

WHAT OF THE CHURCH IN WALES?

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Most clerics of the Church in Wales will be aware that many people on the fringe of Church life will describe themselves as belonging to the Church of England, rather than as members of the Church in Wales. A Welsh hospital chaplain recently issued a circular requesting that Anglican patients entering hospital should describe themselves as members of the Church in Wales rather than of the Church in England. Seventy and more years after the disestablishment of the Church in Wales there is thus confusion in the minds of many about the identity of the Church in Wales. Is it, or is it not, part of the Church of England? But if there is confusion in the minds of some about the identity of the Church in Wales, there is equal confusion about its status. What does it mean to belong to a disestablished Church? What does it mean to be a disestablished Church?

It is not a subject generally discussed. I have failed to find any real discussion about our *status* as a Church at all. Clearly the Church in Wales is not a sect. On the other hand we do not want to be a denomination either. Rather we give the impression that we wish to remain an “established” Church with a disestablished *ethos*. We somehow want the best of both worlds. As Arthur Edwards states, ‘Can there be any excuse for a disestablished Church to seek the privileges of the Establishment rather than assert the independent and divine status of the Church in a pluralist society?’¹ We like our independence from the State, but we still prefer, or at least wish to retain, the appearance of an established Church, with the assumption that every area within Wales is the responsibility of some cleric, and that the great national events should take place in our cathedral churches.

The ambiguous relationship between the Church in Wales and the State adds further to our confusion. Thomas G. Watkin in an informative and recent article, ‘Vestiges of the Establishment’ (1990), points out that two areas of *establishment* were retained in the Welsh Church after disestablishment, namely, those of marriage and burial.² The Church in Wales still has rights and privileges in these areas which are not automatically enjoyed by nonconformity. These rights are controlled by an ecclesiastical law made for the Church by the State in Parliament. As Watkin remarks, in Wales, though not in England, there is a valid distinction between canon law and ecclesiastical law. Canon law is that law which is controlled and regulated by the Church in Wales, but ecclesiastical law, in those areas instanced, is regulated by the State and over which the Church in Wales has no actual control.

So what is the ecclesiological status of the Church in Wales? It is obvious we need to go back to the period of the disestablishment in order to attempt this particular question. And one of the principal features we need to look at in that period is the title the Church in Wales chose for itself as the expression of its identity.

1. ‘God and Caesar’ in *Lay Authority*, ed A. R. Willie (Cardiff, 1990), p. 118.

2. (1990) 2 Ecc. L.J. 110-115.

1. THE TITLE: THE CHURCH IN WALES

What then does the title *Church in Wales* actually mean? The term *The Church* indicates, as C. A. H. Green maintained in his study *The Constitution of the Church in Wales* (1937), that we belong to the universal Church, and in particular to its Anglican aspect. As Green rightly held, whatever disestablishment effected, it did not affect our doctrinal position: 'There was no break in the life of the Church on the 31st of March 1920; the Church is the same after as before Disestablishment which only touched the surface of things.'³ The writer, A. W. Wade Evans, held the same view. Writing in 1906 he stated 'The Church still exists, not forever as the national religion, which is ridiculous, but as a living denomination.'⁴ Archbishop Edwin Morris also wrote, against a controversy regarding his claims about the Church in Wales, that the Church 'assumes without question its place as the whole Catholic Church. It is so sure of its position that it feels no need to assert it . . . It is the spiritual air we breathe; any other would mean our death.'⁵

The term *Wales* is equally clear. The Welsh Church Act 1914 (4 & 5 George V c 91) interpreted the term as meaning those parishes within the four historic dioceses of Wales which were included within the geographical boundaries of Wales and Monmouthshire, and those parishes whose boundaries moved across the border but who opted to remain within the Church in Wales.

It is the proposition *in* which demands our attention, however, and for our purposes it will be necessary to look at the terms of definition of the Act which disestablished the Church.

