

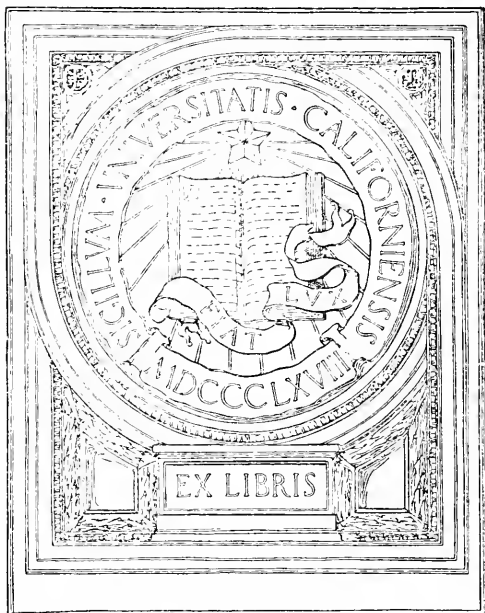
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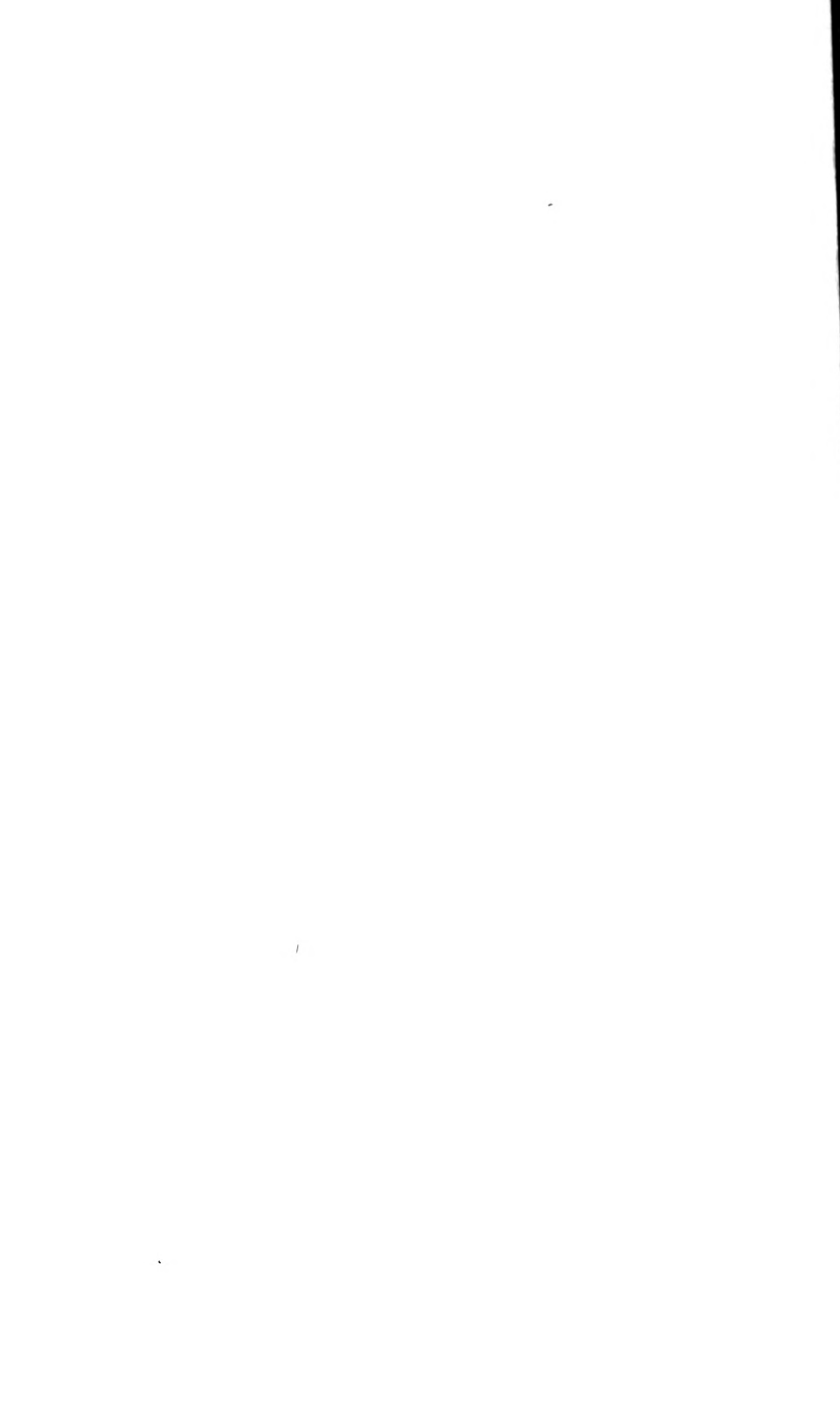
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OF WELSH
NONCONFORMITY

AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION

BY

VIATOR CAMBRENSIS

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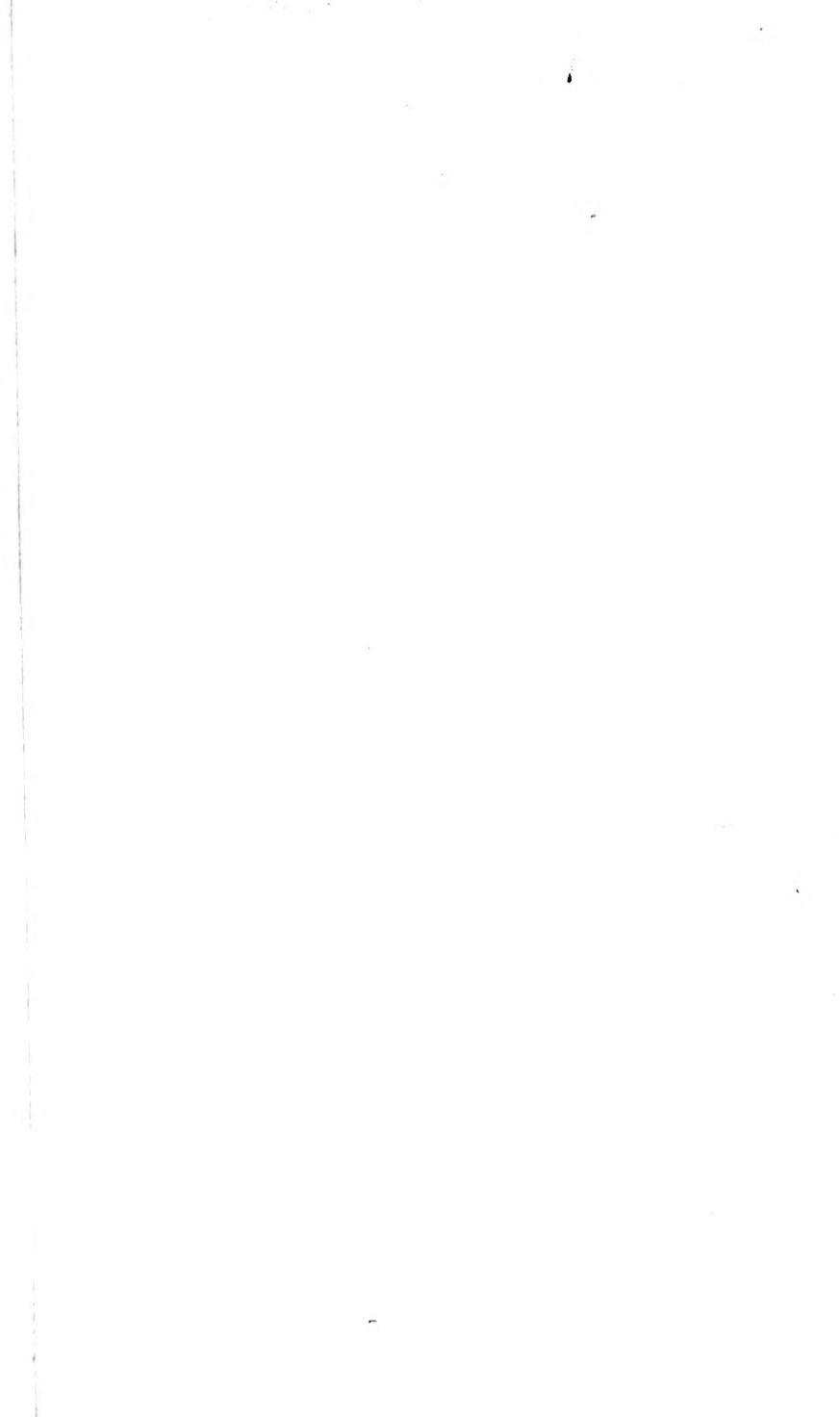
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THE RISE AND DECLINE OF WELSH NONCONFORMITY

CHAPTER I

ITS ORIGIN

WELSH Nonconformity is of recent origin ; it dates back to the middle of the seventeenth century. But since its advent, it has been the means, directly and indirectly, of effecting changes—social, religious, and political—the broad significance of which is not yet fully seen. It presents a variety of problems to the student of history.

First of all there is the general question, How are we to account for its sudden beginning, and ultimate success ? How are we to explain it in the light of the fact, that the movement was so radically and irreconcilably opposed, in form and in principle, to the existing Church, which was recognised as national, and which was considered to express the religious feelings and convictions of the people at large ? The Anglican Church had its roots in the distant past, with its traditions, its theory of Divine right, its artistic accessories to Divine worship, its priestly ministry, and its endowments that existed long before the time of legal memory.

Those days were days of religious depression, though the Church had not lost its hold on the intelligence and affections of its people. Almost every parish in the land

bears eloquent testimony to their zeal and sacrifice. From the thirteenth to the seventeenth century was a great period ; many churches were built. Their stately architecture, with their beautiful carving and painting, their stained windows, and their altars have been veritable picture galleries to the cultured, as well as to the ignorant and unlettered, symbolising the history and doctrine of their religion. It demonstrates not only the existence, in that golden age of art, of a high proficiency in design and execution, but the strong attachment of Churchmen to their religion, and to the Church as the organised exponent of that religion.

When Nonconformity came, like the erratic phantom of a dream, it came, as it is natural to suppose, unwelcomed, with its lay ministry, uncultured, and indifferent to ordination. Regard being had to the manner in which it originated, and the mould in which it was cast, it was inevitable that the whole weight of the episcopate should be against it. The dignitaries of the Church looked upon it, not only as a grave violation of Church discipline, but as a menace to social order, and to the peace of the community. And not without some show of reason. The acute social and religious cleavages which were caused by it, and the antagonisms which ensued, went far to determine the subsequent strained relations between tenant and landlord, and Church and Dissent.

As to the characteristics of Welsh Nonconformity in its very early stages, the *primâ facie* presumption, in many quarters, and even among many Nonconformists, is that it was purely Welsh. On the contrary, it was more English than Welsh ; indeed, judged by its character, and the area which it covered, it was essentially English. Those sections of Wales which were distinctively Welsh were scarcely touched by the movement in its initial stages. In the agricultural districts, in which the use of

the Welsh language predominated, the ignorance of the Welsh was deplorable. From the time of the Conquest, there had been no improvement in their mental condition ; they could neither read nor write, and practically no educational facilities had been brought within their reach. According to the testimony of Wesley, and of Dr. Erasmus Saunders, the Welsh were as ignorant as the Cherokee Indians.

It is to Llanfaches, a country parish between Newport and Chepstow, that Welsh Nonconformists look for the birth-place of their system. The chief founder was William Wroth, a seventeenth-century man of eccentric and puritanical views on Church discipline and government. He held a benefice in that parish, but he was deposed by Laud, on account of his opinions. Wroth was not noted either for his abilities or his saintliness. Indeed, he himself had been a most deplorable example of the drinking and pleasure-seeking parson of that day. He was an adept at the art of harp-playing, and was always in evidence on festive occasions. But this tragic deflection of life's purpose was afterwards rectified. Nonconformists had better abandon the practice of presenting the beginning of Nonconformity as a protest against "a corrupt Church," for Wroth had a corrupt record himself. After his expulsion he formed an Independent cause near his old parish at Llanfaches, which dates from the year 1639. This was the first organised Nonconformist cause in Wales. There were others who co-operated with him, the most conspicuous among them were Walter Cradoc and William Erbury, both clergymen, and ejected on account of the views which they held in common. They subsequently became itinerant preachers throughout the country. Their work was largely confined to the more Anglicised portions of the Principality. They were followed by Morgan Llwyd, Hugh Owen, James Owen, and

Vavasour Powell, who adopted similar methods, confining their attention almost exclusively to the towns, and to the purely English side of Welsh life. The result was, that their propaganda left the bulk of the Welsh-speaking population practically untouched. The movement, however, continued to advance, encountering and enduring an inevitable succession of opposition. By the end of the seventeenth century, a very considerable number of sporadic Nonconformist causes had been established, mostly in South Wales. The movement did not make much headway in the North, for by the year 1735 there were only eight such causes established in that section of the country; whereas in the South there were numerous congregations. Such, broadly speaking, were the organised results of Puritanism in Wales during this period.

With the rise of Methodism in the eighteenth century Revival, Welsh Nonconformity entered upon a new life. It has been associated with the names of Griffith Jones of Llanddowror, Howell Harris, and Rowlands of Llan-geitho, though it was Harris and Rowlands who carried the movement to its final issue. Harris was a layman, but Griffith Jones and Rowlands were in holy orders. This movement, unlike that of William Wroth, in 1639, was not a schism; it directly affected the Welsh-speaking population, and its leaders were Welsh. No doctrinal disputations were involved, and there was no idea of opposition to ecclesiastical authority, or of protesting against the lethargy which had overtaken the Church. There are men who, for political reasons, spend laborious days and nights in drawing lurid pictures of the internal condition of the Church during the years preceding this awakening. They deliver speeches, which are more vehement than eloquent, more sectarian than Christian, exaggerating admitted evils, and evils which churchmen now think of with sorrow. Evils, and serious evils, did exist, but

there were godly and devout men in the Church, who deplored the anomalies and indifference which prevailed, and who faithfully proclaimed the message of salvation. Indeed, the Revival actually synchronised with the profound change which was coming over the Church. The holy flame was present, and was beginning to burn, dimly seen by some—Rowlands among them. The awakening was an expression of the expanding nature of the new life which had already come into the heart of the Church. This vital truth has never been fully brought to the consciences of Welshmen. Indeed, the youths of this, as of past generations, are nurtured with the thought that the great awakening of the eighteenth century, which marked a new epoch in the life of the nation, was of Nonconformist origin. Nothing dies so hard as the memories of what people have learnt as children.

The movement was of Church origin, its leaders were Churchmen, and nearly all in holy orders. It was, it is true, unfortunately driven into exile and ultimately into opposition, through the unsympathetic attitude of Bishop Squire, and the ecclesiastical leaders of the hour. How much ill-treatment Rowlands received, in various ways, it is difficult to say, but in all probability not so much as Harris. Whether Bishop Squire cancelled his licence is a moot point. Chancellor Espin—an eminent authority on ecclesiastical law—says that, if the Bishop had done so, the fact would, in all probability, have been recorded in the Diocesan Registry. No trace of such a record has yet been found. It is, however, clear that Bishop Squire prevented Rowlands from ministering in the two parishes to which he had been appointed—Llangeitho and Nantcwnlle. A chapel was then built for him at Llangeitho by his sympathisers.

Harris's extravagances, it was said, suggested revolt ; "he was always on Sinai's top, hurling his terrible

thunderbolts." He certainly dealt some very effective blows from that quarter. So did St. Chrysostom, if such a comparison may be permitted. St. Polycarp said to the pro-consul, "With fire that burns for an hour or so and is extinguished, thou dost threaten me, but thou dost not know of the fire of the future judgment and of the eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly." Even Origen, under whose arms every heretic now seeks refuge, believed in hell. Harris warned his generation from the judgment to come—offensively and disproportionately, it may be. He took as literal what was meant to be figurative, but the certainty of his note was one of his greatest assets. Men cannot always, and some men can never, be reached by appeals to their better nature. Harris felt that the conscience of the people had to be roused, and the most effectual quickening of conscience is through the dread of judgment to come. We may talk as we will about the evanescent nature of fear, and of its being an inferior motive, but in all other things in life it is being appealed to. Our pulpit, to-day, is losing some of its power because it so seldom appeals to healthy fear. Take fear out of the discipline of life and chaos follows; take it out of religion and you weaken the power of religion. Harris was an abnormal man—crude, erratic, audacious, turbulent, and in many ways, ignorant; but the people to whom he preached were by no means perfectly normal; their conduct shows that, and the life they led. When men are preaching to renovate the community, and if they preach with effect, they raise against them all the interests that suffer. It has always been so. Much of the power of the Welsh pulpit in that and succeeding generations was due to its appeal to fear.

