

Bangor University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Roman Catholic Church and society in Wales 1916-62.

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Award date:
1998

Awarding institution:
Bangor University

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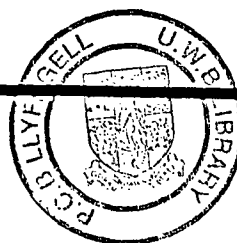
The Roman Catholic Church

and

Society in Wales

1916-62

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The Roman Catholic Church and Society in Wales

1916-62

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University of Wales for the degree of

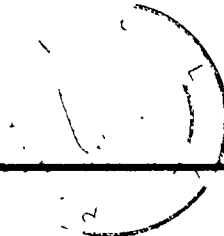
Philosophiae Doctor

by

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February 1998



Abstract

The progress of the Roman Catholic Church in Wales under a succession of able bishops between 1916 and 1962 was striking. The Church grew in strength, stature, and confidence. The expansion in the number of its adherents was largely due to continuing immigration from Ireland, England and the Continent. Although conversions from among the native population certainly occurred, they helped the Catholic cause only minimally. Furthermore, like the other Welsh denominations, the Church found itself in a constant struggle to retain its existing faithful.

The growth of the Church in the Principality was one of the primary reasons why hostility and prejudice against Catholicism continued unabated down to the early 1960s. At a local level, the initial opposition to the re-emergence of Catholicism was undramatic and soon subsided. In the wider sphere, however, animosity remained virulent. In denominational newspapers and conferences, ministers, clergymen and prominent laymen revealed deep anti-Catholic dispositions. Many reacted directly to the growth of the Church by warning fellow Welshmen of the insidious intentions of Rome and its Fascio-political threat. Others vehemently attacked Catholic belief and practice. The Catholic Church's unceasing attempts to establish its own educational system in Wales became an ideal channel into which these prejudices were directed.

While hostility remained fervent throughout the period, underlying it was the clear, yet gradual, acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church by the people of Wales. By 1962 the Church had achieved an accepted, and indeed revered, position among the Welsh denominations. The effect of increasing general tolerance, the wide-scale adoption of ecumenical ideals, and respect both for individual Catholics and for their promotion of social, moral and cultural issues, all helped transform the attitude of Welsh society towards the Church.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following for their assistance during the period of my research :

- The University of Wales, Bangor which awarded me a three-year studentship.
- Bishop Edwin Regan of Wrexham and Bishop Daniel Mullins of Menevia who were both continually eager to help.
- All the staff at the archives and libraries where I studied, especially the secretaries at Bishop's House, Wrexham whose great assistance and kindness was much appreciated.
- My tutor Dr. D. Densil Morgan who has been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.
- Lastly, a big thanks to my family. My parents especially have shown unfailing support throughout an eventful four years of research. My Grandparents also took a great interest in my work and gave me a place to stay while I was working in the South Wales libraries. As my Grandmother passed away before she could see the fruit of my research, it is to her that I dedicate the work.

Introduction

Between the formation of the Metropolitan of Wales in 1916 and the commencement of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 the Roman Catholic Church in Wales was transformed from being an alien, vaguely sinister institution into an accepted and often revered part of Welsh religious life. Far from being automatic and trouble-free, this progress was nuanced and complex, and only occurred in the context of wider changes in Welsh religion and social life during this period. During the last 25 years the history of twentieth century Welsh society has been the subject of much research¹. Despite the fact that a complete history of Christianity in Wales during this century remains to be written, Anglican scholars have treated different aspects of the Church in Wales² and Nonconformity has been partially explored³. No specific history tracing the Roman Catholic Church's relation to Welsh society, however, has been attempted. The aim of this dissertation is to provide such a history.

'The people of Wales have been told a lot of lies about us, and their attitude is a result of these lies;' announced Bishop John Petit of Menevia at a rally of over 2,000 at Llandudno in 1948, 'the influence of Welsh chapels has been used against us'⁴. Striking out at the hostility, prejudice and discrimination which he claimed was being shown towards the Church, the Bishop accused Nonconformists of persistently using their political, social and religious influence against the faithful. The primary reason for this attitude was, he concluded, resentment at the growth of Catholicism in the Principality. The hostile attitude which Petit referred to was frequently reflected both before and after the Second

¹e.g. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation : Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1981); Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales : A Concise History c. 1485-1979* (Cambridge, 1984) etc.

²e.g. D.T.W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century* (Penarth, 1990); David Walker (ed.), *A History of the Church in Wales* (Penarth, 1976); John S. Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris : Archbishop of Wales* (Llandysul, 1990); Owain W. Jones, *Glyn Simon : His Life and Opinions* (Llandysul, 1981) etc.

³e.g. R. Tudur Jones, *Hanes Annibynwyr Cymru* (Swansea, 1966); T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists* (Swansea, 1977); Robert Pope, *Building Jerusalem : Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales 1906-39* (Cardiff, 1998) etc.

⁴*Western Mail*, Sept. 6 1948:1; see also *Y Cymro*, 10 Sept. 1948, 1.

World War. The support given in Y Cymro in 1933 for Rev. Prof. W.D. Davies of Aberystwyth's claim (made at a Calvinistic Methodist conference) that he would rather see a child grow to be an atheist than a Catholic, shows the extent and the absurdity of Welsh animosity towards Rome⁵. Nearly 30 years later the reaction in the letter pages of the Western Mail to a series of articles on the resurgence of Catholicism in Wales, written by an unprejudiced Protestant, showed the fervency of feelings which could be still engendered against 'Papism'. 'Hundreds of letters' were received by the editor⁶, their contents so hostile that a leading article entitled 'Losing the Eye of Charity' was published to close the correspondence. A great deal of the letters (many unpublished) revealed not merely a 'narrowness of outlook' but 'vituperation, bigotry and intolerance'. It was 'a poor advertisement for the tolerance of our free society if we cannot disagree, even fundamentally, with our neighbour without consigning him to the Devil'⁷.

The extent of hostility and prejudice towards the Catholic Church between 1916 and 1962 was, then, widespread. The reasons for this conflict were complex. Certainly Protestant dissent was by its very disposition suspicious of Rome. Nonconformity, wrote R.O.F. Wynne, is 'by nature ... anti-traditionalist, and anti-Catholic'⁸. In Wales, the added 'foreign' character of Catholicism heightened opposition. Not only did loyalty to Rome continue to be seen as unpatriotic, but Welshmen were also acutely aware that the vast majority of Catholics were not natives. However much Welsh Catholics emphasised that their Church (rather than being alien to the Principality) represented *yr Hen Ffydd*, the pre-Reformation faith which their ancestors held so dear, there could be no denying that modern Catholics in Wales were a motley collection of immigrants and their descendants. Here was no homogeneous people, but rather an assortment of largely Irish and English settlers whose language and traditions were just as repugnant as their religion. The absence of Catholics in ecumenical discussions, as they clung rigidly to their position of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*

⁵*Y Cymro*, 10 June 1933, 15; 24 June 1933, 7; 15 June 1933, 5.

⁶*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

⁷*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

⁸R.O.F. Wynne, 'Post-Reformation Wales', *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956), 202.

(‘outside the Church no salvation’), also added to adverse Welsh attitudes towards them. Most of all, however, the hostility was (as Petit had rightly assessed) a reaction to the growth in strength and numbers of the Roman Catholic Church in Wales.

Although it was the mid-nineteenth century immigration of Irish workers to Wales’s thriving industrial centres which initiated the great expansion of the modern Catholic Church in the Principality, from 1916 (under a succession of able and industrious bishops) the Church went from strength to strength. The increase in the number of the faithful was largely due to continuing immigration from Ireland, England and the Continent. Both conversions and an ultramontane pastoral system⁹ aimed at stemming the increasing problem of leakage could also be cited to have contributed to this development. It is, however, questionable whether either evangelistic endeavours or the efforts to arrest the falling away of practising Catholics, had anything close to their desired effect. Superficial successes in these areas masked the reality that immigration was the key to the increase. Whatever the reasons for the growth, the twentieth century expansion of Catholicism was in striking contrast to the fortunes of the great majority of Welsh denominations at this time. Certainly no other Christian body could boast an augmentation in numbers anywhere close to that of the Roman Church, and many of the others were decreasing at almost the same rate as Catholicism was increasing. This gave a flourishing and triumphalistic Church further confidence.

At a local level, the expansion of the Church into areas hitherto untouched by Catholicism since the Reformation might have been expected to have caused fervent hostility. The initial reaction to Catholic settlers or to native converts was certainly adverse. This, however, seemed to be a fear of the unknown, and once the Church was established in a community hostilities swiftly faded. The deep prejudice and opposition between 1916 and 1962 was rather to be found in denominational conferences and publications, and was largely expressed by ministers, deacons and clergymen. Often the antagonism was a direct reaction to the efficacy of the Church in the Principality and to the increasingly popular

⁹Ultramontane - favourable to the absolute authority of the Pope in matters of faith and discipline.

conviction among Catholics that Wales was on the verge of returning to the old faith. Non-Catholics reacted accordingly - some dismissed such suggestions as sectarian propaganda, while others sternly warned their fellow religionists of the dangers of Romanism and of the calamities which would befall on Wales if the Church succeeded in winning more ground. Such responses to Rome's confidence were exacerbated by the widely-held belief (due to the Church's hatred of Marxism, its authoritarian structure and the political sympathies of the Papacy) that Rome had devious plans to help spread Fascism. Catholicism was therefore seen as a political and not merely a religious threat to Wales.

Aside from specific reactions to the Church's growing strength and optimism, non-Catholic Welshmen were also hostile to, and intolerant of, Catholic doctrinal issues. Again largely expressed through conferences and the Welsh press, the attacks on Catholic beliefs were vehement. Regarded as being superstitious, unscriptural, ostentatious and in bondage to the past, very few specifically Catholic beliefs and practices were left unscathed. Papal infallibility, Marian doctrines, transubstantiation, and devotion to martyrs were the butt of Welsh hostility, as was the authoritarian temper of the Papacy. In an atmosphere of tolerance, ecumenism and increasing Christian unity, the arrogance and exclusiveness of the claim to be the 'one true Church' was also ridiculed. In face of such enmity, Welsh Catholics used their newly-found optimism and confidence to counter-attack. Not only were apologies written to answer their accusers, but Nonconformists and Anglicans found their own beliefs under attack by a formerly passive enemy. Welshmen expressing hostility towards Roman beliefs and trepidation at the Church's growing strength, found in the Catholic claim for their own separate education system an ideal channel in which they could vent their prejudice and animosity. In Wales, more than in any other part of Britain, the Catholic insistence on their own schools caused a fervent reaction. The burden of financing a separate system of education was indeed great, but the impassioned hostility of the largely Nonconformist local education authorities served to make the situation far worse. Both before and after the 1944 Education Act, Catholics in Wales struggled against authorities who defied Whitehall by adamantly refusing

any petitions to erect schools. The sectarian, anti-Catholic motives behind the resistance was often all too clear.

In the years 1916 to 1962, then, Wales' attitude to the Catholic Church was characterised by perpetual bigotry. Underlying this hostility, however, was evidence of a slow changing of attitudes. Ironically, just as the growth of the Church was behind much of the Welsh animosity, so this expansion contributed directly to its gradual acceptance, both locally and nationally. As Catholicism changed from being an alien sect into one of the principal denominations of the Principality, so it and its adherents slowly became respected and accepted. The gradual abating of prejudice and hostility occurred for numerous reasons. The integration of immigrant Catholics into Welsh society, reflected in the increasing prominence of the faithful in the civic life of cities and towns, both revealed and facilitated this trend. Local respect for saintly and hard-working individual Catholics likewise helped lessen enmity. More widespread respect was the result of Catholic efforts for social justice and charity, moral stands and the attempts of a significant minority (which included the hierarchy) to foster a Welsh consciousness among their fellow religionists. Other forces, such as increasing indifferentism to things religious and the influence of ecumenical ideals, also contributed to the slow decline in anti-Catholicism. In the larger Welsh towns evidence that toleration was increasing was clearly manifest in the inter-war years, and even in the more rural areas there were some notable signs that attitudes were changing. At a wider level, while fervent hostility continued to be frequent both in conferences and in the sectarian press, there were indications even here that a new attempt to try to understand Catholicism was developing.

Following the Second World War non-Catholic tolerance became more and more apparent. As the Second Vatican Council approached, even the Catholic Church itself became more accepting of fellow Christian bodies. The Council was indeed to usher in a new era for the relations between Catholics and other Welsh Christians, and, from the 1960s onwards, animosity towards the Church faded rapidly. In 1954 H.W.J. Edwards had asked why it was 'that my neighbours and relations suddenly go queer in the head whenever they hear the

words “Roman Catholic”?”¹⁰. Certainly, prejudice and hostility towards Catholics was still virulent in many areas of Welsh life right up to the early 1960s. Yet Edwards’ words masked a change of attitude towards the Church which, although gradual and uncomprehensive, had been evident since the First World War. It is the hostile, anti-Catholic position of many Welshmen in the years 1916 to 1962, along with the underlying (yet fundamental) change in this attitude, which the following narrative will attempt to trace¹¹.

¹⁰*Western Mail* 4 Jan. 1954. 6.

¹¹Due to the denial of access to the archives of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, the range of primary source material used in this study is narrower than was initially intended. However, it is hoped that the abundance of material from other sources, both manuscript and printed, has not seriously affected the balance of the work in any way. Correspondence with officials of the Venerable College at Rome revealed that its records contain nothing relating to Wales or the Welsh bishops, while the Vatican archives only allowed material prior to 1908 to be consulted. For a full list of sources used see bibliography.

Chapter 1

The Roman Catholic Church in Wales 1916-1962 : Growing Strength

The remarkable growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Wales in terms of numbers and influence since the mid-nineteenth century was to change significantly the religious life of the Principality. This resurgence of Roman Catholicism in Wales in the last century and a half has been described as the 'second spring'¹. Whereas by the late eighteenth century the only indigenous Catholics in Wales were to found in parts of Monmouth and Flint, the immigration of Irish workers to the industrial towns of South Wales at the time of the great potato famine and after was to transform the prospects of the Catholic Church in 'Nonconformist Wales' far more than could ever have been expected. By 1982 as many as a quarter of all church or chapel members in Wales were Roman Catholics². The importance of the years between 1916 and 1962 for this development cannot be understated. This period was fundamental in the consolidation of Catholicism as a strong and influential Christian body in Wales. Roman Catholicism seemed to flourish numerically and socially during this time, and its growth was clearly visible to the native population. In the towns and cities it grew to be one of the most powerful and influential churches possessing some of the most dedicated and zealous members, reflected in the vast amount of money collected towards Catholic schools. In the rural areas the Church expanded into territory virtually untouched by Catholic witness since the Reformation. That the number of Catholics in Wales was rapidly increasing underlay all the hostility towards the Church in the years 1916 to 1962, and also, paradoxically, the gradual improvement of relations with Catholics. In order to present a clear picture of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the

¹*Western Mail*, 16 Feb. 1960, 4.

²Peter Brierley and Byron Evans. *Prospects for Wales : From a Census of the Churches in 1982* (London, 1983), p. 28.

people of Wales, we need first to understand the extent of the Church's growth and the reasons for it.

Growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Wales 1916-1962

a) 1916 - c.1939

i) Archdiocese of Cardiff

'It was in the inter-war period', writes Keith Robbins, '... that the Roman Catholic Church came to be noticed as a factor in Welsh life'³. Following the announcement of the formation of the Metropolitan of Wales in 1916, with the Diocese of Menevia becoming a suffragan see to the new Archdiocese of Cardiff (which comprised of the counties of Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire), The Tablet enthused that 'the prospects for Catholicism in Wales are exceedingly bright'. This 'natural and almost inevitable development'⁴ was described by a later historian as the completion of 'the evolution of Wales'⁵. With the investiture of James Bilsborrow as the first archbishop of Cardiff, The Tablet wrote of the dawn of 'a new era' for the Catholics of the Principality⁶. It was not, however, until 1921 when Bilsborrow retired due to ill health, and a Welshman, Francis Mostyn, was translated from the Diocese of Menevia, that Catholicism in South Wales began to grow substantially in strength and influence. In his Catholicism in England (1936) David Mathew cited Mostyn's appointment alongside Thomas Williams's to Birmingham and Richard Downey's elevation to Liverpool as being of utmost importance to the success of the Catholic Church of England and Wales during this period⁷. In his first ten years as archbishop the

³Keith Robbins, 'Religion and Community in Scotland and Wales since 1800' in Sheridan Gilley and W.J. Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain : Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford, 1994), p. 378.

⁴*The Tablet*, 12 Feb. 1916, 200.

⁵Martin V. Sweeney, 'Diocesan Organisation and Administration', in G.A. Beck (ed.), *The English Catholics 1850-1950* (London, 1950), p. 148.

⁶*The Tablet*, 29 July 1916, 136.

⁷David Mathew, *Catholicism in England* (London, 1936), p. 252.

number of Catholics in the Archdiocese rose by 27,471, from 59,640 to 87,111⁸, an increase of 46.06%. This figure is made even more striking when we compare it to the intercensal change of the general population of two of the counties of the Archdiocese. The population of Glamorganshire during these same years fell by 2.14% and the population of Monmouthshire by 3.51%. During the next eight years, up to 1939, the number of Catholics remained steady around the 85,000 figure. Although this shows no increase in the total, compared to the general population change it is still impressive as both Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire's populations were falling quite dramatically, by 5.55% and 8.12% respectively⁹. Furthermore, between 1921 and 1939 the numbers of churches in the Archdiocese increased by 35, from 81 to 116, with around 15 schools also having been opened. Finally, the increase in the number of secular priests working in the Archdiocese was also impressive, with an increase of 70, from 45 when Mostyn's archepiscopacy began in 1921 to 115 by his death in 1939.

By the mid 1920s this great expansion was being noted, not only nationally with The Tablet was remarking that the 'great progress' within the Archdiocese was 'remarkable'¹⁰, but also internationally. A newspaper in Detroit, Michigan reported that 'the Archdiocese of Cardiff is on the way to becoming one of the most important Catholic strongholds in Great Britain ... on all sides there are abundant signs that Catholic activity is very energetic in both religious and social schemes'. This success was, it claimed, 'due, no doubt, to the wisdom of the Holy See in promoting a native Welsh prelate as Metropolitan of this ecclesiastical province'¹¹. Donald Attwater again linked this 'very solid progress' directly to the influence of Mostyn himself¹². In his first advent pastoral on succeeding Mostyn as bishop of Menevia, however, Francis Vaughan reminded

⁸Denis Gwynn 'Growth of the Catholic Community', in Beck, *English Catholics*, p. 412 warns that 'it would be foolish to take the earlier statistics (pre 1939) too literally'. Beck ('To-day and To-morrow' in Beck, *English Catholics*, p. 585) asserts they are reliable 'only in a very general way'. They do, however, provide a rough index to Catholic progress.

⁹John Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics Volume 1* (Cardiff, 1985).

¹⁰*The Tablet*, 3 Dec. 1927, 738.

¹¹Quoted in *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (2) (1924), 37.

¹²Donald Attwater, *The Catholic Church in Modern Wales : A Record of the Past Century* (London, 1935), p. 158.

Welsh Catholics not to depreciate the contribution made by John Hedley, the final bishop of Newport before the formation of the archdiocese of Cardiff, to the development of Catholicism in both Cardiff and Menevia. Although Mostyn's zeal, care, devotion, and courage were responsible for carrying out the re-establishment so successfully, Hedley was to be remembered as 'the herald and the harbinger of the Catholic restoration in Wales, though it was not granted unto him to enter into the promised land'¹³.

Not least among the events which illustrated the strength of the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese, were the annual Corpus Christi celebrations. Since 1874 this, with its colourful procession into the Castle grounds, had been 'the big event in the Catholic life of Cardiff every year'¹⁴. By the 1920s around 6000 children were taking part annually, with about 30,000 visiting the ground and up to 120,000 spectators in the streets round about¹⁵. The Corpus Christi procession was equally popular at Newport, with as many as 20,000 people in the procession to the rugby ground¹⁶. Such processions also took place in other towns across the Archdiocese, such as at Swansea, with over 10,000 attending annually¹⁷, and, from 1921 onwards, at Monmouth¹⁸. The number of Catholics present at these celebrations was certainly astonishing. It is little wonder that many Welsh Nonconformists were apprehensive at the sight of such great rallies, especially in view of accompanying newspaper reports of the re-emergence of Catholicism as a vital force throughout the land.

By 1933 The Tablet was referring to 'the flowing stream of Catholic progress in the Archdiocese'¹⁹. This success reflected the sense of burgeoning confidence which filled the Catholic Church in England and Wales during the 1930s²⁰. In fact, the Church world-wide was expanding in both numbers and influence, while all other large Churches were declining²¹. In the Archdiocese of

¹³Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1926*.

¹⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (6) (1921), iii.

¹⁵*Catholic Times* in *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 5 (5) (1925), 207.

¹⁶*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (7) (1928), 208.

¹⁷Gerard Spencer, *Catholic Life in Swansea 1847-1947* (Swansea 1947), 71; *The Tablet*, 3 June 1933, 704.

¹⁸*The Tablet*, 4 June 1921, 737.

¹⁹*The Tablet*, 4, Nov. 1933, 608.

²⁰Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 1991), p. 275.

²¹Adrian Hastings, *Modern Catholicism : Vatican II and After* (London, 1991), p. 2.

Cardiff this progress occurred in spite of great financial hardships for the largely working class Catholic population. At the opening of a new parish hall for St. Mary's, Merthyr in 1934, Mostyn spoke of the great efforts of both priests and laity in carrying such ventures to successful ends at the time of widespread industrial depression²². Likewise, recording some of the personal recollections of parishioners, P.J. O'Conner described the situation at Rogerstone, Monmouthshire in the 1920s and 1930s. 'The parish was desperately poor,' she wrote, 'church collections were a mere pittance. Fr. O'Keefe depended on financial support from his family in Ireland'²³. The economic collapse certainly 'obstructed and no doubt changed the course of Catholic activities' in the Archdiocese, as *The Tablet* claimed in 1936²⁴. It did not, however, stem these efforts completely, for the expansion of Catholic activity continued, with new churches and schools still being provided for the ever increasing faithful. In fact, during Mostyn's first twelve years as archbishop the expenditure for Catholic building developments amounted to around half a million pounds. 'Considering the depressed industrial conditions prevailing during practically all this period, the repayments made are extraordinary'²⁵.

ii) *Diocese of Menevia*

Between the formation of the diocese of Menevia in 1898 and Bishop Mostyn's translation to Cardiff in 1921, there had been 'steady progress' both in numbers of Catholics and in numbers of churches²⁶. The rise in Church membership between 1911 and 1921, for example, was over 3% higher than the intercensal change, the Catholic numbers rising by 8.47% whilst the general population rose only 5.32%²⁷. Although the progress was not outstanding, Mostyn had certainly laid secure foundations which future bishops were able to

²²*Western Mail*, 31 June 1934, 7.

²³Patricia O'Conner, *St. Basil and St. Gwladys Roman Catholic Church, Rogerstone, Centenary 1892-1992: A history of the first 100 years with some personal recollections* (1992), p. 4.

²⁴*The Tablet*, 28 Nov. 1936, 733.

²⁵*Francis Mostyn's Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee, 1884-1934 Souvenir Handbook* (Cardiff, 1934), p. 15.

²⁶*ibid.*

²⁷John Williams, *Welsh Historical Statistics* (1 and 2).

built on. It was written that, although he had ‘found no highly organised body of helpers when he took up the See of Menevia’, within 25 years he had ‘fashioned a machine which, backed by his own driving force, became one of the most efficient Catholic organisations in the Kingdom’²⁸. Again, at his Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1934, the archbishop of Liverpool, Richard Downey, claimed that it was undoubtedly due to Mostyn that ‘the modern diocese of Menevia was now consolidated’²⁹. Mostyn’s own reaction to such claims was typically self-effacing. ‘If progress has been made,’ he claimed, ‘do not attribute it to me, for I have simply been an instrument in the hand of God, who has made use of your unworthy bishop’³⁰.

It was, however, during Mostyn’s time as Menevia’s ‘Apostolic Administrator’ (up to 1926), and under its next two bishops, Francis Vaughan (1926-1935) and Michael McGrath (1935-1940), that the numbers of Catholics in Menevia rose dramatically. Statistics show just how remarkable inter-war growth was. Whereas between 1921 and 1931 the general population of Menevia actually dropped by 2.16%, the number of Catholics rose by a remarkable 41.17%, from 9,881 to 13,866. The rise which occurred during the next ten years was even more dramatic. The general population of Menevia was still falling, albeit at a slower pace (0.31% between 1931 and 1939), while the population of Catholics in Menevia increased by a massive 51.25%, from 13,866 to 20,000 in 1940. In England the Catholic Church likewise expanded during this period. The increase in Wales, however, was especially outstanding in that the English figures, although impressive, did not actually keep pace with natural population advances³¹. The number of churches built in Menevia to service the increasing faithful also soared. In the 13 years between Mostyn’s resignation as ‘Apostolic Administrator’ in 1926 and his death in 1939, the number of churches rose from 57 to 79. Similarly the number of secular clergy working in the diocese had also risen quite dramatically, from 26 in 1921 to 61 in 1939. Vaughan and McGrath’s welcoming attitude to new houses of religious orders, further helped increase the

²⁸*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (3) (1921), v.

²⁹*The Times*, 15 Sept. 1934, 7.

³⁰*The Tablet*, 25 Sept. 1920, 414,

³¹Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford, 1985), p. 108.

number of clergy in the diocese, with the number of regular clergy increasing from 64 in 1925 to 92 in 1938. It was apparent, then, that Catholicism had grown considerably in both numbers of adherents, priests, and churches, in spite of a falling population, deep prejudice, strong opposition, and a spreading secularisation within Welsh life generally.

As in the Archdiocese of Cardiff, there were a number of pre-war Catholic shows of strength in the diocese which would also have caused Protestant communities much concern. From 1931 an annual, very well-attended Corpus Christi procession took place at Trefriw, in the heart of the Welsh Conwy valley³². Likewise, following a conference of the Catholic Young Men's Society of Great Britain at Colwyn Bay in 1935, over 4000 Catholics attended an open-air Mass which was described as 'the largest religious event yet experienced at Colwyn Bay'³³. Three years later, a large Corpus Christi procession of Catholics from all over mid-Wales took place at Llandrindod Wells³⁴. While such events may have been impressive, there is certainly a need to be realistic about the growth of Catholicism in the diocese. In comparison with the other dioceses of England and Wales it is noticeable that, though geographically extensive, Menevia still had by far the fewest number of Catholics of all the dioceses. It is also clear that the growth, although impressive, was largely confined to the North Wales coast and the Northern counties bordering England. Thus in 1929 a reporter in The Tablet could still refer to the 'slow progress of the Church in the Principality' which 'has been a trial of faith and even a discouragement'³⁵. Mostyn's obituary in The Times similarly claimed that 'it can hardly be said that the diocese made the progress which had been hoped'³⁶. The bishops themselves often recognised that Catholicism was making little impact on the heartland of 'Welsh Wales'. Although he still believed the prompt conversion of Wales to be a realistic possibility, Vaughan frequently admitted that Catholic progress in his diocese, though steady, was still sluggish³⁷. In 1934 The Tablet was to paint what was still

³²*The Tablet*, 4 June 1932, 738.

³³*The Tablet*, 15 June 1935, 767.

³⁴M.B. Kiely, *Annals of the Parish of Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride, Aberystwyth* (1973), p. 64.

³⁵*The Tablet*, 12 Jan. 1929, 38.

³⁶*The Times*, 26 Oct. 1939, 10.

³⁷*The Tablet*, 24 June 1933, 800; see also *The Tablet*, 9 March 1929, 334.

a very accurate picture of the diocese up to the outbreak of the war. 'Nearly all of its threescore and ten or so of churches and public chapels', it stated, 'are served by lonely priests, living far from other missions and working bravely on the scantiest resources'³⁸. A year later the Church was still able to publish a leaflet for financial appeal which carried the title 'Radnorshire - a County without a Catholic church!'³⁹. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church was still 'the only major Church to show any expansion' in Wales in the inter-war years⁴⁰, and this laid the foundations for further growth following the war.

b) c.1945 - 1962

In an article in the Western Mail early in 1960 Ena Kendall wrote that many non-Catholics were astounded at the great numbers which were attending Roman Catholic churches in Wales, while their own chapels and churches were half-empty. 'They compare the empty spaces there with the crowded Catholic churches, where the congregation spills over into the aisles and there are not enough chairs to go around'. This could be answered partly by the fact that a single Catholic church served a larger area than its Protestant counterpart. Even allowing for this explanation, Catholic churches in Wales, she continued, 'have remarkably strong and vigorous memberships, covering all age groups - memberships which are increasing'⁴¹. Six years earlier Fr. E.L. Butler had published a similar appraisal in the Catholic Herald. 'The Catholic Church', he wrote, 'is the only one that is growing in Wales'. In many towns 'one will find as many Catholics attending the little Catholic church as any Nonconformists attending three different chapels'⁴².

Following the war many new churches were opened in the Archdiocese of Cardiff, the 116 which had existed at Mostyn's death in 1939 had become 130 when McGrath died 22 years later. The erection of these churches, however, did

³⁸*The Tablet*, 10 March 1934, 295.

³⁹Menevia Diocesan Archives : Llandrindod Wells File.

⁴⁰Deian Hopkin, 'Social Reactions to Economic Change', in T. Herbert and G.E. Jones (eds.), *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 62.

⁴¹*Western Mail*, 15 Feb. 1960, 4.

⁴²*Catholic Herald*, in *Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954), 8.

not reflect a spectacular increase in the number of Catholics in the Archdiocese. During that period Catholics had increased by around 10,000, from 85,580 to 95,500, very much in line with the general population growth. Even though this modest increase was not to be despised, it is clear that most of the new churches were built to cater for movements of population because of re-housing. 'Rising population, increasing affluence and changing industrial patterns', writes Gareth Elwyn Jones, 'saw the expansion of urban areas and much new house-building'⁴³. This was in turn reflected in church extension. McGrath ensured that the need for churches in these areas was always met promptly. 'Many fine buildings', Fr. F.H. Poyner wrote as McGrath celebrated 25 years as a bishop, 'now stand as memorials of his pastoral care'. Church building was matched by the establishment of Catholic schools, from 53 in 1939 to 81 in 1961. 'The Church in South Wales has grown strong under Archbishop McGrath', continued Poyner, 'and will indeed grow stronger'⁴⁴.

The number of secular priests working in the Archdiocese also continued to increase, from 106 in 1946 to 135 in 1959. Vocations to the priesthood, however, had been gradually falling since the Second World War. This led to McGrath's enthusiastic approval of the shrine of Our Lady of Vocations at Courtfield, granting an indulgence of 200 days to the recitation of the invocation: 'Our Lady of Vocations, pray for us'⁴⁵. Three years later Fr. E.L. Butler in the *Review* in 1957 urged parents to encourage their sons to take up holy orders⁴⁶. From 1960 onwards the actual numbers of priests working in the Archdiocese also began steadily to decline. In his final introduction to the Archdiocesan yearbook, McGrath noted the beginning of this decline in his diocese. 'New Churches, new districts, new parishes raise new problems,' he wrote, 'not least of which is the ever-increasing shortage of labourers in the vineyard'. This shortage would have been more acute still had it not been for the co-operation of bishops in Ireland, who were loaning priests to the Archdiocese. McGrath concluded by appealing for contributions to meet the educational expenses of seminary students,

⁴³Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History c. 1485-1979* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 216-7.

⁴⁴*Review*, 4 (3) (1960), 3.

⁴⁵*Menevia Record*, 6 (3) 1957, 16.

⁴⁶E.L. Butler. 'The Call to the Priesthood and to the Religious Life', *Review*, 1 (2) 1957, 4.

and by urging parents to encourage their sons to consider ordination. 'It should be the holy ambition of parents to provide, if God wills it, a son of their own for his immediate service in the priesthood'⁴⁷.

Following the Second World War Catholicism in the diocese of Menevia continued to flourish, with John Petit (bishop of Menevia 1947-1972) noting in 1957 that 'much solid progress' had been made in the diocese since his appointment⁴⁸. Statistical evidence supports his claim. Between 1939 and 1951 the number of Catholics in the diocese increased by 57.33%, from 15,000 to 23,600. From 1951 to 1961 a similar increase occurred, eventually reaching 33,000. This, an almost 40% increase, at a time when the general population actually decreased. Likewise, the number of churches expanded, from 79 in 1939 to 117 in 1954. Finally, the number of secular priests within the diocese also rose, from 61 in 1939 to 78 in 1961, as did the complement of regular priests, which reached 118 in 1950 and remained around that number until the mid 1960s. As in the Archdiocese of Cardiff, however, the number of vocations from within the diocese was gradually dropping, new priests being largely recruited from Ireland. 'Throughout Wales today,' noted the *Menevia Record* in 1957, 'there is a dearth of vocations'⁴⁹. Petit's advent pastorals in 1955 and in 1957 both emphasised the increasing acuteness of this problem, with the latter announcing that one Sunday each month was to be made a special day of prayer for vocations⁵⁰. 'What concerns me most', he wrote a year later, 'is the fewness of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life from this diocese'⁵¹. By 1960 prayer-leaflets were sent to all in the diocese urging prayers for vocations. At the Menevian Synod a year later Petit was still lamenting that vocations remained 'very low numerically'⁵². The predicament prompted him to appeal for 'all you Catholic young men and girls who have the necessary ability and quality; join the ranks of the Clergy and Religious and lead our people in their fight for God'⁵³. The idea of the priesthood was also put straight to Catholic children in the columns of the

⁴⁷ *Cardiff Archdiocesan Year Book 1961*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ *Menevia Record*, 4 (4) 1957, 2.

⁴⁹ *Menevia Record*, 6 (3) 1957, 17.

⁵⁰ John Petit, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1955*; *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1957*.

⁵¹ John Petit, *Pastoral Letter October 1958*

⁵² *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of the Diocese of Menevia July 1961*, p. 10.

⁵³ John Petit, *Pastoral Letter 1961*.

“Young Apostles’ Circle” in the Menevia Record, which suggested in 1957 ‘perhaps God is calling you?’⁵⁴.

The main difference between the pre-war growth in Menevia and that which occurred afterwards was that the Church was finally succeeding in making headway in rural Wales. According to Ena Kendall, the rapid development of the parish of Ruabon served as ‘another example of the foothold the Catholic Church is winning in hitherto completely Protestant areas’⁵⁵. Catholic publications were also enthusiastically noting ‘the return of Mass to rural Wales’⁵⁶. Although compared to other British dioceses the Catholic population of Menevia admittedly remained slight, by 1962 there was hardly a single Welsh district without some sort of Catholic church or service. This had been a remarkable achievement, especially in light of what Petit described as the ‘infinitesimally tiny resources’ of the diocese⁵⁷. Much effort was made to help the diocesan finances. Apart from financial assistance from Ireland and England, assistance also came from abroad. In 1955 the bishop embarked on a two month American tour to try to interest American Catholics in the Welsh Apostolate and to raise money for the building of churches and the provision of schools⁵⁸. He returned with over \$15,000 donated to the Menevian cause⁵⁹. In the same year, Fr. Francis Scalpell returned to his native Malta to try and interest both priests and laity in the diocese of Menevia⁶⁰.

The growth and development of the Metropolitan of Wales following the war reflected the general strength and confidence of pre-Vatican II Catholicism in Britain⁶¹. Evidence for this was apparent throughout the Principality. There was the triumphalistic return of the Cistercians to the ruins of Valle Crucis in 1947⁶² and the Franciscan friars to Beaumaris in 1961⁶³. Likewise, there was the large

⁵⁴*Menevia Record*, 5 (2) (1957), 24; see also 3 (2) (1955), 23.

⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

⁵⁶*Menevia Record*, 6 (2) (1958), 4.

⁵⁷*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 3.

⁵⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 15-6.

⁵⁹*Menevia Record*, 3 (1) (1955), 4.

⁶⁰*Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 14.

⁶¹Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 473, 480-1, 484-5.

⁶²*The Tablet*, 21 June 1947, 319.

⁶³*Menevia Record*, 8 (4) (1961), 4.

and ceremonial opening of the shrine of Our Lady of Pen-rhys in 1947⁶⁴ and the procession of the statue of Our Lady of the Taper, Cardigan through England and Wales in 1956⁶⁵. These all reflected a burgeoning self-confidence and renewal within the Church. Continuing shows of numerical strength and unity were also witnessed across the Metropolitan. In Cardiff some 12,000 Catholics formed a mile long procession to the Castle grounds for the diocesan celebrations of the hierarchy's restoration⁶⁶, and, following the reintroduction of the great Corpus Christi procession in 1960, around 30,000 Catholics filled the Castle precincts⁶⁷. In Menevia 'one of the greatest demonstrations of the Faith ever seen in North Wales' was staged in 1952 at the Calvinistic Methodist's stronghold of Bala. 'You have to live here to appreciate what Bala means to Wales, Welsh Wales that is', Petit wrote to Cardinal Griffin's secretary⁶⁸. Around 15,000 Catholics attended the procession and open-air Mass which were held⁶⁹. Two years later the *Western Mail* reported that a similar Bala rally had attracted around 20,000 Catholics, making 140,000 the total estimated number of Catholics to have visited the tiny church there since it opened six years earlier⁷⁰. That such demonstrations were taking place in the heart of staunchly Nonconformist 'Welsh Wales' certainly caused Protestants much concern. 'The folk in the valleys and up the hillsides', wrote Petit, 'debate these things with an intensity not to be found I think anywhere in the industrialised parts of the islands nor even in the rural parts which are not mountainous'⁷¹. By the census of Welsh Churches in 1982, the Roman Catholic Church in Wales, both in Cardiff and Menevia, was strongly consolidated. 'The Roman Catholic Church has in sixty years', wrote D. Ben Rees, 'established itself as an integral part of the Welsh religious scene'⁷².

⁶⁴*Menevia Record*, 7 (3) (1960), 15.

⁶⁵*Irish Weekly*, 20 April 1957, 4.

⁶⁶*Cardiff Archdiocesan Year Book 1951*, p. 129-131; *The Tablet*, 15 July 1950, 46.

⁶⁷*Western Mail*, 20 June 1960, 7.

⁶⁸Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

⁶⁹*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 129.

⁷⁰*Western Mail*, 5 July 1954, 5.

⁷¹Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

⁷²D. Ben Rees, 'Geography of Religion in Wales', in Brierley and Evans, *Prospects for Wales*, p. 10.

Reasons for Catholic Growth in Wales

a) Immigration

It is impossible to underestimate the influence of the nineteenth century industrial revolution on the progress of the Catholic Church in Wales. The number of Irishmen and their families arriving in the South Wales towns at that time can certainly not compare with the numbers arriving at some of the English cities such as Liverpool. Nevertheless the thriving industries of South Wales still attracted a large influx of Irish workers⁷³. 1861 was the high-point of this immigration, with as much as 5% of the population of both Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire, and around 2% of that of Breconshire and Pembrokeshire, having been born in Ireland⁷⁴. So many Irish immigrants settled in the Greenhill area of Swansea from the 1840s onwards that it became known as 'Little Ireland'⁷⁵. Despite being unprepared for such a heavy influx, the Church struggled valiantly to provide churches and schools for such communities. Fighting poverty and prejudice, the Church in these industrial regions grew fast. Without the influx of Irish workers there would have probably been little, if any, Catholic progress in the Principality. 'South Wales, today,' wrote Garfield Lynch in 1941, 'but for the Industrial Revolution and the immigration of Irish, would contain only a very small percentage of Catholics'⁷⁶. This influx of Irish workers also affected north-east Wales. The original nucleus of the present Catholic community at Mold, for example, was a group of Irish workers who settled in the town during the nineteenth century⁷⁷. Similarly, when a chemical works was opened at Flint in 1852, many Irishmen were among the employees⁷⁸. In 1861

⁷³For more on the immigration of the Irish to Wales see Paul Brendan O'Leary. 'Immigration and Integration : A Study of the Irish in Wales 1798-1922' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 1989).

⁷⁴John Archer Jackson. *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963), p. 12.

⁷⁵R.T. Price. *Little Ireland : Aspects of the Irish and Greenhill, Swansea* (Swansea. 1992). *passim*.

⁷⁶Garfield Lynch. 'The Revival of Roman Catholicism in South Wales in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries' (unpublished MA Thesis. University of Wales, Cardiff 1941). p. 214.

⁷⁷Margaret Joy. *A History of St. David's Roman Catholic Parish, Church and School, Mold* (1992)

⁷⁸J. Rudd. 'Catholic Life in Flint', *Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 3.

around 2% of the population of Flintshire and around 1% of that of Denbighshire were Irish-born.