It is not generally realised that the Welsh Church Act concerned three aspects of the life of the Church in Wales. By this act the Church was disestablished: its ecclesiastical law and legislative processes were no longer to be governed by Parliamentary oversight; though its bishops lost their position as peers of the realm with seats in the House of Lords, the Church could appoint its own bishops by its own procedures; and private and state patronage of livings and the appointment of dignitaries were abolished. The disendowment clauses, by which the State confiscated all income acquired by the Church before the year 1662, took up a very substantial part of the Act. But the Church was also dismembered. The main operative clause (sect 3 [5]) stated that the bishops, clergy and laity of the four Welsh dioceses should cease to be members of, or new members of, the Houses of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury. Yet it could be argued that the clauses permitting the Church in Wales to establish a Representative Body for the management of the Church's property, and to call a synod 'for the general management and good government of the Church in Wales', its property and affairs, or validating its ecclesiastical law by the use of a fictional contract between the members of the Church, tended to *re-establish* the Church in Wales, albeit in a new direction.⁶

2. THE FEAR OF DISMEMBERMENT

The dismemberment clauses were retained in the bill, and eventually passed, in spite of the remonstrances of the Convocation of Canterbury – in which members

3. C. A. H. Green, *The Constitution of the Church in Wales* (London, 1937), p. 279.

4. A. W. Wade Evans, *Papers for Thinking Welshmen* (London, 1907), p. 67.

5. Edwin Morris, *The Church in Wales and Nonconformity: Second Visitation Charge* (1949), p. 15.

6. W. Fowell and L. G. Dibdin, *The Welsh Disestablishment Bill 1912* (London, 1912), pp. 14f; *The Welsh Church (Wales) Bill: The Parliamentary Controversy Further Reviewed* (London, 1913), pp. 26, 57-59; S. E. Downing, *The Church in Wales: Disestablishment and Disendowment under the Welsh Church Act 1914* (London, 1915), pp. 12, 18f, 21-23; Green, *Constitution*, p. 298.

of the four Welsh dioceses sat, and who, with others, argued that dismemberment was not in itself a necessary consequence of disestablishment.⁷ On the other hand it was argued that such dismemberment was the inevitable consequence of piecemeal disestablishment, that is, of four dioceses within the Province of Canterbury, and it was impossible, therefore, to permit the disestablished portion of the Church to remain in direct legal union with the established portion.⁸ Although nothing in the Act was said as to the actual position of the Welsh bishops, it was assumed that they would cease, 'so far as Parliamentary action is operative, to be subject to the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury.'⁹ This must have left the bishops in a rather ambiguous position.

Bishop Edwards of St Asaph, the self-elected leader of the Church in Wales' opposition to disestablishment, was more concerned about the effect of the dismemberment of the four Welsh dioceses from the Province of Canterbury than about any other aspect of disestablishment and disendowment. He frequently quoted Gladstone's comment that the 'Welsh sees form a portion of the Province of Canterbury as much as any four English sees in that Province.'¹⁰ Again and again Edwards maintained that he feared this loss of unity far more than the confiscation of the endowments of the Church. By this term 'loss of unity' Edwards meant the loss of the influence and guidance of the larger body. It would sever 'the arteries through which the life of that Church pulsed', and would expose the Church to the danger of a narrowness of outlook and make it prone to 'ill-considered innovations that certainly beset a small and isolated community.'¹¹

Bishop John Owen of St. Davids was equally fearful. He expressed his concern about the growth of 'tribal jealousies' and 'nationalistic vanities' in a separated Welsh Church. Writing to Archbishop Davidson in 1909 Owen noted that he feared most 'the dreadful apparition of a Welsh Synod, messing about with the big, complex, and far-reaching questions which now perplex all the combined wisdom of the Church of England.'¹²

An anonymous writer, in a pamphlet issued in 1913 by the Central Church Committee for Defence and Instruction, argued that the opponents of the Welsh Church had been forced to admit that it was 'on the grounds of a narrow political expediency alone they are destroying, contrary to the will of the Church, and to their own principles, the Consitution of a united Church. . .'. This would amount 'to a wide practical breach in the Province of Canterbury, of which the Welsh dioceses are a part, and involves grave dangers to the spiritual life of the dismembered portion of the Church.'¹³

If we may see the hands of Edwards and Owen in the above statement, we may also note the measured instincts of a lawyer in the following statement, written in the same pamphlet: The Home Secretary, with others 'have found it safer, instead of lauding dismemberment as a means of forcing upon the Church in Wales a constitution and a spiritual atmosphere of their own choosing, to treat the whole scheme of the Bill, in its dismemberment aspect, as a mere legal technicality without any spiritual import or effect. Parliament, they later said, following

