

THE DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

APPROVED:

Bullitt Henry
Major Professor

R. Stanley Jones
Minor Professor

Jack Burgess
Director of the Department of History

Robert B. Toulouse
Dean of the Graduate School

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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Arthur L. Sargent, B. A., S. T. B.

Denton, Texas

August, 1967

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CHAPTER I

ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

The disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales was a direct result of a renascent Welsh nationalism asserting itself in the daily life of Wales and in the English parliament. This assertion of Welsh nationalism did not go unchallenged by those who identified themselves with the established order of British life.¹ On the contrary, Welsh nationalism provoked partisan passions and became, along with the issue of Irish Home Rule, one of the determining factors of English political life for a brief period of time. Due to its coincidental relationship with Irish Home Rule, Welsh disestablishment became a part of a combination of social and political conflicts, which drove England to the brink of civil war in the early years of the twentieth century.

Welsh nationalism is a modern phenomenon dating little earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century. Prior to that time Wales was normally distinguished from the

¹In this thesis the phrase "establishment" or "English establishment" will not refer to the established Church exclusively, but rather to the whole social, economic, and political power structure of the nation, which was based on the concept of hereditary right to govern by the aristocracy.

remainder of Britain only by a different language, which was in the process of disappearing. Following the Methodist schism from the established Church in the early nineteenth century, Wales had the distinctive characteristic that a predominant part of the population were Nonconformists. This development became significant as Welsh Nonconformity took an increasingly positive emphasis in the form of active and militant dissent after 1843. Other than these factors, none of which posed any immediate or obvious threat to Anglican dominance in Wales, it is meaningless to speak of Welsh nationalism prior to the middle of the nineteenth century.²

Welsh nationalism found its midwife in the Royal Commission Report of 1847, which reported the results and conclusions of an investigation into the state of education in Wales.³ The findings of the report were generally accurate enough; that is, education in Wales was in a terrible state. However, the Commission phrased the report in a fashion which served to indict the Welsh people as being inherently immoral. The conclusion was that if the Welsh were to be redeemed, it would be necessary to Anglicize Wales by erradicating the Welsh language and Welsh

²R. T. Jenkins, "The Development of Nationalism in Wales," The Sociological Review, XXVII (April, 1935), 163.

³Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, XCI (1847), 1412, 1419.

Nonconformity.⁴ It is not too surprising that the Commission's report provoked bitter anti-English feelings on the part of Welsh Nonconformists, for the Commission was so biased that it equated morality with education, the English language, and the established Church.⁵

The situation was not helped when several minor clerics of the established Church gave what their own bishops thought was biased and inflammatory testimony in reference to immorality among their Nonconformist parishioners. This testimony occasioned heated anti-Church feelings, which soon coalesced with the anti-English feelings generated by the Commission itself.⁶ In this fashion what was to become an inseparable alliance between Welsh nationalism and Welsh Nonconformity came into being. This was despite the more just and complimentary testimony given before the Commission by the Welsh bishops.⁷

The Welsh Nonconformists charged the Commission with attempting to discredit Nonconformity by blaming the widespread immorality in Wales on the failure of Nonconformity rather than considering the inadequate living

⁴The Times (London), October 8, 1850, p. 8. Jenkins, The Sociological Review, XXVII (April, 1935), 163.

⁵David Williams, A History of Modern Wales (London, 1950), pp. 255-256.

⁶John Williams James, A Church History of Wales (Ilfracombe, 1945), pp. 177-178.

⁷Alfred George Edwards, Memories by the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), p. 114.

conditions and education facilities.⁸ As feelings became increasingly polarized the Nonconformists soon ceased to admit the existence of any moral or social evils in Wales.⁹ In the ensuing controversy the long dormant and all but forgotten Welsh spirit began to revive and to be consciously nurtured in the form of Welsh nationalism.¹⁰ The Royal Commission Report had three immediate consequences. First was provision for government aid to education in Wales, which would ultimately benefit all the people.¹¹ The second result was more ominous and consisted of the fouling of Welsh life with an implacable hostility between the established Church and Welsh Nonconformity.¹² The third result has already been mentioned; that is, the creation and nurture of Welsh nationalism.

The Welsh Radicals seized upon Welsh nationalism for their purposes under the initial leadership of Henry Richard. Richard was a Congregationalist minister turned politician whose father had been a Welsh Methodist minister. In 1850 Richard left the active ministry in order to become the "interpreter of Wales to England."¹³ The

⁸Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁹James, A Church History of Wales, p. 180.

¹⁰A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 114.

¹¹James, A Church History of Wales, p. 178.

¹²A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 114.

¹³Ibid., p. 115.

political activities of Richard led to the splitting of Wales along the lines of class consciousness and religious allegiance. The established Church became the church of the upper class and the wealthy, and Nonconformity became the religion of the Welsh nationalists and the lower classes.¹⁴

These seeds of division were present in Wales prior to the Royal Commission Report and Richard's exploitation of the events surrounding that report. The division had been intimated as early as the 1830's, when Nonconformity had given general support to the Chartist movement in Wales. This movement represented the first emergence of a working class political force in Wales. Although the movement failed to achieve any lasting results, the support it received from the Nonconformists was prophetic of the political-religious alliance that was to come.¹⁵

Chartism grew out of the industrialization and urbanization of Wales. These radical changes in the nature and structure of Welsh life coincided with the revival and growth of Welsh Nonconformity. The working class, which was the fastest growing element in the population became the most fertile recruiting ground for Nonconformity. By 1851 Nonconformist places of worship in Wales outnumbered Anglican places almost three to one. With a predominantly working class membership, it is not too surprising that

¹⁴James, A Church History of Wales, p. 180.

¹⁵Williams, History of Modern Wales, p. 238.

Welsh Nonconformity focused its attention on a search for the causes and cures of the social and economic evils of Welsh life.¹⁶

Nonconformity again demonstrated its tendency to political activism in the 1840's when Welsh Nonconformists began to agitate against what they regarded as the tyranny of the landlords, heavy taxation, and the payment of the tithe and church rates.¹⁷ The last two items were extremely galling to Nonconformists, because they were exacted by law and were used for the maintenance of the Church in Wales.

All of the dissatisfactions of Nonconformity with the then existing order of things were galvanized into action by the proposed Education Bill of 1843. This bill was designed to place the education of the children in the mines under the direction of the Church in Wales. This arrangement was unsatisfactory to Nonconformists, for in nineteenth century England all education was predicated on religious

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 248-249.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 230-232. The Times (London), October 4, 1843, p. 5; October 5, 1843, p. 5; October 6, 1843, p. 5. The tithe had its origin in medieval English law, which directed that the parish priest was to receive one tenth of the profits of the land, livestock, and personal industry. Prior to the reign of Richard I the practice arose of commuting this payment into a set money value. By the end of the nineteenth century all tithes had been commuted into a money value based on the septennial average of bushel production and price of barley, wheat, and oats in equal amounts. Willes T. Chitty, editor, Halsbury's Statutes of England (London, 1930), XIX, 423, 424, 455, 466, 495.

principles and involved doctrinal instruction. Nonconformists resented the requirement by schools operated by the established Church that all students study the Book of Common Prayer Catechism. The objections of Nonconformists to state aided education were religious in origin, and the inherent logic of these objections would lead, in time, to objections to state religion in the form of an established Church.¹⁸

The opening attack on the established Church in Wales was armed with Welsh reaction to the Royal Commission Report of 1847. By quoting the bigoted testimony of some parish clergy and the conclusions of the Commission Report itself and by fanning Nonconformist resentment of the 1843 Education Bill, Welsh nationalists were able to make it appear that the official policy of the Church was the forcible eradication of the Welsh language and Welsh Nonconformity.¹⁹ The apparent attack on the Welsh language and Welsh Nonconformity made nationalism and Nonconformity natural allies and gave renewed impetus and growth to Welsh Nonconformity. Thus a formidable political power came into being in Wales. This power would be further enhanced by the Reform Act of 1867, which by extending the franchise gave

¹⁸The Times (London), March 15, 1847, p. 6; March 26, 1847, p. 7; April 22, 1847, p. 7. Williams, History of Modern Wales, pp. 252-253.

¹⁹The Times (London), September 26, 1848, p. 8.

the balance of political power in Wales to the Radicals.²⁰ In this fashion Welsh Radicalism evolved, prospered, and gravitated into the alliance originally created by nationalism and Nonconformity. As the movements evolved and merged they joined in one voice calling for abolition of all privilege based on class and heredity.²¹ Nonconformity was to become the adhesive force which would hold Welsh Radicals and nationalists together as a political party.²² Nonconformity and Radicalism had become the two sides of one coin, and it became inevitable that in time Nonconformist antipathy to the Church in Wales would find expression in the political creed of disestablishment and disendowment.²³

The Church in Wales during the nineteenth century was ill prepared to bear the brunt of the concentrated political attack to be mounted by the Radical, nationalist, and Nonconformist alliance. It is easy and tempting to describe the Church in Wales during the nineteenth century as a monolithic corporate structure. This is what the Church's opponents almost unflinchingly did, but regardless of how convenient or tempting such a description might be, it is hardly accurate. The Church in Wales, like all of Wales and

²⁰James, A Church History of Wales, p. 180.

²¹F. J. C. Hearnshaw, editor, Edwardian England (London, 1933), p. 241.

²²Gwendolyn Cecil, Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury (London, 1921-1932), I, 319.

²³Williams, History of Modern Wales, pp. 250-251.

England, was in a state of flux. The old ways and attitudes were being increasingly challenged, but the new ways and attitudes of the future had yet to be formulated. This makes an exact description impossible, and the best that can be done is approximate generalization.

The establishment of the Church in England and in Wales was based on two presuppositions: that the "state as such should recognize that every national act should be a religious and Christian act" and that the national character depends on individual character.²⁴ It was assumed to be obvious to all reasonable men that Christianity was the best means of guaranteeing a nation of citizens of unimpeachable character. The nature of the established Church had been determined at the time of the English Reformation.²⁵ Initially the rights and perogatives of the state in the affairs of the Church had been vested in the Crown. However, beginning with the Revolution of 1688 these rights and perogatives were increasingly transferred to parliament.²⁶ By the nineteenth century this process of transfer was for all practical purposes complete. The state under the terms of the establishment had almost complete control of the

²⁴Arthur Page, "Church Establishment," Blackwood's Magazine, CXCI (June, 1912), 748.

²⁵Elie Halévy, England in 1815, Vol. I of A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols. translated from the French by E. I. Watkin (New York, 1961), p. 394.

²⁶Cyril Garbett, Church and State in England (London, 1950), pp. 131-132.

Church. The state appointed all members of the hierarchy, all clergymen were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown, no change could be made in the doctrine, discipline or worship of the Church without permission of the state, and the final courts of appeal were secular courts.²⁷ Under the establishment the Church's rights were limited to having the legitimate decisions of the ecclesiastical courts enforced by the state, the requirement that the sovereign belong to the Church, that the sovereign be crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the right of the Lord bishops to sit in the House of Lords.²⁸ In the final analysis the Church had little legal freedom,²⁹ and it was thereby grievously hindered in meeting the new challenges posed by the industrialization and urbanization of the nation. This lack of flexibility jeopardized the ability of the Church to survive much more seriously than anyone imagined at the time.³⁰

This rather simplified description of the established Church must not lead to the conclusion that the organization of the Church was a matter of precision and certainty. On

²⁷Ibid., pp. 135-137. It should be noted that the ecclesiastical courts were largely abolished in the nineteenth century. John R. H. Moorman, A History of the Church in England (New York, 1954), p. 349.

²⁸Garbett, Church and State in England, p. 116.

²⁹Ibid., p. 138.

³⁰Ibid., p. 140.

the contrary, the Church's organization was the result of a confused and intricate patchwork over the centuries.³¹ While the appointment of the Church's hierarchy was reserved to the state, the right to appoint the lower clergy was divided among the Crown, the two Universities, the public schools of Eton and Winchester, and the hereditary great land owners. The right of appointment had been gained by the land owners largely at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries during the Reformation. At that time the rights of appointment had been sold by the Crown to the highest bidder. By the nineteenth century over 5,700 out of 11,000 benefices had come under the control of the great land owners in this manner. This gave the landed gentry an absolute power in the affairs of the local parish.³²

By virtue of its establishment the Church was in theory responsible for the spiritual leadership of the nation and for expressing national concern for justice, mercy, and love in the community and their relevance to politics. However, the "close connection with the State . . . sometimes made it [the Church] blind to contemporary evils or so timid" that it chose silence "as the wiser policy."³³ By 1850 factions within the life of the Church began to challenge its former complacency as the old

³¹Halévy, England in 1815, p. 387.

³²Ibid., p. 394.

³³Garbett, Church and State, pp. 131-132.

nationalistic protestantism began to show signs of weakness.³⁴ The inability of the state to impose theological or ritual conformity on the followers of the Oxford Movement contributed to this erosion of old certainties within the life of the Church.³⁵

The process of erosion was hastened in Wales not only by the internal renewal and awakening of the Church itself, but also by the problems posed by Welsh nationalism in alliance with a politically active Nonconformity. The Welsh attacks on the Church were to a large extent motivated by a bitterness at the Church's failure to champion social and economic justice. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the majority of Welshmen had been loyal sons of the Church, but due to the Church's inability to adjust to the new needs created by industrialization, the people increasingly sought churches which could and would adjust. Not only was the Church in Wales structurally incapable of changing to minister to the changing times, but it was also inextricably identified and interwoven into the warp and woof of the English establishment. This was an alienating factor, which played a significant part in the desertion of the Church by the working class. With the religious revival in Wales there also came a growing resentment of the Church's long

³⁴A. O. J. Cockshut, Anglican Attitudes (London, 1959), p. 50.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 19-20, 48-49.

history of absenteeism and nepotism,³⁶ and the predominant philosophy and attitude which equated a church position with a sinecure rather than a spiritual vocation to serve God and man.³⁷ The workers reacted to this corruption and the Church's alliance with the vested interests of the existing order by deserting the Church. In Wales this desertion was accelerated by the effects of the Oxford Movement, which served to identify the Church in Wales with Toryism and resurgent Romanism.³⁸

The training of the established clergy was not of the type which would prepare them to break down the barriers between Church and worker. All professional men were educated together and most of them were recruited from the same social class.³⁹ This training and social background had nothing in common with the vast majority of people the cleric would be called to serve, and in effect guaranteed that the Church would reflect the same social philosophy as the government. This was a self-perpetuating system in that the Church controlled both Oxford and Cambridge and practically all of the secondary and elementary education in the nation. These universities and schools were the

³⁶Williams, History of Modern Wales, pp. 246-247.

³⁷Halévy, England in 1815, p. 387.

³⁸Williams, Modern History of Wales, pp. 258-259.

³⁹Helen Merrell Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties (London, 1945), p. 393. Halévy, England in 1815, p. 393.

natural sources of future leaders of Church and state. An outsider to the establishment such as a Nonconformist, who was barred from the universities due to his religion, could easily see the Church as an instrument of the status quo dedicated to maintaining its own material and political position.

The intricate alliance of the Church and the existing social and political order was unmistakably clear in the daily life of England and Wales during the nineteenth century. The landlord was at the apex of his power in English life,⁴⁰ and the constitution of the established Church was in complete harmony with the constitution of the land. Both Church and state were in the hands of the landed gentry.⁴¹ The nobility and squires looked upon the Church as a "subservient and useful institution" and expected the Church to support their political interests. It was a time when "tenants dared not question the political directions given them by the landlord's agents."⁴² All of this simply contributed to the rise in Wales of a

bitter hatred in the village of the tyranny of a Church which through Squire and Rector, tried to stamp out the Welsh tongue, persecuted school children and even forced them to repeat the Catechism by threatening the direst penalties against their parents.⁴³

⁴⁰ A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 80.

⁴¹ Halévy, England in 1815, p. 394.

⁴² A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 80.

⁴³ Donald McCormick, The Mask of Merlin (London, 1963), p. 33.

The favored relationship of the Church to the rulers of the nation, and the Church's role in the recruiting and training of these rulers, fostered the desire for disestablishment and disendowment on the part of the politically active but socially inferior Nonconformists.⁴⁴ In opposition to the democratic idea of government espoused by the Nonconformists, the Church advocated a continuation of the then existing system, which was based not only on a hereditary right to privilege but also on the right to govern.⁴⁵ The Church's approval of this system was understood by Nonconformists to be enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer Catechism where men were taught as a religious duty "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters."⁴⁶ If the hereditary right to govern had been limited to Westminster, life would have been more tolerable for the Nonconformist, for the government at Westminster had little direct bearing in the life of the working man. This was not the case; the burden of aristocratic government was felt in the day to day affairs of life at the local level on the estates and lands contiguous to the estates.

⁴⁴ Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties, p. 312.

⁴⁵ David Spring, "The Role of the Aristocracy in the Late Nineteenth Century," Victorian Studies, IV (September, 1960), 60.

⁴⁶ Book of Common Prayer (English 1662).

Here every facet of life fell under the ruling hand of the local squire.⁴⁷

It is not surprising that the alliance between Church and squire led people to understand the role of the Church to be "to move as little as possible"⁴⁸ and to defend the existing order. Any challenge to the social or economic order of the time was met with ferocious attack, for there was a widespread conviction in the establishment that the well being of the nation depended on allowing the aristocracy a free hand.⁴⁹ To guarantee the support of the clergy for the establishment was their own interest in the tithe and Church endowments from which their income was derived and assured. Both the tithe and the Church endowments were based on land and were, therefore, an integral part of the landlord system. It was the extraordinary cleric who under these circumstances was able to view the existing order without an jaundiced eye.⁵⁰

Nonconformist resentment of the Church was fed by the established clergy's deference to the wealthy while the poor were ignored outside of the church building itself. A

⁴⁷Spring, "The Role of the Aristocracy," Victorian Studies, IV (September, 1960), 60.

⁴⁸E. T. Raymond, Portraits of the New Century (New York, 1928), p. 102.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁰Donald Owen Wagner, The Church of England and Social Reform Since 1854 (New York, 1930), p. 17.

Nonconformist who was poor knew he would be treated like a pariah by the local parson, but if he were wealthy he would be invited and urged to participate in the life and worship of the established Church despite his Nonconformity.⁵¹ Many of the established clergy received large sums of money from their benefices, which caused many Nonconformists to doubt that such luxury could produce real sanctity. This doubt became conviction the more the working people witnessed the established clergy judging the worth of their parishioners by the standards of the world rather than those of the Gospel.⁵² All of which made the clergy of the Church appear to be nothing more than "squires who wore a white tie."⁵³ Living in comparative luxury and privilege and imbued with a social philosophy based on hereditary class, it is not too surprising that the local parson would occasionally be guilty of exercising despotic and petty power in the lives of the working people.⁵⁴

All of this was a product of the previous decades and centuries, but by mid-century signs of change were to be

⁵¹Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties, p. 311.

⁵²Ibid.: The Illustrated London News, March 16, 1895, p. 315.

⁵³Lynd, England in the Eighteen-Eighties, p. 311.