Immigration from Ireland had certainly slowed down considerably by the end of the nineteenth century, though it did not stop completely and there were times between 1916 and 1962 when the influx from Ireland became again quite heavy. Even in the 1930s, as many of the great industries of South Wales declined, the relative prosperity of the north-east Wales industries (iron, steel, rayon and building) and the development of tourism along the north coast, and in Pembrokeshire in the south, attracted continuing immigration. After the Second World War one Catholic historian referred to 'a new Irish invasion'⁷⁹. Attracted by higher wages and better working conditions, these immigrants brought to Welsh Catholicism 'a reinforcement almost comparable to the earlier flood of immigration after the famine years'⁸⁰. Economic revival, reflected in the vast projects along the coastline of industrial South Wales following the war, drew large numbers of Irish workers. Such industrial projects included oil terminals in Milford Haven and Llandarcy, tinsplate production at Trostre, and steel in Margam and Llanwern. By 1951 as much as 2.5% of the Pembrokeshire population had been born in Ireland⁸¹.

Irish immigrants also came in great numbers to North Wales in the post-war years. The influence of this new wave of immigration on the Diocese of Menevia can be seen in the development of the parish of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Established in 1945, the work on the hydro-electric scheme in the late 1950s brought so many Irish workers to the district that the Church's weekly congregation overflowed. With the atomic power station being built at nearby Trawsfynydd, there was even the need to appoint a full-time Catholic chaplain for the Irish workers there⁸². Irish immigrants also flocked to the north-east Wales industries, such as the new coal pit at Point of Ayr and tinsplate production at Shotton, as well as to the tourist industries of the towns on the coast. In fact, the increase of the numbers of Irish born in the North Wales counties can be starkly

⁷⁹Denis Gwynn, 'Great Britain : England and Wales', in Patrick Corish (ed.). *A History of Irish Catholicism Volume 6* (Dublin, 1968) p. 52.

⁸⁰*ibid.* p. 49.

⁸¹Jackson. *The Irish in Britain*, p. 20.

⁸²*Menevia Record*, 9 (3) (1962), 3-4.

contrasted with the decrease in those in the more densely populated counties of the South. The numbers of Irish-born in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire in 1951, although still around 1% of the population, had sharply decreased in comparison with the figures for the turn of the century of around 5% and 2.5% respectively. In the North, however, the percentage of Irish-born inhabitants increased in every single county. Both Anglesey and Caernarfonshire had their highest ever recorded figures of Irish born, with as much as 2.5% and 1% respectively. In Denbighshire and Flintshire figures rose from no more than 0.2% at the turn of the century, to around 1% after the war⁸³. In 1960 a Congregationalist minister Rev. Ivor V. Cassam estimated that since 1945 as many as 4,000 Southern Irishmen a year had found employment in Wales. He calculated that between 45,000 and 60,000 Irishmen had entered Wales in this time, and this figure did not include wives and children⁸⁴.

As the twentieth century progressed immigrant Catholics arrived from countries besides Ireland. Just as the post-war revitalised Welsh industries attracted Irish immigrants, so they also attracted English workers. The North Wales tourist industry also drew in many English workers. Increasingly, however, it was elderly people who were moving to Wales from England, often to retirement homes. 'Young people, usually well-qualified, left,' writes Gareth Elwyn Jones, 'older people came in, often to retire'⁸⁵. Wales, then, has been left with 'a more anglicised population as tourists and second-home owners have moved in'⁸⁶. By 1966 one in five people living in Wales was of non-Welsh origin. Although the influx of English into the country was causing problems for Wales and its language, for the Catholic Church it assisted growth and development. Many of those moving to the Principality were from cities where Catholicism was strong, such as Liverpool and Manchester. The growth of Catholicism in the North Wales coastal tourist towns such as Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, and Rhyl, which were also popular retirement towns, reflects the consequence of the English influx for the Catholic Church. In other towns across Wales there was a similar

⁸³Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, pp. 16, 20.

⁸⁴*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

⁸⁵Jones, *Modern Wales*, p. 183.

⁸⁶*ibid.*, p. 185.

trend. In the parish of Aberystwyth in 1955, for example, the number of Catholics born in England and Scotland (31%) far outnumbered those born in Wales (22%) or Ireland (15%)⁸⁷.

Both World Wars also brought in non-Irish Catholic immigrants. In the First World War there was an influx of Catholic Belgian refugees into the country. Some groups settled close to convents of French-speaking nuns⁸⁸ and where Catholic communities were already established, such as in Mold⁸⁹, Aberystwyth⁹⁰ and Milford Haven where the influx was so heavy that the Church had to be enlarged⁹¹. Others, however, were reported to have scattered in isolated areas. The Passionist Fathers at Carmarthen travelled many miles to reach these Catholics, but some were in such isolation that priests could not reach them. Some lapsed, while a small number converted to Protestantism⁹². There was also relatively heavy Italian immigration in these years, largely to Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. By 1921 there were over 1500 people of Italian birth in Wales. Most of these immigrants went into the catering business, with perhaps as many as 400 Italian cafés and restaurants in the Principality⁹³.

During and following the Second World War it was mostly Italian and Poles who came to settle. These came over either as refugees, as prisoners of war, or in search of work. Whereas before the war the great majority of foreign immigrants went to south-east Wales, they were now settling across the Principality. The substantial number of German prisoners is shown in the Menevia Diocese's requests to Westminster for more German prayer books⁹⁴. Likewise, the presence of Italian prisoners in Menevia during the war made it necessary for Bishop Hannon to write special pastoral letters in Italian⁹⁵. Many of

⁸⁷Michael P. Fogarty. 'A Social Survey of the Parish of Aberystwyth', (1955), p. 2; in Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

⁸⁸G.B. German. 'A History of the Diocese of Menevia : 1898-1987' (unpublished MA Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1991), 26.

⁸⁹Joy, *St. David's, Mold*.

⁹⁰Kiely, *Our Lady Aberystwyth*, p. 34.

⁹¹*Menevia Record*, 4 (2) (1956), 2.

⁹²Alan Randall, *The Passionists at Carmarthen 1889-1986 : A Commemorative Booklet* (1986), p. 24.

⁹³Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon & Sarsaparilla : The Italian Community in South Wales 1881-1945* (1991), pp. 23-4.

⁹⁴Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44

⁹⁵German, 'History of Menevia', p. 43.

these remained in Wales following the war. In Conwy a number of the German and Italian prisoners of war along with some Polish soldiers who attended the local Catholic church, subsequently settled in the area⁹⁶. A similar development occurred in Mold, where a number of Italian prisoners of war decided to stay on to work at the brickworks in Buckley and at Courtauld. They were soon joined by relatives from Italy who immigrated to the town⁹⁷. A report in 1957 on the Capuchin Travelling Mission of Pantasaph noted that a number of the Mass Centres it was serving were made up predominantly of Italians. At Clawddnewdd near Ruthin the Catholic community of 20 were almost all Italian⁹⁸. Further Italian communities could be found at Cloddiau Farm near Newtown and at Lawrenny near Pembroke Dock which became known as 'Little Italy in Little England'. Most of these had taken up farming, as had many Polish families in places such as at Farmers near Lampeter and Maenclochog in Pembrokeshire⁹⁹. From 1946, at the request of Cardinal Griffin of Westminster, Polish Resettlement Camps were opened across Wales. Nine camps were established in Menevia (including ones at Rhosneigr, Beaumaris, Cardigan and Builth Wells), and four at Cardiff (including two outside Swansea)¹⁰⁰. Petit's desire to provide pastoral oversight for the subsequent immigrant communities is shown in his enthusiastic correspondence with the Polish Catholic Mission in London, who would supply Polish priests to the diocese¹⁰¹. There were also Catholic immigrants from Hungary (in Aberystwyth¹⁰²), from Yugoslavia (in Hirwaun, Brecon¹⁰³) and from Spain (again in Aberystwyth¹⁰⁴).

A social survey of the parish of Aberystwyth in 1955 shows the extent to which immigrants from the continent had numerically strengthened the Church in the Principality. Out of a community of 135 Catholics, 20% were born in Italy. This was 5% more than those born in Ireland, and only 2% less than those born in

⁹⁶Margaret Williams, *Catholicism in Conwy 1186-1993* (1993), p. 22.

⁹⁷Joy, *St. David's, Mold*, pp. 32-3.

⁹⁸*Menevia Record*, 4 (4) (1957), 9.

⁹⁹*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 6; *Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 4.

¹⁰⁰Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

¹⁰¹Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

¹⁰²Kiely, *Our Lady Aberystwyth*, p. 86.

¹⁰³Menevia Diocesan Archives : Brecon File.

¹⁰⁴Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

Wales itself¹⁰⁵! Sermons were preached and church notices given in the Italian language¹⁰⁶. 8% of Aberystwyth Catholics had been born in Poland and a further 4% originated from elsewhere on the continent¹⁰⁷. Five years later in the Western Mail Rev. Ivor Cassam gave the example of the Italian community in the Morriston area of Swansea again to show how foreign immigrants had helped the growth of the Church. There were, he claimed, around 200 Italians working there. Taking that 75% of these were married, and with their average family having five children, the total number of Italian Catholics in this area would be around 1000. Such numbers would have considerably strengthened the Roman Church in Wales¹⁰⁸. In the census a year later the numbers of Italian and Polish-born living in the Principality was shown to be very high. Of all those born outside Wales (except Ireland and, of course, the rest of Britain) Italians were in the largest abundance with over 4600, with the Polish the third largest with almost 3600¹⁰⁹.

The war was also to leave another legacy to the Catholic Church in Wales. These were the Mass centres established in many areas to cater for evacuees and subsequently kept open. The movement of children, civil servants, academics, and bankers from cities heavily-populated with Catholics into isolated districts of Wales forced the Catholic Church to provide temporary Mass centres and Catholic schools in the remotest areas of the Principality. There was also evacuation to the larger towns of the North Wales coast, such as Rhyl, Colwyn Bay, and Llandudno, which helped boost the Catholic communities already established. 'Catholics in their hundreds', wrote Patrick J. Breen, 'were exiled from Manchester, Liverpool and the big industrial towns of the Midlands and settled down to live in Rhyl'¹¹⁰. Although many evacuees returned to their homes after the war, others stayed behind, either through choice or because of the difficulties in obtaining housing in the devastated cities. Although some of the Mass centres in rural Wales were abandoned as evacuees returned, others formed

¹⁰⁵Fogarty, 'Parish of Aberystwyth', p. 2.

¹⁰⁶Kiely, *Our Lady Aberystwyth*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁷Fogarty, 'Parish of Aberystwyth', p. 2.

¹⁰⁸*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

¹⁰⁹*Census 1961 England and Wales: Birthplace and Nationality Tables* (London 1964).

¹¹⁰*Menevia Record*, 4 (3) (1957), 10.

the nucleus of future parishes and attracted growing numbers of Catholics. Thus the 'unorganised and temporary dispersal from the cities into the country areas produced lasting results'¹¹¹. Likewise the temporary Mass centres established for British and American army camps in areas across Wales often had a similar future. In Ruabon, Flintshire the village had no Catholic connection at all until a Mass centre was established for the army camp during the war. By 1960 a Church, St. Michael and All Angels, had been opened in the village, and the Catholic population had grown to almost 350¹¹².

Although it never reached the proportions of Irish Catholic immigrants in the nineteenth century, between 1916 and 1962 the numbers of Irish, English, and European Catholic immigrants to Wales was certainly substantial. 'No total picture of religious affiliations in Wales', wrote Cassam, 'can discount such significant numbers'¹¹³. Due to the great numbers of immigrants, it is also clear that in general Catholics were markedly younger than their non-Catholic neighbours. In the parish of Aberystwyth only 5% of Catholics were over 60 years of age, compared to the Cardiganshire figure of 20%¹¹⁴. This brought to the Church a constant renewal of zeal and vigour, and also added to the considerably higher birth rate among Catholics. The high birth rate was further assisted by the strong anti-contraception stand of the Welsh hierarchy, who often reiterated the Pope's denunciation of birth control¹¹⁵. By the 1950s there is evidence that the bishops' condemnation of birth control was being ignored by many of the faithful. In Aberystwyth out of a total of 22 completed families (i.e. families of women over 45 years age), 13 had 1-2 children, 9 had 3-4 and not one had over 5 children. This stood in marked contrast to the fact that 12 of these mothers had themselves come from families of over 5 children¹¹⁶. In the inter-war years at least, however, it is clear that the bishops' condemnation of contraception greatly helped the growth in numbers of Catholics¹¹⁷.

¹¹¹Gwynn, 'England and Wales', p. 50.

¹¹²*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

¹¹³*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

¹¹⁴Fogarty, 'Parish of Aberystwyth', p. 2.

¹¹⁵See Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1931* and *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1932*.

¹¹⁶Fogarty, 'Parish of Aberystwyth', p. 3.

¹¹⁷Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 277.

b) The stemming of leakage

In the early years of immigration to the industrial towns and cities of Wales there was certainly a drift away from the Church which struggled to minister to the numbers of Irish journeying in search of work. Although they were baptised Catholics, when freed from the restraints of home many of these immigrants lapsed. Their descendants tended to break completely with the faith of their fathers largely through marriage. 'It is a lamentable fact', *The Tablet* noted in 1924, 'that to-day one can meet, in the Rhondda valley and elsewhere in South Wales, with many bearers of old Irish and Catholic names who are not Catholics but Nonconformists'¹¹⁸. In 1941 McGrath wrote that 'again and again, the bearers of obviously Catholic surnames are seen to be prominent members of some non-Catholic denomination'¹¹⁹. The situation was made worse by the increasing numbers of mixed marriages. Although the earliest Irish immigrants had largely married within their own communities, from around 1875 onwards there began a trend towards such marriages. From these unions, the lapsing of either the Catholic partner in the marriage, or of the children, was common¹²⁰. Mixed marriages were, however, but a symptom of the beginning of the Irish immigrant integration and assimilation into Welsh society. As this integration hastened, the tendency to lapse became far more of a concern, with the faithful now fraternising with 'a non-Catholic and essentially non-religious population'¹²¹. In 1926 the Anglican Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan wrote that 'it is doubtful whether Roman Catholicism is maintaining its ground even among the Irish population in Wales'. He referred to a conversation he had had with a priest who admitted that of the 12,000 Irishmen in his district only a third were loyal to the Church¹²².

The Welsh episcopal reaction to the obvious amount of leakage among their faithful was zealous, continuous and direct. From the 1920s through to the 1950s there were huge episcopal efforts to arrest the flow away from the Church. On the face of it these efforts seemed very successful. The number of Catholics

¹¹⁸*The Tablet*, 11 Oct. 1924, 470.

¹¹⁹Michael McGrath. *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on 'Mixed Marriages'*.

¹²⁰O'Leary, 'Immigration and Integration', p. 178.

¹²¹Jackson. *The Irish in Britain*, p. 146.

¹²²J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Welsh Mind in Evolution* (London, 1925). p. 206.

was, after all, increasing up to the 1960s. Certainly in the inter-war period the efforts did seem to lead to some success. Among other reasons, Hastings attributed the growth and development of the Church in the 1930s to the ‘ultramontane pastoral system’ of the hierarchy¹²³. Following the War too, many of the bishops’ efforts helped hinder the drift from the Church. It is certainly clear that successive Welsh bishops were adamant that their endeavours were of utmost importance in both the Church’s struggle against secularisation and in the positive growth of the Church in the Principality.

Mixed marriages

‘Once let ignorance, indifference or disobedience grow to such an extent as to do away with, or seriously diminish the abhorrence which the Catholic flock ought to have of contemplating holy matrimony with a stranger to our holy religion,’ wrote Bishop Hedley of Newport at the turn of the century, ‘apostasy with the loss of children will come upon us like a flood’¹²⁴. The curtailing of mixed marriages was certainly one of the principal aims of successive Welsh Catholic bishops until the 1950s and beyond. Mixed marriages, however, were certainly not all bad for the Church’s development in the Principality. They not only helped reduce the prejudice and hostility towards the Faith by hastening integration, but they also sometimes brought in converts to the Church, as the non-Catholic party would not infrequently convert to Catholicism. By the 1920s lists of candidates for confirmation were beginning to include more Welsh family names, as the children of Irish Catholics who had inter-married with local families were brought up as Catholics. Yet those Catholics drifting away from the Church because of mixed marriages far outnumbered those who were won over. ‘The Catholic party in these “marriages”’, noted *St Peter’s Parish Magazine* in 1924, ‘lose sight of the sacraments and its graces’¹²⁵. Although strictly forbidden in principle, in practice and subject to a number of conditions Catholics could marry non-Catholics. All children were to be brought up as Catholics, the Catholic

¹²³Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 277.

¹²⁴J. Anselm Wilson, *The Life of Bishop Hedley* (London, 1930), p. 119.

¹²⁵*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 4 (3) (1924), 96.

partner should pray and strive for the conversion of the other, and no religious ceremony was allowed other than that in the Catholic Church and only then after the issuing of a dispensation. It was also expected that the non-Catholic partner would attend a series of 'instructions' on the Catholic Faith.

The incipient threat of mixed marriages was continually expressed by clergy and the hierarchy alike. Both Pius X's Decree on Marriage (*Ne Temere* 1908)¹²⁶ and Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* (1931) were expounded, with Mostyn dedicating a pastoral to the latter noting the importance of marrying 'someone who will think and speak as we do as regards religious matters'¹²⁷. In the inter-war years, parishes in the larger Welsh towns organised clubs and social events with the aim of bringing young Catholics together and preventing mixed marriages¹²⁸. One such group, the 'Cheerio Club' in St. Peter's, Cardiff, even offered a prize for the first two members 'entering into the bonds of Holy Matrimony'¹²⁹. As late as 1943 J. O'Connell urged that parish youth socials should regularly be held as they were 'the most effective means of bringing together the Catholic boys and girls ... how many mixed marriages had their origin in a non-Catholic dance hall?'¹³⁰. A year earlier Fr. W. Arendzen of Brynmawr, Breconshire had listed the 'manifold and obvious' evils of such marriages. Among these were the lowering of the faith and piety of the Catholic party, the difficulties caused by the question of birth control, friction over religious beliefs, and the impossibility of building up a Catholic atmosphere in the home. Furthermore, children often 'follow the example of their parents in contracting further mixed marriages and thus the Catholic body throughout the land becomes more and more enfeebled and diluted'¹³¹.

Following the War, the Church continued stubbornly to keep to its exacting guidelines for those entering mixed unions. Bishop Petit was particularly

¹²⁶*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff* 1927 p. 39; *Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff* 1935 p. 11.

¹²⁷Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral* 1931.

¹²⁸cf. *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (2) (1923), 55; *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (9) (1926), 276; *Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (11) (1928), 345.

¹²⁹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (3) (1923), 82.

¹³⁰*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook* 1943 p. 114.

¹³¹*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook* 1942 p. 79-81; see also *Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook* 1943 pp. 84-6.

strict in his insistence that non-Catholics attended instructions. He would even encourage non-Catholic women to accept more than the required instruction lessons in the Catholic faith. 'I would beg of you', he wrote to a priest about one such non-Catholic woman, 'to induce her to accept more explanations of the Faith since she is going to be the mother of Catholic children; I feel most strongly on this point'¹³². Although any form of mixed marriage was condemned, for a Catholic man to marry a non-Catholic woman had always been regarded as particularly unwise. This was due to the greater influence that the mother would have on the future children of that marriage. 'No man who has had the privilege of being brought up by a Catholic mother', St Peter's Parish Magazine had noted, 'should dream of denying a like privilege to his own children'¹³³.

More than any other single Welsh bishop, however, it was McGrath who was most incessant in his condemnation of these marriages which led, he claimed, 'insensibly yet rapidly in many cases to leakage and decay'¹³⁴. A strict ultramontanist, McGrath had noted in 1936 that such unions were 'ever odious to the Catholic Church' which had always held them as 'unlawful and pernicious'¹³⁵. Five years later he wrote a special pastoral letter on the subject which came to be read annually throughout his Archdiocese on the first Sunday in October and was often alluded to by English Catholics in their own denunciations of mixed marriages¹³⁶. Whereas in the past such unions had been between Catholics and Protestants, now the majority were between Catholics and unbaptised non-Catholics. This 'new kind of Mixed Marriage is far worse' as the way was clearly 'laid open to religious indifference on the part of the Catholic partner, and little hope remains of any religious upbringing of the children'. The Catholic Faith at large was also weakened by these marriages. 'Continue to pour water into milk', McGrath stated, 'and eventually there is a nauseating liquid which is neither milk nor water ... So will a parish change and deteriorate under the influence of this evil'. He concluded by announcing that from 1 January 1943 a dispensation for a

¹³²Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File: Petit was also insistent that the non-Catholic partner (not the priest or the Catholic partner) should write to him if they wished the organ to be played during the wedding ceremony see Menevia Diocesan Archives : Parish Files.

¹³³*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (12) (1931), 187.

¹³⁴Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff 29 June 1940* p. 9.

¹³⁵Michael McGrath, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1936*.

¹³⁶e.g. *The Tablet* Aug. 13, 1955:163

mixed marriage would not, as a rule, be granted to men in parishes where the Catholic population exceeded 1500¹³⁷. Twenty years later, such unions were still being condemned as very much inferior to marriages between Catholics. ‘Pastors of souls must do all in their power to discourage Mixed Marriage’ noted the 1961 Menevia Diocesan Synod¹³⁸. Similarly, John Murphy’s first advent pastoral letter as archbishop of Cardiff in that year emphasised that for the ‘perfect’ Catholic family ‘the first ingredient is two Catholic parents’¹³⁹.

Missions to scattered Catholics

In the Menevia Record Peter Morgan described the endeavours of the Catholic Church since the turn of the century to establish Mass Centres in the rural areas of Wales as ‘a practical all-out effort to safeguard the faith of isolated Catholics’. All sorts of places were used for Mass, including a wooden hut at Llangollen, a dance hall at Benllech, a barn at Llanrwst, a club room at Ruabon, a cottage at Harlech, and a garage at Penrhyndeudraeth. Such pioneering work was done ‘despite cramping, poverty and fearful obstacles’¹⁴⁰. It was often left to individual priests to walk, cycle or motorcycle for miles to minister to these Catholics. In the 1920s, for example, Fr. Laurence Kinsella of Aberystwyth would motorcycle great distances to reach the faithful¹⁴¹. An American journalist described this situation in Wales by stating that ‘if the people cannot come to the Church then the Church will go to the people’¹⁴². It was, then, fully recognised that such measures were needed as scattered Catholics (in the midst of a hostile and anti-Catholic atmosphere) often drifted away from the Faith. ‘Up in the hills’, asserted T.B. Wills of Merthyr in 1936, ‘there has been a struggle to keep certain oases of Catholicism alive in a desert of bigotry and intolerance’¹⁴³.

The need to establish missions and build churches for these isolated Catholic communities was especially recognised by Francis Mostyn. ‘Many

¹³⁷Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on ‘Mixed Marriages’ 1941*.

¹³⁸*Acts and Decrees of the Synod of the Diocese of Menevia July 1961* pp. 29, 97.

¹³⁹John Murphy, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1961*.

¹⁴⁰Peter Morgan, ‘The Faith and Rural Wales’, *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 2.

¹⁴¹Kiely, *Our Lady Aberystwyth*, p. 44.

¹⁴²*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 4.

¹⁴³*Western Mail*, 27 April 1936, 14.

groups of Catholics scattered here and there in the valleys of Wales', it was written in 1934, 'owe it to him, that they have now the opportunity of sharing in the sacramental life of the Church'¹⁴⁴. Throughout his tenure he continually appealed for financial help for both the 'Church Extension Fund' and the poor missions¹⁴⁵. Summarising the aim of the former he noted that 'small and inexpensive churches' should be built throughout Wales. If funds would not stretch to build a proper church then he suggested that church halls should be erected where Catholics could meet on weekdays and have an altar there for Mass on Sundays¹⁴⁶. The aim of his annual collection for the poor missions, on the other hand, was to establish and support missions in the smaller towns and villages with the hope of saving isolated Catholics 'from that greatest of all calamities, shipwreck of their Holy Faith'¹⁴⁷. Such financial help was particularly important in light of the economic conditions in both industrial and rural Wales during the 1930s. 'The advance has been great,' enthused T.P. Ellis in 1936, 'the Church has, in an astonishing manner, been brought to the doors of the people'¹⁴⁸. It is also clear that the efforts were relatively successful in their aim to stem leakage. In Bala, for example, 24 Catholics, who within a generation would almost certainly have lost their faith, were 'found' when a church was opened in Dolgellau only 18 miles away. Within three years, in 1935, Bala's congregation had grown to 40 and a site for a church had been acquired¹⁴⁹.

The opening of such missions and small churches across Wales did not, however, completely solve the problem of ministering to rural Catholics. In a letter to Saunders Lewis in 1928, Fr. Paul Hook reported that there were still many isolated Catholics in the Machynlleth district who lived over thirty miles from the nearest church. 'What chance have they of keeping the faith alive?' he lamented¹⁵⁰. The need for a Travelling Mission, with priests doing pastoral work

¹⁴⁴Francis Mostyn's *Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee, 1884-1934 Souvenir Handbook* (Cardiff 1934) p. 15.

¹⁴⁵See Francis Mostyn, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1920* and pastorals as archbishop where he even invited donors to give five shillings or more towards missions in return for their names being printed at the back of the letters. .

¹⁴⁶Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1925*.

¹⁴⁷Daniel Hannon, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1940*.

¹⁴⁸*Western Mail*, 18 May 1936, 7.

¹⁴⁹Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*.

¹⁵⁰National Library of Wales Archives : MS 22725 E.

from village to village, had been emphasised from as early as the late nineteenth century. In the 1870s Fr. Henry Bailey Hughes, the great Welsh priest who was ‘before his time in many things’, had suggested such a venture¹⁵¹. Before the Second World War, there were irregular motor missions to Catholics in outlying and remote districts of the Province. Organised by the Catholic Missionary Society from the 1920s onwards they would take a mobile chapel, begin their mission at Llangollen and travel into the heartland of Menevia¹⁵². It was only following the war, however, that the Menevia Travelling Mission, ‘a practical attempt to bring the Mass and the Sacraments to isolated Catholics’¹⁵³, was to become a familiar sight in the remote areas of Wales. The enthusiastic labours of these missionaries were also to become known and respected in Catholic quarters internationally. ‘Their notable work among the isolated Catholics in Wales’, wrote one American journalist, ‘is known to all’¹⁵⁴.

In an interview with the Catholic Herald in 1948 Bishop Petit had expressed his wish to have two or more ‘missionary priests’ whose full time work would be to travel through his diocese evangelising and ministering to the spiritual needs of those in danger of losing their faith. The cost of such an endeavour, however, was well beyond the means of the diocese¹⁵⁵. With financial backing from the ‘Lamp Society’, a society formed in England to help Catholicism in Wales, the first travelling missionary was appointed in 1949. This was Fr. Patrick Crowley, the parish priest at Porthmadog, whose new work was often hazardous and lonely. He obtained the names of Catholics in isolated areas either from the nearest priest or by enquiring ‘perseveringly and tactfully’ at post offices, farms, and garages¹⁵⁶. A suitable place, such as a kitchen or living-room, was then found for Mass, confessions and instruction of the children. Following Crowley’s retirement due to illness in 1950, after having established 14 Mass centres for around 250 Catholics, the Redemptorist Fathers based at Machynlleth took up the travelling mission, and were provided with three vans by the ‘Lamp Society’.

¹⁵¹*Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Church of St. Garmon, Abersoch Aug. 3rd, 1953 at 3.30pm by the Bishop of Menevia. To the Memory of Father Hughes* (Caernarfon Archives).

¹⁵²*The Tablet*, 9 July 1927, 62.

¹⁵³*Menevia Record*, 4 (4) (1957), 2.

¹⁵⁴*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 4.

¹⁵⁵*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

¹⁵⁶*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 2.

Mass therefore became ‘the culmination of hours of driving up hill and down dale to collect the congregation’¹⁵⁷.

By 1960 there were around 1200 Catholics being cared for by travelling missions who would otherwise have almost certainly lapsed. The Redemptorists were still running 24 Mass centres, having handed over a further 30 to the care of other priests¹⁵⁸. Eight of these were handed over to the Franciscan Capuchin Fathers of Pantasaph who, discovering further families outside the striking distance of a church, began a second such travelling mission by using small scooters¹⁵⁹. The future archbishop of Cardiff, John Aloysius Ward, was behind much of the early labours of the Franciscan Travelling Mission¹⁶⁰. They now covered the northern section of the diocese, while the Redemptorists covered the southern section. The Franciscans were helped with the instruction of Catholic children living in outlying districts by Brigidines of Denbigh, and by the Canonesses of St. Augustine at Flint¹⁶¹. With the continuing financial support of the Lamp Society (without which they would not have survived through the 1950s¹⁶²), the travelling missions were certainly able to regain a great many lapsed Catholic families to the faith.

Parochial efforts to stem leakage

In further efforts to stem leakage both the Welsh hierarchy and the Welsh Catholic press urged regular attendance of Mass and the practice of baptising children as soon as possible¹⁶³. Archbishop Mostyn especially noted that Catholics must ‘realise, and have a true living faith in, the Blessed Sacrament’. If this were the case attendance at Mass would not be a chore but a privilege. ‘If we actually realised that Jesus Christ was really and truly present, then we should

¹⁵⁷Sebastian Holland, *The Capuchins* (Liverpool, 1984), p. 66.

¹⁵⁸*Menevia Record*, 7 (3) (1960), 2-4.

¹⁵⁹*Menevia Record*, 4 (4) (1957), 9.

¹⁶⁰Holland, *The Capuchins*, p. 37.

¹⁶¹*Menevia Record*, 7 (3) (1960), 6-8.

¹⁶²*Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 17.

¹⁶³cf. *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (2) (1926), 56; *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (3) (1926), 85; *Newport Catholic Magazine*, 4 (9) (1931), 145; *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 13; *Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954), 19.

never stay away from Holy Mass'. Neither would Catholics absent themselves from evening services if they realised that they would be blessed, 'not by the priest, but by this self-same Jesus Christ'¹⁶⁴. Reacting to instructions from the Holy See, Mostyn also urged the establishment of branches of the 'Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament' in each parish as a way of ensuring that Catholics regularly attended Mass. 'Membership', *St. Peter's Parish Magazine* stated, 'helps one to fight slackness and to make spiritual progress'¹⁶⁵.

Another method of reducing leakage was by fostering the community spirit and social life within the parish. In the smaller parishes, especially those in Menevia, the only parochial activity was Sunday Mass¹⁶⁶. In most towns, however, after the local church and school was established, the attention was always focused on finding a suitable meeting place for the people of the parish. If building a hall was inexpedient, then a schoolroom or the church itself was used. Aside from church services themselves, clubs (such as social or whist clubs) were held at the meeting place and became the focal points of the parish as centres of social intercourse. Not only was it hoped that such close contacts would help reduce mixed marriages, but, more importantly, it was expected that a sense of community among parishioners would be strengthened. 'It is most important that Catholics should get to know one another socially', urged Mostyn in Cardiff in 1923, '... we should not be to each other as strangers and passers-by, who come together in the Church and separate at the Church doors as though we had never met'¹⁶⁷. Catholics were also encouraged to become active and zealous members of the numerous confraternities which helped nurture community spirit. In the inter-war years, groups such as the St. Anne's Guild, the Children of Mary, the

¹⁶⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (1) (1922), vii; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (4) (1924), 127: 'try to realise the presence of our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and a love born of that understanding would sanctify and save their souls'.

¹⁶⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 7 (11) (1927), 341.

¹⁶⁶Kathryn Byrne, *The Development of the Roman Catholic Church in N.E. Wales since the 1930s with Special Reference to the Parishes of Chirk, Ruabon and Llangollen* (Wrexham Diocesan Library, 1985), pp. 27-8.

¹⁶⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (5) (1923), 150; Catholic publications were themselves intended to foster parish unity by co-ordinating parish activities and promoting social events 'There may be social distinctions among us, varied political outlook, and many nationalities - but at the altar rails, in the dispensation of God's grace, we are all equal in His sight. Our Catholic faith is a great bond of unity' *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (1) (1921), v; see also *St. Patrick's Parish Magazine* 1 (10) (1948), 2.

Catholic Institute, the Catholic Young Men's Society, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society were thriving across Wales. Through these it was hoped 'parochial life [will] become spiritually and socially alive with the abundance of life we like to see flourishing'¹⁶⁸. The Catholic hierarchy therefore continually encouraged every Catholic adult to belong to one or more group, so as both to keep alive community spirit and to ensure that there was means of taking organised action, political, financial, or social, when occasion demanded. Writing of the Catholics in Cardiff John Hickey noted that 'a marked sense of solidarity persisted in the Catholic community down to the decade preceding the Second World War'¹⁶⁹.

After the war while the community spirit within Catholic parishes declined somewhat, it did not die completely. In Wales, as in England¹⁷⁰, the influence of secular society and the extension of Catholic secondary education which drew pupils from different parishes took their toll on parochial unity as celebrations for such festivals as St. Patrick's Day (once the high-point of Catholic life in the South Wales towns) decreased rapidly. Yet, however curtailed, a sense of community continued in many parishes, due to the calls of the hierarchy¹⁷¹, the zeal and enthusiasm of converts and young immigrants, and especially the rise of a flourishing Catholic middle class. Known and respected in their parishes, members of this new middle class took over much of the organisation and fund-raising of the Catholic societies and associations¹⁷². Rather than destroy the unity of parishes, as might have been expected, the emergence of different classes actually helped maintain and strengthen it. In both Cardiff and Menevia, societies such as the Catholic Young Men's Society and the Catholic Women's League therefore continued to flourish following the war. In Aberystwyth, where survey figures show a strong middle class, such groups were so healthy that Michael

¹⁶⁸*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (8) (1929), 279.

¹⁶⁹John Hickey, *Urban Catholics: Urban Catholicism in England and Wales from 1829 to the Present Day* (London, 1967), p. 133.

¹⁷⁰cf. Norman, *Catholicism in England*, p. 115.

¹⁷¹cf. *Catholic Herald*, 17 Sept. 1948, 1: 'Above all keep your unity of action in your parishes. Priests and people working together for the good of the parish. Unity is strength' (Bishop Petit).

¹⁷²Hickey, *Urban Catholics*, p. 121: The burdens of organisation was 'lifted from the clergy and taken over by the laymen and women'.

Fogarty commented 'no one can say that Catholic Action in Central Wales is without prospects'¹⁷³.

Finally, there were many parochial efforts to win back the lapsed. Some of the larger parishes would hold missions not so much to convert non-Catholics but to renew the faithful and reach the lapsed¹⁷⁴. These campaigns were often reported to be very successful. During 1926 at least 1000 Catholics attended each session of a Franciscan mission at St. Peter's, Cardiff, and the mission was claimed to have caused a 'strong revival in fervour and devotion'¹⁷⁵. It was perceived that such missions were necessary to deepen spiritual dedication in an age where secular attitudes were permeating all aspects of the nation's life. 'Secular books, magazines and newspapers abound in our midst,' noted the parish magazine, 'not all of them *anti-Catholic* of course, but most of them *non-Catholic*, and many of them non-moral from a Catholic point of view, and it is all too easy for Catholics to become secularised (as it were) in their outlook upon life'¹⁷⁶. Following the Second World War the importance of the laity in helping to reclaim the lapsed was often emphasised. The Diocesan Catholic Action Organisation, which united the various Archdiocesan lay-societies and was established by McGrath in 1950, petitioned lay Catholics to help preserve the faith of Catholics and to help reclaim already lapsed Catholics¹⁷⁷. Similarly, in the Review in 1957 Fr. E.L. Butler urged Catholics to help stem the drift from the Faith by keeping in touch with Catholics who were ill, poor and dejected, or those who were moving far away from Church and school to the new housing estates which were being built¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷³Fogarty, 'Parish of Aberystwyth', p. 5.

¹⁷⁴Kiely, *Our Lady Aberystwyth*, p. 55; *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (3) (1926), 85 : The missions aimed at 'intensifying the spiritual life of the parish, and ... giving the wayward an opportunity of coming into line'.

¹⁷⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (4) (1926), 117.

¹⁷⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 10 (9) (1930), 144.

¹⁷⁷*Cardiff Archdiocesan Yearbook 1952*.

¹⁷⁸*Review*, 1 (4) (1958), 15.

Catholic schools

The uncompromising insistence of Catholic schools for Catholic children, which figured so prominently in these years, was undoubtedly a vital element in the Church's efforts to maintain the hold on its youth. To bring up a child as a faithful, church-attending Catholic was the very reason for the establishment of such schools, which Mostyn described as the 'the cradle of the mission'¹⁷⁹. 'What vast numbers would have been lost to the faith', it was noted, 'if it had not been for the Catholic schools and our devoted teachers'¹⁸⁰. It was believed that non-Catholic schools were far from being non-partisan. 'I know the teaching in the Council Schools is supposed to be non-sectarian,' noted the Newport Catholic Magazine in 1929, 'but it is almost impossible in teaching history (not to speak of Scripture) to avoid signing it with our own colours'. When St. Augustine was a Manichean, so became his disciples; when he converted to Christianity, his disciples followed him. There was certainly no doubt, claimed the article, that the teachers in the State schools 'consciously or unconsciously spread their opinions'¹⁸¹. In Menevia the situation was, if anything, worse. Petit went as far as to insist that 'in the matter of teaching in rural Wales there is no such thing as neutrality'¹⁸².

It was, then, held that to avoid lapsing in later life Catholic children must not attend non-Catholic schools and the frequenting of such schools was strictly forbidden, a point made forcefully by Pius XII in *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929). The Welsh Catholic hierarchy, and especially Archbishop Mostyn, continually emphasised the need for Catholic schools and the hazards of education at Council schools¹⁸³. In his Lenten Pastoral in 1930 Mostyn cited education as the key factor in keeping Catholicism alive and vibrant. Without proper religious education the seed 'soon withers away amid the storm of irreligion that it meets in

¹⁷⁹*The Tablet*, 16 Dec. 1922, 832.

¹⁸⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (5) (1926), 158; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 8 (10) (1928), 316 : by the time Catholic children left school the Faith must have 'caught hold of them - it must have bitten into their very system'.

¹⁸¹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (5) (1929), 158.

¹⁸²*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952* p. 16.

¹⁸³See Chapter 4.

the world'¹⁸⁴. In the Diocese of Menevia, however, most Catholic children had no choice but to attend non-Catholic schools. This was a cause of 'constant anxiety' to successive bishops¹⁸⁵. 'The plain fact has to be faced by parents and guardians', wrote Peter Morgan in 1953, 'that a Catholic boy or girl attending such schools is in grave danger of losing the Faith'. Many Catholic children in the diocese 'thus handicapped (in a Protestant environment, way of life and thought), begin to drift from the Church before the end of the first school year'. Parents and priests should, therefore, ensure that these children were given daily religious instruction at their homes. Morgan even suggested that fellow laity should also help teach the rudiments of the Faith to the children. 'Trained catechists from among the laity', he wrote, 'would be worth their weight in gold in any rural parish'¹⁸⁶. In particular members of the religious orders, such as the Carmelite sisters in Carmarthenshire¹⁸⁷ and the Canonesses of St. Augustine in Flintshire¹⁸⁸, made great efforts to ensure that isolated Catholic children were instructed in the catechism.

Superficial success?

While these efforts seemed to lessen somewhat the drift away from the Church, it soon became clear the success was limited and superficial. Secularisation was slowly but clearly gaining the upper hand and by the 1950s the Church, like all the other denominations, was struggling vainly to stem the leakage. In their efforts to limit mixed marriages the Welsh hierarchy certainly seemed to be fighting a losing battle. In the smaller towns and villages, especially in Menevia, mixed marriages were naturally very common. At Chirk in North-east Wales, for example, there was only one marriage 'with Nuptial Mass' in the fifty years after its formation as a parish in the late 1920s¹⁸⁹. As the century progressed, however, the numbers of mixed marriages in the hitherto enclosed

¹⁸⁴Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1930*; see also *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1923*; *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1935*; *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1938*.

¹⁸⁵*Menevia Record*, 4 (4) (1957), 2.

¹⁸⁶Morgan, 'The Faith and Rural Wales', 3.

¹⁸⁷*Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 11.

¹⁸⁸*Menevia Record*, 7 (3) (1960), 7.

¹⁸⁹Byrne. *The Catholic Church in N.E. Wales*, p. 27.

Catholic communities of the larger towns were becoming similarly numerous. As early as 1922 Mostyn noted that an increasing number of Catholics were being married in registry offices¹⁹⁰, while a year later St Peter's Parish Magazine showed concern that mixed marriages had passed the 50% mark for the first time in the history of the parish registers¹⁹¹. This trend continued in the inter-war years¹⁹², and on his appointment to the see of Cardiff McGrath claimed to be 'somewhat disturbed by the huge number of "Mixed Marriages" in the Archdiocese within recent years'. These had risen from around 200 in 1930 to 1070 in 1940¹⁹³.

Following the war such an increase continued. By the 1950s requests for marriage dispensations far outnumbered any other correspondence received by the Welsh Catholic bishops¹⁹⁴. With the secularisation process in rapid advance, many couples entering a mixed marriage were even abandoning the Church's strict guidelines altogether in favour of a registry office service or one in the non-Catholic partner's place of worship. The Church's efforts seemed increasingly futile, as by the end of his tenure even McGrath reluctantly began to recognise. In 1960 the Western Mail suggested that there were indications of 'a more liberal attitude by the archbishop towards the question of "mixed marriages"'¹⁹⁵. He certainly continued to strongly condemn such unions throughout the 1950s and early 1960s¹⁹⁶. His relaxation of some of his diocese's exacting mixed marriage rules, however, showed that even this strictly conservative and ultramontanist bishop was having to face the fact that the Church's efforts in this regard were somewhat in vain. Whereas music had previously been banned, in 1959 he decided to allow the organ to be played at such marriages. A year later he reduced the term of compulsory instruction for non-Catholics from five to two months. Previously non-Catholics had to attend a course of twenty periods of instruction before a dispensation for marriage could be granted; now only five

¹⁹⁰Westminster Diocesan Archives : Bourne Papers Box 1/86.