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7. In his paper, *Self Government Compatible with Establishment and Endowment* (Cardiff, 1911), Green argued that even an established Church could retain its own legislative authority.
 8. *The Welsh Church (Wales) Bill*, p. 26.
 9. Fowell and Dibdin, *The Welsh Disestablishment Bill*, p. 15.
 10. George Lerry, *Alfred George Edwards* (Oswestry, 1939), p. 32; E. E. Owen, *The Later Life of Bishop Owen* (Llandysul, 1961), p. 231.
 11. A. G. Edwards, *Memories* (London, 1927), pp. 329-331; Owen, *Later Life of Bishop Owen*, p. 231.
 12. Owen, *Later Life of Bishop Owen*, p. 139. For a contemporary reflection, endorsing these statements, see Jeremy Winston, 'The Church of England and the Church in Wales: Two Radically Different Churches', in *Living Authority*, pp. 179-190.
 13. *The Welsh Church (Wales) Bill*, p. 61.

the Prime Minister's lead, may erect barriers between the different parts of the Church, but they will be purely legal barriers which the Church can easily surmount. Even the exclusion of the Bishops and Clergy from Convocation was pooh-poohed as being, for practical purposes, a mere nullity. Convocation, the Church was assured, was only a legal body, and the expulsion of Wales therefrom left her at full liberty to unite with the representatives of the Church of England in any purely spiritual assembly that the two bodies might think fit to set up.¹⁴

It was the hope of Bishop Edwards, especially, throughout the years of the First World War, when the enforcement of the Disestablishment Act – passed in 1914 – was suspended for the duration of hostilities, that it might still be possible for the four Welsh dioceses to retain membership of the Canterbury Convocation, or some such revised body, and thus permit the Church in Wales to remain part of a wider and more comprehensive entity. This hope was still retained by him while the four dioceses in Wales began to prepare for disestablishment. By 1917 a draft constitution was being prepared, and a Convention established comprising representatives of the four Welsh diocesan conferences. Edwards hoped that the formation of a Governing Body rather than a Synod for the Church in Wales would enable links to be retained with the Province of Canterbury so that it might be possible to repeal or evade the dismemberment clauses.¹⁵ Bishop Owen, as late as 1919, suggested that even if the Church in Wales became a separate province it could still remain part of the wider Church of England, which would then possess three provinces, rather than two [Canterbury and York]. The Act of 1914, he declared, had not weakened the wish of Welsh Churchmen to stand fast by the religious principles of the unity of the Church in England and Wales.¹⁶

3. A SEPARATE PROVINCE

The Convention of the Church in Wales, meeting in 1917, had at the back of its mind all these hopes and fears when it debated the title for the new Church. Its members were hopeful that it might not lose this wider connection, and the title they eventually chose for the new Church was governed by this consideration, as we note later. We, of course, know the sequel. In May 1919 Bishop Edwards wrote formally to Archbishop Davidson and requested his guidance about the future position of the Church in Wales:

The time has come when, as Chairman of the Governing Body, I venture respectfully to ask you for your Grace's guidance in reference to the provision in the Welsh Church Bill which excludes from the Convocation of Canterbury the representatives of the Church in Wales.

Would your Grace advise us as to the possibility and the wisdom of our attempting to retain our place in the Convocations of Canterbury, on, of course, the same terms of equality as heretofore?

Or would your Grace advise the Church in Wales to accept the new conditions and to form its own Welsh province?¹⁷

14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

15. A. J. Edwards, *Archbishop Green* (Llandysul, 1986), pp. 51f; Owen, *Later Life of Bishop Owen*, pp. 265, 275.

16. John Owen, *A Statement to St. Davids Diocese on the Acceptance of the Welsh Church Temporalities Act* (Carmarthen, 1919), pp. 40f.