Rowlands was a man of a different type, but he never toned down his message to placate the susceptibilities of his hearers. He was often under stress like Harris, but,

when he spoke of hell, he never adopted the euphemistic method of one who spoke of "the place which could not be named in the presence of cultured people." Rowlands, who was ordained in 1733, attempted to do for the Church in Wales, in the eighteenth century, what Francis of Assisi attempted to do in the thirteenth, viz., to reinstate the preacher. Their invasion of other parishes and their open-air preaching technically amounted to a breach of discipline, but the maintenance of customary action was not essential to the vitality of the Church. The inclusion of the movement within the Church would not have meant the relinquishing of any doctrines or principles, for none were involved. It is a historical fact that Rowlands never encouraged the administering of Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, without a commission from a bishop in the Apostolic succession. For valid ordination, he believed a like episcopal commission was necessary. Sectarianism was repugnant to him, and the idea of forming a denomination outside his own Church was utterly foreign to his heart and mind. All that he claimed was greater freedom of action. He saw no disloyalty, and nothing inconsistent with his vow and calling, in preaching in the street or the open field. However irregular his method, he only sought to give expression to the new spirit which had been awakened within the Church; the leaven of righteousness was already there.

But Bishop Squire must be judged from the impulse of his own time, and the atmosphere in which he lived. No man can be rightly understood apart from his training, or position, or apart from his own day and generation.

Regarded in the light of the present, the Bishop's action was not wise: it forced Rowlands into a course which was distasteful to him. It illustrates, like many other movements, both religious and political, how a crisis comes which proves too strong for those who guide

and inspire them. Leaders of great causes are often driven by the logic of facts, and by the irresistible trend of things, to vary their course, and even to modify their views. Luther never contemplated a break with the Romish Church, neither did Wesley think, during the opening stages of his great revival, that it would result in the formation of a denomination outside the Church of England. To Rowlands, and those who shared his labours, Dissent was a sad and painful necessity. But though the policy of Dissent was the precise antithesis of the policy of the established Church, its doctrines were the teachings of the Church.

Rome is wise, and Rome is right. She found a place within her own fold for the Franciscans. She never loses a man if she can help it ; if she cannot use her men in one way, she will use them in another. If the present Bishop of London had been Rowlands' Bishop, how very different would have been the history of the Church in Wales, and of Welsh Nonconformity ! A movement which would have poured its rich blessings into the existing organisation of the Church was, through lack of sympathy and foresight, diverted into another channel. It established Nonconformity as a permanent, and for a time, a dominant force in the religious life of Wales. Until then its career had been sporadic, and its influence more or less localised.

In 1743, Welsh Methodism was founded, and for over half a century it lingered on the boundary line between Church and Dissent. In the year 1811, twenty-one years after Rowlands' death, the bond was severed, and Methodism began to ordain ministers to administer the Sacrament. Chapels were built, congregations multiplied, and endowments were given. A constitutional Deed was drawn up, in which it was laid down that the foundations of Methodism were to be the Articles of the Church in their Calvinistic sense, and the Westminster catechism.

It was in virtue of such a Deed that they were able to protect their possessions. Thus it is seen that the direct effect of the revival was, on the one hand, to weaken the established Church by depleting its ranks, and on the other to consolidate Nonconformity. But no impartial student can fail to be impressed with the immense improvement which has since taken place in the Church. Mighty energies have been set free, and unexpected elements have arisen, which have marvellously enhanced its progress. Judged by whatever standard, whether by the number of confirmations, churches built, baptisms, marriages, the larger number of clergy ordained, contributions towards Church work and educational objects, the Church is doing great work. It is increasing, widening and broadening year by year. It is also a remarkable fact that many of the most active and distinguished of the clergy in Wales at this hour have come from our prominent Nonconformist families. Whatever may be one's opinions of the controversy between Church and Nonconformity, it is becoming increasingly evident that the power of the Church is growing rapidly, while Nonconformity is, for various reasons, receding more and more as a spiritual and creative force.

CHAPTER II

ITS ORGANISATION

WALES is no stranger to religious unsettlements. The first to be noted is the opposition between Celtic and Latin Christianity, which ended in the triumph of the Roman organisation. Next, the union of the four Welsh dioceses with the southern English province. The Welsh have, alternately, recognised the authority of the Pope and the authority of both King and Pope. In the rise of Non-conformity, Wales experienced another change. The system which it established approximated more to the Celtic than it did either to the Latin or to the Anglican. It came nearer to the old tribal conception of Celtic Christianity, viz., the right of the people to baptism, burial and communion, and the ideal of tribal as opposed to State religion. As a system of Church government it has no affinity with the Anglican.

The theory of Divine right has no place in the Non-conformist system of worship or of government; it claims the right to ordain its own ministers, to call and to dismiss them. It is not the function of the State, according to the Nonconformist tenet, to patronise religion. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is equally accessible to every individual; it attaches no value to ceremonies, or to artistic accessories, and it is perfectly content to dispense with adventitious aids of every description. Between the Nonconformist and the Anglican system, the law of differentiation is carried to its extreme limit. Each cause, or Church, is an autonomous body within itself, having complete legislative power in its own internal affairs. There is no central authority, or collective body, that has power to enforce rules or policies upon any individual congregation.

As to the relation between Welsh and English Non-conformity, which has been strengthened of late years by the formation of the Free Church Council, there is a good deal of misconception abroad among Churchmen both in England and in Wales. The 243 English Congregational Churches in Wales have twelve representatives on the Council of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The 825 Welsh Congregational, or Independent, Churches in Wales, have three representatives on that Council. One of the reasons for the preponderance of English representation is that the English Churches are more closely affiliated with the General Council, and many of them are subsidised by money grants from its funds. The Council of the Congregational Union of England and Wales bears a similar relation to the English Congregational Churches in Wales, as does the A.C.S. of the Church of England to the Home Mission work carried on by the Church of England in Wales. Grants are periodically made under specific conditions, for the maintenance of the ministry, and other objects. In like manner three of the English Baptist Associations in Wales belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and seven out of the ten Welsh County Associations send representatives to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The unity of the Calvinistic Methodists in England and Wales is well known. The list of presbyteries and churches in England, and the Associations to which they belong, are given on page 33 of the report of the Royal Commission. As to Wesleyanism, it is the one Nonconformist denomination that is not doing particularly well in Wales. There is no separate Welsh Wesleyan Church. The British Wesleyan Conference may be regarded as the unit of the whole connection ; it legislates for and revises the work of the districts of British Methodism. The argument from the relation between Welsh

and English Nonconformity, or between the Welsh denominational Unions and the English Unions, to the Convocation and the Welsh bishops, is not a good one. Whereas the union of the four Welsh bishoprics with the province of Canterbury is a law of the State, and can neither be altered nor dissolved except by Parliamentary sanction, the relation of the Welsh Unions to the English Unions, is a purely voluntary arrangement. It can be dissolved at any time, and if dissolved, there would be no injury to either. The Church is established by law, not by any specific Act of Parliament; but it has been established, as Professor Freeman says, by the general course of our law "written and unwritten." The union between Welsh and English Nonconformity has no legal sanction, and no legal binding, and it bears no similarity to that of the four Welsh bishoprics and Canterbury. The union is more apparent than real. The Welsh representation to the English Unions does not carry with it any legislative power; their joint decisions or recommendations cannot enforce the smallest alteration in the management or organisation of a single Welsh Nonconformist chapel in Wales. The two cases are not on a par. It may, however, be stated that the Independent, or Congregational, Churches are fast losing their autonomy; they are gradually ceasing, if they have not already ceased, to be independent, or autonomous, in the old sense.

There can be no doubt that the form of Nonconformist Church government has added greatly to its power with the masses of the Welsh. Its rapid growth, during the past, has been partly due to the fact that it was founded on the voluntary principle; it explains the comparative facility with which they have organised themselves, and the convenient fluidity of their ecclesiastical organisation.

How does the system stand in its application to present conditions? Has the voluntary principle stood the test

of experience? It is a problem worthy of impartial consideration. It is clear that Welsh Nonconformists do not all think and feel alike on this subject. There are ominous signs; old methods and points of view are rapidly passing away. Some complain that the system is too democratic; factors at one time beneficent, we are told, are working havoc of much that is good. Our ministers are complaining that undue and unjust restrictions are being imposed upon them. There are laymen who complain that the system is not democratic enough. There has been an apprehension for a considerable time—well founded or otherwise—that the control of the religious concerns of the Churches generally, and denominational agencies, has drifted too much into the hands of our ministers. It has been suggested that a layman's league should be formed, to protect the interests of the laity, with a view of securing reforms, so as to make Nonconformist Churches more democratic, and to bring the administration of denominational affairs into closer harmony with the "spirit of the age," as regards direct and adequate representation of the members at large, in all denominational movements. There is a growing fear of the undue ascendancy of ministers, who, it is contended, have too much authority vested in them. These conflicting forces have been gathering from widely different centres, and are fast coming to a focus, and the crisis must be wisely met.

CHAPTER III

ITS DIACONATE

THE "deacons' seat" or the "big pew," as it is called, surrounds the pulpit, and the deacons sit with their backs to the congregation. The structural arrangements of this pew, which is more or less elevated from the ground, are somewhat primitive. Such a pew is not to be found in any other Christian Church with the exception of the Free Churches. It is a place originally supposed to be reserved for the foremost men of the church and congregation. The custom is derived from the appointment of the seven deacons in Apostolic times. Their numbers vary in different churches, but the principle is the same. The duties assigned to them were to make provision for the poor of the church, to look after the minister's stipend, to assist in serving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and to act as custodians of the doctrines of the Church. The deacons are elected for life.

This is the rule among Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, but there are exceptions among other denominations. There is a strong feeling throughout Wales, and among Welsh Nonconformists, for a change in this respect, and to elect these church officials for a period of five or seven years. Five years, it is now thought, is long enough for deacons to hold office without re-election. A minister who is not a *persona grata*, whose preaching is not considered good enough, or sensational enough, or who has given offence, whether consciously or unconsciously, by something that he has done, or spoken, in private or from the pulpit, can be reduced to impotence. Even *one* deacon can accomplish this ; it is often done. He can, by sinister

methods, force a good man to resign his pastorate, while the deacon himself is seated on his throne, like a Czar, for ever. Any attempt at dislodging him, unless for some notorious and admitted public wrong, would result in disaster to the Church, and, probably, in an action at law. If the secret history of this side of our Nonconformist life were written and published, it would be sad and painful reading.

The deacons would be more useful if they mixed with the people, instead of sequestering themselves and constituting themselves into a particular caste or class. As to safeguarding the "orthodoxy" of the pulpit, the majority of them could not even give a definition of orthodoxy. They could not stand a simple examination in the rudimentary elements of theology. Indeed, theology is the very science that they do not understand. They *think* they do; they *claim* that they do, and they would be very angry if attempts were made to question their ability to distinguish between what is orthodox, and what is heterodox.

As to the idea of the deacons being in the "big pew" in order to give encouragement to the minister, the traditional method is to repeat the word "Amen" at certain points. Some show their approval with a smile, or a nod, or both. The interjections vary in style and intensity. Something depends upon the quality of the deacons' voices, their temperament, and their prejudices. A great deal also depends upon the degree of friendship existing between the deacons and the minister: something upon their theological views. One deacon may be all for doctrine, another may have no partiality for doctrinal sermons. One may be puritanical in his notions, another lax and loose. One may delight to hear the sad and doleful side of religious experience, another may have a preference for the bright and the cheerful. One wants a preacher

with a voice like a nightingale, who can sing, and intone the sentences as they are uttered ; another cares very little about the traditional "sing-song" style of preaching, all he wants is "matter." Each deacon brings into the service his own notions and prejudices ; so they are all more often than not at a jangle one with another, and the minister, especially if he be young and somewhat inexperienced, is often at a loss to know how to placate these "beasts in Ephesus." Not a few good men have been driven to despair, and have actually died broken-hearted. Many, disgusted with the whole system, have gone over to the Anglican Church, where they can get protection. It is a fact within the knowledge of every Nonconformist that many of the brightest, brainiest, and most capable, of the Welsh clergy to-day are men who have seceded from Nonconformity.

The decline in the power and prestige of the "deacons' pew" has been coincident with the decline in the power and prestige of the pulpit. The one has acted and reacted upon the other. Once upon a time the diaconate was held in high esteem. That was in the days long past, when the "big pew" was occupied by aged men of unquestioned goodness, whose Christian experiences were food for sermons, and a source of joy to the saints. As one glances over the "big pew" of to-day, and compares it with that of thirty or fifty years ago, how serious is the difference—in its mental equipment, its ideals, its experience and its spirituality ! How can the rising generation be expected to pay heed to, much less respect, a pew, filled as such a pew often is by mediocrities, by men notorious for their inexorable avarice ? Many of them are the incarnation of ignorance, and their obstinacy is commensurate with their ignorance. There are excellent men among the deacons of to-day, but the system is bad, and out of date. Not that we must look for perfection, we often look for it

less in the Church than anywhere else—where religion is professed. But when a certain lot of men are picked out of a whole congregation, and sequestered for spiritual purposes, and held up as models, and when, at the same time, they are selfish, arbitrary and offensively official, how can a congregation bring itself to believe in the propriety of such a system? These are some of the things that make the office—whatever it may signify—odious in the sight of the world.

It was once observed by an astute old Nonconformist minister, that the difference between the deacons of the present day, and the "women trampers," who, in days past, used to follow certain popular preachers about the country, and shriek out their joy, or sorrow, at certain points in the sermon, consists in the fact that these women knew *when* to shout. There have been experts in this line in Wales; men of stentorian voices, with a touch of unction about them, who made a "hobby" or a "business" of it. They were hospitably entertained wherever they went, for they helped to give the services an air of success. Secret arrangements were made by certain ambitious ministers to secure their presence at meetings, where they were advertised to preach. Travelling expenses were paid privately with a little extra. But they were expected to carry out the contract honourably, though a long-winded minister often exhausted their energies. To the "stranger within the gates," or the inexperienced, the performance had the appearance of reality and spontaneity, but it was all pre-arranged, and done quite automatically. It is sad to relate that such a reprehensible practice has been applied, not merely to the delivery of the sermon, but to the prayer. It is almost too horrible to contemplate. To suborn unctuous sycophants in order to get the "*Hwyl*," and to rouse enthusiasm, during prayer, or what is part lecture and part sermon under

the guise of prayer, is enough to make one shudder at the wickedness of it.

It is not too much to say that out of a dozen or more deacons in a single church not more than two or three, as a rule, would be capable of leading the congregation in prayer, or of speaking upon any theological question, or of giving instruction upon any matter of deep spiritual significance, with any degree of intelligence, or in a manner likely to be helpful to the congregation. This is all the more astonishing when we take into consideration the fact that these deacons—very many of them at least—are schoolmasters, managers of different industries, and leading men in the community. They are not selected because they have been proved and tested for their spirituality, or for their knowledge of the Word of God, or their ability to communicate what knowledge they have. They are picked out and placed in the deacons' pew, as a rule, from social considerations, because it is thought that their appearance in the big pew will add weight to the authority of that pew, and increase the status of that particular church in the community. The spirit that prevails in the big pew is reflected in the congregation. As the gift of prayer and the capacity for spiritual instruction is no longer a characteristic of the big pew, so it is no longer a characteristic of our churches and congregations. The wealth of this power, which was revealed by the late Revival, and which was created and cultivated by it, is at present practically non-existent. Through the combined influence of both the pulpit and the big pew, the Church has been lowered to the level of the thought and spirit current in the world. Instead of raising the people to the level of the Church, they have lowered the Church to the level of the people. The Church idea, with present-day Nonconformity, has practically disappeared. The Church is made subservient to every

wind that blows. The obligation to contribute to the maintenance of the ministry, to attend the appointed services of the Church, and to bring one's experience and knowledge into the life of the Church, all which is involved in the fact of membership, no longer prevails. Indeed, the thought that the Church as a spiritual organisation is meant to supply its members with strength and guidance in the conduct of their daily affairs, and in meeting temptation in the world, has to all intents and purposes passed away. It is a fact within the knowledge of all observant Nonconformists that not more than ten per cent. of the members of our Nonconformist churches attend week-night services, and the tendency is in the wrong direction. This is applicable not only to the ordinary prayer service, but also to that particular service at which the minister once a week preaches a sermon. In days past the very presence of the minister was in itself an attraction, and there was that something in him, and about him, and in what he said, that arrested attention and brought with it conviction of one's failings, and which produced implicit belief in the reality of the minister, and the truth of his utterance. To-day the ordinary Church member would be the first to criticise his minister, and even to question his sincerity. The shifting of opinion in this regard is a matter of grave concern to Nonconformity, and is one of the many unmistakable signs of its decline. It recalls to one's mind many things, and many sacred associations, now buried deep in our memory of the past. These facts, and they are facts which cannot be controverted, do not tally with the Nonconformist claim that it has a hold upon the intelligence and the affection of the masses of our people. Whatever Nonconformity may appear on paper, whatever it may be able to prove by the statistical argument, and whatever power it may claim in virtue of its parliamentary

representation, it is certainly not warranted by its spiritual condition, or by the loyalty of its communicants and adherents to the traditions of Nonconformity, and to the only real test of membership upon which Nonconformity has been built.

