

Welsh disestablishment: 'A blessing in disguise'.

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The history of the protracted campaign to achieve Welsh disestablishment was to be characterised by a litany of broken pledges and frustrated attempts. It was also an exemplar of the 'democratic deficit' which has haunted Welsh politics. As Sir Henry Lewis¹ declared in 1914: 'The demand for disestablishment is a symptom of the times. It is the democracy that asks for it, not the Nonconformists. The demand is national, not denominational'.² The Welsh Church Act in 1914 represented the outcome of the final, desperate scramble to cross the legislative line, oozing political compromise and equivocation in its wake. Even then, it would not have taken place without the fortuitous occurrence of constitutional change created by the Parliament Act 1911. This removed the obstacle of veto by the House of Lords, but still allowed for statutory delay. Lord Rosebery, the prime minister, had warned a Liberal meeting in Cardiff in 1895 that the Welsh demand for disestablishment faced a harsh democratic reality, in that: 'it is hard for the representatives of the other 37 millions of population which are comprised in the United Kingdom to give first and the foremost place to a measure which affects only a million and a half'.³ But in case his audience were insufficiently disheartened by his homily, he added that there was: 'another and more permanent barrier which opposes itself to your wishes in respect to Welsh Disestablishment', being the intransigence of the House of Lords.⁴

The legislative delay which the Lords could invoke meant that the Welsh Church Bill was introduced to parliament on 23 April 1912, but it was not to be enacted until 18 September 1914. Even then, its operation was suspended, and it did not take effect until 31 March 1920, almost eight years after the proposed legislation had commenced its extraordinary parliamentary odyssey. Ultimately, it was to leave both sides with cause for dissatisfaction, suspicion, misunderstanding and lasting resentment. By 1937, it was possible to write that: 'Welsh Disestablishment seems to mean very little to Wales to-day', although readers were

¹ Sir Henry Lewis (1847-1927), prominent Calvinistic Methodist elder and temperance advocate in north Wales.

² Sir Henry Lewis, *Is Disestablishment Just? Letters on the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England in Wales* (Conwy: R. E. Jones, 1914), p.31.

³ *A Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Rosebery at Cardiff, on January 18th, 1895* (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1895), p.13.

⁴ *A Speech Delivered by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Rosebery at Cardiff*, p.15.

reminded that: ‘it was to the Wales of the ‘eighties and ‘nineties what Home Rule was to Ireland. It was “the Welsh Nationalist movement in religious dress”’.⁵ Those who sought to defend the Anglican church, interpreted disestablishment as an attempt to facilitate constitutional change within an entity which was integral to the English state: ‘it was one bulwark defending the rest of the power edifice’.⁶ The question of disestablishment had always been subject to the tensions between those who viewed it as purely a Welsh matter and the church defenders who barely recognised the concept of Welsh nationality. Bishop A. G. Edwards⁷ as to make his position abundantly clear when, in 1892, he asked: ‘What right have such a small section of this kingdom to demand separate legislation upon a question touching the very foundations of the English Constitution’.⁸ He also dismissed Wales on the basis that its population ‘is less than that of more than one English diocese and less than that of more than one English county’. By 1911, the bishop was to dismiss any claim that Wales was: ‘so distinct and homogenous in character as to justify its title to be regarded as a national entity, and to claim for itself differential treatment that would not be accorded to Cornwall or Yorkshire?’⁹ The bishop attached some significance to these English counties, as he had, in 1889, asked if: ‘Supposing that Yorkshire and Cornwall return members pledged to Disestablishment, is the Church forthwith to be disestablishment in Yorkshire and Cornwall’.¹⁰

Commentators have often exhibited a general failure to understand the complexities of the disestablishment campaign, its duration, and the precise nature of the outcome. Many simply weary at the longevity of the struggle and are tempted to concentrate on the final few years, overladen with preconceptions about the role of the leading Welsh secular politicians, including David Lloyd George, which are often erroneous. Uncertainty and trepidation about the terms of disestablishment, including the potential for substantive amendment or even repeal, were to result from the suspension of the implementation of the 1914 legislation. Such concerns proved well founded, as the arguments about disestablishment were to continue during the war years,

⁵ W. Hughes Jones, *Wales Drops the Pilots* (London: Foyle’s Welsh Co., 1937), p.59.

⁶ Kevin Manton, ‘Edwardian Conservatism and the Constitution: The Thought of Lord Hugh Cecil’, *Parliamentary History*, vol.34, pt.3 (2015), p.371.

⁷ Alfred George Edwards, (1848-1937): bishop of St. Asaph from 1889 to 1934 and archbishop of Wales from 1920 to 1934.

⁸ ‘St. Asaph Diocesan Conference’, *The Times*, 14 September 1892, p.4.

⁹ ‘Representative Church Council. Great Debate on the Disestablishment Question. The Bishop of St. Asaph’, *The Church Times*, 24 November 1911, p.693.

¹⁰ A. G. Edwards, *The Truth About the Church in Wales* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1889), p.18.

despite the political truce which had been declared by both the Liberal and Unionist parties. Winston Churchill, F. E. Smith, and William Crooks, on behalf of the Liberal, Unionist and Labour parties respectively, had ‘roused the enthusiasm of a great audience by the vigour of their appeals to the patriotism of the nation’. It was proclaimed that: ‘The other quarrels can wait. It will be time enough to settle them when the one supreme quarrel, the quarrel for life and death with the foreign enemy, has been fought out’.¹¹ Roy Jenkins had also observed that the House of Lords, after 1911, used its remaining powers so that matters such as disestablishment were ‘delayed until they could be submerged in the national unity of 1914’.¹² However the ‘quarrels’ surrounding disestablishment were not to wait and, as a result, the terms of the 1914 Act were not to survive the subsequent politicking. Amending legislation, in 1919, would both attenuate what had originally been included in the 1914 legislation and provided for the government to ‘re-endow’ the Welsh Anglican church to the sum of one million pounds. The leading church defenders had cause to be satisfied with the results of their rear-guard stratagems and astute political manoeuvrings.

*‘Here in Wales the Church has been compulsorily set free’.*¹³

Lord Bankes, a leading lay Anglican churchman who served as a judge on the Court of Appeal, expressed the opinion, in 1917, that disestablishment was ‘a blessing in disguise’, in terms of his hopes for the future of the Welsh church. However, there were many church people who would attribute a different interpretation, as they sought the *status quo ante* or a state which closely resembled the pre-1914 position. The Conservative *North Wales Chronicle* made its position explicit, when it described the purpose of the Church in Wales Convention, which met in Cardiff in October 1917, as making ‘the first formal efforts to deal with the problems created by the Welsh Church Act 1914’.¹⁴ The Convention consisted of one hundred representatives from each of the four Welsh dioceses and they were to consider ‘the creation of new legislative and administrative authorities’ that a disestablished Welsh church would demand. Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph, who, by virtue of his seniority, officiated as president of the Convention, considered that: ‘In the long history of the Church in Wales nothing quite parallel to and

¹¹ ‘A Truce to Controversy’, *The Times*, 12 September 1914, p.9.

¹² Roy Jenkins, *Mr. Balfour’s Poodle* (London: Collins, 1954), p.270.

¹³ *The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales, held at Cardiff, October 2-5, 1917*, p.26.

¹⁴ ‘Gathering of Welsh Churchmen at Cardiff. Review of Welsh Church Act’, *The North Wales Chronicle*, 5 October 1917, p.2.

certainly nothing more momentous than this Convention has occurred'.¹⁵ Bishop Edwards had been the prelate at St. Asaph since 1889 and he had garnered a high profile as the staunchest of church defenders, one who had long been identified as 'a most deadly controversialist in the cause of the Establishment'.¹⁶ In a book, written in 1912, his declared objective was 'to ascertain the true facts about some of the leading events in the history of the Church in Wales'.¹⁷ Although the bishop stressed that the book was not produced for 'controversial purposes', it was laced with evidence of its true intent, which was to buttress church defence at a critical juncture. This was amply demonstrated by such questions as: 'How far has Parliament the right to rend or mutilate this Church which has come down the centuries woven without seam throughout its whole structure?'¹⁸

In 1917, Bishop Edwards was to regale the assembled church people with 'a modest recital of essential facts', in which he reminded them that many regarded the Welsh Church Act 1914 as 'unjust and its injustice as aggravated by the time and circumstances under which it was passed'.¹⁹ However, he acknowledged, judiciously, that: 'We could ignore the law, but the law would not ignore us, and resistance where it concerns only the person resisting is different to resistance where it involves the responsibilities of Trusteeship'.²⁰ But in case his comments could be portrayed as, uncharacteristically pusillanimous, he followed with the rhetorical question: 'if we could not ignore, how far could we safely recognize the requirements of the Act without forfeiting the hope of redress'. The possibility of repeal, or at least amelioration of the disendowment and dismemberment provisions, would also create a quandary for the Welsh church. It was required to ask itself whether it should utilise the apparently limited time available, before disestablishment took effect, to establish the organisation of the new church, or would such action be perceived as an acceptance that disestablishment was a *fait accompli*.

Any anxiety that the 1917 Convention was, in part, a sham and that the church was simply marking time whilst it sought to achieve repeal or amendment, was to be dismissed by W.

¹⁵ *The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales, held at Cardiff*, p.7.

¹⁶ 'Welsh Members Delighted with the Quarrel', the *Western Mail*, 8 July 1893, p.5.

¹⁷ A. G. Edwards, bishop of St. Asaph, *Landmarks in the History of the Welsh Church* (London: John Murray, 1913), p. iii.

¹⁸ Bishop of St. Asaph, *Landmarks in the History of the Welsh Church*, p.252.

¹⁹ *The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales*, p.7.

²⁰ *The Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales*, p.8.

Llewelyn Williams, the barrister, ‘patriot-journalist’²¹, Liberal MP for Carmarthen District, and a major proponent of disestablishment. He opined that: ‘With the meeting of the Church Convention at Cardiff this month, the question of the Disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales may be regarded as finally settled’. He believed that ‘it would be too cynical a farce to hold the Convention, to set up the Representative Body, and to frame a Constitution for the emancipated Church, if Churchmen still refuse to accept as an accomplished fact the severance of Church and State’.²² On this occasion, he appeared strangely sanguine, as his frequent clashes with the church defenders would have led him to understand that many church people viewed the Convention as an evil to be endured, until a change of government would facilitate repeal. This ambivalence was confirmed by a resolution at the Convention which recorded that the ‘work of the Committee was provisional and in no way affected the Church’s resistance to the Disestablishment and Disendowment Act’.²³

Crucially, Llewelyn Williams was also aware of the numerous examples of duplicity and prevarication displayed by Welsh Liberal politicians, such as his friend Lloyd George, whom he was to later come to excoriate for his ‘apostacy’ and his ‘great betrayal’ over disestablishment.²⁴ In 1928, any Welsh readers of *The Church Times* might have been amused by a headline which asked: ‘Will Mr. Lloyd George Back Disestablishment?’²⁵ It was concerned with English disestablishment, and Lloyd George’s position in advance of the general election in 1929. Those who were still trying to understand how the terms of Welsh disestablishment had been so enfeebled need not have looked any further. The article suggested that: ‘The truth is that Disestablishment as a practical policy has not for many years appealed to the ex-Premier’. Indeed, it declared that as far as Welsh disestablishment was concerned: ‘In the end, after the formation of a Coalition Government, he got rid of the question by making concessions to the Disestablished Church’. With a nod to the transactional form of politics which came to dominate Lloyd George’s approach, the article observed that in 1928 Lloyd George appreciated the importance of disestablishment to English Nonconformists, but that their vote ‘cannot win’. Welsh Nonconformists might have empathised, as they recalled how

²¹ J. Arthur Price, ‘Llewelyn Williams’, *The Welsh Outlook*, vol.9, no.6 (June 1922), p.134.

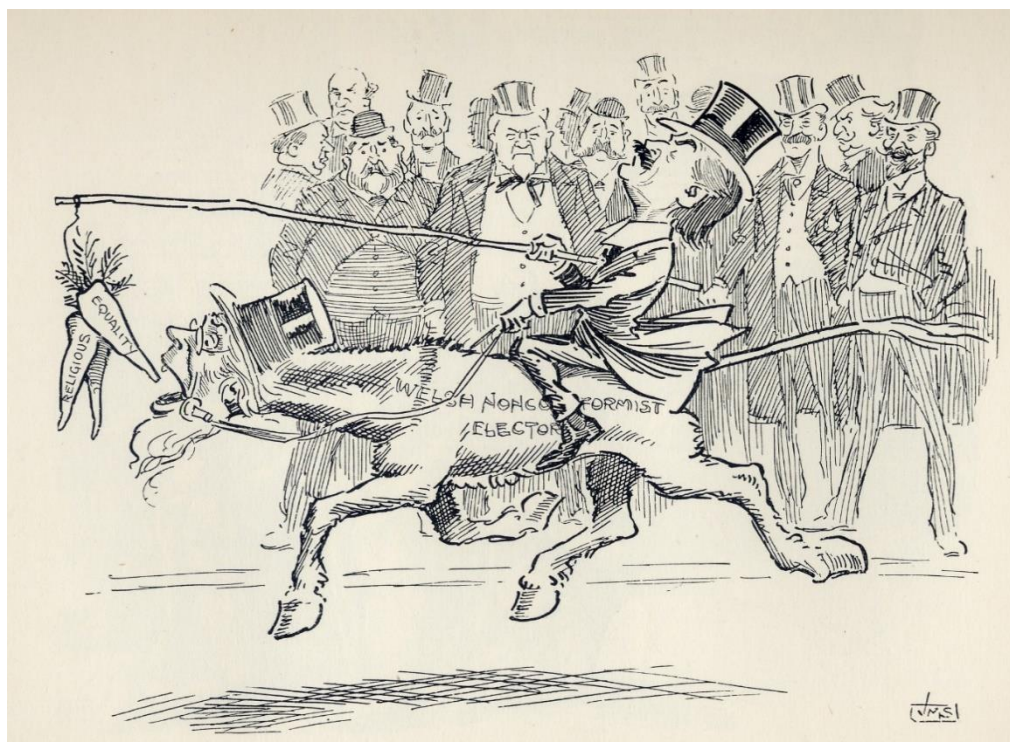
²² W. Llewelyn Williams, ‘Disendowment: The present position’, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.4, no.10 (October 1917), p.358.

²³ ‘Church Convention’, *The Brecon County Times*, 11 October 1917, p.3.

²⁴ W. Llewelyn Williams, ‘The Great Betrayal’, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.6, no.9 (Sept. 1919), p.227.

²⁵ ‘Protestants and the General Election. Will Mr. Lloyd George Back Disestablishment?’, *The Church Times*, 2 November 1928, p.521.

they had regularly been portrayed as gullible dupes, whose continuing electoral support for the Liberal party had been garnered by promises that were deferred, as this cartoon depicts.



‘Diddling the Donkey’, *Western Mail*, 14 March 1907.

Herbert Lewis, MP for Flint Boroughs, is shown to be saying: ‘Isn’t he clever? What Statesmanship!’ ‘The strapline to the cartoon notes that: ‘During the discussions arising out of the discontent of the Welsh Radicals at the postponement of Welsh Disestablishment, Mr Lloyd-George delivered several speeches calculated to temporarily satisfy the malcontents. His clever tactics disarmed the other Welsh MPs, who were being encouraged by their constituents to force the hands of the Government’.²⁶

The *Official Report* of the 1917 Convention of the Church in Wales encompasses a mixture of bureaucratic planning, overladen with evidence of continuing resentment, but it also provides an insight into how, with disestablishment seemingly inevitable, the church would ultimately respond to the prospect. A realisation that with effect from the date of disestablishment: ‘the Church of England, so far as it extends to and exists in Wales and Monmouthshire (in this Act referred to as the Church in Wales), shall cease to be established by law’.²⁷ It was a senior church layman who appeared to grasp some of the potential that this would create. Lord Justice

²⁶Cartoons, by “J. M. S.”, Subscription Copy, *Western Mail*, Cardiff, 1908, volume 1: featuring J. M. Staniforth’s cartoons from 27 August 1900 to 23 July 1908.

With thanks to *Cartooning the Road to War*, which forms part of the ‘Cartooning the First World War’ project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and based at University College Cork, where it is led by Professor Chris Williams, Head of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences.

²⁷ Section 1, Welsh Church Act, 1914: 4 & 5 Geo. 5. chapter 91.

Bankes²⁸ was intimately familiar with the nature of the soon to be disestablished church, as he had, together with Lord Sankey²⁹, drafted the new constitution. He was also, crucially, unencumbered by the legacy of the long-standing anti-disestablishment rhetoric associated with the Welsh prelates, who had long been calcified as the church defenders. Rather than a threat, Lord Bankes saw, in his ‘mind’s eye a truly national Church, a Church that will adapt itself to the needs and requirements of all classes’ and that ‘the church should seize an opportunity, with the creation of: ‘a Church whose sympathy, whose tolerance, whose enthusiasm will draw all men to her and enshrine herself permanently in the affections of the inhabitants of Wales’. As a layman, he championed the fact that the Welsh church had, despite itself, been placed in an advantageous position. This was particularly apposite when: ‘If we look over the border into England, we see the Church of England at this moment struggling to free herself from the hindrances and disadvantages arising from working under a system which came into existence under conditions very different from what they are today’.

He went on to recognise that: ‘Here in Wales the Church has been compulsorily set free’, but whilst he acknowledged that to some this ‘may seem to be an unmitigated evil’, he tended to believe that ‘it may seem to be a blessing in disguise’.³⁰ English commentators were to exhibit a marked reticence about Welsh disestablishment after 1920, and a level of wariness before it took place. Lord Bankes’ obituary in *The Times*, in 1947, provided a notable instance, as it made no reference to his significant efforts on behalf of the Welsh Anglican church.³¹ This inexplicable omission was made even more bizarre by the fact that the bishop of Exeter was to subsequently write to the newspaper in response to the obituary, and express the gratitude of a ‘whole generation of churchmen of the diocese of London’ for his ‘twenty years of service’.³² Eventually, perhaps out of belated embarrassment, David Prosser, the archbishop of Wales, wrote to ‘claim the opportunity of acknowledging, with profound gratitude, all that he did’ for the Church in Wales.³³

²⁸ Sir John Eldon Bankes, (1854-1946): He was unsuccessful as Unionist candidate for Flint in 1906, but in 1910 he was appointed a puisne judge and knighted. In 1915 he was promoted to the Court of Appeal and became a privy councillor.

²⁹ John Sankey, (1866-1948), Baron Sankey, 1929: Viscount Sankey of Moreton, 1932, appointed a judge of the High Court in 1914, and a Lord of Appeal in 1928. He became Lord Chancellor in 1929, in the second Labour Government.

³⁰ *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales*, p.26.

³¹ ‘Sir Eldon Bankes. A Former Lord Justice of Appeal’, *The Times*, 2 January 1947, p.6.

³² ‘Sir Eldon Bankes’, *The Times*, 4 January 1947, p.7.

³³ ‘Sir John Eldon Bankes’, *The Times*, 7 January 1947, p.7.