17. G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (Oxford, 1952), p. 987.

Davidson, after noting the loss Convocation would sustain by the exclusion of the Welsh bishops and proctors, continued:

On the other hand, if, as seems now to be the case, the disestablishment of the four Dioceses must unhappily be regarded as a *fait accompli* to take effect after the War, we have to consider what ought in future to be the position of your four Dioceses. I have, as I think you know, taken counsel on the subject with most of our English Bishops, as well as with all the Welsh Bishops, and I am prepared to say that I have the support of, at the very least, the great majority of them in expressing my deliberate opinion that it will conduce to the happy and orderly working of the whole Church in England and Wales if by our own joint action a separate Province be formed for Wales: indeed, I cannot help fearing that unless this be done there is some danger of confusion and even chaos in the arrangements for the future. We shall hope in every possible way to retain the close fellowship in thought and action which has subsisted between the Bishops in the English and the Welsh Dioceses; but constitutionally the formation of a new Province will, as I believe, be essential to due orderliness and smoothness of working . . . I repeat 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 deeper kind which will continue to unite us in things spiritual.¹⁸

Accordingly, the four Welsh diocesan bishops were released from their oath of obedience to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a new province was formed. Edwards withdrew too from the private meetings of the bishops of the two provinces realising his status was that of a guest and not a member. His bitterness comes out in his comment that ‘the Convocation was in Bishop Stubbs’ words “a spiritual assembly, it is intimately bound up with the State Church”, and the admission to its deliberations of the representatives of a Church entirely free from any connection with the State might prove embarrassing.¹⁹ Archbishop Green, his successor, put it in a more succinct way: ‘Convocation established by law could not retain the membership of Disestablished dioceses, for it could not legislate for the Church in the absence of the Welsh Church representatives on the one hand, but its proceedings would be irregular and informal if they were included on the other.’²⁰

4. A TITLE FOR THE NEW PROVINCE

The title given to these four disestablished dioceses, *The Church in Wales*, was itself a product of this controversy as to whether the Welsh Church could continue as part of the Province of Canterbury or not. It was eventually accepted in 1917 that the matter should wait until the second meeting of the Governing Body in 1920 by which time the question of the Church’s connection with the Province of Canterbury would have been determined, and a title could then

18. *Ibid*, pp. 988-989.

19. Edwards, *Memories*, p. 328.

20. C. A. H. Green, *Disestablishment and Disendowment in Wales* (London, 1937), p. 13; see also E. W. Williamson, *The Church in Wales* (London, 1948), pp. 5f, for the results of dismemberment.

be found which would give a more accurate description of the Church in whatever position it then found itself.²¹

A number of titles had been used previously by church defenders. The *Church of Wales* was favoured by many; the *Church in Wales* had many supporters, and was used by the Welsh Church Act itself to describe the four Welsh dioceses, while others preferred the title given by that Act as its short-title, the *Welsh Church*. Historical precedents proved to be of little help, Green noting that while Gerald Cambrensis used the term *Welsh Church* and Archbishop Peckham that of *The Church of Wales*, there was then no constitutional link between the dioceses of Wales save that of their common allegiance to Canterbury.²² In a paper to the Llandaff Diocesan Conference of 1911 Green seems to have accepted the title *Church in Wales* given by the Bill with some gratitude for the 'tardy recognition' it gave to the Church in Wales,²³ while Bishop Owen made it clear that the Parliamentary draftsmen had not invented the title *The Church in Wales*, but they had accepted a term used 'by careful Church defenders' for the previous thirty years.²⁴

These arguments surfaced in a long and substantial debate at the Convention of the Church in Wales in 1917, held at Cardiff. The Convention consisted of representatives of all the four Welsh dioceses.²⁵ It was at this Convention that the title *The Church in Wales* was accepted as the most appropriate one for the Church for the time being. The other titles mentioned, *The Welsh Church* and *The Church of Wales*, received considerable support as well, those arguing for the latter stating that it expressed the territorial extent of the Church as being the only religious institution in Wales which claimed to cover every square yard of its territory.²⁶ Bishop John Owen made it clear that both titles were misleading and premature, as they indicated a separate entity or Church 'before we have settled whether there is to be a province of Wales or not.'²⁷ It was wrong, argued another speaker, to use a title which seemed to 'disassociate ourselves in every way' from the Province of Canterbury, the title *Church of Wales* seeming to him to speak of a totally independent Church.²⁸