CHAPTER IV

ITS PULPIT

THE greatest thinker that ever adorned our Welsh Nonconformist pulpit—the late Dr. Lewis Edwards, of Bala—said in 1858: “We (Nonconformists) can never go on successfully without good preachers.” A pregnant and prophetic saying. What else could Nonconformity fall back on? Not on its altar. Worship is of secondary importance. The congregation comes to hear the preacher. Not on its system of doctrine. Nonconformity is not organised on the basis of fixed intellectual forms. Not on its republican or democratic system of congregational government, for the popular belief in its infallibility has undergone profound modifications of late years. Not on the sense of its social, or religious solidarity. There can be no solidarity where there is no unity. It lacks the elements of unity. The most potent forces that inhere in the genius of Nonconformity are the centrifugal. That is the reason why Nonconformity cannot give denominationalism without sectarianism, and sectarianism in its acrid and conflicting form. Sects, and schisms within the sects, have abounded, each sect coming into the circle with those views of truth and of government that fit into its own apprehension, and all the sects and the schisms together, burning and swinging incense to the genius that separated them; helping each other’s consciences by maintaining a kind of conventional agreement, and each sect proudly Christian on the ground of its disagreement with the other. It is claimed that this sectarian animation is a sign of religious activity. It may be ordinary, but not real, religious activity. Of one thing there can be no doubt, it kills the spirit of unity for which Nonconformists pray so fervently and so eloquently.

Not the least of the many valuable services which

Dr. Edwards rendered Welsh Nonconformity was his successful effort to raise the status of its pulpit. What did he demand? He demanded earnestness, first-rate ability, scholarship, knowledge of the Bible and of the language, and gentlemanliness. He himself was the very embodiment of gentlemanliness. A man of sturdy convictions, but ever mindful of the feelings of others, and though a pronounced Nonconformist, he cherished and expressed, as every Christian should, the greatest respect towards the clergy and the established Church, and other religious bodies. He saw, he said, in Methodism "something which was not to be found in any other denomination under heaven," yet he sought all his lifetime to establish a spiritual *modus vivendi*, of charity and kindness, among all Christians in the Principality. A highly respected minister of another denomination is reported to have said, at the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the ejection of Nonconformist members from the Established Church, which was held at Swansea on Wednesday, July 3rd, "If the Establishment had nothing better than the report of the Royal Commission to fall back on, then God help her!" Could anyone imagine our Dr. Lewis Edwards showing such bitterness, and taking such sentient delight in damning another religious organisation? Could anyone imagine his son, Dr. Thomas Charles Edwards, doing so? Or Dr. Owen Thomas, of Liverpool, or even his amiable and eloquent successor, the Rev. John Williams, of Brynsciencyn? Whatever doubts there may be as to the advisability of ministers interfering in party politics, one thing is beyond dispute, politics do embitter the spirit. No candid, unprejudiced Nonconformist can dispute the fact that God is blessing the Church in Wales, and that in a very marvellous manner. The evidence is clear and complete. To dispute this is to dispute incontrovertible facts.

How does the Welsh Nonconformist pulpit of to-day compare with the standard set up by Dr. Lewis Edwards? That standard he established, and it was maintained in Wales for generations. To imply that there are no earnest, eloquent, and educated men in the Welsh pulpit to-day would be grossly untrue. But taking a general view of our ministry, one is forced to the conclusion that its most distinctive qualities are its *surface* qualities. By *surface* qualities is meant, volubility, demagogism, wild emotion, physical excitement, and evanescent fervour. There is enough and to spare of that metaphysical fogginess which uses grandiloquent phrases, as if they were real things, and rhythmical delivery of the most monotonous and mechanical character. What solidity do we find? What genuine fervour? What digestion of doctrine? What mystical exposition of a well-systematised theology? What preparation of heart and mind in the atmosphere of the Divine spirit? What practical or philosophical analysis of popular theology in its comparative sense? Great waves of feeling, but how much of that feeling is intellectually engaged? How much of that feeling is inspired by the light of truth, and how much by the heat of physical passion? There is more than enough of pious exclamations, but do they stimulate the people to think and to observe? Are the sermons Biblical, rational, or practical? Is the preaching as diverse in the form of its thought and utterance as the character and conditions which it addresses? Truth is comprehensive, and because it is comprehensive, it ought to be made to minister to a variety of conditions and people. What evidence is there of a sound education? Surely there is no such evidence in its style, none in its simplicity, and none in its learning. What proofs are there of wide and deep reading? Where is the courage to say the brave and necessary thing? Our preachers have abandoned their vocation, and have

gone in for flattering the prejudices that afflict our countrymen. Welsh patriotism, nowadays, is synonymous with soft soap. This is the commodity that is in demand, and our politicians, and public men, are competing with each other in trying to supply the stuff that is most palatable. These parasites are plentiful in the land. In the daily Press, in our convivial gatherings, in our political demonstrations, and our magazines, we get nothing but soft soap for the Welsh, intermixed with vulgar and vicious abuse of well-known Welsh writers who are bold enough to criticise. Our system of education, our politicians, poets, colleges, and institutions, are described as the "most idealistic in Europe." "No nation on earth can teach us anything"; "We are the most notable of nations"; "There has been created in Wales a standard of intellectual taste and capacity, such as has never been equalled since the times of the cultured democracies of Greece"; "The Eisteddfod would be impossible in England, because it pre-supposes a general level of culture which the democracy of England has not yet attained"; "All the great literature of modern Europe is indebted to us"; "The loss of Welsh nationality would be a loss to humanity"; "How infinitely more musical, and natural, are such words as *bara*, *gwenith*, *eira*, *afon*, and *glan*, than their equivalent in English—such as bread, wheat, snow, stream, and shore; the Welsh words are poetic, imaginative and ethereal, whereas the English are very matter of fact"; "The songs and ballads of Wales stand on the very highest plane in the original poesy of the human mind, so tender-sweet is the emotion, so simple the diction, so perfect the phrasing, so exquisite the imagery, so profound the passion, so condensed and pregnant the expression, that we should be amazed to find anything more beautiful in the whole range of literature."

Besides the injurious effect such abominable nonsense must have upon the mind of the Welsh, the simple historical fact is that the Welsh have taught the world nothing of the art of government, they have contributed nothing to the scientific knowledge of the world, they have added nothing to its material prosperity, nothing to its philosophy, and nothing to the artistic side of civilisation. If these Welshmen have no better use for their knowledge of the English language than to make it the vehicle for planting such raw material on the market, let them stick to their native language. The whole thing stinks in the nostrils of educated people.

In the *South Wales Daily News* for August 5th, a Liberal daily, usually conducted on clean and sane lines, there appeared an editorial respecting the selection of a candidate to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Abel Thomas, M.P.—

The contrast in personality provided by the three candidates tended to enhance the dramatic effect of the proceedings. When they were called upon to state their claims we were reminded of the famous judgment of Paris, the son of Priam, who had to decide who was the fairest—Juno, Pallas, or Minerva. Paris had not more doubts as to who should receive the golden apple than had the East Carmarthenshire Liberals. First came Towyn, who will allow us on this occasion to use the name by which he is known throughout the county. On his own heath, where he is idolised by the people, nobody calls him "Mr." He is spoken of affectionately everywhere as Towyn; there could be no better proof of the fact that he is a true son of the people. His speech was a masterpiece—full of energy and emotion and real eloquence. No report could do justice to it. It was necessarily more personal than political. His political views were too well known to his hearers to need recapitulation. He based his case, therefore, on his long, and faithful service to the cause of Liberalism. That argument was unanswerable. Even a less eloquent man could have carried conviction with it. For it is undeniable that he has been a tower of strength to his party in East Carmarthenshire. He has done singly the work of many men, and with scant reward. But, added to his fine record was the wonderful personality of the man. Surely, there is no more typical Welshman in all the world

than Towyn. He is racy of the soil. The expressive mobile features, the whole bearing of the man, are Welsh to the last degree. He is the Celt of the Celts. Vivid and intensely imaginative, he speaks his mother's tongue like no man we have ever heard. He can play on all the chords of human emotion. One moment, as his voice falls he stirs his audience to the depths; the next he sweeps them up into the heights like a great wind blowing from Ezekiel's Valley. His power and energy are amazing beyond description. He is more than a man; he is a super-man.

The most discouraging feature about this matter is that among the worst transgressors are our ministers of religion. Some of the occupants of the Welsh Nonconformist pulpit are so conscious of the fact that Wales is slipping out of their hands that they subscribe to any shibboleth that is going, in order to curry favour with those who are pulling the political strings. Not a voice comes from the older men in the Nonconformist pulpit to check these hypocritical pretensions, and all this wanton and gratuitous advertisement of the mental imbecility of our countrymen. We say the *Welsh Nonconformist pulpit* for the reason that it claims to be the custodian, the chosen and traditional custodian, of the moralising and civilising forces of the nation. Ministers of religion had better give up praising Mr. Lloyd George and the *London Daily News*, and study the Sermon on the Mount. Mr. Lloyd George has better friends, and sincerer admirers, in Wales, than the parasites who serenade him, who pray for him by name from the pulpit, who whisper every gossip into his ear, simply from selfish motives, and who pretend to speak with his authority. He has some favour to bestow just now, and to his honour be it said, he never forgets his countrymen. If misfortune should befall him, and he were driven into political exile, what would these sycophants do to assist him? These men are in the business for what they can get out of it. This is how Welsh Nonconformist Christianity works out in

practice. It consorts with anything and everything that is likely to restore to it the power that it has lost.

It consorts with Socinian interpretations of the Godhead. The old trinitarian doctrine is, at any rate, the product of a sound exegesis and a sound philosophy, fortified by a sound Christian experience. But it is the fashion now, in some Welsh Nonconformist pulpits, to preach God as a Father in a sense which denies His Kingship. It pictures to the young a God without courage ; so full of good sentiment, that He hesitates to wield the rod. His face is covered with smiles, and His eyes are full of forgiving tears. Wrath is foreign to His nature. Sin is spoken of with the same bated breath as hell. If alluded to at all, it is alluded to only as some sort of physical disease, due to unfavourable environment. What our working men need is better houses to live in, more libraries, gymnasiums, institutional churches, billiard tables, smoking concerts, and a thousand and one other things. So runs the Gospel that they preach. But these men are beating the air and wasting their opportunities. They are afraid to face the men who pay them a miserable pittance, and to confront the vices of their congregations, with unflinching determination. Another revivalist will soon appear, like a meteor from heaven, crying aloud in voice resonant with indignation, and passionate with pleading, " Repent ! Repent ! " He will do what the pulpit of to-day neglects to do, he will bring home to the consciences of the working men of this generation the fact of God's holiness, and His awful wrath against incorrigible wrong-doers. He will give them the right view of sin, which consists not merely in the act, but more in the underlying state from which the act proceeds.

We hear as little about God's holiness as we do about His sovereignty. This is part of the reaction against Calvinism, and like every other reaction, it has its perils

and limitations. It has given our religion the *cast* of an ethical cult. Its emphasis is upon the idea of human brotherhood, and the rarity and amplitude of the philanthropic side of the Christian religion and Christian institutions. It is an attractive Gospel to preach, and it has its good side. It has made a valuable contribution to the progress of Christianity. Calvinism undoubtedly over-emphasised the sovereignty of God, but its place in the theology of the past has been amply justified if only by the nobility of character it has produced—narrow, if you like, and obstinate ; yet brave, pure, and strenuous. Neither Froude nor Macaulay could write modern history without making his careful reckoning with John Calvin. Calvinism has been the source and abiding impulse of all that we hold dear to-day. Even its critics and enemies admit as much. They cannot help themselves. Let it be said that the theology of Calvinism was incomplete, but Calvinism had this great merit, namely, it rested on *conviction*. The Christo-centric theology, which repudiates Calvinism, and the conception of Sovereignty as central in a theological system, and which makes love its starting-point, is likewise incomplete. It swings to the opposite extreme. It has not the same grip upon the consciences of men, nor the same vigorous and responsible restraint upon the life. Take the ethics that issue from it. What are they ? At bottom nothing more than a sentiment. Take its philosophy. What is it ? Utilitarianism, leading to a justification of hedonism. Take its class of thinkers. What are they ? What is their characteristic ? They are superficial, even frivolous. Dörner described this class as “ being devoid of feeling for that which is lofty, who can find no other way of dealing with Christianity than dragging it into the dust, who, blind to the true light and intoxicated with a fancy of enlightenment, pronounce judgment upon the profoundest questions

which have stirred and enriched the human mind for thousands of years."

Let the gospel of Divine love be preached in all its light and sweetness, but not at the expense of the sovereignty that lies behind it. Love can at last be turned into wrath ; we are dealing not only with our Father but with our *King*—our Divine King. To separate the two conceptions is to degrade Christianity. To over-emphasise His love, and to hide His sovereignty, is not to preach the theology of Christ. The great cry which comes into the Church from the world of to-day is for a social and a practical Gospel. "Let us have catholicity" ; "Do away with restrictions" ; "Do not talk so much about the justice of God" ; "It is the thought of redeeming and pardoning love that will win the world to a new and an abiding allegiance." These are the popular cries of the hour. Such cries are not to be ignored. God delights in His people, but that delight rests upon their allegiance to Him. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. As the Welsh pulpit toys with this new, social Gospel, so it toys with Socialism. It is pathetic to watch the efforts of many occupants of the Welsh Nonconformist pulpit to conciliate the working man, and to consolidate itself by preaching on labour questions, and having labour men to preach in their pulpits. But they are playing with fire, for they are ignorant of economics. Indeed, they are no match for the Socialist. He is better versed in the tenets of Socialism. He can sing a "more lovely song," and spread a better net. Let such ministers keep to the one calling, for which they are not too well qualified. For the task of combating Socialism they are totally unqualified. They are out of their latitude ; they are attempting to deal with a subject in which they have not been trained, and for which they have not the aptitude, either in temperament or education.

It matters not from what point of view we examine the Welsh pulpit, we cannot escape the conclusion that the very qualities that contributed to its greatness are passing away. As compared with the pulpit of the early and mid-Victorian period, as many of us remember it, it is like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. There has been a gradual lowering of intellectual powers and moral tone. By a lowering of the moral tone we mean a lowering of the finer sentiments of chivalry, and of the spirit of charity and magnanimity ; a deterioration of the nobler impulses and aspirations. It is quietly confessed by the best men among us, day by day, that our pulpit has been sinking to meaner and coarser ideals, to a more open craving for popularity, and a more unscrupulous assertion of the force of numbers. Our pulpit has become sour, and its sourness causes many to ask, " Is there any sweetness in Dissent ? " The poet speaks of " a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart." This is what one finds, largely, in Nonconformity to-day ; less, rather than more, of the higher feeling ; more, rather than less, narrowness of heart.

As with its moral tone, so with its intellectual powers. Who will dare to say that, man for man, denomination for denomination, the pulpit of to-day possesses an intellect as solid, or as deep, or as penetrating, as compared with the pulpit of thirty or fifty years ago ? Is there the same depth and originality, or the same traces of massiveness ? Much was expected of our university colleges, but they are out of touch with Nonconformist ideals, and they do not help this side of our religious life. The average young minister of to-day is highly, often offensively academic, in his attitude, but he has not the academic qualities. He is not a scholar, neither does he utilise, or seek to fructify, the fruits of scholarship. He is not a student ; he is not a philosopher, nor a reader of philosophy ;

he abounds in the most arrogant type of dogmatism, but he is very remote from the new world opened up by modern scholars, a world which has brought with it, when historically considered, almost a new revelation. Scanty as is his knowledge of the results of modern scholarship, his knowledge of its *method* is more limited still. This new method is as revolutionary in its way as Baconian inductions in another region of science, or Kant's criticism in philosophy. It has changed the mental attitude of the people to the Bible, and to religious questions ; but it is in vain that men look to this class for guidance in interpretation. The average minister is not competent to perform the part of an interpreter, neither is he actually interested in this branch of science. It really seems, generally speaking, as if the deepest and most vital interpretation of the Bible, and of religious problems, is to be looked for in quarters where there is but a poor sense of the Gospel. If we were to name the one denomination that seems to possess the greater number of men who can justly lay claim to classical culture, it would be the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.

The existence of such a non-scholastic pulpit as is found in the Nonconformist community of to-day certainly requires an explanation, for the reason that Wales can no longer complain of the lack of educational facilities. It has its university system and its colleges, with which the Nonconformist colleges are now affiliated, and where ministerial students receive their classical training. These Welsh national colleges are rapidly effecting a great social, religious and intellectual revolution, the far-reaching consequences of which no one can, at present, foresee. They are creating a problem, which it is not in their power to solve. They are changing the source and course of the nation's activities ; they are creating new desires in, and new objects of interest for, the youth of the

country. They are taking in an enormous mass of raw material, which properly belongs to the elementary and secondary schools. The result is, in a large measure, the opposite of what the nation expected. The colleges have to provide for a class of students that have no right to be there. This contact with university life has the effect of unduly augmenting their desires, while it fails to give them sufficient ability and knowledge, for anything better than that to which they have been accustomed. It ought to be the aim of such colleges, not to deceive, but to undeceive, the scholars as to the objects and pursuits in life that can give them contentment, and the pursuits for which they are fitted or unfitted. To strive to popularise such institutions for the sake of the educational notoriety which it brings, is to misuse them. To demonstrate to the Government of the day that increased grants are warranted by indiscriminately increasing the number who clamour for college education, is not a movement towards progress. The influence of the Welsh colleges in this respect, at any rate, is maleficent. The true policy is to raise rather than to lower the standard, to restrict the institutions, rather than to make them more democratic. This process of augmenting the desires and the wants of the nation, while it has its value, should be carried out with caution and prudence.