⁵⁴Ibid. Wagner, Church of England and Social Reform Since 1854, p. 14.

observed in the Church.⁵⁵ The move toward change and renewal gave the Church a mottled character, with pockets of renewal in surrounding areas of entrenched status quo. Reform was slow in coming because the Church was handicapped by a dearth of truly qualified men and especially of intellectuals.⁵⁶ It must also be remembered that the organization of the Church itself had remained basically unchanged for two hundred years, and this added to the difficulties of reform.⁵⁷

In Wales reform had been presaged by the appointment of worthier types of men to the episcopate beginning as early as 1803.⁵⁸ Church reforms beginning with the Tithe Commutation Bill of 1836, which substituted payments of money for payments in kind, and the establishment of Ecclesiastical Commissioners to administer the estates and revise the income of the bishops contributed to a growing spirit of reform in the life of the Church.⁵⁹ The Oxford Movement, despite its less helpful effects, aided in reviving the Church, with its emphasis on the Church and clergy as successors to the apostles. This emphasis in time changed the reasons and motives for many of those

⁵⁵ The Illustrated London News, September 29, 1894, p. 407.

⁵⁶ A. G. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London, 1914), p. 163.

⁵⁷ Halévy, England in 1815, pp. 387, 390.

⁵⁸ James, A Church History of Wales, p. 170.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 174.

seeking ordination in the Church. A concept of the pastoral office based on the model of the apostles rather than that of the sinecure began to alter the professional behavior of the clergy toward their parishioners.⁶⁰ In time more and more of the Church's clergy began to realize the need for what today would be called a more ecumenical approach to Nonconformists.⁶¹ But all of these changes took time, and time was one asset the Church was not to have in its struggle to avert the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales. Time was on the side of the Welsh nationalists allied with Nonconformity, as expressed politically in Welsh Radicalism.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 176. Early examples of the renewal among parish clergy in the established Church are to be found in the lives of George Prynne, Vicar of St. Peter's, Plymouth, and William Bennett, Vicar of St. Barnabas' Church, Pimlico, London. A. C. Kelway, George Rundle Prynne (London, 1905). Frederick Bennett, Story of W. J. E. Bennett (London, 1909). A much later but interesting example is to be found in the ministry of Edward Miller. Edward Miller, "Confessions of a Village Tyrant," The Nineteenth Century, XXXIV (December, 1893), 47-51.

CHAPTER II

DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT BECOME PART OF THE LIBERAL PARTY CREED

Nonconformist dissatisfaction with the establishment, especially as it was expressed by the Church in Wales, found its immediate political expression in the Liberation Society, which was dedicated to the liberation of the established Church from state control. This society was in effect a political party based on the theological principle that only a Church free from interference from the state could respond to the demands of the times in ministering the Gospel. Obviously the membership of such a group would be practically exclusively Nonconformist, for most members of the established Church regarded the relationship of the Church to the state as inviolate. To the task of liberating the Church the Liberation Society brought a revivalistic zeal, which was characteristic of Welsh Nonconformity. As early as 1862 appeals were being made to Nonconformists to express themselves politically by joining the Liberation Society.¹

While a renewed, militant, and vigorous Nonconformity in Wales was being urged to express itself politically

¹Alfred George Edwards, Memories by the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), pp. 117-118.

through the Liberation Society, the equally renewed, militant, and vigorous Welsh nationalism was being shaped for political purposes by Henry Richard. As a native of Wales and a one time Nonconformist minister, Richard's credentials for the task were impeccable, and he quickly gathered a following in Wales by advocating "the cause of the working man and of Welsh Nonconformity."²

Through the influence of his writings Richard introduced into Welsh nationalism the two dominant themes of making political demands in the name of and as a nation and the demand for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales because it was an alien Church.³ Richard's political agitation was the prime contributor to the appearance of class consciousness in Wales.⁴ In 1862 Richard addressed the Liberationist Conference of Swansea, Wales. He stated that there existed in Wales a "living practical Christianity"⁵ only because the Nonconformists churches were voluntary organizations based on voluntary principles. He intimated that the organization of a christian church on any other basis was immoral and should be forbidden by law. Following this attack on the Church in Wales, Richard proceeded to play

²The Times (London), December 5, 1868, p. 7. A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 116.

³A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 118.

⁴John Williams James, A Church History of Wales (Ilfracombe, 1945), p. 180.

⁵A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 116.

upon Welsh hostility toward the Church by denouncing the proprietary attitude of the Church toward the land. Wales did not belong to the Church, but to Nonconformity, because Nonconformity had reconquered the people in the name of Christ following the decay and corruption of Church life during the eighteenth century. Any religious knowledge and enthusiasm in Wales should be attributed to a persecuted Nonconformity.⁶ Richard's speech did little to improve relations between Churchmen and Nonconformists. In their fury Churchmen could only fume and accuse Richard of being an outsider, since he had not lived in Wales since 1837. This allowed Churchmen to dismiss Richard's criticism as being uninformed.⁷

At the same time that the Liberation Society was encouraging Nonconformity to organize politically and that Richard was giving to Welsh nationalism its two dominant themes, the political balance of power in Wales was changed. This change was brought about by the 1867 Franchise Law and the extension of the franchise in 1884. This effectively transferred the basis of political power in the nation from the nobility to the democracy.⁸ It would take time for this transfer to be expressed in parliament, but it would ultimately be accomplished. The immediate effect in Wales was to destroy the myth that the conservatives spoke for all those

⁶Ibid., p. 116. ⁷Ibid., p. 117.

⁸F. J. C. Hearnshaw, editor, Edwardian England (London, 1933), p. 31.

who lived on the land. The results of the 1868 election, in which twenty one Liberals were elected to parliament from Wales as compared to twelve conservative candidates,⁹ gave witness to the trend of future events unless something was done immediately by the landlords to recoup the losses. Much to the consternation of conservative Churchmen in Wales, Henry Richard was one of the Liberals elected to parliament from Wales in 1868. This election gave frightening evidence of the popularity of Richard's two themes of nationalism and disestablishment.¹⁰ The landlords reacted to the threat in many cases by evicting or raising the rent of tenants, who had dared vote Liberal.¹¹ In the absence of a secret ballot it was not safe for tenants to vote other than as directed by the landlord's agents. The landlords hoped by intimidation and coercion to regain what had been lost in the 1867 Franchise Law. The Welsh Liberals reacted to this threat under the leadership of Richard, who in 1869 moved a parliamentary resolution of condemnation against the Welsh landlords.¹² Ultimately Richard would be instrumental in passing the Ballot Act of 1872, which gave voters the secret

⁹The Times (London), December 1, 1868, p. 4.

¹⁰A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 119.

¹¹The Times (London), December 5, 1868, p. 8. Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, CXCVII (1869), 1302-1303.

¹²Ibid. At the urging of the government Richard withdrew his resolution without insisting on a division.

ballot. The main facts involved in Richard's resolution and in the desire for the Ballot Act were never in dispute, for in the words of a future Archbishop of Wales, it was impossible to deny the many public cases of "extreme cruelty and tyranny involved."¹³

The success of the Welsh revolt against landlord politics in the 1868 election forced the Liberal party to take cognizance of its Welsh members in party politics.¹⁴ To mollify Welsh and Nonconformist opinion a bill providing for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales was introduced in the House of Commons May 24, 1870.¹⁵ This maneuver was probably necessary to gain Welsh cooperation in giving aid to schools operated by the Church as well as to secular schools. The industrialization of England had made a more adequate system of education an absolute necessity for the nation's welfare. But regardless of how essential education might be for the national welfare, education was still a point of controversy between Nonconformists and Churchmen.¹⁶ By allowing the Nonconformists to believe disestablishment was a possibility, the Liberal government was able to give

¹³A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 119.

¹⁴S. Maccoby, English Radicalism 1853-1886 (London, 1938), p. 151.

¹⁵Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parl. Debates, CCI (1870), 1274. Alfred George Edwards, Landmarks in the History of the Welsh Church (London, 1912), p. 252.

¹⁶G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History (London, 1942), pp. 580-581.

tax support to all non-sectarian schools in the Education Bill of 1870. Church schools, which were practically all Anglican owned, became national schools under the Act and gained tax support for operating expenses only. The Church regarded this as a temporary settlement and immediately began to agitate for full tax support.¹⁷ This agitation provoked Nonconformists into fierce resistance to any added recognition of the Church's privileged status in the life of the nation. Nonconformists regarded tax support to Church schools to be a subsidy to the established Church. The reasons for this attitude are obvious, for practically all church related schools were Anglican, and it was not likely that new Nonconformist related schools would be established. There were so few Nonconformist schools¹⁸ and new ones were not anticipated because land was not generally sold by conservative land owners for this purpose.¹⁹

The growing voice of Welsh Liberals in the Liberal party is illustrated by the Burial Act of 1880, which had its origins in the demands of the Welsh members.²⁰ Upon returning to power in 1880 the Liberals proceeded to make it legal for any christian burial rite to be used in the

¹⁷J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George (New York, 1929), I, 238.

¹⁸Trevelyan, English Social History, pp. 580-581.

¹⁹J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 238.

²⁰Randall Thomas Davidson and William Benham, Life of Archibald Campbell Tait Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1891), II, 412.

churchyards.²¹ This had long been a point of contention in Wales, for frequently the churchyard was the only available burial ground in a community. Prior to 1880 it was a crime to use any burial rite other than that of the Book of Common Prayer even when the local parson would agree. Due to this legal requirement numerous acts of petty tyranny had occurred in and around burial yards in Wales.²² Despite the obvious humanitarian and christian character of the Burial Act all but a few Churchmen reacted violently against the bill as being the first step which would lead finally to the disestablishment of the Church.²³ Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln on the motion for a second reading of the bill described it as a threat to the existence of the Church of England "as a national institution."²⁴ In saying this the bishop spoke for many of his fellow Churchmen. Archbishop Tait was one of the few Churchmen astute enough to realize that the bill would not be fatal to the Church's established status and could easily be turned to the Church's advantage by spiking one of the continuing arguments for disestablishment.²⁵ The Archbishop's fellow Churchmen chose to follow the warning of

²¹Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parl. Debates, CCLII (1880), 498.

²²A. G. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London, 1914), p. 130.

²³Davidson and Benham, Life of Archibald Tait, II, 378.

²⁴Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parl. Debates, CCLII (1880), 1013.

²⁵Ibid., 1024.

the Bishop of Lincoln, so the opportunity for a gesture of reconciliation was lost and the bill became law despite the resistance of Churchmen. The remainder of the decade was spent in a restless search by the Liberals for new opportunities to limit the power and influence of the conservative-Church alliance in the life of Wales. Although the Liberals lost power in 1885, it is indicative of Liberal strength in Wales that by running on a strict disestablishment platform the Liberals were easily elected.²⁶ New and greater success in the fight for disestablishment would have to wait for a leader to succeed to Richard's role in Welsh Liberalism.

The movement for disestablishment found its new leader in a parliamentary newcomer, who had a decisive influence in the course and final resolution of the struggle. This was David Lloyd George. Before disestablishment could become a national issue, it would have to first become a major plank in the Liberal platform. Until the 1890's disestablishment in the Liberal platform was nothing more than window dressing for the benefit of the Welsh.²⁷ With the advent and rapid rise of Lloyd George in Liberal politics, the cause of disestablishment found a new and dynamic champion, for it was on this issue that Lloyd George built his early political success.²⁸

²⁶G. K. A. Bell, Randall Davidson Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1935), II, 103.

²⁷J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 161.

²⁸Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 13, 18.

Lloyd George came from a Welsh Nonconformist household and was raised in an atmosphere of religious revivalism.²⁹ Lloyd George's early schooling was obtained at a Church school where he experienced the coercion employed by the Church against Nonconformist families through their children.³⁰ He was offered a lucrative scholarship in the local Church school but refused it, because it would have required him to become a formal member of the Church.³¹ From this early exposure to the division between the Church and Chapel in Wales, Lloyd George developed into a fiery Welsh nationalist in rebellion not so much against the establishment and its subtleties as the combination of squire and parson on the local level.³² Once elected to parliament he unabashedly used the tactics of class warfare in his politics, for they came naturally to him, although they scandalized statesmen of both parties. Class warfare was not congenial to the English spirit of the times.³³ In debate he could be devastating or unfathomable whichever he chose. "He could annihilate with argument or

²⁹ Donald McCormick, The Mask of Merlin (London, 1963), p. 30.

³⁰ Eluned E. Owen, The Later Life of Bishop (John) Owen (Llandyssul, 1961), pp. 27-28.

³¹ J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 57-58.

³² E. T. Raymond, Uncensored Personalities (London, 1919), p. 15.

³³ Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 103.

seduce with charm, or out-manoeuvre or simply reduce his opponent's resistance by a form of psychological warfare."³⁴ All of which made him one of the more amazing politicians of the era.

Lloyd George was not a socialist, for that implies theory and dogma, which were far from his nature. In the course of his political career he retained the unquestioning confidence of the working class and simultaneously gained the confidence of the commercial class. In time he outgrew the provincialism of Welsh nationalism and became a respectable middle class statesman and the first Welsh cabinet member in British history. Any man capable of such accomplishments and such a metamorphosis obviously falls into a unique category in terms of character. The key to his character probably lies in his dual motivation. On the one hand was an absolute love and passion for Wales. On the other hand was an instinct for the great game of power.³⁵ The former thrust him into a struggle against the establishment and the principle of hereditary privilege. The latter caused him to outgrow the confines of Welsh nationalism.³⁶ To aid him in this quest was a quick and vigorous mind of unbounded imagination, a pragmatic spirit which allowed him to find solutions where

³⁴ Richard Lloyd George, My Father Lloyd George (London, 1960), p. 16.

³⁵ Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings, p. 136.

³⁶ J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 276.

dogma said there were none, and enough ruthlessness to accomplish his goal.³⁷ He was the "most profound and subtle political strategist"³⁸ of the country with the ability to project whatever image and play whatever role was demanded by the occasion. He was a man loved by his friends and feared and despised by his enemies, who saw in him nothing more than an opportunist and undisciplined demagogue. All of which was true and therein lies the continuing enigma of the man.³⁹ A man of charismatic speaking ability who could cast a spell not only on friend and foe but regrettably on himself too.⁴⁰ Some of his enemies, such as the Duke of Marlborough, saw in him a "mere Welsh attorney"⁴¹ and others, like a future Welsh Archbishop, recognized in him a gift of chivalry, a generosity in victory, and imagination. Many interpreted his imagination as nothing more than a lack of principle.⁴² It is this remarkable man who more than anyone else engineered events in such a fashion as to make disestablishment an integral part of the Liberal party platform and then to push that part of the platform to a successful conclusion.

³⁷Raymond, Uncensored Personalities, p. 10.

³⁸First Earl of Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities (London, 1924), p. 35.

³⁹Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings, pp. 131-133.
A. G. Gardiner, Pillars of Society (New York, n.d.), pp. 296-301.

⁴⁰Raymond, Uncensored Personalities, p. 21.

⁴¹A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 190.

⁴²Ibid., p. 245.

The pressure for dismantling the establishment of the Church in Wales was maintained in the early 1890's by the Tithe War. The war was organized by the Liberals to publicize and win support for disestablishment. The people of Wales were organized to refuse payment of the tithe. This in turn cut off the local parson's income.⁴³ The only recourse the parson had was to force eviction of those who refused to pay and to auction off their household effects. Needless to say the spectacle of the Church causing families to be evicted into the streets and their belongings auctioned in order to exact payment of the tithe did inestimable damage to the Church in Wales and its struggle to resist disestablishment.⁴⁴ There is no question that the Tithe War was motivated by politics and not poverty,⁴⁵ for the period was a time of economic prosperity.⁴⁶ Many of the tithe evictions were carefully planned by the Nonconformists for propaganda purposes, for the evictions served to discredit both the Church and the conservatives.⁴⁷ In 1891 the Tithe Recovery Bill was passed under a conservative government which made

⁴³ Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁴ J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 140.

⁴⁵ A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 142.

⁴⁶ D. C. Somerville, British Politics Since 1900 (London, 1950), p. 22.

⁴⁷ A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 130.

the landlord liable for payment of the tithe. This was an attempt to placate all involved by gaining relief for the financially pressed clergy while freeing the Nonconformist tenants from the odium of direct payments to the Church.⁴⁸

That the Nonconformists, especially those in Wales, were not satisfied was demonstrated in the election of 1892, which was fought on the familiar basis of squire and parson tyranny.⁴⁹ The election resulted in twenty-eight Liberals out of thirty races being elected in Wales.⁵⁰ In view of Gladstone's majority of forty in the new parliament, the Welsh had their long awaited opportunity to force a meaningful consideration of disestablishment in the party program. The attainment of this goal would be difficult at that time, for the party was split by internal disagreement over its own proposed program as set forth in the Newcastle Program of 1891. With the freedom of a party out of power this program had been constructed out of every demand for reform to be heard from within the party.⁵¹ Gladstone's apparent reluctance to make disestablishment a major goal of the party finally provoked a rebellion of his Welsh

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴⁹ Edward Miller, "Confessions of a Village Tyrant," The Nineteenth Century, XXXIV (December, 1893), 955.

⁵⁰ The Times (London), July 20, 1892, p. 3.

⁵¹ W. E. Lunt, History of England (New York, 1947), pp. 726-727.

supporters led by Lloyd George. In the face of this revolt Gladstone was forced to assure the Welsh that disestablishment was definitely one of the party goals. Despite this pledge the Welsh feared Gladstone's Anglican predilections would win out.⁵² The Welsh continued to remind the Prime Minister of their unswerving support in the past,⁵³ which along with the then present balance of power held by the Welsh within the Liberal members of Commons led to the introduction of a Suspensory Bill in February 1893. The bill proposed to prohibit the creation of new life interests in the Church in Wales.⁵⁴ At the same time pensions would be provided for all clergymen of the Church in Wales, who would then be free to retire or seek another position. All episcopal palaces, all parsonages, and glebes were to be sold with the proceeds going to the County Councils. Doctrine and discipline of the Church of Wales would be controlled by the parishioners, all unused or unrepaired cathedrals would become the property of the county councils as national monuments, all endowments would be placed under the control and direction of the parish council, and all documents and deeds would be

⁵²J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 166-167.

⁵³Ibid., I, 165-166.

⁵⁴The creation of new life interests refers to the appointment of new men to vacant benefices or livings. A. G. Edwards, Memories, pp. 144-145; J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 163-164; The Times (London), February 24, 1893, p. 6; The Times (London), February 15, 1893, p. 9.

surrendered to the County Councils. This bill did not actually provide for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, but it would have effectively destroyed the Church financially. The Church would also be destroyed as a part of the Anglican Church, for control of doctrine and worship would be in the hands of the parish council, which could easily be dominated by the Nonconformists residing within the geographical parish.⁵⁵ It is hard to believe that any serious politician of any political or religious persuasion believed this was a realistic goal for Gladstone's government with a working majority of only forty in Commons. An attack upon the established Church of such dimensions would have occupied a government with a considerably larger majority for years. It can only be concluded that the bill was a gesture made for the benefit of the voters in Wales.

By March 1894 the unruly behavior of his colleagues forced the aged Gladstone to retire. At the time it was speculated that his aversion to disestablishment contributed to Gladstone's decision. The Welsh were certainly not sorry to see Gladstone go,⁵⁶ for his failure to give more than lip service to disestablishment led the Welsh to distrust him.⁵⁷ The Queen, without consulting Gladstone, passed over

⁵⁵A. G. Edwards, Memories, pp. 153-154.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 159-160.