¹⁹¹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (2) (1923), 52.

¹⁹²See *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (12) (1931), 187 : 'We really cannot imagine why our young people need go outside the household of the faith to find a partner'.

¹⁹³Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on 'Mixed Marriages' 1941*.

¹⁹⁴See Menevia Diocesan Archives : Parish Files.

¹⁹⁵*Western Mail*, 13 Jan. 1960, 2.

¹⁹⁶Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1956*.

would be required. 'It will relieve a heavy burden on parish priests,' claimed one priest, 'some of whom have had to give as many as 29 instructions a week to different individuals'¹⁹⁷. McGrath had bowed to the inevitable, accepting that the faithful were disregarding both the Church's advice and its injunctions.

The Welsh hierarchy's other efforts to stem leakage were similarly fated. While the numbers of Catholics in Wales was increasing, those who regularly attended Mass were increasingly in the minority. The calls for regular Mass attendance were largely, then, falling on deaf ears. In a letter to Bishop Vaughan in 1930, Lieutenant J. McGuire of Brecon had noted that 'our poor few Catholics are slowly slipping through [our] fingers ... a good many do not come to Mass'¹⁹⁸. Later in the decade the Newport Catholic Magazine noted that it was 'most distressing' to see 'the number of empty benches' at services¹⁹⁹, while Mostyn expressed a grave concern that in the archdiocese 'Our Flock think little of absenting themselves from Mass'²⁰⁰. By 1961 H.W.J. Edwards was to reassure the declining non-Catholic denominations that the apparent growth of Catholicism in Wales was deceiving. There was, he wrote, a joke which was becoming common among Catholics - 'Bless me Father for I have sinned. I have missed Mass once and Bingo twice' - and this was 'sufficient commentary upon our own plight'²⁰¹.

While the community spirit in many Welsh parishes was still relatively healthy despite this declining Mass attendance, in other parishes the situation was different. In 1948, for example, the St. Patrick's Parish Magazine lamented that many parishioners were strangers to each other, claiming that 'such an unhappy lack of social intercourse is most undesirable'²⁰². Furthermore, the efforts to reclaim those already lapsed Catholics was again only limited in its success. Locally, both the calls for lapsed Catholics to return to the Church and the renewal of confidence in the Welsh Church during the 1950s may well have led a number of the lapsed to resume active commitment. There is, however, certainly

¹⁹⁷*Western Mail*, 13 Jan. 1960, 2.

¹⁹⁸Menevia Diocesan Archives : Brecon File.

¹⁹⁹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 4 (9) (1931), 145.

²⁰⁰Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1937*.

²⁰¹*Western Mail*, 13 Oct. 1961, 6.

²⁰²*St. Patrick's Parish Magazine* 1 (10) (1948), 2.

no Welsh evidence of a success similar to that of John Heenan's National Mission in England between 1949 and 1950²⁰³. The evidence that there is seems only to reflect a confident and triumphalistic Church, over-enthusiastic at what was really only superficial success²⁰⁴.

Even the missions to scattered Catholics, which were perhaps the most effective way of stemming leakage and winning back Catholics, were by no means universally effective. While the founding of new missions, the building of new churches and the efforts of individual priests helped reach some of the isolated faithful, before the establishment of the Menevia Travelling Mission the great majority of Catholics in rural areas drifted from the Church. These either turned to the strong Nonconformity or simply to indifferentism. In his Lenten Pastoral of 1925, Mostyn described that the Faith of many isolated Catholics languished for a time and then ceased altogether. Thus they became 'Catholics in name and nothing more'²⁰⁵. Yet even following the establishment of the Travelling Mission not only did many lapsed Catholics who had integrated into their Nonconformist communities bitterly resent their efforts²⁰⁶ but leakage due to isolation continued. In 1952 Petit noted that 'immersion in a sea of Nonconformity' still threatened to drown Catholics in rural Wales : 'The peculiar structure of Nonconformist administration, by which chapels and their territory are ruled by deacons who are always the most influential people in that locality tends to exert pressure upon isolated Catholics which they often find themselves unable to resist'²⁰⁷. Two years later, an American Catholic journalist visiting Wales noted that Italian and Polish immigrants living in isolated areas were particularly susceptible to lapse from their faith : 'Most Continental Catholics who come to live in Wales seem to drift from the Church'²⁰⁸. Catherine Daniel suggested that even enthusiastic Welsh converts to Catholicism were not exempt from this trend. The religious, social and economic prejudice against Catholicism in Wales, she wrote, often led

²⁰³cf. Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 480-1.

²⁰⁴*Menevia Record*, 6 (4) (1959), 10.

²⁰⁵Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1925*; see also Daniel Hannon, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1940*.

²⁰⁶*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 6; *Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 16.

²⁰⁷*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952* p. 15.

²⁰⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 4.

to the descendants of Welsh Nonconformist converts to Catholicism, of second or third generation, becoming reabsorbed into the original chapel milieu²⁰⁹.

Finally, the Church's continuous warnings against attendance at non-Catholic schools also seemed increasingly futile. Certainly many thousands of Welsh children did receive a fully Catholic education. Many Catholic parents, however, believed that State schools were educationally better equipped than the only partially maintained Catholic schools. Throughout this period, then, they continued to defy and ignore episcopal instructions, warnings and threats by sending their children to non-Catholic schools even though there was ample space in the local Catholic schools. 'There are still parents who wantonly expose their children to the danger of losing their Faith in the atmosphere of non-Catholic schools;' *St. Peter's Parish Magazine* thundered in 1929, 'numerous excuses for their action are offered, but satisfy none, not even the parents themselves, who in their heart, know that in sending their children away from a Catholic atmosphere, they do wrong'²¹⁰. Warnings of the dangers of sending Catholic children to Protestant schools resounded throughout the 1930s²¹¹. In 1935 Mostyn dedicated a whole pastoral letter to this concern. By blindly sending their children to Council schools believing it was securing them a better secular education, he claimed that parents were attaching 'more importance to worldly affairs than to the great affairs of eternal salvation' and their children were facing a 'grave risk of losing their faith'. Did Catholics not realise, he asked, that it was 'a grievous sin on the part of parents to send their children to such schools'²¹². By 1954 McGrath felt compelled to make the ultimate threat in regard to parents whose children were forced to attend non-Catholic schools : by failing to withdraw their children from public worship at those schools then they would be refused the sacraments²¹³. Although this was not carried out, the threat reflects both the

²⁰⁹Catherine Daniel, 'Catholic Converts in Wales', *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956). 211.

²¹⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (4) (1929), 120.

²¹¹See *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 10 (1) (1930), 3 which referred to this as 'nothing more than a crying evil'; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 10 (3) (1930), 38; *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (11) (1931), 176; *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 10 (10) (1930), 145 : 'They would not dream of denying their little ones food or clothing or anything necessary for the health of their bodies yet they deny them something even more important'.

²¹²Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1935*; see also *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1938*.

²¹³*Western Mail*, 22 Nov. 1954, 1; see also Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/148.

utmost importance of the issue for the Welsh hierarchy and the fact that parents across Wales were obviously disregarding the Church's instructions.

Even worse than the fact that many parents seemed to be disregarding episcopal commands, was the increasing realisation that not even the strictest Catholic education could prevent a falling away from the Faith. Secular society was a potent threat wherever Catholics were educated. The success of these schools in stemming leakage was therefore relative, as an increasingly secular and indifferent society proved too strong an attraction for even those educated at Catholic schools. The 1959 Menevian Clergy Conference noted that 'priests are faced with the problem that about one third of the children who leave Catholic schools lapse'²¹⁴. A year later the *Menevia Record* seemed wholly disillusioned when it claimed that 'these young people who drift from the practice of their religion on leaving school are not exclusively, or even extensively, those who have been sent to non-Catholic county schools'. On the contrary, 'the majority of them have been, from their first day in the infant school to their last day in the secondary school, in the hands of Catholic teachers'²¹⁵.

Leakage continues

Evidence of continuing leakage throughout this period supports the indication that the Welsh Church's success in stemming the drift away from the Faith was both limited and superficial. The Church's increasing sense of confidence and outward triumphalism seemed somewhat to disguise the fact that leakage was continuing unabated. 'There is an appalling leakage;' H.W.J. Edwards admitted in 1952, 'there are thousands of lapsed Roman Catholics in Wales'. Rather than Catholicism causing concern for chapels, 'when it comes to our being a cause of concern there can be no doubt that we cause the most concern to Mgr. Michael McGrath' he wrote²¹⁶. While the nineteenth century had seen many Catholics turn to the Protestant bodies, it was not now other denominations who mostly were benefiting from the drift away from the Church.

²¹⁴*Diocese of Menevia : Clergy Conference Oct. 1959 - Liturgy.*

²¹⁵*Menevia Record*, 7 (4) (1960), 8.

²¹⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Dec. 1952, 6.

In 1952 an article in Y Faner mentioned how the Catholic Yearbook for Menevia had reported that there was a tendency for Nonconformity in rural Wales to swallow Roman Catholics²¹⁷. It was far more frequent, however, for Catholics to turn away from religion altogether. H.W.J. Edwards had suggested in The Tablet in 1948 that in the industrial areas of Wales working-class Catholics were straying from a devoted Catholic life not by turning to Nonconformity but by embracing socialism, or, at worst, Communism. At the recent pilgrimage to Pen-rhys, referred to by the Welsh bard Gwilym Tew in medieval times as ‘the poor man’s pilgrimage’, Edwards noted that he saw very few Catholic ‘poor men’. ‘I am afraid that many of them are making the pilgrimage to Judges Hall, Tonypany’, he concluded, ‘... to hear Harry Pollitt, the boilerman, speaking, if you please, on the Miners’ Next Step’²¹⁸.

While some Catholics were undoubtedly lost to Protestantism or to active socialism, it was far more frequent for them to drift to mere indifferentism. Many became Catholics only in name. Alluding to a religious census in 1951 the Anglican Bishop Edwin Morris of Monmouth noted that ‘there is a popular notion that the Roman Church does not have a penumbra of merely nominal members, yet quite a number of those who claimed to be Roman Catholics added that they “did not go”’²¹⁹. Most lapsed Catholics, however, yielded to the influence of an increasingly secular and materialistic society by breaking all links with their former Church. ‘There is a rising tide of paganism,’ stated one priest of the South Wales valleys, ‘the people are drifting away’²²⁰. Fewer Catholics were actively abandoning the Church, but more and more were simply becoming indifferent to religion. This problem was certainly not confined to either Wales or to Catholicism. Across the border there was just as much concern for leakage from the Church²²¹. In his advent pastoral for 1931, Bishop Vaughan claimed Catholics in modern society were more likely to lose their faith than at almost any other time. Each generation was naturally affected by the atmosphere of the society in

²¹⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Feb. 1952, 7; see *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 15.

²¹⁸*The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 248; Harry Pollitt stood as the Communist party candidate in Rhondda East in the 1930s and 1940s.

²¹⁹*Province*, 2 (4) (1951), 114.

²²⁰*The Tablet*, 28 Nov. 1936, 735.

²²¹cf. Mathew, *Catholicism in England*, p. 253.

which it lived, and the atmosphere of modern Wales was characterised by indifference, sensual sin, and lack of prayer. Worldliness was bound to devour those Catholics whose faith was weak²²².

By 1950 Fr. W.J. Randall of Cardiff wrote that the word ‘leakage’ was carrying a note of fear to Catholic priests in the modern world. An increasing ‘spiritual malady’ was spreading alarmingly among the Catholics of Wales, due to a lack of interest in the Church and its worship, the pressures of the time, and the influence of companions. This was especially influencing young Catholic men. ‘To make it worse’, he wrote, ‘it has the nature of an infection; it breeds by contact. It spreads into the social order’²²³. Papal encyclicals were expressing similar concern, with Pius XI’s *Mens Nostra* (1929) seeing the ‘tenets and morals’ of modern-day materialism at its roots. His successor’s *Le Pelerinage de Lourdes* (1957) also noted that modern materialism was shamelessly trying ‘to seduce souls which are still pure’. At the beginning of his archbishopric, McGrath had lamented that in this materialistic, secular world many of the badly-instructed and careless Catholics did indeed ‘mostly compromise, drift downstream and end by giving up their religion’. He warned that all Welsh Catholics should be on guard as ‘breathing such a tainted atmosphere, we may find it difficult at times to resist the insidious and evil influence’²²⁴. His warning, however, was somewhat futile. By 1954, in an address to a rally of Knights of St. Columba in London, Bishop Petit recognised that Catholic Wales had a “leakage” problem’ and ‘given our parochial and our schools system it is alarming’²²⁵.

c) Evangelism and the winning of converts

²²²Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1931*.

²²³*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1950*, p. 143.

²²⁴Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1941*.

²²⁵*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 11.

i) *Evangelistic exhortations and efforts*

England and Wales had ceased to be a missionary district with the 1908 Apostolic Constitution *Sapienti Consilio*, and with the code of Canon Law in 1918 (officially constituted in Wales in 1925²²⁶) all ‘missions’ became ‘parishes’. In parts of Wales, however, Catholicism was numerically so weak that it continued to be treated by the Church as a mission area. ‘Wales’, wrote Fr. Oswald J. Murphy in 1953, ‘is essentially a missionary territory’²²⁷. The very fact that Wales was still seen in this way gave Catholics ‘a greater zeal than those of some of the other, older-established denominations’²²⁸. With the growth of Catholicism in the Principality, there was also a sense among Welsh Catholics that the return of Wales to the Faith was a real possibility²²⁹. Combined with the influence of a general trend in England (especially in the inter-war years) towards winning converts²³⁰, this all meant that efforts towards the conversion of Wales were zealous and enthusiastic. General papal exhortations for missionary zeal likewise encouraged this fervour. In the inter-war years *Humani Generis* (1917), *Mortalium Animos* (1928) and the many encyclicals and letters on the Catholic missions²³¹ exerted influence on those toiling for converts among the often hostile Welsh. Likewise, in the 1950s *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) exhorted missionary zeal ‘all missionaries, priests and individual faithful, both in missionary lands and throughout the whole world’ and *Fidei Donum* (1957) called for a ‘fresh growth of apostolic vigour’, so that there would be on the battle-field of the Lord ‘countless phalanxes of apostolic men, not unlike those who sprang up in the primitive Church’. John XXIII’s *Ad Petri Cathedram* and *Princeps Pastorum* (both 1959) also emphasised the Church’s missionary responsibility. On occasion the Pope even showed interest in the conversion of Wales explicitly. In 1933 Pius XI announced a plenary indulgence for all those visiting the newly opened Church

²²⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 5 (12) (1925), 374.

²²⁷*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 114.

²²⁸Ena Kendall in *Western Mail*, 15 Feb. 1960, 4.

²²⁹See Chapter 2.

²³⁰Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 279.

²³¹For Example, Benedict XV’s apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* (1919), and Pius XI’s homily *Accipietis Virtutem* (1922) and encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926).

of Christ of our Saviour at Porthmadog on the condition that the visitor would pray for the return of Wales to the Faith²³².

Certainly the Welsh hierarchy was fervent in its desire for the conversion of Wales and emphasised evangelism regularly. Mostyn's very first Pastoral Letter as Archbishop of Cardiff reflected his long belief that the Welsh people would eventually return to the Faith²³³. At his death it was written that Mostyn would be now 'interceding at the Throne of God for the conversion of his beloved Welsh people'²³⁴. Daniel Hannon referred to him as being 'burning with zeal to bring the light of God's truth to regions enveloped in the darkness of unbelief'²³⁵. His successor at Menevia was similarly fervent. As the bishop-elect of the diocese, Vaughan was invited to write a few words in St. Peter's Parish Magazine. 'What shall I speak if not, of what is nearest to my heart,' he began, 'namely the restoration of its ancient faith to gallant little Wales?'²³⁶. As late as 1961 Petit, who often urged his flock to become what he described as 'conversion-minded'²³⁷ and referred to himself as 'a missionary bishop'²³⁸, told his clergy that 'conversion work is of the very essence of our ministry'²³⁹. In the zealous Welsh Catholic calls for evangelisation throughout this period, it is clear that it was believed that the conversion of Wales would occur through a combination of different means.

Prayer

One of these means was prayer. Mostyn had composed a special prayer which petitioned God to grant to the Welsh 'the precious gift of faith'. This was printed in his Advent Pastoral for 1925 and Catholics were invited to recite it at every Benediction²⁴⁰. Of all the twentieth century Welsh bishops, however, it was

²³²*Y Cymro*, 22 July 1933, 8.

²³³Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Pastoral Letter 1921*.

²³⁴*Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1940*.

²³⁵Daniel Hannon, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1940*.

²³⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (8) (1926), 229.

²³⁷*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 21.

²³⁸*Menevia Record*, 4 (2) (1956), 23.

²³⁹*Acts and Decrees of the Synod of the Diocese of Menevia July 1961*, p. 18.

²⁴⁰Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1925*.

Francis Vaughan who was most fervent in his insistence that the nation's conversion would only be achieved through prayer. 'We cannot all be Apostles preaching the Gospel, we cannot all give of our worldly substance towards the founding of new churches, but we **can** all pray, and pray without ceasing that Wales once more may take her ancient place as a beloved daughter of Holy Mother Church'²⁴¹. This 'paramount belief in Prayer as the grand means for converting Wales' was noted for special mention in his obituary in 1935²⁴².

Vaughan's great faith in prayer explained the warm welcome which he extended towards communities of religious orders, often contemplative, who moved to Menevia at this time. This was a flourishing period for all the orders²⁴³ and Vaughan enthusiastically encouraged their labours within Wales in view of its conversion²⁴⁴. On his first visit to the new community of Cistercians on Caldey Island, Vaughan reminded the monks that none of his missionary plans would 'fructify without the great background of prayer ... may your community's mortifications, labours, trials and prayers bring about the return of our beloved country to its ancient faith'²⁴⁵. He reiterated his appeal in his advent pastoral for that year. 'All our efforts for the conversion of Wales will fail unless we are supported and assisted by many who pray'. The four contemplative orders in the diocese were to act as 'power-houses, sending along to us a stream of life, courage and strength'²⁴⁶. His last pastoral letter before his death in 1935 was also dedicated to the subject of prayer and to the importance of these orders: 'We rejoice in the advent of so many Contemplatives to our diocese'. It was in them that Vaughan saw 'the firm foundation of the future glories of Catholic Wales'²⁴⁷.

One of the two principal reasons for the formation of 'The Apostolate of the Welsh Missions' (*Cyfeillion Cymru*) in England almost a decade later was to offer prayer for the restoration of the Faith in Wales (the other reason being to collect funds for the Welsh missions). In 1932 The Tablet had claimed that 'Englishmen take far too little interest in the Principality, with its remarkable

²⁴¹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (8) (1926), 229.

²⁴²*The Tablet*, 16 March 1935, 325.

²⁴³cf. Norman, *Catholicism in England*, p. 124.

²⁴⁴cf. *Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 11.

²⁴⁵*The Tablet*, 7 April 1929, 584; see also *The Tablet*, 12 Jan. 1929, 56.

²⁴⁶Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1929*.

²⁴⁷Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1935*.

language and literature, its legends, its folk-lore and its Catholic past'²⁴⁸. The Apostolate was created in response to this predicament and to help restore the Faith in the Province. Having been separated by the War from their previous mission field in Africa, a Mission Study Circle in Liverpool realised that they had a mission field much closer to home where financial, language, and culture difficulties were fully equal to those abroad. A Benedictine monk saw the possibilities of the idea of offering prayers and assistance to parishes in Wales and drew up a scheme for a real Welsh Apostolate. Priest members of the new Apostolate were urged to offer Masses for the conversion of Wales, while circles of laity were asked to pray daily for the Principality and 'adopt' a particular mission, giving alms to it and visiting it if possible. By 1946 there was 25 circles of the *Cyfeillion Cymru*, mostly in England but a number also in the larger towns of Wales. Some of these groups had few members, others had as many as 2000. A quarterly newspaper, Llais Cyfeillion Cymru, was published giving news of the Apostolate's activities and publishing articles on Welsh Catholic history²⁴⁹.

Dissemination of literature

In striving towards the conversion of Wales it was also believed that the dissemination of Catholic literature among non-Catholics was vitally important. Mostyn, for example, wholeheartedly supported the formation and subsequent development of a Welsh branch of the Catholic Truth Society which published books and pamphlets exhorting Catholic truth²⁵⁰. Following the war it was the 'Lamp Society' which did the most to distribute evangelistic literature, in both Welsh and English, among non-Catholics. Although *Cyfeillion Cymru* had certainly helped both finances and morale, teaching the Faith to the Nonconformist people of Wales had still been a great financial problem for his diocese. 'I cannot put a priest out in the wilds, so to speak,' Petit asserted in an interview with the Catholic Herald in 1948, 'and tell him to live on air. Yet, if the

²⁴⁸*The Tablet*, 27 Feb. 1932, 261.

²⁴⁹Winifred Loughlin, 'The Story of Cyfeillion Cymru : The Apostolate of the Welsh Missions', in *Daffodils Under the Snow* (Liverpool, 1946), p. 4.

²⁵⁰Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1924*.

Welsh are not told, how can they know what Catholicity is?'. The diocese needed more clergy and more money to maintain them. 'Why should Wales not be looked upon as the mission field of England?' he therefore suggested²⁵¹. The interview did more than give the Aposolate an impetus; it inspired the creation of a brand new society in England, the 'Lamp Society'. Whereas *Cyfeillion Cymru*'s principal emphasis had been on prayer, this new organisation was more practical. It funded such efforts as the Menevia Travelling Mission and the distribution of literature which aimed at conversions²⁵².

The Laity and Silent Evangelism

It was also frequently stated by Welsh bishops and clergy that the personal example of Catholics would lead to conversions. This was aptly described as 'silent evangelism'²⁵³. One reason why the Catholic Young Men's Society, which Mostyn called 'the backbone of the parish'²⁵⁴, was established throughout the Archdiocese during the inter-war years was in order to facilitate this²⁵⁵. According to Fr. Thomas Hickey, a CYMS chaplain in Cardiff, the most convincing arguments for the Faith were not those 'of a speculative nature, but the argument of a Catholic life as it manifests itself in action'²⁵⁶. Following the war, McGrath continued to emphasise the importance of the laity in evangelistic efforts²⁵⁷. The everyday living of the Faith, he wrote in 1956, was 'a far more powerful argument than mere rational speculation and thought'. Through this non-Catholic neighbours and fiancés would be drawn towards the religion. 'Show by your lives', he concluded, 'that the Catholic Faith is right, holy, good and necessary, which it cannot be unless it is true. Then will your non-Catholic friends be drawn to desire and embrace it in God's time'²⁵⁸.

²⁵¹*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

²⁵²See Pius XII's *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) which encouraged such dissemination of literature.

²⁵³See *Western Mail*, 11 Sept. 1933, 7.

²⁵⁴*The Tablet*, 3 Feb. 1923, 168.

²⁵⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (11) (1921), vi.

²⁵⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (8) (1924), 235.

²⁵⁷He had also done so in the inter-war years: see *Western Mail*, 27 Sept. 1935, 11; Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter June 29th 1940*.

²⁵⁸Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1956*.

McGrath also stated that lay attendance at Mass was an evangelistic act²⁵⁹. In the *Menevia Record* in 1953 Fr. L.M. Hughes developed this idea. Just as a physical body a mouth eats for the good of the body as a whole, so the Mass ('the Sacrament of Growth') benefits, not the eater alone, but the whole Church. Frequent attendance at Holy Communion, then, would bring in conversions and help the Mystical Body grow²⁶⁰. McGrath's insistence on lay efforts for the conversion of Wales was further reflected in his support for Catholic Action. One of the prime objectives of Catholic Action was, after all, 'Church extension'. Two years after McGrath's inauguration of Catholic Action in the Archdiocese, Fr. A. Winsborough of Neath summarised its aims. 'The apostles of Catholic Action', he wrote, 'will extend their apostolate to their workshops, factories and offices and to the surroundings in which they spend the greater part of their lives'²⁶¹. This included both silent and active evangelism, and reflected the Papacy's great emphasis on Catholic Action. 'The Church', wrote Pius XII, 'needs thousands and thousands of militant lay-missionaries'²⁶².

Preaching

While the Welsh hierarchy continually reiterated the importance of the laity spreading the Faith among their friends and colleagues, they did not exclude them from evangelistic preaching. In fact, laymen were encouraged to help spread the Faith through preaching. Reflecting the ideals of the evangelical street preachers, the outdoor lay preaching activities of the 'Catholic Evidence Guild' was very strong in the Archdiocese during the 1920s and 1930s. In a letter to the Director of the Cardiff CEG, formed in 1920 at a meeting at St. David's Hall²⁶³, Mostyn described the Guild as 'one of the most important instruments for

²⁵⁹Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter June 29th 1940*.

²⁶⁰*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 15.

²⁶¹A. Winsborough, 'Catholic Action in the Archdiocese of Cardiff', *Cardiff Archdiocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 127; see also *Review*, 1 (4) (1958), 14-5 where Fr. E.L. Butler noted that 'in the factory, at the shop, in the office, on the farm, in the steelworks, or in the colliery, during war and peace, [the Catholic] represents the Catholic Church as truly as he does at Mass on Sunday ... From the experience of the past, we know that nearly every convert is first brought into contact with the Church by an ordinary lay Catholic'.

²⁶²See *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) and John XXIII's *Ad Petri Cathedram* (1959).

²⁶³*The Tablet*, 24 July 1920, 127.

disseminating the truths of the Catholic Church²⁶⁴. After special training Catholic laymen would be expected to find a 'pitch' - on a street corner or in the market square - whereby they would expound the teaching of the Church with the aim of winning converts from among 'Protestant, Agnostic, Atheist or sheerly indifferent'²⁶⁵. In Cardiff itself the Guild speakers would speak every Sunday evening on two separate outdoor venues, one at Llandaff Fields and one at West Wharf, St. Mary's Street. It was said that such evangelising was 'the highest office a layman in the world can exercise, co-operating closely with the *Ecclesia Docens* in spreading the Faith'²⁶⁶. In 1939 the 'Guildmaster' of the organisation in Cardiff, D.P. McCarthy, wrote of the 'duty' of Catholic laymen to join the guild. 'You have often prayed, hoped and longed for the conversion of Wales but you cannot turn a field over in your mind - you must put a hand to the plough'²⁶⁷. Similar preaching was also part of the missionary activity of the Archdiocesan CYMS. In 1927, for example, a week's missionary work was undertaken by members of the society 'for the purpose of furthering the Faith amongst the non-Catholic public'²⁶⁸. Aside from these lay efforts, there were also frequent talks, missions, and lectures by priests which aimed at converting non-Catholics. These were held in the larger towns right up to the 1960s²⁶⁹. At a meeting on behalf of the Catholic Missionary Society at Cardiff in 1936, Fr. Owen Dudley justified evangelistic efforts in the face of non-Catholic criticism. He strongly disagreed that evangelising work of the Church disturbed 'these days of toleration'. It was the efforts of the Catholic Church, rather, that had helped win such toleration²⁷⁰.

After the war, Heenan's success in reinvigorating the Catholic Missionary Society in England further stimulated calls for this evangelisation of Wales²⁷¹. When Heenan turned his own preaching efforts to Wales, however, the results were disappointing. A week's mission which he led at Welshpool was a total

²⁶⁴*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1930*, p. 98.

²⁶⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (11) (1929), 335.

²⁶⁶*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1930*, p. 98.

²⁶⁷*Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1939*, pp. 135-6.

²⁶⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 7 (4) (1927), 122.

²⁶⁹*Review*, 4 (2) (1960), 10.

²⁷⁰*Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 5.

²⁷¹See *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 1; *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 12-13; *Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 12; *Review*, 1 (3) (1957), 7; *Review*, 3 (3) (1959), 14.

failure. Every house in the district was canvassed, leaflets were distributed, and loud-speaker vans invited non-Catholics to a ‘huge rally’ in the Town Hall. Less than half a dozen turned up. ‘The Missioner [i.e. Heenan] and the then parish priest stared at each other in silence;’ a correspondent in the *Menevia Record* reminisced, ‘Dr. Heenan saw that Wales has its own particular problems’²⁷². On taking up his episcopacy Petit had originally planned to establish his own Welsh-speaking equivalent of the CMS, inviting the future bishop of Salford, Thomas Holland, to lead the venture. Holland was enthusiastic at the idea and even took some Welsh lessons from a friendly Nonconformist minister in order to prepare²⁷³. Disappointment again ensued as the scheme failed to materialise. Despite the Church’s growth and confidence at this time, the continuing hostility of Welsh Nonconformity towards it meant that preaching efforts were limited in their success. Both the disillusionment of this predicament and the effects of secularisation led to a marked abating of lay apostolic zeal by the early 1960s. In *The Tablet* E. Mab Rhys of Tredegar claimed that ‘our greatest problem is how to recapture the zeal of Apostolic times, when every layman was a missionary in both word and deed amongst his fellows’²⁷⁴.

The use of the Welsh language in evangelistic efforts

In all these evangelistic efforts the use of the Welsh language by both Catholic priests and laity was often urged. The reason for this was twofold. Not only would Catholics be able to use the language to convey their Faith’s tenets in a familiar and homely tongue, but they would also be showing that Catholicism was not the foreign religion that so many Welshmen believed it to be. The universal use of the English language by Catholics in Wales (most of whom were Irish and English immigrants and their descendants) was seen as a stumbling-block to the Welsh-speaking rural population. With these problems in mind the Anglican Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan described the Welsh language as the ‘most serious’ of all difficulties in the way of Roman Catholic evangelistic efforts. Only

²⁷²*Menevia Record*, 8 (1) (1960), 12.

²⁷³*Golden Jubilee of the Priesthood of the Rt. Rev. John E. Petit of Menevia*, (1968), p. 5.

²⁷⁴*The Tablet*, 28 July 1962, 721.

by training priests to converse with the Welsh people in their own tongue could the situation be changed²⁷⁵. Likewise, in a letter to R.O.F. Wynne in 1945, Saunders Lewis put missionary work among the Welsh-speaking people of Wales as one of the principal Catholic difficulties in the Principality²⁷⁶.

As the twentieth century progressed many Catholics began to recognise this predicament, and calls for the use of the Welsh language in evangelistic efforts became frequent. The need for Welsh-speaking priests was especially emphasised. These calls were encouraged by Papal encyclicals, as the Vatican had long recognised the importance of using the native culture and language in non-Catholic lands. 'A native priest, having a place of birth, character, mentality, and emotional make-up in common with his countrymen,' wrote Benedict XV in *Maximum Illud* (1919), 'is in a privileged position for sowing the seeds of the Faith in their hearts'. Likewise, Pius XI's *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), Pius XII's *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), and John XXIII's *Princeps Pastorum* (1959) all reiterated the importance of appealing to native populations through their own characteristics. Although these encyclicals largely referred to the establishment of the Church in the missionary lands in Africa and Asia, the sentiments behind them were equally applicable to the situation at home. Welsh Catholics would certainly have been inspired by their words, as, indeed, they were by tales of the nineteenth century priests who had attempted to convert the Welsh through their own language. Their dedication was seen to set an example of the kind of impassioned zeal that priests in Wales should strive towards. Frequent articles were published on such pioneers as Fr. Edward Metcalfe²⁷⁷ and Fr. Henry Bailey Hughes²⁷⁸.

Before the Second World War, calls for the use of Welsh in missionary endeavours came largely in The Tablet. As early as 1912 it had stressed the importance of Wales's 'national language as a means of bringing the Catholic faith home to the Welsh people'. 'The Church has suffered much in the past from the scarcity of Cymric priests,' the article continued, 'and ... much still remains to be

²⁷⁵Morgan, *Welsh Mind in Evolution*, p. 200.

²⁷⁶Hazel Walford Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin* (Llandysul, 1995), p. 297-8.

²⁷⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (2) (1926), 38.

²⁷⁸*Blackfriars* March 1945; *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 22; *Menevia Record*, 9 (3) (1962), 22-25.

done in supplying this deficiency'²⁷⁹. Over twenty years later, R.O.F. Wynne claimed that the language question was 'without doubt, the distinctive problem to be faced in any attempt to re-Catholicize Wales, for the Welsh are very deaf to all attempts made to "reach" them in English'. Until the issue of converting Wales through its own language was 'met and dealt with as it would be in any other foreign land where Catholicism is preached, it is hard to see how the conversion of Wales will be begun'. Welsh people, he warned, would not play any part in supporting a Church which seemed to be an Anglicising influence. They would 'hesitate to as much glance in at the portals of a church which cannot appeal to them in any vernacular but English, with the consequent accompaniment of English modes of thought and traditions'. The use of Welsh hymns and prayers by Catholics would soon break down prejudices, with 'the Welsh in particular being eager to welcome as friends those who will master even a little of the language', and would naturally prepare the way for conversions²⁸⁰. A year later Donald Attwater was to echo these sentiments. 'Those Catholics who maintain the language question has nothing to do with the conversion of Wales have usually had very little intimate association with the common people; and, quite simply, they are talking nonsense'²⁸¹.

During the post-war years, similar articles appeared in the Menevia Record. In its very first issue in 1953, Peter Morgan suggested that not only priests but all Catholics in Wales should acquire some amount of Welsh, and teach it to their children. While there was admittedly 'no short cut to holiness - no, not even through the Welsh tongue', for the sake of 'preparing the way for conversions' and showing that the Church was 'not a foreign element in this land' he encouraged 'our cradle Catholics would show at least a sympathetic interest in the Welsh tongue, a kindly respect for the Welsh way of life'²⁸². The same point was reiterated by Leo Arnold a year later. Welsh was the medium which many used to express spiritual or aesthetic sentiments, even though the vast majority would also be fluent in English. Consequently, 'a knowledge of Welsh is of great

²⁷⁹*The Tablet*, 14 Sept. 1912, 407.

²⁸⁰*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1934, 422-3; See also *The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

²⁸¹Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 214.

²⁸²*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 4.

importance if any appeal to the religious sentiments of the Welsh people is to have any large-scale or lasting effect'. The 'highest motive' for learning Welsh, he concluded, was clearly the conversion of Wales to its ancient Faith²⁸³. There were some who were clearly vexed at the way in which so few made this effort to master the language. 'Why is it that the language difficulty, so brilliantly overcome throughout the Foreign Missions, has been so consistently shirked in Wales? The Welsh lost the Faith through the lack of a native-speaking clergy; they will never regain it while this lack persists'²⁸⁴.

There were, however, a good number of Catholics who believed that it was going to take more than an ability to preach, sing and pray in Welsh to win the people of Wales over to the Faith. It was just as important, they claimed, to be able to preach, sing and pray in a Welsh manner. 'The whole religion of this country', claimed Bailey Hughes decades before, 'seems to consist in the tonic sol-fa; so I must even go with the tide and set them singing the Christian doctrine ... and so fight Methodism with its own weapons. I believe we shall convert Wales better by singing than by preaching'²⁸⁵. As bishop of Menevia, Mostyn often emphasised the importance of enthusiastic congregational hymn-singing. 'We are living in a land which has been truly styled a "land of song",' he wrote, 'and most of us have heard the magnificent congregational singing that meets our ears as we pass any of the chapels of the various sects which exist in Wales; why cannot we do the same?'²⁸⁶. As well as this enthusiasm for congregational singing, J.T.F. Williams was soon to claim that the Catholic Church also had to show that there was a active place for the laity. 'Our missionaries must recognise that whatever religious activity exists among the Welsh sects is mainly due to the laity and, therefore, convince their potential converts that in the Church there is even more scope for lay zeal'. The Welsh people 'must be shown that all that is good and consoling in their religion is to be found in abundance in the Church'²⁸⁷. After the War, the desire to introduce practices that would appeal to the Welsh

²⁸³*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954). 19.

²⁸⁴*Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955). 19.

²⁸⁵Donald Attwater, 'A Celtic Apostle', *The Welsh Outlook*, XVI Feb. (1929), 51.

²⁸⁶Francis Mostyn, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1903*; see also *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1916*; A correspondent in *The Tablet* (29 July 1933, 143) later asked the same question, as did the *Menevia Record*, 5 (2) (1957), 17: 'Need our singing be so drab and uninspiring?'

²⁸⁷J.T.F. Williams, 'The Conversion of Wales', *The Month*, 167 (861) (1936), 259-60.

people continued. Writing in the Menevia Record in 1955, a Welsh convert Philip Jones asked parishes not to neglect the Dialogue Mass, which gave the congregation a part to play in the celebration. 'To my mind - and I claim to know the Welsh mentality - it should play an important part in the apostolate of Wales'²⁸⁸. He also called for more 'doctrinal' sermons and urged lay Catholics to become more involved in the everyday running of the parish²⁸⁹.

These calls to use Nonconformist characteristics to appeal to the Welsh were, however, not universally popular. In 1948 a vigorous discussion on the virtues of using 'all that is good and consoling' in Nonconformity appeared in the columns of the Catholic Herald. This especially dealt with the importance of singing and preaching 'in a Welsh manner' in order to attract potential Welsh converts. The whole debate was certainly deeper than a question of national temperament; it reflected theological differences as well. Not only did it occasion the accusation that those who supported such efforts were ignoring the universal scope of the Church, but it also revealed the imputation that, through overemphasising human means, they were depreciating the power of God's grace. The discussion had begun when a non-Catholic Welshman from Deeside suggested that Catholicism would make little progress among the Welsh people if it did not incorporate elements of Free Church worship into its services. For the people of Wales to be drawn towards Catholicism, it needed more use of Welsh, better pulpit delivery, more Welsh hymn singing, and greater lay-activity²⁹⁰. Many reacted to these suggestions with great hostility. J.A. Burlinson wrote that Catholicism had for centuries appealed to people in its own specific way, which had (and was still) winning many Welsh converts. Why change this to be like the chapels when, after all, Welsh Nonconformity was in decline? 'We Catholics do not need to worry', he concluded, 'Wales will be converted not by oratory nor by

²⁸⁸Since Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* in 1947, which urged lay participation in the Mass. Catholics were increasingly recognising the place of the laity in worship. Following the Second Vatican Council lay participation was to become widespread.

²⁸⁹Philip Jones. 'Welsh Convert Asks Questions', *Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 2-3: 'The laity welcome and appreciate pure theology from the pulpit', 'Team work, priest and people working solidly together, would mean an enormous difference in a parish'.

²⁹⁰*Catholic Herald*, 16 April 1948, 2: 'Instead of finding such a standard [of preaching] in a Catholic church, he is expected to tolerate a very much lower standard, and delivered with an accent foreign to the Welsh people', 'what provision is made by the Catholic Church for congregational singing? What outlet is provided for this need of the Welsh spirit?'

music but by the grace of God²⁹¹. Others noted the futility of changing Catholic worship as the Nonconformist drawn towards Catholicism ‘is searching for something missing from his own religion’²⁹², and questioned the need for Welsh-speaking priests in a Welsh society which was fast becoming anglicised²⁹³. In reply to such letters, Henry Edwards wrote that, not only had everything that was good in Protestantism a Catholic origin, but ‘I would go further and suggest that some Protestants have used some Catholic things rather better than Catholics have used them’²⁹⁴. God’s grace was certainly necessary for the conversion of Wales, though oratory and music (which in this instance were of Cymric, not Protestant, character) were often the means through which it was channelled²⁹⁵. Other correspondents also zealously defended this viewpoint²⁹⁶, with Miss. A.J. Mills of Cardiff suggesting that the lack of fervent singing and preaching was not only repelling possible converts from the Church, but it was, in some cases, also driving actual converts back to their old religion²⁹⁷.

While this debate between lay-Catholics raged, successive bishops continued to emphasise the need for more Welsh-speakers in order to facilitate the conversion of Wales. There were, then, many practical efforts to foster a Welsh-speaking clergy, to encourage the laity to learn the language, and to attempt to convert areas through Welsh. Even the Catholic constitutional changes in Wales between 1895 and 1916, culminating in the formation of the Metropolitan of Wales, themselves reflected a growing recognition among Catholics that Welsh

²⁹¹*Catholic Herald*, 30 April 1948, 2: see also another letter on the same page : ‘the Catholic conception of worship differs profoundly from the Protestant’

²⁹²*Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1948, 2: see also *Catholic Herald*, 21 May 1948, 2 : Catholics went to church to participate in the Mass ‘not to listen to eloquent sermons or to derive personal satisfaction from the singing of hymns’

²⁹³*Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1948, 2 : ‘I am somewhat puzzled by the assertion that we must have priests who speak Welsh “as to the manner born” before we can hope for a re-birth of Catholicism in Wales’.

²⁹⁴*Catholic Herald*, 11 June 1948, 2.