How does this Welsh educational output affect the pulpit? Is it more educated? It is not more educated in refinement. By refinement, I mean, comprehensively, the bringing to bear of reason, of judgment, and of the imagination, upon things and qualities, in such a way that men will see truer and finer elements in them than they could otherwise see; truer and finer than their native intelligence could see. Such refinement the Welsh colleges do not appear to produce. It does not come to the nation by way of the Welsh pulpit, and certainly not by way of

the schoolmaster. A cultivated public—and there is a cultivated Welsh public—has the right to look for such refinement in those who are its recognised teachers and leaders. The uncultivated section of the public needs it, and therefore has a right to it. Refinement is not a thing to be sequestered. The general lack of this refinement in the Welsh pulpit of to-day partly explains its decline as a restraining and educative agency.

Our people sorrowfully complain that they can get out of the older and non-University men what they cannot get out of the younger men of University rank. They miss in the younger men, who have had a Welsh University training, that virile spiritual note that characterises their seniors. They do not convey the impression that they have taken up the work of the ministry from conviction, but rather because to be a minister of religion carries with it a status of respectability in Society. There is an apparent effort to display what little classical education they have attained, and there goes with it an air of superiority and of authority which is more assumed than real. The points of difference between the old order of things and the new are very marked in the substitution of acquired knowledge for native eloquence, of measured movement for the rugged impetuosity, which was very manifest in the more powerful preachers of the early and mid-Victorian period. It is really the difference between genius and respectable mediocrity. It is also seen in the distinct and definite disposition, on the part of many of the younger ministers, to assimilate themselves to the clergy of the Church of England. The clerical collar worn by the clergy of the Church is rapidly taking the place of the white tie, and though this class of men would probably not admit it, the tendency is distinctly in the direction of sacerdotalism.

There is another class of our ministers who are moving

in quite an opposite direction. They have discarded the white tie for one of a nondescript character, and very many of them even discard the proverbial black frock suit. It was a Metropolitan Congregational minister, we believe, who set the pace in this free-and-easy style. But while it may suit one man to go about and to preach in the garb of an ordinary civilian, and to wear a flower in his coat, it may not suit others. The difference between Welsh ministers and Scottish ministers in this respect is very marked. It may appear very democratic and non-pretentious, but it certainly does not add to the dignity of the average minister, nor does it tend to augment, or even to preserve his influence with the common folk. One recalls even with sadness that phase of Welsh ministerial life which carried with it unmistakable signs of saintliness, in the outward demeanour, the expression of the countenance, and the dress which distinguished the older men from those amongst whom they laboured. The distinctive ministerial attire is most assuredly a protection to the minister himself when he goes out into Society, and especially when he moves amongst strangers, and is confronted with those temptations to which all mortal men are liable.

There is also among the younger ministers an evident lack of familiarity or acquaintance with the phraseology of the Welsh Bible. The older ministers of the non-up-to-date type do show an intimate acquaintance with their Bible, and, unlike their younger brethren, they are not in the habit of drawing instruction, or inspiration, from current events which fill the columns of our daily papers. Not that our younger ministers have a wider sympathy with sorrowing and tempted humanity; indeed, they have far less. Whatever gain there is to our younger ministers through their contact with University life, the loss more than counterbalances that gain. One

would not expect, in the changed condition of things, and having regard to the difference in the character of the community, for our young ministers of to-day to be an exact counterpart of their predecessors. But one has a right to expect a superiority in intrinsic excellence, and this we do not find. One has also a right to expect in the sermons of the younger ministers something much more helpful to the heart and to the mind and the daily trials of our people, than we do find. Welsh University life does not encourage or help us in this. As a matter of fact, it rather suppresses that element of spirituality which was so predominant in the old-fashioned preacher, and which one is glad to find even in the older ministers of to-day. Even our theological colleges, which are in affiliation with our University colleges, and where our students receive their theological training, do not seem to foster this spiritual side of ministerial life. It is a remarkable fact that the prejudice which once upon a time existed amongst the Nonconformists of Wales against preachers who were "collegians," as they were called, still exists and is even intensified, though on very different grounds, and for very different reasons.

In what direction are we to look for the root-causes of this intellectual reversion to a lower and a leaner type? The explanation is to be found in that cloudy intuitionism that destroys the habit of reasoning, and in the growing partiality for topical sermons. Such discourses do not require much deep thought, or any profound learning. They are of the street-corner type, and can be got up with little preparation. Such discourses have the merit of being efflorescent, and they attract attention. Is it not true, painfully true, that there is too much desire for self-glory in the preaching and in the preachers of this hour? When our preaching services are over, especially our great annual gatherings, is it not the fact

that the very first question the preacher puts to his friend is, "How did I pull it off?" not "What good have I done?" When in twos and threes we take our walk along the country lane, or enjoy a quiet smoke in some hospitable home, between the hours of service, the chief question discussed is, "Who was the best preacher?" Human nature being what it is, such personal considerations will always be present in men's minds. But that is a very different thing, from making the advancement of one's pulpit reputation the *primary* object of one's ambition, both in the preparation and in the delivery of the discourse. Is this the antidote that is going to cure the cynicism that is eating its way into the very soul of our young people? On the contrary, it is feeding and intensifying it, and spreading its deadly fangs over the whole body politic. The very best service a true son of Nonconformity, and a true son of Wales, can accomplish is to face these facts. Call them "allegations," if you like; but do not dismiss them with a smile of contempt, or with a shrug of the shoulder, and attempt to clear your conscience by repeating the old jargon, "*another disappointed Nonconformist.*" Just consider that you yourself are among the disappointed ones. You grumble at your "miserable salary," and justly so. You compare it with what the artisan gets, and what even the rudest collier earns. You have often said that you wished you had devoted your life to business. You complain that you do not get the attention your abilities deserve in our denominational gatherings. That also may be a just complaint, for we know what an advantage it is to be in favour with the clique, that governs and arranges the list of preachers and speakers. You wonder why your brother is more popular than you are; you say that you see nothing special in his discourses, you think that they are all "very commonplace." You

notice how the clerical and literary cliques laud and advertise each other's goods, and how they despise and traduce and ignore the efforts of those who are not among the "anointed." If the discontented ones were picked out, and placed in a line, they would form a procession miles long.

There is another important question. What is the linguistic position of our Nonconformist pulpit? Take those who emerge with all the glamour of university training? Do they know Welsh? They do not speak it if they do. Their speech is not Welsh, but a mixture of English and Welsh. It is all the more alarming, in that it is a growing habit, and the chief culprits are our younger men. There is absolutely no hope of any assistance in this direction from our Welsh University staff or system. If the fate of the language depended upon our University colleges, its death would be speedier than is expected. If John Jones, of Talysarn, or Caledfryn, rose from his grave, he would have a difficulty in understanding the language spoken by these brethren; he would certainly not own them as Welsh. What force can there be in appeals for the preservation of the Welsh language, made in a mixture of Welsh and English, or by men who habitually speak in English. The Welsh pulpit owes it to itself, and to Wales, to show that its claim to respect is based on something more substantial than its own inconsistency, or *ipse dixit*.

CHAPTER V

NONCONFORMITY AND THE SABBATIC PRINCIPLE

THE Acts of Parliament regulating the observance of Sunday are two in number. One was passed in the reign of King Charles II, the other was passed in the reign of George III. How long they will be allowed to remain on the statute book of our country it is difficult to say. One thing is certain, they are not and cannot be strictly enforced now, even by the Sabbatarian party.

Who is to judge as to what actions are right or wrong on a Sunday? What valid ground is there for many of the Nonconformist prejudices, and the popular prejudices, for which it is responsible? How many of our Nonconformist ministers and laymen have ever studied the difference between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day? The confusion of mind which exists is deplorable. The Jewish Sabbath was proclaimed by Moses to a nation of slaves. They did not know what "rest" was. So slow were they to grasp the idea of "rest," that a man had to be stoned to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. Such punishment was necessary in those times. Even the Duke of Wellington had a man shot for stealing a fowl during the Peninsular War. Moses enforced the idea and need of rest, as a principle. But when Christ came He taught that "the Sabbath, or seventh day, was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It is necessary to remember that, while the old Jewish Sabbath has been abolished, the law of the Sabbath Day has never been transferred authoritatively to the first day, or Sunday. The Apostle Paul declared that the duty of keeping the Sabbath was abolished.

“ One man esteemeth one day above another : another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind ” (Rom. xiv. 5). He did not prohibit the observance of the Sabbath Day, for the reason that a large number of the Christians in Rome were composed of Jewish converts. “ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days ” (Col. ii. 16). The Sabbath was a shadow of Christian rest and worship. It was no longer binding, and its rules were never transferred authoritatively to the Lord’s Day.

There is no ground for placing the observance of the day of rest on the foundation of the Jewish Sabbath. Like the Biblical argument for capital punishment, the Fourth Commandment argument for observing the Lord’s Day like the Jewish Sabbath is almost extinct. The Ten Commandments, which were originally and expressly meant for a horde of barbarians, no doubt do contain a rough statement of the moral law for all time. They contain what was specially applicable to Jewish circumstances in those days, and that which is permanent and beneficial for our times. The Jewish Sabbath had fixed rules, the Lord’s Day has no fixed rules, and it is distinct from it. The first Christians did not confound the one with the other. It was the Reformers, and the Puritans who founded the Sunday, as a day of rest, upon the Fourth Commandment, and it is the descendants of the old Puritans who are seeking to rivet this sophism upon the people. They are seeking to subvert the teaching of Christ. He declared that even the rigid old Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Paul declared the old Sabbath abolished. St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century, actually forbade the observance of the Sabbath Day. When John Knox visited

Calvin on the Lord's Day, he found him playing at bowls in his back garden. Not a word of remonstrance fell from Knox's lips. In fact neither of them saw any harm in such recreation on a Sunday. Luther told his co-religionists to work, to feast, or to do anything on the Sunday, as a protest against those who placed the observance of the glorious day of rest on the basis of the Jewish Sabbath. Neither Luther nor Calvin nor Knox did anything, or said anything, to encourage this puritanical encroachment on our Christian spirit and liberty.

So confused is the Welsh mind about this Sabbatical theory, confusing Sunday and Sabbath, that many of our Nonconformist brethren are going out of their way to make themselves ridiculous. They are wasting their time in trying to superintend the running of trams and trains on Sunday. They are endeavouring to induce the Postmaster-General to abandon the delivery of letters on Sunday, and they are trying, in every way, to curtail the liberties of well-ordered visitors to our pleasure resorts, upon whom, in large measure, so many Nonconformists depend for their living. How is it possible to persuade, or to force people not to do a thing which their enlightened conscience, and their strong moral sense, tells them is not wrong to do? Where is the line of demarcation between the secular and the strictly religious to be drawn? Who is to draw it? No one disputes the need and the propriety of one day of rest out of seven, when man's physical and moral nature may be refreshed and cultivated. If the term Sunday means the old Sabbath, there are many things done by Nonconformists, and in Nonconformist chapels, on the Sunday, which ought not to be done. Undoubtedly, the Reformers had a just cause for their attitude upon this question, for they lived in dissolute times, and Rome was busy with her feasts and festivals. But when they founded their claim

for Sunday observance on the old Jewish Sabbath, and when they taught that the Fourth Commandment was still binding on Christians, they were wrong. The rules for keeping the Jewish Sabbath were never transferred to Sunday. Neither Christ, nor the Apostles, nor the early Fathers of the Christian Church, can be quoted in justification.

To be consistent our puritanical Sabbatarians ought not to allow their wives and their cooks to boil potatoes, or to prepare tea, or to sweep the house on a Sunday. Ministers ought not to travel to their public vocations on a Sunday, either by train, tram, bus, or bicycle as very many of our brethren in Wales do. They ought not to provide refreshments for the visitors and strangers on anniversary days, or when special preaching services are held on the Sunday. To argue that the Fourth Commandment has been relaxed so as to permit of works of necessity is beside the point. By whom was it relaxed? Who gave them authority to relax it? What is the difference between the employing of labour for the delivery of letters on Sundays, or the running of trains, or of tram-cars, and the employing of labour for domestic purposes, or for superintending the heating apparatus in chapels, or preparing meals for strangers? If the observance of Sunday rests on the Fourth Commandment, what would Moses say about our present-day Sabbatarians? Have the Methodists forgotten the old "split" in the Llansanan Calvinistic Methodist Church, in the last century, when Joseph Davies, Llys Aled, was excommunicated for walking over the hills from Cerrigydruidion home on Sunday morning to see his wife, who had been reported dying? What would Christ have said, or what would Paul have said, about such inhumanity? Are we going back to the days of the advocates of adherence to the *letter* of Scripture, and of the maintenance of

the equal value, as inspired Revelation, of every part of Scripture ?

Sunday was not meant to be a burden or a restriction but a blessing. The same Lord who made the Sabbath made man, and the two are fitted for each other. Man needs the Sabbath for rest—freedom from all secular activities and worldly business. The need is intensified as the activities of our Western life become more intense. True, some of the highest civilisation has gone on without it. Africans, Hindoos, Chinese do not rest. There are millions of professing Christians in the world who do not rest. The Greek of the time of Pericles had no fixed day of rest, neither did the Roman of the early Republic, or the Augustan age. But the strain of modern life makes a day of rest especially imperative, and it has its root in natural law. The words "God rested" are often made the foundation of a supposed universal command. But God cannot rest, any more than He can repent. The language is the language of accommodation. It is time to abandon the old Scriptural argument, and all the confusion as to what may or may not be done. So long as our people conform to the spirit of the Sunday, rest and recreation for the body and the mind, and do not neglect the assembling together for worship, and the performance of those deeds of charity which Paul enjoined upon his followers, they should be held to be free to choose to do, either in the form of work or recreation, what their conscience and good taste permit them to do. Anything which does not demoralise a man he is entitled to enjoy on a Sunday. Music, lectures, visiting museums, art galleries and libraries, and whatever is wholesome and exhilarating, ought to be available to the masses of the people, and especially to those who are not attracted by the kind of preaching, and the kind of service, provided for them by our orthodox churches. It is useless to

complain about drawing from the churches those who are not in the churches.

It is time that Welsh Nonconformists should study the interests of the people in the light of their Bible and their history. Contingencies have arisen out of the methods of modern life which make it impossible to observe the Sabbath as our fathers did, or even according to our own ideal standard. There are also questions of interpretation and application which cannot be settled by mere assertions. The bulk of our Nonconformists do not seem to know that the note of Sunday is a joyous note ; it is the day which marks the resurrection of our Lord, and for that reason the seventh day was changed to the first day. Welsh Nonconformists would keep the Sabbath so tight as to crack every cord that one could put around it. Their outward observance of it is worthy of the most obstinate Puritan or Pharisee. This is their badge of a growing Christian manhood and womanhood. They would even impose, if they could, their method of keeping it, upon others. Nonconformity does not foster the happier elements in human life : it seeks to bring all men into a spiritual state of the most desperate wretchedness.

One hears on every hand, even among men of undoubted godliness and sincerity, complaints as to the blighting spiritual tyranny of our Nonconformity. It seeks to exercise a kind of spiritual terrorism, not only over men's opinions, but over men's conduct. If a kind-hearted guardian proposes to supply the inmates of a workhouse with a little beer on Christmas Day, the very first to oppose it will be a Nonconformist, and he will entertain the guardians and the public with long and melancholy tirades against the evil of drink, and the most pathetic appeals to those in charge not to offend the sentiment of the community ; as if they represented the sentiment of the community, and as if they were the only persons

concerned in public morals. Nonconformity claims to be "liberal," in the modern sense, and to be the shining example of the perfected Christianity, but it mistakes the term "liberal" for "narrow." It is not only narrow, but intolerant. As we study the character which modern Nonconformity is producing, the picture is not a very fascinating one. It is acrid, sour, combative, argumentative, and always airing some fancied grievance. It is not the character of the Beatitudes. It would be impossible to overestimate the oppressive and baneful influence of modern Nonconformity upon all things and ideas that make for real human happiness. It regards with suspicion all physical beauty and all exuberance of health and spirits. One would imagine that *revolt* was one of the highest human virtues. Its recurring emphasis is on the negative aspect of things, on the necessity of not doing something or other. Its vice is the vice of negativeness, and it will end in doing nothing—except destroying. It is in vain we look for that elusive, but most real quality, which we call "charm," in our Nonconformist character of this age. One cannot trace the slightest sign of real human joy in any of the Welsh sermons, or in the life of our ministers. They are morose, insipid, charmless, and the impression they make is unsympathetic. This sham morality is what alienates the young and stamps our ministers as the enemies of real life. It explains in a large measure the passionate desire of our young people to get away from our ministers, and their eagerness to get any excuse or to seize upon the first opportunity of emancipating themselves from a thralldom, which, to them, and to thousands more, has become intolerable. Thus, it is that our Nonconformity is regarded as an *irritant*. Instead of welding together the discordant elements in the population, it multiplies the barriers that separate them; instead of winning its way into the hearts of the

people by a spirit of sweet reasonableness, it repels by its bitterness and intolerance. It measures goodness, and calculates increase in grace, by the degree of gloom men are able to introduce into life and the service of God. A cessation of all this strife and political contention, and a little opportunity to pause for thought, for prayer, and for contemplation, would be a blessing to Nonconformity at this very critical period in its history. A little less platform and electoral work, and a larger practice of those mystical virtues that centre in relation not to our fellow-men, but to God, is what our Nonconformist ministers sadly need.