John Owen made it clear that he believed that the title of the Church should reflect its mission to all the people of Wales, although not all accepted his argument that his preferred title *The Church in Wales* indicated this. More delegates appeared to be impressed by Sankey J.'s argument that as the title *The Church in Wales* was used by the parliamentary Act, it could not be altered, and if it were changed it could cause considerable difficulties in such matters as legacies to the new Church or with regard to the Privy Council's Charter of

21. The Governing Body was more concerned by the date of its second and subsequent meetings with the work of re-construction rather than with the actual title of the church. As the title *The Church in Wales* is used in the Archbishop of Canterbury's licence allowing the creation of the new Province of Wales on 1 April 1920, one may assume that this title had been found acceptable to the Church by this date without further debate or qualification. I am grateful to the Representative Body for permitting me to inspect the early minute book of the Governing Body, and to Mr Glyn Ellis for drawing my attention to the Archbishop's licence.

22. Green, *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, p. 5.

23. C. A. H. Green, *Disestablishment: A Paper to the Llandaff Diocesan Conference* (1911), p. 7.

24. John Owen, *An Essay on the Church in Wales and its Convention* (1917), pp. 16f.

25. *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Church in Wales* (Cardiff, 1917), pp. 125-146.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 236, cf. Owen, *An Essay* . . . , p. 17.

28. *Report of Convention*, p. 132.

Incorporation. Furthermore, he added, to adopt a title such as *The Church in Wales*, one used by the Calvinistic Methodist Church, was to commence the career of the new Church with a challenge to nonconformity which would be undignified and unpopular.²⁹

It may be concluded, therefore, that the title *The Church in Wales* was chosen in order to express the Anglican and Catholic heritage of the new Church and its geographical expression, but that the preposition *in* was retained as being deliberately ambiguous. It was seen as an interim measure, until the future relationship of the new Church to the Province of Canterbury had been established. If that title was retained after that position had been clarified and a new province brought into existence, it was not only because of the legal reasons expressed by Sankey, but also as it was a title which did not threaten or challenge nonconformity. Furthermore it also indicated that the Church believed it had a role to play within the nation of Wales, even if it was disestablished. Its catholic faith still required it to proclaim the Gospel; its historic position meant that its parochial groundwork was still intact, and if it refused to term itself the *Church in Wales* as being too arrogant or almost dismissive of the nonconformist contributions to Welsh religious life, it was still willing to be a Church ready to serve the nation in a spirit of humility and charity.

5. A NATIONAL ROLE FOR A DISESTABLISHED CHURCH

This understanding gains from Bishop Owen's continuous reiteration that the Church in Wales, even after disestablishment, had a role to play within the nation. Its new title, he claimed, spoke of the universality of the Church of Christ and reminded it of its mission to Wales itself.³⁰ The second part of his pamphlet in which this assertion is made is headed *The Mission of the Church to the Nation*.³¹ Disestablishment could not take away this mission, which 'in every country, under all circumstances, remains to the end what it has been from the beginning, and Christ's last commission forced it once for all to be a mission to nations as nations as well as to individuals as individuals.' Service for the future must therefore replace dwelling on the grievances of the past, and in this connection Owen hoped that the Church would take its place in 'Welsh national movements' more so than in the past, and even influence Welsh national life, especially by creating a wholesome spiritual and moral atmosphere so that this national life could be nurtured.³² He re-echoed these sentiments two years later in his *A Statement to the St. David's Diocese on the Acceptance of the Welsh Church Temporalities Act* (1919). Mission, he said once more, was the Church's duty 'after as well as before Disestablishment', and this it could never forget 'without disloyalty to its Divine Founder'.³³ The Church's rich heritage 'in the spiritual treasures of the Church', he said on another occasion, was left entirely unchanged by the act of disestablishment, and consequently the mission of the Church still continued, even though its thrust might have to be through the individual to the nation rather than by the Church as a corporate body.³⁴

It may be argued that Owen's re-statement of the Church's missionary task to the whole nation was no more than any other Church could claim,

29. Ibid, pp. 142f, 137, 139.

30. Owen, *An Essay*. . . , p. 18.

31. Ibid, p. 20.

32. Ibid, pp.20-22.

33. Owen, *Statement on Acceptance*, p. 51.

34. Owen, *An Essay*, p. 27.

although the one difference was that the Church in Wales had the ecclesiastical structure and parochial machinery to enable it to fulfil such a task better than most other religious bodies. On the other hand, however, I think Owen is saying more than this. Other Churches have the privilege of proclaiming the Gospel, but the Church in Wales has a duty to do so, and to involve itself in national life as fully as possible, *because* it is the historic Church of the nation, and thus part of the universal Church. Though he did not, or would not say it, the implication is that compared to the Church in Wales, the nonconformist Churches were *cul-de-sacs* leading off the main road.