⁵⁷"A Political Retrospect," Edinburgh Review, CLXXXII (July, 1895), 257-259.

Sir William Harcourt and called on Lord Rosebery to form a new government.⁵⁸ Bishop Edwards of Wales believed that Harcourt was denied the position of prime minister due to the refusal of the Welsh to give him their support.⁵⁹ This is not likely, for Harcourt could not have formed a new government from the former cabinet in any case.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Lloyd George had begun to steer his own course of action, which was becoming increasingly independent of party discipline. When the new parliament opened it was reported that Lloyd George and three Welsh followers would give their support to the new government only if disestablishment was given precedence over other proposed measures. Harcourt, when pressed by Lloyd George, on the matter refused to give any assurances and shortly thereafter Lloyd George and his three followers refused the party whip. Two days later a Disestablishment Bill was brought in.⁶¹ Surprisingly Lloyd George did not support this bill, but rather attacked it in the most vitriolic manner imaginable. He contended that the bill was entirely too lenient,⁶² and when viewed

⁵⁸ Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey (New York, 1955), p. 78.

⁵⁹ A. G. Edwards, Memories, pp. 162-163.

⁶⁰ Robert Rhodes James, Rosebery: A Biography of Archibald Philip Fifth Earl of Rosebery (London, 1963), pp. 317-318.

⁶¹ Owen, Tempestuous Journey, p. 78.

⁶² The Times (London), May 1, 1894, p. 6.

against the severe measures envisioned in the 1893 Suspensory Bill this was quite true. The 1894 Disestablishment Bill provided simply for separating the Church in Wales from the state and the nationalization of £279,000 annual endowment income and the cathedrals as national monuments.⁶³ Many Welsh Liberals were attracted by the bill not only for the sake of realizing the goal of disestablishment, but for the many rich positions of patronage the bill proposed to create in Wales.⁶⁴

Lloyd George argued against supporting the bill not only because it was too lenient, but also because unless the Liberal party was willing to scrap the remainder of its proposed legislative program the bill would never pass.⁶⁵ In view of the difficulty Rosebery had in enforcing party discipline and the small majority the party had in Commons, it must be concluded that Lloyd George was correct in this observation. The bill was proposed not as a realistic political goal, but as a "sop to Welsh Nonconformist sentiment" and for strategical purposes.⁶⁶ Other than maintaining peace in the Liberal party, the bill was part of a strategy designed to introduce several major bills knowing they would be defeated. In this fashion an election platform

⁶³Ibid., April 27, 1894, p. 6.

⁶⁴A. G. Edwards, Memories, pp. 159-160.

⁶⁵Owen, Tempestuous Journey, p. 78.

⁶⁶Ibid.

could be created by placing the blame of failure on the conservatives in Commons and the patrician arrogance of Lords. Many of the bills introduced in this strategy were constructed in a fashion designed to assure their rejection by Lords. The rejection would prepare the ground for an attack on Lord's right of veto.⁶⁷

In the face of Lloyd George's opposition to the bill and in hopes of assuring him that the government intended to pass the Disestablishment Bill through Commons, Lord Rosebery promised that before there was a general election the bill would be passed. This was enough to gain Lloyd George's support.⁶⁸

In the parliament of 1895 Welsh disestablishment was again placed on the agenda and was introduced March 1, 1895.⁶⁹ The bill secured a margin of forty-four votes on the second reading in contrast to the seven and eleven vote majorities it had mustered in 1894.⁷⁰ Bishop Edwards reports that at this time, in hopes of achieving disestablishment in some form, Lloyd George made it known to Joseph Chamberlain, a former Liberal, that he was willing to make concessions.⁷¹ No doubt Lloyd George speculated that

⁶⁷"A Platform Parliament," Blackwood's Magazine, CLV (June, 1894), pp. 871-872.

⁶⁸The Times (London), May 24, 1894, p. 9.
Thomas Jones, Lloyd George, p. 19.

⁶⁹The Times (London), March 1, 1895, p. 8.

⁷⁰A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 169.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 170.

passage of the bill regardless of whatever compromises might be necessary would regain whatever votes he might have lost by his initial opposition to the bill and his subsequent break with party discipline. Chamberlain, who favored disestablishment, was regarded with some distrust by conservatives.⁷² Chamberlain's biographer makes no mention of Lloyd George's offer for compromise, and in view of the distrust in which Chamberlain was held by conservatives on the issue of disestablishment, it is unlikely that any offer to compromise from Lloyd George through Chamberlain would have been seriously considered by Churchmen.

The whole question came to an abrupt end with the defeat of the Rosebery government on a minor amendment to the Disestablishment Bill on June 21, 1895.⁷³ It is unlikely that the bill could have been passed into law even if Rosebery's government had survived due to the right of veto possessed by Lords. At the time, however, Liberals felt that Lloyd George would have been a greater assistance to the government and the party if he had concentrated his talents on keeping the party in power. In his efforts to achieve disestablishment at any cost, Lloyd George had distracted the party leadership and made it more difficult to maintain party discipline and, therefore, power.⁷⁴

⁷²J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London, 1933), II, 602-604.

⁷³The Times (London), June 21, 1895, p. 7.

⁷⁴Jones, Lloyd George, pp. 19-20.

The new government under Salisbury came to be known as the Unionist government and was composed of an alliance between the Unionists and the Liberal Unionists, who had left Gladstone's Liberal party over the issue of Home Rule in 1886.⁷⁵ Shortly after the government was formed a general election was held in which the Liberals suffered a massive defeat.⁷⁶ One of the Welsh bishops glibly assumed at the time that the defeat indicated a growing dissatisfaction with the principle of disestablishment on the part of the voters.⁷⁷ This conclusion ignored Lloyd George's success in campaigning on the two principles of Welsh Home Rule and Welsh disestablishment. On the basis of this platform Lloyd George was able to survive the Liberal debacle.⁷⁸ The resulting Unionist parliament was judged by the Liberals to be the product of national exhaustion and class interests.⁷⁹ This is not too far from the truth, for the reforms proposed by the Liberals in the Newcastle Program had been extreme and diverse enough to alienate parts of every segment of the population. This alienation coupled with the internal strife of the Liberal party effectively guaranteed its defeat at the polls

⁷⁵Somerville, British Politics Since 1900, p. 11.

⁷⁶The Times (London), July 31, 1895, p. 6.

⁷⁷A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 174.

⁷⁸Owen, Tempestuous Journey, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁹J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 180-181.

without an electrifying issue such as a rejection by Lords of two major bills. A veto of Home Rule and Welsh disestablishment by Lords would have united the electorate under the banner of democracy versus the autocratic power of Lords.

Hopes for Welsh disestablishment would have to wait until the Liberals could again come to power. Meanwhile, Gladstone, whom the Welsh increasingly felt to be a major obstacle within the Liberal party had vanished from the scene. Lloyd George was then able to emerge as one of the future leaders of the party and this in turn increased the possibilities of disestablishment becoming a major goal of the party. Lloyd George had entered politics from Wales, running within the narrow confines of Welsh provincialism. His popularity and influence spread and his base of power broadened as he gained national notice for his leadership of the opposition to the Voluntary School Bill, which had been framed for the express purpose of giving additional support to Church schools.⁸⁰ Lloyd George's political potential was further revealed in his work on the Agricultural Rating Bill. It was in his work on these bills that his ability to shape and influence legislation was publicly demonstrated.⁸¹ During this time Lloyd George came to the conclusion that the Welsh would have to make common cause with any group which could help advance the cause of disestablishment. The most

⁸⁰Jones, Lloyd George, p. 25.

⁸¹J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 185.

available ally were the Irish nationalists, who were struggling for Home Rule.⁸² Further efforts to achieve disestablishment or Irish Home Rule were abandoned with the outbreak of the South African War, for the nation's interest was shifted from domestic to foreign affairs.⁸³

⁸³McCormick, Mask of Merlin, p. 47.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIBERAL ATTACK ON THE HOUSE OF LORDS' VETO

The end of the nineteenth century saw the Liberal party increasingly tied to the politics of Irish Home Rule, which in turn was being used by the Welsh nationalists for their purposes. Lloyd George's emergence as a growing influence in Liberal politics demonstrated not only his potential as a politician, but also the continuing ability of nationalism to garner votes in Wales. Along with these political developments there were other changes in the nation's life. The accession of Edward VII saw a shift in the social and political life of the country. The shift in life style was subtle but substantial enough to give Edward's name to the era and to distinguish his reign from the two longer pieces between which Edwardian England exists as a brief interlude.¹

Edward VII spent the vast majority of his life living in the shadow of his mother and came to the throne quite late in life. While Victoria had been a formidable mother to her people, Edward proved to be a genial friend, who desired everyone to have a good time. Ballad singers of his time referred to him as "Dear Old Dad" a familiarity that would

¹E. T. Raymond, Portraits of the New Century (Garden City, 1928), pp. 1-2.

have been inconceivable with his royal predecessor.² Edward had a head for business and an insight into others stemming from an acute sense of humor, which was a new experience for most of his subjects in a sovereign. As tribute to his ability to understand people, one of Edward's contemporaries observed that he had a knowledge of "men, women, and affairs beyond that of any King since Charles II."³ The comparison is a story in itself. In contrast to his mother Edward was a person of genuine humanity, who instinctively saw the view of the common man and did not find it uncomfortable to mingle with commoners.⁴ This acute sensitivity to the average Englishman convinced many of his acquaintances that he was an instinctive Liberal in his politics.⁵ That may have been the case, but Edward was in any event careful to remain apart from all parties and to act only on the advice of his ministers.⁶ It is difficult to believe that the son of Queen Victoria could have been anything other than a conservative, but it can not be denied that he was capable of seeing flaws in the conservative philosophy and certainly in conservative strategy.⁷

²Asa Briggs, They Saw It Happen (Oxford, 1962), p. 26.

³Raymond, Portraits, pp. 6-9.

⁴A. G. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London, 1914), p. 8.

⁵F. J. C. Hearnshaw, Edwardian England (London, 1933), p. 29.

⁶Gardiner, Prophets, p. 14.

⁷Raymond, Portraits, p. 16.

The belief in Edward's liberalism may have arisen from the pleasure he derived from working with Asquith, whose company Edward thoroughly enjoyed. In contrast to this Edward found Balfour somewhat dour and tedious.⁸ Although Edward may have been able to tolerate Asquith's Liberalism, he was absolutely appalled by the Radicalism espoused by Lloyd George.⁹ When the confrontation between the House of Commons and the House of Lords began to loom in the life of the nation, Edward remained convinced to his death that the policy of Lords was suicidal.¹⁰ Despite these slight predilections for Liberal politicians and policies, Edward was a product and loyal son of the conservative establishment and aristocracy. Herein is the irony of his reign, for more than anyone else he is probably most responsible for giving the last push to aristocratic government.¹¹ The cost of maintaining the social pace which Edward set for the establishment was prohibitive, but the temper of the times was such that those who spent their way out of power and into ruin lacked the foresight to avoid the abyss. By the time of Edward's death the aristocracy would be on the brink of financial ruin or abdication, both of which had the same effect.¹²

⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁹Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 11.

¹⁰Frederick Edward Grey Ponsonby, Recollections of Three Reigns (New York, 1952), p. 365.

¹¹Raymond, Portraits, p. 16.

¹²Ibid., p. 18.

At the time of Victoria's death little had been changed in the social structure of the nation despite the legislative achievements of the Liberals during Victoria's reign. Society was still based on the concept of the Christian gentleman. It mattered very little that the adjective had been dropped and the noun ensconced in a snobbishness which excluded those without the correct school background.¹³ Life for the Edwardian gentleman was safe and secure, for he knew that everyone had a place in the scheme of things. The gentleman could afford an air of complacency,¹⁴ for happily his place was one of comfort, wealth, and power by birth. The caste system of England continued to have an icy finality about it.¹⁵

The complacent acceptance and anticipation of a continued status quo was reinforced by the knowledge that despite radical legislation, life had changed very little. Furthermore, there was little reason to suppose life would change much in the future. No one saw any reason to anticipate social revolution, for after all "England was a very good country for gentlemen," and it mattered little that this fact was made possible by a low income tax and cheap

¹³E. T. Raymond, Uncensored Personalities (London, 1919), p. 14.

¹⁴Briggs, They Saw It Happen, p. 59.

¹⁵Roger Bradhaigh Lloyd, Church of England in the 20th Century (London, 1946, 50), pp. 38-39.

domestic labor.¹⁶ There were those who claimed to detect a decline in the age, but their prophecies were treated as amusements and nothing more.¹⁷ Emotion of any kind, especially that which would have allowed one to attend with seriousness to the prophecies of decline, was out of fashion.¹⁸ The new style of life called for approaching life in an airy manner in much the same style as Balfour and Asquith would handle affairs of state as Prime Ministers.¹⁹ It was a time of comfort, of fevered luxury, and of almost total ineptitude on the part of those in power.²⁰

Among those who shared in the incredible wealth of the era the standard of living was based on public ostentation and private amusement.²¹ The daily lives of the aristocracy were filled with dances, riding, and games. It was a life of ease, and in the words of a participant an era of:

vast. . .entertaining, in an agreeable, leisurely manner that few people now remember. . . .We enjoyed ourselves light-heartedly, and loved every minute of our lives. . . .it all sounds frivolous and trifling--but we were young then, and the shadows of this century had not yet fallen across our lives.²²

¹⁶ Briggs, They Saw It Happen, pp. 27-28.

¹⁷ Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 37.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁹ Raymond, Portraits, p. 229.

²⁰ Briggs, They Saw It Happen, p. 34.

²¹ Ibid., p. 40.

²² Ibid., p. 32.

There was another England, however, which did not experience life in such light and gay terms, for in a society, which in Victoria's time had already seen an increase in the splendor of national wealth, the distribution of that wealth was becoming increasingly uneven.²³ Edwardian England became a time of public penury and private ostentation. Urban and rural poverty grew beyond comprehension. It was a society in which banquets of almost everyday frequency cost much more than many a poor man's annual income.²⁴ Over twenty-five per cent of the total population during Edward's time earned less than the amount necessary to maintain health and working efficiency with the best possible knowledge and management. In some areas of the nation this figure came perilously close to fifty per cent of the population.²⁵ It was a time that promised little more than a "sulky servility of hopeless poverty" for most Englishmen.²⁶ These social conditions, in conjunction with the political reforms initiated by the Liberals in the nineteenth century, would provoke radical changes in the political life of the nation. Among these changes would ultimately be the disestablishment of the Church in Wales.

²³Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 137.

²⁴Briggs, They Saw It Happen, p. 43.

²⁵Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 150, 173-174.

²⁶Briggs, They Saw It Happen, p. 28.

The spirit of Edwardian politics gained its initial impression from the conservatives, who were in power until late 1905. The spirit of the nation under the conservatives reveled in the realization that England was a great Empire and "might as well make the most of it. . .consolidate it. . . make a business of it. . .for trade, for. . .defence, and for. . .surplus population."²⁷ While the conservatives were enjoying life and contemplating the empire, Liberals were having disturbing second thoughts. The Liberals were disappointed in the failure of their earlier legislative triumphs to solve what turned out to be incredibly complex social problems, which would not answer to simple or absolute answers. It was a time when old Liberals began to develop misgivings about the results of democracy.²⁸ This in turn reinforced conservatives in their original resistance. Political feelings quickly became inflamed and took on more importance than political measures. Not since the seventeenth century had Englishmen experienced a comparable loss of the spirit of compromise.²⁹ and the ability to keep the course of domestic politics under control.³⁰

These feelings and passions reached their apex in 1910 and inflamed the subsequent confrontation between the House

²⁷D. C. Spinks, British Politics Since 1900 (London, 1950), p. 13.

²⁸Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 233-234.

²⁹Ibid., p. 29.

³⁰Blanche E. C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (New York, 1937), II, 16.

of Commons and the House of Lords and agitated Ireland as she approached civil war.³¹ The House of Commons was disturbed with scenes of shouted insults, flying books, and blows. Ireland, Welsh disestablishment, and educational reform provoked irrational responses of hysteria and passion on both sides. Men sought to gain what they desired from the government through rebellious nuisances rather than by the means of traditional parliamentary debate and agreement.³² The tide of partisanship seemed to be carrying the nation into civil war as the Irish armed themselves for apparent insurrection. If civil war could in some fashion be averted in Ireland, the threat of anarchy in the form of general strikes and the irrational outbreak of violence in the suffragette campaign still posed a threat to national life.³³ In the midst of this social unrest and upheaval, it is difficult to comprehend the complacency with which the establishment viewed the future. It may be that the heated passions which accompanied these changes prevented men from realizing what great changes were being wrought in the fabric of their lives. This is no less true of the Church, for in the midst of all this flux, it too was undergoing radical

³¹Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 83.

³²Lloyd, Church of England in the 20th Century, p. 54.

³³Reginald Baliol Brett Esher, The Captains and the Kings Depart, edited by Viscount Esher Oliver (New York, 1938), I, 145-146. Alexander Mackintosh, From Gladstone to Lloyd George (London, 1921), p. 16.

changes with an equal amount of partisanship and acrimonious debate.

The controversy within the Church reached such dimensions in the early nineteenth hundreds that Balfour, who as a conservative was committed to the concept of Church establishment, feared the possibility of schism. The immediate cause for this fear was the ritual controversy, which was one of the less happy effects of the Oxford Movement of the previous century.³⁴ This division in the life of the established Church was aggravated by the already existing political schism within the Church between the bishops on the one hand and the lower clergy and laity on the other. The bishops on the whole were more radical in their politics. This was an indication of the influence wrought by the right of episcopal appointment under the Liberal governments of the previous century.³⁵

The fear of schism in the established Church must not be understood as reflecting a deep concern for religion among conservatives or in the nation at large. Edwardian England refused to take anything seriously and this was particularly true of religion. The requirements of religion met with a formal observance and little else.³⁶ In Wales there was a slight cultural lag, for the years 1904-1905

³⁴Dugdale, Balfour, I, 209.

³⁵G. Stephens Spinks, Religion in Britain Since 1900 (London, 1952), p. 92.

³⁶Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 210-211.

saw the zenith of the Welsh religious revival,³⁷ but shortly thereafter Wales too manifested the symptoms of the waning authority of the crown, the aristocracy, and the Church in the lives of men.³⁸ These attitudes proved a definite handicap to the Church in seeking reform for her life. When challenged by her critics to renew herself, the Church found herself unable to gain a hearing in parliament. The press of political events prohibited the devoting of time in parliament to the needs of the Church. This fact reduced much Church legislation to a "matter of not very savory barter and exchange" involving quite a "deal of backstairs work, conducted with great secrecy."³⁹ When the challenge to the Church's established position came the Church would find herself experiencing much of the same complacency, partisanship, irrational fear, and hysteria of all Edwardian England. To this extent the Church would prove unable to meet the challenge of the times.

The end of the Boer War in 1902 allowed the government to turn its attention again to domestic affairs under the leadership of Sir Arthur Balfour, who had replaced Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister. Much of the government's attitudes and

³⁷Arthur Page, "Church Establishment," Blackwood's Magazine, CXCI (June, 1912), 745. Eluned E. Owen, The Later Life of Bishop (John) Owen (Llandyssul, 1961), p. 75.