Nonconformist religion is in bondage, and it will remain in bondage until Nonconformity renews its recognition that the purely spiritual and eternal, as well as the social and temporal, has claims upon it.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL CAUSES OF DECLINE

IN the discussions that have taken place on the relative strength of Anglicanism and Nonconformity, the statistical argument has been forced to its extreme limits. There has been too much juggling with figures. This side of the question we regard as of secondary importance. Two things, however, ought to be made clear. The attempt to prove the Nonconformist decline, by quoting the decrease in members among the four larger bodies from 1905 to 1908, is not a good argument, and Church defence speakers had better abandon this line of attack. It is not sound, and is even misleading. The decrease, during those years, is very often quoted as evidence of the rapid and general decline of Welsh Nonconformity, and the figure is often given as 29,000. The Welsh Revival was no exception to other revivals. Those years were the years immediately following that great upheaval. Thousands of those who flocked into the churches lapsed with equal rapidity, and the last state of many of the churches was worse than the first. But while a great ebb has not unnaturally followed the high flow tide of the Revival years, there has been a distinct gain through the Revival. As far as it appears practicable to reach conclusions, upon the figures ascertainable, the net gain, up to the present, has been, roughly speaking, about 40,000. This gain stands to the credit of the movement, and of the Free Churches in general. To attempt to get away from this incontrovertible fact is to cover oneself with ridicule. Due consideration must also be given to the changes that have taken place in religious thinking and in the social order. No religious body is free from the effects of that process

of disintegration which has been at work in the whole of society. The Sabbath is no longer a restricted day. Since human history began unbelief in the supernatural was never more marked. The spirit of lawlessness, which is daily increasing, manifests itself in the common disregard of parental authority, and in the growing feeling that one should be free to follow his own impulses and passions. Wales has proved a congenial soil for this headlong disregard of any law higher than one's own inclinations. Even among the native Welsh, religious restraint is, to a large extent, discounted. There is less regard for the rights of others, and less regard for rightful authority. This impatience of restraint is reflected in the sphere of religion; the Churches—all Churches—feel its force. But it is peculiarly fatal to Nonconformity, for the reason that the Churches which it has organised are based on the principle of popular control. What authority ministers have they derive from the people, and in order to retain what measure of authority there is left, they find it necessary to conciliate and to defer their personal judgment to the judgment of the people. They are compelled to be silent when their duty is to speak, and to speak on matters with respect to which their duty is to be silent. The result is that their official and even personal authority is slipping away from them. Even Wales itself is slipping away. While Nonconformist ministers are fighting for the principle of a Free Church, they daily feel and privately confess the need of some such protection as an Establishment affords. Nonconformity, the traditional purveyor of an unrestricted democracy in religion, is gradually and painfully realising the fact, that it has been preparing a rod for its own back.

No one who really knows Wales would attempt to deny to Nonconformity the credit that is due to it for its past services in the field of Welsh hymnody, literature, and

education, and the impetus it has given to the social and religious development of the people. Its output of work has been very considerable during the 270 years of its existence. The evolution of Welsh Nonconformity has been a great fact—the central fact, some good authorities say—in the life of the people. It has certainly been the chief means, in the growth and expression of the national consciousness. This much, at any rate, must be conceded.

Since, however, the advent of the New Dissent, which was coincident with the advent of the New Liberalism, there has been a great change in the aims and ideals of Nonconformity, and with that change a serious loss of moral authority. The *lacrima debita* is already being shed over the departed glory. At the ballot-boxes, when under whip and spur, Nonconformity gains easy victories, but as a civilising and spiritualising influence it has no grip on the rising generation, and as a Parliamentary force it is a byword. It continues to play its customary part in the civil and religious life of the community—a part which is not to be ignored. But it is increasingly evident that a growing section of the people are less disposed to render it that allegiance, which was so characteristic of the Wales of thirty years ago. There are many who have ceased to attend any of our places of worship; there are others who say that they have found a more congenial spiritual home in the Anglican Church. In discussing this, and other phases of the unrest so prevalent in the Free Churches, Dr. Horton remarked at the Free Church Council which was held at Swansea, that they made “a great mistake in excessive discussion of their failures.” Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said “that he was quite aware of the note of pessimism and complaint on this question. He believed, however, that even a decrease of membership might be a great sign of the growing of the Spirit of God

in their midst, for sometimes by the sifting of the thirty thousand to three hundred God's battles were won." A curious deduction this. It would be better to face the facts, honestly and manfully, and see what can be done to remedy the evils which exist.

It is an admitted fact that Nonconformity has not kept pace with the progress of population. It has also failed to maintain its pre-revival normal annual increase. It may be contended that the time for a satisfactory estimate is not yet come. There are, however, sufficient facts before us, and we are not discussing its ultimate fate or destiny, but its prospects in the light of present facts.

From day to day the signs multiply that Welsh Nonconformity is in a moribund condition, and the most impartial and thorough-going Christians among us are acutely conscious of the fact. We are no longer able to hide the symptoms, that show that we are suffering from a serious—one is almost inclined to say, fatal—disease of the brain and heart. On the political questions of the hour some of our ministers seem to be afflicted by a form of lunacy. So extreme and absurd have they become, that they have lost all taste for pastoral and evangelistic work. But it does not lie in the mouth of Conservative politicians to revile Nonconformity for its alliance with politics, or with the Liberal party. Much of this responsibility rests with the Conservatives. The managers of the Conservative party in London have never considered Wales with a view of helping Welshmen. Party managers have treated Wales and the Welsh with contempt. What has been done to foster Welsh nationality, and to promote the interests of Welsh institutions, has been done by the Liberal party. Indeed, the Conservative party has done more to embitter the feelings of Welshmen against the Church in Wales than the Church has ever done. The stupidity of the Conservative party in its attempt to

win Wales back from Liberalism may be gauged by the type of candidates they have tried to thrust upon Welsh constituencies and the type of speakers they have sent down to try to persuade the Welsh to vote Conservative, and to vote against the Disestablishment Bill. Bishop Berkeley once asked "Whether there be any instance of a people being converted, in a Christian sense, otherwise than by preaching to them and instructing them in their own language?" What is true religiously is true politically. The Bishop of St. David's and the Central Church Committee would show foresight as well as courage, if they insisted upon keeping such men out of the Principality, for they only irritate the Welsh and aggravate the difficulty. It would be better to secure the services of Chinese, for these astute Orientals understand the Welsh much better than do the political itinerants, who are sent down into Wales by Birmingham wire-pullers. The Welsh have received nothing at the hands of the Conservative, and they have nothing to expect. The Welsh are Liberals because the temper of the nation is Liberal, and because what sympathy they have had they have had from the Liberals.

Mr. Balfour's Education Act, of 1902, did more to consolidate political Nonconformity than any other Act that was ever passed by Parliament. Welsh and English Churchmen in Wales are not blameless in this matter. They have joined forces with the Conservative party in driving Nonconformity into open alliance with the only political party that befriended it, and the only party that gave a sympathetic hearing to the recital of its many grievances. It is now too late to make amends.

It is not for its alliance with the Liberal party that Nonconformity is to be criticised, but for the fact that its very religion has been transferred, and controlled by a distinct political spirit. Its lack of concentration on

purely and strictly religious influences is now a matter that causes grave concern to the best men among us. For that reason Nonconformity is failing to perform its proper work, and actually disqualifying itself for such work.

In examining the symptoms of this decline, not the least significant among them is the growing disuse of the Bible, which has assumed a very acute form in the Dissenting community. This is the case among the rank and file, it is also the case among a number of our ministers. The daily paper has taken its place. The old Welsh preachers were not technically educated, but they read their Bible, preached and expounded it. Their congregations read it; to them it was *the* means of grace. In those days the dominant forms of religious experience were highly theological, and they found themselves in many of the Bible phrases and ideas which that theology grew from. That form of religious experience has changed, even the religiously-disposed do not find themselves at ease in the Bible. Then, the preaching of it is so non-literary, so unctious, and so inapplicable to the trials and doubts of men, that there is not only a lack of knowledge of the Bible, but lack of interest in it. This is peculiarly fatal to Nonconformity, for the reason that the relation of the members to their ministers, and of the Churches to the ministry, is such that they are constituted the judges of the orthodoxy of those who preach. They have the power to choose and to dismiss them, on this very ground, and they exercise that power. If things continue to go on among us as they are going, there will, ere long, be an un-Bibled Welsh Nonconformist public, with no more reference to the Bible, and no more Bible spirit, than there is in Italy or France.

Another symptom of decline is the practical failure of the voluntary system. This is both a cause and a

symptom. Much has been said and written about the "wretchedly paid clergy" of the Welsh Church, and of the English Church, at the commencement of the eighteenth century. The stipends, we are continually reminded, were so low and so inadequate that the "type of man who took orders and accepted the average Welsh living, could not, upon the most favourable construction, be deemed to have been cultured or efficient." We grant the argument. But how does Welsh Nonconformity stand to-day in the light of this argument? What type of man can Nonconformity expect for 15s. a week? That is what about four per cent. of Welsh Nonconformist ministers receive. The average is not higher than £80 a year. These salaries vary, downward, as far as £60 and £50. A few of our more popular preachers make a good deal more. Some of them are very well paid, and they are able to augment their salaries by preaching in various parts of the country, at special services. But the bulk of our ministers are paid, not only inadequate, but iniquitous salaries. Speaking generally, the Nonconformist ministry is the most sweated industry in the whole of Wales. Ministers are afraid to complain, for fear of being stigmatised as "avaricious," and of losing what little they get. Fifteen, or thirty shillings a week, especially for a man with a large family, is better than nothing. It so often happens that the most impecunious ministers have the largest families. Our friend Mr. Lloyd George has secured Old Age Pensions for us all, and he has given us the Insurance Act. He now informs us that he intends putting the agricultural labourer on his feet. When does he propose to tackle this vexed question of "salaries" that is agitating Welsh Nonconformity at this hour? If he took it in hand and solved it, he would earn the everlasting gratitude of hundreds of Welsh Nonconformist ministers, to say nothing of their wives and

children, and many a hard-pressed shop-keeper. But we are afraid that he would be confronted with an insoluble problem. The cost of living is much greater than it was in the time of the Hanoverian sovereigns, and between all sorts of new taxes and foreign competition, there is no likelihood of any decrease in the cost of the necessaries of life. Here is a case for very serious reflection. Attempts are being made by the Congregationalists to guarantee a minimum wage of £80 a year for every Nonconformist minister. It is safe to prophesy that it will not be accomplished. The obstacles are insurmountable. The Calvinistic Methodists are aiming at a minimum of £100 per annum, and they propose to levy a halfpenny rate on each member of the self-sustaining churches. They have an advantage over other denominations. The Methodists have their network of organisation ranging from the monthly meeting to the general assembly. There is greater cohesion and unity, and a higher type of statesmanship among their laymen and ministers. The truth is that the voluntary system has broken down: it has proved unequal to the exigencies of modern conditions. A melancholy prospect for the future of Nonconformity! Indeed, Nonconformity had better abandon its glorification of the noble past, and attend to its own present ignominy.

Not the least has been its failure to make any substantial contribution to the cause of higher civilisation.

It has been claimed that Nonconformity has profoundly modified the Welsh character. None could successfully dispute this claim. It infused into the Welsh character a public spirit, and gave that spirit a political bent. But it has intensified rather than mitigated its emotionalism and impetuosity. What steadying and broadening influences have been brought to bear upon it are *ab extra*. Nonconformity has actually retarded the development of

some of the finest elements in the Welsh character. It has dulled its artistic sense, and its innate gift of idealisation. It has intensified its partialism, and increased the offensiveness of its individuality. It has contracted its intellectual outlook, by confining its thoughts to the native language, the native literature and purely native interests. It has encouraged it to overestimate its own attributes, and to depreciate those of other races and nations. Nonconformity has no genuine conception of the value of architectural art, and all elaborations of art in religion have been considered as out of keeping with the simplicity of religion. The symbolism of worship is a thing entirely foreign to the Nonconformist mind, and all artistic accessories to worship are regarded as relics of idolatry. What love of art there is, what dramatic instinct there is, what æsthetic taste there is, exists *in spite* of Nonconformity. Cultivated Welshmen, whose sympathies have broadened by travel, and contact with other nations and people, and the younger generation of Welshmen at home, who have larger ambitions than their fathers had, are beginning to realise how Wales has been impoverished in her material civilisation through the repressive influences of Welsh Nonconformity. The service which it has rendered to the Principality, when judged in this light, is not commensurate with its pretensions or its reputation.

What has Welsh Nonconformity done to develop the larger patriotism among our people?

The Nonconformist community is greatly agitated just now regarding the recent proposal of the War Office, relative to the attendance of Nonconformist ministers at Territorial camps. The proposal is that a certain number of Nonconformist and Roman Catholic ministers should be invited to visit Territorial Force camps for a week-end during the present training, thus to become better

acquainted with the beneficial influence of camp and military life. The Army Council intends to confine the experiment of granting a consolidated allowance of a guinea a day to such ministers, with travelling expenses. This, it is supposed, might help to dispel prejudices which exist among Nonconformist ministers. Provision will be made for the holding of religious services, and an opportunity will be given to the Nonconformist ministers to conduct services for men of their own denominations. The Army Council leaves to the County Associations a free hand in the selection of ministers, but they urge "the importance of securing the attendance of ministers not at present strongly interested in the Territorial Force, whose interest, if gained, is likely to be influential among members of their denomination, and generally expending the sum placed at the Association's disposal in the way which seems likely to result in a maximum of fresh and increased interest in the Territorial Force." The authorities of the War Office have for some time past observed with some concern the apparent want of touch between ministers of religion of the unestablished bodies in England and Wales and the Territorial Force. With a few exceptions the Free Churches in Wales have for the most part held themselves aloof from anything that might be regarded as approval of the work of the Territorial Force, and in not a few cases ministers have discouraged the younger members of their churches from participation in the movement. The military authorities no doubt believe that this attitude has been due largely to a misapprehension of the *raison d'être* of the Territorial Force, which is "Defence, not defiance," and also probably to a want of knowledge of the character of the training and influences of camp life. Some of the ministers have been denouncing the Territorial movement from the pulpit, as being detrimental to morals and to the general

well-being of the community. They have even warned the young women of their congregations not to associate with Territorial men when camping in their districts. One would imagine that these Territorials were the dregs of the earth, who would delight at the opportunity to bring dishonour upon our women. It is difficult to speak in measured words of such reprehensible conduct. The vast majority of our Territorials are honourable men, and in many cases the heads of families occupying highly respectable positions in the community. To slander a whole body of men, and to create unjustifiable suspicions as to their personal character, is a proceeding, not only unworthy of the pulpit, but calculated to make the very name of a Welsh minister odious in the sight of all noble-minded citizens. When a certain Calvinistic Methodist minister, whose name need not be mentioned, took a chaplaincy in the Territorials, his best friends thought that he was making a short cut for the far country. It was contended that his action implied that he favoured war, and that he was setting a bad example to the young men of Methodism. So contracted is their view of patriotism that they would exclude the whole world, and limit the ideal of good citizenship to attending Non-conformist devotional gatherings, and listening to any and every kind of sermon.

Certain prominent Nonconformist ministers have been invited by the *South Wales Daily News* to express their judgment on the invitation of the War Office. In the main they are in strong opposition to the idea. The reasons given are that the Free Churches hitherto "have wisely refrained from using their influence in favour of Army recruiting. As followers of the Prince of Peace, whose birth was heralded by angelic hosts as intended to bring peace on earth, they have not been able, consistently with loyal obedience to Him, to support a policy

which trusts ultimately to the arbitrament of the sword." The Free Churches have not as a body been convinced that arbitration is impracticable, and that the best means of securing peace is to be prepared for war. Rather they maintain that the words of the Founder of Christianity are as applicable to nations as to individuals—"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It is further contended "that compliance with the War Office circular would considerably weaken the Nonconformist conscience in opposition to war as an un-Christian and barbaric method of settling international disputes."

"How can our attitude be different from what it is?" we are asked. "To be otherwise in ministers of the Free Churches would be an absurd inconsistency and a national calamity." The practice of Territorial recruiting and of drilling "interspersed by prayer and praise and preaching would lead to godlessness and unavoidable degradation among the young men." To doubt the sincerity and the godliness of this class of ministers would be an act of unpardonable folly, but it shows how utterly incapable they are of understanding the position. The War Office is not asking for the assistance of Nonconformist ministers to do any "recruiting for the Territorial Force" or "to throw a glamour over warlike preparations." The world is a long way off the great Christian ideal of international arbitration and universal peace, and Christian nations are therefore forced to an attitude of defence, and preparedness for repelling warlike attacks from without. Such is the sad reality, and Christian ministers must face the situation, and seriously ask themselves what is their duty, under existing circumstances, and in view of the fact that thousands of young men are already in the Force at that period of life which is decisive as regards future character and career. And the majority of these young

men must in all charity be credited with high patriotic feeling.