²⁹⁵*Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1948, 2 : The Welsh people would never accept the Faith ‘unless the Church decides to be in Wales as Welsh as the Welsh’, ‘it is not enough that clerics should learn Welsh they must learn to preach according to a Welsh manner and to understand that Welsh is not only a vernacular but almost a liturgical language’

²⁹⁶*Catholic Herald*, 23 April 1948, 2 : Welshmen found Catholic services ‘incomprehensible - the silence of a Low Mass or the cacophony of a Benediction were equally distasteful’.

²⁹⁷*Catholic Herald*, 21 May 1948, 2 : ‘The hymns and the sermons - these are the two things Welsh converts miss most ... surely it is possible to meet the deep-rooted desire of the Welshman for a carefully thought out and well-delivered sermon and for good congregational singing’.

culture had to be recognised if the conversion of Wales was to become a realistic possibility. One of the main reasons for the re-formation of the diocese of Menevia and appointment of Mostyn as its bishop was that ‘the idea of a Welsh diocese, a Welsh bishop, and a bilingual clergy would not only make a special appeal to Welsh Catholics, but would break down prejudice and encourage a sympathy in the non-Catholic Welsh, and so open the way to conversions’²⁹⁸. Mostyn himself immediately set about to ensure a body of ‘bilingual clergy’ for the Principality²⁹⁹, establishing St. Mary’s College at Holywell in 1904. The college was intended as a junior seminary ‘in which students for the Welsh missions could get a thorough grounding in Welsh’ under Mgr. Paul Hook³⁰⁰. The institute was moved to Aberystwyth in 1923 but to Mostyn’s great disappointment he and Vaughan had to agree to close the college down in 1934 due to a lack of financial resources³⁰¹. Attwater questioned whether the college had been as successful as originally hoped. It was certainly not developed on a large scale, never exceeding 20 students³⁰². The Welsh-speaking priests that St. Mary’s did nurture, however, became influential and invaluable to the Church and by the mid-1930s priests who had been trained in Welsh at St. Mary’s were numerous.

While at Menevia, Mostyn also oversaw the first serious attempt in the twentieth century to convert the indigenous communities through their own tongue. This came not from native Welsh clergy but from Breton missionaries. With the encouragement of Leo XIII³⁰³ Mostyn welcomed two members of the Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from Quimper ‘who, after having learned the Welsh language, would undertake in that idiom the evangelization of the Welsh people’³⁰⁴. Fr. G.M. Trebaol’s worked at Llanrwst in the Conwy valley, North Wales, and in his 13 years there his congregation grew from just one to 120

²⁹⁸Wilson, *Bishop Hedley*, p. 130.

²⁹⁹*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 149 : Mostyn held that ‘only Welsh speaking priests would succeed in converting the Welsh’.

³⁰⁰Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 132; *The Tablet*, 27 Feb. 1960, 201.

³⁰¹Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

³⁰²Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 135.

³⁰³*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 45.

³⁰⁴G.M. Trebaol, ‘The Cambro-Breton Missions (1900-1914)’, *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 149.

(which included many converts)³⁰⁵. Fr. Merour, however, was not as successful in his time at Blaenau Ffestiniog, and then at Pwllheli³⁰⁶. As archbishop of Cardiff, Mostyn continued to champion the cause of Welsh in order to help convert the Principality³⁰⁷. Francis Vaughan shared a similar zeal. Only six months before his death he published a letter expressing the importance of ‘native clergy’ who could speak the Welsh language³⁰⁸. The result of Mostyn and Vaughan’s efforts was that even the Western Mail noted in 1935 that, in efforts to convert Wales, the ‘Roman Catholics are utilising the Welsh language to a far greater extent than they have ever done before’³⁰⁹.

Following in the footsteps of the two preceding bishops of Menevia, McGrath (an Irishman fluent in Welsh) immediately showed that he saw the Welsh language as the key to the return of ‘yr Hen Ffydd’ to Wales. At a crowded meeting at Queen’s Cinema, Cardiff in 1936 he appealed that every Catholic in Wales should study the Welshman, sympathise with him personally and try to master his language³¹⁰. Most of all, however, he was ‘a staunch advocate of the policy of appointing Welsh-speaking priests in Wales’³¹¹. Having been rector at St. Mary’s College at Aberystwyth, it was little surprise that as bishop he continually insisted that all his clergy should attempt to have a ‘working’ knowledge of the Welsh language. Such was the need that at once he set about to reopen St. Mary’s, under a mission of Irish Carmelites from Whitefriar Street, Dublin³¹². In 1939 he also welcomed the Passionist Order’s new Welsh study

³⁰⁵ He was also responsible for publishing and distributing the *Cennad Catholig Cymru*, which *The Tablet*, 14 Sept. 1912, 408 referred to as its ‘able Welsh contemporary’ and ‘the most conspicuous example of the good use that is being made of the national language as a means of bringing the Catholic faith home to the Welsh people’.

³⁰⁶ P.G. Furey, ‘A Hundred Years Between : An account of the Redemptorist Foundation in Machynlleth’, in *Daffodils Under the Snow* (Liverpool, 1946), 53; Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 131.

³⁰⁷ See *The Tablet*, 24 Nov. 1934, 672.

³⁰⁸ *The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1934, 440.

³⁰⁹ *Western Mail*, 19 Aug. 1936, 13.

³¹⁰ *Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 5.

³¹¹ *Western Mail*, 23 April 1940, 5.

³¹² *Western Mail*, 2 Jan. 1936, 10 : Roman Catholics ‘were approaching the conversion of Wales through the Welsh language, as they recognised there was little hope of doing so except through the native tongue’.

house at St. David's, Pembrokeshire³¹³, and the Redemptorists' foundation which was dedicated to evangelism through Welsh at Machynlleth³¹⁴.

Under Bishops Daniel Hannon and John Petit the endeavours to convert Wales through the native tongue continued. At the beginning of his incumbency Petit announced that if the conversion of Wales was ever to become a fact, Welshmen must be approached as Welshmen and 'not as some kind of hybrid Englishman, which he is not'³¹⁵. By 1960 all Church students in the Diocese of Menevia were expected to have some proficiency in the Welsh language³¹⁶. The dedication that many Catholic priests showed in attempting to learn the language as a missionary weapon was reflected in an article by Rev. E. Cynolwyn Pugh of New York in the Welsh American paper *Y Drych*. Pugh reported that he had received a telephone call from a zealous Roman Catholic asking if he knew of anyone who would give Welsh lessons to an Irish priest in New York. 'Y mae "superior" y gŵr hwn', he stated, 'wedi rhoi gorchymyn iddo ddysgu Cymraeg er mwyn iddo fynd i Gymru fel cenhadwr i ennill Bedyddwyr, Annibynwyr, Methodistiaid, a Phresbyteriad yn ôl i'r "Hen Eglwys"'³¹⁷. The *Cylch Catholig*, formed in the 1940s, naturally stressed the importance of using Welsh in evangelistic efforts. 'Could we not, once again,' Fr. Francis Murphy of Maesteg emphasised at the society's pilgrimage to St. David's, Pembrokeshire in 1954, 'turn to use the Welsh language, pride and glory of the Welsh nation, so that Wales would for the second time be a Catholic Wales? In the language lies all her Catholic past'³¹⁸. Both the English organisations of *Cyfeillion Cymru* and the

³¹³*Western Mail*, 13 March 1939, 12.

³¹⁴Furey, 'Redemptorist Foundation in Machynlleth', p. 54 : The Redemptorists had recognised that Welsh was an 'absolute essential where Wales is concerned'.

³¹⁵*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5 : In evangelism it was essential that the priests of Menevia understood the Welsh mind, and 'you can only do that by understanding their history, their culture and their aspirations and you can only understand these if you know the language'.

³¹⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

³¹⁷*Y Drych*, 15 March 1949: see *Menevia Record*, 3 (3) (1956), 28 reporting on a series of lectures on Catholicism for non-Catholics, given in 1955 in both Welsh and English; see also an Anglican reaction to this predicament in 'Theomemphus', *Bilingual Bishops and All That* (Llandybie, 1958), p. 17 : The 'Roman Church knows that this language is the key to its missionary problems in Wales'.

³¹⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 14; see also *Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4 where Edna Hampson Jones of Maesteg noted that the society (in trying to incorporate 'Welsh Nonconformist' elements into Catholic worship) was making efforts to try to introduce practices such as fervent hymn-singing and better preaching at parish level.

Lamp Society also recognised the importance of the Welsh language in their evangelisation³¹⁹. Most of the clergy of the Lamp Society funded Menevia Travelling Mission, for example, were Welsh-speakers³²⁰, while the society also issued evangelising leaflets in the Welsh language³²¹.

ii) Conversions

‘In spite of the [Catholic Church in Wales’s] often foreign appearance’, wrote Catherine Daniel in 1959, ‘it draws a steady stream of converts’³²². A year later Ena Kendall reported that the Menevia Travelling Mission, in serving isolated Catholic communities, was ‘bringing their faith to the notice of the Welsh people, and a number of these are undergoing instruction’³²³. Similarly, the *Review* reported that the ‘talks for non-Catholics’ which had been held in different parishes in Cardiff since the beginning of the century were continuing to attract many such non-Catholics and to win some of them over to the Faith³²⁴. Through their incessant attempts to evangelise, then, many converts were being won over. Between 1916 and 1961 there were actually over 300 converts annually in Wales. The high-points in this development were in the late 1920s and again in the late 1950s, when numbers were reaching as high as 700 annually. At an estimate there were over 20,000 converts to Roman Catholicism in Wales between these years. In 1955 almost a quarter of the Catholic population of Aberystwyth were converts³²⁵. As early as 1921 it was reported that ‘every year now sees many of her [Wales’s] children brought back to the one true fold’³²⁶. Individual priests, such as Canon M.E. Duggan of Newport and the convert Fr. E.M. James of Pontarddulais, became known as great evangelists who had won many to the Faith³²⁷. As in England, during the late 1920s and the 1930s some of

³¹⁹See Loughlin, ‘The Story of Cyfeillion Cymru’, p. 4.

³²⁰*Western Mail*, 19 Jan. 1952, 4.

³²¹*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 18.

³²²*Menevia Record*, 7 (2) (1959), 17.

³²³*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 6.

³²⁴*Review*, 4 (2) (1960), 10.

³²⁵Fogarty, ‘Parish of Aberystwyth’, p. 3.

³²⁶*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (3) (1921), v.

³²⁷*The Tablet*, 31 Dec. 1921, 885; P.J. Gibbons, ‘Cradling a Parish in Wales’, in *Daffodils Under the Snow*, p. 36.

the most intellectually promising men and women were among those won over, including Saunders Lewis, R.O.F. Wynne, and Catherine Daniel. ‘There have been some notable conversions in the last few years’, delighted T.P. Ellis, ‘of men and women, most of them young, wholeheartedly devoted to Wales, and the leaven of their example will spread’³²⁸. These notable converts in turn influenced other Welsh non-Catholics to turn towards the Faith, either by their actual conversion or by their subsequent Catholic life. Harri Pritchard Jones, who became a Catholic in 1958, wrote that Lewis’s Catholicism had been very influential in his own conversion³²⁹.

Those Welsh converts who became ‘intellectually convinced’³³⁰ as to the truth of Catholicism (as opposed to entering the Church through a mixed marriage) gave numerous reasons for their attraction to the Faith. These included espousal of the Marian doctrines³³¹, the appeal of pre-Reformation Wales/Europe³³², Rome’s attitude to the Bible³³³, and the deficiency of other denominations³³⁴. Two reasons, however, were central to almost all the conversions. In an age of religious uncertainty, increasing indifferentism and secularisation, the notion of infallibility and the authoritarian temper of the Church certainly helped draw many to its fold. ‘At last I was beginning to see the wood in spite of the trees,’ wrote the priest Fr. Christopher Thomas of his conversion from Nonconformity through Anglicanism, ‘for an essential consequence of Papal Infallibility was that for which I had been looking for so long - AUTHORITY and, moreover, an INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY’³³⁵. Facing a diversity of beliefs within their own Church, many Anglicans were undoubtedly attracted to the certainty of Rome : ‘[in the Anglican Church] one can never appeal to an Authority clearly recognised by everybody’³³⁶. Regardless of their original beliefs,

³²⁸*Western Mail*, 18 May 1936, 7.

³²⁹Harri Pritchard Jones, ‘O Safbwynt Cyd-Babydd’, *Barn* 273 (3) (1985), 379.

³³⁰*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 8.

³³¹*Menevia Record*, 5 (3) (1958), 11; 2 (4) (1955), 2.

³³²Catherine Daniel, ‘Paham yr Wyf yn Aelod o Eglwys Rufain’, *Llafar*, (1957), p. 47-9; Lewis’s conversion ‘is not entirely to be divorced from his discovery of an older Welsh tradition to which he felt Wales should return for inspiration’ (Bruce Griffiths, *Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff, 1989), p. 80).

³³³*Menevia Record*, 6 (3) (1959), 10.

³³⁴Archimandrite Barnabas, *Strange Pilgrimage* (Welshpool, 1985), pp. 18-27.

³³⁵*Review*, 2 (1) (1958), 4.

³³⁶Barnabas, *Strange Pilgrimage*, p. 26; see also *Review*, 2 (1) (1958), 4.

however, those desiring religious certainty (and indeed those inclined towards conservatism or state authoritarianism) were those who turned to the Church of Rome; 'its very authoritativeness was what appealed'³³⁷.

It is also noticeable that almost all Welsh converts regarded the Mass as central to their conversion. In reacting to the suggestion that his conversion was influenced by the social teaching of Catholicism, Saunders Lewis insisted that he converted 'am un rheswm enbyd o syml, fy mod i'n meddwl mai yn offeren yr Eglwys Gatholig y mae Duw yn cael ei addoli fel y dylai ef gael ei addoli gan ddynion. A dyna'r unig reswm i mi droi'n Gatholig'³³⁸. Likewise, Margaret Davies, a convert from Welsh Calvinistic Methodism in 1930, described how she decided to convert the first time she saw Mass celebrated. "This is the real thing!" I murmured "The Mass is not just a stately ritual. It is the greatest religious act on earth"³³⁹. The fact that Mass added a new dimension to the usual denominational ceremonies was often noted. Fr. Christopher Thomas referred to his first experience of Mass from the Roman Missal as 'something quite, quite different'³⁴⁰, just as David Jones referred to 'a new experience, very other in feeling'. Jones had described how as a soldier in 1917 in Flanders he accidentally stumbled upon Catholics celebrating Mass. 'Here, wherever there was not' he wrote, 'was a most powerful sense of a unific cult act'. In emphasising a 'tremendous sense of participation and one-ness' along with the Latin element of the rite, Jones summarised the sense of community as well as mystery that many converts saw in the Mass³⁴¹.

In 1926 Evan Morgan had stated that those more likely to convert had, according to their form of worship 'nothing in common with Catholicism, who have even a hatred of it, but who have in spirit and race a firm hold on the Catholic doctrine'. For this reason, he claimed that Welsh Nonconformists were bound to be more frequent converts to Catholicism than Anglicans³⁴². Likewise,

³³⁷Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 279.

³³⁸*Taliesin*, 2 (1961), 15.

³³⁹*Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 2; see also 1 (1) (1953), 8; 5 (1) (1957), 17 : 'the great spiritual experience was unforgettable'.

³⁴⁰*Review*, 2 (1) (1958), 4.

³⁴¹National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 1/16 (*MS Drafts of Letters on Religion*).

³⁴²*Western Mail*, 27 Jan. 1926, 7.

in 1956 Catherine Daniel claimed that ‘nearly all the Welsh converts to the Catholic Church in Wales come from Nonconformist bodies’³⁴³. The number of converts from the Anglican Church, however, should not be depreciated. Out of the 31 converts in the parish of Aberystwyth in 1955, only seven of these were from Nonconformity while 22 were from the Anglican Church³⁴⁴. Catherine Daniel’s claim, which was made only a year later, seems to have been an exaggeration. It reflected the values of the Welsh-speaking intelligentsia among whom she mixed and the Welsh-speaking converts that she had met. It may also reflect that converts from Nonconformity were usually committed chapel-goers, whereas many former Anglicans had been nominal in their belief. Michael Fogarty, commenting on the Aberystwyth survey, added that converts came ‘mainly from “C. of E.”, whatever that may mean’³⁴⁵.

Many of those converts who came directly from the Church in Wales came from its Anglo-Catholic section, which flourished in the south-east. Reports of Anglican clergymen converting were frequently printed in newspapers, such as the Western Mail. Two curates from Roath in Cardiff, Revs. W.H. Thomas and Vernon Gilbert, for example, converted to the Church of Rome in 1933 after a long dispute with the vicar³⁴⁶. Again, in 1947, a vicar at Monmouth, Rev. E.J. Henry, was ordered to discontinue holding services which were closer to the Catholic Mass than the Anglican Eucharist. Henry refused, sending a letter to the bishop stating that ‘the step I take of seeking admission to the Roman Catholic Church has not been taken in any hurried manner’³⁴⁷. Monmouthshire had in the 1940s been an area where a number of High Anglican clerics had congregated, encouraged by Canon A. Frederic Hood, the Principal of Pusey House, Oxford and an Honorary Canon of Monmouth. When Alfred Edwin Morris became bishop of the Diocese of Monmouth in 1946, however, he made it quite clear that he would not tolerate ‘Romish’ practices, refusing to appoint Hood as Dean of Monmouth when Dean Phillips retired. Following this ‘some of “Freddy” Hood’s boys left the Diocese and a few went further from the Church in Wales to the

³⁴³Daniel, ‘Catholic Converts in Wales’, p. 211.

³⁴⁴Fogarty, ‘Parish of Aberystwyth’, p. 3.

³⁴⁵*ibid.*

³⁴⁶*Western Mail*, 23 Sept. 1933, 6.

³⁴⁷*Western Mail*, 19 Dec. 1947, 3.

Church of Rome'³⁴⁸. Archimandrite Barnabas recalled what these converts must have felt when he described his own position as a High Anglican clergyman in the 1940s. While at Landore, near Swansea he and his fellow clergy were reported to the bishop for saying Latin Mass from the Roman Missal. Realising that it was 'dishonest to be paid as Anglican clergymen while doing work for the Church of Rome', he too converted to Roman Catholicism³⁴⁹.

Efforts were made to keep newly converted Catholics in the fold, many of whom had given up much, socially and materially, through their conversion. In the Converts Aid Society the Church had an association to financially help Anglican clergy (both secular and religious) and Nonconformist ministers who converted to Catholicism. Mostyn, who as bishop of Menevia had welcomed the Anglican monks of Caldey Island and nuns of St. Bride's (Milford Haven) into communion with the Holy See in 1916, fully recognised the importance of this organisation. As archbishop he suggested that all parish priests 'should each allow at least one collection, annually, to be made in their respective parishes, on behalf of the funds of the Converts Aid Society'³⁵⁰. Such efforts certainly helped converts, although the greatest problem for most converts was not financial but cultural. Many of those from Welsh Nonconformity found themselves isolated from their old friends because of their religion, and at the same time isolated from the largely English-speaking Catholics because of their language and background. The *Cylch Catholig* was formed by Welsh-speaking converts in the 1940s in an attempt to bring them together and alleviate the problems they encountered.

Many Catholics, noting the prominent conversions and the reports of Catholic growth, were quick to enthuse about the realistic possibility of the conversion of Wales. Likewise, some Nonconformists worried about this prospect. These reactions, however, was misplaced for a number of reasons. J.P. Brown pointed out in 1973 that frequent headlines such as 'Catholic Progress in Wales' in publications from the 1920s, which would have caused much excitement among Catholics and much alarm among non-Catholic Welshmen, did not refer to a great number of conversions but 'merely to the erection of buildings (often at

³⁴⁸ John S. Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris : Archbishop of Wales* (Llandysul, 1990), pp. 68-9.

³⁴⁹ Barnabas, *Strange Pilgrimage*, p. 32.

³⁵⁰ *Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1930*.

the cost of great effort) for Catholic immigrants³⁵¹. Likewise, in a letter to Saunders Lewis in 1928, Fr. Paul Hook reported that the increase in the numbers of Catholics in the Machynlleth area was not due to conversions. They were lapsed immigrant Catholics won back by missionaries, affectionately called ‘dug-outs’ by Hook. ‘Mae’r achos yn tyfu’, he reported, ‘... 28 pan deuthom yma - 60 yn awr. Rhai ‘converts’ ond y parth mwyaf o ‘dug-outs’³⁵². In 1960 the Congregationalist Rev. Ivor V. Cassam also claimed that the number of converts in Wales was not as high as some Catholic propagandists were making out. ‘The incidence of actual conversions of Welsh people to the Roman Church’, he wrote, ‘is statistically almost negligible’. In fact, if it was not for continuing immigration the numbers of Catholics in Wales would probably be falling. There had undoubtedly been converts, but ‘the overwhelming proportion of those who occupy the beautiful new Roman Catholic churches springing up around us are those who have come to work here from other lands’. Furthermore, there had also been converts from Catholicism to Welsh Nonconformity and Anglicanism. After contacting twelve Protestant ministers and clergymen he found that each had had at least two converts from Rome in his congregation since the war. ‘Admittedly this is an unscientific basis of investigation,’ he concluded, ‘but it does show that there is a two-way movement’³⁵³. Thirty years earlier a letter from Lieutenant J. McGuire of Brecon to Bishop Vaughan had also noted that there had been Welsh Catholics in his town who had ‘embraced another creed’³⁵⁴.

Writing in 1935 Donald Attwater discussed other reasons why the Catholic reaction to conversions in Wales was over-enthusiastic. While noting that there had been many recent conversions in Wales, especially in Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire, he noted that almost all of these converts were either English or from overseas. There were, he claimed, very few ‘Welsh’ converts, and what Welsh converts there were were mostly through marriage. Furthermore, ‘mixed marriages cut both ways and probably lose at least as many individuals to the Church as they gain’³⁵⁵. In an interview in the Western Mail in

³⁵¹J.P. Brown, ‘Disestablishment : Christianity in Wales’, *New Blackfriars* 54 (632) (1973), 26.

³⁵²National Library of Wales Archives : MS 22725 E.

³⁵³*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

³⁵⁴Menevia Diocesan Archives : Brecon File.

³⁵⁵Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 210.

1960 Fr. Owen Hardwicke also noted that the great majority of converts coming into the Church came through marriage. 'I find that most converts', he asserted, 'are accounted for between the ages of 18 and 25. That is the age when a lot of people marry, and if they marry a Catholic, undergo instruction, and decide to become Catholics themselves, it is usually at that time'³⁵⁶. It also seems clear that many who converted through marriage did so largely for the convenience, and thereafter quickly lapsed. These Catholics were often referred to as 'Marriage Catholics'³⁵⁷. The words of Lieutenant J. McGuire to Bishop Vaughan in 1930, that there had not been a single 'churchgoing convert' to Catholicism for many years, are revealing³⁵⁸.

Conversions of Anglican clergymen, Nonconformist ministers, and prominent figures such as Saunders Lewis were certainly well publicised, and such reports would naturally have provoked further discussion about the threat of Catholicism in Nonconformist Wales. The conversion of Wolfe H. Bretwyn, a Nonconformist minister at Aberdare, for example, was front-page news in the Western Mail in 1952³⁵⁹. Conversions of Anglo-Catholic clergymen were similarly reported³⁶⁰. The fact that such incidents were so well publicised, however, shows them to be rather unusual. The numbers of conversions, then, may not have been statistically as important as some Catholics were claiming. Those conversions which did occur certainly helped establish and strengthen the new Catholic middle class, as well as hastening the integration of Catholicism within Welsh society. Most of all they raised morale and encouraged further apostolic zeal. In the words of Denis Gwyn, these converts 'brought in new blood and a constant renewal of religious energy and fervour'³⁶¹.

³⁵⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

³⁵⁷Menevia Diocesan Archives : Milford Haven File.

³⁵⁸Menevia Diocesan Archives : Brecon File.

³⁵⁹*Western Mail*, 13 March 1952, 1.

³⁶⁰See *Western Mail*, 19 Dec. 1947, 3.

³⁶¹Denis Gwynn. 'Growth of the Catholic Community', in G.A. Beck, *English Catholics*, p. 433.

Chapter 2

Direct Reactions to Roman Catholic Progress

Catholicism and the Possibility of the Conversion of Wales

From as early as the formation of the Diocese of Menevia and the appointment of its enthusiastic Welsh bishop, Catholics had begun to contemplate seriously the possibility of the winning of their country back to *yr Hen Ffydd*. In 1899 the Welsh Catholic Herald stated that ‘the re-conquest of Wales by Rome is by no means regarded as out of the range of possibilities’¹. As the Catholic population grew following the First World War, such enthusiasm increased and it was claimed that the revival of Catholicism in Wales would lead to something much greater. Catholic publications were quick to point out that even the champion of the Nonconformist Liberals, David Lloyd George, had told Cardinal Gasquet that the ‘Welsh people are still Catholic at heart’². Reports claiming that many of the Welsh were taking an interest in Catholicism would certainly have alarmed Protestants in Wales. Following a ten day Catholic Evidence Mission by Fr. Filmer at St. Peter’s parish in Cardiff in 1921 one report noted that ‘the spirit of inquiry is abroad with regard to the Church and her teachings’. The great majority of non-Catholics present at the meetings ‘seemed to be persons seriously seeking enlightenment’³. Later in the same year the parish magazine expressed the sincere hope of a full revival of the Catholic faith in the Principality. ‘The glorious Faith of which Wales was once beguiled’, it announced, ‘is showing many signs of new life, and there is hope that she is slowly coming into her own again’⁴.

¹ *Welsh Catholic Herald*, 22 Sept. 1899, 1.

² *The Tablet*, 14 Aug. 1920, 221.

³ *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (2) (1921), v.

⁴ *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (5) (1921), v.

The same optimistic note was struck in periodicals and newspapers throughout the 1920s. While admitting that the Church's resources were small and the difficulties it faced were enormous, *The Tablet* in 1924 claimed that it had 'not the smallest doubt that the ancient affinities of the Welsh will assert themselves and that Cambria will some day rival Hibernia in her Catholic faith and zeal'⁵. Similar sentiments were reiterated by the publication's correspondents throughout the following year. One claimed that although progress was slow, when revival came it would be lasting unlike the more familiar Welsh revivals. 'In Almighty God's good time Wales will be retrieved for the Church and the Welsh will make Catholics inferior to none'⁶. Another article announced that a declining and ultimately moribund Nonconformity would soon leave Catholicism to take its place as the religion of the Welsh people. 'In His time and in His season, Wales will return to the Faith and to the Catholic Unity which were hers for a thousand years'. When that day came, 'Wales will be a Holy Land; her wind-vest Tegid a Sea of Galilee, her headlong Dee a Jordan, her Snowdon a Mount of Transfiguration'⁷. In an article in the *Welsh Outlook* later in that same year, J.E. de Hirsch Davies maintained that this Catholic revival was already well underway. He contended that any study of Welsh Catholicism, however superficial, would reveal that 'the question of the gradual revival of Catholicism in Wales has ceased to be a matter of mere academic interest, and is, slowly perhaps, but steadily becoming an exceedingly practical one'⁸. A year later, in 1926, he developed his assertions. With the slow decline of old prejudices, the appeal of the Catholic Church 'with its immense historical prestige and its doctrinal stability is becoming stronger everywhere, and Wales is no exception'. Tired of the negations of Protestantism, many thoughtful Welshmen were now examining afresh Catholic claims. The conversion of Wales, he concluded, would certainly take time and patience but 'let there be no mistake about the revival of the Old Religion in our midst'⁹. Evan Morgan, later to become Viscount Tredegar, also expressed great

⁵*The Tablet*, 27. Dec. 1924, 864.

⁶*The Tablet*, 4 April 1925, 439.

⁷*The Tablet*, 15 Aug. 1925, 206.

⁸J.E. De Hirsch Davies, 'Catholicism and Protestantism', *The Welsh Outlook*, XII (10) (1925), 267.

⁹J.E. De Hirsch Davies, 'Wales and Catholicism II', *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (3) (1926), 76.

excitement about the position of Catholicism in Wales. Newly returned from Rome where he held the position of Private Chamberlain of the Cape and Sword to the Pope, he enthused 'that a long cherished wish of mine for a revival of Catholicism in Wales is actually becoming a fact'. Great progress had been made in the Principality, not least 'the increasing number of Welshmen who are adopting the Catholic religion'¹⁰.

This spirit of buoyancy continued into the 1930s, during which time the Metropolitan of Wales was seen to be flourishing. At a Catholic meeting at Treforest in 1933 T.P. Ellis of Dolgellau declared that the remarkable growth in Catholic numbers meant that they now had a sufficient number 'to leaven the whole of Wales if they went about it the right way'¹¹. Likewise, while admitting that 'Menevia is still a very, very hard row to hoe', in 1934 The Tablet insisted that 'prayer and apostolic work are bringing about the conversion of Wales'¹². The Welsh hierarchy also maintained that the conversion of Wales was becoming a distinct possibility. At the laying of the foundation stone of a chapel at St. David's, Pembrokeshire in the same year Vaughan suggested that Wales was indeed returning to her ancient Faith¹³. A year later McGrath began his episcopal reign by declaring that in such days of religious scepticism more and more Welsh people were looking towards the Church of Rome¹⁴. Similarly, at a crowded meeting in Cardiff in 1936, he declared that 'North Wales is moving fast with all Wales back to the faith of the fathers'. Claiming that even some non-Catholic ministers whom he knew were praying for a return of Wales to the Faith, he bluntly asserted that he was 'not trying to arouse your enthusiasm. I am giving you hard facts. To-day, the atmosphere is fast changing religiously'. Fr. Owen Dudley who also addressed the meeting, declared that 'of one thing I am certain; there has never been since the Reformation an opportunity such as is ours to-day. Protestantism is on its death-bed'¹⁵. In the same year an article by J.T.F. Williams entitled 'The Conversion of Wales' was published in The Month. While admitting

¹⁰*Western Mail*, 27 Jan. 1926, 7.

¹¹*Western Mail*, 11 Sept. 1933, 7.

¹²*The Tablet*, 10 March 1934, 296.

¹³*The Tablet*, 10 March 1934, 297.

¹⁴*Y Cymro*, 12 Oct. 1935, 5.

¹⁵*Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 5.

that there was still ‘an almost insurmountable mountain of prejudice and misrepresentation to be overcome’, he still asserted that the eventual conversion of the Principality was a certainty. ‘The ultimate victory of Catholicism is certain’, he concluded¹⁶.

Such excitement as to the progress of Catholicism in Wales and the possibility of the nation’s conversion continued unabated following the Second World War. While speaking at the celebrations of the centenary of St. David’s Church in Swansea in 1947, Cardinal Griffin of Westminster claimed that there were clear indications that Wales was rediscovering the Faith. ‘Signs are not wanting that the age of transition has arrived’, he announced, ‘and that the call of the past is likely to come with overwhelming power to a people so deeply attached to their ancient Faith which they have loved long and lost awhile’¹⁷. A year later a front page article in the Catholic Herald reported that both Welsh bishops had expressed great hope over the possibility of the conversion of Wales, Petit at a rally in Llanelli and McGrath on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Pen-rhys. McGrath had announced that ‘to-day hundreds of pilgrims are demonstrating the return of the Faith; this is a revival’¹⁸. He had expressed a similar optimism at the consecration of Petit in Llandudno in 1947. ‘Wales is not Catholic,’ he proclaimed, ‘but it is fast becoming Catholicised’. Outside the Catholic Church he insisted religion in Wales was dying. ‘It is more than a dream of life that the future is with the Church of Rome in this country’¹⁹. Right up to the early 1960s many Catholics still held great hope for the conversion of Wales. Writing in the Review in 1957, Francis H. Poyner claimed that ‘you cannot speak of “converting” the Welsh so much as of “re-converting” them, and please God, that day is fast approaching’²⁰. In the same year the Irish Weekly declared that there was ‘great interest all over Non-Conformist Wales’ in the restoration of the shrine of Our Lady of the Taper at Cardigan. ‘Will this interest develop soon into love?’, it optimistically asked²¹. A number of letter-writers in the Western Mail in

¹⁶J.T.F. Williams. ‘The Conversion of Wales’, *The Month*, 167 (861) (1936), 256-7.

¹⁷*Catholic Herald*, 10 Oct. 1947, 7.

¹⁸*Catholic Herald*, 17 Sept. 1948, 1.

¹⁹*Western Mail*, 26 March 1947, 3.

²⁰*Review*, 1 (1) (1957), 11.

²¹*Irish Weekly*, 20 April 1957, 4.

1960 were also adamant about the return of Wales to its old religion, with one correspondent confidently claiming that ‘by 2050 AD Wales will be a second Ireland in religious outlook’²². Likewise, Bernard Law of Boncath wrote that ‘it may well be tiresome and disquieting for some folks, but there is little doubt that the “Faith of the Fathers” is rapidly returning to the “Land of my Fathers”’²³.

These instances of enthusiasm between the 1920s and the early 1960s reflected the general optimism of the Catholic Church in Britain during this period. In Wales this optimism was particularly evident. The strong and efficacious hierarchy as well as prominent converts, such as Saunders Lewis and Catherine Daniel, certainly helped engender a feeling of success. The main reason for this optimism, however, was the huge increase in Catholic numbers and in church buildings during these decades. For the Diocese of Menevia, which in the nineteenth century had vast areas completely bereft of Catholics, this growth was particularly apparent. The Faith was returning to many areas for the first time since the Reformation. Likewise, in those areas of Wales which already had thriving Catholic communities the real feeling of unity and strength bred an optimism for possible future achievements. With the visible decline of Welsh Nonconformity from the 1920s onwards, Catholics began truly to believe that their Church was set to mount the pedestal which Nonconformity seemed to be vacating.

Despite this relish for the nation’s potential mass conversion in the near future, there were other Catholics who were much more sanguine about the prospect. Writing in 1935 Donald Attwater stated that the reunion of Wales with its ancient Faith was ‘not merely not in sight - it has not been begun’²⁴. Again, in 1953 Peter Morgan, while noting that the Welsh people were ‘nearer to Catholicity than is generally realised’, admitted that the conversion of Wales would never be achieved if Catholics in the Principality did not begin to work incessantly towards fulfilling the aim²⁵. Four years later J.P. Brown dismissed the possibility of the imminent return of Wales to the Faith, claiming that ‘we must

²²*Western Mail*, 24 Feb. 1960, 4.

²³*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

²⁴Donald Attwater, *The Catholic Church in Modern Wales : A Record of the Past Century* (London, 1935), p. 210.

²⁵*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 4.

get rid of the idea that Wales “is still Catholic at heart”²⁶. One of the main problems was that Catholicism in Wales was still essentially an immigrant Church of Irish and English; the conversion of the people of Wales would never be achieved as long as the Church was still seen as a foreign institution. ‘Welsh priests are recruited only very slowly,’ claimed a correspondent in *The Tablet* in 1933, ‘and the return of Wales to the Faith is not in sight’²⁷. Three years later the publication gave the same point a different gloss. With the social deprivation and poverty which many areas of Wales had experienced since the Great War, religion had been pushed to the boundaries of people’s lives and many had turned to secular doctrines of socialism and even Communism. It was up to Catholics in Wales to redress the social problems facing Wales, as there was a great need for ‘a social and economic restoration without which there can be no hope of a religious restoration’. Until all children in Wales were properly fed and clothed then there was little hope for the wholesale conversion of the people²⁸.

With both Mostyn and McGrath taking steps to ensure a sufficiency of Welsh-speaking priests and with a number of influential Welsh-speakers turning to Catholicism, by the late 1930s there was a feeling that the image of the Church as foreign could be overcome. Many also saw the advent of the Welfare State in 1947 as an answer to the problem of poverty in South Wales, and, along with the decreasing influence of the far left, these were hopeful signs for Catholicism in the Principality. One remaining problem, however, was increasingly seen to be insoluble. Disenchantment with Nonconformity was not proving to be automatically beneficial for the Catholic Church. The sharp decline in Sunday School attendance and the gradual decrease in chapel membership did not mean that Wales was soon to return to its old faith. The trend away from Nonconformity was rather a trend in the direction of religious indifferentism. Illtud Evans was very realistic in 1947 when he described the faithful in vast areas of the Diocese of Menevia as ‘a handful of Catholics lost in a world that was Protestant until yesterday and today is fast drifting to total unbelief’²⁹. Ten years

²⁶*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1957* p. 102.

²⁷*The Tablet*, 17 July 1933, 750.

²⁸*The Tablet*, 5 Dec. 1936, 770.

²⁹*The Tablet*, 21 June 1947, 319.

later J.P. Brown wrote that ‘some think we should wait for Protestantism to collapse, when its disillusioned adherents will flock to Catholicism; unfortunately the evidence shows that the vast majority of them turn to modern materialism’³⁰. In the same year a Welsh convert in the Menevia Record also vigorously denied that Wales was Catholic at heart. The trend away from the chapels, he lamented, was not moving towards the Catholic Church, but towards religious indifferentism³¹. Even McGrath admitted that the reports of sharp drops in the numbers of Protestant clergy in Great Britain should not be received by the Catholic Church in Wales ‘in any sense of elation, but in sorrow’. It was clear that most of these ministers ‘have not come into the Catholic Church, but have gone out to rationalism, indifferentism and neo-paganism’³².

The realisation that Wales rather than converting to Catholicism was slowly losing its religion altogether, would eventually lead to Catholics in Wales, as elsewhere, gradually accepting that denominations should stand together to halt the decay of spirituality among the Welsh. Between the 1920s and 1950s, however, a number of Catholics reacted to the spread of indifferentism by noting that, with Nonconformity in apparent decline, the people of Wales would soon be left with a clear choice between Catholicism and paganism. J.E. de Hirsch Davies often prophesied such a future. While addressing the Catholic Citizens Parliament in 1926 he stated that Catholicism was the only hope Wales had of stemming paganism. ‘Unless Wales is to sink into blank materialism,’ he claimed, ‘it will have to return to the Faith of its Patron Saint’³³. On another occasion he reacted to the turbulent situation in Europe by envisaging that this struggle would be between Catholicism and Communism, between Rome and Moscow³⁴. This idea was echoed by Michael Gray in the Welsh Outlook in 1926, when he wrote that ‘the men with whom the future lies are the internationalists - [whether they be] Red or Catholic depends on us’³⁵. McGrath also often envisaged that the Welsh people would soon be presented with a the choice between Rome and paganism.

³⁰*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1957* p. 102.

³¹*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 18.

³²*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1951* p. 133.

³³*The Tablet*, 10 April 1926, 507.

³⁴J.E. De Hirsch Davies, ‘Wales and Catholicism II’, *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (3) (1926), 74.

³⁵*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (6) (1926), 165.

The modern Welshman, he said in 1936, 'is more than deeply conscious that something is coming; that strong efforts are moving, and that within the next 50 years Wales must choose between infidelity and the Catholic Church'³⁶. Again at the episcopal consecration of Petit, he announced that 'the issue in Wales to-day is the choice between giant paganism and giant Roman Catholicism'³⁷. As late as the 1950s some Welsh Catholics were still insisting that the Welsh people would soon have to choose between the Pope and indifferentism. 'There is throughout the country that spiritual hunger which followed the Reformation', wrote A. Cordani in 1957, 'and which Catholicism or sear materialism must fill'³⁸. Even a non-Catholic writer in the Western Mail in 1945 suggested that Wales' future was not with Nonconformity but with either Catholicism or irreligion. 'The Free Churches may even disintegrate,' the article reflected, 'their more intellectual and sophisticated members [moving] into Romanism or secular humanism, the poorer and simpler into a welter of emotional, irrational and atomic sects'³⁹.

Reactions to the Growth of the Catholic Church in Wales

a) Protestant trepidation and fear

In 1933 Y Cymro, while dispelling suggestions that the Anglican Church in Wales was would soon convert *en masse* to Rome, conceded that the reason for the recent hostility towards Catholicism in Wales, manifested in Nonconformist Councils and in a spate of letters in its pages, 'yw'r ffaith ei bod yn ennill tir yng Nghymru tra y mae Calfiniaeth yn prysur ddiiflannu'⁴⁰. In an article in The Tablet two years later Fr. Eric J. Green agreed that fear of this growth was, indeed, the primary reason for much of the prejudice and hostility still being shown against Catholicism in Wales. His own explanation for this fear was that Nonconformity had become sterile and inward looking, crumbling under

³⁶*Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 5.

³⁷*North Wales Weekly News*, 27 March 1947, 4.

³⁸A. Cordani, 'Wales, Yesterday and Today', *Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 12.

³⁹*Western Mail*, 24 April 1945, 2.

⁴⁰*Y Cymro*, 15 July 1933, 5.

the influence of increasing secularisation and anglicisation. Ministers and deacons had, therefore, been gradually feeling a loss of prestige within their communities, and the growth in the number of Catholics and the role of the Catholic priest threatened further the former status quo⁴¹. However this fear was perceived and explained, from the 1920s through to the 1950s Catholic expansion certainly caused much disquiet. A similar alarm had been witnessed in England in the mid-nineteenth century in reaction to the combination of the Irish immigration and the restoration of the hierarchy⁴². The incessant talk in the inter-war years of the conversion of Wales, however, made the Welsh fear and the reactions it engendered even more marked and sustained.