³⁸Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 28.

³⁹Lloyd, Church of England in the 19th Century, p. 247. Cyril Garbett, Church and State in England (London, 1950), pp. 110-111.

actions toward the surging demands of the democratic spirit sweeping across the land would be determined by the personality of Balfour, who in the popular description of his contemporaries was a man "hampered by no passionate convictions."⁴⁰ This statement is a surprisingly adequate description of the character of both Balfour and his government.

Balfour was a man brilliant enough to be a Gifford lecturer⁴¹ and possibly the most outstanding parliamentary debater of his time.⁴² His wit and charm, coupled with a cool grace, were legendary.⁴³ In keeping with his lack of any passionate conviction, he abhorred anything of a crusading spirit and was convinced that life was a mixture of good and evil. The correction of the latter would more often than not lead to the loss of the former; therefore, the only change permissible would be one of simple adjustment.⁴⁴ This philosophy made Balfour a born spokesman for the aristocratic establishment, and he understood his role in terms of protecting the rights of property and the interests of the Church.⁴⁵ He regarded democracy as nothing more than an

⁴⁰ Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 50.

⁴¹ Dugdale, Balfour, II, 74-75.

⁴² Gardiner, Prophets, p. 32.

⁴³ Margot Asquith, Autobiography (London, 1920), I, 257.

⁴⁴ A. G. Gardiner, Portraits and Portents (New York, 1926), p. 82.

⁴⁵ Raymond, Uncensored Personalities, pp. 71-72.

unruly child in need of disciplinary care of a more mature and wiser aristocratic class. If the democracy did not understand the nature of their blessings under his government, this was an indication of its childishness and unsuitability to govern a great empire.⁴⁶ It is with this condescending spirit and attitude that the government proceeded to introduce the Education Bill of 1902.

The 1902 Education Bill had as its goal the reorganization of national education by placing all secular education under the control of County Education Authorities.⁴⁷ The Church had been seeking additional state assistance in the form of grants from local rates, and this was provided in the 1902 bill.⁴⁸ The bill proposed to abolish all existing school boards and to require each county to establish an Education Authority to oversee all aspects of elementary and secondary education on the local level.⁴⁹ In this arrangement the Voluntary Schools would receive grants from local rates for operating expenses but not for capital expenses. In return the local Education Authority gained the right to appoint one third of the managers of Voluntary Schools as

⁴⁶Gardiner, Prophets, p. 31.

⁴⁷Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CXV (1902), 952.

⁴⁸Ibid., CXIV (1902), 625; CVIII (1902), 1174.

⁴⁹Ibid., CXIV (1902), 625; CVIII (1902), 1152.

well as exclusive control of secular curriculum material.⁵⁰

The provisions of the Education Bill provoked bitter hostility, resentment, and resistance from Nonconformists.⁵¹ They claimed the act was a form of endowment for the Church. The debate was one of the most bitter religious debates in parliament within the then recent past.⁵² The identification of the bill with the interests of the established Church was quite clear in the minds of the Nonconformists. Joseph Chamberlain, a conservative Nonconformist, warned the government that the bill would lose the votes of many of his coreligionists.⁵³ Resistance to the bill was so determined in Commons that the government was forced to limit debate during the Committee stage in order to move it through. This procedure intensified Nonconformist anger, for no one could pretend that the elementary meaning of parliamentary debate was being preserved in the passage of the bill.⁵⁴ The struggle in parliament over the bill produced the political miracle of reuniting the Liberal Party.

⁵⁰Ibid., CXV (1902), 625.

⁵¹Ibid., CXIV (1902), 625; CVIII (1902), 1152; (Lords), CXVI (1902), 88.

⁵²Ibid., (Lords), CXVI (1902), 88-89.

⁵³J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George (New York, 1929), I, 240.

⁵⁴J. W. Lowther, A Speaker's Commentaries (London, 1925), I, 318-319.

This was a consequence the conservatives had not anticipated and would regret.

Lloyd George was a prominent participant in the resistance to the Education Bill. He attacked the bill for its support to Church schools by arguing that the schools were a means of proselyting children of Nonconformists. He had no difficulty in documenting this charge, for at least one Diocesan School Inspector had given as an apologia for Church schools the fact that the schools trained "the children of Nonconformists to be children of the Church."⁵⁵

Nonconformists throughout England, and especially in Wales, where most schools were under Church control, resented the prospect of supporting Church schools through the payment of rates.⁵⁶ A passive resistance to the bill once enacted quickly developed among Nonconformists. Lloyd George sought a compromise in the enforcement of the Act in Wales by requesting that no school should receive grants from local rates unless one half of its managers were elected from nominees of the local Education Authority, and that the Authorities nominate all teachers.⁵⁷ The intention was clear, for practically all Welsh County Councils operated with Liberal majorities. This arrangement would guarantee the Liberals complete control of all education in Wales.

⁵⁵Great Britain, 4 Parl. Debates (Commons), CVIII (1902), 1098-1099.

⁵⁶Spinks, Religion in Britain, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁷Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 36.

Churchmen refused to have anything to do with such an arrangement. Lloyd George's next gambit would prove more seductive to many Welsh Churchmen.

He suggested that a concordat be arranged between the Church and the Welsh County Councils. The concordat would provide for the Councils to take over supervision of the Church schools for three years at the end of which they would revert to Church control. Meanwhile, the Church would control the religious curriculum as well as have guarantees in the matter of teacher appointment. At least one Welsh bishop found this suggestion to be attractive, but it was impossible to gain sufficiently binding guarantees without statutory provisions. Some Churchmen felt this proposal was an elaborate trap being laid by Lloyd George. They feared that once the schools were placed under control of the County Councils they would never be returned.⁵⁸ Even those who favored the idea feared that Lloyd George, although acting as a sincere and right minded person in the matter, was at the mercies of public opinion and would be unable to control the final course of events.⁵⁹ With the failure of the hopes of a concordat in 1903, Lloyd George supported the Welsh County Councils in their refusal to supplement the Church schools with grants from the local rates.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 41-44.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁶⁰The Times (London), March 7, 1904, p. 8; May 31, 1904, p. 12.

This action put the Church in an untenable position, for the 1902 Act forbid the Church schools from falling back on private subscriptions for support.⁶¹ The result was a victory for the Welsh Nonconformists, and for Lloyd George it was a spectacular display of playing both sides. If he had been successful in negotiating a concordat, he would have broadened the base of his political appeal to include Churchmen to some extent. As events turned out, however, this was not possible, and yet he was able to associate himself with the successful strategy of withholding rates from Church schools. In fact he soon became indentified in the minds of Wales as having singlehandedly prevented the implementation of the 1902 Act. Nonconformists had contended that the 1902 Act was a form of endowment and therefore a strengthening of the established status of the Church. Lloyd George had been able to identify himself as having at least temporarily prevented the act from becoming operative.⁶²

The crisis presented to the Church by the County Councils' refusal to give grants was met by the passage of the Default Bill of 1904. This act authorized the local Education Authorities to make expenditures and charge them as debts to the crown against the County Councils, in the

⁶¹Dugdale, Balfour, I, 244.

⁶²Alfred George Edwards, Memories by the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), pp. 188-189.

event support was withheld from Church schools.⁶³ The Default Bill was an effective strategy, and the Liberals found themselves impotent to frustrate its passage and implementation. When debate was closed on the Default Bill the most effective thing the Liberals could think of to do was to walk out of Commons as a group in silent protest.⁶⁴ When the act became operative the Liberals did not dare make good on their threat of mass resignations from the County Councils, for this would have given the conservatives a free hand.⁶⁵ The futility of resistance was obvious to all. The Liberals and Nonconformists could only bide their time and join with Lloyd George in vowing revenge.⁶⁶

In late 1905 the conservative government had become so weak as to be unable to gain passage of important legislation, and the Cabinet resigned without waiting for a vote of censure. A new government was formed with Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister, and a general election was held in January, 1906. The Times remarked at the time on the number of diffuse election issues and the inability of any party or party leader to really narrow the range of issues.⁶⁷

⁶³Great Britain, 4 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXXXIII (1904), 1205.

⁶⁴Ibid., CXXXIX (1904), 1268.

⁶⁵Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 77-78.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁷The Times (London), January 11, 1906, p. 9.

This may have been true, but the Liberals found themselves united behind the outrage of the 1902 Education Act and on this basis were able to win an overwhelming victory at the polls for the first time since 1886.⁶⁸ The new parliament had one hundred and fifty-seven Nonconformist members. This was the largest number of Nonconformists in parliament since Cromwell's time.⁶⁹ The landslide vote freed the Liberals from the burden of relying on the Irish vote, which in turn meant the Welsh were not going to be able to make their demands heard too well within the party. The new members came to parliament with an indelible spirit of mandate to change that which had gone before and to initiate a new order.⁷⁰ There was a spirit of vindication and conviction that the nation desired an immediate building of democratic institutions and a destruction of privilege, aristocracy, and land monopoly in the new parliament.⁷¹ The magnitude of the Liberal victory, and the election of a sizeable block of Labour men raised fears of a radical revolution and socialism throughout the English establishment. Old members who were returned would, in later years, confess to

⁶⁸The Annual Register for 1906 (London, 1907), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁹G. K. A. Bell, Randall Davidson Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1935), p. 504. The Annual Register for 1906, p. 13.

⁷⁰The Times (London), January 30, 1906, p. 9; January 31, 1906, p. 7.

⁷¹Mackintosh, Gladstone to Lloyd George, p. 225.

an unexpressed conviction at the time that things would no longer go on as before.⁷² The nation was poised on the brink of impending change, and the lack of certainty as to the nature and effects of the change only added to the feelings of anxiety and forboding.

Many dealt with their fear and anxiety at the prospects of rule by the new parliament by aligning themselves with Balfour, who having no concept of democratic government, assumed that whatever could not be defeated in Commons could certainly be crippled by amendment, if not vetoed, in Lords.⁷³ The vast majority of conservatives looked to Lords as the only means left to prevent the democracy from ruining everything by tampering with the order of things. This policy was often defended in terms of protecting the people from their own foolish and irresponsible desires. Complacency and condescension of such arrogance in the face of the recent election infuriated the partisan spirit of the triumphant Liberals, who soon introduced a bill amending the 1902 Education Act.⁷⁴ The bill proposed to put all schools receiving any aid from rates or taxes under the exclusive control of the local Education Authority. Furthermore the bill proposed the abolition of all religious tests

⁷²Briggs, They Saw It Happen, pp. 95-96.

⁷³Dugdale, Balfour, II, 16-17, 19-20.

⁷⁴Great Britain, 4 Parl. Debates (Commons), CLV (1906), 1017.

for any teacher paid from state funds.⁷⁵ The stated purpose of the bill was to allow for fuller religious instruction in the schools by Nonconformists. Churchmen reacted to the proposal with apoplectic rage. Bishop Owen charged that the bill was no compromise but a dictat which took everyone by surprise and amounted to an endowment of Nonconformity.⁷⁶ The bishop could easily understand the injustice of the proposed bill and the manner in which it was handled in Commons, but he failed to see the similar injustice involved in the 1902 Education Act and the manner in which it was passed.

With an overwhelming majority in Commons the Liberals had no difficulty in passing their bill. When it came to the House of Lords, however, the fate of the bill was another matter. A few conservatives in Commons had argued for compromise hoping to avoid a direct confrontation between Lords and the expression of the people's will in the recent election. Bishop Owen hoped for compromise in Lords, but his attitude did not reflect that of his fellow conservatives or even the Liberals.⁷⁷ When the bill was returned to Commons with suggested amendments by Lords, Commons repassed the bill in its original form and sent it

⁷⁵Ibid., 1021, 1046.

⁷⁶Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 83-84.

⁷⁷Great Britain, 4 Parl. Debates (Commons), CLXIV (1906), 974.

back to Lords for their final approval.⁷⁸ At this point Balfour, as leader of the conservatives, caused the conservatives in Lords to exercise that House's veto. The veto provoked Campbell-Bannerman to express the opinion that the nation needed to find a way to have the will of the people prevail over that of the aristocracy in Lords.⁷⁹ When Lords again vetoed Liberal legislation in 1908, the Liberals began to seriously consider ways to limit the power of Lords to frustrate the will of the people as expressed in Commons.⁸⁰

Disestablishment had ceased to be a major party goal among Liberals due to the party's preoccupation with social legislation. The Welsh members found it impossible to force the issue within the party due to the large majority enjoyed by the Liberals in Commons. This majority freed the party from relying on the Welsh and Irish nationalist vote.⁸¹ Indeed, the lack of enthusiasm for disestablishment among the rank and file outside of the Welsh members coupled with the effective control of Lords enjoyed by conservatives led many Churchmen to believe the Church to be safe.⁸²

⁷⁸Ibid., CLXVII (1906), 1735; (Lords), CLXVII (1906), 1370.

⁷⁹Dugdale, Balfour, II, 21.

⁸⁰Ibid., II, 22-23.

⁸¹Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (Cambridge, 1951), p. 33.

⁸²Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 142.

Lloyd George initiated the attack on Lords' right of veto in his budget of 1909, which was the occasion of renewed controversy and struggle. As Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George had been presented with the problem of raising large sums of additional revenue to pay for the newly enacted social legislation. In his budget he proposed to raise these revenues by levying a heavy land tax as well as a graduated income tax.⁸³ The philosophy evidenced in the budget was obviously that the wealthy should help pay the expenses of welfare legislation designed to benefit the poor. In short it was a clear attempt to force the redistribution of income and looked to many like the obvious advance guard of socialism. Conservatives, who controlled the House of Lords, could not let such an attack on the social and economic principles of their existence as a class go unchallenged, and yet they were at an obvious political disadvantage due to the constitutional limitations on Lords in regard to financial bills. The crisis was not helped by the apocalyptic manner in which Lloyd George presented the budget.⁸⁴

By October the conflict between the two Houses had reached such serious proportions that King Edward attempted to serve as intermediary to prevent a direct and possibly

⁸³Dugdale, Balfour, II, 34.

⁸⁴Raymond, Uncensored Personalities, pp. 16-17.

disastrous confrontation between the two Houses.⁸⁵ In the midst of these negotiations Asquith, who had become Prime Minister following the death of Campbell-Bannerman in 1908, delivered a memorandum to the King in which guarantees of action by the crown to assure the realization of Commons' will were discussed in general terms.⁸⁶ As the crisis deepened in November, both Asquith and Lloyd George warned that rejection of the budget would be intolerable and lead to revolution.⁸⁷ There was little doubt that if things should reach that point the entire concept of nobility and inherent right to wealth and land would quite possibly be challenged and even abolished.⁸⁸ Many members of Lords and many conservatives outside that House realized the accuracy of the Liberal warning and lobbied for acceptance of the budget. Despite the warnings, Lords rejected the budget, insisting that it was not a financial bill as much as a piece of radical social legislation masquerading as a budget.⁸⁹ By rejecting the budget Lords played into the hands of Lloyd George and the Liberals as they sought to limit Lords' power

⁸⁵H. H. Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament (Boston, 1926), II, 84.

⁸⁶Frederick Edward Grey Ponsonby, Recollections of Three Reigns (New York, 1952), p. 365.

⁸⁷J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 317-318. Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, II, 83.

⁸⁸J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 318. Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, II, 83.

⁸⁹Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, II, 86.

of veto. The conservatives, who had insisted on rejecting the budget, would come to understand this to be the case, but only after it was too late.⁹⁰ With the rejection of the budget, parliament was dissolved and a general election was called for January, 1910. The election was fought on the basis of the will of the people as expressed in Commons versus the will of the aristocracy as embodied in the House of Lords.⁹¹

Within these terms the candidates campaigned with great bitterness and partisan spirit, for conservative feelings were inflamed by the unprecedented nature of the budget and Liberal feelings were equally inflamed by the unprecedented rejection of a budget by Lords. No doubt the candidates, many of whom believed Lords' action to have been unconstitutional,⁹² were somewhat disappointed by the disinterested spirit the electorate manifested throughout the campaign. Despite the apparent disinterest there was a surprising shift at the polls, for the conservatives gained one hundred and sixty-seven seats and the Liberals lost ninety-nine seats.⁹³

⁹⁰First Earl of Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities (London, 1924), p. 5.

⁹¹Dugdale, Balfour, II, 36.

⁹²Esher, Captains and Kings Depart, I, 35. The Times (London), January 20, 1910, p. 7; January 21, 1910, p. 9.

⁹³Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 104-105. The Annual Register for 1910 (London, 1911), pp. 15-16.

Confronted with the lackluster results of the election, the cabinet hesitated momentarily and then decided to remain in power.⁹⁴ This would be possible, however, only by the grace of the Irish and Welsh nationalists.⁹⁵ This meant that both Irish Home Rule and Welsh disestablishment would figure in future party politics.⁹⁶ The Irish had demanded abolition of the Lords' veto and passage of Home Rule as the price of their support.⁹⁷ The Welsh could be kept in line through party discipline and by the abolition of Lords' veto, which would prepare the way for achieving the disestablishment of the Church in Wales.

Following the election Asquith set about to limit the power of Lords by introducing the Parliament Bill, which guaranteed Commons complete fiscal control of the government and provided for the enactment of any bill which had been passed in three consecutive parliaments provided that two years had elapsed from its introduction.⁹⁸ As might be expected, so radical an alteration of the constitution met with dogged resistance which at times became fanatical. Conservatives understood the abolition of Lords' veto to

⁹⁴Ponsonby, Recollections of Three Reigns, p. 394.

⁹⁵Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 144.

⁹⁶Dugdale, Balfour, II, 36.

⁹⁷Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 104-105.

⁹⁸Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), XVI (1910), 1547.

amount to the destruction of the constitution, social order, religion, morality, and property.⁹⁹ This was an obvious sequence of events which could not be tolerated in a civilized christian nation. When Lords rejected the demands of the government the issue was taken to the electorate. Balfour was convinced that a return of the Liberals to power with a "good working majority" would endanger all that his party and class stood for and would endanger even the throne if the King should stray from the strict constitutional path.¹⁰⁰ In Wales the election of December, 1910, was fought in terms of the effects of the Parliament Bill on the future of the Church. The results of the election were much the same as the previous election with no significant change in the balance of power in parliament.¹⁰¹ Since the Liberals were still at the mercies of the Irish and Welsh nationalists, they had no choice but to proceed with the Parliament Bill.¹⁰²

Confronted again with the possibility of Lords rejecting the Parliament Bill, Asquith persuaded the new sovereign, George V, to guarantee the creation of enough additional peers to assure acceptance of the bill when it

⁹⁹"Past and Future," Blackwood's Magazine, CLXXXVIII (August, 1910), 280-281.

¹⁰⁰Esher, Captains and Kings Depart, I, 34.

¹⁰¹Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 144. The Annual Register for 1910, p. 264.