The Territorial Force has come into being owing to the unfortunate exigencies of international relations, and it exists solely for the defence of our shores against foreign invasions, and there can be no inconsistency on the part of any Nonconformist minister, nor any disloyalty to his principles, in visiting these camps and exercising what religious influence he can over the members of that Force. To decline to avail themselves of this opportunity to guide and mould the character and conduct of our young men on the highest Christian line, simply because they are in a Territorial camp, not only makes ministers appear absurd in the eyes of the public, but constitutes a distinct and a serious violation of their ordination vows. The ideal of arbitration as a means of settling international disputes is not yet practicable. Why not put into the actual a little more of the spirit of the ideal? It would be quite as reasonable for ministers to refuse to recognise their members because they do not live up to the ideal presented to them, or for the members to refuse to recognise their ministers because the ministers do not live up to the ideal that they preach to the people. There is, however, one aspect of the case that might with profit be considered by the Army Council. The Territorial is supposed to be a national force, but even in Nonconformist Wales the selection of chaplains is practically confined to the clergy of the Church of England. There are two or three Calvinistic Methodist ministers who have been appointed chaplains, but no Free Church minister belonging to other denominations is on the list. The War Office ought to take into consideration the feeling of Welsh Nonconformists with regard to the question of Sunday drilling. No encroachment upon Sunday observance, even by a Liberal Government, will be tolerated by the Free

Churches of Wales. There is another injustice. It appears that while an established clergyman who is a chaplain can approach and address all members of the Territorial Force, both Conformists and Nonconformists, as well as those who make no profession at all, a Nonconformist chaplain is only allowed to address those members of the Territorials who are Nonconformists. The sooner this grievance is removed the better, especially if the co-operation of Nonconformist Ministers is to be secured.

Nonconformist ministers have with equal vehemence denounced the Boy Scout movement. But what is there in the Boy Scout movement to warrant the ignominy attached to it by Welsh Nonconformist ministers? Anything in its objects? These are set forth by its founder, Lieutenant-General Sir R. Baden-Powell, as follows: "The whole object of our scheme is to seize the boy's character in the red-hot stage of enthusiasm, and to weld it into the right shape, and to encourage and develop its individuality—so that the boy may become a good man and a valuable citizen for our country in the immediate future, instead of being a waste of God's material."

It recognises the necessity of teaching religion, and that *as a matter of everyday life*. It does not define religion in a sectarian sense. It teaches the duty of religious observance, but it gives a free hand to the boys to choose their own organisation, or, if they are not identified with any, a service will be provided for them. As to the ethics of the Boy Scout movement, it teaches veracity, honesty, self-restraint, chivalry, and the heroic side of religion. Its system of "scouting" puts the boys into fraternity-gangs, which is their natural organisation. It gives them a smart dress and equipments, it appeals to their imagination and romance, and it engages them in an active and open-air life.

Why advise our parents from the pulpit, and during pastoral visitations, to refuse their boys permission to join? It gives the boys physical health and development: it teaches energy, resourcefulness and handicrafts. It puts the boys into discipline. It does for the lads what the day schools are not doing, and covers ground which our churches are not supposed to cover.

"Yes," say some of our ministers, "that is all very well, but it is making soldiers of our lads; it is teaching them blood-thirstiness." *Bella! horrida bella!* is the only reply one can get. There are lop-sided minds that can read evil into any movement which is not in accord with their tastes. The wastefulness of our country is appalling—in money, physique, energies, time, and work. Wastefulness due to want of thrift, and discipline, and the want of a sense of responsibility. Wastefulness that leads to unemployment, poverty, and crime. To check this wastefulness is one of the great objects of the Boy Scout movement. Every patriot should support it. For Nonconformity to remain sullen, critical, and hostile, is to cover itself with ridicule, and to place itself outside the pale of those forces that operate for the good of our higher civilisation.

As Nonconformity treats the Boy Scout movement, so does it treat all Imperial questions. Our Nonconformist ministers will not bring to the consideration of these questions, either the enthusiasm of the idealist, or the trained intellect of the practical man of affairs. Such has been the growth of our country and Empire, that our statesmen are face to face with the necessity of making provision for the *immediate* future, and of taking adequate steps for the permanent readjustment of Imperial burdens and responsibilities. They have to provide for the security of our Empire without infringement of the autonomy of its constituent parts. The leaders of both

political parties acknowledge this. It is the sense of this community of interests, and the necessity for community of effort, among the nations constituting the Empire, that Welsh Nonconformity lacks. It discourages, and even openly repudiates, the idea that it is obligatory upon every citizen to be prepared to take his fair share among his fellows, in the defence of the homeland, against aggression, in return for the safety and freedom enjoyed. Until nations agree to disarm, to neglect the question of defence, is to invite aggression, and to leave our country at the mercy of an actual or a potential enemy. We might as well abolish our police force in order to do away with crime before educating the masses not to steal.

The Government now in power is not a war government. There is no evidence of a war party in the House of Commons, or in the country. By this is meant, there is not a party in England that desires war for the glory of it. But statesmen on every side, both at home and abroad, are seriously concerned about the safety of our country, and our Imperial interests. War is often the least of two evils, and often an absolute necessity. It is the only means left by which laws, principles, and the interests of humanity can be protected. Conference is preferable to bloodshed, and a peaceful solution, even at some sacrifice, is better than a disastrous war. But a condition of helplessness is as much of a provocation to war as is aggrandisement. The days are past when kings can make war at pleasure, and when a few politicians can hurl masses of human beings against each other in deadly conflict, without serious cause.

Welsh Nonconformists have had painful experience of the fact that the ideal of arbitration as the means of settling disputes is not always practicable. Have the Welsh Congregationalists forgotten the bitter and prolonged conflict over the Old and New Constitution, which

rent the denomination in twain, and which produced a state of things that was a disgrace to the Christianity of the leaders of both sides. What malice, hatred, un-charitableness and fiery indignation did that controversy breed! It was not the case of "If a man smite you on the one cheek turn to him the other," but of "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." It was a war of retaliation, blow for blow, bitterness for bitterness, and one good man at any rate went broken-hearted into an untimely grave. Some of the leaders are now living and very many who took part in it are living. They denounce the Territorial system because they believe in settling national disputes through arbitration. There are five thousand chapels in Wales and it is calculated that over a thousand of them are the direct results of "splits." They are the outcome of disputes so personal, so vindictive and so unchristian that the record had better be buried in oblivion. In how many cases was arbitration tried? Ministers and deacons preferred to fight out their differences to the bitter end and thus cover the land with "split" chapels that are a burden to us, and that give us a false reputation of prosperity in the eyes of strangers who visit our land, but who are not acquainted with the inner history and the origin of such causes.

We do not doubt the importance of the Reformation and the Puritan movement. Indeed, it is the custom to glory in them, and to claim them as the source of our national prosperity and of the golden age of art and of literature. Freedom of spirit and liberty of thought, it is contended, were the direct products of the Protestant Reformation. This illusion is still cherished by men who either have not read, or who cannot understand, the later sources of information on the subject. When will Welsh Nonconformist ministers inform their minds by reading

both sides of a question, and when will they cease to arrogate to themselves an infinity of wisdom and knowledge ?

Have our Nonconformist ministers seriously considered the tremendous issues involved in the safety of our shores, and the preservation of our Imperial interests ? If we were defeated, or conquered, what would be the effect upon our commerce, the distribution of our industries, and the character of our people ? The loss of Welsh semi-independence plunged Wales into a condition of mental torpor for centuries, and seriously retarded the intellectual development of our Cymric ancestors. From the Norman Conquest down to the middle of the eighteenth century, not a voice came from the people as a whole ; even the intellectual movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries failed to rouse them.

War and defeat or victory in war modify profoundly national character, and decide for centuries the course of national life. The battle of Marathon secured the growth of free institutions, and the ascendancy for ages of European civilisation. It was the battle of Marathon that made possible the poetry and philosophy of Greece, and paved the way for Xenophon and for Alexander. What would have become of England if Napoleon's power had not been broken in the Peninsula and at Moscow, and finally crushed at Waterloo ? When Hannibal saw the bloody head of his brother Hasdrubal, which was flung over into his camp in Italy, he exclaimed, "The name and power of Carthage are dead." What did it mean ? It meant that the future was to belong not to the Arabs and Phœnicians, but to the Greeks and Germans. Out of his defeat came commerce, legislation and art. Those who value the Reformation ought to rejoice in the fact that the admirals of Queen Elizabeth, in 1588, went forth against the Spanish Armada. Volumes

could be written on the powers of resistance, the heroism, and the fine human qualities our great wars have produced. Well would it be if our ministers, and our young men, could exercise such habits of self-restraint, and cultivate such habits of forbearance and good-humour, and the gift of co-operation for the good of others, that are manifested by our soldiers. The habits of self-indulgence, the want of the sense of discipline, and the disregard of authority, which is such a painful feature of our Welsh young men, is pitiable. They sadly need to learn some of the lessons which are being taught in the camp and barracks. A little military service would be an admirable training for them, both in body and in mind. But this side of Welsh development receives no encouragement from the body of our Nonconformist ministers and laymen.

In the Welsh Press, and in magazines printed in English, which are supposed to reflect the Welsh national spirit and ideal, and the creations, we are told, of Nonconformity, we are regaled, week by week and month by month, with exuberant articles on such topics as "Wales among the Nations," "The Celtic Genius," "The Mission of Wales," "Welsh Influence on British Constitution," "Welsh Nationalism as a Social Religion," "Wales, a neglected Imperial Asset," and so forth, *ad infinitum*. Vain-glorious Welshmen are invited to write vain-glorious eulogies on our forgotten and neglected, and much despised, racial qualities. Here, and elsewhere, those who take the trouble to read such nauseous stuff are reminded that we Welsh are a nation of "writers," "orators," "singers," and "linguists"—the "best linguists among white men." We are invited to bring our "incomparable imaginative qualities," our "unrivalled patriotism," our "matchless gift of idealisation," and, above all, our "bold veracity" as a people, into the

common treasury. "We are not liars," it is said; "we are not like the Yorkshire folk, for instance, given to brutal veracity." "We (Welshmen) prefer to round off the corners of unpleasant verities, and under the play of quick sympathy the complexion of the facts themselves is often modified for us." It would be impossible to fathom the depth of such colossal ignorance and stupidity. This is "rounding off the corners" with a vengeance. Their motto seems to be *Credo quia absurdum*.

This gross dereliction of taste and travesty of history does not end here. It pronounces its anathema upon every writer who has the courage to place Welsh qualities and Welsh history in a truer light before the British public. Baal has reared his altar, and all who decline to worship at the shrine are treated with contempt and derision. For some years past the readers of such periodicals, which apparently are growing beautifully less every year, have been treated to the most vulgar and vicious abuse of certain men and writers of acknowledged renown and ability. They are not critics, for they do not know enough and their very temperament disqualifies them to act in that capacity. Authority they have not, for they are overweighted with prejudices. Respect for their opinions they cannot get, for they give the case of those whom they profess to criticise not the best, but the worst possible colouring, and a false colouring. Being disappointed men, they agree with nobody, and they waste precious days in seeking to slay and to devour those whom they would put down—if they could. Such muck-rake is placed in the market periodically to the amusement of those who delight in such vulgar and vitriolic ebullitions, and to the disgust of the saner and more cultivated of our countrymen. But every nation, like every circus, must have its clowns. Further illustrations are unnecessary. *Crimine ab uno disce omnes*.

Where, in all our Welsh literature, where, in all our periodicals, can we find a single article, or an editorial note, dealing with the *duties* of this nation of ours, that claims a place among other nations? Where can we find anything that enforces the lessons of our obligation as a people, and as citizens, to share responsibilities with the rest of the Empire? In no part of the Kingdom—barring Ireland—is the Imperial sentiment less fervid than it is in Wales. To compare Wales with Canada would be to go to the point of the ridiculous; but taking Canada as an example, while its policy is to work out its own destiny on its own lines, and not to accept a subordinate position in the fellowship of nations, and not to be an adjunct even of the British Empire, much less of America, the whole nation stands as a unit in its determination to perform its full Imperial duty within the British Empire. Every Canadian boy and girl, every farmer and every merchant, every professor of education, and every minister of religion, in Canada, are imbued with a sense of their duty to the Empire.

Let Wales cease its whining, let those who claim to represent our nation, in the Press and on the platform, abandon this sickening sentimentality, and give our people something that they can learn. One thing is certain, Wales will never be a dominant, or a predominant partner in the United Kingdom; it will not deserve to be even a partner at all, if it carries on as it does, forgetful, unmindful, and even contemptuous, of its plain duty to cultivate among all Welshmen a solid sense of their obligation as citizens, to contribute to the defence of their homeland, and towards the protection of privileges gradually won in the course of national and international development.

Again, Nonconformity has neglected the inculcation of the simpler virtues. Take the quality of veracity.

I have already referred to the manner in which Welshmen seek to explain the lack of truth, which is one of our national faults. Our reputation as a people is not a good one in this respect. Is there any historical foundation for this discredit that is being cast upon us? It is clear that we have been put on the defensive. What defence, if any, have we to offer? Where is the root of the evil? Is it in our temperament, or in our discipline, or in the lack of proper cultivation? Is it in our undervaluation of its intrinsic worth, and of its necessity as one of the prime constituent qualities in the making of personal and national character? It is a grave misfortune that a nation should be compelled to defend itself against such a charge; it is graver still when we sniff at it, and put it down to the malice of the Saxon, and to a want of knowledge of the Welsh character. The implication is not confined to Englishmen. Educated and observant Welshmen know it to be true. In a brief article on "Welsh Patriotism" in the August number of *Wales*, the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, of Brighton, advises Welshmen "to learn the point at which truthfulness must curb the wings of imagination," and "to acquire exactitude of expression which comes from business training, and in which we (Welshmen) are lacking." The level of learning in Wales is very much higher than ever before. But has there been a corresponding elevation of the national intelligence? Does it produce a nobler Welshman? "I have no fear whatever concerning John Jones, junr.," wrote a certain Nonconformist minister lately, "if he will, whilst pursuing his studies at the great educational centres now practically open to all, continue to cherish those lofty moral and spiritual ideals which have created Wales of the past." Is *veracity* one of those ideals? The self-complacent Welshman will not stop long enough to consider this grave matter.

He prefers to beat the big drum, and to shout "Great is the national Diana!" That is where our weakness as a people lies, and there it continues to lie. "But we Welshmen are not essentially untruthful," is the flippant retort of these lovers of their country. "We simply find it harder to be veracious with a bold veracity than duller folk with a heavy-footed sympathy. These characteristics of ours—a vivacious imagination and a ready sympathy—which bring us sometimes into trouble, have their value nevertheless. They enable us to grasp naturally, and firmly to hold to the poetic conception of life." This is the qualification, or the kind of justification, of our admitted duplicity, that one finds in cold print over the signature of Welsh leaders. It practically amounts to saying that the quality of duplicity is one of our national endowments, and that it has its good, as well as its bad, side. There is no good side to duplicity; and it is deplorable that it should be necessary to expound the evil of untruth to Welshmen of the twentieth century.

How often is this evil denounced from Nonconformist pulpits? How often is the virtue of truth inculcated? It is one of those national delinquencies with which the pulpit is afraid to cope. Who ever heard a Nonconformist minister preach on the sin of perjury? Who ever heard a deacon on Sunday night, in the after-meeting, or in any of our connexional gatherings, expatiate on the absence of the sense of truth among our people? There is nothing that so ill becomes our nation as the motto: "The truth before the world." We have no right to it, for we are not worthy of it. We form ourselves into religious, political, and literary cliques. Whom we will we set up, and whom we will we put down. We indulge in deliberate misrepresentation of facts and conclusions, in order to accomplish our purpose. The dictum that "in politics a man may be a liar whereas in ordinary

things he may be quite honest," has become stereotyped in Wales.

What is the attitude of Nonconformist ministers, and our Nonconformist Churches, to the question of national purity? It is claimed on our behalf by some Welsh Nationalists, who are more ardent than discreet, that we are the *most* religious nation in the world. If we divorce morality from religion and if we take religion in the sense in which it is commonly understood, and practised in Wales—in its emotional sense, no one will contest the statement. But if religion includes the virtue of veracity—verbal and literary veracity—integrity of conduct, purity and other virtues, the claim that is being made on behalf of Wales is as grotesque as it is false. Some amazing figures, which form a sad commentary on the morals of certain portions of Wales are supplied by Dr. Llewellyn Williams, county medical officer, in his annual report to the Denbighshire County Council. During the past year there were born in that county no fewer than 187 illegitimate children, including 13 at Colwyn Bay, 18 at Denbigh, 8 at Llanwrst, 11 in Ruthin rural district, 22 at Wrexham, and 77 in Wrexham rural district. Of the 187 illegitimate children born, 35 died before attaining the age of one year.

"It will be noted," remarks the medical officer, "that this year again the illegitimate births constitute over 5 per cent. of the total. The total infantile mortality rate is 129·13 per 1,000 births. The rate for illegitimate infants is 125·95, and the rate for illegitimate children 187·00."

This and other grave matters related with this specially concern Nonconformity, for the reason that it claims to be the paramount religious force, and indeed the only religious force of any consequence, in the Principality. Nonconformists say, "Here is Wales, a pure, orderly and

crimeless country, *we* have made it what it is." If Nonconformity has made Wales what it is, in these respects, nothing more need be said. If Nonconformity is the one sole custodian, as Nonconformists contend, of the nation's morals and religion, why abandon their trust and devote their energies to purely political ends?