In his review of the rumours circulating prior to the meeting of the 1917 Convention, an experienced commentator, barrister J. Arthur Price,³⁴ was also to display optimism, when he discerned the seeds of a nationalist revival in the Welsh Church, following disestablishment. He observed that ‘the ablest minds among her clergy and laity are already turning from the dead past of Erastianism to the living future of Nationalism’.³⁵ Price was described by Frances Knight as: ‘an intriguing figure: a nationalist who maintained a faith in that when many around him abandoned it, and a churchman who vigorously worked for disestablishment when most of his fellow Anglicans were either doubtful or hostile’.³⁶ He was also, by dint of his experience with the Welsh church, a realist, and although he anticipated a ‘demand for a national Welsh Church’, he feared that ‘the timidity and the Anglicising prejudices of high dignitaries will prevent immediate action’.³⁷ He questioned the actions of Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph and Bishop John Owen of St. David’s and was puzzled about the creation of a Welsh archbishopric: ‘For twenty years these two prelates have been preaching and proclaiming the absolute identity of their Church in England and Wales and extolling the Canterbury connection’. Yet even though the influence of the two principal church defenders remained undiminished, Price retained a belief that: ‘the Disestablished Church is slowly drifting to a reconciliation with Welsh Nationalism, and it is possible that even its leaders may be affected by the feeling of the hour’.³⁸ That ‘reconciliation’ was not evident eighteen years later when, as will be described below, Frank Morgan, the hugely influential Welsh church layman,³⁹ explained why the disestablished Welsh church had not exercised many of her freedoms, including the perceived threat of nationalism.

One of the many paradoxes associated with Welsh disestablishment was that the commander in chief of the ‘losing’ side, Bishop Edwards, should be promoted to be primate of the very institution whose creation he had consistently and assiduously opposed. In 1912 he had exhorted those attending the St. Asaph Diocesan Conference that they should: ‘Set your faces

³⁴ John Arthur Price (1861 - 1942), barrister and journalist. A devout churchman and Anglo-Catholic, who was also an ardent Welsh nationalist.

³⁵ J. Arthur Price, ‘The awakening in the Welsh church’, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.4, no.10 (Oct. 1917), p.361.

³⁶ Frances Knight, ‘Welsh Nationalism and Anglo-Catholicism: The Politics and Religion of J. Arthur Price (1861-1942)’, Pope, R. (ed.), *Religion and National Identity. Wales and Scotland, c. 1700-2000* (Cardiff: UWP, 2001), p. 104.

³⁷ Price, ‘The awakening in the Welsh church’, *Welsh Outlook*, p.363.

³⁸ Price, ‘The awakening in the Welsh church’, p.362.

³⁹ Frank Morgan, former Fellow of Keble College, Oxford, and secretary of the Governing Body and the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, from 1920 to 1935. His role assisting the bishops of St. Asaph and particularly the bishop of St. David’s can be traced to 1906.

like a flint against the idea of allowing the Church to be degraded to the level of a new Welsh sect. We do not want any pinchbeck provinces or Archbishops in Wales'.⁴⁰ It was evident that eight years later, the bishop was prepared to accept what had previously been viewed as faux, albeit that he had been sedulous in negotiating the most propitious terms possible for disestablishment. With his election to the archiepiscopate, *The Times* announced that the 'Disestablishment Regime' had begun'.⁴¹ On the morning that the identity of the archbishop of Wales was announced, 'Cambrensis' wrote in *The Church Times* that: 'what is needed is that the Church should be at once fearlessly and wholeheartedly Nationalist'. He suggested that:

The future historian of the Welsh Church will probably be startled at the fact that the first Archbishop of the Welsh Church should have been Dr. Edwards of St. Asaph. If any man in the past has fought long, bravely, and consistently, for the continuance of the union between the Welsh and English Churches, that man is Dr. Edwards.⁴²

He compared, quite topically at the time, the strangeness of the new archbishop's position to that of Sir Edward Carson⁴³, the staunch Unionist leader, being elected president of an Irish Sinn Fein Republic. The writer criticized Bishop Edwards for linking the Welsh church to the Conservative party, and for using 'political arguments that would carry weight with the English voter'. He was, however, prepared to acknowledge that the bishop 'lacks neither courage nor wisdom' and that, despite his failure, his fight was a brave one, and his popularity in the Welsh Church is deserved'. 'Cambrensis' had probably already concluded that this appointment was an indication that the tenor and characteristics of the church had not changed. Such a sentiment would be reinforced by the Conservative, and consistently anti-disestablishment, *Western Mail*, which interpreted 'the election of Dr. Edwards to that exalted office' as a reflection of the fact that the Welsh church had simply been re-established. The newspaper considered that his appointment: 'has established the Church more firmly than ever in the position of head and centre of organised religion in the Principality and the chief available embodiment of national unity as well'.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ 'Religion and Party Politics. The Bishop of St. Asaph on the Crisis', *The Times*, 26 September 1913, p.2.

⁴¹ 'The First Welsh Archbishop. "Secret Election". Disestablishment Regime Begun', *The Times*, 8 April 1920, p.7.

⁴² "Cambrensis", 'The Chance for a Welsh Archbishop', *The Church Times*, 9 April 1920, p.371.

⁴³ Edward Carson, Baron Carson, (1854-1935), leader of the Irish Unionist Alliance and the Ulster Unionist Party between 1910 and 1921.

⁴⁴ 'The Archbishop', *Western Mail*, 23 June 1920, p.4.

The Church Times had taken the occasion of St. David's Day 1917 as an opportunity to explicate its thoughts on 'the present and the immediate future of the Welsh Church. For that Church, when the war is over, a new era will dawn. Her old political and legal status is gone forever'.⁴⁵ The newspaper posed the question: 'Can the Church win the soul of Welsh Nationalism?' Although it claimed that there had been 'no historical justification for the frequent taunt' of alien church, 'The Welsh Church for the last half-century has been in the difficult position of a National Church which has been forced to rely on the support of its co-religionists in another nation'. It acknowledged that the Welsh church 'was (and still is) in ecclesiastical law an integral part of the province of Canterbury, and that it was the duty of English Churchmen to their utmost to support their Welsh brethren'. However, it noted the conundrum that: 'the fact that the Welsh Church claimed to be the Church of St. David and Giraldus Cambrensis put it in an illogical position when, in the House of Commons, 'it relied on the votes of Kent and Mercia against those of Merioneth and Ceredigion'.

The fact that many senior churchmen still held antipathy to disestablishment was apparent from the enraged response from a priest who served as a Canon Residentiary of St. David's Cathedral. The Canon was 'genuinely sorry that *The Church Times* should have sided with the enemy, and he warned how 'disestablishment may open up a way to new nationalism'.⁴⁶ He was also at pains to point out that 'that the Welsh Church was forced through no fault of its own to rely on the support of its co-religionists in another nation'. He argued that 'if those co-religionists in England had put their Church before their politics their older Sister in Wales would not have been so disgracefully treated'. Five years later, *The Church Times* was again to make a startling admission when, just two years after disestablishment, it stated that: 'In the light of accomplished facts, we can now see that for more than a hundred years before 1914 Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment were, in the normal course of events, inevitable'.⁴⁷ There was no apparent chagrin in making this statement, although the newspaper, appeared to acknowledge the adverse effects of the prolonged and embittered campaign, when it absolved the church defenders by reporting that: 'No one can blame Welsh Churchmen for refusing to surrender, until further resistance was impossible', whilst suggesting that the Welsh Church's 'close relations with the Tory party sealed its fate'. In 1926, on the death of Bishop John Owen,

⁴⁵ 'Welsh Nationalism', *The Church Times*, 2 March 1917, pp.194-195.

⁴⁶ Letter from the Rev. Canon Williams, 'The "Church Times" and Welsh nationalism', *Y Llan*, 14 April 1917, p.6.

⁴⁷ 'The Strength of the Welsh Church', *The Church Times*, 21 April 1922, p.408.

an editorial in *The Church Times* made a further surprising confession, when it stated that: 'We had grave doubts at the time whether Establishment, apart from the safety of the Church fabrics and endowments, was worth preservation' and added that church defence was 'a greater hindrance than an aid to the Church's work'.⁴⁸ In 2013, however, in the 150th anniversary special edition, *The Church Times* ignored such earlier assessments of the Welsh church. Perhaps with a tactful awareness that English disestablishment was a recurring topic of debate, simply presented itself as unambiguously anti-disestablishment, noting that in May 1914 it had 'beat its breast' and had claimed that the 'whole of the Church of England must come to the rescue of the despoiled churches'.⁴⁹

Ecclesiastical armistice?

Writing in 1918, Dr J. Vyrnwy Morgan advised his readers that: 'We are participants in, or spectators of, two dramas of the great world war, and of the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales'. It would perhaps surprise modern readers to read of a contemporary observer who directly linked an almost forgotten event such as Welsh disestablishment, with the 'War to End All Wars', to quote President Woodrow Wilson. Vyrnwy Morgan considered that: 'Many years must elapse before the full effect of the former can be measured, and the Church as yet stands only on the edge of the consequences of the latter'.⁵⁰ The significance attributed to the church 'drama' would have been shared by many, including Lord Robert Cecil⁵¹ who believed that disestablishment, when 'conjoined' with disendowment, 'must be described as an outrage on every sentiment of justice and religion'.⁵² It was apparent that, whilst hostilities ended at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918, the church defenders did not lay down their arms and in fact recognised that the political uncertainties could be exploited. Even before the Armistice, in October 1918, the bishop of St. Asaph called upon the prime minister and Andrew Bonar Law, the Conservative leader, with the clear objective of using the pending general election and the tensions of a coalition government to barter with the politicians. Five days

⁴⁸ 'The Future of the Welsh Church', *The Church Times*, 12 November 1926, p.556.

⁴⁹ 'When we gave a piece of our mind', *The Church Times*, 8 February 2013, p.5.

⁵⁰ Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Church in Wales in the Light of History. A Historical and Philosophical Study* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1918), p.1.

⁵¹ Robert Cecil, (later Viscount Cecil of Chelwood), (1864-1958), the sixth child of the Marquess of Salisbury, who served as Conservative prime minister on three occasions. The campaign to impede Welsh disestablishment attracted the constant support of Conservative illuminati such as brothers, Hugh and Robert Cecil, and Lord Selbourne, their brother-in-law.

⁵² Preface to W. G. A. Ormsby Gore, *Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment*, London: West Strand Publishing, 1912, pp.10-11.

before the Armistice, on 6 November 1918, the bishop's adept manoeuvrings proved successful and, at a meeting with Bonar Law, accompanied by the bishop of St. David's, the terms of a declaration, that would be delivered by the prime minister, David Lloyd George, were agreed. This would acknowledge that the Welsh Church Act was on the statute book and that there was no desire, even on behalf of the Welsh church, to repeal the legislation. But the *quid pro quo* for the church's acknowledgement that it would not lobby for repeal, was that the prime minister recognised: 'that the long continuance of the war has created financial problems which must be taken into account'.⁵³ Bishop Edwards acknowledged that the bishop of St. David's 'and others had doubts about abandoning repeal' and the publication of the declaration on 19 November led Lord Robert Cecil to resign from the government. Cecil stated that whilst he did not seek or desire repeal, he objected to dismemberment, which 'appeared a most improper exercise of the authority of Parliament'. He also regretted 'with all my heart and soul, that it should have been thought right to take from religious purposes funds which were in fact being devoted to those purposes'.⁵⁴

The bishop of St. Asaph asserted that during the general election on 14 December 1918: 'Liberal candidates treated the Welsh Church Act with such delicate reserve that they had evidently discovered its unpopularity among the voters'.⁵⁵ Whereas this might have been understandable, in the immediate post-war period, the bishop had clearly demonstrated that he had no reservations about pressing his case, irrespective of the demands of the government at the end of the Great War. It is an indication of the change in the nature of the relationship between the bishops of St. Asaph and St. David's, that the version of events described by Eluned Owen, in her biography of her father, the bishop of St. David's, provided a different and more complex picture of these crucial discussions. She identified the bishop of St. Asaph as appearing less sanguine about events, whereas the bishop of St. David's 'pursued his own course'.⁵⁶ It is apparent that the actions of the bishop of St. David's were, in part, predicated on his deep, almost obsessive, distrust of, and antipathy towards David Lloyd George. Eluned Owen quoted her father as writing that: 'Our only hope of justice is that the Unionist party should convince George that they insist on justice to the Welsh Church – I do not mean Repeal – as a condition of supporting him'. The bishop had accurately identified the prime minister's

⁵³ A. G. Edwards, *The Archbishop of Wales, Memories* (London: John Murray, 1927), pp.282-283.

⁵⁴ 'Sanctity of Pledges. Lord R. Cecil on his resignation', *The Times*, 25 November 1918, p.12.

⁵⁵ Edwards, *Memories*, p.284.

⁵⁶ Eluned E. Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen* (Llandysul: Gomerian Press, 1961), p.377.

attitude to disestablishment: ‘To him the Welsh Church is simply one aspect of high politics, big or small, in precise proportion to its bearing on Unionist support.’⁵⁷ Welsh disestablishment was now viewed as a political counter and the nature of the horse-trading was dealt with succinctly by one of Bonar Law’s biographers. He noted that the terms of the letter agreed by Unionists and Liberals indicated acceptance of the 1914 Act, but ‘embraced the plea of the Welsh bishops that the impending penury of their Church deserved amelioration’. The majority of Unionists agreed with Bonar Law that: ‘while Welsh priests must not be driven out into the road to beg, the Church (like the three remaining Welsh Unionist MPs) would simply have to adjust’.⁵⁸ Clearly, not everybody could adjust to the outcome of the haggling and it was reported that the Hon. Alice Douglas Pennant⁵⁹ had resigned her membership of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, as a protest and the ‘folly of not waiting until the result of the general election was known before thinking of any compromise’.⁶⁰ The prime minister was presumably unperturbed by the dramatic posturing of a scion of Penrhyn Castle, with recent memories of the Penrhyn Lockouts.⁶¹ Lord Penrhyn, the owner of the Bethesda slate quarries, was, ‘a Conservative, a peer and landowner, thereby comprising, in his person a trinity as unholy as any which way imaginable to the Liberal mind’.⁶²

‘A touch of high comedy’.

It has been suggested that the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act 1919 and the ‘change of heart on marriage and burial all indicate that by the time disestablishment occurred much of the venom that had fuelled the debate in earlier decades had already disappeared’.⁶³ As will be explored, such a conclusion ignores the machinations that preceded the legislation and the fact that David Lloyd George was the ideal person to broker such an outcome as he still, ostensibly, wore the somewhat tattered tabard of a man who had fought for disestablishment. One of the key objectives of disestablishment was to place the Anglican church in Wales on an equal basis

⁵⁷ Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen*, p.374.

⁵⁸ R.J.Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (London: John Murray, 1999), p.279.

⁵⁹ Lady Alice Douglas Pennant, (1862-1939), second daughter of George Sholto Douglas, 2nd Baron Penrhyn; her gravestone, at Capel Curig, records that: ‘She faithfully defended the ancient church in Wales’.

⁶⁰ ‘Welsh Representative Body’, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser*, 2 May 1919, p.4.

⁶¹ Robert Pope, ‘Pilgrims Through a Barren Land. Nonconformists and Socialists in Wales 1906-1914’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series, Vol.7 (2001), p.151. In the dispute over union recognition and wage agreements 2,800 men were locked-out from 19 November 1900 to 14 November 1903, five days short of three years.

⁶² David Powell, ‘The New Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1886-1906’, *The Historical Journal*, vol.29, no.2 (1986), p.378.

⁶³ Thomas Glyn Watkin, *The Legal History of Wales* (Cardiff: UWP, 2012), p.182.

as other denominations and the 1919 legislation sought to amend the Welsh Church Act 1914 in favour of the church. Section 23 of the 1914 Act had sought to end marriage by banns, common licence, or special licence, as and when disestablishment took effect. That section was repealed by section 6 of the 1919 Act and the church therefore retained its privileged position. Section 3(2) of the 1919 Act provided for a sum of one million pounds to be paid to the Welsh Commissioners, which many interpreted as a form of re-endowment, or ‘a new endowment of the Church of England in Wales at the expense of the nation’.⁶⁴ *The Church Times* observed that the passage of the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill through parliament had ‘afforded more than one opportunity for a touch of high comedy’.⁶⁵ In particular, it highlighted the fact that the ‘Treasury is contributing a million sterling towards the cost of disendowing the Church’. Despite this extraordinary *volte face*, with its softening of the terms of the proposed form of disestablishment, the bishop of St. David’s felt that it was necessary to go to great lengths to elucidate the reason for his acceptance of the terms of the 1919 Act. He produced a sixty-two-page pamphlet which would suggest that he was sensitive to a high level of disquiet and potential criticism.⁶⁶ The question Bishop Owen posed was whether acceptance of the 1919 Act ‘was a base barter of religious principles for either a real or imaginary pecuniary advantage’ or was it ‘a sincere endeavour to place religious principles in their right perspective’.⁶⁷ The bishop had been only too aware that there were diehards who would not be convinced by his arguments. This included Dr G. N. W. Thomas, a prominent Nonconformist’, who been instrumental in the development of a protest against disendowment in 1914 and therefore an extremely useful ally. His value as a campaigner against disestablishment and disendowment being enhance by the fact that he was a Congregationalist minister.⁶⁸ He was lionized by the Conservative *North Wales Chronicle*, for his widely publicized correspondence with the prime minister, on behalf of the South Wales Protest Committee, in which he argued the case that large numbers of Nonconformists were against disendowment.⁶⁹ The fact that Dr Thomas was still adamant to resist disendowment, despite the bishop of St. David’s acceptance, was an embarrassment. The bishop, who had spent decades as an opponent of disendowment. was now

⁶⁴ ‘Re-endowment by the State’, *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 15 April 1919, p.2.

⁶⁵ ‘The Welsh Church Act’, *The Church Times*, 22 August 1919, p.167.

⁶⁶ ‘Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act 1919. Why it was accepted’, *Y Llan*, 14 November 1919, p.15.

⁶⁷ The Bishop of St. David’s, ‘The Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act. Why it was accepted. Part II’, *Y Llan*, 21 November 1919, p.15.

⁶⁸ ‘The Nonconformist Protest’, *The Brecon County Times*, 19 March 1914, p.5.