6. THE PARADOX OF DISESTABLISHMENT

Such an assertion involves a paradox, for one of the clearest concerns of those who wished to see the Church in Wales disestablished was to reduce it to a position of equality – sociologically at least – with the other main-stream Welsh denominations, and thus to remove it from all the privileges of establishment which separated it from them.³⁵ Disestablishment was meant, therefore, to assert a principle of equality between the denominations in Wales, and to render the Church in Wales as no more than another denomination, with no greater privileges than any other Church. Thus Owen's claims for the Church in Wales having a mission to the whole nation struck at the very root of this sense of equality. For in a wider sense, all the denominations in Wales shared in this mission, not simply the Church in Wales, even though it saw itself in much more catholic or universal terms than did an insular Welsh nonconformity. In essence, Owen and the leaders of his own day were never able to come to terms with the full concept of disestablishment, and still thought in terms of an establishment mentality. Nonconformity made little protest. It had exhausted itself over the years of controversy, and its fight ended, had little more to say for itself.

This is why, over the years, the Church in Wales has given itself 'superior airs'. Even Bishop Edwin Morris got into some trouble for expressing these too forcibly during the late 1940s, during which he claimed, on somewhat dubious grounds, that nonconformists and Roman Catholic ministers were 'intruders'.³⁶ But generally the Church in Wales has maintained its sense of superiority in more subtle ways. If its bishops no longer sit in the House of Lords, they have found for themselves another form of numinous quality. If the influence of C. A. H. Green is here, with his outdated and overworked views of episcopal prestige, we must not underestimate the significance of W. J. Conybeare's remark, that if bishops were deprived of their 'temporal rank of influence . . . they would be tempted to make up for this diminution of their importance by lofty claims of sacerdotal

35. John Owen, *The Principles of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill* (Cardiff, 1909), p. 10: and *An Address on the Duty and Encouragement of Welsh Churchmen* (Carmarthen, 1911), p. 7.

36. Maintaining that the Church in Wales was 'the Catholic Church in this land', Morris argued it possessed a supreme pastoral and spiritual oversight through its diocesan bishops. Stating that 'both the Roman clergy and Nonconformist ministers are, strictly speaking, intruders' Morris denied their right 'to be here' (Edwin Morris, *Primary Visitation Charge* (Newport, 1946), pp. 6, 16). He based his argument on the continuation of the parochial system, together with a highly selective reading of the 17th century formularies of the Church of England which he believed were taken over by the Church in Wales at disestablishment (Edwin Morris, *The Church in Wales and Nonconformity* (Newport, 1949), pp. 2, 8f). Unfortunately, he failed to apply these matters hermeneutically to the 20th century world, though he acknowledged the difficulty as to the precise position of canon law within the Church in Wales on page 4 of his first visitation charge. J. S. Peart-Binns (*Edwin Morris, Archbishop of Wales* (Llandysul, 1990), pp. 81f) notes that Morris was speaking against the backcloth of Archbishop Fisher's controversial proposals for church unity.

power.³⁷ When the leaders of a Church claim substantial powers and influence for themselves, a certain superiority may well be felt by members of that Church over against traditions which exercise more moderate and less assuming modes of government. The Church's continuing link with the Church of England, albeit more friendly than legal, also adds a certain *ethos* of establishment, even if borrowed, to its deliberations, as does its identification with the Established Church in respect of marriage and burial. Furthermore, the appointment by the State of chaplains to the armed forces stationed in Wales or to prison establishments, and the fact that the cathedrals are often the only buildings with enough space and *ethos* to be used for the great and formal occasions required by local and national events both tend to reinforce the establishment *motif* within the Church in Wales.