The Anglican Church had reacted to the Catholic growth with a mixture of both surprise and hostility. On a general level, the Church Times merely noted that ‘we fail to understand the success that is beginning to attend the efforts now made by the Roman Catholic communion to secure adherents in the Principality’⁴³. The growth also underlined the importance of showing that the Anglican, and not the Roman Church, was the Catholic Church of Wales⁴⁴. Individual Anglicans, however, were often as hostile to Papal claims as their Nonconformist neighbours. ‘There seems to be a vague impression abroad,’ wrote Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan, ‘which is being assiduously cultivated in some quarters, that Wales is gradually reverting to Roman Catholicism’⁴⁵. Playing on the fears of Welshmen as to the devious aims of the Catholic Church, he claimed that ‘she aims at the utter destruction of Protestantism, because it is the great stumbling-block in her way, and because she affects to see in it ... the root-causes of the revolutionary spirit which has troubled Europe, and the world, since the Reformation, and the source of all error’⁴⁶. For Morgan, however, the claim that Wales was reverting to Catholicism was a fallacy. ‘Roman Catholicism is in a weak condition in Wales, numerically and financially’. What increase there had been in the numbers of Catholics in Wales had simply been due to Irish

⁴¹*The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

⁴²E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968), pp. 17, 52-79.

⁴³*Church Times*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Sept. 1934, 291.

⁴⁴See Chapter 3.

⁴⁵J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Welsh Mind in Evolution* (London, 1925), p. 177.

⁴⁶*ibid.* p. 180.

immigrants, and even many of these had since lapsed. The Catholic Church in Wales possessed neither the finances to aid a revival, nor was there any 'popular social feeling, or popular religious impulse, upon which she could depend for support'⁴⁷. She had no choice but to resort to conversion by stealth. Sisters of Mercy were sent out into the communities, Catholic nurses were placed in various hospitals and periodicals or books were given to Nonconformist ministers. 'Well knowing that a frontal attack would ruin her chances, Rome quietly proceeds in devious ways', he concluded⁴⁸.

Such hostile accusations were frequent at this time, as was the rejection of the claim that Wales' return to the Catholic Church was imminent. In 1926 the editor of the Welsh Outlook stated that there was little sign that Wales would ever again return to the jurisdiction of Rome. The Church, it maintained, was 'too reluctant to allow of change, and the divergence between it and the modern Welsh spirit is too great'⁴⁹. In reaction to what he described as a 'pessimism' regarding the future of Catholicism in Wales, Fr. Ivor Daniel asserted plainly that 'the Church which held the allegiance of all Welshmen when "Wales was Wales" is still at hand'⁵⁰. At a meeting of the South Wales Calvinistic Methodist Association at Llanddewibrefi five years later Rev. J.D. Evans of Aberystwyth again questioned whether Catholicism was making as great progress in Wales as some of its adherents were claiming. The Papacy, he claimed, would be delighted to learn of the alarm it was causing in the heart of Protestant Wales, and yet there was little reason for panic. The Catholic Faith was making very little headway at all, with the increase in numbers not due to Welshmen being converted but to immigrants. Evan Roberts, the revivalist, also urged Welsh Protestants to remain calm. The Papacy was doomed, he claimed, as all the prophecies foretold⁵¹.

Such efforts to dispel Nonconformist alarm intensified as Catholic enthusiasm for the possibility of the return of Wales to the Faith increased. In 1934 Y Tyst insisted that Wales was not reverting to Papism. 'Teflir y newydd o dafod i dafod yn ddifeddwl fod Pabyddiaeth ar gynnydd yng Nghymru, heb gynnig

⁴⁷*ibid.* p. 205.

⁴⁸*ibid.* p. 206.

⁴⁹*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (1) (1926), 5.

⁵⁰*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (2) (1926), 53.

⁵¹*Western Mail*, 17 June 1931, 1.

un math o eglurhad'. This supposed growth, it concluded, was far from being true in the 'Welsh' regions of Wales, and was only true in some other places because of the families of Irish immigrants⁵². Two years later the Western Mail again felt the need to remind its readers that in reality 'the conversion of this country to Roman Catholicism appears to be a remote event'. Just as Hilaire Belloc's contention that the conversion of England would take place 'some time between May and July 1923', so too the Catholic Church vastly underestimated the power which Nonconformity still wielded in Wales. Welsh Protestantism may have gone through many changes since the turn of the century but this did not mean that it was dead or dying. In fact 'the faith of the Reformation is still cherished by the British people, as it has been for centuries and will be for many more'⁵³.

The reaction of most Welsh Nonconformists to the Catholic growth, however, was less sanguine. Such efforts to dispel their fears could not belie the fact that statistical evidence showed the Catholic Church to be growing, and attracting a good number of formerly Nonconformist converts. The deep fear of the increasing strength of Papism in the Principality was given voice at the National Free Church Council in 1926, held at Llandrindod Wells and presided over by Rev. H. Elvet Lewis. It was said that any discussion on the growth of Catholicism was 'still certain to give rise to passion and strong speech'⁵⁴. Rev. F.C. Spurr began by claiming that Protestants were entering their greatest struggle for 400 years. In urging chapels to educate their young against the dangers of Catholicism, Principal E. Griffith-Jones of the United College, Bradford claimed that were the Papacy to manage to win over Britain, it would be in a position to take over the world. His assertion that 'nothing would be more calamitous than for this country to become Roman Catholic' was greeted with shouts of 'Hear, Hear' from many of those present⁵⁵. Rev. D.M. Davies from Penybont, who spoke from the gallery, explained that one reason for Protestantism's numerical decline and Catholicism's increase was that the children of mixed marriages were

⁵²*Y Tyst*, 1 March 1934, 1.

⁵³*Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 8.

⁵⁴*Western Mail*, 26 March 1926, 10.

⁵⁵*South Wales News*, 26 March 1926, 9.

compelled to be raised in the Catholic Faith. Furthermore, whereas Protestant families tended to be small, Catholic families were invariably large. 'In Ireland', Davies quipped, 'if any Roman Catholic couple had no children the priest went there instantly - (laughter) - and threatened what he would do if there were no children'⁵⁶.

In 1929 an article in the Western Mail by the Wesleyan Methodist leader Rev. D. Tecwyn Evans again dealt directly with the potency of the Catholic threat in Wales. Writing of the increasingly good relations between Christian communions, nevertheless he claimed that 'spiritual religion is in danger from Romanism'. In the modern, secular world Catholicism was bound to win converts 'from among people who will not take the trouble to fight their own battle but are prone to submit for the sake of peace to the authority of a would-be infallible Church'. Evans quoted the words of 'an eminent politician' who stated that 'if we are not careful, this country, by a lack of alertness, may be handed over to (Roman) Catholic influences'. Nonconformity should, therefore, have been fighting with all its strength against the increasingly powerful evils of Catholicism and secularism. Evans concluded by echoing the contemporary Catholic claim that Wales might soon have to choose between Rome and infidelity: 'apart from a better acquaintance with our Bibles we in Wales shall certainly become either Papists or pagans'⁵⁷. A year later the 'dygnwch di-ben-draw selogion y Pabyddion yn ein plith' came under the scrutiny of the radical Nonconformist newspaper Y Faner: 'Rhaid i'r "Faner" ddatgan ei barn na eill ond drwg ddyfod o lwyddiant Pabyddiaeth yng Nghymru, ac ymhobman arall'. Nonconformist ministers, it concluded, were not nearly alert enough in their attempts to combat Papist propaganda⁵⁸. Likewise, in 1935 Edward Jones of Llanwnda criticised sharply Nonconformist leaders for allowing two Catholic students to attend a Nonconformist College. 'Dylem ni fel Protestanaidd fod yn fwy effro i'r sefyllfa', he warned, 'oherwydd cynyddu y mae Pabyddiaeth ym mhob cyfeiriad'⁵⁹. Typical of this period was a resolution passed by Youth Committee of the

⁵⁶*Western Mail*, 26 March 1926, 10.

⁵⁷*Western Mail*, 12 June 1929, 9.

⁵⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 June 1930, 4.

⁵⁹*Y Cymro*, 5 Oct. 1935, 5.

Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire Baptist Association, recommending that it should publish pamphlets and other popular literature showing the Baptist position in response to the expansion of the Papacy⁶⁰.

Local denunciations of the growing Catholic Church in Wales were just as venomous and personal during the 1930s as those made in publications and councils. According to E.R. Norman, apart from ordinary clergy, 'the most powerful agency for the diffusion of anti-Catholicism among working men' during the nineteenth century were itinerant preachers⁶¹. J.A. Kensit, the notorious 'Protestant protagonist'⁶² would often lead demonstrations urging the mainly Nonconformist listeners to face up to the challenge of the growing number of Catholics in Wales with their false doctrines and evil superstitions. In 1933 the Cambrian News of Aberystwyth carried a plea that Kensit should visit the area in order to stem Catholic growth. The letter expressed extreme worry about the emergence of Catholicism in such a Welsh and Nonconformist area, and foretold the horrors which would descend upon Cambria 'when Roman Catholics are established in our coastal towns'⁶³. One example of Kensit's anti-Papist campaigns took place at the Cory Hall, Cardiff in October 1936. Responding scathingly to the assertion made by Fr. Owen Dudley during the CMS's recent Cardiff rally that Protestantism was on its death bed, he claimed that this crowded meeting suggested that Protestantism 'was a rather lively corpse'!! Furthermore, Kensit claimed that Catholic enthusiasm of the growing strength of their Church in Wales were being exaggerated, with still less than 1% of the Welsh people belonging to the Roman communion and almost all these being immigrants. He concluded by inciting both religious and cultural prejudice against Catholics, suggesting that the most popular song among the native population of South Wales should be 'Go Back to Erin'⁶⁴.

Following the Second World War, Rev. J.H. Griffiths, a minister at Denbigh, grudgingly admitted that 'there is failure all round; the Church of Rome

⁶⁰*Seren Cymru*, 26 June 1931, 6.

⁶¹Norman, *Anti-Catholicism*, p. 17.

⁶²*Western Mail*, 22 Oct. 1936, 10.

⁶³*Cambrian News*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 29 July 1933, 130.

⁶⁴*Western Mail*, 22 Oct. 1936, 10.

alone has made visible progress'⁶⁵. Likewise, an editorial in the Western Mail in 1950, written following the Chairman of the Assembly of the Congregational Union's assertion that Churches were suffering from a 'creeping paralysis' because of the bondage to their past, cited the Catholic Church as the exception to this rule: 'which on account of its antiquity might be regarded as living "in bondage to the past", but to-day is making phenomenal progress and wielding a greater influence in Europe and all parts of the world than ever in its long history'. It was clear to all that the Catholic Church was 'still working with extraordinary efficiency, and has already recovered from most of the losses that it suffered at the Reformation'. As the position of the other Churches in Wales was in jeopardy, the editorial concluded that it was up to them to try to discover the secret of Rome's success⁶⁶. The virulent reaction to this editorial was indicative of Protestant fear in face of Catholicism's continuing prosperity. 'The real issue', wrote Rev. Ridley Williams of Treorchy, '... is not the apparent extent of the advance; it is its quality that matters'. Williams saw the secret of Rome's success as threefold. Firstly, there was the political influence of the Vatican with Rome's diplomatic machinery bringing much influence upon the world. Secondly, Rome's coercive authority was attractive to many as it relieved people of having to think for themselves. Finally, Catholic exploitative propaganda combined with its stress on evangelism had not been without success in Wales as elsewhere⁶⁷. For Catholics, however, the reason for their Church's growth was obvious. 'Her growth', wrote K.J. Popham of Cardiff, 'is due to her truth and not to any present temper'⁶⁸.

Welsh Nonconformist periodicals also expressed concern at the growth of Catholicism. In Y Dysgedydd in 1951 Rev. E. Lewis Evans of Pontarddulais noted that the Church of Rome was growing world-wide; 'ni bu Eglwys Rhufain ar un adeg yn ei hanes yn ddiwytach nag ydyw heddiw'. Wales was not exempt from its growing influence; 'planna ei lluestai ym Mhrydain, a hyhi sydd wrth gefn y prynu mawr sydd ar ffermydd yng Nghymru Gymraeg'. Evans then expressed

⁶⁵*Western Mail*, 26 March 1947, 3.

⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 16 May 1950, 2.

⁶⁷*Western Mail*, 30 May 1950, 4.

⁶⁸*Western Mail*, 2 June 1950, 4.

the claim that this growth could eventually drive mankind ‘dros y dibyn i Gehenna rhyfel’. There had always been enmity between Rome and the East, but with the rise of Communism the nature of this tension had been transformed. With the United States clearly under the influence of the Catholic Church and with Rome intent on the eradication of Communism, even the existence of mankind was threatened. In conclusion Evans returned to the growth of Catholicism in Wales and in the world. ‘Nid ymgudd dim rhagddynt; cerddant o goncwest i goncwest ... ceisiant ennill yr holl fyd’⁶⁹.

Writing in The Tablet in 1948, H.W.J. Edwards responded to such Nonconformist anxiety by noting that ‘at last, Welsh Protestant Dissenters are worried about what a Welsh minister calls “the insignificant minority” of Catholics in Wales, about what it is succeeding in doing’. He gave the example of the September 1948 pilgrimage to the shrine at Pen-rhys which had evoked ‘a strong protest by the Protestant Truth Society, which warns the Welsh of the peril of returning to Popery’⁷⁰. Continuing Catholic speculation as to the possibility of the conversion of Wales certainly continued to anger and worry Nonconformists, leading to hostility in the letter pages of publications throughout the 1950s. In a letter to Y Faner in 1952 A. Jones of Ffynnon Groyw reacted to Welsh conversions to Catholicism by claiming that by joining a coercive and authoritarian Church, these Welshmen had decided to give up thinking for themselves. ‘Mae’n haws cael cydwybod dawel am wythnos, dim ond plygu o flaen offeiriad’⁷¹. Likewise, in the Western Mail in 1958 Mervyn Owen of Llanelli criticised the press’s coverage of the election of Pope John XXIII. This coverage constituted ‘more publicity than is warranted by the minority of Roman Catholics in this country’. Yet the increasing influence of the Catholic Church in Wales was clearly troubling Owen. ‘Millions of freedom-loving people’, he concluded, ‘view with considerable misgivings the growing influence of the Roman Church’⁷². Earlier, in 1952, a correspondent had similarly criticised Y Cymro for the prominence it was giving to Catholics in Wales who were ‘fel “snake in the grass”

⁶⁹*Y Dysgedydd*, (9) (1951), 218-221.

⁷⁰*The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 247.

⁷¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30 Jan. 1952, 2.

⁷²*Western Mail*, 3 Nov. 1958, 4.

yn gwylio am bob cyfle i godi eu crefydd (?) ar draul darostwng y WIR grefydd'. In his answer the editor of the publication did not, however, appeal to the principle of tolerance. *Y Cymro*, he wrote, was the last paper which could be accused of displaying Papist tendencies. Its report in question (on Catholicism in Gellilydan) was merely published to show the Catholic increase in such a Welsh-speaking district, 'fel rhybudd i'r bobl gan hyderu bod pobl yn ddigon eofn i wynebu ffeithiau a derbyn yr her'⁷³.

As late as 1960 many anti-Catholic letters were published in the *Western Mail*, in reaction to a series of articles entitled the 'Second Spring' which dealt with Catholicism's growing strength and influence in Wales. Rev. L. Alun Page of Neath suggested that his fellow Nonconformists should stand together as one if they wished to face the Catholic threat successfully. 'If the Free Church people in any given district could be united under one roof there would be less talk of superior Catholic numbers. But the cutting edge of Nonconformity in severing this knot is about as sharp as a rice pudding!'⁷⁴. Rather than displaying such self-criticism, however, the majority of letters merely showed deep animosity towards Catholicism and a fear of its growth. 'If the "Second Spring" can be accepted as a sign of the times,' wrote Rev. Eirwyn Davies from Llanelli, 'then some day another series will appear under the heading "A Black Harvest"'. After dealing with the superstition of Catholicism and Wales' traditional hatred of such practices, Davies concluded that 'if Wales ever be deluded by the splash of what is essentially alien and pagan, then it will be her darkest hour'⁷⁵. Likewise, G.M. Williams of Devizes warned his fellow countrymen of the 'twin tyrannies' of Catholicism and Anglicanism. 'Welsh people', he suggested, 'would be well advised to think twice before agreeing to an exchange of their hard-won traditional freedoms, which derive from Nonconformity, for any mess of pottage provided by power-crazed organisations historically recognised as tyrannical'⁷⁶. After many letters by Welsh Catholics defending their position of increasing strength, D.A. Morgan of Chepstow sarcastically asked that 'if the Catholics are

⁷³*Y Cymro*, 18 Jan. 1952, 13.

⁷⁴*Western Mail*, 24 Feb. 1960, 4.

⁷⁵*Western Mail*, 1 March 1960, 6.

⁷⁶*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

gaining so much ground, why all this propaganda to spoil the reading of our daily paper at the breakfast table?’⁷⁷.

Following these and many other letters in the Western Mail in 1960, both from Catholics enthusiastic about the possibility of the conversion of Wales and from non-Catholics criticising such suggestions in an all too often derogatory and hostile way, the correspondence was concluded by an article by Rev. Ivor V. Cassam, a Congregationalist minister. He claimed the article was intended to give readers a ‘a synoptic and balanced view’ of the position of Catholicism in Wales. ‘I fervently hope that these facts will not serve to exacerbate religious fermentations;’ he wrote, ‘but it is necessary to get the record straight if only for the sake of some future generation of historians’. Compared to the other churches in Wales, the Catholic Church was not at all strong : only 16% of Welsh Church people were Catholic while 62% were Nonconformist. He also claimed that the recent ‘influx’ into the Church had been greatly exaggerated. There certainly had not been as many Welsh converts to the Church of Rome as some Catholics were claiming, and there was also much leakage with some even converting to Protestantism. Welsh Nonconformists, therefore, had no need to worry about any such conversion of Wales⁷⁸.

b) Catholicism natural to Welsh temperament?

One argument which was regularly used by Catholic evangelists was that Catholicism, having been the religion of Wales for a millennium or more, was natural to the Welsh temperament. ‘If ever the Lord of Nations created a people especially suitable to be Catholic through and through,’ stated The Tablet in 1925, ‘we believe that the Welsh are that people’⁷⁹. A year later Evan Morgan asked whether Catholicism or Welsh Nonconformity was a truer reflection of the heart and spirit of the Welshman. The answer was abundantly clear : ‘through his racial characteristics the Welshman would accept Catholicism far more readily than the man of any other race, provided it was put to him squarely’. One such inherent

⁷⁷*Western Mail*, 14 March 1960, 4.

⁷⁸*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

⁷⁹*The Tablet*, 15 Aug. 1925, 206.

Catholic tendency which had remained in the Welsh spirit since pre-Reformation days was a deep patriotism. 'Just as the Welshman remains at all times and in all places steadfastly true to his country', he wrote, '... so is the Catholic to his church, which is just as much immutable'. Morgan also asserted that the sensual side of Catholicism, with its physical and spiritual appeal to beauty, would also appeal to the Welsh temperament. In language, in music and in aesthetic leanings, he claimed, 'the Welshman is essentially an artist'⁸⁰. Even Cardinal Griffin of Westminster stated in 1947 that the conversion of Wales would be made that much easier because of the affinity of Catholicism with the Welsh character. As had been evident before the Reformation, 'the Catholic Faith was able to express the religious genius of the Celt'⁸¹. Likewise, the Menevia Record in 1953 claimed that it was 'doubtful whether Puritanism will continue indefinitely to satisfy and express' this genius⁸². Later in the year the publication quoted Dr. Hartwell Jones in emphasising that 'underneath the surface there lies in the Welsh nature a vein of mysticism which three centuries of Puritanism have not succeeded in eradicating'. There was in the Welsh mind many traits, such as a love of symbolism, an eye for the artistic aspects of Christianity, a fervent imagination, and an impressionable temperament, which 'would naturally find satisfaction in the Catholic creed and Catholic ritual'⁸³. In short, the Church of Rome had 'everything that should appeal to the religious makeup of the Welshman'⁸⁴.

In his book The Welsh Mind in Evolution (1925), however, Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan maintained that, contrary to these claims, the Welsh mind was far from being predisposed to Catholicism. Morgan cited an 'eminent Cardinal in Rome' who had claimed that the strict, austere lives led by old-fashioned Calvinists was proof that the Roman ascetic ideals of self-discipline and sacrifice of worldly pleasures were real elements in the Welsh character. Morgan, however, suggested that Protestantism had changed the form and direction of asceticism and the modern Welsh mind had therefore 'no points of contact with Catholic asceticism in its old form, or with Jesuit asceticism'. Other Catholics

⁸⁰*Western Mail*, 27 Jan. 1926, 7.

⁸¹*Catholic Herald*, 10 Oct. 1947, 7.

⁸²*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 11.

⁸³*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 9.

⁸⁴Cordani, 'Wales, Yesterday and Today', p. 14.

were claiming that the Nonconformist *seiat* was in all respects identical with the Confessional, a theme which Saunders Lewis would take up in his treatment of Williams Pantycelyn. In reply Morgan pointed out that there was no confession of sin at the *seiat*, and that by nature the Welsh people were very secretive. 'The Confessional is the precise antithesis of the Seiat, which has assumed a thoroughly Welsh character'. After refuting these claims, Morgan listed other reasons why Rome could never appeal to the Welsh temperament. Catholicism, which operated so little in the realm of emotions, could never 'hope to reach, or to wean from its traditional mode of worship, a race so highly emotional as the Welsh'. Furthermore, at Welsh Nonconformist services there was a great attraction to the 'art' of preaching, rather than to outward devotion, so prevalent in Catholicism. Finally, Rome had no affinity with the Welsh mind as far as its ideas of absolute obedience to authority was concerned⁸⁵.

Behind Morgan's dismissal of the claim that Catholicism was in any way intrinsic to the national character, was his belief that Nonconformist traits had become natural to the temperament of the Welshman. Many others also stressed that Nonconformity was perfectly suited to the Welsh character and that was why it became the religion of Wales. The Roman Church, however, was a foreign intruder whose superstitious practices were offensive to the true Welshman. Though Wales was Catholic at one time, stated Y Faner in 1930, 'fe droes hithiau ers maith o dro at Brotestaniaeth fel ffurf o grefydd lawer mwy boddhaol i dymer ein cenedl ni'⁸⁶. Furthermore, at the quarterly meeting of the North Wales Association of the Welsh Presbyterian Church at Nefyn in 1950, both the growth of Catholicism and the decline of Nonconformity were linked with the increasing anglicisation of Welsh society. For these Nonconformists, Catholicism had become a threat not only to the religion of Wales but to its nationhood. In a discussion on self-government Rev. Evan Lynch of Glyn Dyfrdwy proposed a motion that an institution to work on behalf of the Welsh people and to secure their prosperity of the Welsh nation be established. 'Os syrth y genedl Gymreig daw yn y man gwypm Ymneilltuaeth yng Nghymru,' he claimed, 'os digwydd hyn,

⁸⁵Morgan, *The Welsh Mind in Evolution*, p. 192-99.

⁸⁶*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 June 1930, 4.

yna fe dry'n gyfle i'r Babaeth ymestyn ei chortynnau. Drwy ddiogelu y gymdeithas Gymreig, mae ei chadw hi draw'. The motion was passed unanimously⁸⁷. As late as 1960, a letter in the Western Mail by J. Cope of Ystalyfera, reacted to the suggestion that Catholicism was suited to the Welsh disposition by claiming that Wales would never be 'gullible enough to be taken in by the ravings of the Roman Catholics'. Catholicism was, he concluded, 'abhorrent to the people of Wales as it is to all sane, intelligent men'⁸⁸. The reactions to such a hostile letter were varied, ranging from complimentary to utter disgust. Whereas Anne Lodwick Lewis of Cwmavon praised Cope for saying what most Welshmen knew but were afraid to say⁸⁹, Iris L. Asals of Barry criticised his ignorant statements and noted that he simply 'seems to have a bitter, intolerant attitude to the Roman Catholic Church and to each of its members'⁹⁰.

c) Vatican political policy : more than a religious threat?

i) Accusations of Fascism

A number of different factors led to the accusation of Fascist tendencies within the Catholic Church in the inter-war years and beyond. One of these was the fervent anti-Communist emphasis voiced by Catholics during this period. In the speeches and pastoral letters of the Welsh hierarchy, in the Welsh Catholic yearbooks and in other publications, Communism was consistently denounced as the main evil of the modern age. This was certainly in strict accord with Papal policy, reflecting such encyclicals as *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) and *Ad Apostolorum Principis* (1958). In the former encyclical Pius XI described Communism as 'a system full of errors and sophisms', which was 'intrinsically wrong'. The Welsh Catholic repetition of these criticisms admittedly served to help an already enthusiastic and confident Church engender 'a sense of martial unity : we were all now in the front line in the struggle with Communism'⁹¹. For

⁸⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 March 1950, 1.

⁸⁸*Western Mail*, 10 March 1960, 6.

⁸⁹*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

⁹⁰*ibid.*

⁹¹Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 1991), p. 483.

many Welsh people already prejudiced against the Catholic Church such passionate anti-Communism could imply a belief in Marxism's antithesis, namely Fascism. The extent of Catholic hatred of Communism was reflected in 1928 by a question posed by H. Somerville whether a Catholic could call himself a socialist and remain in communion with Rome. The whole question hinged on the ambiguity of the term 'socialist'. There was no doubt that Catholics could belong to the Labour party, which was often referred to as socialist. The more extreme and ideological socialism, however, did pose a problem. The real doctrines of socialism, concluded Somerville, were opposed to the positive teachings of the Church. Leo XIII, for example, had stated quite clearly that the State would be 'unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fitting'. Socialism in its true nineteenth century sense, then, was definitely in contradiction to Catholic social teaching⁹². This was the ideology to which Archbishop Mostyn referred when, at a rally of the South Wales branches of CYMS in 1932, he coupled socialism with infidelity claiming both to be Catholicism's greatest threats in modern day Wales⁹³.

This condemnation of Socialism needed, therefore, to be carefully defined in order not to be confused with the doctrine and principles of the Labour Party. Communism, however, was routinely and universally denounced. At the same CYMS rally in which Mostyn had criticised socialism, D. Webster of Maesteg read a paper on 'Christian Morality and Communism' in which he condemned all forms of Marxism, warning that Labour colleges (formally a means of educating the masses in social and economic matters) were being exploited by Communists⁹⁴. Mostyn himself denounced the 'pernicious doctrines' of Communism in his 1936 Advent Pastoral, and warned that it was clear, from the persecution of Catholics in Russia, that Communism's aim was ultimately 'to obliterate the name of God'⁹⁵. This persecution of Catholics heightened opposition to the political ideals of Marx. In an article in the Western Mail in 1933 T.P. Ellis explained that he had written his The Catholic Martyrs of Wales as

⁹² *Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1928* p. 63.

⁹³ *The Tablet*, 24 Sept. 1932, 412; *Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1932, 8.

⁹⁴ *Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1932, 8.

⁹⁵ *The Tablet*, 5 Dec. 1936, 770.

a foil against 'Communist teaching [which] is spreading in Wales'. He warned that 'if the Communist-Modernist combination gains headway' such persecution as was witnessed at the Reformation and was being repeated in present-day Russia would commence in Britain once more⁹⁶. As most Welsh Catholics belonged to the working class they were thought to be particularly susceptible to the Communist appeal, especially during the harsh economic conditions of the 1920s and 1930s. This alarm was echoed in a number of Catholic publications at the time. In 1936 *The Tablet* warned Catholics to remain steadfast in their Faith as 'the Communist agitator has been busy in South Wales'⁹⁷. Following the First World War the secular gospel of Marxism had begun to effect Wales, and historian Kenneth Morgan suggests that by early to mid-1930s the far left was briefly strong enough to be even able to mount a challenge against the Labour Party in Wales⁹⁸. The need to denounce Communism in Wales, then, became more and more important as Marxism became an alternative power to infringe upon the loyalty of the suffering, working class Catholics of the Principality⁹⁹. Catholicism was seen by the faithful as possessing 'the only coherent body of philosophy capable of contesting the teaching of Marx'¹⁰⁰.

Although support for the Communist party waned in Wales from the 1940s onwards, Catholics in the Principality continued vigorously to denounce Communist beliefs and teachings. 'Let it be plainly stated and understood at once', wrote Archbishop McGrath in 1942, 'that the Christian conscience will not tolerate the introduction of the tenets or tactics of Bolshevism into our Christian land'¹⁰¹. In 1948 the Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales issued a six-point programme to meet the challenge of Communism¹⁰², and during this time both

⁹⁶*Western Mail*, 12 June 1933, 9.

⁹⁷*The Tablet*, 5 Dec. 1936, 770.

⁹⁸Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Welsh Politics 1918-1939', in T. Herbert and G.E. Jones (ed.), *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff, 1988), p. 105; cf. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford 1981), pp. 281-3.

⁹⁹In the 1930s and 1940s the Communist party made some headway in the South Wales valleys; support was reflected in Arthur Horner's display in the 1933 Rhondda East by-election and again in the 1945 general election where his successor as Communist candidate, Harry Pollitt, was defeated by a mere 972 votes - the closest the party came to winning a Welsh parliamentary seat.

¹⁰⁰H.W.J. Edwards, *The Good Patch* (1938), p. 145.

¹⁰¹Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1942*.

¹⁰²*Western Mail*, 9 April 1948, 2.

McGrath and Bishop Petit incessantly condemned both the principles of Communism, and, what they described in 1950 as, ‘the devil-driven countries behind the Iron Curtain’¹⁰³. A year later McGrath informed delegates and representatives of diocesan branches of the CYMS that it was the Society’s responsibility to stand up to the threat of ‘subversive theories and Communistic shibboleths’¹⁰⁴. The CYMS’s role in combating the Marxist threat was also emphasised by others. Writing in the Archdiocese Directory for 1950, Fr. P. Reidy of Pyle described the CYMS as ‘a society founded one year after the birth of Communism, which has grown up ready to meet the challenge’. In his article, which was tinged with hysteria, he described the Catholic Church as the breakwater against the evil tide of atheistic Communism. ‘The enemy is at our gates’, Reidy continued, ‘... He is well organised and his apostolate is among the working class. He has his propaganda machine in all countries. He is snatching one country after another whilst the world looks on complacently’¹⁰⁵. Such alarm was oddly reminiscent of the Nonconformist alarm at the growth of Catholicism, with the words of Rev. E. Lewis Evans’s article in *Y Dysgedydd* a year later almost mirroring that of Reidy’s article¹⁰⁶. Further Catholic fears of Communism were expressed at the CYMS Archdiocesan rally for 1950 when Dr. De Souza of Bedlinog declared that Catholics in Wales could not be apathetic towards the threat of Communism which preached class hatred, which was surely the negation of comradeship¹⁰⁷. Welsh Catholic publications were also quick to denounce Communist teaching, with the *Menevia Record*, for example, printing a number of anti-Communist articles in the mid 1950s¹⁰⁸. Many anti-Communist leaflets were distributed by the Lamp Society throughout Wales¹⁰⁹ and it was no coincidence that Saunders Lewis’s famous anti-Communist play *Gymerwch Chi Sigaret?* was also written and published at this time.

¹⁰³Michael McGrath and John Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral 1950*.

¹⁰⁴*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1951* p. 137.

¹⁰⁵P. Reidy, ‘CYMS : Archdiocese of Cardiff’, *Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1950* pp. 97-9.

¹⁰⁶*Y Dysgedydd*, (9) (1951), 218-221.

¹⁰⁷*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1951* p. 141.

¹⁰⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954).

¹⁰⁹Christopher Magner, *The Lamp Society and the Welsh Travelling Mission* (1997), p. 4.

Although Catholics rarely made any efforts to encourage denominational co-operation, their hatred of Communism led Petit to urge all Christians to collaborate to combat its threat. Petit had always emphasised the ideology's dangers, noting in 1948 that it was impossible for any Catholic ever to be a Communist¹¹⁰. In a declaration to a Committee of the Council of North Wales Evangelical Churches in 1949, however, Petit not only condemned Communism but emphasised the need for every division of the Christian Church in Wales to co-operate in opposing the Marxist menace. Not only had persecution of both Protestants and Catholics in Eastern Europe reached new heights, but Russia's leaders were clearly ready to hazard a Third World War which would lead to the destruction of civilisation¹¹¹. The reaction of the other denominations to Petit's appeal, however, was lukewarm. At the tercentenary meeting of the Welsh Baptists at Swansea later in the year the representatives unanimously refused to support the alleged 'holy war' by Catholics against Communism¹¹². Six years later at the opening of St. Mary's School, Rhyl, Petit used to opportunity to appeal to non-Catholics to support, and not oppose, the development of Catholic schools as 'training grounds of the anti-Communists'¹¹³.

Accusations that such virulent anti-Communism was merely a cloak for Fascism were exacerbated by further factors. Firstly, the contemporary Catholic trend towards ecclesiastical authoritarianism did lead to a positive attitude towards State authoritarianism¹¹⁴. Secondly, that obsessive fear of all forms of Communism often blinded Catholics to the blatant evils of Fascism¹¹⁵. In 1941 McGrath, for instance, criticised those who were 'stressing Hitlerism in Germany and soft-peddalling Communism'¹¹⁶. Such statements, though probably true in themselves, were always open to misinterpretation. Lastly, and most importantly, Vatican political policy in Spain and Italy seemed to be sympathetic towards Fascism while the 1933 Concordat with Hitler gave the impression of condoning Nazism. For many non-Catholics the implication was obvious : Catholicism was

¹¹⁰*Western Mail*, 12 Oct. 1948, 3.

¹¹¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 April 1949, 5.

¹¹²*The Tablet*, 15 Oct. 1949, 247.

¹¹³*Western Mail*, 14 March 1955, 7.

¹¹⁴Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 280.

¹¹⁵*ibid.* p. 326.

¹¹⁶Westminster Diocesan Archives : Bourne Papers Box 1/174.

nothing but Fascism with a religious veneer. Welsh opposition to the supposedly Fascist political policy of the Papacy had been strong since the 1920s. In 1929 the Vatican's treaty with Mussolini to settle 'the Roman Question' had been agreed. While non-Catholics looked askance at any dealings with a Fascist dictator, Catholics in Wales offered Masses in thanksgiving for the settlement¹¹⁷. Again in the same year came the Malta crisis, in which the Vatican was again seen as showing Italio-Fascist support. At the annual conference of the Baptist Union of Wales held at Porthmadog in 1930 the ministers voted to move a resolution supporting the British Government in their dispute against the Catholic Church in Malta. Although this angered some Catholics, The Tablet reported that five members of the conference had openly opposed the official resolution and were not willing 'to obey the crack of the English no-Popery whip'¹¹⁸. The small scale of opposition to the resolution, however, was not in fact due to any support for the Catholic Church, but rather because it offered an opportunity to denounce the English Government. This is shown in the fact that one of the ministers opposing the motion was Rev. Lewis Valentine, a close friend of Saunders Lewis, who had stood as a Welsh Nationalist Candidate at the 1929 General Election. Valentine, and the others who stood by him on the issue, opposed the resolution 'o'r safbwynt cenedlaethol'¹¹⁹. 'Fel cenedl fechan,' Valentine stated, 'dylai Cymru gydymdeimlo â chenedl fechan arall oedd yn cael ei hamddifadu o'i hawliau a'i rhyddid cyfansoddiadol'¹²⁰. The opposition was wholly political, not religious.

Most Welshmen, then, seemed fully to support the British Government's policies against a proto-Fascist Vatican. Even some Welsh Catholics refused to toe the official Catholic line as far as the Malta crisis was concerned. Archbishop Mostyn's unhappiness was clear when the prominent Catholic layman Sir Evan Morgan made his support of the government clear. In 1930 Mostyn sent Morgan a copy of a translation of Exposition of the Malta Question with Documents Feb. 1929 - June 1930 and suggested that he studied it carefully. Sometime later in the year Morgan returned the book to Mostyn with a letter explaining why he

¹¹⁷M.B. Kiely, *Annals of the Parish of Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride, Aberystwyth* (1973), p. 51.

¹¹⁸*The Tablet*, 4 Oct. 1930, 427.

¹¹⁹*Seren Cymru*, 4 Oct. 1930, 2.

¹²⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30 Sept. 1930, 5.

remained unconvinced at the official Vatican position. 'I am afraid in this matter that I am definitely pro-English', he wrote, 'and when the Vatican employs a man like Fr. Orlich, who is nothing more than a spy for Mussolini ... it misgives me as to whether the Segretario di Stato is quite as wise in its Foreign Policy in regard to Malta as one might hope'. Morgan's admiration for the policy of the Catholic Lord Gerald Strickland, the British Prime Minister of Malta, was unabashed, and, though he recognised that every Catholic must obey the Pope in matters of faith and conduct, in political activities Catholics were at liberty to hold whichever opinion they liked. 'I am so frightfully sorry that I have incurred your displeasure', he concluded his letter to Mostyn, '... but I do not see that as a loyal subject of His Majesty the King that I can take any other line than that which I have taken and propose to continue to take until such time as a definite ban of excommunication is placed on those persons who hold these views'¹²¹.

Papal policy in Italy, Spain and Germany between the 1930s and 1950s intensified Welsh accusations of Fascist tendencies within the Catholic Church. Following Pius XI's 1937 encyclical on Communism an editorial in the Western Mail summarised the fears that many Welshmen held. The article noted that the Papacy has been continual and vehement in its condemnation of modernism, Liberalism, socialism and Communism, yet it had not in any way criticised Fascism. 'Successive Popes have condemned nearly everything under the sun except Fascism and Nazi-ism'. Although the Pope was justified in warning of the perils of Communism, he should also realise that Fascism is 'as inimical to and destructive of' the highest Christian values: 'the foul idol of the totalitarian State, as expounded by Hitler and Mussolini, will probably be found more insidious to religious faith and to all the Churches than the wildest attacks of the Bolsheviks'. Not for the first time it was noted that the Pope had never uttered any words of protest against either Hitler or Mussolini. These powerful leaders continually asserted the rights of the State over the laws of God and man, openly advocated a policy of 'might is right', and held great contempt for Christian values. Their beliefs and actions 'cry to Heaven for rebuke and condemnation', yet the Papacy

¹²¹National Library of Wales Archives : MS21095C ('An autograph letter, 1930, from [Sir Courtenay Charles] Evan Morgan, [3rd Viscount Tredegar] to [Francis Joseph Mostyn] Archbishop of Cardiff').

remained silent. With the Pope's encyclical accusing the Press of an 'inexplicable silence' regarding the Communist menace, the editorial claimed that this was never 'so noticeable or so inexplicable as the silence of the Vicar of Christ regarding these greater evils'¹²².

This editorial precipitated a vigorous correspondence. A number of letter-writers congratulated the paper for correctly interpreting the sentiments of the great majority of its readers. One wrote that Communism and Fascism were the twin enemies of liberty and freedom, and 'he is guilty of inequitable, and therefore false, judgement who condemns the one and is silent as to the dangers of the other'¹²³. Rev. M. Watcyn Williams of Merthyr Tydfil likewise criticised the 'non-Christian' silence of the Papacy as regards such Fascist atrocities as the recent Addis Ababa massacre¹²⁴. Defence of the Vatican's position came from a letter by a Trefriw correspondent who insisted that in years to come 'we may be quite sure that the reputation of one of the greatest Popes of history will not be spoiled by evidence of cowardice or weakness'. Pius XI had, he claimed, publicly condemned the excesses of Nazi and Fascist governments. Furthermore, the prime purpose of a Pope's encyclical was to teach a truth to each one of his 365 million subjects throughout the world. Communism was certainly an international menace, though 'do you really think that America, Ireland, China and India need a solemn warning against the Fascists and Nazis?' Finally, it was claimed that local Catholics in Germany and Italy, both priest and laity, were opposing the Fascist regimes with great bravery and some success. Nobody knew this better than Hitler himself who was facing a fearless stand by the German Cardinals, themselves representatives of the Pope. As far as Mussolini was concerned, what was the point of encyclical letters when the danger was at home? The Pope's policy of direct, private representation was, according to the letter writer, bound to be far more successful¹²⁵.

Later in 1937 further letters were published in the Western Mail which also dealt with the political position of the Vatican. Rev. J. Penry Thomas of

¹²²*Western Mail*, 19 March 1937, 8.

¹²³*Western Mail*, 22 March 1937, 11.

¹²⁴*Western Mail*, 23 March 1937, 11.

¹²⁵*Western Mail*, 25 March 1937, 11.

Cardiff criticised the newspaper for denouncing Nonconformity's pacifist policies when the 'peril of our days' comes from the 'far greater menace' of the State control of Churches. 'The Romanist Church', he claimed, 'has always been an Italian Church, and is to-day but a tool of Mussolini'. In Germany too the Catholic Church was state-aided, 'Hitler pays the piper, and logically calls for the tune'¹²⁶. John Morgan of Llandrindod Wells reacted angrily to these suggestions, which he described as 'sheer nonsense'. To accuse the Catholic Church of being an Italian Church was blatantly incongruous. Only a handful of the millions of Catholics world-wide were Italian, the Vatican was not part of Italy but an independent state, and history did not warrant the accusation 'unless the Rev. J. Penry Thomas manufactures his own history'. Furthermore, the Catholic Church was in no way an instrument of a Fascist despot. 'The only dictator the Catholic Church recognises is Christ, and during nineteen hundred years of history this Church has proved itself to be the greatest democracy the world will ever know, fighting the Devil at all times'. Morgan concluded his letter by stating that 'the mischief-makers will be peeved at not being able to blame the Roman Catholic Church for the war in China!'¹²⁷.