⁶⁹ ‘Welsh Disendowment. St. Asaph and Bangor Nonconformist Protests’, *The North Wales Chronicle*, 24 April 1914, p.5.

faced with a Nonconformist who, after reading the bishop's pamphlet, claimed that his 'view is that there is only one thing to do with evil – fight it' and he was intent on the formation of a society to repeal disendowment, with the earl of Plymouth and Viscount Tredegar as patrons.⁷⁰ The bishop of St. David's was probably more vexed in that traditional allies, Lord Hugh Cecil and Lord Robert Cecil, were also to oppose the intended legislation. It was possible for the bishop to construct part of his defence on the fact that the government had been presented with 'a strong memorial signed by a large number of our steadfast friends in the House of Commons'. But the bishop added that he was 'sorry to say' that it did not represent 'the full strength of the Unionist majority'.⁷¹ The bishop would have been particularly displeased by the suggestion that the church had suffered because of the legislation and it was apparent that the Cecil brothers had been 'furious with St. Asaph (Bishop Edwards) because he accepted the Bill without consulting them'.⁷² In fact, Bishop Owen was indignant because he prided himself upon the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act 1919, which he argued 'is a huge hanky-panky job after George's best style and much, much better than it looks'.⁷³

Lloyd George was astute enough to avoid jeopardising the continuing endorsement of his traditional supporters and it was reported that: 'Representatives of all the Welsh Nonconformist denominations lunched with the Premier, on Thursday, to discuss the position of the Welsh Church under the Disestablishment Act'.⁷⁴ He reassured those present, as 'a starting point that the Welsh Act is to remain intact, but that the question was how much should be conceded to the Welsh County Councils to cover their losses and to the Welsh Church to cover theirs, if any'. It was apparent that Lloyd George had again accomplished his perennial trick of persuading the Welsh delegates that their concerns were being addressed. In return, they demonstrated their magnanimity by stating that they 'were not disposed to be ungenerous to the Church, provided a final settlement was effected, and the matter was adjourned for an actuarial report, which will be used as the basis of a final settlement'. The fact that a grant of one million pounds was reported, shortly after the prime minister's lunch, would suggest that reference to 'the actuarial report' was a device to forestall any suggestion that the payment was

⁷⁰ 'Welsh Church Act', *Y Llan*, 21 November 1919, p.17.

⁷¹ 'Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act. Why it was accepted by the Bishop of St. David's (II)', *Y Llan*, 21 November 1919, p.15.

⁷² Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen*, p.420.

⁷³ Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen*, p.420.

⁷⁴ 'The Premier and the Welsh Church', *Llangollen Advertiser Denbighshire Merionethshire and North Wales Journal*, 25 July 1919, p.8.

a form of ‘re-endowment’ and a political device to maintain political power, so far removed from the original intentions:

In connection with the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill which is down for second reading in the House of Commons on Wednesday, a grant of £1,000,000 is proposed. A White Paper, issued on Tuesday night, explains that the object of this grant is to enable the Welsh Commissioners to meet their obligations in respect of the Commutation of its existing life interests.⁷⁵

It is helpful to understand how the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act was viewed by the church at a local level. At a meeting of the Wrexham Deanery Association, Archdeacon Fletcher appeared unmoved by the current situation, albeit with an almost Pavlovian response that ‘the alienation of the Welsh Church's ancient endowments was nothing else than sacrilege’, but at least they now ‘knew the worst’. He was more exercised by his conviction that, at the next election, a Labour government would be elected and ‘that one of the first measures they would bring forward would be the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in England and a measure of a very drastic character, too’.⁷⁶ Although one of the laymen in attendance was keen to dispel any suggestion that the Act: ‘embodied a bargain between Mr Lloyd George and Mr Bonar Law, and that the Church secured better terms because of the support given to the Coalition Government’. He preferred to attribute the ‘advantages’ to the lapse of time and ‘certain economic effects’. Canon Davies, the vicar of Wrexham, appeared more gracious and said that he was thankful for many things in the Act and, vitally, to be able to have marriages ‘conducted in the same old way in their churches’. Arguably, this was for many clerics a crucial ‘establishment’ characteristic, as it would persuade church goers that the Welsh disestablished Anglican church carried on as before. The legislation which had ‘threatened to de-church the Welsh Church by disestablishing it not only failed to turn it into a denomination; it was not even fully effective in disestablishing it at the level of popular perception and customary practice’.⁷⁷ *The Llandaff Diocesan Magazine* quietly identified another potential benefit that the disestablished church could grasp. After describing the ‘scandalous stipends’ which were paid to ‘most of our clergy’, it stated that they should receive ‘at least £200 pa’ and, in terms of how this could be achieved, it noted that: ‘Now we are free to do what we like there can be

⁷⁵ ‘£1,000,000 for the Welsh Church’, *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 6 August 1919, p.1.

⁷⁶ ‘Welsh Church Endowments. Archdeacon Fletcher’s Forecast’, *The North Wales Chronicle*, 28 November 1919, p.5.

⁷⁷ C. Harris and R. Startup, *The Church in Wales. The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (Cardiff: UWP, 1999), p.7.

no excuse for retaining so many large rectories and vicarages in parishes where the stipends are wholly inadequate to maintain them'.⁷⁸

When he moved that the bill be read for the second time, on 6 August 1919, the home secretary, Edward Shortt,⁷⁹ began by stating that the: 'title of this Bill may, perhaps, recall to Members the old and somewhat belated controversies of the past, but I hope that the Bill will remove once and for all those old struggles and differences'.⁸⁰ It was difficult to gauge from the home secretary's comments that the 'old struggles and differences' had in fact vexed the House of Commons just four years earlier and that they still held the potential for significant political upset. A desire to present disestablishment as a 'belated controversy of the past' was convenient politically, but many would recall 'Mr. Lloyd George's Pledge to Wales', as *The Times* captioned its reportage of the major demonstration held in Swansea in May 1912.⁸¹ Lloyd George's riposte to a suggestion that the church should be treated generously had been that: 'If the property belongs to the nation, or if it was given for the benefit of the Welsh people, it is theirs, and we cannot give away the property of a nation in order to obtain a meretricious credit for generosity'. In his peroration to the many thousands who had gathered at Swansea, Lloyd George declared: 'For Heaven's sake let us apply our principles fearlessly'. Clearly, by 1919 the time for exhortatory statements had passed and equivocation and political deal-making were in vogue. The *Welsh Outlook* proclaimed that it had no intention of pronouncing upon the 'merits of the financial solution' that was announced, although it pointedly stressed that at least some viewed it as 'an utter betrayal of Wales'.⁸² The essence of their argument being that Wales was ill-served by the Liberal members of parliament, whereas 'the Church party had mastered every detail of the controversy' and that 'the sacrifice of every national issue through neglect and ignorance cannot go on'.⁸³ The 1914 legislation, and all that led to it, was being ushered out of the door. The home secretary did attempt to 'satisfy the House' that, in 'the judgement of most people who examined the figures', the church was not fiscally disadvantaged, as many had assumed, and he went on to explain the reasons why. The passage

⁷⁸ 'Welsh Church (Temporalities) Act, 1919', *The Llandaff Diocesan Magazine*, vol. XI, no.3 (October 1919), pp.35-36.

⁷⁹ Edward Shortt, (1862-1935), Liberal MP for Newcastle upon Tyne 1910 to 1922. Home secretary from 1919 to 1922.

⁸⁰ Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill, *HC Deb. 6 August 1919*, vol.119, cc 459.

⁸¹ 'Disestablishment Demonstration. Mr. Lloyd George's Pledge to Wales', *The Times*, Wednesday, 29 May 1912, p.6.

⁸² 'Welsh M.P.s – Promises and Performances', *Welsh Outlook*, vol.6, no.9 (September 1919), p.224.

⁸³ 'Welsh M.P.s – Promises and Performances', p.225.

of two laws reduced the amount paid to the Welsh beneficiaries and increased the financial security of the Welsh Church after disestablishment.⁸⁴ First, in 1918, an increase in the price of grain made it necessary to cap tithe, and that cap limited the income from tithe but not the amount paid to the Welsh Church. Second, in 1919 the entire disendowment scheme was at risk of collapsing because of the 1918 legislation, and in addition to a subsidy of £1,000,000 from the government, the Welsh Church also gained other financial concessions that were detrimental to the Welsh Beneficiaries.⁸⁵ In a markedly different interpretation from that still proffered by the Welsh church, it is suggested that various archbishops of Wales have ‘successfully diverted attention from the fact that the Church was almost certainly better off financially after disestablishment than it had been before’.⁸⁶ On that basis, and in light of how the church retained many characteristics of its established status, then Welsh disestablishment was an event whose identifying characteristics had been so attenuated to such an event that it bore no resemblance to what had been originally envisaged fifty years earlier and those early campaigners would not have recognized the resulting disestablishment or disendowment.

Dismemberment.

It became apparent that one of the features of disestablishment, which was to cause alarm, at least among Welsh prelates, was that of dismemberment, the dreaded separation from the Province of Canterbury. Archbishop Edwards was to later admit that exclusion from the House of Lords, as stipulated by section 2(2) of the 1914 Welsh Church Act, was the ‘most conspicuous’ change, the ‘most inevitable’ and the ‘least important’.⁸⁷ Charles Green, the second archbishop of Wales, attributed an act of wise beneficence to the archbishop of Canterbury, in resolving the consequences of section 3(5) of the 1914 legislation, whereby: ‘As from the date of disestablishment the bishops and clergy of the Church in Wales shall cease to be members of or be represented in the Houses of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury’. It had been recognised that the Welsh dioceses would no longer be represented in the Convocation of Canterbury, and this created a ‘situation of extreme delicacy’, as the Church of England repudiated the right of the State to do this without the consent of the church. The

⁸⁴ Section 19(a) and (b), Welsh Church Act 1914 specified the distribution, by the Welsh Commissioners to the County Councils, ‘to any charitable or eleemosynary purpose of local or general utility, including the aiding of poor scholars’, the University of Wales and specified colleges, and the National Library of Wales.

⁸⁵ S. Peterson and I. McLean, ‘Of Wheat, The Church in Wales and the West Lothian Question’, *Welsh History Review*, vol.23, no.3 (June 2007), p.153.

⁸⁶ S. Peterson and I. McLean, ‘Of Wheat, The Church in Wales and the West Lothian Question’, p.173.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Memories*, p.328.

difficulty was resolved by the act of the archbishop of Canterbury, ‘proclaiming in full Synod of the Province of Canterbury that he had released the Welsh Bishops from their allegiance to the See of Canterbury, and that he counselled them to form a separate Province for Wales’.⁸⁸ It would have been possible for English and Welsh bishops and clergy to meet in voluntary assemblies, but Randall Davidson, the archbishop, suggested that it would be too complicated.⁸⁹ In his evidence to the *Select Committee of the House of Lords on Matters affecting the Church in Wales.*, the bishop of St. Asaph disputed the suggestion proffered by Reginald McKenna⁹⁰ that the Welsh church had been independent and declared that it was ‘without historical foundation’.⁹¹ He gave evidence that he could not recall a single instance where Anglicans, in his diocese, had expressed support for Wales to be a separate Province.⁹² The bishop also stated, ‘without hesitation’, that all Anglicans in his diocese, be they clergy or laity, were ‘unanimous against this dismemberment’.⁹³ The creation of the *Select Committee of the House of Lords* had been, potentially, an important initiative, but it has received little consideration due to the fact that its existence was curtailed due to the outbreak of war. Its importance was recognised by *The Times*.⁹⁴ It had been tasked to examine what might have appeared to be an arcane point, but one which could have led to a constitutional clash, at a time when the establishment was still smarting from the Parliament Act 1911. The Select Committee was asked to consider: ‘whether the constitution of Convocation of the English Church has ever been altered by Act of Parliament without the assent and against the protest of Convocation’.⁹⁵

The Select Committee was attempting to subvert two of the elements that would follow disestablishment, being disendowment and dismemberment which, at that juncture were causing the Church defenders more concern than disestablishment.⁹⁶ Bishop (later Archbishop)

⁸⁸ Archbishop C.A.H. Green, *The setting of the Constitution of the Church in Wales*, London, 1937, p.210.

⁸⁹ Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919, Chapter 76 (9 and 10 Geo 5).

⁹⁰ Reginald McKenna, (1863-1943), MP for North Monmouthshire from 1895 to 1918 and Home Secretary from 1911 to 1915, at which time he became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

⁹¹ The First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Matters Affecting the Church in Wales, August 1914, p.7.

⁹² The First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Matters Affecting the Church in Wales, para. 1977.

⁹³ The First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Matters Affecting the Church in Wales, para. 1980.

⁹⁴ ‘The New Erastianism’, *The Times*, 26 June 1914, p.9.

⁹⁵ First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Matters affecting the Church in Wales, London, 1914, order of reference, p. ii.

⁹⁶ ‘Welsh Church Bill. Nonconformist and Liberal Opposition’, *The Times*, 22 July 1914, p.6.

Edwards was to acknowledge that, following disestablishment, the Welsh church was ‘as independent as she was before Augustine came, or before the Norman Conqueror extorted from her reluctant submissions’.⁹⁷ Presumably such sentiments then became more acceptable, as he was now reconciled with the political outcome. He endeavoured to reinvent the disestablished Church in Wales as the means by which ‘the nation arose and thronging voices of approval came from far and wide’, and his enthronement ‘was an event without precedent in Wales’.⁹⁸ It might have surprised many readers that when the Archbishop Edwards attempted to estimate ‘the gains and losses’ of disestablishment in the final chapter of his reminiscences, he admitted ‘that disendowment, although naturally attracting public attention, was not the heaviest blow that befell the Church’.⁹⁹ This statement might have been viewed with some irony by those who would recall the bishop’s efforts to raise financial concerns throughout the campaign. Archbishop Glyn Simon¹⁰⁰, when describing the first fifty years of disestablishment and disendowment, reported that ‘the bishops were excluded from the House of Lords, but Archbishop Edwards could still be seen from time to time, sitting on the steps of the Lord Chancellor’s seat’.¹⁰¹ During one of his last speeches in the House of Lords, the then Bishop Edwards was to again suggest that it was ‘our brethren in England’ who had tired of matters and abandoned the Welsh church. Bishop Edwards would have thought back to the 1891 Rhyl Church Congress, over which he had presided as a young, recently appointed bishop. He had cajoled the archbishop of Canterbury into making an appearance at the congress, and subsequently he had often had reason to refer to the archbishop’s exhortation, which had served as a source of comfort: ‘I come from the steps of the chair of Augustine, your younger ally, to tell you that, by the Benediction of God, we will not quietly see you disinherited’.¹⁰² However, the archbishop’s ingratiating statement, that it was ‘truer, historically, to speak of the “Church of Wales in England” than the “Church of England in Wales” might have been met with scepticism. It conveniently ignored the question of how the Welsh church had been subsumed by the Convocation of Canterbury, as the image of the Welsh church as a conquered church would have shattered the image he was attempting to project. Glanmor Williams described the

⁹⁷ Edwards, *Memories*, p.320.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Memories*, p.321.

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Memories*, p.327.

¹⁰⁰ Archbishop Glyn Simon, (1903-1972), served as Bishop of Swansea and Brecon from 1953 to 1957, when he was translated to Llandaff. He served as Archbishop of Wales from 1968 to 1971.

¹⁰¹ Owain W. Jones, *Glyn Simon. His Life and Opinions* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1981), p.129.

¹⁰² Most Rev. E. W. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury, ‘The Church Revival in Wales’, *The Official Report of the Church Congress held at Rhyl, October 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1891*, C. Dunkley (ed.), (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1891), p.42.

‘process of subordination’ of Welsh bishops as beginning with Bishop Urban of Llandaff’s profession of obedience to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1107: ‘It was a shift pregnant with consequences for church and people, not incomparable in scope and magnitude with those later to be brought about by the Protestant Reformation and Methodist Revival’.¹⁰³ The archbishop’s pronouncement, in 1891, had provided reassurance at an uncertain time. Even as late as 1909, the bishop of St. David’s still considered that it was significant enough to remind churchmen of the ‘historic declaration’ by the late Archbishop Benson and reassured them that they still had the ‘best sympathy and support of Churchmen in England at the present time’.¹⁰⁴ Eluned Owen was keen to point out that her father, who was then dean of St. Asaph, had assisted the archbishop with parts of his speech.¹⁰⁵ Whether or not this ‘historic declaration’ owed something to John Owen’s assistance is possible.¹⁰⁶ However, by 1919, the archbishop’s declaration was indeed ‘historic’. It was therefore difficult for Bishop Edwards to maintain his composure and he ruefully suggested what the English bishops could say to the Welsh church’: ‘You have our best wishes, but we tell you frankly if you go away soon we shall not be sorry. The State, of course, has thrown you overboard, and it is a matter of satisfaction and thankfulness to us to see that you do not swim badly’.¹⁰⁷

Disendowment.

Much animus has derived from a failure to appreciate the true impact of the financial position in 1920, when generous helpings of subterfuge have caused confusion about the true position, whereas even *The Church Times* acknowledged the uncomfortable fact that, as result of the First World War, the Church could be viewed as a ‘war-profiteer’.¹⁰⁸ Writing in October 1917, W. Llewelyn Williams believed that: ‘the Welsh people have behaved with singular magnanimity in not demanding that the financial provisions of the Welsh Church Act should be re-considered’ and that the ‘fighting bishops’ were taking advantage of those ‘generous instincts’.¹⁰⁹ He also believed that the church’s financial position had been enhanced by the ‘accident of War’ and he made the mordant comment that: ‘Whoever has suffered by the War,

¹⁰³ Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh and their Religion* (Cardiff: UWP, 1991), p.16.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Bishop of St. David’s and the Church’, *The Pembrokeshire Herald*, 29 January 1909, p.4.

¹⁰⁵ Owen, *The Early Life of Bishop Owen*, p.118.

¹⁰⁶ Owen, *The Early Life of Bishop Owen*, p.119.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill’, *HL Deb.*, 14 August 1919, vol. 36, cc 919.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The Welsh Church Act’, *The Church Times*, 22 August 1919, p.167.

¹⁰⁹ W. Llewelyn Williams, ‘Disendowment: The present position’, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.4, no.10 (October 1917), p.358.

it is surely not the Church of England in Wales'. In a later observation, he suggested that considering the Church's continuing protestations about the financial settlement, that perhaps the whole matter should be reopened, so that 'the Church should not make a profit out of the War'.¹¹⁰

As would have been anticipated, in the atmosphere of 'tit for tat', Llewelyn Williams's pronouncements were certain to galvanize a response from a 'fighting bishop' and, unsurprisingly, it was the bishop of St. David's who had taken up the challenge. Prior to his article in *Welsh Outlook*, Llewelyn Williams had written a letter to the editor of *The Times*, on 26 March 1917, in which he had attempted to raise an awareness of the church's financial state. This had been in direct response to a letter to the editor, dated 22 March 1917, under the signatures of Lords Salisbury, Plymouth, Selborne, Penrhyn and other prominent laymen, although it would not be unreasonable to discern the hand of the bishop of St. David's in the letter's drafting.¹¹¹ Whatever the case, the signatories to the letter expressed the 'desire to draw the attention of the public to the present position of the Church in Wales', but they were seeking sympathetic public support and not a forensic analysis of the church finances. According to Llewelyn Williams, 'the signatories had taken great care not to explain to the public how enormously the Church has benefitted by the war'.¹¹² In fact the letter had been concerned with a particularly vital, pressing issue for the Church, in that the Suspensory Act had postponed the implementation of the 1914 Act until a date not later than the conclusion of the war. Their case was that the preoccupation with the war and, in the absence of many churchmen at the Western Front, they could not make adequate preparations for this contingent date. The Salisbury letter had attempted to garner support by being astute enough to quote David Lloyd George, who had, in 1915, suggested a date of six months after the cessation of hostilities. Their only reference to finances was in relation to the fact that increased taxation, due to the war, predicated against the collection of funds 'to replace the endowments of the Church' and it was this point which galvanized Llewelyn Williams.

It was the financial impact of disendowment which was usually mooted as presenting the severest threat to the newly disestablished church. Yet, writing fifteen years after

¹¹⁰ Williams, 'Disendowment: The present position', pp.359-360.