The "Nonconformist conscience" has much to answer for in this regard. When the history of the disestablishment campaign comes to be written, it will be sad reading. It is not within the province of this work to deal with the merits of this question, but we wish to utter a protest against the immoralities of the campaign. Nonconformist ministers, and Nonconformist politicians, have not deemed it beneath their dignity, and the dignity of the office which they hold, to slide falsehoods off their tongues with such an easy grace, as to cause one to wonder whether they really know the difference between truth and falsehood. If the cause of disestablishment is a sound one—and there are many loyal and conscientious Churchmen as well as Nonconformists who believe that the principle stands on solid ground—it is not necessary to bolster it up with palpable falsehoods, in order to gain the vote of the ignorant. Political purity is not one of the virtues of the "Nonconformist conscience." To take money out of our richer fellow-countrymen's pockets, and to apply it to non-religious uses, is serious enough in itself. But to seek to do so by malicious and misleading statements, is immoral. It is being continually dinned into English ears by Nonconformist orators that the Church in Wales is a "retrograde Church," the "Church of the aristocracy," an "oppressive Church," an "unprogressive Church." It is even said that it is an "immoral Church." These men are not only guilty of creating an impression that is wholly false, but they are guilty of deliberately uttering what they know to be false. It is quite as sinful

to slander the Church as it is to slander an individual. The law protects the one but does not protect the other. Whether the Church goes under in the end or not, one thing is clear, it will come out with clean hands. The battle it has waged has been an honourable one. I know not of a single slanderous statement uttered against Nonconformists or Nonconformity by any bishop or dignitary, or a lay representative of the Church, during the whole of the agitation, though they have been under great provocation.

CHAPTER VII

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH IN RELATION TO WELSH NATIONAL LIFE

IT is sometimes assumed—erroneously assumed—that the fundamental character of a people is of itself a sufficient guarantee of their ultimate development. Environment is of equal, often of greater, importance. For centuries, nowhere on the map of Europe could there be found a more backward community than Wales. The dreary period coincided with the period of its sullen exclusiveness, and morbid introspectiveness. How could a people existing under such conditions produce anything of real merit? Ignorant, morose, and unpractical, what they needed was a new stimulating influence, and a new environment, that would divert the current of their life, change their outlook, and modify their traditional prejudices. Something, though very little, was done in that direction through the liberalising influences of a few of the more advanced Welshmen who had travelled abroad. The renaissance of the Tudor period marked a new epoch. The rise of industrial Wales, the introduction of English journalism, the influence of British civilisation, must also be taken into account. The main force, however, was the religious awakening of the eighteenth century, which in its intensity and consequences may be compared to the analogous movement in Bohemia hundreds of years before, and to the renaissance of Scotland in the sixteenth century. Whereas in the middle of the eighteenth century the Welsh-speaking people of the Principality were the most irreligious and ignorant in the whole of England and Wales, by the middle of the nineteenth century they ranked among the most earnestly

religious people in the United Kingdom. Ever since, political progress has been continuous, uniform and general. Wales is receiving at this moment a measure of attention, in the country generally and in the House of Commons especially, that is out of all proportion to the area which it covers, its population, its contribution to general culture, or its claims as a factor in the work of Imperial expansion and consolidation.

In analysing the religious forces that have operated in the making of the new Wales, through the education of the moral and mental capabilities of the people, there are two organisations that must be considered, viz., Anglicanism and Nonconformity. Their mutual activities embrace all that is best and highest in the ethical, religious, and educational development of the nation. True, it has become the fashion, in some quarters, to deny to Welsh Anglicanism any real share or lot in the work of social and spiritual regeneration. Unworthy attempts are being made in the Press, on the platform, and even in the House of Commons, to associate this awakening of the race, and "the preservation of its language, traditions, and moral idealisation," *entirely* with the rise and influence of Nonconformity. The matter has assumed considerable political significance. It is one of the arguments upon which the case for Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment has been founded.

That the established Church in Wales has not always been faithful to its trust, or equal to its opportunity, is a mere truism. We might go further and say, that in pre-Nonconformist days, and even in subsequent days, the Church grossly misused its privileges and endowments. The Welsh were allowed by the neglect of the clergy to grow up in ignorance of the teachings, and in complete neglect of the duties, of their religion. Ecclesiastics did not stand well in the esteem or the affections of the

people, and for very good reasons. Those who know most about this portion of our national history will best understand the force of this statement. There are Churchmen who assert, and unfortunately some clergymen who assert from their pulpits on Sunday, that the present distress of the Church is due to the "perversity of Nonconformists." One wonders whether these clergymen have ever read any authority bearing upon the pre-Nonconformist period. Unfortunately, the Established Church has not a single Welsh representative in the House of Commons who seems capable of looking at the question from the Nonconformist point of view, or from the Welshman's point of view. The Church is not represented in the House of Commons by a single member, either for Wales or for any part of England, who has an affinity with the Welsh, or who is qualified to speak for the Church, as a Welshman, by birth, language and instincts. All that these defenders of the Church seem to have to say could with equal propriety be said if it were a case for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in England.

The exhausted condition of the Church in pre-Nonconformist times was due to historical causes operating for centuries in the Principality. It was greatly aggravated by the fact that the population was by race and language distinguished from those who had ruled them, and from the majority of the Established clergy, who were appointed to minister to them in holy things.

But the religious revival of the eighteenth century produced a wonderful change in the Established Church. Decayed and decaying churches were restored, the service of prayers was more regularly held, greater attention was paid to preaching, catechising and the administration of the Holy Communion. The necessity for a well-trained clergy was recognised, so that to-day the Established

Church possesses a body of men as active, intelligent, and competent as in any equal area in England. It is very desirable that this fact should be emphasised, for the reason that even among the clergy in England, there is an impression abroad, that the clergy of the Established Church in Wales are an inferior body of men. As a class they are quite up to the English standard. It should not, however, be forgotten that the majority of the Welsh clergy have come from obscure homes, where the table is bare, and the surplus cash, if any at all, very limited. There is no part of our national history more pathetic than that which concerns the education of our people. Thanks to the Tudor monarchs, the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and the schools which had been in the Tudor or at an earlier period established, were in a large measure thrown open to the sons of the Welsh gentry, and in some instances to the actual cultivators of the soil. But it is no exaggeration to say that, down to the time of the religious revival of the eighteenth century, no opportunity was offered to the Welsh-speaking people of Wales for the education of their children. Welsh University life is only thirty-five years old. What intellectual resources the masses of our people possess, it is yet too soon to say. The Welsh lack that fineness of thought, intellectual elegance, sanity of judgment, and comprehensiveness of vision, so characteristic of the Scots. This is to their disadvantage and not to their discredit. Scotland had a University five hundred years before us. If those ancestors of ours, who have not been in their graves over two generations, could only be told of the number of our elementary and intermediate schools, the great army of schoolmasters, technical colleges, laboratories, and our University system, they would shed tears of joy, and wish that they had been born later in life. So rapid and so vast has been the change, that there are men now living

who can truthfully say : " We are become like unto them that dream."

To condemn the Established Church of to-day for something that happened centuries ago, to penalise and to cripple it for the future would be a sovereign triumph of injustice ; it could not be justified either on the ground of equity or of conscience. We could abolish the British monarchy on the same principle. What is the record of democracy ? With banners waving it came to free the oppressed, and itself has been an oppressor. So numerous have been its blunders, its wrongs, and its illusions, that one wonders whether it has not created greater difficulties than it has solved. What about sectarianism ? Has it not caused more divisions in the community, more discord in society, than even civil governments ? Is Nonconformity to-day fulfilling its duty ? " Blessed are the peace-makers," said the Master. What has become of the peace-bearing spirit of the Nonconformity of generations ago ? It fought for liberty for itself and got it, but how rudely it handles every custom, every principle, and every movement that does not fit in with its own apprehension ! How much of the force which is inspired by the lower feelings does it present to the world in the form of religious feelings ? How much of its zeal in religion, which it claims to be a matter of conscience, can be traced to selfishness and political aggrandisement ? Much of what passes for religion in Nonconformist circles is not religion : it is not devotion, it is not patriotism. We have enough and to spare of discourses upon the evil of grog-shops, militarism, Sunday golf, and of a State Christianity, but where is the Nonconformist minister who has the courage to plead for the sacredness of contracts ? Our Nonconformist ministers are taking sides with current opinions. What is held to be true, must be true, or must be assumed to be true. That is the theory.

These men are running after every novelty, and every economic and political sophistry, in order to curry favour, and to gain some degree of notoriety. There has come over our Nonconformist ministers a positive turn for vulgarity of thought, manners and taste. Nonconformity as a system of thought and worship, is being used for ends alien to those for which it was created. The reek of the pot-house politician infects it, and its new motto is "Take what you can." "To the victors the spoil." This is but a part of that repulsive side of its career, which the historian of the future will weave into his indictment of the Nonconformity of this day and generation.

The Established Church is not the only organisation against which the historical indictment could be used with deadly effect.

But has the Church, with all its shortcomings, done nothing for Wales? "If the Anglican Church was in sympathy with the nation there ought not to be one chapel in Wales," said a young sparkling Nonconformist politician the other day. "They could hear the parson sing," he continued, "'Oh, where is my wandering boy to-night?' Yes, where was he? Why, in the Nonconformist chapels." Could there be anything more offensive to cultivated Christians? Anything more coarse and vulgar? Could there be a more glaring example of the folly of political infatuation? Is it any wonder that Nonconformity is losing its grip upon the most cultivated section of the community, and that it relaxes its responsible restraints upon the life? Nonconformity, surely, has something better to do than to make music in pantomimes. The Apostle Paul speaks of "sounding brass" and "tinkling cymbals." There is nothing so absolutely empty as cymbals, those great plates of brass which they carry around with big bands

to make a crashing noise; tambourines, those great rattling humbugs that are used to make music in pantomimes; castanets, those rude instruments made for the purpose of marking time, or to cover up the discords of other instruments. That there is *brass* and plenty of it we know, and that they are sounding it we know.

While this Nonconformist pantomime is in full swing, to the great sorrow of many of us, the Anglican Church is working, and achieving results that will put Nonconformity to shame.

“The Church of England,” said Mr. Gladstone, in the House of Commons, May 16th, 1873, “has not only been a part of the history of this country, but a part so vital, entering so profoundly into the entire life and action of the country, that the severing of the two would leave nothing behind but a bleeding and a lacerated mass. Take the Church of England out of the history of England, and the history of England becomes a chaos, without order, without life and without meaning.”

Let us examine this statement in its application to the Established Church in Wales. If we take the Church out of the history of education in Wales, what becomes of it? The foundation of grammar schools in Wales, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was in the main associated with the Established Church. They were, in the first instance, situated in the towns, and gradually attracted to them a large number of distinctly Welsh pupils. The first attempt to found an institution of university rank in Wales was made by the Established Church, in the year 1827, when St. David's College, Lampeter, was established. In the educational movement of the early 'forties, Brecon, Llandoverly, and Howell's School—all Church colleges and schools—took a leading part. They did more than that. They retained their original type and purpose, and all the work done in

Llandovery Boys' School was not only as good as, but infinitely better, greater, and more precious than the work of all the intermediate schools put together.

Wales has done a great deal for education generally. We are spending an enormous sum of money on education. Last year, for instance, no less a sum than £1,907,000 was spent on elementary and intermediate education in the Principality, and out of that sum £87,000 went on administration. But the return to the nation does not justify this enormous expense. Owing to multiplicity and complexity of subjects and organisation, the tendency is to impoverish their educational ideas and work. Thomas Gouge, once incumbent of St. Sepulchre's, London, did much for education in Wales. Thousands of young men were taught to read and write, and were instructed in the elements of religion, in the charity schools which he founded.

To write the history of Welsh elementary education without taking into account the heavy part played by the clergy and the Church, would be like writing *Hamlet* with the Prince of Denmark left out. Long before the State, in 1870, began really to interest itself in the matter of Welsh education, the Church had planted her National Schools where all children without distinction of creed or class could be trained and educated. Griffith Jones (1683-1761), around whose honoured name the history of Welsh elementary education so thickly clusters, and who was the one landmark in the Principality during the Georgian period, was a clergyman, and the rector of Llanddowror. The landmarks of the Victorian era were Bishop Short and Dean Cotton ; the former in the diocese of St. Asaph, and the latter in the diocese of Bangor. Dean Cotton established schools all over the diocese by means of private subscription ; he discovered and instructed teachers, he himself acted the part of both

teacher and inspector. He was the prime mover in the founding of the Training College at Carnarvon in 1846. Since the date of its foundation to the present day, the number of teachers trained in this College is over 1,100. Many of his pupils became distinguished clergymen. How his heart would have rejoiced, had he been permitted to live to see the magnificent block of buildings, standing on the rocky eminence overlooking the city of Bangor, in which he toiled for upwards of half a century in the work of elementary education.

One of Dean Cotton's most distinguished scholars, or "Old Boys," as he used to call them, was our late Rev. Owen Thomas, D.D., of Liverpool. Mr. Lloyd George himself was brought up in one of these Church schools. Dr. Thomas publicly acknowledged his obligation.

It is recorded that by "the year 1847 the Church had 279 schools in North Wales, where 18,732 children were trained, and in South Wales 312 schools, with 16,868 children. The increase was such that by 1902 they numbered 677, in which 91,603 children were being educated. Under the Act of 1902, the managers of the Church, or National Schools, were relieved from the cost of secular education, the Church lending its buildings to the education authorities for secular education, the Church being granted permission to impart religious instruction in them during school hours."

But not in the region of education alone are we to look for the work of the Church in the making of the modern life of Wales. Archdeacon Prys, of Merioneth, gave Wales her rhymed version of the Psalms. The renowned Vicar of Llandovery gave us his moral aphorisms and sermons in verse. Bishop Morgan gave Wales her Welsh translation of the Bible. It need hardly be said that it has profoundly affected the whole course of the nation's life. It preserved the Welsh language from extinction,

and it fixed the standard of the language. The greatest lexicographer that Wales ever produced was a Churchman, in the person of the late Chancellor Silvan Evans.

As to the attitude of the Established Church towards the Welsh language, concerning which so many fallacious statements have been circulated by a certain class of Welsh historian, we recommend young Welshmen to consult the records of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, which was founded in 1698. These records have been preserved from the beginning; they supply reliable and authoritative evidence as to the religious and educational condition of Wales, in pre-Nonconformist days. Those dealing with the first forty years of the eighteenth century are of special interest. This Society continued to publish editions of the Bible and Prayer Book in the native language, as in 1709, 1718, 1746, 1752, 1770, and 1779. The policy of the Society was the policy of the Established Church. From the sixth century onwards the Church was the sole teacher of the Welsh nation, and she imparted instruction by means of the Welsh language. Our ancient literature is a standing proof of this fact. The language had lost considerable ground in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the Welsh Bible, the Prayer Book, and the Metrical Psalms of William Middleton and Edmund Prys, gave it a new lease of life. After its expulsion from the monasteries it was fostered in the service of the Church.

What has been the contribution of the Church to Welsh patriotic movements? The oldest and most distinguished patriotic institutions Welshmen can boast of are the Society of Ancient Britons, established in 1715; the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1751; the Eisteddfod, 1819; and the Cambrian Archæological Association, 1845; and it was by the efforts of Welsh

Churchmen all four were started, and at a time when the Church in Wales is said to have been at its lowest ebb.

It was the Church that planted Christianity in our midst and watched over our national life during times of national feuds and disorders. Whether we believe in the principle of an establishment or not, let the truth be told. It has long been the characteristic of Welshmen to deny to a fellow-countryman what credit is due to him if he is not a *persona grata*. The lower feelings are being permitted to govern our actions, and it presents us as a nation in a very unsavoury light.

A WORD OF ADVICE TO WELSH NONCONFORMISTS

In these days of strife and political controversy, clear your minds of inaccuracies of thought and looseness of expression ; avoid fallacies in argument, and define the terms that you use ; weigh carefully the foundations on which your reasonings are based ; do not forget that this time represents a critical period in the history of Nonconformity, as well as in the history of the Established Church. New forces are coming to the birth, and new ideas are taking possession of the people's minds ; new opportunities of higher education have been placed within the reach of our young men and women, and they require something more substantial than mere *ex cathedra* statements. Do not let your enmity against the Established Church cause you to enter into an unnatural and an unholy alliance with the enemies of all religion. Prove to the world that the Christian in you is stronger than the Nonconformist, and consider the undesirability that so much power which is inherent in Nonconformity should go to waste because wrongly guided. Do not forget that some of the sweetest and most beautiful hymns that are sung in our dissenting chapels to-day, and which cheer the sorrowing hearts of our people, are the productions

of Churchmen like Vicar Prichard and Edmund Prys. When you preach, do not intrude your political opinions offensively. You are not expected to compromise your political principles, and as a citizen you have certain responsibilities, and they demand the expression of your vote and of your moral influence, but keep away from the polling booth and the committee rooms of parliamentary candidates on election day. Such conduct is unbecoming to a Christian minister. You are out of place even on an electioneering committee. Devote yourself to the work for which you have been trained, and let the polling booth take care of itself. To the plea that the mission of Nonconformity has been to Christianise politics, the obvious answer is that it has overleapt itself. To what extent it has succeeded in Christianising politics that is a question that still remains in the broad borderland of debatable ground. Lastly, bear in mind that Nonconformity did not become a power in Wales until late in the eighteenth century. Before that period it was sporadic. It was the spiritual force that was infused into Nonconformity through the revival of the eighteenth century, which began in the Established Church, that made Welsh Nonconformity a living power. It is very doubtful whether it would have continued to exist, were it not for the new spirit which grew up outside itself.