During the Second World War Vatican political policy was repeatedly criticised for its purported Fascist sympathies. In July 1944 the President of the National Free Church Council, Rev. H. Townsend, spoke at Abertillery, claiming that responsibility for the war 'lay in no small measure with the Vatican for its political policy during the past 25 years'. He listed many different instances of the Vatican having helped the Fascist cause. These included the Pope's agreement with Hitler which led to Catholics voting him into office, the alleged Vatican knowledge of the Abyssinian attack and the call from the Catholic hierarchy in France to be loyal to the Laval-Pétain government. Most damning of all, however, was the fact that 'none of the crimes of the Fascists and Nazis has brought forth a single public protest from the Church in Italy'. These accusations combined clearly proved that 'the Vatican has been dealing the most damaging blows to the Christian religion and ... the Christian Churches are all suffering

¹²⁶*Western Mail*, 1 Sept. 1937, 11.

¹²⁷*Western Mail*, 7 Sept. 1937, 9.

because the great mass of men and women outside them are judging you and me by the political policy of a Church that calls itself by the name of Christ'¹²⁸.

Townsend's speech led to a barrage of letters in the Western Mail. Between July and September over 20 letters appeared relating to the subject including a number from outside of Wales. R.F. Copeland of Heythrop College, Oxfordshire wrote asking whether Townsend would prefer to see the continent of Europe pagan or Catholic? Surely he could see that Catholicism had become the only effective opposition to Nazi Fascism, for even his predecessor as President of the Free Church Council had supported the Pope's peace points calling for the end of war. A number of other letters were written defending the Catholic Church. J. Discoll from Cardiff, for example, pointed out that Protestants as well as Catholics supported the Nazis in their rise to power¹²⁹. Letters from Rhiwbina¹³⁰, Cardiff, Tylorstown and Aberystwyth¹³¹, however, reacted harshly to Copeland's letter. Eventually Townsend himself replied to his critics. 'Romanism', he wrote, 'has never given religious and political freedom to any nation over which it had authority'¹³². Some prominent figures were drawn into the debate with Michael De La Bedoyere, the editor of the Catholic Herald, writing two letters defending the Vatican's policy¹³³ and Lady Mildred Artemus-Jones of Bangor replying to De La Bedoyere's arguments¹³⁴. The majority of these letters fully supported Townsend's views. Mervyn Davis from Pontypridd emphasised that the Vatican 'must bear some responsibility for its misdeeds'¹³⁵, while W. Harold Evans from Llanelli reacted to the letters defending the Vatican by sarcastically stating that 'we now know that the Pope will tolerate all the persecution and suffering imposed by Hitler and other dictators provided it does not interfere with the Catholic Church, and that he will not support any system which does not further Catholicism, however much it might help to improve the lot of mankind in

¹²⁸*Western Mail*, 19 July 1944, 3.

¹²⁹*Western Mail*, 17 Aug. 1944, 3.

¹³⁰*Western Mail*, 8 Aug. 1944, 3.

¹³¹*Western Mail*, 9 Aug. 1944, 3 (all three).

¹³²*Western Mail*, 12 Aug. 1944, 3.

¹³³*Western Mail*, 26 Aug. 1944, 3; 6 Sept. 1944, 3.

¹³⁴*Western Mail*, 28 Aug. 1944, 3.

¹³⁵*ibid.*

general¹³⁶. When Townsend spoke at Aberdare only six months later, his criticisms of the Vatican's political policy were as uncompromising as ever. He claimed that 'the international policy of the Papacy was red with the blood of nations and stained with political crimes'. In dealing with the Vatican's political alliances with Fascists he referred to 'an offence against the Gospel' and asserted that 'God never intended His Church to be a tool in the hands of gangsters'¹³⁷.

The question of the Vatican's alleged silence on the Fascist atrocities of the war was again raised in a debate held by the Cardiff University College Union in January 1946. On hearing about the proposed debate Archbishop McGrath immediately withdrew from lecturing to the students on another matter. Following his protest the title of the debate was altered from 'The Pope should be tried as a war criminal' to 'That this house deplores the Vatican state policy'. Although the organisers admitted that the original wording had been 'indelicate', they still maintained that they had every right to debate the subject itself. The Catholic chaplain circulated a directive forbidding all Catholic students from attending the debate, while McGrath had his secretary bring pressure on college authorities to have the debate banned claiming that the subject had arisen 'on the part of one or two queer individuals. The better educated folk among them deplore the whole thing'¹³⁸. The debate, however, went ahead as planned and the motion was passed by a majority of three to one. The whole saga then developed into a controversy, not only about the Vatican policy, but about freedom of speech and McGrath's rights to object. A joint statement was issued by the Society's President and Secretary, reminding McGrath that the subject of the debate had been chosen by a committee which included Nonconformists, Anglicans, agnostics and even Catholics. 'There has never been at any time', the statement noted, 'hostility to the Roman Catholic Church as such'. They were, however, angry with the Church for the pressure it had exerted on them to stop the debate. 'As a liberal university we believe it is our duty to uphold freedom of discussion about anything in God's universe'¹³⁹.

¹³⁶*Western Mail*, 1 Sept. 1944, 3.

¹³⁷*Western Mail*, 17 Jan. 1945, 3.

¹³⁸*Western Mail*, 19 Jan. 1946, 1.

¹³⁹*Western Mail*, 21 Jan. 1946, 3.

Many letters appeared in the Western Mail responding to McGrath's attitude to the debate. A good number of Catholics wrote in support of McGrath's stand, with Bernard Cronin forcefully stating that he was 'utterly disgusted' at the proposed debate¹⁴⁰. A letter from Caerphilly asserted that in the students' case a 'little knowledge has proved to be a dangerous thing'¹⁴¹. J.C. Lewis from Cardiff explained that McGrath, as the Pope's direct representative in the Archdiocese, was bound to react to the slander of the representative of Christ on earth. 'I am convinced', he wrote, 'that no right-minded student can resent his Grace's protest and natural correction or interpret it as an unwarranted interference'¹⁴². Even 'a disgusted Protestant' from Aberdare denounced what he described as the 'recent indecorous indictment of the Pope' by the students at the Debating Society. 'Though the hands were Welsh hands,' stated the sympathetic writer, 'the voice was the voice of 'Pravda''¹⁴³. Other letters, however, were far more critical of McGrath's actions. A staff representative of the University Debating Society claimed that it would have been far more irresponsible for the 'better educated youth of today' not to have considered the Vatican policy, than it was for them to discuss the matter openly¹⁴⁴. C.D. Mathias expressed surprise that McGrath saw to object in the first place to the debate, as surely, in a free country, the students 'should be allowed to discuss and express their opinions on any subject without an objection being raised'. He bluntly asserted that 'this fuss seems both petty and unnecessary'¹⁴⁵.

Accusations of the Fascist sympathies of the Catholic Church were to continue following the Second World War in reaction to the increasing problems in Spain. Since the Civil War in the 1930s Catholics had often pledged public support for the Fascist dictator Franco. Bishop Petit was especially fervent in his defence of the Franco regime. Between 1910 and 1916 he had been a seminarian at the English College at Valladolid, Spain and then from 1924 to 1930 he was Vice-Rector at the college. He therefore had first hand experience of Spain and

¹⁴⁰*Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1946, 3.

¹⁴¹*Western Mail*, 22 Jan. 1946, 3.

¹⁴²*Western Mail*, 23 Jan. 1946, 3.

¹⁴³*Western Mail*, 22 Jan. 1946, 3.

¹⁴⁴*Western Mail*, 23 Jan. 1946, 3.

¹⁴⁵*Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1946, 3.

the problems there. As Master of St. Edmund's House, Cambridge between 1934 and 1946 he was forthright in his opinions on the civil war and the nationalist regime. As the college was affiliated to the university his candid utterances 'did not enhance his reputation ... but it left no one in any doubt as to where his sympathy lay'¹⁴⁶. In a personal letter during his first year at Menevia, Petit even urged Cardinal Griffin of Westminster to visit Spain and show his support for the Church there. Griffin replied that such a visit would have to include meeting Franco which 'might easily cause embarrassment'¹⁴⁷. The Welsh Nonconformist reaction to Catholic support for the Spanish situation was fervently hostile. W.J. Gruffydd even suggested that the Catholic Church was behind the original struggle. On first glance it seemed to be a struggle between Communists and Fascists, but 'rhyfel oedd, yn ei chynllun a'i chyllid a'i hamcan, i adfer gallu a chyfoeth yr Eglwys yn Ysbaen'¹⁴⁸. While such accusations were tainted with prejudice, the world-wide Catholic defence of Franco did lay them open to such adverse allegations. Catholics everywhere were therefore incriminated when Fascist Spain was accused of persecuting its Protestants in the late 1940s.

At the Work Committee of the Council of North Wales Evangelical Churches in 1949, Petit (who was attending to discuss Catholic educational matters) was asked directly by Rev. Herbert Evans of Caernarfon concerning the situation in Spain. The Bible had been outlawed, the Bible Society headquarters at Madrid had been forcibly closed down, Protestant chapels were being defiled and Protestant baptisms, weddings and funerals were prohibited. Although some individual Catholic priests had protested, the Catholic hierarchy had been notably silent. Evans asked Petit whether he could use his own influence to stop this persecution. The bishop's answer was that the Catholic hierarchy was certainly not involved in any oppression. It was even questionable whether many of the accusations were authentic as, in his twelve years in Spain, he had never seen any ill-treatment of Protestants. When Evans enquired when this was Petit had to admit that it had been before Franco's rule¹⁴⁹! In this same year *Y Tyst* printed

¹⁴⁶Brian Plumb, *Arundel to Zabi : A Biographical Dictionary of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (Deceased) 1623-1987*.

¹⁴⁷Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

¹⁴⁸*Y Llenor*, XIX (1940), 123.

¹⁴⁹*Y Goleuad* 11 May 1949, 1; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 April 1949, 5.

two articles accusing the Roman Church of being directly involved in this persecution of the Spanish Protestants. ‘Franco, yn fwy na neb arall yn Ewrop heddiw yw gŵr deheulaw y Pab. Ewyllys Eglwys Rufain yw ei ewyllys ef’. Petit had claimed that there was no persecution, and yet in 1947 the British Embassy in Madrid had given proof that seven Protestant chapels had been closed by the authorities. Perpetrating such an action and then denying that there had been any persecution ‘yw erlid yn ystyr waethaf y gair’, and implicated all Catholics in this dreadful oppression. It was the duty of all Welsh Nonconformists to speak up against these events and not to be duped by the false sincerity of Catholics at home¹⁵⁰. The second article noted with sadness that troops and rioters were attacking chapels in Spain, and Protestants were even being punished for worshipping in private houses. As the Catholic Church was the most important religious body in Spain, ‘naturiol yw gofyn : A yw hi yn dal i ymyrryd â rhyddid pobl i addoli yn ôl eu cydwybod?’¹⁵¹.

Discussions surrounding the relationship of the Catholic Church and Fascist Spain continued into the 1950s. In 1950 E.D. Jones of Pontypridd in a letter to the Western Mail again accused Catholics of double-standards. The continual criticism of Communism by Welsh Catholics would be very complimentary if not for the fact that in Spain ‘a form of Government akin to the Moscow brand and denounced by Western democracy is upheld by the Pope’¹⁵². Six year later, Dave Shipper of Cardiff noted that a denunciation of Spanish Fascism by the Vatican was yet forthcoming. ‘Possibly its leader, the Pope,’ he stated, ‘is not such “a friend of the world” as his peace-loving speeches would seem to signify’. The Vatican hierarchy was, rather, intensely political-minded, and it was clear that ‘the stamp of Papal approval is affixed to events in Fascist Spain’¹⁵³. In reply to these accusations, Griffith Bowen of Ebbw Vale claimed that the Catholic Church had worked under all sorts of governments ‘seeking to improve them by preaching the principles of justice rather than denouncing them’. The Church only needed to raise a disapproving voice if an authority was

¹⁵⁰*Y Tywt*, 5 May 1949, 7.

¹⁵¹*Y Tywt*, 7 July 1949, 1.

¹⁵²*Western Mail*, 14 June 1950, 6.

¹⁵³*Western Mail*, 27 Nov. 1956, 4.

attempting to expel or kill clergy and trying to substitute false beliefs for Christ's teachings, as had happened with Islam in the Middle Ages and now with Communism in Eastern Europe. In lands where the Catholic Church was not impeded, such as in Britain, Spain, Italy and Germany, it was left to the local clergy and laity to attempt to reform the corruption by the preaching of Christian principles. This was already happening in Spain, with Bishop Herrera attacking censorship laws and demanding freedom of speech and Cardinal Pla vehemently criticising all totalitarian attempts to regulate social and economic life¹⁵⁴. These attempts to justify the position of Catholics in Fascist Spain were, however, not enough for many Welshmen. A year after these letters appeared, the Caernarfonshire Baptist Association summed up the attitude of most Welsh Nonconformists when it decided to protest directly to Pius XII about 'Roman Catholic persecution of Protestant minorities' in Spain. The double-standards of Catholics was again criticised. 'How can you sincerely plead for liberty for Roman Catholic people in Communist nations, and at the same time permit your own Roman Catholic clergy and laity to persecute mercilessly the Protestant minorities in such countries as Spain and Columbia?'. How, it repeated, could the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church condemn in others what he condones in his own people? 'It is well that you should preach freedom and religious tolerance. It would be more admirable and convincing still if you would practise it'¹⁵⁵.

ii) The growth of Catholicism as a political threat to Wales

With these accusations of Fascist tendencies the growth of Catholicism in the Principality began to be regarded not only as a religious threat but as a political one as well. Non-Catholic Welshmen had inherited a Protestant tradition which believed Rome to have secret political aspirations in this country. This belief, summarised as the 'double allegiance' of Catholics to Pope and Crown, had led to much of the nineteenth century English anti-Catholicism¹⁵⁶. Whereas in

¹⁵⁴*Western Mail*, 3 Dec. 1956, 4.

¹⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 25 Jan. 1957, 5.

¹⁵⁶Norman, *Anti-Catholicism*, p. 15.

England, however, this belief had declined by the inter-war years, in Wales it seemed to increase as the Church grew. In 1925 Rev. J. Vyrnwy Morgan suggested that in discussions concerning the possibility of a conversion of Wales to Catholicism, the political implications had not been given adequate attention. According to Morgan, Rome's theory was that 'Christendom must have a headship, and that must be Roman. Once that is definitely settled, it inevitably implies the eventual control of the civil, or temporal, power'¹⁵⁷. Likewise, Y Faner in 1930 feared that Catholicism posed as much of a political threat to Wales as it did a religious danger to Nonconformity, and its growing strength in the Principality made this menace very real. 'Nid breuddwyd gwag, nid dychmygion anelwig yw perigl Pabyddiaeth. Y mae Pabyddiaeth heddiw yn fwy beiddgar nag erioed'. As the Vatican was trying to control the Maltese government, so this would eventually happen to Wales if Welshmen did not face the Catholic menace. 'Unwaith eto, bydded Cymru'n wylidwrus. Gwylier pob symudiad. Y mae'r Pabyddion yn gyfrwys, ni wyddoch yn y byd ymha ryw gyfeiriad y daw eu cynllwynion i'r golwg'¹⁵⁸. A year before this Rev. D. Tecwyn Evans had expressed similar fears in the Western Mail. 'Now that the Pope has become an independent Monarch with power to send his Ambassadors to every country the situation is more dangerous than ever'¹⁵⁹.

The issue of the possible political threat posed by the Catholic Church to Wales also manifested itself in discussions concerning Catholic education. There was a real feeling that supporting Catholic schools through public funds was tantamount to financing not only religious but also specific political aspirations and propaganda in Wales. 'Would they [the people of Wales]', asked Rev. D. Winter Lewis of Bridgend in 1929, 'support private schools which are to be exclusively under the control of ecclesiastical rulers whose ideas of religious duties are, to inculcate obedience in matters civil, as well as religious, to the edicts of the foreign potentate - the Bishop of Rome - a temporal sovereign?'¹⁶⁰. In a special letter to the Western Mail a year later he was to reiterate the point. 'The

¹⁵⁷Morgan, *Welsh Mind in Evolution*, p. 180.

¹⁵⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 1 July 1930, 4.

¹⁵⁹*Western Mail*, 12 June 1929, 9.

¹⁶⁰*Western Mail*, 29 May 1929, 9.

opposition of Protestants to the Roman Catholic Church is not a matter of mere sectarian rivalry;’ he wrote, ‘the opposition is at bottom to the dangers of political interference by foreign ecclesiastical rulers in the affairs of this country’¹⁶¹. Again in reaction to calls for more educational funding, the President and Secretary of the Cardiff and District Evangelical Churches Council wrote to the Western Mail in 1930 warning of what might happen to Wales if they were given their own way. ‘Recent occurrences in Malta have clearly demonstrated that the Roman hierarchy is the active political organisation of an alien state, and that it is prepared and determined to disable and, if need be, to destroy the civil constitution of any state that does not fall in with its wishes’¹⁶².

At times accusations of a secret Papal political offensive were so impassioned that Emlyn Sherrington describes ‘an atmosphere of hysteria’ in Welsh Nonconformist spheres at this time¹⁶³. Such accusations were increasingly preoccupied with Rome’s affiliation with Fascism. At a meeting in Cardiff in 1936, J. A. Kensit further provoked these feelings by reiterating the claim that Wales would go the way of Italy and Spain, where democracy and freedom were in crisis, if it converted to Catholicism. The totalitarianism which was growing in these countries was a natural outcome, he claimed, of their autocratic Catholic beliefs. ‘Wales would present a strange spectacle if it were converted into a Spain, an Italy, or an Austria ... the larger the figure of the priest the smaller the figure of liberty’¹⁶⁴. A year later the Council of the Presbyterian Church in Wales, meeting at Llandrindod Wells, discussed the East Glamorgan Presbytery’s appeal that Nonconformists should attempt to combat, by speech and pamphlets, ‘the opportunist combination of Fascism and Roman Catholicism as movements opposed to freedom of religious thought and practice’. The Council responded by declaring war on the assortment of ‘isms’ which were threatening modern society. These were what Rev. M. Watcyn-Williams referred to as ‘a strange combination of Fascism, Nazism, and Roman Catholicism seeking to impose upon others a

¹⁶¹ *Western Mail*, 13 Feb. 1930, 9.

¹⁶² *Western Mail*, 19 June 1930, 6.

¹⁶³ Emlyn Sherrington, ‘Welsh Nationalism, the French Revolution and the Influence of the French Right 1880-1930’, in David Smith (ed.), *A People and a Proletariat : Essays in the History of Wales 1780-1980* (London, 1980), p. 127.

¹⁶⁴ *Western Mail*, 22 Oct. 1936, 10.

particular way of life'. It is interesting to note that only when the resolution of condemnation was redrafted was Russian Communism added. To Welsh Catholics the greatest threat to religion and world order was Marxism, whereas to Nonconformists it was Catholicism with all its Fascist connotations. The Council's resolution, therefore, called the Welsh people's attention to 'the menace of movements which suppress liberty of religious thought and practice', warning them against the subtle combination of Fascism and Catholicism 'which, under the guise of religion, threatens to stamp out the liberty of Christians'¹⁶⁵. As late as the mid 1950s it was still being claimed that the Pope's political aims in Wales had not been dealt a deadly blow at the Reformation. As the Papacy slowly regained its strength, so, wrote W. Rawlings of Abertridwr, 'we may expect to see some great moves in the near future towards the complete subjection of the civil power. This is what the Roman Church is aiming at'¹⁶⁶.

When Saunders Lewis converted to Catholicism in 1932 he became the perfect target against which those who feared the Fascist political goals of Catholicism in Wales could aim their accusations and anger. Lewis had become president of the Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1926, and served as the party's 'major ideologue and inspiration' from its founding a year earlier¹⁶⁷. That there was a relationship between the development of Lewis's political policies and his spiritual path to conversion cannot be denied. 'Fe esblygodd syniadau crefyddol a gwleidyddol Saunders Lewis yn y dauddegau' wrote Robin Gwyn¹⁶⁸. It is also clear that following his conversion Lewis's political ideas were influenced, quite naturally, by his faith. His 'Ten Point Policy', published in 1934 and the unofficial programme of the Plaid during the 1930s, reflect such Papal Encyclicals as *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). 'Mae 'na gryn debygrwydd', claimed Gwyn, 'rhwng rhai o syniadau'r Deg Pwynt Polisi a datganiadau cymdeithasol yr Eglwys Babyddol'¹⁶⁹. To deduce from this that Lewis was a

¹⁶⁵*Western Mail*, 8 April 1937. 10.

¹⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 12 Jan. 1954. 6.

¹⁶⁷Morgan, 'Welsh Politics', p. 105.

¹⁶⁸Robin Gwyn, 'Cwrs y Byd - Dylanwad Athroniaeth Wleidyddol Saunders Lewis ar ei Ysgrifau Newyddiadurol 1939-50' (unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Wales, Bangor 1991) p. 12.

¹⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 24; cf. D. Tecwyn Lloyd, *John Saunders Lewis : Y Gyfrol Gyntaf* (Denbigh. 1988), pp. 273-90 and Dafydd Glyn Jones, 'His Politics', in *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff. 1973).

Fascist in his political dealings was certainly unfair, yet with fear of Catholicism's growth in Wales and with accusations of Fascist tendencies in the Catholic Church, many did reach that conclusion.

Accusations of Lewis's allegedly Fascist tendencies had surfaced a number of years before he actually converted. In the mid 1920s W. J. Gruffydd, staunch Nonconformist and editor of *Y Llenor*, criticised what he called the 'Neo-Catholic Movement' (namely Lewis himself and Ambrose Bebb) whose new nationalism saw conservative traditionalism as Wales's only hope. He accused Lewis and Bebb of sympathies both with the Catholic Church and with *Action Française*, the quasi-Fascist French movement. Ostensibly Catholic, this extreme right-wing movement was, in fact, repudiated by the Vatican in 1926. Lewis replied to the criticism in his 'Llythyr Ynghylch Catholigaeth' published in *Y Llenor* in 1926. While admitting he had been influenced by the literary works of right-wing French novelists, such as Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès, he claimed that their political ideas were very different from his own¹⁷⁰. Between the 1920s and the 1940s Gruffydd continued to voice his disapproval of what he saw as Lewis's anti-democratic and Fascist views. Gruffydd, however, had an 'inability to distinguish between Catholicism and elitist political ideology'¹⁷¹, and his accusations were certainly coloured by his clear dislike of Catholicism. In his pose as the 'preceptor' of the Welsh nation, T.P. Ellis accused him of very often betraying 'a childish impertinence towards the Catholic Church'¹⁷². Likewise, even potentially sympathetic observers faulted him for his 'strong animus against the Roman Catholic Church'¹⁷³. On responding to an article of his in *Y Llenor* in 1933¹⁷⁴ a Dublin Protestant, Maud Joynt, felt the need to remind him that if the Catholic Church was admittedly 'liable to the worse abuses, it has contained some

p. 45; Lewis accepted this oft-made charge, but argued that many non-Catholic movements advocated policies to be found in various encyclicals (D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood* (Cardiff, 1983), p. 125).

¹⁷⁰This accusation, however, was to resurface in Rev. Gwilym Davies's attack on the Plaid leaders in *Y Traethodydd*, XI (3) (1942), 97-111.

¹⁷¹Sherrington, 'Welsh Nationalism', p. 127; cf. T. Robin Chapman, *W.J. Gruffydd* (Cardiff, 1993).

¹⁷²*Western Mail*, 24 June 1929, 11.

¹⁷³*Papurau W.J. Gruffydd: Cyf II* (MS NLW 523).

¹⁷⁴*Y Llenor*, XII (1933), 144-157.

notorious sinners even in its hierarchy, it has also, I believe, produced some of the greatest saints and highest types of spirituality'¹⁷⁵.

With the outbreak of the Second World War Gruffydd's prejudice continued unabated. In *Y Llenor* in 1940 he maintained that Catholics, with their loyalty to a politically scheming Pope who was all too ready to placate the Fascist powers, were attaining too much power at the Foreign Office. He noted that while Catholics only held 9% of the civil service higher posts outside the Foreign Office, in it they held 60% of its appointments. 'Mae adran gref o'r Eglwys Gatholig wedi bod yn gweithio allan o'r golwg, ymhob cyfeiriad mewn bywyd', he wrote, 'nid yn unig i adfer rheolaeth yr Eglwys ar foesau dynion unigol ond i adfer ei gallu a'i phenarglwyddiaeth dros y wladwriaeth'¹⁷⁶. Later in the year Gruffydd expressed concern that Plaid, which now had Catherine Daniel's husband, J.E. Daniel, as its president, still presented a Fascio-Catholic threat to Wales. Its policy of neutrality during the war and Daniel's alleged claim that the right of a nation was more important than liberalism and humanitarianism¹⁷⁷, led Gruffydd to conclude that if Plaid succeeded then the road would be clear for Fascism and for the Catholic Church¹⁷⁸. Although by 1951 Gruffydd was to urge fellow Protestants to work with Catholics against the evils of the modern world¹⁷⁹, during the war he reflected an increasing concern among Welsh Nonconformists. In *Y Faner* John Gwynedd Griffiths of the Rhondda tried to calm the situation by noting that in Wales 'nid yw'r Pabyddion yn cyfrif dim i ni heddiw. Ni ddônt byth yn ddylanwadol'¹⁸⁰. Others, however, were far less confident. Francis Williams strongly supported Gruffydd, urging that Welsh people realise 'y perygl y mae'r wlad hon yn ddo y dyddiau hyn oddi wrth ddylanwadau Jesiwitaidd'. It was only right that Gruffydd should throw 'golau llachar y gwir ar ystrywiau a dichellion dieflig Pabyddiaeth yn yr oes hon fel ymhob oes o'r blaen'¹⁸¹. Likewise, in a

¹⁷⁵*Papurau W.J. Gruffydd : Cyf II* (MS NLW 523).

¹⁷⁶*Y Llenor*, XIX (3) (1940), 121-26.

¹⁷⁷This was, Gruffydd claimed, 'athrawiaeth eithaf Hitler' (*Y Llenor*, XIX (4) (1940), 167).

¹⁷⁸*Y Llenor*, XIX (4) (1940), 167; J.E. Daniel retaliated in 'Lythyr Agored at W.J. Gruffydd' (*Y Faner*, 5 March 1941, 8) in which he accused Gruffydd of 'rhagfarn [ac] anwybodaeth'; cf. D. Densil Morgan, *Torri'r Seiliau Sicr : Detholiad o Ysgrifau J.E. Daniel* (Llandysul, 1993), pp. 59-63.

¹⁷⁹*Y Llenor* XXX (1) (1951), 2.

¹⁸⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Nov. 1940, 4.

¹⁸¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30 Oct. 1940, 4.

personal letter to Gruffydd, Sir Thomas Artemus Jones of Bangor thanked him 'from the bottom of my heart' for writing his initial article, as for years he too had been warning that Catholics had too many of the principal jobs at the Foreign Office¹⁸². Some months later Jones again wrote to Gruffydd suggesting that the article should be published as a bilingual pamphlet: 'mae'r erthygl wedi cynhyrfu tipyn ar y dyfroedd ymysg y bobl sy'n cyfrif yng Ngogledd Cymru'¹⁸³.

With attitudes such as Gruffydd's widespread among the Welsh people, Lewis's conversion to Catholicism had far reaching implications for Plaid, both during his presidency and for years after his resignation. Following his conversion he offered to resign his leadership, realising the embarrassment his action was bringing to the party. Although he was persuaded to stay in his position, there were certainly many Plaid members who began to question the wisdom of having a Papist as leader. In 1938 in *Y Ddraig Goch* Rev. R.H. Hughes criticised Lewis's tendency to idealise the Middle Ages and his constant emphasis on the 'Roman tradition'. 'Tipyn o benbleth i genedlaetholwr Cymreig', he concluded, 'yw gweled rhai o arweinwyr y Blaid yn troi o Eglwys Gymraeg i eglwys na chlywir ynddi yr un gair o'r iaith a gâr, ac na wnaeth ddim i feithrin bywyd ysbrydol y genedl, nac i ddiogelu ei hiaith na'i diwylliant ers canrifoedd'¹⁸⁴. Lewis's new faith was certainly looked upon with misgiving by many members. Some suggested that Lewis's policies emanated not from the experiences of the people of Wales but from the ideas of Pope Leo XIII¹⁸⁵, while others wished to disassociate the party from anything which could be construed as Fascism¹⁸⁶. The great majority who held any scruples over their leader, however, simply recognised the damage having a Catholic President was having on Plaid's standing among the largely Nonconformist people of Wales. Many years later Lewis himself admitted that his new faith was a problem in this respect. 'Rwy'n meddwl

¹⁸²*Papurau W.J. Gruffydd: Cyf II* (MS NLW 513).

¹⁸³*ibid.* (MS NLW 514).

¹⁸⁴*Y Ddraig Goch*, May 1938, 10; see also J.E. Daniel's reply in *Y Ddraig Goch*, May 1938, 11; cf. Morgan, *Torri'r Seiliau Sicr*, pp. 54-7.

¹⁸⁵Gwyn, 'Cwrs y Byd', p. 24; Lloyd, *John Saunders Lewis*, pp. 274-9; a Plaid member in 1937 asked 'what is the meaning of the President when he says he is standing for Welsh traditions, and yet has left one of the greatest traditions of Wales, that is its Protestantism?' (quoted in Davics, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 199).

¹⁸⁶See *Y Ddraig Goch*, May 1938, 10.

fy mod i wedi diethrio'r Cymry oddi wrthyf fi a pheri iddyn nhw fy amau i a'm hofni, oblegid i mi droi'n Gatholig. 'Rwy'n meddwl fod agwedd Cymru, yn enwedig pan drois i'n Gatholig, tuag at Gatholigiaeth, yn peri ei bod hi'n amhosibl i Gymru dderbyn Catholig yn arweinydd gwleidyddol'¹⁸⁷. Time after time Lewis threatened to retire, but was continually asked by the party to stay in office. By 1939, however, the gulf between himself and the rest of the party was unbridgeable, and he resigned his post¹⁸⁸. His letter of resignation implied that his Catholicism was one of the main reasons for his decision¹⁸⁹. Lewis's successor as President was the party's vice-president since 1930, Prof. J.E. Daniel, who (although a prominent Nonconformist) was subject to similar criticism after his wife Catherine's conversion to Catholicism. After Lewis was defeated by W. J. Gruffydd in a fiery contest in the 1943 election for the University of Wales seat in Parliament, he himself decided to leave politics completely, 'believing he had been badly served by Wales and victimised for his Catholicism'¹⁹⁰.

Following Lewis's resignation, Plaid continued to be linked by their opponents with Catholicism (and, by implication, with Fascism¹⁹¹). The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, it was due to the influence and reputation of its former president. Over ten years after his resignation as President, H.W.J. Edwards wrote that, although Lewis by now often criticised the party, 'to many people Saunders Lewis is Plaid Cymru'. Edwards claimed that to these people 'just as you will possibly say "Dick Whittington, Richard Whittington and Sir Richard Whittington"' to the question "name three Lord Mayors of London", so the answer to the question "name three Catholics in Plaid Cymru" would be "Saunders Lewis, S.L. and Lewis the Bard"¹⁹². The second reason the party was

¹⁸⁷*Taliesin*, 2 (1961). 14-15.

¹⁸⁸Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 199 notes that younger, left-wing members in particular became aggravated at Lewis's 'Catholic policies' associated with Fascism.

¹⁸⁹*ibid.* p. 105.

¹⁹⁰Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh Question : Nationalism in Welsh Politics 1945-1970* (Cardiff, 1975). p. 21.

¹⁹¹The accusation of Fascism was made all the more poignant by Plaid leaders' attitude to international events during the inter-war years and by their neutrality during the war. 'Nid rhyfel Cymreig, nac i ddibenion Cymreig. Nid Cymru a'i dewisodd, nid Cymru a'i cyhoeddodd ... yr unig ddinas noddfa sydd gennym yw ein gallu i gadw meddwl gwastad, gwrthrychol a niwtral yn y rhyfel hwn. Os collwn ein niwtraliaeth meddwl, y mae Lloegr wedi'n concro' (Saunders Lewis in *Y Ddraig Goch*, Oct. 1939, 4). This attitude in itself heightened the continuing accusations of Papism in Plaid (Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 112).

¹⁹²*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1951, 228.

seen as 'Catholic' was that a number of other prominent members were Catholics, including the editor of the Welsh Nationalist R.C. Richards, its regular international commentator T. Charles Edwards, Catherine Daniel¹⁹³, and Lewis's good friend R.O.F. Wynne.

Opponents of the Plaid were quick to play on the links it had with Catholicism. In 1942 in Y Traethodydd 'the most bitter attack ever'¹⁹⁴ on the party was made by Rev. Gwilym Davies. The charge of Papism was central to his accusations. A Baptist minister writing in a Methodist journal, this was all too clearly a sectarian attack. For Davies, Plaid was a Welsh branch of *Action Française*, with Lewis the Welsh version of the movement's leader, Charles Maurras. The party, which he referred to as 'y Blaid Ffascgaidd yng Nghymru', aimed simply at spreading anti-democratic influence and Papal authoritarianism. It therefore provided a dangerous challenge to the Welsh Churches and religious institutions. 'Yn y Gymru annibynnol, dotalitaraidd, ffascgaidd, a phabyddol, ni fydd ond un blaid, un eglwys ac un iaith'¹⁹⁵. In retaliation to these accusations Saunders Lewis and J.E. Daniel wrote two pamphlets, Plaid Cymru Gyfan and The Party for Wales. Lewis showed the absurdity of Davies's claims by estimating there to be only eight or nine Catholics in the entire party, while Daniel dismissed the proposition that Papal teaching was at the root of the nationalists' policies.

D. Hywel Davies claims that the frequency of these accusations declined following Lewis's withdrawal from public life in 1945, J.E. Daniel's retirement from political activities shortly afterwards and the choice of Nonconformist Gwynfor Evans as party president. While the influence of such indictments certainly waned¹⁹⁶, it is clear that well into the 1950s the accusation of Plaid being a Catholic party was still being made. After accusing Catholics of Fascist views, a Labour party member Enoch Thomas of Cardiff asked Plaid members (in a letter in Y Faner in 1948) whether they still stood by their former president's principles.

¹⁹³Before her marriage to J.E. Daniel. Catherine Huws had been a prominent canvasser for Plaid in Cardiff (Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 149. 172).

¹⁹⁴Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 236.

¹⁹⁵*Y Traethodydd*, July 1942, 107; cf. Morgan, *Torri'r Seiliau Sicr*, pp. 63-4.

¹⁹⁶D Hywel Davies notes that J.E. Jones referred to the lessening of the effectiveness of Catholic jibes even during the war with significant support given to Plaid by Nonconformist ministers during the by-election campaign (Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, pp. 250. 259).

‘A ydych chwi yn credu yn y dorïaeth Babyddol hon a bregethir gan Saunders Lewis, neu nad ydych? (Os dyna eich athroniaeth, Duw a’n gwaredo os cawn Ymreolaeth!)’¹⁹⁷. Similarly, Iorweth Thomas, the Labour MP for Rhondda West, also criticised the party for their Catholic links, stating that the greatest danger to Wales ‘came not from Downing Street, but from the Vatican’. In a fiery outburst at a rally at Cwmparc in 1951 Thomas claimed that the Nationalist party was ‘an agent of the Catholic Church’ and that it was time that they ‘repudiated Popish influences’¹⁹⁸.

Even in the 1950s Plaid members therefore found themselves defending their party against Papist accusations. In *Y Faner* in 1950 D.J. Thomas of Dyserth asked those who continued to criticise the party ‘ai teg yw dweud mai “plaid babyddol” yw hi gan fod rhyw hanner dwsin (os hynny) o’i harweinwyr yn aelodau o’r Eglwys Babyddol?’. The other parties were, for Thomas, distorting the truth so as to reach their own political aims. ‘Gwerin Cymru, Anghydfurfwyr selog,’ he stressed, ‘yw cant-namyn-un o bob cant o aelodau Plaid Cymru’¹⁹⁹. A letter by Dafydd Orwig Jones of Deiniolen, after referring to ‘y camliwio sydd ar Plaid Cymru am fod rhyw ddau neu dri o’i haelodau blaenllaw yn Babyddion’, pointed out that of the 21 Catholics in Parliament, 15 of those were in the Labour party. There was, however, no criticism of the Labour party. ‘Pam ynteu codi bwganod yn achos Plaid Cymru? Yr ateb yw, wrth gwrs, fod rhai pobl yn rhy lwfr i greu barn; credant y gwna rhagfarn y tro’²⁰⁰. Two years later Rev. J.T. Williams of Clydach admitted that many, misled by the party’s enemies, still believed that Plaid was linked to a Catholic plot to gain political power. Through his own experience he knew that Catholicism’s connections with prominent members of the party had been ‘yn faen tramgwydd i lawer ac wedi eu cadw o’r tu allan o’r blaid’. He did not, however, deny that Catholicism was a political threat to the freedom of Wales. Instead, he urged members to be on constant guard against Catholic influences in the party. The important point for Williams was that the leadership was now completely free of Catholic influences, and Welsh

¹⁹⁷ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Nov. 1948, 2.

¹⁹⁸ *The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1951, 228.

¹⁹⁹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 12 April 1950, 2.

²⁰⁰ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 19 April 1950, 2.

Nonconformists need not worry about supporting the present Plaid Cymru organisation²⁰¹. Even Catholics themselves repudiated the accusation that the party was being colonised by Catholics. An article by H.W.J. Edwards in The Tablet in 1951 played on the irony of such accusations. However much he himself would love the charge of Plaid Cymru being a party of Catholics to be true, the reality was that most Catholics were actually very wary of the party. Those who were in Plaid were the very small intellectual minority who were Welsh-speaking. Most Catholics in Wales, with their Irish or English backgrounds, deeply feared the Plaid's 'Welsh-Welsh policy' believing it 'expresses the mood of Protestant chapel folk'. They were also most concerned 'that a successful Nationalism in Wales would deal a deadly blow to Catholic education in Wales'²⁰².

Both during the Second World War and afterwards Saunders Lewis in particular continued to receive much criticism for his alleged Fascism. Gwilym Davies published a parody of Lewis's ideas, trying to prove 'trwy ddethol a chamesbonio ei ddeunydd fod Saunders Lewis yn ceisio creu gwladwriaeth Ffsgaidd a Phabyddol yng Nghymru'²⁰³. Such allegations of Fascism were certainly one reason why he did not get more support in the 1943 University Election²⁰⁴. The basis for the accusations were centred on his Catholicism. Lewis certainly reflected his fellow Catholics' strong anti-Communist stance, suggesting in the late 1940s that there was soon to be a virulent battle between the Communists and 'the Christian civilisation'. Likewise, his refusal to condemn either Franco's oppression of the Basques or Mussolini's war against Abyssinia reflected Papal policy. The Vatican's attitude to events during and after the war can be clearly seen in his 'Cwrs y Byd' column in Y Faner, which he wrote between 1939 and 1951. Sir Thomas Artemus Jones, in a letter to W.J. Gruffydd in 1940, had noted the Catholic attitude of Lewis's articles. 'Gyda phob parch i awdur "Cwrs y Byd"', he wrote, 'mae'r peraroglau Rhufeinig drosti i gyd!!'²⁰⁵.

²⁰¹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 Feb. 1952, 3.

²⁰² *The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1951, 228.

²⁰³ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15, Aug. 1951, 7.

²⁰⁴ Even the *Western Mail* (16 Jan. 1943) referred to Lewis as a 'nationalist authoritarian' whose propaganda was something 'which Dr. Goebbels could scarcely excel ... even its vocabulary is Fascist'.

²⁰⁵ *Papurau W.J. Gruffydd: Cyf II* (MS NLW 513).

That Lewis's opinions during the war were reflecting badly on the traditionally Nonconformist ethos of the newspaper in which he wrote, can be seen from another letter sent by Jones to Gruffydd. Jones expressed sadness that in articles in Y Faner, of all papers, there seemed to be support for *Action Française* and Vichy's government. 'Y mae teyrngarwch Saunders Lewis i Babyddiaeth wedi ei ddallu i ddrygioni y rhai hyn'²⁰⁶. A year later Jones reported to Gruffydd that a friend of his, Hooson, had resigned from the Governing Board of Y Faner. 'Tybia nad oedd yn teimlo'n esmwyth iawn', he concluded, 'ymysg "y fath nyth o Gatholigion"!' ²⁰⁷.