¹¹¹ 'The Church in Wales', *The Times*, 22 March 1917, p.10.

¹¹² 'The Church in Wales', *The Times*, 26 March 1917, p.6.

disestablishment, the leading lay official, Frank Morgan, reported that: ‘it is almost impossible to estimate to what extent the finances of the Church in Wales suffered by Disendowment’.¹¹³ This can be contrasted with the comments of the second archbishop of Wales, C. A. H. Green, when he advised the Church Congress in 1935 that: ‘Summing up our experiences of Disendowment - we may admit that there is general satisfaction with the financial arrangements’.¹¹⁴ He went on to address the question of: ‘is all well?’ His answer was: ‘I believe it is’.¹¹⁵ Green’s biographer believed that the archbishop had: ‘realised that uncovenanted blessings had accrued to the Church in Wales through disestablishment in spite of the Church’s original opposition. Disestablishment enabled the Church in Wales to be more closely identified with the Welsh people and the Church’s position in Wales was strengthened’.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the ambiguous statements reflected a desire by churchmen not to gloat about the eventual financial outcome, or to cause those outside the church from enquiring too closely into the arrangements.¹¹⁷ In 1919, Frank Morgan had demonstrated that it would not have been in the Church’s interests to be entirely transparent about the impact of disendowment, when he wrote that: ‘it was urgently important not to let Welsh Nonconformists get the idea that the Church had not suffered by Disendowment. I am absolutely clear that we want £1,000,000 new money but do not care much on what ground we put the claim’.¹¹⁸ Frank Morgan was the secretary of the Governing Body and the Representative Body of the Church in Wales from 1920 to 1935 and it was noted that he ‘was for nearly 30 years one of the most active laymen in the Church of Wales’, and ‘one of the chief artificers in building up its present constitution’.¹¹⁹ It appeared that there was also an intention to keep the church people themselves in ignorance, as Frank Morgan was to write to Bishop Owen of St. David’s in 1922 that: ‘I send you a copy of my figures which must be regarded as absolutely confidential. I do not want them known as it would only lead to reckless spending’.¹²⁰

¹¹³ *Church & State. Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on the Relations between Church and State*, vol. 2, Evidence of Witnesses (London, 1935), p.1., p.141.

¹¹⁴ C.A.H. Green, ‘Disestablishment and Disendowment in Wales’, *Address of the Lord Archbishop of Wales, at the Church Congress, Bournemouth, 10 October 1935*, p.15.

¹¹⁵ C.A.H. Green, ‘Disestablishment and Disendowment in Wales’, p.19.

¹¹⁶ Edwards, *Archbishop Green. His Life and Opinions*, p. 92.

¹¹⁷ Lord Crickhowell, ‘The Conservative Party and Wales, 1888-1997’, revised and expanded text of the 20th Political Archive annual lecture, *National Library of Wales*, 3 November 2006.

¹¹⁸ Frank Morgan to Bishop Owen, 23 September 1919, (N.L.W, Bishop John Owen papers, 12/6).

¹¹⁹ H.V. “Mr. Frank Morgan”, *The Times*, 31 December 1935, p.6.

¹²⁰ Morgan to Owen, 30 March 1922, N.L.W Bishop John Owen, letters from Frank Morgan, 12/6.

The fate, or the financial interests, of the Welsh Church held little interest for the English church and that acidulous observer, the Reverend Hartwell Jones, recalled an incident when he was asked by an English archdeacon, ‘what was the real truth about this Welsh Church?’ He suggested that the archdeacon had seemed neither to understand, ‘or was even interested’.¹²¹ Writing to the Marquess of Salisbury, in August 1919, Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote that he was ‘most thankful’ that the ‘episode is closed’ and, whilst stating that he held ‘no special brief for the Welsh bishops’. It was clear that he now felt able to observe the outcome of ‘the change in Wales’, with ‘no small anxiety’, but more in terms of a mild curiosity in terms of the outcome of somebody else’s experiment.¹²² The archbishop of Canterbury’s desire to extricate the Church of England from what appeared to be a the prolonged controversy, was further confirmed by the fact that he had, within 24 hours, responded, in the negative, to the bishop of St. Asaph’s request for guidance upon whether it was possible for the Welsh Church to be included in the Convocation of Canterbury.¹²³ It is apparent that the archbishop was concerned about the possibility of confusion, or even chaos, if consideration had been given to Bishop Edwards’s request. The archbishop of Canterbury had been obliged to shield the status of the Church of England, at a particularly challenging time, which witnessed an increase in radical politics during the so-called ‘Edwardian Crisis’, and he would have been relieved to stem any potential ‘mischievous exacerbation of Welsh opinion with consequent damage to the cause of religion’.¹²⁴

A celebration of ‘defeat’?

Writing on the verge of disestablishment, Frank Morgan felt that it was apposite to utilize military metaphors when he sought to describe what the Welsh church thought of the impending situation. He acknowledged that it was not ‘an easy question to answer’ and, after confirming that they were facing ‘the future with a quiet optimism’, he adopted the bellicose imagery of an army steeled in the heat of battle, although he diplomatically emphasised that the army’s defeat was no reflection upon their ‘trusted leaders’: ‘They have been defeated, but are proud of having defended so hotly attacked a position so long and so stoutly and, like other

¹²¹ The Reverend G. Hartwell Jones, *A Celt Looks at the World* (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1946), ed. By Wyn Griffiths, p.56.

¹²² G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, volume 1* (Oxford University Press, 1935), p.987.

¹²³ Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury*, pp.987-989.

¹²⁴ M. Hughes, ‘Archbishop Davidson, the “Edwardian Crisis,” and the Defence of the National Church’, *Journal of Church and State*, vol.57, no.2 (October 2013), pp.218-220.

comrades in arms, they have learnt to trust one another and to follow trusted leaders'.¹²⁵ But it was Morgan's next observation which might have caused objective observers to gasp. He declared that they could now 'turn with fresh energy to the Church's real fight against the forces of religious indifference, of materialism and of anarchic selfishness'. If the church had been aware of the 'real' spiritual struggle in Wales, then why had it continued to battle for unconditional surrender. As *The Carmarthen Journal* had enjoined in 1913: 'Churchmen must and will have no other war-cry but that of the strong man of Wales, the Bishop of St. David's, viz., "No compromise!"'¹²⁶

The enthronement of Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph as the first archbishop of Wales at St. Asaph Cathedral on 1 June 1920 was designed to reinforce a narrative that the Welsh Anglican church remained preeminent, with the requisite ceremony and the presence of distinguished attendees, all captured in an eight-minute silent newsreel.¹²⁷ It was described by Lloyd George as a 'Welsh Festival' and, although *The Times* referred to a 'new order', it appeared to accentuate the old order redux.¹²⁸ It was a state occasion, with representatives of the establishment present to witness and underwrite the standing of the church and it was far removed from any suggestion that the Anglican church had segued into another Welsh denomination. Although Archbishop Edwards was clearly of the view that the unthinkable had taken place, he appreciated that the ceremony proclaimed that, despite the fact that the church was redefined by statute, it maintained a distinct place in the 'establishment'.¹²⁹ The crux of the event was when the archbishop of Canterbury, 'at the invitation of the Welsh Bishops', enthroned the first archbishop of Wales. This act: 'further signified that there was no breach of ecclesiastical usage and unity'.¹³⁰ Archbishop Green was to confirm, in 1937, that: 'There was no breach in the life of the Church on the 31st March, 1920: the Church is the same after as before Disestablishment'.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Frank Morgan, Secretary to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, 'The Church in Wales', *Welsh Outlook* (March 1920), vol.7, no.3, p.55.

¹²⁶ 'No Compromise', *The Carmarthen Journal*, 2 May 1913, p.4.

¹²⁷ 'Scenes at the Enthronement of the First Archbishop of Wales, at St. Asaph, June 1st, 1920' National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales.

¹²⁸ 'Welsh Archbishop Enthroned. A Notable Ceremony. The New Order in Wales', *The Times*, 2 June 1920, p.13.

¹²⁹ Edwards, *Landmarks in the History of the Welsh Church*, p.252.

¹³⁰ Green, *The setting of the Constitution of the Church in Wales*, p.210.

¹³¹ Green, *The Setting of the Constitution of the Church in Wales*, p.279.

Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph, perhaps displaying his ultimate loyalty, was desperate to interpret Welsh disestablishment within the context of the Church of England, as demonstrated by his forlorn comment that ‘it is probable that March 31, 1920, will occupy a larger place in English history’.¹³² During the debates concerning the Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill, the bishop of St. Asaph referred to the dearth of sustained and meaningful support from the English church. He was convinced that, in terms of the Welsh Church Act of 1914 reaching the statute book, only: ‘A policy of total repeal could only have been ventured upon if the whole of the Church of England had rallied to the cry and had been ready to stake its whole position on the result’.¹³³ It is extremely doubtful if he were assuaged by ameliorative comments such as that made by the archbishop of Canterbury in May 1919. To mitigate the advice that the Welsh church should form a separate province, the archbishop wrote that: ‘we are not going to allow the legal severance of some of the formal bonds which at present unite us to impair in the smallest degree the fellowship of the deepest kind’.¹³⁴

A newspaper report of a meeting of the governing body of the Welsh church, in 1920, would have intimated to the newly appointed archbishop of Wales that symbolism could also have unwelcome consequences. In response to a public appeal for a million pounds, to place the Welsh church on a sound financial basis, only approximately £480,000 had been received and the then bishop of St. Asaph had emphasised that the response from England ‘had been very much less than had been hoped’.¹³⁵ He had confidently anticipated that ‘England would see it right, as Wales held the post against a bigger onslaught, on the English Church’. But the newspaper reported that he ‘did not allude to one reason which has hindered many English parishes from sending their aid’. It appeared that the admission to Communion of the prime minister and his wife, on the day of the enthronement had caused an adverse reaction:

the secrecy which has been observed as to the responsibility for that admission—whether the Archbishop of Wales or the Archbishop of Canterbury was responsible has not yet been made clear—has alienated English sympathy to an extent which Welsh Churchmen have not yet realized, and has moreover made the position of loyal Welsh Churchmen most difficult at the very outset of their life in the new province.¹³⁶

¹³² ‘The Church in Wales. Facing the Future’, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 31 March 1920, p.10.

¹³³ ‘Welsh Church (Temporalities) Bill’, *House of Lords*, 14 August 1919, vol.36, col.917.

¹³⁴ Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Oxford, p.988.

¹³⁵ ‘Welsh Church Appeal for £1,000,000’, *The Times*, 8 January 1920, p.11. It was reported that the Welsh Church Governing Body decided ‘to make an appeal for £1,000,000, to take the place of the £48,000 annually lost to the church by the new Act’.

¹³⁶ ‘The Church in Wales. Session of the Governing Body’, *The Church Times*, 15 October 1920, p.345.

The archbishop of Canterbury wrote that: ‘To our surprise he (Lloyd George) and his wife appeared at the Early Service’, which suggested that he had no foreknowledge, but he was quite relaxed about the affair ‘which created a teapot storm in ecclesiastical circles of the *Church Times* sort’.¹³⁷ The surprising aspect is that it appeared that this was not the first occasion that Lloyd George took Communion. Although unspecific about the precise date, William George wrote that his brother had, sometime in 1903, ‘had been spending a weekend with the Bishop of St. Asaph, and on Sunday morning he attended service and received Holy Communion at the Bishop’s hands’.¹³⁸ The bishop of St. David’s was, however, to adopt a jaundiced view of the enthronement, describing it as a ‘festival of National Sentiment’ and that ‘sentiment was given rather too central a place’. His perturbation exhibited by a mordant comment that he recognised that it was ‘natural’ to invite Mr. Lloyd George to the event, as he was ‘the most sentimental of Welshmen’.¹³⁹ Bishop Owen’s long-standing animus to the Prime Minister was to drive him into being ‘very much out of sorts’ and in a state of nervous collapse’. Although the bishop advised Frank Morgan that the matter should be treated as ‘altogether exceptional’ and that his ‘nervous collapse resulted from a fear that Lloyd George’s seeking Communion would ‘strain the unity of the Church’. His daughter’s biography makes it abundantly clear that the long-standing relationship between the Bishop Owen and his archbishop had become strained and that it was suggested that Bishop Owen had advised against the prime minister being invited to the enthronement because he knew that ‘there would be trouble of some sort’. It was extraordinary that the bishop had allowed his personal antipathy to suggest a course of action which would have been a notable breach of protocol. Whether or not the prime minister and his wife taking Communion had been sufficient to deter potential English donations appeared very unlikely and probably Bishop Edwards was more accurate in his disillusioned realisation that Welsh disestablishment simply did not garner English ‘public interest and attention’, although he did endeavour to instil its significance in the readers of *The Times*.¹⁴⁰

A relatively minor incident which drew attention to a ‘strange lack of historical perspective’ at the enthronement was the decision by the archbishop of Canterbury to present the archbishop of Wales with a throne, which is still in use, whose design was based upon St. Augustine’s Chair at Canterbury.¹⁴¹ After a brief synopsis of the relevant history, ‘Cambrensis’ ended a

¹³⁷ Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, volume I*, p.990.

¹³⁸ William George, *My Brother and I* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), p.169.

¹³⁹ Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen*, pp.441-442.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The Church in Wales. Facing the Future’, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 31 March 1920.

¹⁴¹ ‘Cambrensis’, ‘The Welsh Church’, *The Church Times*, 16 April 1920, p.395.

letter of complaint with a statement that: ‘The Welsh Church has little cause to be grateful to Canterbury’. It is of note that Archbishop Edwards himself was clearly aware of the unfortunate connotations associated with the new archiepiscopal throne, because when he described the new Church in Wales, he was careful to note, as described above, that it was ‘as independent as she was before Augustine came’.¹⁴² In reality, based upon the new archbishop’s perception that the Church of England was the ‘National Church’, it was probably quite fitting, with the Welsh archbishop forever to be perched on a replica of the throne of an English archbishop.

In its reportage of the enthronement, *The Church Times* stated, pointedly, that the ‘photographs we have seen show the new Archbishop to great advantage’. Its ambiguous comment may have been influenced by the fact that ‘the Church Press was ignored’ and it was not invited to the enthronement.¹⁴³ The newspaper contrasted the dearth of information emanating from the church about the ceremony, with the ‘liberality’ with which it was ‘kept supplied with news of the financial needs of the Welsh Church and the manner in which it was hoped to induce English Churchmen to help meet them’. The newspaper had assuredly garnered episcopal opprobrium from its report, a few months earlier, of the St. David’s Eve’s London Welsh Festival, held at St. Paul’s Cathedral. *The Church Times* had criticised the fact that no senior clerics from the Cathedral were in attendance, but: ‘Another regrettable fact was the absence from the service not only of all the Welsh Episcopate, but of leading dignitaries in Wales’.¹⁴⁴ Although the report did not attempt to explain why the bishops, who had been so ubiquitous in their past peregrinations, had decided to shun the festival and a service which witnessed ‘an enormous Welsh congregation’. Certain conclusions can be drawn from the fact that the sermon was delivered by the Reverend Maurice Jones.¹⁴⁵ He was forthright in his summary that: ‘deplorable mistakes had been made by the leaders of the Church’ and that: ‘The Church had been allowed to drift out of the current of Welsh life and had appeared as a mere handmaiden of the Church of England’. He stressed that the church ‘must identify herself with the national life of Wales’. Reverend Jones was to write, in June 1920, that:

A burning zeal for Welsh national sentiment has not been the most conspicuous factor in the life of the Welsh Church during the more recent period of its history, and it is to its comparative neglect of what has been the strongest element in national life during

¹⁴² Edwards, *Memories*, p.320.

¹⁴³ ‘Summary’, *The Church Times*, 5 June 1920, p.551.

¹⁴⁴ ‘The Welsh Service at St. Paul’s’, *The Times*, 5 March 1920, p.255.

¹⁴⁵ Maurice Jones. (1863-1957), priest. He served as chaplain to the Forces 1890 to 1916, Principal of St. David’s College, Lampeter 1923 to 1938. member of the Gorsedd of Bards, with bardic name of Meurig Prysor.

the last half century that we must attribute a substantial share of the hostility manifested towards the Church by a very considerable section of the Welsh people.¹⁴⁶

However, he was magnanimous in his conclusion that the decision to ‘convert Wales into a separate ecclesiastical province, with its own Archbishop, would seem, however, to indicate a change of mind and heart’ and that ‘the leaders of the disestablished Church have not only converted what was a memory into a splendid reality’. At the time he was probably unaware that this decision had had its genesis with the archbishop of Canterbury, who had been keen to release ‘the Welsh Bishops from their allegiance to the See of Canterbury, and that he counselled them to form a separate Province for Wales’.¹⁴⁷

‘Nine years of progress.’

The completion of the Welsh church’s constitution was announced at a meeting of the governing body meeting in April 1922, although the author, Mr. Justice Sankey, sounded a note of caution in that: ‘Sound finance and a democratic constitution are, however, not enough’ and he reminded people that the church had ‘a Divine commission’.¹⁴⁸ Archbishop Edwards still rankled at the apparent failure of the Church of England to provide the ‘financial help which for many years they thought would be abundantly flowing into the Principality if disendowment and disestablishment came’. In 1923, Archbishop Edwards sought to garner the attention of English churchmen when he reported upon the Welsh church’s ‘nine years of progress’, in a series of two articles which he wrote for *The Times*. The bishop had decided, on the date of the enthronement of the first bishop of Swansea and Brecon, Edward Latham Bevan, to review the church’s ‘progress’ since the Welsh Church Act 1914 ‘was passed under protest’.¹⁴⁹ Soon after Welsh disestablishment, and demonstrating the very independence that the Church defenders had striven to avoid, the newly disestablished church’s governing body decided, in September 1921, to create the new diocese of Monmouth.¹⁵⁰ This was followed, in 1923, by the formation of the bishopric of Swansea and Brecon.¹⁵¹ It might have been assumed that it would provide an opportunity for the archbishop to proclaim the church’s new freedom,

¹⁴⁶ The Rev. Maurice Jones, ‘The Church in Wales. It’s Province and it’s Archbishop’, *Welsh Outlook* (June 1920), vol. 7, no.6, p.137.

¹⁴⁷ Archbishop C.A.H. Green, *The setting of the Constitution of the Church in Wales* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1937), p.210.

¹⁴⁸ ‘The Church in Wales. New Constitution Completed’, *The Times*, 21 April 1922, p.18.

¹⁴⁹ ‘The Welsh Church. Nine Years of Progress. The Archbishop’s Review’, *The Times*, 14 September 1923, p.11.

¹⁵⁰ ‘The Church in Wales. New See of Monmouth’, *The Times*, 19 October 1921, p.12.