¹⁰²Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, p. 82.

came again before the House of Lords. The effect among conservatives of the King's acquiescence in the plan to destroy Lords' veto was predictably explosive. In reality there was little else the King could do, for had he refused Asquith's advice the government would have resigned. Balfour would not have been able to form a government in the midst of the crisis and the resulting election would be fought on the basis of the People versus the Crown. Such an election could only end in the final destruction of the throne.¹⁰³

In view of this overwhelming political maneuver the conservatives found themselves divided as to what course of action to take.¹⁰⁴ The moderates, among whom were many of the Church's bishops, counselled that Lords should give way in view of the threat of its virtual destruction. Bishop Owen feared that Lloyd George's influence in the cabinet was great enough to secure the creation of four hundred peers rather than the one hundred and fifty necessary to carry the Parliament Bill. If such a large number were created then the Liberals could pass all of their legislation without delay. This would mean immediate disestablishment.¹⁰⁵ Other conservatives, who came to be known as Die-hards, advocated resistance to the end rather than endure what to them would be a compromise of principle.

¹⁰³ Ponsonby, Recollections of Three Reigns, pp. 295-296.

¹⁰⁴ Lowther, Speaker's Commentaries, II, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 153-155.

Among this group was Lord Robert Cecil, a loyal son of both the Church and his class. In the end Lords did consent to the Parliament Bill, but not before many of the bishops had voted for it and thereby angered and alienated their more conservative laymen.¹⁰⁶

With the passage of the Parliament Bill the Church knew it faced a challenge to its establishment in Wales and girded herself for the contest. The bishops had participated in creating the crisis in the hope that the Church's best defense lay not in the veto of Lords, but rather in the attitude and good will of the people. It was their hope that at worst a mutually agreeable compromise could be achieved and at best complete victory might be had. The more conservative laity, however, who saw the attack on the Church's established status as part of the attack which was already being made against their class were not inclined to take such a sanguine view of the future.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 156.

CHAPTER IV

DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT

ACHIEVED AND SUSPENDED

Herbert H. Asquith was Prime Minister during the most crucial period in the long parliamentary process involved in the final disestablishment of the Church in Wales. Asquith's finest hour had been the struggle with the House of Lords.¹ At that time he demonstrated himself to be a match both intellectually and in parliamentary skill for Arthur Balfour.² In view of this accomplishment, it is surprising that Asquith's mentality was incompatible with any kind of forward planning.³ In his conduct of political affairs he was regarded by friend and foe alike to be a dry, hard, colorless, aloof man, who made no appeal to emotion or party passion.⁴ No doubt his unfailing realism, which

¹E. T. Raymond, Portraits of the New Century (Garden City, 1928), p. 212.

²Ibid., p. 213. A. G. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London, 1914), p. 54.

³Reginald Baliol Brett Esher, The Captains and the Kings Depart, edited by Viscount Esher Oliver (New York, 1938), II, 48.

⁴Gardiner, Prophets, p. 54. A. G. Gardiner, Pillars of Society (New York, n.d.), p. 82.

seldom if ever allowed him to raise false hopes, contributed to this somewhat austere characterization.⁵ His friends and followers understood him to be a man who could never justly be accused of falsity, for to them he appeared to move in an air of truth.⁶ On the other hand his opponents often viewed him as a person lacking all scruples.⁷ The truth no doubt lies somewhere between the two extremes.

As a politician Asquith was regarded by his contemporaries as a "constructive engineer of politics."⁸ This assessment is somewhat surprising in view of his reluctance to take up any revolutionary cause and an equal reluctance to abandon a cause once adopted. This lack of flexibility makes it difficult to visualize Asquith as the master politician, but his accomplishments confirm the assessment.⁹ The reluctance to commit himself to revolutionary causes may have stemmed from his inherent preference for ease in contrast to action and a disposition for compromise rather than face disagreeable personal friction.¹⁰ It is a continuing

⁵Gardiner, Prophets, p. 54.

⁶Ibid., p. 58.

⁷The Times (London), September 15, 1914, p. 9. Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), LXVI (1914), 904-905.

⁸Gardiner, Prophets, p. 59.

⁹Ibid., p. 62. First Earl of Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities (London, 1924), p. 32.

¹⁰Raymond, Portraits, p. 215.

puzzle how a man of such accomplishments could have been so inflexible, and how he could have blundered as much as he did in light of his inherent political ability.

Following the triumph of the Parliament Act and the introduction of the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill, Asquith experienced increasing difficulty in holding the government together.¹¹ It was only through superlative parliamentary skill that he was able to do so, although political ineptness on the part of the Tories made the task easier. The opposition insisted from 1912 until the outbreak of the war in 1914 that the government did not have the support of the people and continually called for an election. Whether Asquith accepted this analysis of affairs or not can not be determined except by observing that he refused to call an election and pushed stubbornly on toward Irish Home Rule and Welsh disestablishment.¹² Here as nowhere else is to be seen his characteristic attitude of seeing a cause through to the end. Home Rule was the major issue on which Asquith's government had to stand or fall. In the opinion of one observer the conservatives managed to lose a major political opportunity, for if they had come out for Home Rule, Ireland would presumably have gone Tory. This would have given the conservatives the ability to rule

¹¹Esher letter to Lord Fisher dated April 11, 1912, as printed in Esher, Captains and Kings Depart, I, 86-87.

¹²Alexander Mackintosh, From Gladstone to Lloyd George (London, 1921), pp. 240-241.

and to prevent disestablishment in Wales or any other social legislation.¹³

To make such a daring concession to the Irish presupposed a radical break with party tradition and philosophy. Daring of such audacity was beyond the collective will and imagination of a divided conservative opposition. If Asquith was having difficulty in maintaining the solid front of his government, the conservatives were having an even more difficult time. The issue of disestablishment illustrated this division among conservatives.¹⁴ The clergy of the Church were divided, for the bishops were being challenged by the lower and younger clergy. Many of the younger men were convinced by 1914 that the Church had been repressive of legitimate Welsh aspirations and had indeed resisted the Welsh revival.¹⁵ Even among the bishops there was a lack of unity. Bishop Edwards and Bishop Owen could not agree on the best course of action. Bishop Edwards, who was to be the first Archbishop of Wales following disestablishment, favored a more conciliatory attitude toward the government in hopes of negotiating a mutually agreeable formula for disestablishment. Bishop Owen on the other hand insisted on fighting to the end.¹⁶

¹³Esher letter to M. V. B. dated April 12, 1912, as printed in Esher, Captains and Kings Depart, I, 86-87.

¹⁴Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXII (1914), 704.

¹⁵Ibid., 668-669; LXII (1914), 1658-1660.

¹⁶Eluned E. Owen, The Later Life of Bishop (John) Owen (Llandyssul, 1961), pp. 36-37, 147-148.

It may be significant that Bishop Edwards was the son of a parish priest in Wales and had also served as a parish priest in Wales before his elevation to the episcopate.¹⁷ Bishop Owen did not enjoy such close familiarity with the Welsh countryside within the parochial system.¹⁸

Among the laity there was also division. Some believed, and rightly so, that disestablishment was inevitable after the Parliament Act.¹⁹ Others insisted, along with the majority of Welsh bishops, on resistance to the end. Still other Churchmen voted with the Liberals in the sincere conviction that Church and Chapel should be equal before the law as well as in social convention.²⁰ Time and again it was pointed out that on the Ministerial Bench in Commons there were more Churchmen than Nonconformists.²¹ With these divisions within the ranks of Churchmen, it is not difficult to understand why the Liberal government was able to force the issue of disestablishment. As the struggle progressed it became increasingly obvious that the issues involved were not religious issues between Church and Chapel.²² The issues were political in nature and involved a struggle between the aristocracy and the democracy.

¹⁷ Alfred George Edwards, Memories by the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), pp. 1-4, 72, 88, 100.

¹⁸ Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁰ Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXII (1914), 1685-1686.

²¹ Ibid., LXI (1914), 704.

²² Ibid.

Following passage of the Parliament Act in 1911, Asquith introduced the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, the Irish Home Rule Bill, and the Plural Voting Bill for the first time. Predictably they were rejected by Lords and were introduced again in 1913 for a second time. They were again rejected by Lords.²³ This set the stage for the third and final introduction under the terms of the Parliament Act. Under that act it was simply a matter of time before the bills became law, and as long as the government could cling to power there was no effective way the opposition could block their passage. This in effect made the parliamentary process a charade. Many members of Commons resented this aspect of the Parliament Act, and this resentment quickly turned to bitterness which beclouded the final debates of the Disestablishment Bill.²⁴

The bill was debated in an atmosphere of conflict between People and Parliament on the one hand and the Army and Aristocracy on the other. The Irish insurrection and the Army's involvement interjected the note of civil war. A note of class war was already present in the guise of the

²³Ibid., 718. Herbert H. Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament (Boston, 1926), II, 149-150. Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Lords), XIV (1913), 1279.

²⁴Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXII (1914), 1061-1062.

disestablishment controversy.²⁵ Events became so sinister that the King was moved to remark that "the cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober-minded of my people."²⁶ Old religious hatreds began to stir in Ireland and Wales,²⁷ and in later years participants would express the opinion that only the horrors and ruin of the war had saved the country from the even greater and more ruinous horrors of civil war and anarchy.²⁸

In this atmosphere of emotion and fear Commons debated the Disestablishment Bill, which provided for the legal disestablishment and partial disendowment of the Church. The bill provided for the transfer to secular charitable purposes various endowments of the Church, of which the tithe was the most important. The bill gave the Welsh Church an option of receiving a lump payment equal to the actuarial value of the tithe²⁹ for

²⁵Mackintosh, Gladstone to Lloyd George, p. 17.

²⁶Ibid., p. 15.

²⁷Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 623.

²⁸Mackintosh, Gladstone to Lloyd George, p. 243.

²⁹Medieval English law directed as early as 787 that the parish parson was to receive one tenth of the profits from land, livestock, and personal industry. This practice is confirmed by the decretal of Innocent III instructing the landowner to pay the tithe. With the dissolution of the monasteries the tithes which the monasteries had accumulated passed to the crown or the lay purchasers. Thus by the twentieth century not all lands were equally liable to the

each living beneficed clergyman at the time of disestablishment or of allowing the tithe to remain in support of each benefice until the death of the incumbent, at which time the tithe would become the property of the local County Council. The bill also nationalized all churchyards deeded to the Church prior to 1662. Finally the dioceses within Wales were required to separate themselves into a separate and autonomous national church with its own convocation and constitution. The debate was long and bitter, but it produced no new arguments on either side. As one weary member of parliament remarked:

No new argument or suggestion can be adduced to-night that would enlighten the Debate. . . .I have listened to all the arguments before and I have read them all in the last quarter of a century. . .nothing new can be obtained by further discussion.³⁰

But discussion continued just as long as the opposition could force a delay.

Throughout the debate the opposition charged that the future of the Disestablishment Bill was being determined by

support of the Church. The price of the tithe was commuted into a money value based on the septennial average of bushel production and price of barley, wheat, and oats in equal amounts by parliament in the nineteenth century. T. Willes Chitty, editor, Halsbury's Complete Statutes of England (London, 1930), XIX, 423, 424, 455, 466, 496. A. G. Little, "Personal Tithes," English Historical Review, LX (January, 1945), p. 68. J. A. Brendon, editor, A Dictionary of British History (New York, 1937), p. 515. Sidney J. Low and F. S. Pullings, editors, The Dictionary of English History, (New York, 1889), p. 1000.

³⁰Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 831.

political expediency.³¹ They were quite correct, although it was not as sinister as many would have liked to believe. Asquith's government was at the mercies of the Irish and Welsh nationalists and needed both groups to retain power. The Irish had demanded passage of the Home Rule Bill as the price of their continued support, and the Welsh demanded disestablishment.³² Oddly enough, disestablishment was not a political hurdle of that magnitude for Asquith, for public opinion was surprisingly apathetic to it. The same was not true of Home Rule.³³ In the past the Irish had saved the Welsh Bill on at least four occasions by their vote and in return the Welsh consistently voted for Home Rule.³⁴ Churchmen were outraged that the Church should fall prey to party politics in this manner and many were equally disturbed that as a result of the strangle-hold the nationalists had on the government no suggestions for amendment would be seriously considered.³⁵ The Liberals could afford to ignore these complaints of the opposition as long as the nationalists continued their support.

³¹Ibid., LVIII (1914), 635.

³²Ibid., 623, 635; LXI (1914), 833; LVII (1914), 967.

³³"The Parliamentary Session," Blackwood's Magazine CXC (March, 1914), 433.

³⁴Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LVIII (1914), 632; LXI (1914), 645.

³⁵Ibid., LXI (1914), 875; LXII (1914), 969-970.

Churchmen argued that public support on a national scale for disestablishment had evaporated in the two years' interim required by the Parliament Act; therefore, to proceed with the bill would be a violation of the spirit of the Parliament Act.³⁶ In support of this claim of lack of support petitions were presented by conservatives to Commons. Many of the petitions involved thousands of signatures of persons claiming to be Welsh Nonconformists.³⁷ The conservatives also cited the absence of disestablishment as a topic of Lloyd George's speeches. The conservatives reasoned that since Lloyd George was the leading member from Wales, his speeches in Wales would give an index to the current interests and concerns of Wales. Using this novel approach to determine public opinion, the conservatives concluded that the Welsh were more interested in the questions of insurance, land, and the army than in disestablishment.³⁸ Churchmen believed the government itself was convinced that public interest in disestablishment was waning and had therefore set about to hush up the bill. Opponents of the bill claimed it was for the purpose of keeping the bill from the public eye that no mention of it had been made in the King's opening address to parliament. These persons also felt it was significant that no cabinet

³⁶Ibid., LVIII (1914), 621-622.

³⁷Ibid., 630, 1130.

³⁸Ibid., LXI (1914), 619-620.

officer had referred to disestablishment during the 1913 recess.³⁹

Many of these charges were true to an extent, for throughout the summer there had been no public meetings to support the passage of the Disestablishment Bill in England or Wales, and supporters of the bill had been unable to collect funds from public appeals to support passage of the bill. In light of these indications of public apathy, it can be assumed that the conservatives were correct in believing the bill was being passed due to political pressures from within the Liberal party.

The evidence will not, however, substantiate the conservatives' claim that there was absolutely no public sentiment for disestablishment. The bill was being passed in 1914 only because of the successful passage of the 1911 Parliament Act. That act had been the issue of the 1910 general election; therefore the government reasoned, with some justification, that their success at that time, regardless of how slim their victory, was ample mandate to proceed with the Disestablishment Bill.⁴¹ The Welsh reminded Commons that the only laymen in Wales opposing the bill were "squires, land owners and successful English

³⁹Ibid., LXI (1914), 619-620.

⁴⁰Ibid., 631.

⁴¹Ibid., LVII (1914), 1654.

grocers living in Wales."⁴² To the Welsh the large numbers of signatures involved in the petitions were unconvincing due to evidence of fraud and coercion in the soliciting of signatures.⁴³ The results of three bye-elections in Wales during the time the petitions were being gathered also indicated public support for disestablishment. These elections had been won by Liberals, by reduced majorities, but majorities which were still ten times greater than conservative majorities.⁴⁴

Actually this phase of the debates was fruitless, for it was obvious to all with eyes to see that the government was going to have the bill. The government might pass the bill in the name of the people against the aristocratic claims of the Church and squire, but they were going to have the bill. The government made it quite evident that it was a matter of ballot boxes versus petitions, and the government was going to listen to the ballot box.⁴⁵ This was certainly an unchallengeable stance, but it hardly hides from view the naked partisan interest involved in the final passage of the Disestablishment Bill.

Opposition charges that the Parliament Act was being used in an arbitrary manner inconsistent with Asquith's

⁴² Ibid., LVII (1914), 1654.

⁴³ Ibid., LXI (1914), 670-673, 813.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 879.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 833.

pledges at the time of that act's passage gained little hearing from the Liberals.⁴⁶ The Liberals simply answered that if Asquith was acting arbitrarily, it was only because Lords had arbitrarily frustrated the legitimate will of the people in regard to disestablishment in the past.⁴⁷ As Balfour and his followers contemplated the impending passage of the bill, they could only rage at the state of affairs, which for the first time left the aristocracy powerless to veto legislation or force continued delay. Balfour was doubly outraged, for he believed that the government had engineered events to prevent the public from noticing the impending passage of disestablishment. The introduction of the Home Rule Bill and the controversy surrounding the Insurance Bill, in Balfour's eyes, had no other purpose than to dilute the expression of public opinion on the Disestablishment Bill.⁴⁸ With the voters of the nationalists behind him, Asquith was more than willing and able to ignore the objections of the opposition.

Much of the debate in 1914 was spent on the issue of the provisions for partial disendowment of the Church in Wales. Three types of endowments were affected by the bill,

⁴⁶Ibid., LVIII (1914), 631-632, 643, 645; LXII (1914), 1634.

⁴⁷Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament, II, 149-150. Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LVIII (1914), 660-661.

⁴⁸Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LVIII (1914), 656-657.

the tithe, the glebe, and the churchyards. Title to the churchyards was to be vested in the parishioners with the local County Council acting as trustee.⁴⁹ The glebe lands were treated on a selective basis, with some remaining to the Church and others being nationalized. All of the tithe was to be nationalized. These endowments were to be used to support the University of Wales and to provide public services to the Welsh people, especially poor relief, under the management of the County Councils.⁵⁰ The total amount of annual endowment income to be alienated in this fashion amounted to £157,000 out of a total 1906 annual Church income of £560,000.⁵¹ As might be expected in dealing with figures of this amount, there was an incredible amount of bickering and pettifogging⁵² over the breakdown of these figures, but the amounts cited are substantially correct.

To justify this act of nationalization Asquith contended that the endowments deeded prior to 1662 had been given to the Church in Wales when it was co-extensive with the state and the only existing welfare agency in society. In this interpretation the endowments were given "to the

⁴⁹Ibid., LXI (1914), 724; LXII (1914), 1675-1676.

⁵⁰Élie Halévy, The Rule of Democracy, Vol. IV of A History of the English Speaking People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols. translated from the French by E. I. Watkins (New York, 1961), 441-442.

⁵¹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 884.

⁵²For examples see: Ibid., 621, 637, 885ff.

nation on its spiritual side."⁵³ The only change would be that instead of the endowments being used on a parochial basis, they would now benefit the entire nation, and instead of the Church administering them, they would be administered by the state.⁵⁴ Much to the dismay of those who saw themselves as the protectors of the Church's patrimony, the government found support in the public statements of the Bishop of Hereford, who agreed with the government's interpretation that the ancient endowments were a national trust for the benefit of the entire national community.⁵⁵

Generally, however, Churchmen saw things somewhat differently. First they insisted that the ancient endowments were not given "to some super-corporation known as 'The Church'," but rather to individual ecclesiastical corporations.⁵⁶ To say all such endowments were for welfare purposes was simply to ignore the facts. The only way it could be determined what purposes the endowments were originally intended for was by examining the individual local corporations. Generally only those tithes appropriated by monasteries had welfare obligations.⁵⁷ Finally Churchmen appealed to the acts of parliament itself during the reign

⁵³Ibid., 815.

⁵⁴Ibid., 641.

⁵⁵Ibid., 701.

⁵⁶Cyril Garbet, Church and State in England (London, 1950), p. 126.