At a Plaid Cymru Summer School in Abergele in 1951, Dr. Pennar Davies defended Saunders Lewis against what he saw as the unfair accusations of Fascism. Just because he was a Catholic, and therefore loyal to the Pope, this did not mean he was Fascist. Any type of Fascism was 'gwbl annerbyniol ganddo, oherwydd yr awdurdod diamodol a fynnai gwladwriaeth a Fuhrer Ffasgaidd'²⁰⁸. Accusations that Lewis and his fellow Catholics in Plaid held anti-democratic views, however, continued to flourish. In Y Faner in 1948 Margaret Thomas of Glanamau quoted an article by J.B.S. Haldane in the Daily Worker and asked if Lewis could find time to give his view on it. 'The only body of men and women in Britain who receive orders from the head of a foreign State are the Roman Catholics;' ran the quotation, 'their orders, contained in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* ... are to work for Fascism'²⁰⁹. Although Lewis did not directly reply to Margaret Thomas, his Catholic friend and fellow-Plaid member R.O.F. Wynne of Garthwin quoted a large section of the encyclical in question to show that, rather than supporting Fascism, it clearly condemned the wickedness of extreme capitalism. He urged all who wished to know more about the true teaching of the Church on the subject to read Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, the 'Worker's Charter'²¹⁰. In reply to Wynne's explanation, Margaret Thomas claimed that it was very hard to reconcile Leo's encyclical with the acts and attitudes of the present Papacy, which continued to support Franco against the

²⁰⁶*ibid.* (MS NLW 514).

²⁰⁷*ibid.* (MS NLW 517).

²⁰⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 Aug. 1951, 7.

²⁰⁹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 March 1948, 5.

²¹⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 April 1948, 2.

legitimate people's government in Spain. 'Nid wyf fi am roddi'r Pab yn yr un bad â mi', Thomas sarcastically concluded, 'a dweud ei fod heb ddarllen y Siarter'²¹¹. Criticism of Catholics in the Plaid and suspicion of their political aspirations continued well into the 1950s. 'Nid yw rhyddid i Gymru ond eilbeth i Rufain;' wrote Rev. J.T. Williams in 1952, 'moddion i gyrraedd ei nôd a ehangu gafael ei chrafangau ar werinoedd daear a sefydlu'r Fatican fel gallu tymhorol mwyaf yn y byd, ail-sefydlu Sanctaidd Ymerodaeth Rhufain, na byddai lle ynddi i gydwybod na barn na rhyddid personol, ac a gynhelid drwy drais a grym a gorthrech'²¹².

Local Reactions to the Increasing Presence of the Catholic Church in Wales

a) Reaction to converts

The increasing progress of Catholicism in Wales had an obvious effect on individual communities across the Principality. Not only was there growth into new areas, but there was also numerous conversions among the native population. At a grass-roots level the hostility to the emerging Church was never as fervent as that seen in Nonconformist newspapers and conferences at the same time. Neither was there the violent animosity towards Catholics that had been witnessed in South Wales in the mid-nineteenth century²¹³ and was continuing in some of the larger British cities²¹⁴. It is, however, clear that native Welsh converts, especially those who had forsaken Nonconformity and those from rural areas, did have to face at least initial prejudice from family, friends and neighbours. The Irish or Italian Roman Catholic, wrote H.W.J. Edwards of the Church's position in the

²¹¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 April 1948, 2.

²¹²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 Feb. 1952, 3; R.O.F. Wynne (*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 5 March 1952, 2) answered 'nid ydynt yn coleddu y rhagfarnau na'r cynlluniau tywyll a briodolir iddynt gan Mr. Williams'; see also *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 22 Aug. 1951, 2 : In a personal attack on Saunders Lewis ('Cafodd yr anrhydedd o'i eni i ryddid gogoniant Protestaniaeth ac Anghydfurfiaeth, ond dewisodd lyncu dogma adweithiol') a correspondent in Bala concluded that 'cenedlaetholwr anghyson yw yr un a waedda am ryddid annibyniaeth i Gymru ac a ymgryma i imperialaeth y Fatican'.

²¹³Paul Brenden O'Leary, 'Immigration and Integration : A Study of the Irish in Wales 1798-1922' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 1989), p. 39-43.

²¹⁴Evidence of violence towards Catholics in Wales at this time is almost non-existent; see Magner, *Welsh Travelling Mission*, p. 6 for an isolated incident.

Rhondda valley in 1938, ‘is regarded as a quite ordinary and respectable person, but it is another matter for the Rhondda Welshman or woman to embrace “the old faith”’²¹⁵. Accepting Catholicism frequently meant a degree of rejection by home communities, who often saw conversion not only as apostasy but as a betrayal of their country. ‘A Welshman who embraces Catholicism’, wrote Edwards ten years later, ‘is thought of as having contracted out of the Cymry’²¹⁶. Most Catholics in Wales had, after all, Irish or English backgrounds, and spoke only the English language. ‘The chapels are the outposts of traditional Wales in these areas,’ admitted J.M. Cleary in 1956, ‘the Catholic churches are sure to have statues of St. Patrick, and the *Cork Weekly Examiner* on sale at the door’²¹⁷. The reaction to a conversion of those largely Nonconformist Welshmen who felt deeply about their culture and language could sometimes be harsh. The fact that Catholics placed so much emphasis on their children attending Catholic schools, which for Nonconformists bore no relation to the nation’s cultural values and needs, served only to make the situation worse²¹⁸. According to Catherine Daniel for a Welsh Nonconformist to turn to the Catholic community was ‘nothing less than an act of desertion in the thick of the battle’. Such an act was seen as ‘a wholesale denial of the very cultural values for which Wales is to-day fighting a prolonged battle’²¹⁹. Nonconformity was so inextricably linked with Welsh culture that it was regarded as the only valid tradition to which a true Welshman could belong. ‘Today’, wrote H.W.J. Edwards, ‘I heard a Welshman say, “Why did you become a Catholic, and leave the Welsh religion?”’²²⁰. Catherine Daniel claimed that ‘the convert and his fellow countryman will feel that there has opened between them an abyss’²²¹.

During the 1950s many conversion stories were recorded in such Catholic publications as the *Menevia Record*²²² and *Review*²²³. These articles not only

²¹⁵Edwards, *The Good Patch*, p. 144.

²¹⁶*The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 247.

²¹⁷J.M. Cleary, ‘The Irish and Modern Wales’, *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956), 205.

²¹⁸Catherine Daniel, ‘Wales’, in Adrian Hastings (ed.), *The Church and the Nations* (London, 1959), pp. 123–4.

²¹⁹Catherine Daniel, ‘Catholic Converts in Wales’, *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956), 213.

²²⁰*The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 247.

²²¹Daniel, ‘Catholic Converts in Wales’.

²²²See *Menevia Record*, 6 (3) (1959), 10-3; 7 (1) (1959), 7-10; 7 (3) (1960), 16-8.

²²³See *Review* 2 (1) (1958), 4-5.

heightened the growing sense of optimism and confidence being experienced within Catholic circles but also indicated the type of reactions which converts frequently experienced. One such convert, who wrote under the name 'Rhydderch', claimed that his embracing of Catholicism was regarded 'almost as an act of treachery to one's family and the local chapel'. He described the day when a chapel deacon approached him in the street, and remarked that he had not only brought grief to his parents, but that the deacon's family, formerly his closest friends, would never acknowledge him again. 'I was an outcast. "Go back to college - and keep out of this village!" Those were the deacon's last words. What hurt me most of all was to see the tears in his eyes'²²⁴. Neither was this an isolated instance. An uncle of one Margaret Davies, on hearing that she was to visit Lourdes, had told her that her 'forthcoming visit to a Roman Catholic shrine could only result in personal degradation and misery'²²⁵, while Vernon Johnson wrote of the *unsympathetic reaction of his friends and family who insisted that he was just 'fascinated by the "witchery" of the Catholic religious life and the "glamour of Rome"'*²²⁶. Another convert, despite having become convinced at the 'truth' of Catholicism, had been reluctant to undergo instruction because she knew the reaction this would cause among even her closest friends and family. 'I was too cowardly to take the step and break away from the past;' on reflection she wrote, 'there were links, human links which would have to be severed for all time if I became Catholic. It would be almost like entering a foreign country'²²⁷. Such hesitancy was common among converts. In describing his thoughts immediately after his conversion in 1938, one person wrote that 'there would be difficulties - frightful difficulties, and worst of all there would have to be that sad interview with my aged parents, good, devout Methodists, who, I felt, would never comprehend why I was abandoning their ways and beliefs'²²⁸. Likewise, Mair O'Leary from Port Talbot claimed that 'the period before I was actually received into the Catholic Church was a very difficult and traumatic time both for my family and myself'. Many years after her conversion she claimed that she

²²⁴*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 16-7.

²²⁵*Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 2.

²²⁶*Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 6.

²²⁷*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 8.

²²⁸*Menevia Record*, 5 (3) (1958), 11.

could now 'understand the prejudices are caused by fear of what we do not know and cannot understand'²²⁹. Such reactions, while sometimes reflecting an initial hostility which echoed the official Nonconformist reaction to the growth of the Church, seem more often to reveal a sense of sadness and disappointment on the part of the convert's compatriots.

With these attitudes towards Welsh converts it is very likely that many prospective converts from Nonconformity did not take the final step out of fear of rejection from their friends and relatives. In 1933, for example, two students training to be Nonconformist ministers at the Calvinistic Methodist Theological College in Aberystwyth, H. Llewelyn Williams from Blaenau Ffestiniog and E. Owen Williams from Holyhead, announced that after much prayer and contemplation they had decided to convert to Catholicism. Nonconformists in the town were angered by the prospective defection and demanded that the college authorities investigate the matter at once²³⁰. Before taking the final step the two students were persuaded by their Nonconformist friends and relations to pull back. Clearly, the pressure exerted on the two had been immense, and it was surely more than intellectual and religious reasoning that prevented them from forsaking Protestantism. When they requested permission to return to their studies, the Board of Governors unanimously decided to reject the request²³¹. Both students therefore joined the 'Instructional House Party' in Oxford, where Nonconformists and Anglicans united to discuss Christian matters²³².

As well as the problems converts themselves faced, there were also problems faced by those Nonconformists who had married Catholic partners. In 1923 Saunders Lewis's fiancée, Margaret Gilcriest, became a Catholic. In marrying a Catholic, Lewis experienced what was typical of many mixed marriages. His letters to his fiancée during their courtship clearly reflect the problems faced by Welsh Nonconformists who married Catholics. 'With her traditions,' he wrote of his aunt, 'a Catholic is an immense mouthful to swallow,

²²⁹*St. Joseph's, Port Talbot: Commemorative Brochure Diamond Jubilee 1931-1991* (1991), p. 78.

²³⁰*Y Cymro*, 10 June 1933, 5.

²³¹*Y Cymro*, 8 July 1933, 1.

²³²*Y Cymro*, 15 July 1933, 1.

to put it crudely'²³³. In later letters Lewis referred to 'the prejudices of dead wars and ignorant bitterness'²³⁴ and described Wales as being still essentially a tribal society²³⁵. 'My family will not receive you -', he wrote, 'I don't say "never", but for a long time'²³⁶. Aside from their own prejudices, there was also a recognition that such a mixed marriage reflected badly on the whole family. 'The Chapel and all Nonconformist South Wales', wrote Lewis whose father was a prominent minister, 'will gossip a month and will make my father's life uncomfortable awhile'²³⁷.

With the stigma against Catholicism in Nonconformist circles at this time, converting or marrying a Catholic certainly caused numerous problems. 'They become strangers upon their own hearths; suspect and misunderstood by those to whom they matter most'²³⁸. This not only had religious but also social and economic consequences. Religion in Wales, whether Nonconformity or Anglicanism, was the only social outlet of many of its inhabitants. Saunders Lewis wrote in 1922 that 'here, if you attend neither church nor chapel - well, you can't get to know people'²³⁹. Similarly, nearly forty years later Catherine Daniel could still write that the gulf between convert and fellow countryman was enormous: 'so lacking is Welsh life in institutions other than those which derive from religious contexts'²⁴⁰. As most Catholics were comparatively poor, Rome was also regarded as far less respectable than any other denomination. In a letter to the *Catholic Times* in 1936 T.P. Ellis accentuated this problem. Of the whole Catholic population in Wales at this time, he claimed that he knew only six Catholics who could call themselves wealthy and only around 100 who had moderate incomes. Most Catholics were 'down-and-outers, collected from the hedgeways and byways, and lacking in that outward "respectability" so dear to the heart of the Welsh Nonconformist'²⁴¹. To be connected to the Roman Church,

²³³Letter Dec. 1922, quoted in Mair Saunders Jones, Ned Thomas and Harri Pritchard Jones, *Saunders Lewis: Letters to Margaret Gilcriest* (Cardiff, 1993), p. 497.

²³⁴Letter 22 May 1924, *ibid.* p. 534.

²³⁵Letter June 1924, *ibid.* p. 538.

²³⁶Letter 22 May 1924, *ibid.* pp. 533-4.

²³⁷Letter June 1924, *ibid.* p. 540.

²³⁸Daniel, 'Wales', pp. 123-4.

²³⁹Letter 1 Feb. 1922, Jones, Thomas and Jones, *Letters to Margaret Gilcriest*, p. 482.

²⁴⁰Daniel, 'Wales', p. 126.

²⁴¹*Catholic Times*, quoted in *Western Mail*, 18 May 1936, 7.

then, often meant a loss of social status, and, for many converts who ran businesses, may have brought about a loss of trade or money. According to the Anglican travel writer H.V. Morton 'only the very poor, who have nothing to lose socially or economically, will go to Mass in Dolgelley'²⁴². Catherine Daniel noted that another reason that converts were economically worse off as a result of their new allegiance was because of the Church's teaching concerning birth control; a large family was both the norm and an honourable duty²⁴³. Indeed, the social and economic loss that a Welsh convert would face is perfectly captured by H.V. Morton : 'it would be easier for a rich man to pass through the eye of a needle than for him to walk from his shop past the Nonconformist chapel to the little church where the candles burn'²⁴⁴.

b) Fear of the unknown

As Catholicism grew in strength and numbers, it expanded into areas which had had no direct contact with Catholicism since the Reformation. The initial reaction to Catholics who came to these predominantly Nonconformist areas was mostly hostile, reflecting centuries of prejudice. Some of the most vehement opposition was directed towards the opening of convents and the work of monks. At the beginning of the century the Ursuline Sisters established a convent in Llanelli, South Wales, and were immediately faced with bitter hostility from the native population. It was said that the sisters had 'struck terror in their hearts', and men had actually thrown stones at them while women had attempted to tear off their cloaks²⁴⁵. At about the same time the Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Ghost also faced an initial hostile reaction to their presence at Monmouth, where an anonymous letter to the Monmouthshire Beacon questioned the intentions of the nuns²⁴⁶. Kate Williams recollected that as a Nonconformist child she had 'always been led to believe that convents were

²⁴²*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 10.

²⁴³Daniel, 'Catholic Converts in Wales', p. 213.

²⁴⁴*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 10.

²⁴⁵*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 23.

²⁴⁶David A. Powell, *St. Mary's Catholic Church, Monmouth 1793-1993 A Short History* (Monmouth, 1993).

appalling institutions, and that nuns, especially the older ones, were simply dreadful²⁴⁷. The Passionist monks, who accepted charge of the Carmarthen mission at the end of the nineteenth century, also encountered much animosity as they ‘faced a culture and history that often appeared hostile to their very presence’²⁴⁸, and many sermons of fire and fury were heard against the Fathers from the local pulpits²⁴⁹.

The antagonism which accompanied the re-establishment of Catholicism in Dolgellau in the 1920s reflects the general attitude of the native population in the rural areas of Wales at this time. Dolgellau was said to have been a ‘centre of Nonconformity which had a reputation for bigotry’²⁵⁰. When it was announced a small Catholic chapel would be opened in the town in 1927 the local community reacted with ‘a frightful cry of “no Popery”’²⁵¹. Furthermore, two years later a community of Carmelite nuns from Notting Hill, London, established a closed convent there. Before they had arrived the Mother Prioress received a letter threatening her of the dreadful things that would happen if the nuns dared to set foot in Wales²⁵². It is reported that when they arrived at the town there was much bitterness towards them inspired by Wyclif preachers²⁵³. Similar hostility was displayed in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, where as late as the 1920s the Catholic priest was being spat at as he walked down the road and many of the locals were crossing the road rather than walk past the Catholic Church on the same side²⁵⁴. Writing in the *Menevia Record* in 1957, a Welsh convert to Rome looked back at this period by noting that ‘the Catholic Church was disliked and feared in Wales’²⁵⁵, and in 1926 *The Tablet* acknowledged the extent of the hostility which continued to be found against Catholicism by stating that ‘there is unfortunately still much ignorance and prejudice in Wales’²⁵⁶.

²⁴⁷*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 10.

²⁴⁸Daniel Donovan, quoted in Alan Randall, *The Passionists at Carmarthen 1889-1986 : A Commemorative Booklet* (1986), p. 4.

²⁴⁹Randall, *The Passionists at Carmarthen*, pp. 18-9.

²⁵⁰Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, pp. 206-7.

²⁵¹*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 10.

²⁵²*Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954), 3.

²⁵³Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 207.

²⁵⁴*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 11.

²⁵⁵*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 16.

²⁵⁶*The Tablet*, 10 April 1926, 507.

Writing in the Western Mail in 1960, Ena Kendall described the situation which throughout the twentieth century had been behind local demonstrations of opposition. ‘Catholicism filters back into Wales;’ she wrote, ‘and non-Catholics take a sometimes hesitant, sometimes hostile interest in the Church which might be making its first public appearance in their area for 400 years’²⁵⁷. The hostility shown by Nonconformist ministers and governing councils towards the growing Catholic Church certainly influenced their congregations. In 1931, for example, there was ‘a deplorable anti-Catholic demonstration’ at the Midnight Mass at the little church at Dolgellau²⁵⁸. Archimandrite Barnabus described the attitude towards Catholicism in this part of Wales at this time. Barnabus was forced to visit the Catholic church in Machynlleth at the beginning of the 1930s without telling his family and friends as ‘Roman Catholicism was anathema in those days *to decent Welsh folk*’. His home village of Pennal, Merionethshire was soon visited by an itinerant mission which preached on the village green. All fled indoors, shutting their doors and windows until the group had finished preaching. ‘Rome was indeed the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse and everyone kept clear of Papists’²⁵⁹. When the Menevia Travelling Mission was established in the late 1940s it certainly experienced initial non-Catholic hostility as it brought back the Mass to rural Wales for the first time since the reformation. The original missionary, Fr. Patrick Crowley, was at one time warned by the local police not to take his planned Mass at Nantgwrtheyrn on the Lleyn Peninsula as the non-Catholic villagers had threatened to stone him. In the same village one Polish man *was attacked on his way to Mass, sustaining serious injuries*²⁶⁰.

The erection of Catholic churches which accompanied the re-establishment of Catholicism in rural areas caused frequent Nonconformist protests. In Bala in the early 1930s, for example, a site for a church was finally secured after three years of constant effort ‘thwarted frequently by local prejudice against the Faith’²⁶¹. As late as the 1950s efforts to build and establish churches continued to face opposition. The reaction of the Free Churches to the proposed establishment

²⁵⁷ *Western Mail*, 15 Feb. 1960, 4.

²⁵⁸ *The Tablet*, 5 Jan. 1935, 24.

²⁵⁹ Archimandrite Barnabus, *Strange Pilgrimage* (Welshpool, 1985), p. 15.

²⁶⁰ *Magner, Welsh Travelling Mission*, p. 6.

²⁶¹ *The Tablet*, 8 June 1935, 738.

of a Catholic Church in Ruabon, near Wrexham, is one such example. For over ten years the Catholic community in the village had been using the local village hall for their services, but in 1955 they applied to build their own church. The Ruabon Free Church Council immediately protested against the allocation of land for this building. Copies of its resolution objecting to the allocation were sent both to Wrexham Rural Council and to the Welsh Office of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. 'Viewing with alarm the encroachment of Roman Catholicism on a Protestant Community', read the resolution, 'the Ruabon Free Church Council, representing all the Nonconformist churches in the district, protest strongly against the allocation of a plot of land at Ruabon for the erection of a Roman Catholic Church'²⁶². Three years later, a similar protest was made against an application for a site for a church at Llwynhendy, near Llanelli. A deputation from the Llwynhendy Free Church Council urged the town council to turn down the application on the grounds that a Catholic church 'would be alien to the Nonconformist traditions of the area'²⁶³. As late as 1965 the decision to sell a former Presbyterian chapel at Hay-on-Wye to the Catholic Church caused 'an outburst of anti-Catholic feeling that has set the hills and valleys around Hay echoing with criticism of Romanism'. One Nonconformist lay preacher, David Prosser of Llangorse, referred to 'another encroachment by that Church into what is officially a Protestant country'²⁶⁴.

The greatest manifestations of hostility towards Catholics in Wales, however, were not local lay attitudes. Once Catholics were settled in specific areas they often became accepted quite quickly as integration began, mixed marriages increased and individual members of the Church became respected and well-liked. Local anti-Catholic prejudice was on the whole low key, undramatic and soon overcome - the fear of the unknown rather than blind hatred and maliciousness. Even at Ruabon, where the protest against the building of the local Catholic church had caused quite a stir, Fr. Owen Hardwicke reported five years later that the protest 'was a gesture not meant personally'. It had, he continued, 'made no difference to personal attitudes. The way in which we are received is

²⁶²*Western Mail*, 3 Aug. 1955, 5.

²⁶³Menevia Diocesan Archives : Llanelli File.

²⁶⁴*Hereford Evening News*, 3 Nov. 1965, 3.

staggeringly friendly. Kindnesses were quite voluntarily and deliberately shown²⁶⁵. Such change in attitudes was witnessed across the Principality. At Welshpool the icy hostility and indifference towards John Heenan's post-war missionary efforts there soon melted. By 1960 it was written that 'the Church is respected in Welshpool, and today non-Catholics are helping to make possible the building of a new church'²⁶⁶. Similarly, the report on the Hay-on-Wye controversy noted that, despite the fervent hostility by Nonconformist representatives, 'there is at present no outward animosity between the 70 or 80 Catholics at Hay and the Protestants there'²⁶⁷. Although friendly relations between Catholics and other denominations were rare, they did increasingly exist. For the most part people were content to steer away from local denominational strife. At a local level people had far more to worry about in these years with two world wars, wide-scale inter-war economic depression, and increasing secularisation threatening the existing Welsh society. It was, instead, in fields where the prominent Nonconformist deacons and ministers could exert most influence, such as in local council discussions surrounding Catholic education and in discussions surrounding Catholic doctrinal issues, that hostility and prejudice towards Catholics continued to show itself most vehemently.

²⁶⁵ *Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

²⁶⁶ *Menevia Record*, 8 (1) (1960), 12-3.

²⁶⁷ *Hereford Evening News*, 3 Nov. 1965, 3.

Chapter 3

Prejudice and Hostility against Beliefs and Practices

General Issues

a) Ignorance and prejudice

‘The popular notions about Catholicism’, wrote J.E. de Hirsch-Davies in 1926, ‘are based upon either ignorance or prejudice. These are the enemies of the Faith, and it will take time and patience to remove them’¹. During that same year, in an address to the Catholic Citizens Parliament, he reiterated this complaint. ‘There is unfortunately’, he claimed, ‘still much ignorance and prejudice in Wales’². Archbishop Mostyn frequently stated that it was these two factors which were primarily responsible for the deep hostility towards Catholic doctrines. In his Advent Pastoral for 1932 he wrote that, while there were many doctrines which were regularly misinterpreted by Welsh non-Catholics, there were other doctrines which were being falsely attributed to the Church out of ignorance and intolerance. There continued to be many ‘gross misrepresentations on the part of the enemies of the Catholic Church’, and Mostyn prayed that God would ‘melt away this cloud of prejudice and ignorance’³. The prejudice against Catholic beliefs had certainly declined somewhat since the virulent nineteenth century accusations of the Pope as the Anti-Christ and of Catholics as working for the Devil⁴. That much prejudice still existed, however, is quite clear. Fear of the growth of the Church, the continuing development of its dogma, and its refusal to engage in ecumenical activities, all added to the entrenched prejudice many Welshmen held against Catholic beliefs. The extent that this prejudice turned into

¹J.E. De Hirsch-Davies, ‘Wales and Catholicism II’, *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (3) (1926), 76.

²*The Tablet*, 10 April 1926, 506.

³Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1932*.

⁴See *Y Traethodydd*, 3 (9) (1864), 110.

hatred was summed up by David Smith of Cardiff in 1954. Whereas there was ‘a babel of diversity’ in the beliefs of all the Churches in Wales, there remained ‘one mistakable mark of identification : a *unity of hatred*’. It was invariably aimed towards the Catholic Church. ‘No matter how bitter the wrangling of the sects, let anyone intervene with the red herring of the “Roman Church” and their concentrated venom is immediately directed in a single stream on this, admittedly the oldest of Christian institutions’⁵.

Along with this prejudice, many Welshmen sincerely believed some mythical stories about Catholic belief and practice. According to Fr. Eric J. Green in 1935 many chapel folk ‘have been told that Catholics do not worship God or Christ, but [the] Virgin Mary, and ... are still convinced that we pay to have our sins forgiven’. These people were genuinely ‘pleased as well as surprised’ to find these things were not true⁶. In the same year Donald Attwater claimed that ‘most of the old calumnies and misunderstandings about Catholicism are still current in Wales’ and ‘some preposterous ideas’ about the Church still prevailed⁷. A year later J.T.F. Williams also mentioned some of the ideas : the rosary, for example, was considered ‘a pagan “praying-wheel”’. ‘The vast majority of Welsh people’, he concluded, ‘look upon Catholics as still “lying unmoved in the iron chains of Popery”, and that Popery makes for everything that is vile, anti-Christian and of the devil’⁸. Such ignorance continued well after the Second World War. In an interview in the Catholic Herald in 1948 Bishop Petit described contemporary attitudes towards Catholicism. ‘What they know about the Faith is generally false,’ he claimed, ‘the old hair-raising bogeys of Maria Monk and the Scarlet Woman are still feared’⁹. Writing in the Menevia Record in 1955 Fr. M.J. Congar went as far as to claim that ‘what our Protestant friends take for Catholic doctrine is sometimes nothing but a caricature or else so superficial that it amounts to a distortion’¹⁰. After a spate of hostile letters in the Western Mail, as late as 1960 it

⁵*Western Mail*, 20 Jan. 1954. 6.

⁶*The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

⁷Donald Attwater, *The Catholic Church in Modern Wales : A Record of the Past Century* (London, 1935), p. 222.

⁸J.T.F. Williams, ‘The Conversion of Wales’, *The Month*, 167 (861) (1936), 260.

⁹*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948. 5.

¹⁰*Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 16.

was still being claimed that 'far too many display a marked ignorance of the fundamentals of the Roman Catholic Church'¹¹.

There were, indeed, numerous Catholic efforts in Wales to counter this misunderstanding and ignorance. Many suggested that if the Welsh people knew the true meaning behind Catholic beliefs, then the Conversion of Wales would be imminent. 'As soon as the people know what the Church is', wrote Eric Green, '... there will be a tremendous influx of conversions'¹². Such theories were supported by the evidence of converts themselves. In 1952 Rev. W.H. Bretwyn, the former Presbyterian minister of Aberdare, claimed that 'much prayerful study brought me to the threshold of the Roman Catholic faith, to which I had always been bitterly opposed out of ignorance'¹³. A Welsh article published in the 1944 Archdiocese Yearbook suggested that the best way to educate against the present prejudice and misunderstanding the people of Wales in the true Catholic Faith was through Papal encyclicals. 'Y mae llawer o Gymry heddiw na werthfawrogant Gatholigiaeth am na welant ynddi ddim ond casgliad o wirioneddau i'w profi neu i'w gwrthbrofi. Nid edrychant arni fel bywyd newydd yng Nghrist am na wyddant ddim am Gorff Cyfriniol Crist nac am Gymun y Saint'. The encyclicals were, it claimed, the 'cyfrwng gorau i beri i'r Cymro cyffredin adnabod gwir natur yr Eglwys Gatholig'¹⁴. In an article which also tried to combat misunderstanding of Catholic beliefs among Welsh Protestants J. Barrett Davies concurred: 'Nid cwyno'r ydwyf am eu bod yn ei gwrthod, neu yn beirnadu'n rhy lym, ond yn unig nad ydynt yn ei deall'¹⁵. One group which attempted to demolish this 'enormous barrier of ignorance between Catholics and others in Wales' was the Lamp Society which issued literature in Welsh outlining in an uncontroversial way many aspects of the Catholic faith. Its pamphlets, which began with 1956's 'Beth Yw'r Eglwys Gatholig?', were distributed directly to non-Catholic homes¹⁶.

¹¹*Western Mail*, 10 March 1960, 6.

¹²*The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

¹³*Western Mail*, 13 March 1952, 1.

¹⁴*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Year Book 1944* p. 9.

¹⁵J. Barrett Davies, 'Y Syniad Catholig am Ffydd', in Abel Ffowc Williams (ed.), *Ffydd a Ffydd* (Denbigh, 1945), 11: 'Fe welir diwinyddion disglair, weithiau, yn cyfeiliorni'n ddybryd wrth draethu ar Gatholigiaeth'; much of the misunderstanding was, he claimed, over specific terms: some (e.g. indulgence) not used for the same meaning as they were in the old Christian tradition, others (e.g. Church, grace) have a different meaning to the Protestant tradition.

¹⁶*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 18.

Missions for non-Catholics were also instigated in order to stem this ignorance. These meetings were originally intermittent and were held by itinerant missionaries travelling from parish to parish. During the 1920s and 1930s St. Peter's Church in Cardiff was visited almost annually by missions such as Fr. Filmer's Catholic Evidence Mission¹⁷. By the 1950s some of the larger parishes held missions regularly, organised and taken by one of the local priests. At St. Joseph's convent in Cardiff 'Talks for Non-Catholics' were held each week under Fr. Francis Poyner. Each discourse lasted for about an hour and a half, and the atmosphere was described as 'quite informal and extremely friendly'¹⁸. Non-Catholics who attended were under no obligation whatsoever to the church, as 'the age of the plotting Catholic - if it ever existed - is over, and the trees of the drive leading to St. Joseph's Convent, North Road, where the Talks are held, do *not* conceal militant Catholics armed with grappling hooks to draw one into Peter's net'. Quite apart from their proselytising function, the talks were valued as means to combat misunderstanding and ignorance: 'many misconceptions concerning the Faith are dispelled ... [visitors] will learn that Catholics do not worship the Virgin to the neglect of her Son, why fish is eaten on Friday, why we believe that Our Blessed Lord is truly present in The Blessed Sacrament, and countless others'¹⁹.

To Nonconformists, however, Catholic doctrines continued to be regarded as 'the foreign dogmas of an "Italian or Irish Church"' and most failed to appreciate the attempts made by Catholics to break down the 'great barrier' between the two traditions²⁰. In their over-zealous efforts to explain the 'true' meaning of their doctrines, Catholics often engendered harsh reactions by those who continued to feel threatened by the Church's growth. 'I have no intention ever of reading a Roman Catholic publication,' exclaimed a Nonconformist on receiving a complimentary copy of the Menevia Record, 'so you are merely wasting your time sending me [one]. The contents leave me absolutely cold. I see that the Editor is a priest. Well, I don't mind saying that both he and his silly

¹⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (2) (1924), 50.

¹⁸*Review*, 4 (2) (1960), 10.

¹⁹*Review*, 8 (3) (1964), 5.

²⁰*Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 12.

writers ought to take the high jump ... now!²¹. There was, in fact, woefully little unprejudiced theological critique of Catholicism up to the 1960s. Almost all discussion surrounding Papist beliefs was tinged with hostility and bigotry. Both Anglican and Nonconformist alike were fervent in their desire to undermine a growing and (in their opinion) false Church. Even in the ostensibly serious attempts to discuss the new dogma of the assumption of Mary in the 1950s, there was clearly an appetite for point-scoring and one-upmanship. The opinions of most Welshman towards Catholic beliefs had been summarised perfectly at the beginning of this period when at the enthronement of Archbishop James Bilsborrow The Tablet asked : ‘how can we deal with irrational prejudice, with ignorance that refuses to be enlightened, with misrepresentation that will not be corrected ... ?’. It was concluded that Bilsborrow’s work was bound to be taxing as ‘to clear the accumulated rubbish of 300 years is a heart-breaking task even for the most enthusiastic builders’²².

b) Superstitious errors

In the opinion of Vyrnwy Morgan, the typical Welshman who tested Roman doctrines by reason, history and Scripture, repudiated them as being the ‘essence of superstition, idolatry and error’²³. As well as faulting ‘new fangled and strange doctrines’²⁴ such as Papal Infallibility and those involving the Virgin Mary, there were certainly many general denunciations of Catholicism’s superstition, error and idolatry. These criticisms came primarily, though certainly not exclusively, from Nonconformists. Timothy Evans, a young Catholic convert, noted this in 1953 when he wrote that ‘Welsh Nonconformists, excellent folk, sometimes argue that Catholics are over-credulous about matters of religion ... they are inclined to write us off as a benighted people given to odd stupid practices’²⁵. Although Evans’s summary was accurate in many ways, much of the criticism of Catholicism was in fact far more venomous than he had described.

²¹*Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 7.

²²*The Tablet*, 29 July 1916, 154.

²³J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Welsh Mind in Evolution* (London, 1925), p. 190.

²⁴*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1943, 5.

²⁵*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 18.

Many Nonconformists condemned Catholicism as being utterly blasphemous. For Anne Lodwick Lewis, Catholic beliefs were ‘a substitute for Christianity. The Pope claims to be a substitute for Christ. The sacrifice of the Mass is a substitute for our Lord’s sacrifice on Calvary. Mary and the Saints take the place of Christ in the hearts of Roman Catholics’. She concluded that, in Wales, ‘our dire need is for another Martin Luther’²⁶.

Hostility towards Catholicism’s alleged superstition was frequent during this time. In a joint pastoral of 1950, McGrath and Petit noted that, while the charge of idolatry was not used as much as in the past, the accusation of Catholics being ‘superstitious’ continued to be widespread. The faithful were ‘still accused of being “superstitious”, particularly because of their devotion to the Mother of God’²⁷. A correspondent in *Y Cymro* in 1948 had lamented that this superstition was increasing in abundance. ‘Gwae ni fel gwlad o golli ysbrydolrwydd crefydd y tadau a’r hen Ymneilltuwyr!’²⁸. In the *Western Mail* two years later, Rev. Ridley Williams of Treorchy claimed that such superstitions were even considered a virtue and comprised part of the Church’s evangelistic appeal. Rome believed ‘that the inherent primitive potentials of the masses can be harnessed to the Faith by the simplest and often the most superstitious means’²⁹. Later in that same year *Y Goleuad* announced that ‘yn raddol ond yn sicr cynyddda ofergoeliaeth yn Eglwys Rufain’. The Pope, it noted, was continually adding to the lists of saints, new relics were often discovered and miraculous essences were found in wells. False and groundless superstitions were accepted by Catholics as genuine and proven truths. ‘Erbyn heddiw cynyddodd ei hofergoeliaeth yn gymaint onid ydyw yn gorchuddio ei ffydd yn y datgyddiad dwyfol ac yn bygwth ei fygu’³⁰. A fortnight later the editor ascribed the source of this Catholic ‘superstition’ as a lack of a ‘proper’ faith in Christ. ‘Byddaf yn meddwl weithiau’, he wrote, ‘mai’r hyn sydd wrth wraidd yr holl ofergoelion trychinebus hyn yw diffyg ffydd gyflawn yn Nuw a Christ’³¹.

²⁶*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

²⁷McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

²⁸*Y Cymro*, 24 Sept. 1948, 4.

²⁹*Western Mail*, 30 May 1950, 4.

³⁰*Y Goleuad*, 15 Nov. 1950, 1.

³¹*Y Goleuad*, 6 Dec. 1950, 5.

c) Unscripturality and ostentation

Most of the doctrinal criticism of the Catholic Faith was based on the accusation that Catholicism was unscriptural. In a Protestant demonstration at Cardiff in 1936, J.A. Kensit announced that ‘Wales would come to terms with Rome when Rome came to terms with the Bible’³². Again in 1954 A.W. Fowler of Bridgend asserted that unity between Catholics and Protestants was impossible as ‘there can, indeed be no compromise between Roman Catholics and Bible lovers’³³. The nineteenth century view that the ecclesiastical authorities kept Catholics in ignorance of Scripture was also prevalent among Welsh Nonconformist communities during this time. ‘Legends die hard,’ an editorial in the *Menevia Record* noted in 1959, ‘even today, in Wales, some people really imagine that Catholics are forbidden to read the Bible. We are pitied as benighted souls for whom the inspired Word of God is a closed book’³⁴. Earlier in the year one correspondent had repeated an oft made claim that this attitude was ‘not a matter of prejudice so much as bad history’. In order to reverse hostility and prejudice all that was needed was to introduce to Wales its true pre-Reformation Faith³⁵.

As well as being unscriptural, Catholicism was also accused of being in bondage to its past. The prevailing spiritual temper within the Church certainly encouraged such accusations. While most Welsh denominations at this time felt compelled to re-evaluate beliefs in the face of scientific development, ecumenism, and increasing secularisation, Catholics held doggedly to their traditions. Adrian Hastings describes the spiritual mood of British Catholicism in the 1950s as ‘supernaturalist, uncompromising and neo-traditionalist’. Likewise, he refers to the ‘almost ostentatiously backward-looking note of Restoration and neo-medievalism which so often dominated these years’³⁶. Having remained virtually static in Britain for many centuries, the Church seemed very reluctant to change

³²*Western Mail*, 22 Oct. 1936. 10.

³³*Western Mail*, 15 Jan. 1954, 8.

³⁴*Menevia Record*, 7 (1) (1959), 1.

³⁵*Menevia Record*, 6 (3) (1959), 10.

³⁶Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 1991). pp. 482. 484.

now. Even the Western Mail recognised this. The Church, it claimed, ‘makes little attempt to accommodate itself to the changes in modern science and philosophy’³⁷. The poet Raymond Garlick reacted to this statement by claiming that there was no need to accommodate new ideas as ‘the voice of Peter and the voice of scientific truth cannot conflict’. There was only friction when science or philosophy became erroneous, and then ‘it is not “accommodation” that is necessary, but condemnation’³⁸. In the same year George Davies of Swansea criticised Catholics who had written to the newspaper defending Roman dogmas, citing especially Illtyd Morgan’s defence of Papal Infallibility. Morgan should, he claimed, ‘measure up the mediaeval views of his Church with the findings of modern science, biology and psychology’. Religion, he concluded, ‘is the search for God, who is Truth. He will not be found in a mediaeval Church that has put its thought into cold storage’³⁹.

Another popular charge which had long been made against the Catholic Church was that it was ostentatious in its wealth. In 1950 Y Tyst reported that the new church to be built by the Vatican on the site of the Holy Tomb was to be far grander than the one it was to replace. Such extravagance could not be justified. ‘Prin y gall neb fychanu lle’r synhwyrâu mewn crefydd’, the report concluded, ‘ond anodd yw cymodi gorwychder dewinol â bywyd syml, tlawd yr Iesu’⁴⁰. In the same year Y Goleuad described the pomp and ceremony of a Catholic service, and asked what their readers thought Christ’s thoughts would be ‘o’r math hwn ar ffwlbri arianol a gyflawnir yn ei enw’⁴¹. Ten years later a correspondent in the Western Mail noted the great contrast (at the time of Pius XII’s death) between the poverty of the people in Rome during a visit to the city and the wealth and power of the Church. ‘The Pope lay at rest in full splendour, Our Lord was stripped naked. Christ had no dwelling - the Pope had a palace as rich as any in Rome. Christ had no funeral rites - the Pope’s were spectacular. Our Lord carried his Cross - the Pope was conveyed in a golden hearse’. How

³⁷*Western Mail*, 16 May 1950, 2.

³⁸*Western Mail*, 26 May 1950, 4.

³⁹*Western Mail*, 20 June 1950, 4.

⁴⁰*Y Tyst*, 21 Sept. 1950, 2.

⁴¹*Y Goleuad*, 11 Oct. 1950, 1.

could the 'Church of Christ' justify such nefarious flamboyancy⁴²? H.W.J. Edwards reacted to the 'old-fashioned objection' that the Church flourished while poverty was rife by noting that 'it is quite impossible to answer that objection as long as even Catholics suppose that the function of religion is on the whole ancillary to the life of the City of Man'⁴³.

d) Opposition stemming from ecumenism

Although most Welsh denunciations of Catholic beliefs in Wales came from Nonconformists, Anglicans also often condemned Rome's doctrinal errors. This principally stemmed from the emergence of the ecumenical movement. As it gained momentum in the 1920s and 1930s the enthusiasm of some Anglicans was clear. Bishop Timothy Rees of Llandaff regarded the reunion of the Anglican Church in Wales and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists as being 'not beyond the range of possibility'⁴⁴. With the Anglo-Catholic movement flourishing in parts of Wales, a number of Anglicans believed that some sort of union with Rome was also feasible. This was, however, rejected by High Churchmen, unless (of course) the Roman Church cleansed itself of its extreme superstitions and erroneous traditions. In 1926, for example, Rev. Canon Ceidrych Thomas (a Welsh-speaking Welshman working in England) wrote in the Welsh Outlook that 'the bane of Wales has been, and it is to be feared is, Dis-union'. For Thomas some sort of Christian unity was not merely a desirable goal but an absolute necessity in the increasingly secular modern world. For this unity to be reached, however, some important steps had to be taken. 'Let the Pope of Rome', he concluded, 'seek to purge his church of all harmful errors and traditions of men'⁴⁵. Referring to the views of Catholic convert Fr. Owen Dudley an Anglican correspondent in the Monmouthshire Beacon likewise announced that 'when the Roman Church purges itself of its errors, we may then, and only then, follow Fr. Dudley's example, and join her too'⁴⁶.