¹⁵¹ ‘Ecclesiastical News. The New Welsh Diocese’, *The Times*, 25 June 1923, p.15.

but it led him to write critically about the election of a non-Welsh speaking bishop. He alleged, inaccurately, that: ‘The language qualification for a Welsh bishopric has, for the first time in fifty years, been set aside’ and he warned the Church: ‘nationality is a good friend but a dangerous enemy’, with an admission that: ‘the neglect of the Welsh language on the part of the Church contributed to the rise of Nonconformity’. The archbishop had ignored the fact that many of the Welsh bishops appointed after 1870 had questionable fluency. Such trenchant comments would have surprised many, as the archbishop’s ambivalence towards the Welsh language was well-known. Archbishop Edwards had refused to cast his vote for the ratification of E.L. Bevan, as the first Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, ostensibly on the grounds that Bevan did not speak Welsh, yet Bishop Glyn Simon ‘thought that Edwards had a rather ambivalent attitude to Welsh’, and that his antagonism towards Bevan was personal rather than linguistic.¹⁵² The fact that Bevan’s ‘strongest supporter’ was the bishop of St. David’s may have contributed to the antipathy.¹⁵³

The second of the Welsh prelate’s articles in *The Times* provided an apposite place for consideration of the legacy of disestablishment. The archbishop was obliged, after attesting that; ‘The bond of Establishment has gone. Few, if any, now desire to return to the old order’, to provide an explanation for his ‘apparent acquiescence’. After fifty years of fervent, uncompromising, unflinching public resistance, it is certain that his assertion would have perplexed many of those who had followed his utterances over those decades. He was to refer to ‘a balance-sheet of loss and gain’, in which he addressed disestablishment, disendowment and dismemberment.¹⁵⁴ Remarkably, he ‘dismissed’ disendowment in one sentence, with a statement that the state had taken what it ‘claimed as its own’. His insouciance about a topic which had been critical to the anti-disestablishment campaign can be better understood in the context of a comment made to the church’s governing body in 1924, when Lord Kysant,¹⁵⁵ the chairman of the Finance Committee of the Church in Wales, reported that the finances had gradually been placed ‘on a sound and solid basis, with the result that the Welsh Church was now, owing to the generosity of the Church people in Wales, in a slightly better financial position than it was before it was disestablished’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Owain W. Jones, *Glyn Simon. His Life & Opinions*, p.55.

¹⁵³ David Walker and Margaret S. Walker, ‘Epilogue: A New Diocese, 1923’, in *Links with the Past. Swansea and Brecon Historical Essays* (Llandybie: Christopher Davies, 1974), ed. by Owain W. Jones and David Walker, p.247.

¹⁵⁴ ‘The Welsh Church. New Bishoprics. Influence for Unity’, *The Times*, 15 September 1923, p.9.

¹⁵⁵ Owen Cosby Philipps, Baron Kysant, (1863-1937). Businessman and politician.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Finances on sound basis. Cheering statement by Lord Kysant’, *Western Mail*, 2 October 1924, p. 9.

The archbishop identified a ‘practical result’ of disestablishment as being that Welsh clergy had more time to discuss their own issues, in their own National ‘Convocation’. Although the result of the exclusion of Welsh bishops from the House of Lords was ‘indeterminate’, the archbishop acclaimed the ‘gain’ that Welsh bishops were no longer ‘drawn away from their proper duties’. It was a significant admission by this peripatetic prelate, whose defence of the established church, had been indefatigable. Any assumption that the archbishop had belatedly undergone a Pauline conversion and that he had now, rather belatedly, recognised the gains flowing from disestablishment should evoke a modicum of scepticism. The report of a sermon he delivered in Newcastle in February 1922 would suggest that he was still conflicted, when the archbishop: ‘described the disestablishment of the Church in Wales as a calamity’ and that some ‘of its strongest supporters recognized now that it was an impolitic measure’.¹⁵⁷ This lack of consistency was again demonstrated by the archbishop’s ‘address on the new province of Wales’, only four months earlier, at the 1921 Birmingham Church Congress, where he opined that; ‘Without disestablishment it was doubtful whether the Church in Wales would have had the freedom and elasticity which would have made the creation of a new province possible’ and that ‘the reluctance, misgivings, and even the fears entertained about the new province of Wales had proved so far quite unfounded’. He continued with the opinion that the new province had evoked a series of positive outcomes, all of which amounted to further ‘gains’.¹⁵⁸ It is possible that he wished to exhibit a certain *sangfroid*, avoiding any hint that his efforts since the 1880s had come to nought, and that he wished to flaunt the benefits that had accrued, to an English audience whom, he believed, had failed the Welsh church. It is necessary to stand back and recall his zealous, uncompromising opposition to such change and to reflect upon his admission in *Memories*, published in 1927, when he described the Welsh church as ‘cut off from the State Church in England and from its convocations with no more official share in its spiritual responsibilities than an Indian or Australian province’.¹⁵⁹

‘The National Church’.

The presence of the archbishop of Wales at events such as the 1921 Birmingham Church Congress and his readiness to comment on matters that pertained to the Church of England alone, such as the controversy surrounding the new prayer book, were not solely based upon

¹⁵⁷ ‘Newcastle and Welsh Church’, *The Times*, 27 February 1922, p.7.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Prayer-Book Revision. Church Congress Discussion’, *The Times*, 14 October 1921, p.15.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards, *Memories*, p.320.

nostalgia about his standing, pre-1920. His *locus standi* was predicated, as he argued in 1928, upon his position ‘as a member of the oldest Church in this island’. Despite exclusion from the Convocation and the House of Lords, the archbishop would, by hook or by (episcopal) crook, make himself of relevance to the English church. The Welsh archbishop’s relationship with the Church of England may have been influenced by unrealised ambitions. There was a ‘sensational rumour’ in 1907 that the bishop was seeking a transfer to an English see and Newcastle was mentioned.¹⁶⁰ Although the rumour was quickly dismissed, the timing, following the election of a Liberal government, in 1906, with a large majority, and seemingly intent on Welsh disestablishment, is noteworthy.¹⁶¹ It is also possible that Bishop Edwards believed that his work in defence of the Church of England would garner even higher office. Lord Riddell reported that his name was mentioned in the context of the vacancy for the archbishop of York in November 1908.¹⁶²

His argument about the status and standing of the disestablished Church in Wales, and its relationship with the Church of England after 1920, led to an inventive, if not desperate reinterpretation. He argued that the Church of England maintained a position as the ‘National Church of this country’, which was only second to the throne in ‘its uniting influence upon the loyalty and integrity of the Empire’. Archbishop Edwards emphasised that it was the British, and not the English, Empire and therefore ‘to circumscribe the National Church to the English counties is a curtailed estimate of her influence and power’.¹⁶³ By implication, he recognised that its ‘influence and power’ would continue to be exerted over Wales, which presumably made the Welsh church a vassal Church, at least in the eyes of its senior prelate.

The first archbishop of Wales was to remain in post until 1934, so it is reasonable to assume that his view, that the Welsh church has simply segued from one subordinate position to another, as a satellite of this ‘National Church’, was shared by other senior ecclesiastical and lay people. Frank Morgan, the layman who had been at the heart of the Welsh Anglican church for thirty years, acknowledged that the Welsh church had not exercised its freedoms and

¹⁶⁰ ‘The Bishop of St. Asaph. Anxious to cross the border. A sensational rumour’, *The Weekly News and Visitors' Chronicle*, 26 July 1907, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ ‘Bishop of St Asaph & An English See’, *Evening Express*, 25 July 1907, p.2.

¹⁶² Lord Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary* (London: Country Life, 1934), p.9.

George Allardice Riddell, 1st Baron Riddell (1865-1934), was newspaper owner, diarist and a close friend of David Lloyd George from 1908 to 1922: ‘Lord Riddell. Newspaper owner and diarist’, *The Times*, 6 December 1934, p.19.

¹⁶³ ‘New Prayer-Book. The Church and the State. Archbishop of Wales on Establishment’, *The Times*, 17 January 1928, p.15.

discretion, in part because it was still in thrall to the English Church and, partly, due to anxieties about the ‘Welshness’ of the disestablished church. In his evidence to the *Cecil Committee on Church and State*, which had been convened to ‘enquire into the present relations of Church and State’ in England, Frank Morgan provided an illuminating insight into how the Welsh church had developed since 1920. The Commission had been appointed in response to parliament’s rejection of the Prayer Book Measures of 1927 and 1928, which had led to a crisis, described, within the report, as ‘a situation of peculiar difficulty’, within the Church of England and, naturally, led to a desire to understand its relationship with the state.¹⁶⁴ Frank Morgan was asked about the Welsh church’s ‘capacity and readiness’ in determining ‘its rule of worship’ and ‘to secure conformity thereto’. He explained that although the Welsh church was ‘free to determine its rule of worship and would probably be able to obtain conformity thereto’ the situation had not arisen. This was partly because disestablishment had reduced differences in the church, but also: ‘because Church people in Wales are only too conscious of the danger of taking any step that would tend in any way to widen the breach between the Church of England and that in Wales’. But Morgan then added: ‘Further there is a growth of nationalism which is much stronger in the Church than it was before the War.’¹⁶⁵ Although Frank Morgan’s evidence was given in a personal capacity, his key, long-standing friendship with the leading Welsh bishops and his crucial role *vis-à-vis* the governing body, meant that he was aware that fifteen years after disestablishment, the Welsh church appeared to be subservient and hesitant. This led to criticism by *The Church Times* in 1930, when it observed that: ‘If it is to continue to be no more and no better than a pale imitation of the Church of England – no more than a Province with Canterbury and York – better organised, it may be, better managed, better “run” – then it can never be the Church of Wales’.¹⁶⁶ It is difficult not to understand from Frank Morgan’s comments about the ‘growth of nationalism’, that this reflected the church’s official political stance as remaining resolutely Unionist, and it was clear that his concern was exacerbated by a reaction to the period of ‘radicalisation’ in Welsh nationalist politics.¹⁶⁷ J. Arthur Price had written, in 1921, that the 1914 disestablishment act ‘proclaimed to the world the failure of England’s effort to force upon Wales an unnatural ecclesiastical unity’.¹⁶⁸ It was apparent, in

¹⁶⁴ *Church & State. Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on the Relations between Church and State*, volume 1, London, 1935, p.1.

¹⁶⁵ *Church & State. Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on the Relations between Church and State*, volume 1, London, 1935, volume 2, Evidence of Witnesses, pt.1., p.139. Evidence taken from Mr. Frank Morgan.

¹⁶⁶ ‘The Church in Wales. Yesterday, To-Day and Tomorrow’, *The Church Times*, 3 October 1930, p.398.

¹⁶⁷ D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945. A Call to Nationhood* (Cardiff: UWP, 1983), p.151.

¹⁶⁸ J. Arthur Price, ‘The historical case for Welsh home rule’, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.8, no.12 (December 1921), p.274.

1935 at least, that the Welsh church was wont to cling to that ‘unnatural ecclesiastical unity’ and that it made a mockery of the hopes of those like ‘Cambrensis’, who wrote in April 1920 that: ‘what is needed is that the Church should be at once fearlessly and wholeheartedly Nationalist’.

This question of what amounted to a ‘National Church’ was to continue to be a matter of confusion, as it had been before 1914. It appeared to amount to the subjective, being based upon an individual’s definition of nation, and such confusion was evident in *The Times*’s reporting of the archbishop of Canterbury’s sermon at the enthronement of the first Welsh archbishop. The newspaper regretted the ending of the ‘connection between Church and State’ and exclaimed that the Welsh church could no longer claim to be the ‘National Church’.¹⁶⁹ In terms of how Welsh disestablishment was viewed from England after 1920, there was an inconsistent approach, which either portrayed ignorance or, more commonly, complete indifference. English ambivalence to Welsh disestablishment was a phenomenon which, as has been mentioned above, featured strongly in the manner which Bishop Edwards had conducted church defence. It was tacit in the reportage of his enthronement as the first archbishop of Wales, on 1 June 1920, when *The Times* noted the ‘imposing ceremony’, but exhibited a certain insouciance in the manner in which it described the fact the incumbent of this new post was A.G. Edwards, who had been the bishop of St. Asaph for over thirty years and had, for most of that time, been ‘troubled and distracted’ by the various campaigns for disestablishment. Although it declared that it was testimony to his leadership that he had been elected archbishop, the fact that he had been ‘distracted’ intimated that he had somehow not been successful as a bishop and churchman, but simply as a politician and antagonist. Perhaps inadvertently, the article also suggested the subtle existence of a continuing hierarchical relationship, when it stated that: ‘The Archbishop of Canterbury presented the new Archbishop to the people of Wales’. A casual English reader might have surmised that he was, bizarrely, being rewarded for failure with the archbishopric of a disestablished body, an entity which he had fought, with all his strength, to foil. But although it would have been tempting to view the archbishop’s mitre and cope as some form of consolation prize, it will be argued that his efforts to defer and, ultimately, dilute the nature and terms of disestablishment and disendowment made him worthy of such a prize. In terms of what senior English churchmen thought about the Welsh church on

¹⁶⁹ ‘The Church in Wales’, *The Times*, 2 June 1920, p.17.

the cusp of disestablishment, and what it might mean for Wales, an address by the archbishop of York, to the St. David's Diocesan Conference in November 1919, was illuminating.¹⁷⁰ After expressing the sympathy which English churchmen felt for the Church in Wales 'in the time of her trial', he reminded his audience that 'the formation of a new Province for Wales would no more separate the Church in Wales from the Province of Canterbury than it was already separated from the Province of York'. He did appear to accept the argument that the established church had not served Welsh interests in the past and that the Church of England in Wales had not adapted to 'national sentiment' and added: 'that in her new capacity as a free Church the Church in Wales would be more and more able to adapt the old Faith to the Welsh national sentiment'. He said that he had high hopes that 'March 31 next would be the appointed day on which the gallant Church in Wales would rise and go over the top and go straight ahead in its advance to win Wales for the Kingdom of God'.¹⁷¹

Writing in 1919, the bishop of St. Asaph struck an optimistic note about the future of the church, although his effusion might have been influenced by a post-war euphoria, immediately following the Armistice, as he anticipated that both society and the role of the Church must be transformed and that: 'The door of spiritual opportunity was being flung wide open to them in Wales. They had had their troubles in the past, and those troubles had been swept away'. The churchman who had been synonymous with his diatribes against the Nonconformists since the 1880s now posited that: 'The war had been like a mighty flood it had swept away many barriers and class distinctions; it had changed the whole feeling between what they called Church and Nonconformity'.¹⁷² It was apparent that the 'mighty flood' might not have 'swept away' all of the 'barriers and class distinctions', as the social background of the Church's governing body was, at least until the 1930s, indicative of the traditional class system, in addition to an Anglicised pedigree: 'Of the 36 lay members listed for 1930-1932, there were, from St. David's diocese, for example, two peers, one baronet and two knights, and it is doubtful whether any of them were conversant with Welsh'.¹⁷³ He felt that 'the shadow of the Church of England, with all that implied, quite naturally hung over the official *persona* of the Church in Wales, and that persisted up to the fifties of this century'. Unfortunately, even the appointment of

¹⁷⁰ Cosmo Gordon Lang, (1864-1945), Archbishop of York, 1908 to 1928, when he was translated to Canterbury, where he served as Archbishop until 1942.

¹⁷¹ 'Meeting at the Albert Hall, Swansea', *Y Llan*, 28 November 1919, p.2.

¹⁷² 'St. Asaph Diocesan Conference. Bishop on Future of Welsh Church' *Y Llan*, 5 December 1919, p.33.

¹⁷³ 'Beuno', 'A Leader for the Seventies? (A Comment on our 6th Archbishop)', *Impact*, Church in Wales Publications, vol.1, no.4 (1970), p.3.

bishops to the disestablished Church was to continue to pose problems and as one commentator, albeit one who described himself as a ‘Welsh Nationalist Priest’, indicated in 1929, that the ‘securing thereby of a complete measure of self-government for the Church in Wales’ had not eliminated ‘the manoeuvring and intriguing that often characterised and blurred the appointments to a Welsh Bishopric by the Prime Minister of England ceased to exist’.¹⁷⁴ A. J. Edwards, in his biography of Archbishop Green, quoted Canon D. Parry-Jones’s observation about the Church’s governing body and the fact that ‘one looked in vain for the man with blue veins in his hands and face’, albeit that he added that it ‘was not short of blue blood’, for the 1935 Governing Body had consisted of: ‘at least six barons, ten baronets, five knights, eleven titled ladies, three sons of peers, two generals, one vice-admiral, one brigadier-general and sixteen colonels, not to mention majors and captains’.¹⁷⁵ The Welsh church may have legally departed the establishment, but the representatives of that establishment were still firmly ensconced in the new body and therefore it was difficult to imagine how a change of outlook could have realistically been anticipated. But it was not only the laymen who appeared to have represented an upper class, or at least exhibit those characteristics that were attributed to the pre-established Church. Archbishop Glyn Simon provided a graphic description of the then bishop of Bangor, C. A. H. Green, who was to be the second archbishop of Wales¹⁷⁶, and who was: ‘Driven in a red and silver Rolls Royce with a chauffeur in livery’ when he would descend upon remote parishes, ‘like some visitor from another world’.¹⁷⁷ The attribution of ‘alien’ to the Church in Wales had assumed a slightly different connotation.

Symbolism.

Reverend David Caird, the secretary of the Liberation Society¹⁷⁸, had provided a prescient interpretation of the outcome of Welsh disestablishment when he asked, in 1912, what would happen after disestablishment: ‘To begin with there will be little or no visible change. The churches will remain in the possession of those who now worship in them’ and although the bishops would have to vacate their seats in the House of Lords, ‘their position in relation to the

¹⁷⁴ ‘Episcopal Appointments in Wales’, by a Welsh Nationalist Priest, *Welsh Outlook*, vol.16 (Jan. 1929), p.14.

¹⁷⁵ A. J. Edwards, *Archbishop Green. His Life and Opinions* (Gomer, 1986), p.87.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Alfred Howell Green, (1864-1944), was elected Bishop of Bangor in 1928 and Archbishop of Wales in 1934. He had married, in 1899, the daughter of Sir William Thomas Lewis, later Baron Merthyr, coal magnate.

¹⁷⁷ Owain W. Jones, *Glyn Simon. His Life and Opinions*, pp.25-26.

¹⁷⁸ The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, commonly known as the Liberation Society, was formed in 1844, becoming the most powerful political lobby in England.

Church in Wales will remain unchanged'.¹⁷⁹ Reverend Caird was to be proven correct in his prognostications and additions could be added to his list in that vestiges of establishment would remain and that Welsh cathedrals would continue to house events of national consequence. In 1989, Reverend D. T. W. Price wrote of the Church in Wales that; 'legally disestablished and disendowed, but in outward appearance, in diocese and parish, largely seemingly unchanged'.¹⁸⁰ He also added that: 'A visitor would find little apparent difference in atmosphere between, say, Llandaff Cathedral in Wales and Hereford Cathedral in England'. Moreover, he described the practice, on royal visits to Wales, 'that any religious observances are held in a cathedral, when the presence of Lord Lieutenant presenting bishop to monarch recall all the pomp of Establishment'.¹⁸¹ He could have added that many people, including worshippers, were often unaware of any substantive differences between the English and Welsh churches. A confirmation of this perception of the Church in Wales was outlined by the late Lord Williams of Elvel,¹⁸² during a debate, in 2002, about the case for the 'constitutional separation of the powers between Church and State throughout the United Kingdom'. He said: 'I am a practising member of the Church of England, when I am in England, and of the Church in Wales, when I am in Wales. To be honest, as an ordinary man in the pew, if I may put it that way, I confess that I find very little difference between the two—the one established and the other disestablished'.¹⁸³

The Church in Wales has been variously described as 're-established',¹⁸⁴ being a body that 'retains many of the characteristics of an established church', as a disestablished Establishment,¹⁸⁵ 'post-established',¹⁸⁶ or occupying an 'intermediate position between an established church and one which has never been established'.¹⁸⁷ Prior to implementation in 1920, it was already apparent that any suggestion that the Church in Wales was to be simply

¹⁷⁹ David Caird, *Church and State in Wales. A Plain Statement of the Case for Disestablishment* (London, 1912), p.126.

