, but we do need to be told the gospel, don't we? That's what's so desperately sad about the situation. Who knows whether God is not even at this present time, possibly, thinking of Stuart Elliot's challenge on Monday night, even though preparing some young Dewi, some young David, some young Williams Pantykelyn, some young Thomas Charles.

Who knows? One thing we do know, the light of the gospel has shone brilliantly here in Wales at times in days gone by. There have been other times when it has almost been extinguished. But without that light, all that remains is darkness.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. And it's in that light, and in that light alone, that there is any hope for true light here in Wales. Now then, any questions?

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