⁵⁷C. A. H. Green, "Welsh Disestablishment," The Nineteenth Century, LXXV (April, 1914), 901.

of Charles II, which restored the "Patrimony and Privileges of our Churchmen."⁵⁸

For those who were not persuaded by the argument of national trust the government justified disendowment by charging poor stewardship and claiming the state could do a better job. There was parliamentary precedent, for Church assets had been seized during the Reformation to be applied to the common good.⁵⁹ In highly industrialized areas where the Church was performing at a high degree of competence and dedication the endowments were to remain, but in rural areas of neglect and decay the endowments were to be nationalized.⁶⁰ Many rural parishes did in fact have unrealistically large endowments; therefore, disendowment would enable these funds to provide benefits for more needy parts of the Welsh nation.⁶¹ The government taunted Churchmen with the question of why the Church had not rearranged its endowments for the better support of its work.⁶²

This taunt was hardly fair, for the endowments could not legally be rearranged without parliamentary permission. The endowments were given in legal form to individual

⁵⁸Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates: Commons, (London, 1742), p. 54.

⁵⁹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 676.

⁶⁰Ibid., 675.

⁶¹Ibid., 702-703.

⁶²Ibid., 675.

ecclesiastical corporations for specific purposes, and only an act of parliament could authorize any other use of the endowments.

Many Nonconformists argued for disendowment in the belief that the ancient endowments were actually a type of subsidy. Churchmen, however, attempted to point out the historical fact that the Church possessed the endowments due to individual gifts from the faithful in the past;⁶³ therefore, any proposal for disendowment was pure and simple theft.⁶⁴ Many conservatives felt the populace had been led to believe that disendowment was necessary in order to provide the money for old age pensions.⁶⁵ No doubt many persons did believe this to be the case, and no doubt they had been led to believe so by the more unscrupulous advocates of disendowment. However, there is no evidence that anyone in a position of authority within the government took part in this deception. In essence the majority of conservatives objected to disendowment as a matter of principle, for they saw it as an attack on religion and on property rights.⁶⁶ It is not too surprising that such an understanding of the bill would arouse the most intense passions among a class who depended on land for their financial and social supremacy.

⁶³Ibid., 822.

⁶⁴Ibid., 642.

⁶⁵Ibid., 616.

⁶⁶Ibid., 827.

As Bonar Law queried, if it is permissible to nationalize the ancient endowments of the Church, why not the ancient holdings of individuals too? Law believed disendowment could lead only to national ruin, for if "you begin to interfere with the property of private individuals all security of property would be gone, and there would be a rising against the Government."⁶⁷ Not everyone expressed their concern in terms of the national welfare, for as one contemporary stated the issue, "the property of the Church was given to her ages before the Reformation, and rests on a title certainly quite as good as that of any Duke or Marquis in the land to his ancestral estates."⁶⁸ In its simplest form the issue was basically one of human need versus property rights. It must not, however, be concluded that the conservatives were absolute villains and the government the guiltless champions of social justice. It has already been shown to what extent the hard facts of political necessity dictated the fate of the Disestablishment Bill, and it must be remembered that the socially and economically dispossessed of any culture are also capable of greed and arrogance in power.

Asquith summarized the problem as being whether or not the "persistent and continuing demand of the Welsh People"

⁶⁷Ibid., 870-871.

⁶⁸"Government and the Good," Blackwood's Magazine, CLXXXI (April, 1907), 574.

for disestablishment justified the bill.⁶⁹ The philosophy of the Liberal party, believing as it did in the identity of national groups and their right to govern themselves, answered yes.⁷⁰ Disestablishment was not an ethical question to Asquith but simply a matter of expediency. Disendowment no doubt had ethical implications,⁷¹ but the government was simply following the precedent of disendowment involved in the Irish Church Act, which had been passed under Gladstone in cooperation with the House of Lords.⁷²

The conservative opposition would have nothing to do with these justifications, for basic to their belief was a conviction of the superiority of English usage and the British way of life.⁷³ Balfour totally rejected the idea that parliament should pass legislation for Wales simply because Wales desired it. Such factionalism would subvert parliamentary government,⁷⁴ and certainly many conservatives believed that the establishment, of which the Church apparently was an inextricable part, held the empire together.⁷⁵ In the words of the Bishop of Saint Asaph, the bill was a "desecration of the churchyards and a shameless robbery, and if it were applied

⁶⁹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 811.

⁷⁰Ibid., 718. ⁷¹Ibid., 814-815.

⁷²Ibid., 816. ⁷³Ibid., 685.

⁷⁴Ibid., LVIII (1914), 655.

⁷⁵Ibid., LXI (1914), 683.

in England they would be preparing for civil war."⁷⁶ Churchmen continued to resist the bill. Many continued to resist long after the issue had been settled, if not closed, and by their resistance earned the title of "Diehard." Foremost among the parliamentary Diehards was Lord Robert Cecil, who in the 1914 debate voiced considerable dissent to the financial analysis of the effects of the bill. Lord Robert would be a key actor in the struggle involved in the final settlement of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales.

Lord Robert Cecil shared the family traits of ungoverned passion, unyielding convictions, conscience, and a loyalty to the Church bordering on fanaticism.⁷⁷ In his political philosophy Lord Robert was intellectually convinced that democracy had its place in the empire, but he was never able to reconcile this conviction with his emotions.⁷⁸ He intuitively felt that successful government could only be by a superior class.⁷⁹ This conviction was not grounded on self interest but on the sincere conviction that only in this fashion could the nation be led into the Kingdom of Heaven.⁸⁰ For this reason he resisted all Liberal welfare

⁷⁶Ibid., 723.

⁷⁷Gardiner, Pillars of Society, pp. 70-71. Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 973; LXII (1914), 974.

⁷⁸E. T. Raymond, Uncensored Personalities (London, 1919), p. 68.

⁷⁹Gardiner, Prophets, p. 30.

⁸⁰Gardiner, Pillars of Society, p. 72.

schemes, and yet he had little influence in these matters.⁸¹ Lord Robert's regard for the Church led later to a description of him as a man with "one foot in the Middle Ages and the other in the League of Nations."⁸² In defending the established Church Lord Robert was capable of using "all the dodges of a welshing bookmaker," and if any impious politician despoiled Holy Mother Church, he was "not willing to leave him to Divine vengeance."⁸³ As a result of his resistance to disestablishment in Commons, Lord Robert became recognized as one of the leading parliamentary dialecticians of his day,⁸⁴ but the price of this accomplishment was the total emotional involvement of the man in his cause. He was not able to stand apart from the battle but had to invest his whole being in the struggle. Therefore, when he met with defeat, he was not able to bow graciously to the will of the majority. Instead he was driven by his nature to vow unyielding efforts to repeal the bill and recover the Church's rightful property.⁸⁵ This vow was to have a determining effect in Lord Robert's future public life.

⁸¹F. J. C. Hearnshaw, editor, Edwardian England (London, 1933), p. 94.

⁸²Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities, p. 177.

⁸³Raymond, Uncensored Personalities, p. 64.

⁸⁴Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities, p. 177.

⁸⁵Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 619.

It is surprising how little interest the Welsh Church Bill aroused, in light of the intensity of the parliamentary debate surrounding its passage. This can be partially attributed to the fact that as long as Asquith remained in power the bill was destined to be passed.⁸⁶ This element of finality was most galling to conservatives, for they saw it as the destruction of parliamentary government. Without the possibility of molding and improving proposed legislation through free and open debate, parliamentary government was meaningless. Some supporters of the bill believed free and open debate could not be allowed in the present case, for the bill was being handled under the provisions of the Parliament Act, which required that the proposed bill be passed in its original form.⁸⁷ If the bill was to become law, presumably no change could be permitted, regardless of faults that might be discovered or improvements suggested.⁸⁸ The opposition railed at this fact with increasing venom, denouncing the Parliament Act as a corruption of the English constitution.⁸⁹ The government freely admitted that in any case open debate could not be allowed, for the opposition would not use such debate to improve legislation, but as an opportunity to engineer a defeat of the bill by suggesting amendments in hopes of driving the government from power. This being the case, all bills had to be settled in private

⁸⁶ Ibid., LVIII (1914), 631. ⁸⁷ Ibid., LXII (1914), 649.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 960-961. ⁸⁹ Ibid., 970-972, 1638.

and secret negotiations, because both sides were controlled by party caucus.⁹⁰

In May the government found it necessary to find a means of changing certain provisions of the Irish Home Rule Bill without disqualifying its passage under the Parliament Act. These changes were forced by the fact of the Irish insurrection.⁹¹ Asquith proposed to solve this dilemma by passing the Home Rule Bill along with the Welsh Church Bill without further debate. Immediately following passage of these bills an amending bill would be brought in to make the necessary changes in the Home Rule Bill. At the same time, however, Asquith insisted that no changes could be made in the Welsh Church Bill due to the provisions of the Parliament Act. The double standard involved angered Churchmen and led to the obvious conclusion that only an armed insurrection could gain any alteration in the Welsh Church Bill.⁹² When the procedural resolution was voted on May 12, 1914, the government won with a comfortable margin of seventy-six votes.⁹³ Six days later the Welsh Church Bill passed in the House of Commons and was sent to the House of Lords for final consideration.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid., 975.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1018.

⁹² Ibid., 1062-1063.

⁹³ Ibid., 1068.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 633.

Lords took up the first and second reading of the Welsh Church Bill in June, at which time debate was postponed.⁹⁵ Meanwhile a committee was appointed to investigate whether or not the constitution of Convocation had ever been altered by the state without prior consideration by Convocation and the validity of the petitions from Wales against the bill. The committee attempted to fulfill its task, but it met during July and August, when events on the continent and in Ireland made it increasingly difficult to give full attention to the matter of Welsh disestablishment.⁹⁶ On July 22nd the Ulster Volunteers were fired upon, and on the next day the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum was sent to Serbia.⁹⁷ On July 24th the Lords committee met to gather testimony. Beginning on July 24th events in Ireland and on the continent rushed from crisis to crisis so rapidly that by July 30th the call for national unity in the face of a major European war forced a halt to domestic controversy. On the 30th the London papers were filled with pessimism at the prospects of a general war in Europe.⁹⁸ The Times called for a

⁹⁵Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Lords), XVI (1914), 377.

⁹⁶The Times (London), July 10, 1914, p. 13; July 22, 1914, p. 6.

⁹⁷Ibid., July 23, 1914, p. 8; July 24, 1914, p. 8.

⁹⁸Ibid., July 15, 1914, p. 5; July 31, 1914, p. 9.

domestic political truce. Asquith quickly lent his support to the suggestion, and the opposition agreed.⁹⁹ At the time Asquith stated that during the truce "the business which we shall take will be confined to necessary matters which will not be of a controversial nature."¹⁰⁰ On August 4, 1914, war was declared. Before pledging his support, Bonar Law, as leader of the opposition, gained assurances from Asquith that parliament would not be suddenly prorogued, thereby putting the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill on the books. Asquith assured Bonar Law that nothing underhanded would be done and that neither party would profit by the suspension of internal controversies.¹⁰¹ On August 6th Bonar Law publicly pledged his support to the government.¹⁰²

In the cabinet meeting of August 10th both the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill were discussed amidst much dissension over their disposition. The government was able to settle its internal differences and to arrange for a two-week parliamentary recess.¹⁰³ In his final address to Commons before the recess, Asquith expressed the hope of

⁹⁹Ibid., July 30, 1914, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., July 31, 1914, p. 9.

¹⁰¹Herbert H. Asquith, Memories and Reflections (Boston, 1928), II, 5-9, 24-26.

¹⁰²Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXV (1914), 2089. A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 266.

¹⁰³Asquith, Memories, II, 31.

dealing with all pending controversial legislation at the end of the recess in a manner to "meet with something like general acquiescence." From this guarded phrase it is evident that the government hoped to bring a degree of finality to the question of Home Rule and disestablishment at the end of the recess. Speaking on the same occasion Bonar Law could only express the desire to find "some way. . .to prevent controversial debate."¹⁰⁴

On September 14th Asquith informed Bonar Law and the House of Commons of the government's intention to prorogue parliament within the week and to place both the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill on the books. The day following final passage of the bills the government intended to bring in a bill to prevent any steps to be taken to put either into operation "for twelve months in any event, and if the War is not then terminated until such further date, not later than the date of the termination of the War as may be fixed by Order in Council."¹⁰⁵ The government professed a willingness to suspend implementation of the Welsh Church Bill because of the financial strain and dislocation effected by the war on the Church and its people. The government intended only to proceed with necessary preparatory inquiries and inventories for disestablishment and

¹⁰⁴The Times (London), August 11, 1914, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXVI (1914), 783.

disendowment, but these actions would be done without prejudice to either party.¹⁰⁶ The motivation for suspending the Home Rule Bill was simply the need to avoid divisive debate over the Amending Bill and the need for removing this obstacle to national unity from domestic politics. The conservatives charged, and correctly so, that the Home Rule Bill was being enacted as a political maneuver to assure the support of the Irish not only in Ireland but also in the United States.¹⁰⁷

These developments caused practically uncontrollable rage among conservatives. They charged Asquith with having broken his pledge and with not being a man of honor.¹⁰⁸ Rather than contribute to controversial debate or be a part of this act of dishonor, the conservatives refused to remain in the House and walked out as a body during the debate on the Suspensory Bill.¹⁰⁹ Asquith argued, and with justification, that his pledge of truce did not include a pledge to allow the bills to die, which would have been a victory for the opposition and defeat three years of parliamentary work.¹¹⁰ Despite the uproar created by the opposition, the absence of any strong public disapproval indicates that the solution of

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 892-893.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 889-890, 901-904.

¹⁰⁸The Times (London), September 15, 1914, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXVI (1914), 904-905, 920.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 884.

the Suspending Bill formulated by the cabinet fulfilled the stated requirements of Asquith's pledge given on August 10th. At that time the Prime Minister had stated the hope of finding a solution which would "meet with something like general acquiescence." On September 18, 1914, both the Government of Ireland Act 1914 and the Welsh Church Act 1914 received the Royal Assent, having passed under the provisions of the Parliament Act 1911.¹¹¹

Although the Welsh Church Act had been suspended as far as actual disestablishment and disendowment were concerned, the preliminary steps necessary to effect an orderly disendowment had not been suspended.¹¹² These steps were to be accomplished by the Welsh Church Commissioners, whose salaries and expenses were, under the terms of the act, to be met from money to be alienated from the Welsh Church when that act became operative.¹¹³ Thus despite Asquith's bland assurances that these preliminary steps would be taken without prejudice to either party, they did in fact put the stamp of certainty on the question of disendowment.

The enactment of the Welsh Church Bill along with the Irish Home Rule Bill had been inevitable once the Parliament Act became law as long as the Liberal government remained

¹¹¹ Ibid., 1017.

¹¹² Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 241-244.

¹¹³ Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXVIII (1914), 823.

dependent on the continued support of the Welsh and Irish nationalists. Despite the heated parliamentary debates surrounding the Welsh Church Bill, public opinion remained generally apathetic, and this apathy made passage of the bill a simple task for the government. That the government would not have sought disestablishment except for the political power the Welsh nationalists had in the party and in the cabinet in the person of Lloyd George mattered little to the general public.

The accident of the war removed the future of Welsh disestablishment from the hands of any party or any individual, or even the machinery of the Parliament Act. The dislocation to be expected from a general European war compelled the government to suspend the implementation of the act to assure national unity. As the nation prepared for war the Welsh nationalists could take comfort in the fact that the bill was now law although suspended. At the same time the conservatives could take comfort in the hope that following the war the way would be open for a negotiated settlement. What form a final settlement would take no one could predict. Meanwhile, all parties to the struggle sought to consolidate or improve their relative positions.

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL SETTLEMENT

The Suspensory Act of 1914 did not put an end to the maneuvering of Churchmen and Nonconformists. The Nonconformists were eager to consolidate their victory by making disestablishment and disendowment accomplished facts. This desire was motivated by the general conviction that the war would be over within six months. At that time the unsettled domestic controversy would be renewed, and the Nonconformists doubted the ability of the Liberals to achieve final disestablishment and disendowment in the face of an anticipated general election. These expectations led the Liberals to urge the government to proceed as hastily as possible with the preparatory provisions of the 1914 Welsh Church Act. Only the provisions for actual disestablishment and disendowment had been suspended, and the Nonconformists were eager to see all preparations made as soon and as completely as possible.¹

Churchmen displayed considerable anguish at this turn of events. They too realized that if they could maintain the existing situation until the end of the war and the anticipated general election, the entire 1914 Act could

¹The Times (London), February 23, 1915, p. 9; February 25, 1915, p. 6.

probably be repealed. If, on the other hand, the war should end with all preparatory steps having been completed, it was most unlikely that the 1914 Act could be repealed.² In the maneuvering that took place from September 1914 until early 1915, the one concrete pledge which emerged was that of the government's to stop implementation if the opposition would pledge not to repeal the 1914 Act. The Church felt an urgent need for alterations in the 1914 Suspensory Act, for under its terms the Welsh bishops were not able to guarantee an income to men appointed to positions after September 15, 1915.³ The growing dissatisfaction among Churchmen with the manner in which the 1914 Act had been put on the books began to threaten national unity; therefore, the government began to negotiate in earnest with Churchmen.⁴ A new bill for the suspension of the 1914 Act was brought in for parliamentary consideration in March, 1915. This new bill met most of the demands of Churchmen.⁵ The Nonconformists, however, were extremely unhappy with the new bill, for it would not only

²Letter from Hugh Cecil to Editor, The Times (London), December 7, 1914, p. 9. Alfred George Edwards, Memories of the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), pp. 269-270.

³Letter of the Bishop of St. Asaph to Editor, The Times (London), December 8, 1914, p. 9.

⁴The Times (London), February 23, 1915, p. 9; February 25, 1915, p. 6.

⁵Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), LXX (1915), 173-174.

suspend the date of disestablishment, but all preparatory measures as well.⁶

The Welsh Liberals found themselves deserted by their accustomed leader, Lloyd George, for he supported the new Suspensory Bill in the name of fairness and justice to the Church.⁷ He reminded his countrymen that it would not be just to require the Church in Wales to adjust to disestablishment and disendowment at a time when its most experienced and talented leadership was absent due to the war.⁸

On the basis of secret negotiations a parliamentary bargain was made providing for the new bill, which allowed vested interests to continue until the date of disestablishment and postponed that date to six months after the end of the war. In return for these concessions the Church party agreed not to repeal or amend the 1914 Act prior to the date set for disestablishment. The Church party in making this concession retained the option to start campaigning for repeal or amendment the moment the war was over. The Welsh Nonconformists had not been consulted in the negotiations between the Church and the government and were furious at the concessions made to the Church.⁹ The government's

⁶The Times (London), March 10, 1915, p. 10.

⁷Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXX (1915), 1815.

⁸Ibid., 1815-1816.

⁹The Times (London), March 10, 1915, p. 10. Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXX (1915), 1819-1820.

failure to consult the Nonconformists indicates to what extent the government was beginning to feel the necessity for yielding to Church demands as the Liberal tide began to ebb.

At the time the negotiations were being held on the new Suspensory Bill people expected the war to end within a short time. It is clear that the negotiations involved were carried out by both parties with an eye toward the anticipated general election. It would be to the government's advantage to be able to at least point to the 1914 Welsh Church Act on the books, suspended though it might be. On the other hand, Unionists obviously wanted to go to the electorate with a plan for repeal or major amendment.