¹⁸⁰ William Price, 'Church and Society in Wales since Disestablishment', in *Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain* (Lampeter, 1989), ed. by Paul Badham, p.41.

¹⁸¹ Price, 'Church and Society in Wales since Disestablishment', p. 37.

¹⁸² Charles Cuthbert Powell Williams, Baron Williams of Elvel, (1933-2019). He was the stepfather of Archbishop Welby.

¹⁸³ 'Church and State', *HL Deb.*, 22, May 2002, vol.635, cc.794.

¹⁸⁴ Norman Doe, 'The Church in Wales and the State: A Juridical Perspective', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, vol.2, issue 1, (June 2004), p.107.

¹⁸⁵ Simon J. Taylor, 'Disestablished Establishment: High and Earthed Establishment in the Church in Wales', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol.18, no.2 (2003), p.227.

¹⁸⁶ Harris and Startup, *The Church in Wales, The Sociology of a Traditional Institution*, p.11.

¹⁸⁷ Nicholas Roberts, 'The Historical Background to the Marriage (Wales) Act 2010', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 13 (2011), p.39.

disestablished was erroneous. Although described as a disestablished church, it is evident from numerous sources that this description is misleading and, according to Professor Norman Doe, ‘technically’ not the case. He cites the effect of the Welsh Church Act 1914 as creating ‘the partial disestablishment of the Church of England’.¹⁸⁸ A recommendation ‘that the Church in Wales should be fully disestablished’ was included in a report of the National Assembly’s *Constitution and Legislative Affairs Committee*, in 2013, almost a century after that 1914 legislation.¹⁸⁹ In effect, the church’s role and status would be assessed by how it was perceived and therefore symbolism was to be crucial, to buttress its claim to: ‘unique legitimacy inasmuch as, like its sister-church in England, it claims to be the historic Christian Church in its named territory’, and ‘its structure and the assumptions that underpin it are still those of an established church in a Christian society’.¹⁹⁰

One of the most enduring and apparent symbols of the church is its estate of significant historic buildings, utilised for both periodic religious services and to host national events of commemoration or celebration and, as John Davies observed: ‘Indeed, as they retained possession of the parish churches and cathedrals, they continued to look like an Establishment – and to a considerable extent be treated like one’.¹⁹¹ Archbishop Edwards was to ensure that the church continued to be to the forefront in the commemoration of the Great War. In this, he was to establish a precedent which had been discerned about the Church of England: ‘In some respects, the state role of the Church of England has grown substantially in the course of the last 90 years or so in connection with its core role in the annual national November remembrance service for ‘The Glorious Dead’ of war at the Cenotaph in Whitehall’.¹⁹²

The bishop of St. David’s was the sole Welsh religious leader at a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of the Unknown Soldier at Westminster Abbey, where a small group, including Lloyd George were present.¹⁹³ The event took place the day before the annual Cenotaph Ceremony and it is of note that the Church of England had almost been denied direct involvement in that

¹⁸⁸ Norman Doe, ‘The Church in Wales and the State: A Juridical Perspective’, *Journal of Anglican Studies*, vol.2, issue 1 (June 2004), p.106.

¹⁸⁹ Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales, *Report on the Inquiry into Law-making and the Church in Wales*, (June 2013), p.32.

¹⁹⁰ Harris and Startup, *The Church in Wales. The Sociology of a Traditional Institution*, p.4 and pp.169-170.

¹⁹¹ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), p.539.

¹⁹² Norman Bonney, ‘Established Religion, Parliamentary Devolution and New State Religion in the UK’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, (2013), 66, p.428.

¹⁹³ ‘Armistice Day. Cenotaph Ceremony To-morrow’, *The Times*, 10 November 1924, p.19.

annual remembrance. The archbishop of Canterbury reported that there had been ‘keen controversy’ with the prime minister and the Cabinet about the ceremony at the Cenotaph, with Lloyd George seeking ‘wholly secular’ proceedings, ‘alleging as reason that Mohammedans and Hindus were among those to whose memory it stood’. The archbishop did not record his riposte to this argument, but he simply noted that he had ‘prevailed’ and ‘there was unanimous expression of thankfulness that we had thus marked our Christian fellowship’.¹⁹⁴ The annual Remembrance Sunday commemoration has provided, particularly with comprehensive media coverage, a platform for the established Church of England. But perhaps, more importantly, the Welsh Anglican church has also benefited hugely, in terms of its ‘re-established’ role, with, for example, contingents of the armed forces present at Remembrance services held at Welsh cathedrals every year. When Wales’s own National War Memorial, in Cardiff, was unveiled by the Prince of Wales in 1928, the dedication was performed by the archbishop of Wales, with the bishops of Swansea and Brecon and Llandaff offering prayers.¹⁹⁵

The suggestion that the Anglican church continued to maintain an officially recognised role is reinforced by the continuing role of cathedrals and churches as places to commemorate the armed forces, with wall memorials and the creation of Regimental Chapels, such as the Havard Chapel at Brecon Cathedral, which became the Regimental Chapel of the South Wales Borderers in 1922, and the construction of the Royal Welsh Chapel, as an integral part of Llandaff Cathedral, in 1956. It is also the custom that the laid-up regimental colours should be held and displayed by the Welsh church and, in 2015, the last Colours of the disbanded Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Royal Regiment of Wales were laid up at St. Giles Church, Wrexham and Llandaff Cathedral, respectively. All of which associate and confirm that continuing traditional link between the Welsh Anglican church and the state, albeit that the definition of that state, particularly post-devolution, is subject to differing interpretations.

Referring to the opening of the Fourth Session of the Welsh Assembly, in June 2011, by the Queen, Bonney described one of the ways in which the Church in Wales had managed to suggest its continuing pre-eminence, post-1920, despite disestablishment and an increasingly secular society. A blessing was given at the event by the archbishop of the disestablished church

¹⁹⁴ Bell, *Randall Davidson. Archbishop of Canterbury, Volume II*, p.1037.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Welsh National War Memorial’, *The Times*, 12 June 1928, p.13.

and it was: 'Through various devices such as these the Church of Wales seeks to assert its continuing symbolic eminence and primacy in the devolved state sphere in Wales'.¹⁹⁶

Anniversaries.

The various anniversaries of the date of disestablishment have always provided an opportunity for review and cogitation. In 1930, when the archbishop of Wales wrote to *The Times* to welcome the fact that the annual Church Congress was about to meet in Newport, South Wales, he recorded that: 'Ten years have now gone by since that Act came into force, and we are in some measure entitled to reckon up the gains and losses which it has brought in its train'.¹⁹⁷ It was of note that he dismissed disendowment with a pithy comment: 'With the financial side of the question I am not now concerned'. The archbishop's primary concern displayed the contradictory nature of a disestablished Welsh church led by a prelate who had resisted disestablishment for half a century. His concern was that the Welsh Church would become 'provincial in outlook', which would lead to a 'serious intellectual and spiritual loss'. The archbishop did not wish readers to be dismissive of the church which he led and although he admitted that the Welsh church had 'much to learn' from the Church of England, he also suggested that the English church had something to learn from the Welsh church's experience. Trying to avoid any hint of hauteur, he suggested that if the English church were ever to face disestablishment, the Welsh experience could be of 'utmost value in offering precedents for the solution of the many problems that will arise' and, on that basis, he encouraged English churchmen to travel to the Congress. *The Church Times* noted that: 'Many years have passed since a Church Congress was held in Wales', and that the Congress meetings in Rhyl in 1891 and Swansea in 1909 had met in Wales to 'strengthen the opposition to Disestablishment'. The newspaper then opined that since that time Welsh Disestablishment had become: 'an established fact its consequences appear to have been so little injurious to the Welsh Church that the Bishops of London and Durham both feel that they wasted a good deal of time opposing a proposal from which the Welsh dioceses do not seem to have suffered'.¹⁹⁸ When the official programme for the 1930 Newport Congress was published, it was of note it did include Welsh disestablishment.¹⁹⁹ *The Times* criticised the fact that, despite meeting in Wales, and bearing

¹⁹⁶ Norman Bonney, 'Established Religion, Parliamentary Devolution and New State Religion in the UK', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Volume 66, Issue 2, 1 April 2013, Pages 425–442.

¹⁹⁷ A.G. Cambr. 'The Church in Wales', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 15 September 1930, p.13.

¹⁹⁸ 'Summary', *The Church Times*, 26 September 1930, p. 343.

¹⁹⁹ 'The Church Congress. Newport, Mon. – Oct. 7-10', *The Church Times*, 22 August 1930, p.216.

in mind the archbishop of Wales's words, there was 'from beginning to end' no mention of the Welsh Church, with its 'special experiences and problems, that seems to be the loss of an opportunity'.²⁰⁰ *The Church Times* shared in their surprise, when it emphasised that it was the first Church Congress to be held in Wales since Welsh Disestablishment passed into law. It therefore 'imagined, especially in view of present English troubles, that a real attempt would have been made to show to English visitors, lay and clerical, the practical working of a Church, formerly a portion of the Province of Canterbury, under a regime of absolute independence from the State'.²⁰¹ The newspaper also thought 'that a Congress meeting in the neighbourhood of Caerleon, with its memories of the Round Table, and Caerwent, with its traditions of Celtic Saints, might not unnaturally have suggested an address or two on the history and legends of Celtic Christianity', but this was not to be. It noted that, except for a few casual references, it was 'entirely ignored'. In his sermon, the bishop of Gloucester did acknowledge that 'the Disestablishment of the Church of Wales leaves it with an elasticity and freedom which it has not possessed for many hundreds of years. It can work out its own fate'.²⁰² In its 'final summing-up' *The Church Times* considered that 'the regret still remains that the Congress subject lacked local colour.' 'It was held in Wales—for Monmouthshire is in Wales—and presided over by one of the Bishops of the Province. But it might have been held in Newcastle or Exeter, and there would have been no difference'.²⁰³ There was passing reference to Welsh disestablishment at a meeting of the English Church Union, held in connection with the Congress. Speaking on 'The freedom of the Church', Lord Shaftesbury 'congratulated the Welsh Church on its progress and the position it had won for itself. It was a stirring example of the stimulus that disestablishment had given to the life of the Church'. Although Leighton Davies, organising secretary of the union for the Diocese of Llandaff, believed that: 'Among the effects of dis-establishment was a distinct evidence that members of the Church were learning to give'.²⁰⁴

On the cusp of the fiftieth anniversary, when launching a new Church in Wales magazine entitled *Impact*, it was admitted that it was not 'an auspicious time to embark on a new Christian

²⁰⁰ 'The Church Congress', *The Times*, 7 October 1930, p.15.

²⁰¹ 'The Newport Congress', *The Church Times*, 17 October 1930, p.457.

²⁰² 'Church Congress: Sermon at St. Paul's Church, Newport, by the Bishop of Gloucester', *The Church Times*, 10 October 1930, p.433.

²⁰³ 'The Church Congress. A Final Summing-Up', *The Church Times*, 17 October 1930, p.475.

²⁰⁴ 'Church Congress. The Agenda at Newport. Christianity and Modern Problems', *The Times*, 7 October 1930, p.11.

periodical'. It observed that the 'channels of communication between the Church and the secular world are clogged and cloudy, and they are none too clear within the Church itself'.²⁰⁵ The issue reprinted some of the documents associated with disestablishment, including 'an extract from one of the very many polemical speeches delivered' by Bishop John Owen. The magazine stated that it was 'reprinting some of the polemics with which the original separation was beggared', adding that it believed that its 'proper task' was to 'assess, rather than celebrate, to look to the future rather than the past'.²⁰⁶ It is instructive to understand the confused manner in which disestablishment was viewed by a senior Welsh churchman, also on the fiftieth anniversary of disestablishment. The bishop of St. David's, John Richards, wrote in a Church in Wales publication that: 'I would find it hard to deny that there was justice in the demand that the Welsh Church be disestablished, but that is not the same as saying that the Bill which fulfilled that demand was both just and fair'.²⁰⁷ This would tend to be viewed as vacillation and perhaps it is suggestive of the fact that Anglican emotions were still extant, and somewhat mixed, fifty years after the event. Whilst acknowledging that disendowment was inevitable, the bishop conceded that 'the final settlement was far more generous to the Church than was that of the 1914 Act'. He suggested that 'it may not have been altogether just, neither was it altogether unjust' and that 'in the circumstances, I think that we have cause for thankfulness rather than for complaint'. Glyn Simon, the archbishop of Wales, was inclined to use the fiftieth anniversary as an opportunity to be forthright and he wrote that: 'the disappearance of establishment status and all that went with it has undoubtedly worked for the betterment of the relationship between Church and people; privilege has gone and service taken its place'.²⁰⁸ The seventieth anniversary of disestablishment was marked by the publication of a history of the Welsh Church in the twentieth century and, in its conclusion, the author posited a series of questions, including had the Church taken full advantage of its unsought freedom? Did it still retain too many vestiges of its old, privileged state? Was it isolated in Wales? Was it marginal to Welsh society?²⁰⁹ The fact that it was felt necessary to advance those questions, in 1990, was in itself telling, as was the fact that the Reverend Price stated that: 'some members of the Church in Wales doubtless wish that their Church was still established' and 'they long to be in

²⁰⁵ 'Viewpoint', *Impact*, Church in Wales Publications, vol.1, no.1 (1969), p.1.

²⁰⁶ 'Viewpoint', *Impact*, Church in Wales Publications, vol.1, no.4 (1970), front cover.

²⁰⁷ John St. David's, 'Disestablished and Disendowed', *Impact*, Church in Wales Publications, vol.1, no.4 (1970), p.7.

²⁰⁸ '50 Years After. How disestablishment has affected the Welsh Church', *The Church Times*, 9 January 1970, p.11.

²⁰⁹ The Rev. D.T. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales* (Church in Wales Publications, 1990), p.48.

a Church of which the Queen is Governor,²¹⁰ and they would like to see their bishops in the House of Lords'.²¹¹ It would appear that the 'vestiges of establishment' ran to more than simply the recognition of ecclesiastical marriage and burial.²¹² Reverend Price makes a valiant attempt to respond to the questions he posed and his comments are of a similar ilk to the position, in 1955, when Bishop J. C. Jones²¹³ of Bangor was asked whether disestablishment had been a loss or a gain, and his caveated response was that 'on the whole, up to present, it has been a gain'.²¹⁴ In terms of 'integration', Reverend Price stated that: 'It must be said that there was little integration during the first quarter of a century of the Church's independent life', although he believed that that these years were a 'period when the essential foundations were laid' for the integration of the Church into Welsh life.²¹⁵ One leading Anglican suggested that it took from 1920 to 1982 for the Church to 'truly' become the 'Church *in Wales*', and that the years from 1983 have been a 'difficult period', due to increased secularization and 'internal strife over issues such as the ordination of women'.²¹⁶

Following the election of Glyn Simon, as archbishop of Wales in 1968, 'Beuno' argued that evidence of the Anglicised pre-disestablishment Church was still evident in the 1950s, in 'the shadow of the Church of England', and he suggested, perhaps somewhat hopefully, that 'possibly the last manifestation' had been the election of Edwin Morris, as archbishop of Wales, in 1957. Canon Maurice Jones had presaged, in 1927, that it appeared to him 'quite possible that in thirty years' time the Welsh language will no longer be heard within its (the Church's) walls, and that by that time it may be a complete stranger to an overflowing tide of Welsh national consciousness flowing around it'.²¹⁷

²¹⁰ The monarch retains the title of 'Supreme Governor' of the Church of England, although one interpretation of constitutional law and precedent suggested royal supremacy over all British churches: P. Jones, *The Governance of the Church in Wales*, Cardiff, 2000, p.68. Many may share Queen Victoria's interpretation, when she referred to her position as 'Head' of the Church. Gladstone wrote to Asquith with a comment that 'the Queen's studies have not yet carried her out of the delusive belief that she is still by law the "head" of the Church of England': P. Magus, *Gladstone. A Biography* (London: John Murray, 1954), p.410.

²¹¹ The Rev. D.T. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales*, p.49.

²¹² Thomas Glyn Watkin, 'Vestiges of Establishment. The Ecclesiastical and Canon Law of the Church in Wales', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, (1990), pp.110-115.

²¹³ Bishop John Charles Jones, (1904-1956), Bishop of Bangor from 1949 to 1956.

²¹⁴ Edward Lewis, *John Bangor. The People's Bishop* (London: SPCK, 1962), p.196.

²¹⁵ The Reverend D.T.W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century* (Penarth: Church in Wales Publications, 1990), p.23.

²¹⁶ The Reverend Professor D.P. Davies, 'Welsh Anglicanism', *Trivium*, (2008), p.111.

²¹⁷ 'Church and Nation', *Western Mail*, 25 July 1927, p.8.

In his 1962 booklet, which was intended as a ‘Lent look at the Prayer Book’, Glyn Simon, then bishop of Llandaff, suggested that the Book of Common Prayer was inimical to the suggestion that it could form a ‘bond of unity of the Anglican Communion spreading throughout the world’, because it is ‘understood as practically the same thing as “English”’. He then confirmed the colonial influence of the Anglican Church, when he provided an example which linked Zimbabwe (then named Rhodesia) and Wales: ‘At Salisbury in Rhodesia for instance the Cathedral and its arrangements might have been lifted complete from some English city’. This he contrasted with Bangor in north Wales where, ‘every effort is made to render Morning and Evening Prayer exactly as they would be sung in any English Cathedral.’²¹⁸ Englishness had been perceived as beneficial by at least one commentator, albeit an ordained member of the Church in Wales, who opined that this ensured that the ‘Welsh’ Anglican church has, in these ‘post-Christian’ times: ‘suffered less than the Free Churches, probably because it is a broad Church and, secondly, because its ‘establishment’ outlook enables it the more easily to accommodate itself to the prevailing social, political and cultural context. Developments like greater mobility and increasing Anglicisation do no real harm to the Anglican Church with its perceived English orientation and its well-established parochial network’.²¹⁹ Written in 1995, it appeared to supply an honest appraisal of how the disestablished Church had developed, with damning confirmation that Anglicisation, and a reversion to the status of an ‘alien church’, was viewed as a welcome outcome if it assured the future of the ‘Welsh’ Anglican church. Almost one hundred years earlier, in 1890, Archdeacon David Howell delivered a sermon at St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster, with an uncompromising message about the Anglican church in Wales that:

There is the equally unquestionable fact that her adherents are largely made up of English settlers and Anglicised Welshmen – not of the Welsh-speaking masses, who mainly hold the future of the Principality in their hands – and hence it is that her opponents speak of her, not as historically an alien Church, but as now a Church of aliens.²²⁰

Upon the ninetieth anniversary, in 2010, the former Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, referred to the fact that: ‘It was forced upon us and one of the aims was to weaken the influence

²¹⁸ The Bishop of Llandaff, the Right Revd. W.G.H. Simon, *The Landmark* (London, 1962), pp.62-63.