Neither must we forget the parochial system of the Church, for in theory at least there is not a household in the country which does not have some moral claim upon the Church in Wales and its ministry as and when required. Alan Davies thus declares, 'The Church in Wales is alone able, through its parochial system, to make the Church's ministry and Sacraments available to all the people of Wales.'³⁸ As Bishop David Say writes, although speaking of the Church of England, 'It is the parochial system, for all its weaknesses and all its anomalies, that is the really significant feature of the Established Church, and one, in my judgement, not to be lightly cast aside.' He goes on to speak of the Church of England as a Church in partnership with other Churches in a pluralistic society, and continues,

So far as the Church of England is still called a national Church it is because it professes a mission to the whole nation and seeks to serve it nationwide, and not only in the places where it is strong. The Church needs to be seen as a serving Church and not a ruling Church, and it must rely not on privilege or prestige but on pastoral care faithfully exercised for all persons regardless of their race or rank.³⁹

If Say is correct then the position of the Church of England is in many respects today akin to that of the disestablished Church in Wales rather than the established Church of Archbishop Cyril Garbett's day, as witnessed by his book *The Claims of the Church of England* (1947).⁴⁰ Today that Church has some say in the matter of episcopal appointments, possibly in a more representative way even than the Church in Wales, and has considerable freedom over its worship and structures, as opposed to nonconformity which is subject to parliamentary control over its trust deeds and constitutions.⁴¹

This may well be our clue. The disestablished Church has continued its establishment *motif* because it has retained its parochial basis, and its concern not for prestige but for the pastoral care of all those who wish to be included within its fold. This is not far, let it be said, from Owen's statements about the future of

37. W. J. Conybeare, *Essays Ecclesiastical and Social* (London, 1855), p. 190.

38. A. R. Davies, *What is the Church in Wales* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 1. One might argue that the parochial system of the Church in Wales has always been more in name than in actuality. The system, uncompleted in vast areas of Wales even by the 17th century, broke down extensively in the 18th century, due to the poverty of livings causing pluralism and non-residence. If the system was made to work by the mid 19th century it did so at the expense of clergy: the incumbents of the large urban parishes found it almost impossible to cope, while curates were required to live on an absolute pittance, less even than a collier's wage. The present system of grouped parishes is almost a reversion to an 18th century position, and the rectorial or team ministry parishes may be compared to the Celtic *clas* churches.

39. David Say, 'Towards 2000: Church and State Relations', (1990) 2 *Ecc. L.J.* 153-155.

40. Cyril Garbett, *The Claims of the Church of England* (London, 1947), see especially pp. 182-198.

41. cf. Say, *Towards 2000*, pp. 153.

the Church in Wales during the years immediately before disestablishment, when he saw its pastoral care also displayed in the wider sense of mission to the nation through the agency of individual Christians, rather than by a corporate body. If the Church remains a denomination, even a *gathered Church*, in the sense that membership is voluntary, it yet continues to see and use its position for the benefit of a nation, rather than simply remain as an elitist and obscure group without any wider remit than its own membership. Thus an essay by one R.D., *Wales and the World* (1935), argued that the Church in Wales was not meant to live in an 'effete congregationalism', but rather to make the voice of each parish 'heard in the Song of Redemption'.⁴²

Archbishop Edwards summed up his gradual acceptance of disestablishment in this way: The Disestablishment campaign had shown, 'the most Erastian mind that establishment is not of the essence of the Church, and that in many cases it was doubtful whether it was for the well being of the Church'.⁴³ Certainly the Church in Wales has gained more than it has lost through disestablishment, and even though it is still insular and far too inward looking few would wish to return to the privileges of establishment.

T. S. Eliot wrote in his *The Idea of a Christian Society* that 'we must pause to reflect that a Church, once disestablished, cannot easily be re-established, and that the very act of disestablishment, separates it more definitely and irrevocably from the life of the nation than if it had never been established'.⁴⁴ The experience of the Church in Wales, in the one example of disestablishment this century, has not borne out the truth of this warning. It may well be argued that the Welsh Church, a denomination in law but with a national concern and a parochial structure, has been more involved in the life of the nation since the time of disestablishment than it was ever involved before.

42. R. D., *Wales and the World: An Essay for Welsh Churchfolk* (Newport, 1935), p. 37, and cf. pp. 8 & 46.

43. Edwards, *Memories*, pp. 315f.

44. T. S. Eliot, quoted by Garbett, *The Claims of the Church of England*, p. 198.

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