Despite the anger of Welsh Nonconformists at the secretly negotiated Suspensory Bill, a parliamentary bargain had been made and passage of the bill seemed assured.¹⁰ The Welsh Nonconformists were highly suspicious of the bill because Lord Robert Cecil had been in the middle of the negotiations, and it was common knowledge that he was unalterably dedicated to complete repeal of the 1914 Act.¹¹ On the other hand, the Church party was beginning to doubt whether or not the Unionists could be counted on to seek total repeal if they should gain power. Lord Robert in April 1915, though busy calculating the tactics for repeal,

¹⁰ Ibid., 1800-1801.

¹¹ Ibid., 1803-1804.

was doubtful that Bonar Law could be counted on to support anything more than repeal of the disendowment provisions.¹² Bishop Owen was even more pessimistic, for he feared that the Unionists could be counted on to repeal only the provisions forcing separation of the Welsh dioceses from the Province of Canterbury and their organization into an autonomous national church.¹³ By May Bishop Owen and other Church leaders were beginning to doubt the wisdom of the new Suspensory Bill itself. They feared that it might be interpreted as a final agreement on the issue and end all their hopes.¹⁴

In the midst of their growing pessimism and troubled thoughts, the Welsh bishops were astounded by Lord Robert Cecil, who on May 7, 1915, proposed to the Welsh bishops that the Church should show a "readiness to find a way of agreement by abandoning the privileges of Establishment."¹⁵ This surprising and shocking change of course on the part of Lord Robert left more than one of the Welsh bishops utterly confused. In view of developing political events in the government, however, Bishop Owen believed that Lord Robert was looking forward to the political implications of what appeared to be the impending restructuring of the government.¹⁶

¹²Eluned E. Owen, The Later Life of Bishop (John) Owen (Llandyssul, 1961), p. 278.

¹³Ibid., pp. 266-267.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 281.

¹⁶Ibid.

Shortly after Lord Robert's remarks to the Welsh bishops, a new government was formed consisting of a coalition of the Liberals and Unionists. Asquith remained as Prime Minister, but there was a sizeable number of Unionists in the cabinet. At this time Lord Robert went to the Foreign Office as Under Secretary.¹⁷ In view of the new government it was possible to negotiate a settlement in which the Church agreed not to press for the Suspensory Bill. This suited the Church, in view of growing doubts about the wisdom of the bill. In return the Liberals agreed to Lord Robert's obtaining an Order in Council to postpone disestablishment until the signing of a peace treaty. On July 22, 1915, Asquith moved to discharge the Suspensory Bill on the grounds of Welsh resistance and the unwillingness of the Church to press the government in view of the war. At this time Lord Robert made a most conciliatory speech mentioning the possibility of amendment of the 1914 Act by agreement.¹⁸ At the same time an Order in Council was obtained, which was gazetted on September 14, 1915,¹⁹ thereby barely averting disestablishment, which was to have become effective the next day.

With the issuing of the Order in Council, it appeared as if the matter was effectively closed until after the war.

¹⁷The Times (London), June 4, 1915, p. 8. The Annual Register for 1915 (London, 1916), p. 108.

¹⁸Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXXII (1915), 1991.

¹⁹The Times (London), September 14, 1915, p. 6.

During the winter of 1915-1916 Churchmen and Nonconformists alike found their passions cooling. Both parties began to think in terms of accepting what had been accomplished. At the same time both Churchmen and Nonconformists began to seek for means to negotiate the unsettled elements of the long standing controversy. Both parties realized that compromise was inevitable, for disestablishment was no longer a question over which one could gather votes.²⁰ In May 1916 these mutual convictions were given concrete form by an offer from the Welsh party to seek a definite negotiated settlement. Nothing specific was done at the time,²¹ for Churchmen, though anxiously looking forward to a negotiated settlement, had hopes of obtaining a sizeable lump payment in any settlement to be negotiated with the Coalition government.²²

In December new political developments raised these hopes on the part of Churchmen. In the face of Lloyd George's insistence on being given the power to direct the course of the war, Asquith resigned. Subsequently Asquith made it plain he would not serve in the government except as Prime Minister. It was his expectation that in time he would be asked to form a new government, which he would do in such a fashion as to give himself a freer hand than he had in the previous one. Unknown to Asquith, Lloyd George and Bonar Law had been

²⁰Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 307.

²¹Ibid., p. 311.

²²Ibid., p. 314.

conspiring to limit Asquith's power to direct the course of the war. The King sent for Bonar Law to form a government, who, after discovering he was unable to do so, advised that Lloyd George should be summoned. Lloyd George was able to form a government by appealing to the Labour Party for support and by gathering in the back bench Liberals along with Law's Unionist followers. When it became apparent that he would succeed, Balfour and Curzon along with Lord Robert Cecil accepted positions in the new government.²³

Much to Asquith's disappointment Lloyd George had formed a new government, which surprisingly had an even larger conservative element in the cabinet than had Asquith. The new Coalition government had a Liberal Prime Minister, but its political stance was definitely conservative. Lord Robert Cecil remained as Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Bishop Owen understood that Lord Robert's price for remaining in the new government was a proposal from Lloyd George for the government to, in effect, reimburse the Church for practically all it had lost through disendowment.²⁴

Judging from subsequent events, both Lloyd George and Lord Robert were playing with one another, hoping to gain

²³The Times (London), December 6, 1916, p. 9; December 7, 1916, p. 9; December 8, 1916, p. 9. A. J. P. Taylor, England 1914-1945 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 66-69.

²⁴Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 322.

concessions on the issue of disestablishment and disendowment. No sooner had the new government been formed than doubts began to arise in the minds of Welsh Churchmen as to whether or not Lloyd George could be trusted to keep his part of the reported bargain. In February, 1917, the Prime Minister expressed reluctance to consider the Welsh question for fear of offending the Welsh Liberals, for they were the only Liberals he was able to carry with him in Commons.²⁵ At the same time Lord Robert had not abandoned all hopes for repeal of the 1914 Act. With the conservative element the predominant power in the government, Lord Robert no doubt had hopes of gaining more than just financial relief for the Church.

Meanwhile the Welsh bishops decided that the key to the puzzle was Bonar Law and his followers.²⁶ The only way to convince Lloyd George to treat the Church fairly was to demonstrate to him that Unionist support was more valuable than that of the Welsh Liberals.²⁷ It was believed that the Coalition government would continue at the conclusion of the war; therefore, Lloyd George would have to listen to Bonar Law to some extent. Much to the bishop's consternation, however, Bonar Law was reluctant to commit himself on the Welsh Church question.²⁸ On May 16, 1917, the Welsh bishops were able to extract a statement from Lord Crawford in the

²⁵Ibid., p. 325.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 332.

²⁸Ibid., p. 327.

House of Lords indicating the government would support reconsideration of the 1914 Welsh Church Act. The Welsh bishops' jubilation was short lived, however, for the next day, in response to a question in Commons, Bonar Law disclaimed any change in the government's policy toward the Welsh Church question.²⁹ Nevertheless, many Churchmen would remember Lord Crawford's statement while forgetting Bonar Law's.

By the summer of 1918 it became increasingly apparent that a general election could not be delayed too long. It was assumed by most observers that at the election the Coalition government would seek a mandate from the people. In view of this expectation Churchmen were increasingly anxious to pressure Bonar Law into extracting a public pledge from Lloyd George on reconsideration of the principles of disestablishment and disendowment as contained in the 1914 Welsh Church Act.³⁰

This was not an easy task. Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law were interested in preserving the Coalition, and neither was willing to take any significant risk which might threaten its stability. The Welsh Church question was the kind of unknown risk that might destroy the Coalition. This was doubly true because of the Welsh Liberals' insistence on no compromise, and the equally partisan cry by Church Tories,

²⁹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), XCIII (1917), 1789.

³⁰Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 369.

led by Lord Robert Cecil, for complete repeal. The Welsh Church, after enduring suspense and controversy for four years, simply wanted a cash settlement in order to keep afloat and to put its house in order. Lloyd George needed support, and Bonar Law feared troubling the waters of domestic politics on the eve of a general election by resurrecting the disestablishment controversy.³¹ The more Lord Robert agitated for repeal the more opinions began to polarize. On October 22, 1918, Bishop Edwards met with Bonar Law and stated the Welsh bishops' willingness to support a financial settlement despite Lord Robert's insistence on repeal.³²

On November 6, 1918, Bishop Edwards and Bishop Owen met with Bonar Law to discuss a statement prepared by Lloyd George stating the terms of the proposed Coalition in reference to the disestablishment controversy. The statement read:

I am certain nobody wishes to reopen religious controversy at this time. The Welsh Church Act is on the Statutebooks, and I do not think that there is any desire, even on the part of the Welsh Church itself, that the Act should be repealed. But I recognize that the long continuance of the war has created financial problems which must be taken into account. I cannot make any definite proposals at the present moment, but I do not believe that once the question of principle no longer arises it will be found impossible to arrive at a solution of these financial difficulties.³³

³¹ Edwards, Memories, pp. 281-283. Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 368-369.

³² Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 370.

³³ The Times (London), November 18, 1918, p. 4. Edwards, Memories, pp. 283-284. Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 377, 380.

Understanding this to mean repeal was out of the question, but that financial concessions of a sizeable nature would be made, both bishops agreed to the statement on behalf of the Welsh Church. The statement was made public November 19, 1918, in a letter to Bonar Law setting forth the terms of continuing the Coalition.³⁴ On November 21st, the eve of the Prime Minister's first election speech, Lord Robert resigned from the government, charging that the basis of the Coalition as set forth in Lloyd George's letter ignored the existence of opposition to not only the principle of disendowment, but also the principle of disestablishment. Lord Robert stated that he was forced to resign in fulfillment of his pledge to resist the abuse of the Church. The fact that he made this pledge in 1914 before the intervening events had so drastically changed the situation did not, in Lord Robert's opinion, absolve him from honoring the pledge. Indeed Lord Robert stated his belief that other members of the Coalition were duty bound to honor their pledges in a like manner.³⁵

Following his resignation Lord Robert attacked Bonar Law for betraying the Welsh Church by remaining in the Coalition. Lord Robert recalled that at the time of passage of the 1914 Act Bonar Law as leader of the opposition stated, "If a Unionist Government is returned to power I am sure. . . the. . . Government will. . . restore to the Church of Wales

³⁴The Times (London), November 18, 1918, p. 4.

³⁵Ibid., November 23, 1918, p. 7.

the funds of which you have deprived her."³⁶ By agreeing to Lloyd George's terms for a Coalition in which conservatives would be in the majority,³⁷ Lord Robert understood Bonar Law to be repudiating a promise made to the Church. This was an act a Cecil could not be party to, as a gentleman of honor.³⁸ Lord Robert read Lloyd George's terms for the Coalition to mean that there could be no questioning the principle of disendowment, and to this he would never consent.³⁹

Lord Robert believed that the fact the Welsh bishops had given their approval to the statement proved only that they had been deluded by Lloyd George, for he was convinced that the Prime Minister was tricking the Welsh bishops into believing they would be reimbursed when in fact they would not.⁴⁰ Editorial reaction to the resignation was quite mild. The Times observed that the resignation was totally unexpected and the motivation was most uncommon, for the Welsh Church Act was more than a half closed controversy. The Times found it difficult to understand the resignation if Lord Robert's only difference with the government was the Welsh Church

³⁶Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 878.

³⁷Ibid., CXIX (1919), p. 7.

³⁸The Times (London), November 23, 1918, p. 7.

³⁹Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 504.

⁴⁰G. K. A. Bell, Randall Davidson Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1935), II, 982.

question.⁴¹ In the following election campaign Lord Robert made passing reference to his resignation and attacked Bonar Law for remaining in the government.⁴² Lord Robert claimed there were two equally important principles at stake. The first was the matter of endowments and the second was the forcible separation of the Welsh Church from the Province of Canterbury.⁴³

As The Times observed, Lord Robert's resignation is hard to explain on any basis other than that of honor. It is known that on November 13th Lord Robert talked with Lloyd George about the Welsh Church situation and pressed for a private commitment as to the amount of financial consideration to be given to the Welsh Church. Lloyd George refused to be specific. On the basis of this interview Lord Robert apparently became convinced that the Prime Minister was not going to keep his word to the Welsh Church. When the Welsh bishops ignored Lord Robert's warnings and proceeded to accept the campaign statement as a basis for a settlement, Lord Robert's resignation became inevitable.⁴⁴ The Cecils came from a class and a family which operated under the aristocratic code of honor. He had pledged to resist the evil

⁴¹ The Times (London), November 23, 1918, p. 7.

⁴² "News of the Week," The Spectator, CXXI (November 30, 1918), 602.

⁴³ The Times (London), November 25, 1918, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 381-382.

treatment of the Welsh Church, and he was convinced the Prime Minister was going to be false to his pledge to the Church. He could not be party to such deception even if the bishops could. As he said himself, "for honourable men pledges are pledges;"⁴⁵ therefore, he resigned. For a politician it was an empty and useless gesture, for a man living by the aristocratic code of honor it was the only possible course of action.

Lord Robert's resignation itself did not figure in the campaign and was seldom mentioned even by himself. His continuing rapport with the government was evidenced by his appointment as a member in charge of the British Peace Conference Organization on December 5th.⁴⁶ As the campaign progressed The Times commented on the quietness and good manners of the campaign and election in contrast to others of recent memory.⁴⁷ Part of the quietness may have been due to the inevitability of victory for the Coalition candidates,⁴⁸ and the government's continuing appeal for national unity.⁴⁹ The election resulted in a tidal wave for the Coalition and a complete repudiation of Asquith's Liberals. The Coalition

⁴⁵"News of the Week," The Spectator, CXXI (November 30, 1918), 602.

⁴⁶The Times (London), December 6, 1918, p. 12.

⁴⁷Ibid., December 13, 1918, p. 9.

⁴⁸J. M. McEwen, "The Coupon Election of 1918 and Unionist Members of Parliament," Journal of Modern History XXXIV (September, 1962), 295.

received a parliamentary majority of two hundred and sixty-one, and only twenty-six Liberals who had remained loyal to Asquith were returned.⁵⁰ As a result some Churchmen began to have high hopes for repeal of the 1914 Act.⁵¹ Events would prove this hope to be less than realistic, for Lloyd George was certainly partially responsible for the Coalition's electoral success. With the war ended and the Reconstruction government elected, the time had come for a final settlement of the Welsh Church question.

If legal disestablishment was to be averted, the settlement would have to be finished by August, due to the terms of the original legislation and the terms of the suspending Order in Council. This made the negotiations a race against time, which was complicated by the fact that the Welsh Church problem had become a second class question. The nation's attention was taken up with weightier matters of reconstruction and the dangers of growing social unrest. In face of these pressures only absolute solidarity among Churchmen could gain the Church all of its desires. Bishop Edwards despaired of achieving anything approaching solidarity. As he recalled the temper of the Church at the time, its laity and clergy were divided among those insisting on total repeal, followers of Lord Robert Cecil, and those who followed the Welsh bishops in simply seeking a final and

⁵⁰The Annual Register for 1918 (London, 1919), p. 164.

⁵¹Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 384.

generous financial settlement.⁵² According to Bishop Edward's, the Welsh Nonconformists were happy to have any kind of a negotiated settlement, for in light of the changes in domestic politics they feared the possibility of total repeal.⁵³

The Church Parliamentary Committee entrusted Bishop Edwards with sole responsibility of giving final approval to any negotiated settlement. This was believed to be necessary because of the press of events, which would not allow for decisions to be referred to a Church committee.⁵⁴ The strictly secret negotiations were carried out intermittently from January 1919 to August of the same year.⁵⁵ On February 26th Bishop Edwards met with Lloyd George and Sir Henry Primrose, Home Secretary, and arrived at what Bishop Edwards considered to be very generous terms for a financial settlement. Bishop Edwards reports that at the time both Lloyd George and Sir Henry made it quite clear that the government was most anxious about the possibility of Lord Robert's agitation reviving the acrimonious sectarian spirit which had surrounded the Welsh Church question prior to the war.⁵⁶ Negotiations were suspended from April through June due either to Lloyd George's absence to attend the Peace Conference in France or to the crisis precipitated by the

⁵² Edwards, Memories, pp. 288-289.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 308-309.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 292-293.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 293-294.

coal miners' strike. The final details of the settlement were not completed until late July.⁵⁷ Time was growing perilously short.

The settlement was brought in under the title of the Welsh Temporalities Bill.⁵⁸ The bill did not repudiate the principle of disendowment, but it did manage to give the Church the sum of £1,000,000.⁵⁹ Both Bishop Edwards and Bishop Owen regarded the terms of the bill to be much more generous than either had hoped for at the start of the negotiations.⁶⁰ The bill was introduced on August 4th.⁶¹ Lord Robert Cecil had been informed of the progress of the negotiations, but it was not until July 31st that he was able to see the bill and examine its provisions in detail. He did not like what he saw.⁶² He was particularly shocked by the bill's acquiescence in the principles of disestablishment and disendowment. At that time he did not feel that others were obligated to resist the bill, but he did think it was his duty to resist to the end. As the debate on the bill progressed, Lord Robert's attitude began to harden

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 296-297.

⁵⁸ Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 40.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 465.

⁶⁰ Bell, Randall Davidson, II, 983.

⁶¹ Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 40.

⁶² Edwards, Memories, p. 304.

until he became outraged at the Welsh bishops and Bonar Law for compromising the 1914 pledge of repeal.⁶³

On July 31st the Archbishop of Canterbury by letter to Bishop Edwards gave his approval to the bill. He did so on the basis that the bill was the best that could be had, that the Church desperately needed a settlement, and finally with the understanding that the Church still believed disestablishment and disendowment were wrong in principle. This letter was immediately communicated to Lloyd George and Bonar Law.⁶⁴

In view of the continuing national and international disorders of August, 1919, it is surprising that parliament could be diverted long enough to consider the Welsh Temporalities Bill. During the month the bill was debated the papers were filled with headlines proclaiming, "Police Strike Mutiny; No Leniency to Oath Breakers," "Liverpool Riot Scene; The Road to Anarchy," "More Labour Excesses," and "London Police Purged."⁶⁵ Despite these domestic distractions the Temporalities Bill had to be dealt with, for inflation of prices and the interest rate brought about by the war had maimed the financial provisions of the 1914 Act in any event. This new situation would have demanded some type of amending of the 1914 Act even if there was not

⁶³Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, pp. 406-407.

⁶⁴Bell, Randall Davidson, II, 984.

⁶⁵The Times (London), August 4, 1919, pp. 3, 10.

a political agreement to amend the act in order to achieve a final settlement.⁶⁶ The precise meaning and effects of the Temporalities Bill were to be the subject of extensive and heated debate.

Opponents of the bill were to be found among both Churchmen and Nonconformists. Many Nonconformists opposed the bill because they interpreted it as containing a government grant of £1,000,000 to the Welsh Church. This would, in their eyes, constitute a re-establishment of the Church, and was, therefore, anathema.⁶⁷ Some Churchmen understood the bill as being an opportunity to review the principles of the 1914 Act in hopes of stopping the confiscation of the churchyards and the ancient endowments.⁶⁸

The 1914 act had provided for the transfer to secular charitable purposes various endowments of the Church of which the tithe was the most important. In the original Act the Welsh Church had the option of receiving a lump payment equal to the actuarial value of the tithe for each living beneficed clergyman at the time of disestablishment or of allowing the tithes to remain in support of each benefice until the death of the incumbent, at which time the tithe would become the property of the local County Council.