²¹⁹ D. P. Davies, *Against the Tide. Christianity in Wales on the Threshold of a new Millennium* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1995), p.34.

²²⁰ Canon David Howell, *The Welsh Church. A Sermon preached in St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster*, London, 1890, p.5.

of the Anglican Church in Wales'.²²¹ This work has attempted to address the precise nature of what was 'forced' upon the Church, the nature of that 'influence' and whether, paradoxically, that influence was diminished as a result of disestablishment, as opposed to other factors, such as secularisation. There is also a possibility that disestablishment is utilised as a rallying call for the contemporary Welsh Church, as a symbolic representation of how the Church has 'overcome' the event. This could be gleaned from an interview which Dr Morgan gave to *The Times's* religious affairs correspondent in 2003. The article provided an extremely favourable description of the Welsh Church's financial position, as compared with the Church of England, and posited that 'no wonder that in England there is increasing talk of disestablishment'. The article noted that archbishop's response had been that: 'I do not think it is for me to recommend dis-establishment', which implied that he would have done so, but he added that: 'It is for the Church of England to discover it', suggesting that perhaps, on the centenary of disestablishment, the Welsh Church should be expressing their gratitude for those who battled, decade after decade, to set the Church free.²²²

'The shadow of the Church of England'.

Since 1920 the strained nature of the Church of England's existence as a state church was demonstrated by periodic examinations of that relationship, with the Cecil Committee in 1930, the Moberly Commission of 1949 and the Chadwick Committee in 1967. As early as 1913, when, ironically, there were last ditch attempts to defer, or at least modify, Welsh disestablishment, the Church of England's Representative Church Council passed a resolution which reflected its own growing tribulations. The archbishops of Canterbury and York were requested to establish a committee to report upon the relationship between Church and State, to secure 'a fuller expression of the spiritual independence of the Church as well as of the national recognition of religion'.²²³ It was accepted that the Church of England was obliged to recognise that, firstly: 'Parliament has confined it in every department of its constitutional existence within statutory bars which Parliament itself alone can break or reshape: and, secondly, that Parliament is no longer fitted to legislate for the Church'.²²⁴

²²¹ The Archbishop of Wales, *Presidential Address – Governing Body, April 2010*, The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, 2010.

²²² 'Is this the bishop with the inclusive touch? Well yes and no', *The Times*, 23 August 2003.

²²³ *The Archbishops' Committee on Church & State* (London: SPCK, 1917), p.2.

²²⁴ *The Archbishops' Committee on Church and State*, pp.29-30.

The significance of what was happening in respect of England and the impact, if any upon Wales, has rarely, if ever, been acknowledged and the report of the *Archbishops' Committee on Church and State*, known as the Selborne Report, addressed the position of the 'old Colonies' which had begun as established churches, but had viewed disestablishment as 'the favoured solution of the problem of church and state'.²²⁵ The Committee's recognition that generally 'the Anglican Communion outside England' were in a position where they possessed 'autonomy' was expressed without reference to Wales and the 1914 Welsh Church Act. The members of the committee were divided upon the question of disestablishment.²²⁶ Following a delay caused by the Great War, most of the measures recommended by the committee were introduced into the Church Assembly (Powers) Act 1919, known as the Enabling Act. This devolved to the Church of England, a significant level of autonomy, a change which was then perceived as the most significant in the Church/State relationship since the Reformation, as: 'It would confer on the Church of England all the advantages of disestablishment, without any of the disadvantages'.²²⁷ Yet the Church of England remained very aware of the limitations of that autonomy. The thorny issue of the nature of the relationship between Church and State continued to be a topical and pressing issue within the Church of England.²²⁸ The archbishop of York, writing in 1950, demonstrated the incongruity of approach when he glibly ascribed 'the disestablishment and disendowment of the four Welsh dioceses' as being the result of 'adverse legislation', following 'long agitation directed against the Church'²²⁹, and then, a few pages later, whilst describing the *Life and Liberty* campaign within the Church of England in a positive manner. *Life and Liberty* was a public pressure group formed in 1917, by those advocating reform and self-government for the Church of England. The archbishop reported that responsible Churchmen, including himself, were 'almost unanimous in deciding that if we could not obtain self-government we should ask for disestablishment'.²³⁰ Although there was no hint of irony, in terms of the fact that many of those who had condemned Welsh disestablishment were now actively considering the possible disestablishment of the English

²²⁵ *The Archbishops' Committee on Church and State*, p.34.

²²⁶ *The Archbishops' Committee on Church and State*, p.39.

²²⁷ David M. Thompson, 'The Politics of the Enabling Act (1919)', in Derek Baker (ed.), *Church, Society and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p.386.

²²⁸ *HC Deb. 25 January 1999, vol.324, cc.17-8*: Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) asked for 'an assessment of the financial consequences of the disestablishment of the Church of England'. He suggested that it would be 'prudent' to do their sums now, 'so that when that democratic day dawns, it will not be such a shock for them'.

²²⁹ Cyril Garbett, Archbishop of York, *Church and State in England* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950), p. 107.

²³⁰ Garbett, Archbishop of York, *Church and State in England*, p.112.

Anglican church. The Commission did not consider ‘that there is any necessary connection between Disestablishment and Disendowment’, nor did it believe that ‘the fear of Disendowment should be allowed to play any great part in shaping the policy of the Church’.²³¹ However, this principled stand did not dispel a suggestion, from reading the Commission’s report, that potential disendowment was a significant factor. Another witness, Reverend Dr P. Carnegie Simpson, provided a dispassionate response to the question of whether English disestablishment and disendowment would ‘be a blow to religion and an injury to the country’, when he considered that ‘a great deal of over-tragic language is often used about this. The case of Wales shows the exaggeration of much of it’.²³²

Writing in 1950, Archbishop Garbett of York argued ‘for some readjustment in the existing relationship between Church and State’.²³³ Although he was writing 30 years after Welsh disestablishment, the archbishop is remarkably sparing in any comments about Wales and avoids any direct comparison with the position in England, although the concept of disestablishment is an integral part of his analysis. The archbishop could have reflected upon the Welsh experience of disestablishment, as described by the bishop of St. Asaph, W. T. Havard, only three years earlier, in 1947, when *The Spectator*, albeit with some surprise, reported upon the bishop’s positive observations concerning ‘our twenty-seventh year of freedom’.²³⁴ The bishop had been ‘convinced that the Church throughout the Principality would be unanimous against a return to the old order’. It is crucial to try and understand the Janus-faced way the Church of England adjudged disestablishment. It appeared to maintain a steadfast resistance as far as Wales was concerned, in line with the resolutely uncompromising attitude displayed by the two key Welsh defenders but was prepared to engage in a more nuanced approach, when it was considered in a purely English context. Archbishop Garbett accepted that: ‘Disestablishment seems at first sight the quickest and surest way of gaining spiritual freedom’.²³⁵ He went on to describe the ‘good’ which would be drawn from disestablishment: the appointment of its own bishops and deans, the fact that the Church would be self-governing and, thirdly, that the Church would have its own spiritual courts, and, to sum up, ‘Disestablishment should mean a free Church in a free State’.²³⁶ Remarkably, he admits

²³¹ *Church & State. Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on the Relations between Church and State*, volume 1, p.51.

²³² *Church & State*, p.190.

²³³ Cyril Garbett, Archbishop of York, *Church and State in England*, p.5.

²³⁴ ‘This is our twenty-seventh year of freedom,’ said the Bishop of St. Asaph’, *The Spectator*, 2 May 1947, p.5.

²³⁵ Garbett, *Church and State in England*, p.142.

²³⁶ Garbett, *Church and State in England*, p.143.

that these would be ‘valuable gains if they were certain to follow disestablishment’ and yet, he made no attempt to utilise the Welsh example, in order to test these potential ‘valuable gains’ or, indeed, the potential disadvantages. These disadvantages included a supposition that the ‘State would not allow the Church to retain considerable property’ unless ‘the constitution and doctrine’ of the Church were carefully defined; he anticipates some nefarious State interference, again without a view of the Welsh experience. Archbishop Garbett did conclude that disestablishment, at that time, would present a drawback which was not associated with the legal implications or the practical outcome, but reflected how the British State, with its partial and painful decolonisation, viewed itself *vis-à-vis* the world. The archbishop, in a similar vein to F. E. Smith, opined that it would discourage Christians around the world: ‘at a time when millions are under the sway of ideologies which regard the Christian Church as their most dangerous foe, and when in many Moslem lands Christianity is hard pressed in the fight for survival’, although he did admit that ‘In all probability the reasons which led to disestablishment in England would not be anti-Christian’, as he recognized that many believed that Christianity would benefit generally from a separation of Church and State.²³⁷

When *The Times* provided a guide to Church establishment in 1963, it queried whether disestablishment was in effect a freedom which ‘unfettered’ the church concerned and it suggested that the Church of Ireland ‘had been seriously hampered in its freedom of development by the terms of its disestablishment in 1871, while the Church in Wales, disestablished in 1920, has not’.²³⁸ In 1984, the question was again being asked whether the Church of England, ‘by ending its relationship with the state’, would ‘improve its relationship with the nation’, mainly due to the contemporaneous tensions between the then prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, and bishops whom she viewed as straying into secular matters. The article, by *The Times*’s religious affairs correspondent, provided an extraordinary exposition of what could result from English disestablishment, but without any mention of the position in Wales, which again makes its conclusions fascinating. It was suggested that English disestablishment ‘would leave English society with no source of fundamental values other than the pragmatic sentiment of the majority’ and that ‘a secular state would have to have a secular constitution to declare what it stood for and what were the rights of its citizens’.²³⁹ The article does not attempt

²³⁷ Garbett, *Church and State in England*, p.146.

²³⁸ ‘Guide to the Church Establishment’, *The Times*, 6 May 1965, p.5.

²³⁹ ‘Hidden depths of church and state’, *The Times*, 17 December 1984, p.12.

to address how the ‘dangerous gap’ created by disestablishment had been addressed in Wales. By 2012, *The Times*, in its ‘Opinion’ section, asserted that it was Anglicans who had ‘most to gain from disestablishment’, with the ‘prize’ of ‘institutional freedom’ being the objective.²⁴⁰

In 1895, Dean David Howells preached at Manchester Cathedral²⁴¹, when he protested about the scare mongering tactics employed by the church’s defenders. He declared that: ‘Constantly, are we told that Disestablishment would be the “ruin of the Church,” the “destruction of the Church,” the “collapse of the Church”, and other stronger terms are used, thus confounding the Church with the accident of the Establishment.’²⁴² Statements of the kind which have, in the twenty-first century become known as ‘Project Fear’, had been periodically utilised by English churchmen, or other establishment figures, whenever the possibility of disestablishment has arisen, predicting dire consequences and without any cognisance of Welsh disestablishment, which was staring at them from across Offa’s Dyke, but which was studiously ignored. The Lord Mayor of London, Sir Leslie Boyce, was grandiloquent about the potential results of disestablishment when, in 1952, he stated that it would be ‘interpreted abroad as the beginning of the break-up of that Christian civilisation on which greatness of this country was based’ and, rather curiously, that: ‘A Church established and revered by the State and free and strong in itself was one of the safeguards against the rising tide of totalitarianism’.²⁴³ It would be tempting to dismiss such pronouncements as simply reflecting contemporary perturbations, when the City of London still bore the scars of a recent World War, with a ‘Cold War’ underway. However, it is worth noting that, in 2002, the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, also believed that ‘severing the links between Church and State would lead to the collapse of civilised society’, with the Church providing a ‘spiritual underpinning of the State’²⁴⁴. On this occasion there was a recognition of the indirect sleight and a parliamentary Early Day Motion was laid on 24 April 2002, when Jon Owen Jones, the MP for Cardiff Central, noted that: ‘the church has been disestablished in Wales for the most part of a century with no evidence of a collapse in the state or an increase in dishonesty, faithlessness, disrespect or hatred of neighbours when compared with England’.²⁴⁵ Dr Carey was to be followed as

²⁴⁰ ‘End this failed marriage of Church and State’, *The Times*, 28 December 2012, p.27.

²⁴¹ Howell, David, *Sermon on Romans 12.18: Preached at Manchester Cathedral on the Eve of St. David’s Day*, Bangor, 1895, p.12.

²⁴² Howell, *Sermon on Romans 12.18*, p.12.

²⁴³ “‘No Time for Talk of Disestablishment’”. Lord Mayor’s Comments’, *The Times*, 20 June 1952, p.3.

²⁴⁴ ‘Carey says State would fall apart without Church link’, *The Times*, 24 April 2002, pp.1 and 4.

²⁴⁵ ‘Disestablishment of the Church’, Early Day Motion 1190, 22 April 2002.

archbishop of Canterbury by Rowan Williams who, in 2008, admitted that he recognised the case for disestablishment, because of his experience of the Church in Wales:

I can see that it's by no means the end of the world if the Establishment disappears. The strength of it is that the last vestiges of state sanction disappeared, so when you took a vote at the Welsh Synod, it didn't have to be nodded through by parliament afterwards. There is a certain integrity to that.²⁴⁶

Yet Dr Williams went on to express unease, but for a practical reason which was concerned with modern perceptions of the place and influence of the Church in society: 'it's a very shaky time for the public presence of faith in society. I think the motives that would now drive disestablishment from the state side would be mostly to do with . . . trying to push religion into the private sphere'.

Established Church redux.

Perceptions of what was meant by disestablishment were to change, but any examination must address the following, commonly held viewpoint: 'It can readily be believed that the intention of those who sought disestablishment may well have been to drive Anglicanism out of Wales, in the belief that Wales was and should be seen to be a radical and Nonconformist nation. Disestablishment was meant to be a punitive act'.²⁴⁷ By such a definition, the conclusion must be that the victors would have been the Church defenders, whose successful efforts to delay, and then to attenuate, what was delivered by the legislation in 1914 and 1919. As R.T. Jenkins observed: 'Disestablishment was postponed to so distant a date that when it came it had lost nearly all the value it may ever have happened to possess, whether in the eyes of political Dissenters or in those of cultural nationalists'.²⁴⁸ The *plus ça change* approach, in describing the Church in Wales after 1920, was echoed in the *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, in 1993, when the Reverend Roger Lee Brown addressed the apparent confusion about the identity of Church in Wales, seventy years after disestablishment. He wrote that there was a 'wish to remain an "established" Church with a disestablished *ethos*'.²⁴⁹ The fact that the Church in Wales retains the characteristics of an established church has led to it being described 'more accurately as

²⁴⁶ 'Interview: Rowan Williams', *New Statesman*, 18 December 2008.

²⁴⁷ Thomas Glyn Watkin, 'Disestablishment, Self-determination and the Constitutional Development of the Church in Wales', in *Essays in Canon Law. A Study of the Law of the Church in Wales* (Cardiff: UWP, 1992), ed. by Norman Doe, p.26.

²⁴⁸ R. T. Jenkins, 'The Development of Nationalism in Wales', *The Sociological Review*, vol.27, issue2 (April 1935), p.173.

²⁴⁹ Roger Lee Brown, 'What of the Church in Wales?', *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, vol.3, issue12 (January 1993), p.20.

being a ‘post-established’ church’.²⁵⁰ However, the Marriage (Wales) Act 2010, provided a: ‘textbook example of the paradox of disestablishment: a disestablished church can rarely, if ever, enjoy the same legal status as a church which has never been established, as it will always be bound by the terms of the statute by which it was disestablished’.²⁵¹ The Church in Wales required an Act of Parliament to reform its marriage law, whereas paradoxically the Church of England legislated for itself by Measure.²⁵²

During a House of Lords debate in 2002, Lord Kenneth O. Morgan went to some lengths to describe the ‘success’ of disestablishment, and he spoke of a church which had been ‘transformed. It has grown; it has been a dynamic Church, whereas the Welsh non-conformist chapels have gone into decline. It has been far more responsive to social and cultural change’.²⁵³ Lord Morgan gave, as an example, the poetry of R. S Thomas, with its ‘social and cultural criticism’, which he suggested was ‘inconceivable in the suffocating atmosphere of the Church prior to disestablishment’. This failed to acknowledge that the writings of such churchmen as Dean H. T. Edwards and Canon David Jones were testament to the fact that ‘social and cultural criticism’ was evident.²⁵⁴ Although there is only room to touch briefly on the subject, Lord Morgan’s other contention, that the disestablished Church ‘has done much to promote the Welsh language’ should be examined carefully. The Church’s attitude to the Welsh language was an important feature of the campaign for Welsh disestablishment, but it appears that the Church’s uncertain relationship with the language continued, post-disestablishment. A somewhat begrudging, tactless and condescending comment, in a report of the proceedings of the church’s governing body in 2007, merits consideration. It revealed that: ‘Although not under any statutory obligation to do so, from the time of Disestablishment, the Church had recognised the equality of Welsh and English’.²⁵⁵ The author’s observation, without any apparent awareness of the church’s past, fraught relationship with the Welsh language, appeared to suggest that the Church should have been congratulated for its

²⁵⁰ Harris and Startup, *The Church in Wales. The Sociology of a Traditional Institution*, p.7.

²⁵¹ Nicholas Roberts, ‘The Historical Background to the Marriage (Wales) Act 2010’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 13 (2011), p.41.

²⁵² Church of England Marriage Measure 2008, No. 1.

²⁵³ ‘Church and State’, *HL Debate*, 22 May 2002, vol.635, cc.769-816.

²⁵⁴ Canon David Jones, *The Welsh Church and Welsh Nationality*, p.114: where he wrote that Welsh ‘was saved from actual extinction in Welsh centres, not by well-paid incumbents, but by Welsh speaking curates, who kept alive the fire on her altars for a miserable pittance, while the alien and alienised pluralists who hired them, were accumulating or dissipating fortunes in luxury and lethargy’.

²⁵⁵ Archdeacon P. Morris of Margam, ‘Governing Body of the Church in Wales, April to September 2007’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, vol.10, no.1 (January 2008), p.109.

magnanimity. It is difficult to reconcile his statement with an address which the archbishop of Wales made to the same body, eighty-five years earlier, in 1922, when he attached a somewhat greater priority: 'the subject of language, which he described as the most sensitive, most difficult, and yet most imperative in its urgency for the future of the Church in Wales'.²⁵⁶ It was apparent, a quarter of a century later, in 1949, there was continuing official admission of the Church's apparent inability to address the issue: 'We cannot deny that in Welsh-speaking Wales the Church is widely held to be isolated from Welsh life and that her alleged lack of interest in the preservation of Welsh culture and tradition is being interpreted as a sign of total lack of care for the well-being of the people'.²⁵⁷

Shortly afterwards, tensions within the Welsh Church were to become evident, with the election of non-Welsh speakers to be archbishop of Wales²⁵⁸ and bishop of Swansea and Brecon²⁵⁹, within weeks of each other. *The Times* reported that the appointment of an Englishman, who does not speak Welsh, 'provided ammunition for those Welshmen who claimed that the national spirit is being crushed by an anglicised squirearchy', wording which was emblematic of reportage from the previous century. The new archbishop was quoted as saying that he did: 'not accept that there is a tendency among Welshmen to think of the Church in Wales as an alien body, an instrument of the establishment in all but name'.²⁶⁰ Then, without any apparent discernment, he explained that there was no: 'sinister significance in the shortage of Welsh speakers among the clergy, nor in the fact that the proceedings of the governing body are conducted in English. This was no more than a reflection of the trend in the Principality as a whole'.