Avoid discussing Socialism from the pulpit, and do not forget that the last man in the world to be trusted with the exposition of economic questions is a minister of religion. You occupy a privileged position, and you have no right to that "unfettered liberty of utterance" for which you clamour. Do not quote Luther as an example of the power of a spiritually cultured personality in the pulpit, for your congregation is very far from thinking that there is any quality in you which corresponds with Luther. Between Luther, with his intense convictions

and his colossal courage, and the modern Nonconformist preacher, who has not the pluck of a Socialist lecturer to stand up in the street, there is a wide gulf. Do not expect thinking and well-read members to come to listen, in meek toleration, while you are ventilating views that are hopelessly at variance with well-established truths and practical experience. If you were preaching at the corner of the street, you would find a difficulty in holding your own, and your audience would probably manifest their impatience with you. The man in the street knows nothing about the etiquette of chapel-going. Do not confine your visits to the big man and to the select few of your congregation. Think of the humbler home and the more obscure members who have a greater claim upon your sympathy. Never cast doubts upon Biblical statements, and never suggest that what is recorded as miracles were not really miracles, for you bewilder your people and do more harm than good. Make it a practice not to read your daily paper with all its gossip, football notes, and pugilistic encounters, and political notes, until part of your day's work, at any rate, is done. Do not waste your time in discussing politics during the week, and wandering from home, so as not to find yourself unprepared on Saturday morning for your Sabbath duties. This will prevent the necessity of taking up the *Christian World Pulpit*, which you have stored in your library, preaching the productions of other men, and palming them off as your own. Cast out the spirit of jealousy and enmity, which is one of the curses of the Nonconformist pulpit of to-day. If by nature you are incapable of magnanimity, try to cultivate it. Do not quote Christmas Evans, John Elias, and Williams of the Wern, as your leaders, for these men preached, for the sum of £40 a year, sermons that revolutionised Wales, and they went out among the by-ways and hedges. When you pray, do not

convert your prayer into a speech, or a lecture, or a bureau of information. The heathen of our Lord's time thought that they would be heard for their "much speaking." It is offensive and contrary to the spirit of the Master to try to be eloquent at the Throne of Grace, and to seek to make an impression thereby. "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

THE END



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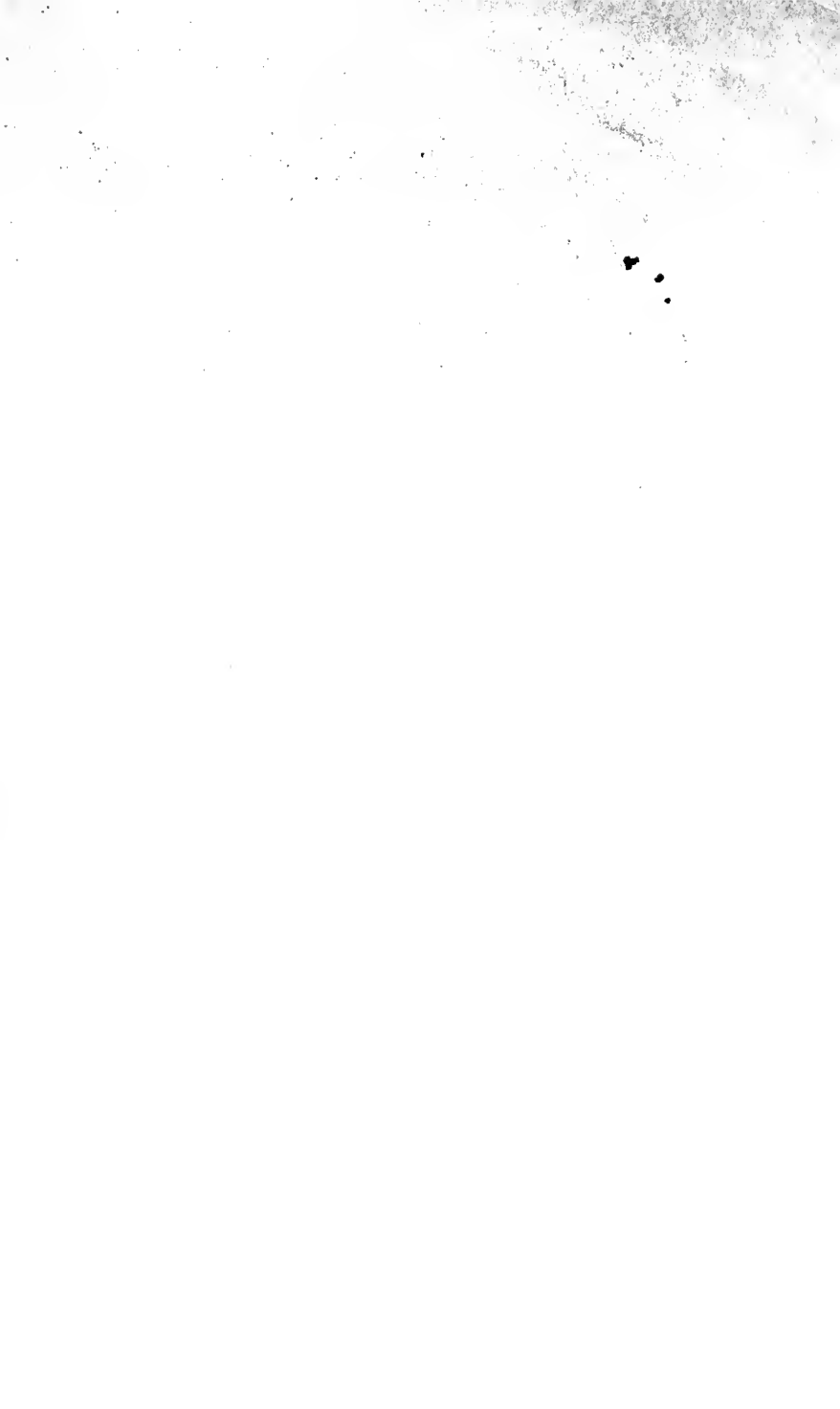
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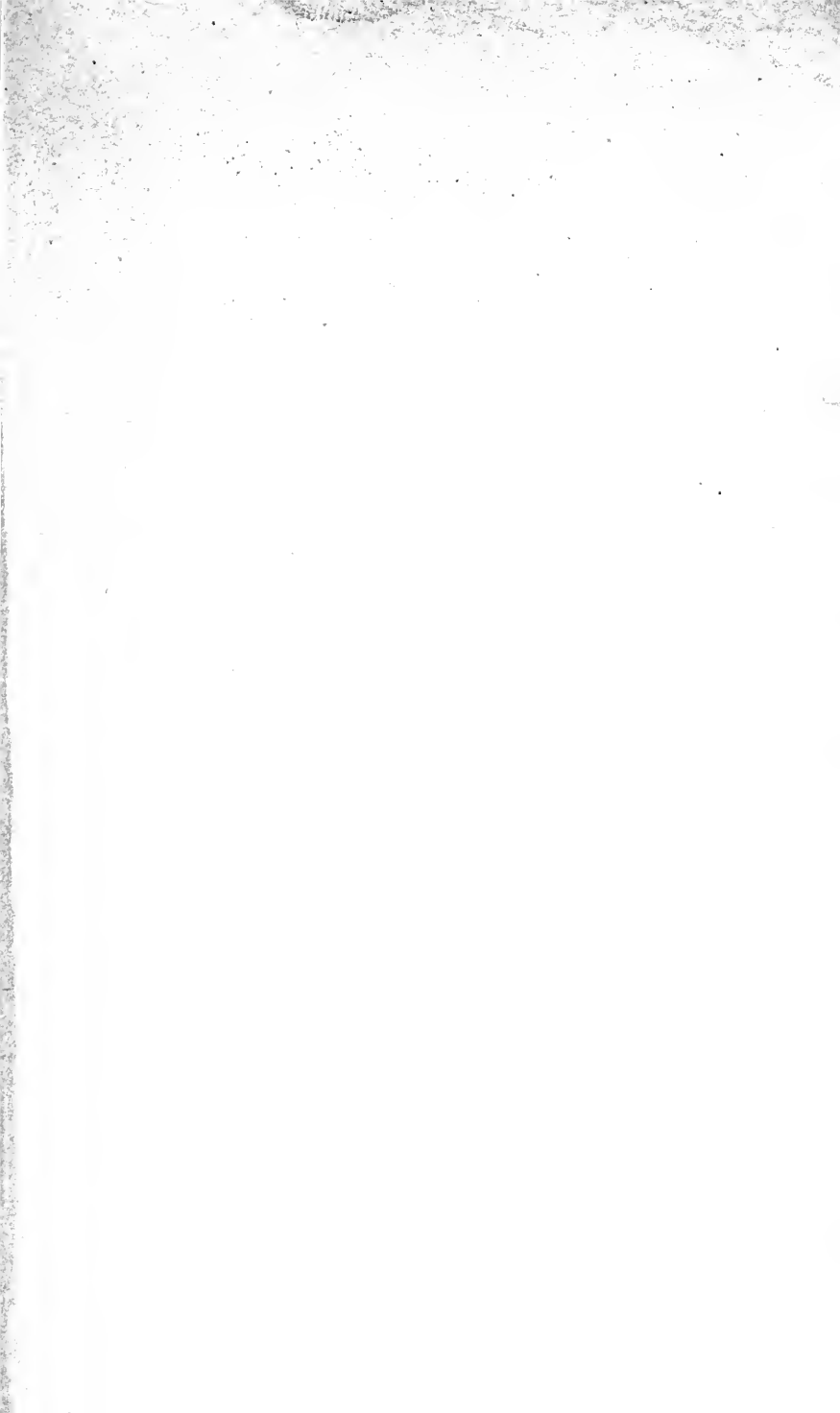
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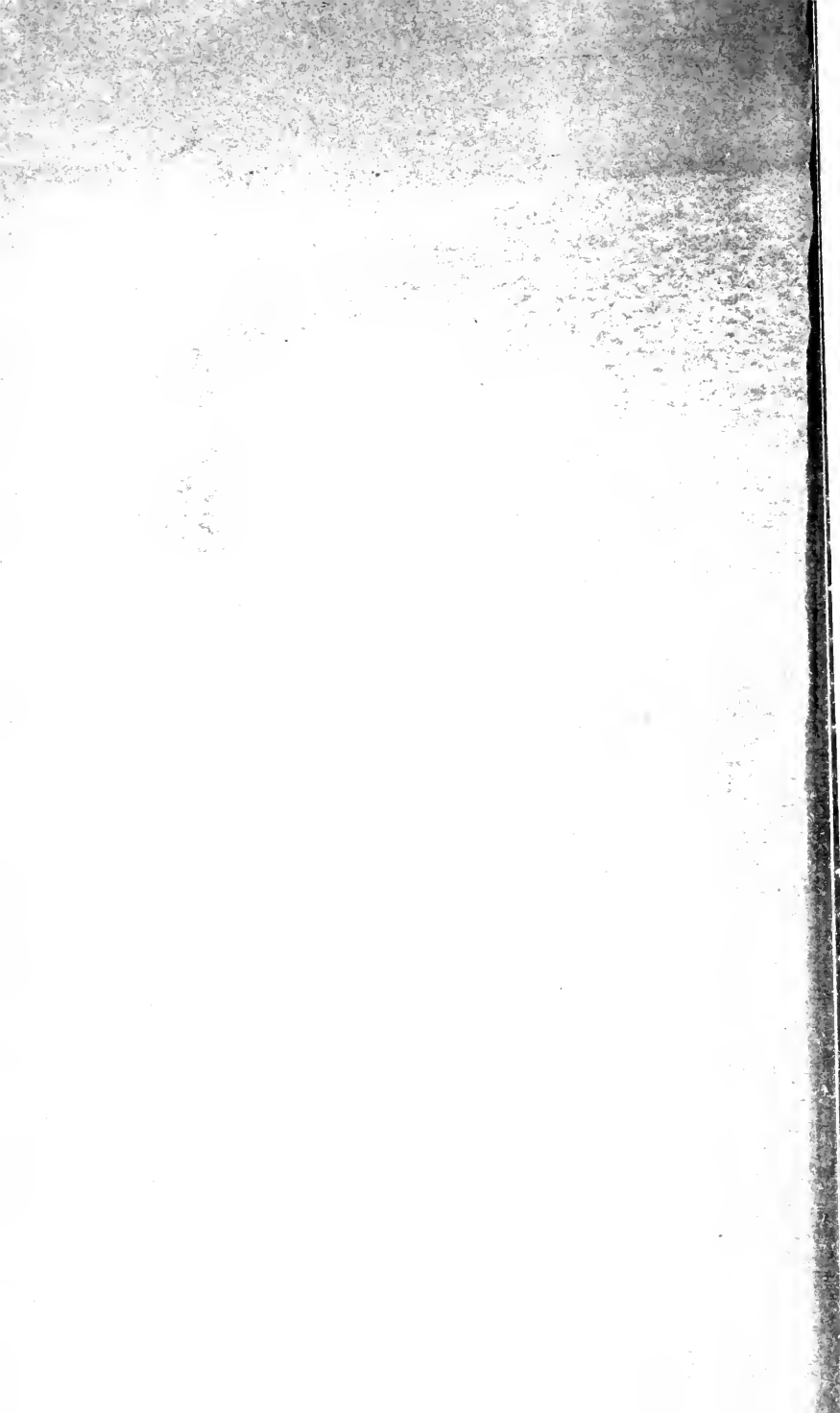
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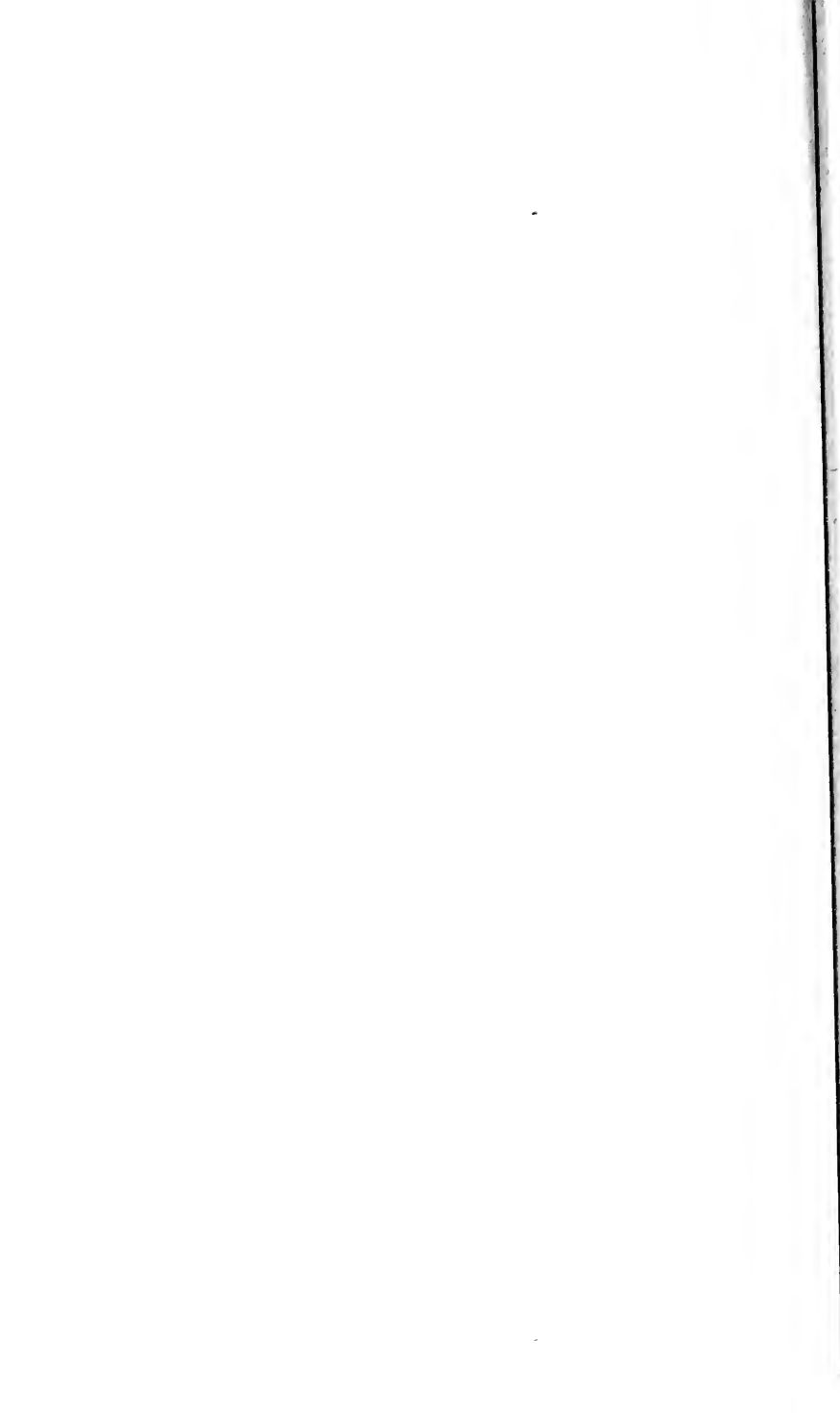
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