⁶⁶Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 94-95.

⁶⁷Ibid., 464. The Times (London), August 12, 1919, p. 6.

⁶⁸The Times (London), August 6, 1919, p. 16.

Churchyards deeded to the Church prior to 1662 were to become the property of the state under the control of the County Councils. Finally the dioceses within Wales were to be separated from the Province of Canterbury and organized into a separate and autonomous national church with a separate convocation and constitution.⁶⁹ All of these provisions were unpopular with Churchmen.

The Temporalities Bill was not only a political necessity, but also a financial necessity, too, due to the methods stipulated in the 1914 Act for calculating the value of the Church's endowments. As would have been expected, the market value of the endowments used in writing the 1914 Act was the value then in effect. Due to the war and inflation many of the endowments had enjoyed sizeable increases in market value. This was particularly true of the tithe, which was pegged to the septennial average price and production of oats, wheat, and barley. The average worth of the tithe had risen from £77 to a projected average worth of £136 by the time the Temporalities Bill could become law. Further complicating the matter was the question of whether or not tithe legislation enacted in 1918 designed to freeze the value of the tithe at the average worth of £109 applied to

⁶⁹ Randall Thomas Davidson and William Erenham, Life of Archibald Campbell Tait Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1891), II, 394-412. Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 503. Ibid. (Lords), XXXVI (1919), 952, 956-957.

the terms of the 1914 Act. The Solicitor General, a Unionist, and the Attorney General, a Liberal, were both of the opinion that the 1918 tithe legislation did not affect the value of the tithe for calculating the sum to be paid to the Church in the event the Church opted for a lump payment equal to the actuarial value of the tithe.⁷⁰ The money for this lump payment to the Church was to be obtained by mortgaging the tithe, but the 1918 legislation prohibited mortgaging the tithe for more than an average annual worth of £109. The contradictory effect of the legislation involved put the Welsh County Councils in the position of being legally liable for paying the Church an average price of £136 on the tithe while being legally able to mortgage the tithe for an average value of only £109. This meant the County Councils would be required to incur an unsecured debt of £1,000,000 as a result of disendowment. The government proposed to solve this tangle by giving £1,000,000 to the County Councils, who in turn would disburse the money to the Governing Body of the Welsh Church along with the money borrowed against the nationalized tithes.⁷¹ In this fashion the County Councils would have the Church's endowments and the Church would have a lump sum equal to the actuarial value of the tithe. To

⁷⁰Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 503.

⁷¹Ibid., 474, 487, 747-750.

the government this appeared to be the only just and fair way to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Not all members of Commons agreed that the problem should be resolved by a grant from the public treasury. Haydn Jones, representing a Welsh constituency, argued that neither party should profit or suffer from the effects of the war, but now the Church was to receive a payment of £3,400,000 as opposed to the 1914 value of £2,150,000. In his opinion this was a definite profit by the Church at the expense of the nation.⁷² No doubt his facts were correct, but the interpretation was not self-evident. Displeasure at the use of the public treasury to rescue bankrupt local government authorities was shared by other members of Commons. Some argued that the whole matter was a quarrel between the Welsh Church and the County Councils which did not concern the government.⁷³ Such Olympian non-involvement ignored the role parliament had played in creating the situation by enacting the conflicting legislation. The 1914 Act in conjunction with the unforeseen rise in prices and the 1918 legislation freezing the value of the tithe had produced a financial and legal snarl which had to be dealt with in a responsible and orderly manner.

Many Churchmen refused to accept the fact that the settlement was acceptable to the Welsh bishops, and insisted on a complete reconsideration of the 1914 Act. These persons

⁷²Ibid., 479.

⁷³Ibid., p. 475.

felt the Coalition had led them to believe that a vote for the Coalition was a vote for reconsideration. When it became apparent that reconsideration was not part of the government's intentions, they felt they had been betrayed and tricked. These self-appointed defenders of the Church seldom tired of reminding Bonar Law,⁷⁴ that he had condemned the 1914 Act as being wrong and having been carried through parliament for political motives by a political machine.⁷⁵

When it became generally known to what extent the Welsh bishops had been involved in the negotiations, some Churchmen began to express public doubts about the bishops' trustworthiness or abilities in complicated affairs of state and finance. Lord Robert announced his opinion that the bishops had been tricked and should have consulted laymen, who would have been better able to deal with the wicked world. Following this lead others condemned the bishops for abandoning the fight. One Churchman characterized the bishops' acceptance of the compromise as a "bit of Episcopal tyranny behind the backs of the Welsh laity."⁷⁶

The bishops could not give an adequate defense to the charges, for to have done so would have exposed the Coalition to attack from the Welsh Liberals and threatened the government's existence. It was to the Church's advantage to do all in its power to maintain the continued existence of the

⁷⁴Ibid., 483.

⁷⁵Ibid., 469.

⁷⁶Ibid., 482-483.

Coalition until the Church had been paid. At that time the bishops could reveal the full details of the settlement, which in fact gave the Church more than the bishops had any right to expect. Bishop Owen believed that much of Lord Robert's anger at the settlement was actually a result of injured pride at not having been consulted by the bishops in the negotiations of the settlement.⁷⁷

Nonconformist support for the bill was based on an acceptance of the fact that neither side got all it wanted in the negotiations and fear that they might lose the entire 1914 Act if they were too unyielding. They admitted to no significant change in public opinion on the issue, but they realized the need for a financial revision due to the effects of the war. For these reasons the Nonconformists were also generally willing to come to a final settlement in the name of national unity.⁷⁸

Those members of Commons who were not directly involved, such as the Labour members, supported the bill as being a means to end domestic strife. Mr. T. Griffiths speaking for Labour recalled that until the war religious bitterness had been so intense in Wales that men would work side by side without speaking. Due to the suffering and sacrifice of the war this religious strife had passed into history. Labour

⁷⁷Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 420.

⁷⁸Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Lords), XXXVI (1919), 903.

supported the Temporalities Bill, for failure of the bill could easily rekindle the recently extinguished fires of discord. National unity demanded passage of the bill.⁷⁹

The government argued that the bill would allow the Church to receive what it was legally entitled to⁸⁰ and in this manner settle once and for all the legal questions involving the value of the sum to be paid to the Church. Furthermore, the Church would benefit by having the basis for charges of being an alien institution within the life of Wales removed. The government understood itself to be doing for the Church what she was unable to do for herself.⁸¹ The government also pointed out to dissatisfied Churchmen that without the Temporalities Bill, which provided the missing £1,000,000, there was no possible way for the Church to receive the amount it was legally entitled to.⁸² Some members of the government, while admitting the desire for reconsideration of the principles underlying the 1914 Act, observed that the support given to the Coalition in the past general election made reconsideration politically impossible. The wiser course was to make the best of a bad situation by supporting the Temporalities Bill.⁸³

⁷⁹Ibid., (Commons), CXIX (1919), 492-493.

⁸⁰Ibid., 1056.

⁸¹Ibid. (Lords), XXXVI (1919), 887.

⁸²Ibid. (Commons), CXIX (1919), 465.

⁸³Ibid., 490.

The government hoped the proposed settlement would remove a continuing irritant from the nation's life and that future relations between the Church and Nonconformists in Wales would be strengthened.⁸⁴ Viscount Peel, speaking for the government in the House of Lords, observed that the £1,000,000 was a payment "made for the general purpose of reconciliation and good will."⁸⁵ In its defense of the bill the government spoke often of the good will and reconciliation in Welsh life that was expected to result, but the burden of the government's defense rested on the implied benefits to accrue to the Church.⁸⁶

Support for the bill from laymen within the Church was based on a realistic appraisal of the situation. They admitted that even a Unionist government could not be counted on to reverse the 1914 Act.⁸⁷ Acting on this conviction and filled with a reasonable hope that the Welsh Church could prosper once free of the disestablishment controversy, the Governing Body of the Welsh Church requested voluntary separation from the Province of Canterbury.⁸⁸ Upper most in the minds of the majority of the Welsh clergy and laity

⁸⁴The Times (London), August 13, 1919, p. 15.

⁸⁵Great Britain, 5. Parl. Debates (Lords), XXXVI (1919), 887.

⁸⁶Ibid., 887-888; (Commons), CXIX (1919), 489-496, 1056.

⁸⁷Ibid., (Commons), CXIX (1919), 492.

⁸⁸Ibid., 491.

was a desire for peace and a finality to the settlement. Finality and stability would enable the Church to proceed with planning its future work with some certainty and continuity.⁸⁹

In this latter sentiment the Welsh clergy and laity found a hearty approval from their bishops and the Archbishop of Canterbury all of whom, despite some misgivings and reservations, supported the Temporalities Bill. The Archbishop of Canterbury had reluctantly consented to that which must be,⁹⁰ but the Welsh bishops were able to be somewhat more enthusiastic. In the bill the bishops saw an opportunity for a final settlement to a controversy, which had troubled all Welsh life for fifty years and had condemned the Church to a period of barren agitation and struggle. The proposed settlement afforded an immediate cessation of the controversy with the promise of permanency by removing all possible doubts as to the legal interpretation of previous legislation. Though the bill left the Welsh Church poor, it would also leave it "with a very clear mission and with a sense of independence."⁹¹

Bishop Owen, speaking in support of the settlement, observed that the Church had an absolute right to retain the property, but it also had a duty under the circumstances to

⁸⁹Ibid., 478.

⁹⁰Ibid., (Lords), XXXVI, 895-896.

⁹¹The Bishop of St. Asaph, Ibid., 920.

forego its right for the good of the realm. In so doing Bishop Owen was confident that the Church would not "suffer in the long run."⁹²

In giving their support to the bill the Welsh bishops paid high tribute to those laymen who differed with them in their judgment and refused to give up the fight to protect the Church's endowments and position.⁹³ In expressing his thanks to the Marquess of Salisbury and Lord Robert Cecil, Bishop Edwards went to great length to repudiate their charges of having been tricked by the government.⁹⁴ In closing the bishop observed that "the policy of total repeal is right if not sensible, but. . .the policy of acceptance is sensible if not heroic."⁹⁵ In choosing to be sensible rather than heroic the bishops were true to their heritage, for it has been rare that bishops of the Church have felt called to be anything other than guardians of the Church's position and interests. It is usually the task of other members of the Church to make heroic stands in the name of the Church's calling and dignity. This task both the Marquess of Salisbury and Lord Robert Cecil accomplished in the best tradition of their faith and their family.

⁹²The Bishop of St. David, Ibid., 911-912.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴The Bishop of St. Asaph, Ibid., 917.

⁹⁵Ibid. 918.

The House of Lords concurred in the Temporalities Bill but not without attempting to amend it by placing the care of the ancient churchyards in the control of the Representative Body of the Welsh Church⁹⁶ and making legal provision for the voluntary separation of the Welsh Church from the Province of Canterbury.⁹⁷ Both of these amendments were lost in Commons because as stated by that House, it would be "inexpedient to introduce controversial provisions into a Bill intended to settle differences by arrangement."⁹⁸ The Temporalities Bill received the Royal Assent and became a law of the realm on August 19, 1919.⁹⁹

After twenty-five years since the issue of Welsh disestablishment first reached Commons as a serious legislative proposal, the issue was settled. In the meantime the English constitution had been radically altered through the Parliament Act, and the nation had endured the struggle and cost of a major war. The settlement was a total victory for neither side, but a compromise. The government, composed of the two political parties which originally had represented the antagonists, encouraged the settlement in order to free the nation from past divisions and controversy. The Nonconformists were willing to negotiate a final settlement in fear that disestablishment might be repealed under a Coalition government which was more Unionist than Liberal in composition.

⁹⁶Ibid., 957.

⁹⁷Ibid., 972.

⁹⁸Ibid., 1045-1046.

⁹⁹Ibid., (Commons), CXIX (1919), 2132.

This fear was intensified by the lack of interest in the issue by the general public. The Welsh Church, after enduring five years of suspense and uncertainty as to its financial future, desperately needed a final settlement that would allow for orderly planning of future work. In this fashion a settlement became a political possibility. Only theologians, philosophers, or fanatics were interested in the issue by 1919, and parliament had little time for any of these. The experience of a a major war appeared to have shown that graver problems awaited the attention of the nation, and parliament was eager to turn its attention away from past controversy to the new and exciting problems of the future.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The desire for disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales was a product of resurgent Welsh nationalism allied with Welsh Nonconformity.¹ At the same time that these forces were coalescing into a political alliance, the established Church in Wales was undergoing a renewal in its life and mission.² This renewal did not, however, prevent the Church from becoming a political target because of its past and continuing identification with the ruling class and the policy of Anglican dominance in Wales.³

Not until the 1890's were the Welsh nationalists able to gain serious consideration for disestablishment within the Liberal party,⁴ and even then they had to contend with Gladstone, who did not favor the proposal. David Lloyd George

¹F. J. C. Hearnshaw, Edwardian England (London, 1933), p. 241. Gwendolyn Cecil, Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury (London, 1921-1932), I, 319.

²John William James, A Church History of Wales (Ilfracombe, 1945), pp. 170, 174, 176.

³J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George (New York, 1929), I, 161. Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 13, 18.

⁴J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 161.

was instrumental in forcing the acceptance of Welsh disestablishment as an official part of the Liberal platform;⁵ however, the Liberals failed to achieve the goal before losing power in 1894, partially because Lloyd George insisted on taking an independent course of action.⁶ This decision cost Lloyd George considerable support in Wales, and many of his fellow party members felt his revolt contributed to the government's fall.⁷ With the collapse of the government, attempts to disestablish the Church would have to wait until the Liberals came to power again in 1905.

In the meantime Lloyd George's work in parliament demonstrated his talents for shaping and influencing legislation as a member of the opposition, and in this manner he established himself as a potential leader in Liberal politics.⁸ During the same period Lloyd George concluded that the Welsh would have to make common cause with any group that could help advance the cause of Welsh disestablishment. The most available ally were the Irish nationalists, who were struggling for Home Rule.⁹

When the Liberals regained power in 1905 their majority in Commons was large enough to allow the party to ignore the

⁵Ibid., I, 166-167.

⁶The Times (London), May 1, 1894, p. 6.

⁷Jones, Lloyd George, pp. 19-20.

⁸J. H. Edwards, David Lloyd George, I, 185.

⁹Ibid., I, 175.

demands of the nationalists.¹⁰ The new government's immediate concern was the amendment of the 1902 Education Bill.¹¹ When Lords vetoed attempts at amendment and subsequent Liberal social legislation, the government's attention turned to the task of limiting Lords' power to frustrate the government's legislative program.¹²

Welsh disestablishment became a part of the immediate Liberal legislative program following the general election of January, 1910, which so reduced the Liberal majority as to make the government dependent on the Irish and Welsh nationalists in Commons.¹³ The Irish demanded the abolition of Lords' veto and the passage of a Irish Home Rule Bill in return for their continued support.¹⁴ The Welsh supported the Irish in the knowledge that the abolition of Lords' veto would make disestablishment a certainty as long as the government was dependent on the nationalists. In this manner the future of disestablishment became subject to party politics.

¹⁰The Times (London), January 30, 1906, p. 9; January 31, 1906, p. 9.

¹¹Eluned E. Owen, The Later Life of Bishop (John) Owen (Llandyssul, 1961), p. 66. Alfred George Edwards, Memories of the Archbishop of Wales (London, 1927), pp. 188-189.

¹²Blanche E. C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (New York, 1937), II, 21-23.

¹³Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 144.

¹⁴Hearnshaw, Edwardian England, pp. 104-105.

It is at this time that the first significant break of solidarity among the clergy and laity of the Church in their efforts to prevent disestablishment and disendowment occurred. The bishops voted for the Parliament Act in hopes that the best protection of the Church was in the attitude and good will of the people and not in Lords' veto.¹⁵ The bishops were somewhat naive in believing the destiny of the Church would be determined in parliament by popular will rather than party politics. The Church's laymen resented the bishops' vote for the Parliament Act, for apparently most of the laity were incapable of conceiving of the Church apart from the aristocratic establishment. The laity saw no reason why the Church's status should not be protected by the use of Lords' veto.

Enactment of the Parliament Bill made passage of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill inevitable as long as the Liberals remained in power by the grace of the nationalists. This was doubly true as long as Lloyd George remained in the cabinet. The hopes and plans of both Churchmen and Nonconformists came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of World War I. The war removed the destiny of Welsh disestablishment from the hands of any one individual or party or group. If the war had not intervened, the 1914 Welsh Disestablishment Bill would undoubtedly have become law and would have left

¹⁵Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 156.

the Welsh Church financially ruined.¹⁶ But the outbreak of the war caused the act to be suspended until six months following the war's end.¹⁷

When the war did end time had changed everything.¹⁸ Disestablishment was no longer a political issue capable of harvesting votes, and the government was a Coalition of the two parties which had previously been antagonists in the disestablishment controversy. While the public was generally disinterested in disestablishment,¹⁹ the politicians were forced to bring the matter to a final settlement on the basis of compromise, for politically it was impossible to repeal the 1914 Act, and as a result of the war and inflation it was just as impossible to implement the financial provisions of the act.²⁰ Recognizing these facts an agreement was reached which gave neither the Nonconformists nor Churchmen a complete victory.

Twenty-five years after Welsh disestablishment first reached Commons as a legislative proposal, the issue was

¹⁶Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), LXI (1914), 621, 884. Owen, Life of Bishop Owen, p. 148.

¹⁷Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), LXVI (1914), 783.

¹⁸Ibid., CXIX (1919), 490.

¹⁹W. D. Morrison, "The Nation and the Church," Contemporary Review, CXVI (July, 1919), 47-51.

²⁰Great Britain, 5 Parl. Debates (Commons), CXIX (1919), 489-490.

settled. The battle had originally been a provincial concern fought on theological and philosophical grounds.²¹ Under the leadership of Lloyd George the provincial concern of Wales for disestablishment and disendowment had been forced on the Liberal party and had thereby become a political issue of national significance. The outbreak of the war forced England to shift its attention from domestic concerns to international issues, which in turn provided the opportunity for Lloyd George to emerge as Prime Minister. In this context Lloyd George outgrew the provincial concerns of a Welsh politician and became a world statesman. It is as if the war caused the whole nation to put aside the narrow and provincial world view that Welsh disestablishment represented to assume the burdens of the new century brought forth in the struggle of World War I. That war may have failed to achieve a European peace of any significance, but it did create a new context in which the Welsh disestablishment struggle could be brought to a successful and peaceful conclusion.

Welsh disestablishment had originally been a religious issue. In time it evolved into a political issue within the Liberal party and finally within the nation. Following the war disestablishment was transformed into a domestic issue having little if anything to do with philosophy, theology, personal power, or party power. In its final form it became a political issue only in the sense of "the practical handling

²¹A. G. Edwards, Memories, p. 116.

of matters which have a direct bearing on the lives of human beings."²² This was the final criterion by which the controversy was settled on the basis of compromise.

²²Reginald Baliol Brett Esher, The Captains and the Kings Depart, edited by Viscount Esher Oliver (New York, 1938), II, 265.

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