Sixty years ago, the controversy concerning archiepiscopal and episcopal elections led to an entertaining exchange of letters in the *Western Mail*, which caused the author, 'a prominent layman of the Church in Wales', writing under the pen name of 'Theomemphus', to draft a 'pungent and penetrating pamphlet', entitled *Bilingual Bishops and All That*. The identity of the author, broadcaster and literary critic Aneurin Talfan Davies, soon became known, and the

²⁵⁶ 'The Church in Wales. Problems for Governing Body', *The Times*, 28 September 1922, p.12.

²⁵⁷ *Report of the Nation and Prayer Book Commission*, (1949), p.42.

²⁵⁸ Alfred Edwin Morris, (1894-1971), bishop of Monmouth from 1945 to 1967 and Archbishop of Wales from 1957 to 1967.

²⁵⁹ John James Absalom 'Jack' Thomas, (1908-1995), bishop of Swansea and Brecon from 1958 to 1976.

²⁶⁰ 'Archbishop of Wales without the language', *The Times*, 18 November 1958, p.6.

pamphlet made it clear that had it not been for the supportive statements by the Bishops of Llandaff and Bangor:

the people inside, and more importantly those outside the Church, would have been led to believe that the Welsh language, and all that is bound up with it was held of no account in our Church, and thus give to outsiders an added reason for their mistaken belief that the Church in Wales is in reality nothing more than the *Church of England* in Wales, more concerned with maintaining anglicising influences, than in ministering to the welfare of Wales and its people and maintain those things which make us what we are – a nation.²⁶¹

In his 1976 history of the Welsh Church, Canon Walker acknowledged: ‘In the last analysis, integration in Wales is integration into both Welsh-speaking and English-speaking communities, and in the third quarter of the twentieth century that complex issue remains the most delicate and the most critical question for the Church in Wales to solve’.²⁶² The fact that this statement brought his history to a close might have tempted readers to believe that this was a subject upon which the Welsh Church would now attribute a level of priority, although some might have reflected upon the words of Dean H. T. Edwards,²⁶³ written almost one hundred years earlier when, in 1879, he wrote that: ‘Let the Church have a native ministry that can regain that Welsh heart, and she will be strong and rich; and when another Congress is held in Swansea by our children at the end of thirty years, some of us may then be living to hear them call her, not the Church *in* Wales, but the Church *of* Wales.’²⁶⁴ Dean Edwards was remarkably prescient, as the Church of England held its annual Church Congress in Swansea in 1909. Unfortunately, Dean Edwards would have been horrified at the summation offered by one newspaper, which boasted that: ‘politicians have beaten assiduously against the fabric and constitution of the National *Church*, they have produced not even a mark, and in this sense there has not been the slightest change since the *Congress* of 1879’.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ ‘Theomemphus’, *Bilingual Bishops and All That* (Llandybie, 1958), p.1.

²⁶² David Walker, ‘Disestablishment and Independence’, in *A History of the Church in Wales*, p.187.

²⁶³ Henry Thomas Edwards, (1837-1884), Dean of Bangor from 1876. Brother of Bishop (later Archbishop A. G. Edwards). His address to the Church Congress, Swansea, on 9 October 1879, was entitled *The Past and Present Position of the Church in Wales* and its second sentence was a damning verdict on the Anglican church in Wales, ‘Till the twelfth century, the Church was the Church of Wales’. Lest anybody should be confused about his views, he had preached at St. David’s Church, Liverpool, on 25 May 1879, on the topic of *Why are the Welsh People Alienated from the Church?*

²⁶⁴ Dean H.T. Edwards, ‘The Past and Present Position of the Church in Wales’, *Report of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Church Congress held at Swansea on October the 7th, 8th, 9th, & 10th 1879*, ed. by the Rev. F. W. Edmondes (London: John Hodges, 1880), p.358.

²⁶⁵ ‘Swansea Church Congress’, *The Cambrian*, 1 October 1909, p.4.

Canon Walker's contention, in 1976, that: 'There is a strong case to argue that Welsh is now essential within the Welsh Church'²⁶⁶, should be contrasted with Cynog Dafis's foreword to a 2011 report, in which he wrote that: 'Our analysis and recommendations arise from a deep conviction that a far-reaching change is necessary in order to give the Welsh language its rightful place in the future life of the Church in Wales'.²⁶⁷ A clear indicator that the church authorities did not ascribe any genuine import to the recognition of 'the equality of Welsh and English' could be drawn from the fact that although: 'It was decreed that the Constitution of the Church in Wales should be published in both Welsh and English, yet it was until 1972 that volume I of the Constitution was published in Welsh, and the Welsh version of volume II did not appear until 1980 – sixty years after disestablishment'.²⁶⁸ Although it has been suggested that there were some administrative reasons which may have led to the delay in translation, it is difficult to seriously ascribe such an excuse to a delay amounting to decades.

Writing in 1893, David Jones excoriated the Church's past leaders, with a statement that: 'The Anglicising policy of past generations, which has prevailed too largely in the promotion of the higher dignitaries of the Church has tended to discourage the due cultivation of the Welsh language and to crush out the national sentiment from the heart of the ministry'.²⁶⁹ In case revisionist historians might suggest that such nineteenth-century pronouncements were unduly fervid and bear no relevance in contemporary times, it should be compared with an article in *The Church Times*, in 2012. The bishop of Bangor, Andrew John, was reported as warning: 'Our communities are becoming more Welsh, but there is a real danger that the Church in Wales is becoming more English because of the leadership in our churches'.²⁷⁰ In 2008, D. P. Davies intimated that: 'Episcopal elections in the disestablished Church give lie to the charge that the Church in Wales is an alien, anti-Welsh language body', and, stated that two-thirds of those elected bishops have been Welsh-speakers.²⁷¹ The current position with episcopal appointments in the Church in Wales, close to the centenary of Welsh disestablishment, would suggest that it would be necessary to look elsewhere to 'give lie to the charge'.

²⁶⁶ David Walker, 'Disestablishment and Independence', in *A history of the Church in Wales*, p.186.

²⁶⁷ *Pob un yn ei iaith ei hun/Each in our own language*, Report of the Welsh Language Vocations Group to the Standing Committee of the Church in Wales, December 2011, p.1.

²⁶⁸ Enid Pearce Roberts, 'The Welsh Church, Canon Law and the Welsh Language', in *Essays in Canon Law. A Study of the Law of the Church* (Cardiff: UWP, 1992), ed. by N. Doe, p.155.

²⁶⁹ David Jones, *The Welsh Church and Welsh Nationality* (Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1893), p.vii.

²⁷⁰ 'Church seeks Welsh-speakers to fill language gap', *The Church Times*, 27 April 2012, p.6.

²⁷¹ Reverend Professor D.P. Davies, 'Welsh Anglicanism', *Trivium* (2008), p.118.

*'This tardy measure of justice for Wales'.*²⁷²

A range of factors have led to significant misunderstandings about both the campaign that sought Welsh disestablishment and what resulted. It was a recondite subject which often leads it to be subject to superficial examination. Reference has been made to those commentators who, often from an Anglo-centric perspective, have, by reason of brevity or from a paucity of knowledge, not provided an accurate depiction. Writing in 1918, the Communist journalist William Ewer²⁷³ argued against home rule and that problems, particularly those that related to Labour: 'are not Welsh problems or English problems or Scottish problems, but problems concerning the whole of the three nations in precisely the same way'. However, he was, upon reflection, obliged to qualify that statement, when he added that: 'The Welsh Church question is the only exception I can think of for the moment'.²⁷⁴ Other commentators have perhaps attempted to assuage the potential sensitivities of a re-established Welsh church that, at a time of increased secularisation, is understood to warrant support. Although the *Humanist Society* was to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Welsh disestablishment by equating the event with 'a proud legacy of pluralism and inclusion' and sought to equate the desire to have equality of religion with the elimination of religion.²⁷⁵

Religious and societal influences have caused disestablishment to appear less relevant and any analysis of the period immediately prior to 1914 is liable to be influenced by the enormity of events from 1914 to 1918. One of the critical characteristics of the Welsh disestablishment campaign was its longevity, and yet this crucial feature is usually ignored. In particular, the reasons which lay behind the length of the campaign are critical to an appreciation of Wales prior to the Great War. During a critical debate Commentators have stumbled over the issue, conflating dates and events, thereby distorting the campaign itself. A confirmation of this perception of the Church in Wales was outlined by Lord Williams of Elvel, as it exhibited a significant dearth of knowledge about how Welsh disestablishment came about. This was

²⁷² 'Established Church (Wales) Bill', *HC*, 25 April 1912, p.1318. During the fervid debate on the second day of the first reading of this bill, Llewelyn Williams MP made reference to the continued evidence of the electoral support in Wales.

²⁷³ William Norman Ewer, (1885-1977), is little known today and he was, from 1919, organising a group which methodically sought out weaknesses in government departments, and then infiltrated those departments, on behalf of the Soviet Union. His group operated successfully in both Britain and France: V. Madeira, 'Moscow's Interwar Infiltration of British Intelligence, 1919-1929', *The Historical Journal*, 46, 4 (2003), pp.915-933.

²⁷⁴ W. N. Ewer, 'About Federal Home Rule', *Pioneer*, 7 September 1918, p.3.

²⁷⁵ *100 Years of Disestablishment. Civic Pluralism in Wales, Past and Present*, (Wales Humanism: 2020).

despite the presence of Lord Kenneth O. Morgan in the chamber, who declared ‘an interest as the only living author of a book on the history of Welsh disestablishment’.²⁷⁶ In his desire to alert his Lordships about the ‘legislative implications’ of any move to disestablish the Church of England, Lord Williams warned: ‘that it took Lloyd George seven years—admittedly, with the interruption of the First World War—to disestablish the Welsh Church, which he wished to do, so we are told, because he disliked the Welsh bishops of the day’.²⁷⁷ His Lordship’s observations were worrying in that the ‘seven years’, which he incorrectly calculated, was actually the period after the Welsh Church Act became law, and that the ‘legislative implications’, with which he was concerned, would have been more accurately described as encompassing half a century. As written elsewhere, it is reasonable to surmise that most commentators would find such a timespan difficult to comprehend or would wish to eschew the questions that would naturally arise from the existence of such a hiatus. Lord Williams’s comment about Lloyd George and the Welsh bishops demonstrated no cognisance of Lloyd George’s long-standing friendship with Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph. Lloyd George confirmed that: ‘Our friendship began in 1904’, and ‘Mr. Lloyd George said that the Archbishop and he had fought many battles, each doing his best for his cause; but during all these years they were personal friends and there was nothing he was prouder of than that he had won and retained the friendship of the Archbishop of Wales’.²⁷⁸ Lord Williams’s observations demonstrate how a significant misunderstanding of Welsh disestablishment has developed and, also, importantly, how the history of disestablishment has become tainted by direct association with the manner in which many still perceive Lloyd George’s personal reputation.²⁷⁹ At the time of the archbishop’s enthronement in 1920, Lloyd George’s reputation was still in the ascendancy and as reported elsewhere, the newly enthroned Archbishop of Wales was to refer to his belief that Lloyd George had ‘saved the Empire’, thereby saving Europe and indeed civilisation.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ ‘Church and State’, *HL Deb.* 22, May 2002, c.801.

²⁷⁷ ‘Church and State’, *HL Deb.* 22, May 2002, c.795.

²⁷⁸ ‘Origins of Welsh Investiture. Mr. Lloyd George’s Part’, *The Times*, 14 August 1923, p. 11.

²⁷⁹ Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Lloyd George and the Historians’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1972), pp.65-85, in which Kenneth Morgan charts the way historians have dealt with Lloyd George, with many commentators traducing his reputation. A recent reviewer of Simon Heffer’s book, *Staring at God: Britain in the Great War* (London: Random House, 2019), reported how Lloyd George was presented throughout the book as ‘unscrupulous, ambitious, dishonest and manipulative’.

²⁸⁰ ‘Welsh Archbishop Enthroned. A Notable Ceremony. The New Order in Wales’, *The Times*, 2 June 1920, p.13.

References to the advantages flowing from disestablishment have often been disregarded, even from those who had dedicated their lives to counter such a prospect. The dean of St. David was clear that; ‘For the Church itself, Disestablishment has been a blessing in disguise’, albeit that his conclusion was allied with a somewhat gloating assessment that it had been a terrible disappointment to political Nonconformists.²⁸¹ One of the ‘freedoms’ that have benefitted the Church in Wales since 1920 was the right to select their own bishops, whereas it was to be in July 2007 that Gordon Brown announced that the prime minister would no longer be directly involved in the selection process of English diocesan bishops.²⁸² This was to evoke mixed emotions from the Church of England, as it was relieved after recent examples of prime ministerial interference. Prime minister Tony Blair had rejected the church’s candidates for the see of Liverpool²⁸³ and Margaret Thatcher had overridden the wishes of the church on three occasions. However, Gordon Brown’s statement in 2007 reawakened ‘the vexed issue of disestablishment’.²⁸⁴ *The Times* opined in 2012 that it was the Anglicans who had ‘most to gain from disestablishment’, with the ‘prize’ of ‘institutional freedom’ being the objective.²⁸⁵

Many might conclude that the eventual terms of Welsh disestablishment and disendowment, and how they are interpreted today, have little bearing on an understanding of Welsh history. Despite a revisionist interpretation, whose cynosure suggests that the support for disestablishment was ebbing by 1914, it was evident that it retained a firm hold. This was despite setbacks, disappointments and a continued failure by those Welsh Liberal politicians who often achieved and sustained their political careers based upon its public espousal.

In January 1914, Hugh Edwards, Liberal MP for Mid-Glamorgan,²⁸⁶ ardently proclaimed that the passing of the Welsh Church Bill would be an ‘historic landmark in Parliamentary history as marking the first legislative achievement under the Parliament Act’. He envisaged that ‘the forthcoming Session will be big with destiny for Wales’, but he was prudent enough to add that ‘it behoves the Welsh Members to see that nothing is left to chance or to the caprice of circumstances.’²⁸⁷ Sadly, his prognostications about Wales’s ‘destiny’ were to be shattered on

²⁸¹ ‘Catholicism in Wales. The Experience of the Past Thirty Years’, *The Church Times*, 11 March 1927, p.297.

²⁸² ‘PM to withdraw from choosing diocesan bishops’, *Church Times*, 6 July 2007, p.5.

²⁸³ ‘Blair’s block on bishop may lead to church crisis’, *The Times*, 15 September 1997, p.9.

²⁸⁴ ‘Church and/or State’. The bishops should welcome more independence from government’, *The Times*, 10 July 2007, p.14.

²⁸⁵ ‘End this failed marriage of Church and State’, *The Times*, 28 December 2012, p.27.

²⁸⁶ John Hugh Edwards, (1869 –1945), politician and writer. Liberal MP for Mid-Glamorgan from 1910 to 1922, and for Accrington from 1923 to 1929.

²⁸⁷ ‘Big Destiny for Wales’, *The Glamorgan Gazette*, 16 January 1914, p.3.

the streets of Sarajevo only 5 months later. The Welsh Church Act was to be placed on the statute book just six weeks after Britain declared war upon Germany and its implementation was to be deferred for almost six years. Any sense of an 'historic landmark' was therefore forfeit. But the 'story' of Welsh disestablishment needs to be recounted, if only to appreciate how the democratically expressed desire of the Welsh electorate, buttressed by the tacit, if understated, support of the only political party of power in Wales, could be repeatedly thwarted. J. Arthur Price concluded: 'There can be no doubt that if Wales had possessed an independent Legislature of her own, competent to deal with the subject, Disestablishment would have been effected in 1868'.²⁸⁸ As Llewelyn Williams was to ask, with some exasperation: 'by what process under the Constitution the people of Wales could express their wishes more forcibly than by returning members to Parliament to express their views'.²⁸⁹

If there was a clear victory, it could not be celebrated by Nonconformity and it demonstrated the impotence of Wales, in terms of an issue which was considered important by the majority of the Welsh electorate. In addition, the continued attention that disestablishment demanded, due to the litany of setbacks, temporising and hesitancy, had an adverse impact upon an embryonic home rule movement. Any belief that disestablishment was, in some way, a substitute for home rule proved illusory. The campaign to seek disestablishment rapidly regressed into a war of attrition and it was apparent that time was on the side of the church defenders. The leading church defenders, Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph and Bishop John Owen of St. David's, were remorseless, resourceful, politically adept operators, who ensured that their views were widely promulgated. In January 1912 *The Times* had remarked upon: 'the thoroughness and the success of the Church Defence campaign of the last few months' and that there was: 'hardly a considerable town in the country in which either the Bishop of St. Asaph or the Bishop of St. David's has not put, or will not put shortly, the case of the Welsh dioceses before the electorate'.²⁹⁰ They were assisted in this by their long ecclesiastical careers. Bishop Edwards was consecrated in 1889, aged 41, and he was to boast of his fifty-year involvement in 'resisting these changes'.²⁹¹ Both bishops were to successfully combine their roles as the prominent Church of England prelates in Wales with a pseudo-political role, where they lectured, lobbied, advised and cajoled political leaders. The personalities who spearheaded the

²⁸⁸ J. Arthur Price, 'Welsh nationalism and Mr. Lloyd George's speech', *Welsh Outlook*, vol.5, no.9 (September 1918), p.274.

²⁸⁹ 'Disestablishment. First Reading of the Bill Carried', *The Times*, 26 April 1912, p.8.

²⁹⁰ 'The Disestablishment Campaign', *The Times*, 29 January 1912, p.9.

²⁹¹ 'Welsh Archbishop Confirmed. Impressive Ceremony'. *The Times*, 10 April 1920, p.9.

disestablishment campaign were less consistent, as they were, in the main, politicians whose careers waxed and waned. Arguably, however passionate or committed they might have appeared, they had less ‘invested’ and would not, apart from the possibility of political opprobrium, ever be as directly affected by failure. It has been suggested that the campaign to achieve Welsh disestablishment ‘bore all the hallmarks of a Greek tragedy’.²⁹² Such a description was apt, but even more so if Lord Riddell’s diary entry for 30 September 1913 was correct. Reginald McKenna, the home secretary, had advised Riddell that the cabinet ‘proposed to drop’ the disestablishment bill in 1912, and that it was only his threat of resignation that had avoided that possibility.²⁹³ An examination of the parliamentary debates in 1912 concerning disestablishment, and the range of other challenges facing Asquith’s Liberal government, would tend to add credence to this startling admission. But to have stumbled so near to the legislative finish line, after almost half a century, only to have the possibility tossed aside, would have been an extraordinary end to the saga. Although it must be acknowledged that the legislative shenanigans that took place between the passing of the Welsh Church Act in 1914 and disestablishment in 1920 were to provide a fitting denouement to this misunderstood episode in Welsh history.

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²⁹² R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation. Wales 1890-1914* (Cardiff: UWP, 2004), ed. by Robert Pope, p.373.

²⁹³ Lord Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary*, pp.176-177.