⁴²*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

⁴³*ibid.*

⁴⁴*Western Mail*, 28 April 1934, 8.

⁴⁵Ceidrych Thomas. 'Re-Union', *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (10) (1926), 273.

⁴⁶*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1943, 5.

Roman dogmas and traditions were criticised by other Welsh Anglicans in their appeal for a unity specifically with Nonconformity. William Williams, the Dean of St. David's in the late 1920s, often appealed for denominational unity. His ideal, however, was the reconciliation of the Nonconformist Churches with the 'Mother Church of Wales'. The Church of Rome was never included in his plans. It seems the reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, the Catholic Church had no desire itself to take part in the new trend towards ecumenism, and was certainly not willing to compromise any of its strict doctrines and traditions which both Anglicans and Nonconformists regarded as unpalatable. This opened the Catholic Church to accusations of arrogance and separatism. 'One thing is certain,' wrote Williams, 'the Church of Rome, until she repents of her errors and arrogancy, will have nothing to do with any scheme of re-union, except that of complete submission to her un-Scriptural claims'⁴⁷. Secondly, the Anglican Church was seen by most of its members as the continuation of the ancient Welsh Church, and therefore the obvious focus for any movements for denominational unity in Wales. Rome, with its own claims to the ancient Church in Wales, threatened the validity of such Anglican pretensions to natural superiority. This intensified criticism and denunciations of Catholicism's 'false claims' and 'superstitious errors' by Welsh Anglicans. 'Where shall we in Wales look for a centre of unity?' asked Williams in the *Western Mail* in 1929, 'Not in the Church of Rome, with its false claim to infallibility and supremacy, and its many errors of belief ... The eyes of many are just now turned towards the old Mother Church of Wales'⁴⁸.

e) Papal infallibility, Mariolatry and the Real Presence

Most of the Catholic beliefs which were criticised by Welshmen during these years had been the butt of hostility for many centuries, some since the Reformation and others since the rise of Nonconformity. Denunciations of these traditional Catholic tenets had become so intense that McGrath dedicated his first

⁴⁷*Western Mail*, 21 July 1930, 11.

⁴⁸*Western Mail*, 15 Oct. 1929, 9.

Cardiff pastoral letter to defending doctrines on Mary, the Apostolic Succession, and especially Papal infallibility⁴⁹. With the definition of Papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council in 1870, condemnation of the Bishop of Rome's claim to be the representative of Christ on earth had intensified. This would be exacerbated in reaction to the strictly ultramontane character of the Welsh hierarchy. Reflecting the contemporary episcopal trend⁵⁰, successive Welsh bishops showed a deep loyalty to the Pope and to his teaching. All their own aims and achievements were rooted in the Papal encyclicals and they rigorously followed the strictest Vatican line in all things. Described as holding 'a deep-rooted and unostentatious loyalty to the Papacy'⁵¹, Mostyn frequently described the Pope as the infallible and unerring head of the one, true Church⁵². Nearly two generations later Petit wrote that

'there will always be men, secure as they think in the infallibility of their own judgements, who will oppose some or all of the teachings of the Church, but it was upon Peter that Christ founded His Church and it is through Peter, reigning through his successor Pius, that Christ guards and teaches His Church and Christ is God'⁵³.

Welsh Catholic publications often reflected this unswerving loyalty and dedication to the Pope⁵⁴. Even the page for Catholic children in the Menevia Record was to remind readers in 1958 that 'devotion to the Holy See is a hallmark of the true Catholic; the Pope is the Vicar of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and we know that the Holy Spirit preserves him from all error in matters of faith and morals'⁵⁵.

Nonconformist denunciation of the ultramontanism of the hierarchy and the Papal infallibility they defended was fervent⁵⁶. Following the election of Pius XI in 1922 Rev. Joseph Evans asked in Y Dysgedydd how the Catholic Church,

⁴⁹Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Pastoral Letter June 29th 1940*.

⁵⁰Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 483.

⁵¹*The Times*, 26 Oct. 1939, 10.

⁵²*Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1917; Menevia Advent Pastoral 1915; Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1928*.

⁵³John Petit, *Pastoral Letter - Our Lady of the Taper, Cardigan 1956*.

⁵⁴See *Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 15.

⁵⁵*Menevia Record*, 6 (2) (1958), 24.

⁵⁶J. Barrett Davies ('Y Syniad Catholig', p. 23) wrote 'anffaeledigrwydd y Pab yw'r prif anhawster i'r rhan fwyaf o bobl'; those who rejected the possibility of infallibility, however, were placing 'terfynau ar allu anfeidrol Duw'.

‘y sefydliad mwyaf unbenaethol a gormesol yn hanes y byd’, could justify the fact that a fallible man could suddenly become (by a number of votes) infallible in all his judgements on faith and moral matters. In his article he gave specific instances in the Gospels when Jesus had spoken out against ‘despotic authority’ and to others where he had given the same authority as he gave to Peter to his other disciples. Furthermore, there was nothing in Peter’s own history to believe that he himself interpreted the words at Caesarea Philippi as the Catholic Church was now doing. Neither was there anything comparable in Paul’s letters, which, if the Catholic Church had followed, ‘ni fyddai ganddi heddyw neb ond Crist yn Ben yr Eglwys’. He concluded by appealing to spiritual experience as the touchstone for religious authority. ‘Yr unig awdurdod gwerth sôn amdano yw awdurdod yn codi o brofiad ysbrydol newydd a gweledigaeth glir,’ he wrote, ‘ac nid oes angen bod yn Bab nac yn Gardinal er ei feddu’⁵⁷.

Hostile criticism of the doctrine of Infallibility and the position of the Pope was to continue throughout the period in question. Writing in Y Faner in 1948, Rev. T. Lloyd Evans of Morriston claimed that while Protestants relied on the Bible for their authority, Catholics looked to the Pope and his declarations. ‘Fe all Pab fod yn ffaeledig iawn fel y bu llawer ohonynt,’ he noted, ‘nid oes sicrwydd dros yr olyniaeth apostolaidd, a phe byddai nid yw hynny yn gwarantu fod pob Pab yn un y gallech ymddiried eich enaid iddo’⁵⁸. In the Western Mail two years later a number of letters maintained that the infallibility of the Pope was in fact one of the prime reasons for the recent Catholic growth in Wales. A case could be made against Papal claims, noted A.J. Mills of Cardiff, but the fact remained that ‘the Protestant interpretations of the promises to Peter as set forth in the Scriptures have produced a chaos of conflicting opinions, while the Roman interpretation has in fact resulted in a world-wide Church with authority and at unity with itself’⁵⁹. Protestant reaction was swift. Rev. W. John Samuel of Llanelli at first simply asserted that Mills had given ‘the usual rather unhistorical claims’ of the origins of the Catholic Church and the position of the Pope⁶⁰. A

⁵⁷Joseph Evans, ‘Eglwys Rhufain a Phedr’, *Y Dysgedydd*, 101 (10) (1922). 312-15.

⁵⁸T. Lloyd Evans, ‘Protestant a Phabydd’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 5 May 1948, 3.

⁵⁹*Western Mail*, 22 May 1950, 4.

⁶⁰*Western Mail*, 25 May 1950, 6.

further letter in reply to K.J. Popham of Cardiff⁶¹ was far more vehement. Popham's claim that Christ guaranteed the infallibility of but one Church was, for Samuel, 'typical of the intolerant point of view of Authoritarianism'. There was certainly no scriptural authority at all for this extraordinary claim. 'My New Testament', he bluntly concluded, 'makes no mention of infallibility'⁶². George Davies of Swansea suggested that if the Catholic Church was infallible, then one would expect to find perfection in all its works. Both Catholic history and Catholic communities, who 'compare very unfavourably with Protestant communities on ethical and social grounds', show how ludicrous the claim was⁶³. Similarly, a few years later Elvet Evans of Barry also saw the history of the Catholic Church as evidence that the Pope could not be infallible. There were, he claimed, many instances on record where Popes had clearly shown their fallibility. The most glaring example was the case of Pope Honorius who supported the Monothelite heresy, and was labelled a heretic by fellow bishops. 'I suggest the trouble with Rome occurred during the 10th and 11th centuries', Evans concluded, 'when, instead of being rich in humility, she displayed pomposity and intolerance, persecuted believers and excommunicated kings. That despicable spirit still persists'⁶⁴.

Anglicans were also fervent in their condemnation of Papal infallibility. This was particularly apparent following the Pope's promulgation of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. In replying to a joint pastoral letter of McGrath and Petit⁶⁵, Bishop W.T. Havard of St. David's denounced their closing appeal to the 'infallible Pontiff' and the 'unerring Church' as grounds for the credibility of the new dogma. 'Where were the "infallible Pontiff" and the "unerring Church"', he asked, 'when there were three rival Popes? Or did Infallibility begin only in 1870'. By asserting the infallibility of the Pope, Rome had 'forgotten that the Living Christ not only dwells in the Church but also reigns over it'. There were many undeniable facts which proved that the Catholic Church could not be unerring, and these were the main reason for the Reformation. It had, for

⁶¹*Western Mail*, 2 June 1950, 4.

⁶²*Western Mail*, 7 June 1950, 6.

⁶³*Western Mail*, 20 June 1950, 4.

⁶⁴*Western Mail*, 20 Jan. 1954, 6.

⁶⁵McGrath and Petit *Joint Advent Pastoral Letter for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

example, ‘too often sought increased worldly power for the ecclesiastical corporation by methods that ill-become the Bride of Christ - methods that must have made the angels weep’. Even the most saintly were subject to fallibility as all, including the apostles themselves, were human. ‘Indefectible the Church of God certainly is, but infallible and unerring - No!’⁶⁶. Many other Welsh Anglicans saw the doctrine’s promulgation in the nineteenth century as an example of how the Roman Church was far from infallible. Archbishop Edwin Morris, for example, was described as being ‘savagely critical of the Papal Infallibility’⁶⁷. Likewise, as late as 1961 C. Eurwyn Jones wrote in the Province that ‘to the Anglican, who values spiritual freedom and respect for individual conscience, is not the essentially clerical doctrine of Infallibility too arrogant, too assured, too glib?’⁶⁸.

Another traditional Catholic belief which Welsh non-Catholics also denounced was the real presence of Christ in the blessed sacrament of the Mass. ‘Though intended probably to simplify a mystery’, one correspondent in the Monmouthshire Beacon wrote in 1943, ‘[transubstantiation] is to the man in the street, absurd, contrary to reason, and opposed to the evidence of one’s senses, of sight, taste and feeling’⁶⁹. Such criticism of Catholic Mass was so heated in the late 1920s that both Mostyn and Vaughan dedicated pastoral letters to defend transubstantiation. In a report on Mostyn’s advent pastoral for 1927 The Tablet mentioned the ‘recent attacks upon the Mass’ in Wales⁷⁰. Many outside the Catholic Church in Wales were, according to Mostyn, ‘directly contradicting the word of our Blessed Lord Himself, speaking of His wonderful sacramental system as mere magic’. He then explained the doctrine of transubstantiation⁷¹. Likewise, in Vaughan’s pastoral of the same month he defended transubstantiation, claiming it was explicitly taught by the Early Church⁷². His next pastoral letter also dealt with the Holy Eucharist. For Catholics Mass had always been of the utmost

⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1951, 4.

⁶⁷John S. Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris: Archbishop of Wales* (Llandysul, 1990), p. 85.

⁶⁸C. Eurwyn Jones, ‘Anglicanism and the Papacy - II’, *Province*, 12 (1) (1961), 24.

⁶⁹*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1943, 5.

⁷⁰*The Tablet*, 3 Dec. 1927, 734.

⁷¹Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1927*.

⁷²Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1927*.

importance, he stated, as it had always been ‘the sacred source of spiritual life and energy’⁷³.

Catholic devotion to Mary was likewise criticised as being unscriptural and irrational. The extent of Marian devotion in Wales at this time was wide, reflecting the Catholic religious enthusiasm and zeal of the period. Closely mirroring Pius XII’s encyclicals *Deiparae Virginis Marie* (1946), *Fulgens Corona* (1953), and *Ad Coeli Reginam* (1954), the Welsh hierarchy’s defence of Marian dogmas was particularly fervent. They zealously supported Pius XII’s definition of the bodily assumption⁷⁴ and would often speak on Mary, especially emphasising the pre-Reformation Welsh devotion to her. In words which would certainly have enraged staunch Nonconformists, Bishop Petit announced at Beaumaris in 1961 that ‘this honouring of the Mother of God is nothing new here; it is as old as the Welsh hills’⁷⁵. The hierarchy’s dedication to Mary was further displayed in the zeal in which they organised the restoration of Wales’s ancient Marian shrines, at Pen-rhys and at Cardigan. That this episcopal emphasis on Mary also engendered devotion among the clergy and the faithful was reflected in the strength of the Legion of Mary by the 1950s. This society, which encouraged both Marian devotion and lay apostolic zeal, thrived in both Cardiff and Menevia during this time. Reflecting a similar trend in England⁷⁶, branches were opened across the Principality⁷⁷. The Welsh hierarchy heartily supported the society⁷⁸, and there were many calls for further branches to be opened and for Catholics to join the existing branches⁷⁹.

Such Marian devotion provoked much Protestant attack. Some Welsh non-Catholics merely criticised the extent of the devotion, with St. Peter’s Parish Magazine noting in 1930 that ‘[we] often hear it said that we go to extremes in the honour we pay Our Blessed Mother. This is untrue’⁸⁰. Others were far more virulent in their condemnation. These accused Catholics of ‘worshipping’ Mary

⁷³Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral* 1928.

⁷⁴McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia* 1950.

⁷⁵*Menevia Record*, 8 (4) (1961), 4.

⁷⁶Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 482.

⁷⁷Menevia Diocesan Archives : Various Files (e.g. Haverfordwest, Pembroke Dock).

⁷⁸*Menevia Record*, 6 (1) (1958), 20.

⁷⁹*Review*, 1 (4) (1958), 14-16; *Menevia Record*, 6 (4) (1959), 14.

⁸⁰*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 10 (5) (1930), 74.

and allowing her to replace Christ⁸¹. While unveiling of the statue of Our Lady of Pen-rhys in 1953, McGrath claimed that, just as the statue had been desecrated and burned four centuries earlier, there were still many Welshmen who wished ‘to delete the name and erase the memory of the Virgin Mary’. In trying to do this, however, they would soon find that ‘1,000 years of the best of Welsh literature will rise up against them and cause them to commit national hari kari’. Furthermore, ‘if these heretics were to succeed they would have to re-write the Gospel and eliminate the history of Christianity as well as the prophecies’⁸². Petit also often defended the Catholic conception of Mary. At Bala in 1954, a Marian year, he defended the title Mother of God and maintained it was ‘a cruel falsehood to assert that we Catholics put Our Lady in the place of God’⁸³. In his Lenten pastoral of 1958, he again claimed that, contrary to non-Catholic suggestions, ‘the honour we pay Our Lady is the highest honour and worship we can pay to any creature of God, but no more than that’. He concluded that in a country once so devoted to her it was sad that ‘Our Lady should now be treated so casually, at times so contemptuously’⁸⁴. An article in the Menevia Record a year earlier attributed the animosity of Nonconformists towards Marian dogmas to ignorance. The article referred to the Baptist preacher and seminary professor, John Gwili Jenkins (1872-1936), whose attitude towards the Virgin Mary was ‘one of reserve and not of hostility’, as proof that Nonconformists were able to change their harsh opinions. ‘Forgive us, tender Virgin, if we have learned to pay less respect than Heaven would like’ wrote Gwili in one of his poems. ‘There is hostility to Catholic doctrines of Our Lady’, concluded the article, ‘because these doctrines are not yet understood as Gwili came to understand them’⁸⁵.

That much animosity towards the Catholic conception of Mary persisted, however, is clear from the letter pages of the Western Mail in 1960. Rev. Eirwyn Davies of Llanelli reminded readers that ‘the greatest compliment paid Mary in the New Testament is that she is “blessed among women”, but not above women.

⁸¹*Menevia Record*, 7 (2) (1959), 17.

⁸²*Western Mail*, 3 July 1953, 5.

⁸³*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 2.

⁸⁴John Petit, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1958*.

⁸⁵*Menevia Record*, 4 (3) (1957), 6.

The last reference we have to her is as one praying, not one being prayed to'⁸⁶. D. Ewart James of Newcastle Emlyn went a step further in claiming that the position Mary held in the Catholic Church was detrimental to the doctrine of salvation. 'To exalt Mary - by inference and/or implication - over her Son is ... contrary to the truth. To keep the Son as a "Babe", and not allow Him to grow up to be the Saviour of the world, is to violate the truth most fatally. For except the Babe "grow" (and not continue to lie in Mary's lap) there can be no Salvation for sinners'⁸⁷. In a second letter James noted that in pronouncing both Mother and Son as sinless, there are then 'two saviours to whom to pray, which can be very confusing'⁸⁸. A number of Catholics replied to this criticism. H.W.J. Edwards claimed that the Marian devotion of 'our separated Orthodox Brethren' was, if anything, greater than the Catholic's, yet no one wrote to denounce Orthodoxy. It was, however, Bernard Law of Boncath who summarised the attitude of most Catholics to the hostility. 'Slighting references to the Mother of God are best left without comment,' he wrote, 'save to express sympathy with him in his obvious ignorance of Catholic tradition and devotion to the Blessed Virgin'⁸⁹.

f) No freedom in the Catholic Church?

Some of the most impassioned accusations against Catholicism came with regard to an alleged lack of freedom. Catholic authority was seen 'as an oppressive system, which, in practice if not in theory, is run largely for the benefit of the Church's rulers'. According to J.P. Brown this was 'the chief barrier between us and most Welsh Protestants'⁹⁰. The Church was accused of not allowing its members direct access to God, of stifling freedom of thought, and of indoctrinating its young. Such accusations were fuelled by the continuing anti-modernist and anti-rationalist attitude of the hierarchy⁹¹, by Catholics insistence

⁸⁶*Western Mail*, 1 March 1960, 6.

⁸⁷*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

⁸⁸*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

⁸⁹*ibid.*

⁹⁰*Menevia Record*, 6 (1) (1958), 13-4.

⁹¹Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1930*.

on running their own schools, and by the authoritarian structure of the Church. As late as 1963 the words of a parish priest who refused to baptise a child when it was known he was to have a non-Catholic godparent, revealed the attitude so distasteful to many Welsh non-Catholics. ‘The whole thing is the parents’ fault;’ Canon John Moran of Llanelli told The People, ‘they should have obeyed the rules. If you belong to a trade union you get thrown out if you don’t obey the rules. The Church has its rules as well’⁹².

Such imputations of bondage added to the idea that Catholicism was the religious aspect of Fascist ideology and that its growth presented a massive threat to the Principality. In 1936 J.A. Kensit announced that Welshmen should be wary of the growing number of Catholics in their midst as ‘the larger the figure of the priest the smaller the figure of liberty’⁹³. The Catholic priest was, in fact, very often the culprit in such accusations. Catholics, it was claimed, could not reach God except through the priest, and for many Nonconformists this was the ultimate restriction of freedom. At the National Free Church Council at Llandrindod Wells Rev. F.C. Spurr suggested that Catholicism’s appeal was that it was ‘the easiest way out, whereas the Protestant and Evangelical position made demands upon the intellect and did not call in a middleman and let him trade with their religion’⁹⁴. Such was this restriction of freedom that, in an address on the challenge of Catholicism to Wales, Rev. Professor W.D. Davies of Aberystwyth declared that he would much rather see ‘fachgen bach dyfu’n annuw nag iddo roddi ei enaid yng ngofal eglwys sy’n trefnu i ddyn sefyll rhyngddo â Duw’. On hearing these words the congregation burst into applause⁹⁵. Writing in Y Faner in 1948, Rev. T. Lloyd Evans also took these accusations to an extreme, claiming that, whereas Protestants were saved through Christ, Catholics were saved through their

⁹²*The People*, 3 Feb. 1963, 14.

⁹³*Western Mail*, 22 Oct. 1936, 10.

⁹⁴*Western Mail*, 26 March 1926, 10.

⁹⁵*Y Cymro*, 10 June 1933, 15; see also *Y Gwilydydd Newydd*, 9 May 1935, 3, 7 : ‘Mae perygl mewn Pabyddiaeth i gaethiwo cydwybod a bod yn ffrwyn arni’, ‘nid rhywbeth sy’n galw am “specialists” i’w drin ydyw crefydd: syniad y Pabydd am grefydd ydyw hwnnw, ond tynnu’r lien a wnaeth Ymneilltuaeth, gan gyhoeddi ffordd unionsyth o galon galed dyn at Dduw’; *Western Mail*, 3 May 1935, 10 : ‘Nonconformity has taught Wales that the Church is not an organisation dependent on formula and the hierarchy of priesthood, but a society founded on the basis of free and unhampered contact with and access to the divine’

priest⁹⁶. Two years later the editor of Y Goleuad took it for granted that ‘Duw pell yw Duw i’r Pabydd, Duw’n troi yn ei gylch ei Hun, ac un na ellir dyfod ato yw Crist’. Catholics filled the gulf between man and God with human beings - either Mary, the saints or their priests. ‘Ni chred y Pabydd,’ he concluded, ‘fod Duw ei Hun yn ddigon i lenwi pob pellter sydd rhwng enaid pechadur ac Yntau, ac mai yn yr un Cyfryngwr, Crist Iesu, y gwna hynny’⁹⁷.

Writing in Efrydiau Catholig in 1948 Catherine Daniel summarised the attitude held by many Welshmen. Not knowing the true nature of the Church, she wrote, the majority of Welsh non-Catholics believed in a parody : ‘cyfundrefn unbenaethol yw hi a wesgir ar bobl anneallus gan eu dal mewn cadwyni o ofn gwasaid. Bwgan y darlun yw’r offeiriad. Dyna’n fras gred miloedd o Gymry am yr Eglwys Gatholig’⁹⁸. This attitude had been seen in a letter in the Western Mail in 1937 which accused the Catholic Church of being the only religious body in which ‘the people belong to the Church, instead of the Church belonging to, or being of, the people’. The Church’s flock, the laity, was subject to the worst kind of indoctrination from this governing class, the priests. ‘Their whole lives (and especially their minds) from infancy are so bent, ordered and controlled as to be merely the instruments of the priests who formulate and carry on the whole policy of what has been called the Catholic institution’⁹⁹. Even Welsh Anglicans criticised Catholicism for suppressing freedom. In 1934 The Church Times asserted that ‘while the Church in Wales is Nationalist in its constitution, the Roman communion is centralised and ultramontane and, above all, undemocratic’¹⁰⁰. Again, writing in the Monmouthshire Beacon in 1943, an Anglican correspondent accused the Roman Church of offering salvation only to those who forfeited their freedom to question its dogmas. ‘Love, yes to those who swallow all their nostrums, with abject submission, but let any one question her authority and stupendous claims, and he will soon find a relentless, bigoted and furious TYRANT’¹⁰¹. Later, in 1951, Bishop W.T. Havard of St. David’s

⁹⁶Evans. ‘Protestant a Phabydd’. p. 3.

⁹⁷*Y Goleuad*, 6 Dec. 1950, 5.

⁹⁸Catherine Daniel, ‘Capel y Ffin a’r Cylch Catholig’; *Efrydiau Catholig*, 3 (1948). 26.

⁹⁹*Western Mail*, 28 Aug. 1937, 11.

¹⁰⁰*Church Times*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Sept. 1934, 291.

¹⁰¹*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1943, 5.

suggested that Rome had succeeded in maintaining doctrinal discipline by creating a kind of totalitarianism. 'Rome has silenced the voice of prophecy within her borders,' he asserted, 'and crushed the possibility of self-criticism'¹⁰².

Following the Second World War accusations that the Catholic Church stifled the freedom of its members continually appeared in the letter pages of the Western Mail. These letters, which were indicative of the fear Welshmen felt towards the 'Fascist' threat of Catholicism, denounced the Rome for its authoritarianism, which was tent-pegged by its indoctrination and blind dogmas. In 1950 Rev. W. John Samuel of Llanelli suggested that the success of the Welsh Catholic Church was due to the 'prevailing temper of the time which is toward Authoritarianism'. Likewise, the right wing of the Evangelical Church, which substituted the infallible Bible for the infallible Church, was also growing. In an age when men were afraid to think for themselves, Samuel concluded that 'any Church, or for that matter political party, that offers to men security by doing the thinking for them is therefore bound to gain ground'¹⁰³. Rev. Ridley Williams of Treorchy also asserted that Rome's coercive conception of authority, 'infinitely less complex than the minute and wearying process of a democracy', was very attractive to the modern, unthinking mind. 'In a tired and busy century', he noted, 'it relieves the masses of the intellectual exactitudes of Protestantism, with its emphasis upon enlightenment, freedom, and character'¹⁰⁴. While there was much to criticise in the Puritan Revolution, wrote Gwen John of Swansea a few days later, it did 'eventually establish the principle that no man's conscience was to be dominated even by a priest'¹⁰⁵. A Catholic riposte came from the pen of H.W.J. Edwards who maintained that the Catholic Church 'is not totalitarian as that word is used ... She claims to teach with Christ's authority. But Christ is not a constitutional King'. In reply to Gwen John, he went on to assert that 'the myth that Puritanism was tolerant is widely held'. Puritans in fact had a form of excommunication far more terrible than the Roman. 'The Puritans got rid of

¹⁰²*Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1951. 4.

¹⁰³*Western Mail*, 25 May 1950. 6.

¹⁰⁴*Western Mail*, 30 May 1950. 4.

¹⁰⁵*Western Mail*, 2 June 1950. 4.

priests', he bluntly concluded, 'and demanded that men should be dominated by elders'¹⁰⁶.

The naiveté of many of these criticisms was starkly revealed in a letter by Mrs. T. Thomas, a Baptist, in the Western Mail in 1960. 'We do not need candles or beads to help us;' she wrote, 'a few minutes in silent prayer can make us feel God is very near. We do not need anyone to intervene between God and ourselves; the minister is there to show us the way'¹⁰⁷. Much popular Protestantism was not only ignorant of the fundamentals of Catholic belief but oblivious to the shortcomings of its own faith. Very often it replicated Catholic belief in the authority of tradition (its own), the infallibility of the Church (or sect or denomination to which its members belonged), the absolute power of the priest (or in its case minister, preacher or elder), and the sacramental nature of grace (ministered through the word of preaching). The oft-maintained freedom in which Protestants revelled was often a thralldom much tighter than that which even the most ultramontane of papists would ever claim.

g) Criticism of devotion to martyrs

In his foreword to T.P. Ellis's The Catholic Martyrs of Wales Bishop Vaughan emphasised the fact that Catholic remembrance of the fate of their martyrs was certainly not intended to incite resentment towards Protestants. 'No Catholic', he wrote, 'is so devoid of common sense as to entertain bitter feelings toward his Protestant neighbour because of any wrong, fancied or real, inflicted by the latter's ancestors'¹⁰⁸. This veneration of the martyrs, however, did provoke hostility towards Catholics from both Welsh Anglicans and Nonconformists. Following an article on the martyrs in the Efrydiau Catholig in 1955 the Anglican periodical Province retorted that 'it is the height of naiveté to

¹⁰⁶*Western Mail*, 14 June 1950, 6; further debates appeared in 1953-4 (28 Dec. 1953, 4 'the blind are those who fail to grasp the fact that the Infinite cannot be explained in a few dogmas, and that eternal truths cannot be put into cold storage, but must be constantly sought') and in 1960 (25 Feb. 1960, 4 'Roman Catholicism is a religion for puppets who do as they are told. Christianity is a religion for thinking men, and has no horror of honest criticism').

¹⁰⁷*Western Mail*, 20 Feb. 1960, 6.

¹⁰⁸Francis Vaughan, 'Foreword', in T.P. Ellis, *The Catholic Martyrs of Wales* (London, 1933), pp. xi-ii.

expect the kind of person who will read this volume to be impressed with the gruesome tales in the Roman martyrology of the Welsh Reformation. We do not publish accounts of the Marian Martyrs for propaganda uses now'¹⁰⁹. That devotion to the martyrs was of far more importance than 'propaganda' is abundantly clear. Martyrs were honoured for having shared the suffering of Christ as well as his glory. They were also revered as examples of piety and as an inspiration for Catholics everywhere. 'Let us try and imitate them in the firmness of our Faith' wrote Archbishop Mostyn in his advent pastoral for 1929. Even Pope Pius XII, in a message given in 1950, exhorted Wales' priests to 'look at your illustrious martyrs, Blessed Richard Gwyn and Blessed David Lewis, and go forward with courage and good cheer'¹¹⁰.

Throughout his time as archbishop, Mostyn was dedicated to the cause of the Welsh martyrs who had been executed 'because of their belief in the real presence'¹¹¹. This dedication was reflected in the beatification in 1929 of a group of Welsh martyrs including Gwyn and Lewis which 'crowned the labours of our dear archbishop'¹¹². Two other Welsh martyrs, Edward Powell of Monmouthshire and Richard Featherstone, Archdeacon of Brecon, had been beatified by Gregory XIII as far back as 1583, and in 1925 the Vatican announced that their feast should henceforth be celebrated on July 30, the anniversary of their death¹¹³. When Mostyn became archbishop, however, many other Welsh martyrs were still termed 'Venerable'. All of these were among the 253 martyrs which in 1923 the English and Welsh hierarchy petitioned Rome to beatify. Alongside the main process to deal with the English martyrs, the Apostolic Court set up a special *Apos Processiculus* or 'Little Process' in Wales.

In Wales's Little Process a small group of historical experts were brought together to gather evidence concerning the martyrs. Among these experts there were a number of prominent Catholic historians, including J. Herbert Canning of Newport and Fr. Cronin of Cardiff for the South Wales martyrs, and Fr. Paul Hook of Aberystwyth for those of the North. To mark his appreciation of

¹⁰⁹*Province*, 7 (2) (1956), 72.

¹¹⁰*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 25.

¹¹¹Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1922*.

¹¹²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (8) (1930), 137.

¹¹³*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1930*, p. 10.

Canning's scholarly work Pius XI conferred on him the honour of a Knighthood of St. Gregory¹¹⁴. When Cronin left Wales for Ireland in 1931 the St. Peter's Parish Magazine asserted that it was 'largely owing to his patient research and his zeal for their cause that those who shed their blood for the Faith in Wales are now amongst the *Beati* of the Church'¹¹⁵. The Little Process finally concluded its task in June 1926 when the witnesses appearing on behalf of the martyrs of the Welsh Province were examined. On 15 June 1926 the collected evidence of the Westminster and Cardiff Processes were despatched to Rome to be judicially examined by experts¹¹⁶. While the decision was being made in Rome, in his 1927 Lenten Pastoral Mostyn urged the Catholics of Wales to pray for the success of the cause and to foster devotion to them¹¹⁷. In December 1929 the Vatican's decree beatified 136 martyrs, eight of whom were Welshmen and at least another four having strong connections with Wales. Mostyn assisted at the ceremony of the Beatification, held at Rome in the December of 1929, with Fr. Cronin also in attendance¹¹⁸. At the beginning of 1930 Mostyn announced 'a day of special commemoration for the beatification of Welsh martyrs'¹¹⁹. Consequently, on 26 January, special services were celebrated throughout the Archdiocese, with a Pontifical High Mass of the martyrs at St. David's Cathedral where Mostyn read aloud the decree.

Such an emphasis on the martyrs of 'gallant little Wales', whose *beati* was now 'a record worthy of national pride'¹²⁰, was equally fervent following the war. On visiting Swansea in 1947 Cardinal Griffin of Westminster spoke of the 'blood of the Welsh Martyrs which was to be the seed of Catholic revival in Wales'¹²¹. In the 1950s six Welsh martyrs (Richard Gwyn, John Jones, John Roberts, Philip Evans, John Lloyd and David Lewis) were among the forty put forward for canonisation¹²². The dedication to their cause was shown in the dissemination of

¹¹⁴*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (6) (1930), 96.

¹¹⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (10) (1931), 155.

¹¹⁶*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1929*, p. 55.

¹¹⁷Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1927*.

¹¹⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (12) (1929), 370.

¹¹⁹*The Tablet*, 25 Jan. 1930, 108.

¹²⁰*The Tablet*, 4 Jan. 1930, 22.

¹²¹*Catholic Herald*, 10 Oct. 1947, 7.

¹²²*Menevia Record*, 7 (4) (1960), 1.

prayer-leaflets to all Catholics in the Principality in 1960 pleading for success in the canonisation efforts¹²³. Since the 1920s devotion to the Welsh martyrs had certainly been relatively strong, with pilgrimages to places associated with their lives and labours always well attended. Large processions to the sites of the martyrdom of John Lloyd and Philip Evans constituted part of the Catholic Emancipation Centenary in 1929¹²⁴, while other pilgrimages were held annually - to the tomb of John Kemble at Welsh Newton and to the grave of David Lewis at Usk¹²⁵. The martyrdom of Richard Gwyn was also celebrated annually, both at his birth-place in Llanidloes in Montgomeryshire¹²⁶ and at the site of his martyrdom in Wrexham¹²⁷. In fact, Wales's Proto-Martyr became so popular that a talk about his life was even given in 1958 on Vatican Radio¹²⁸.

The extent of devotion to the Welsh martyrs can be largely attributed to the efforts made on their behalf by the hierarchy, the clergy, and prominent lay-Catholics. Dozens of articles discussing the lives of the martyrs were printed in Catholic periodicals at this time. Such essays appeared in the Diocesan Yearbooks¹²⁹, *The Tablet*¹³⁰, *Blackfriars*¹³¹, *Efrydiau Catholig*¹³², *Review*¹³³, *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*¹³⁴, and *Menevia Record*¹³⁵. As well as T.P. Ellis's volume, the Catholic Truth Society published smaller, more popular works such as *Welsh Martyrs and Exiles* by R.O.F. Wynne and *Blessed Richard Gwyn, Schoolmaster and Martyr* by Oswald J. Murphy. Martyrs were often referred to in articles appealing for vocations to the priesthood¹³⁶ or in general articles about Catholicism in Wales¹³⁷. Catholic children were regularly encouraged to

¹²³*Menevia Record*, 8 (1) (1960). 8.

¹²⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (5) (1929). 146.

¹²⁵*Western Mail*, 28 Aug. 1933. 10 : Over 2000 attended in this year.

¹²⁶*Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960). 14.

¹²⁷*Western Mail*, 20 Oct. 1952. 4.

¹²⁸*Menevia Record*, 6 (3) (1959). 1.

¹²⁹Henry Bowes, 'Blessed David Lewis', *Cardiff-Archdiocesan Year Book 1953*.

¹³⁰'Blessed Richard Gwynn', *The Tablet*, 17 Nov. 1934. 640-1.

¹³¹Martin Cleary, 'The Catholic Resistance in Wales : 1568-1678', *Blackfriars*, 38 (444) (1957). 111-125.

¹³²R.O.F. Wynne, 'Y Cymry a'r Diwygiad Protestannaidd', *Efrydiau Catholig*, 6 (1954). 17-27.

¹³³'Blessed Philip Powell', *Review*, 5 (3) (1961). 4-5.

¹³⁴'Venerable John Jones or Buckley : A Welsh Franciscan Friar', *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (5) (1926).

¹³⁵J. Owen O'Reilly, 'Five Martyrs of Brecon', *Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954). 20-2.

¹³⁶E.L. Butler, 'The Call to the Priesthood and to the Religious Life', *Review*, 1 (2) (1957). 5.

¹³⁷Cordani, 'Wales, Yesterday and Today', p. 12.

remember and honour the Welsh martyrs¹³⁸. Devotion to Richard Gwyn, the patron of Catholic Schools in Wales, was particularly encouraged among children¹³⁹. Interest in a local martyr was also encouraged. ‘It would be a good plan’, noted the *Menevia Record* in 1959, ‘if local Catholics would develop a keen interest in their Catholic past and make all possible researches about a local martyr’¹⁴⁰. A particularly successful engendering of interest in a local martyr occurred in Dolgellau in the 1930s. Not only was a portrait of John Roberts, a native of Trawsfynydd who had been martyred at Tyburn, blessed by Bishop Vaughan in 1933 for the parish¹⁴¹, but a year later the Poor Clares of Darlington presented the parish with a relic of his¹⁴². The patriotism of the martyrs, as well as their Catholicism, was invariably commented on. ‘They are our fellow countrymen’, said Canon J. Barrett Davies, ‘whose lives we know and whose language we understand’¹⁴³. Even Bishop Vaughan claimed that ‘no one of Welsh blood and true Welsh spirit but will be proud of these long-forgotten members of our race’¹⁴⁴. Likewise in *The Tablet* H.W.J. Edwards maintained that the martyrs had died for ‘the authentic Welsh tradition’¹⁴⁵. In *Blackfriars* in 1957, Catherine Daniel reminded readers that three of the Welsh martyrs (Richard Gwyn, John Roberts and David Lewis) could even trace ‘their descent to the ancient Kings of Wales, thus mingling royal blood with the precious blood of martyrdom’¹⁴⁶.

Reactions to the Welsh Catholic devotion to their martyrs were often very hostile, centring either on the allegation of political treachery or on the purported atrocities of the Catholic Church. Not long before Guy Fawkes Night 1926, J.F. Smith from Prestatyn urged his fellow townspeople not to forget ‘the diabolical plot of the Romanists’. He implored parents to explain to their children the ‘real’ meaning of Guy Fawkes Night, and urged ministers to expound the meaning of

¹³⁸See *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 13.

¹³⁹*Menevia Record*, 3 (1) (1955), 18.

¹⁴⁰*Menevia Record*, 6 (3) (1959), 1.

¹⁴¹*The Tablet*, 19 Aug. 1933, 247.

¹⁴²*The Tablet*, 7 July 1934, 24.

¹⁴³*Cardiff Archdiocesan Year Book 1965*, p. 151.

¹⁴⁴Vaughan, ‘Foreword’, p. xii.

¹⁴⁵*The Tablet*, 15 Oct. 1949, 248; see also *The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 248.

¹⁴⁶Catherine Daniel, ‘Wales : Catholic and Nonconformist’, *Blackfriars*, March 1957, 103; see also Catherine Daniel, ‘Wales’, in Adrian Hastings (ed.), *The Church and the Nations* (London, 1959), p. 118.

the Fifth of November from their pulpits¹⁴⁷. In that same year the National Free Church Council at Llandrindod Wells heard an appeal for a wider circulation for Fox's Book of Martyrs, before Dr. George Eayers asked the assembly to pray that 'God might raise someone to write a story of Protestantism that would deliver the country from Roman Catholicism, as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had saved the world from slavery'¹⁴⁸. Much Protestant criticism of the cult of the martyrs was certainly aimed specifically at provoking hatred and contention.

Both misunderstanding and bitterness were evident in reports of the martyrs throughout this period. In a review of T.P. Ellis's The Catholic Martyrs of Wales in the Western Mail in 1933, the Anglican Dean J.L. Phillips of Monmouth noted the oft made allegation that 'these executions - appalling, indeed in their nature - were not so much for religious views as for high treason and implication in conspiracy against the Queen's life and the government of this realm; and action was taken on political grounds'. There was, therefore, a 'sad necessity which compelled such atrocities'¹⁴⁹. Ellis reacted by claiming Phillips had made use of 'one of the most gigantic falsehoods which have ever crossed the pages of history', and challenged him to find one piece of evidence that any one of the martyrs 'suffered save for his religion'¹⁵⁰. In his reply, the Dean claimed that there was certainly a prevailing impression of Catholic disloyalty, and he threw a challenge back to Ellis, asking him to explain Gregory XIII's teaching on political assassination. 'The fact is that, owing to the stupidity of Gregory XIII, Roman Catholicism and treasonable practice were rendered identical in the eyes of the competent Government of the time'¹⁵¹. Ellis's final letter simply stated that when Phillips 'admitted that he cannot substantiate his assertion that the executions (or any one of them) was due to the victim's implication in conspiracy, I shall be more than glad to deal, fully and candidly, with the red herrings he seeks to draw across the trail'¹⁵². A writer in The Tablet also commented that 'Deans ought not to conduct serious controversy on such lines', calling on Phillips to 'express his

¹⁴⁷*The Tablet*, 6 Nov. 1926, 600.

¹⁴⁸*Western Mail*, 26 March 1926, 10.

¹⁴⁹*Western Mail*, 8 June 1933, 5.

¹⁵⁰*Western Mail*, 12 June 1933, 9.

¹⁵¹*Western Mail*, 15 June 1933, 11.

¹⁵²*Western Mail*, 19 June 1933, 9.

regret for having dealt out false history in a partisan attempt to depreciate some of the noblest and bravest of his fellow-countrymen'¹⁵³.

Ten years later, in 1943, there was a hostile Protestant reaction to an address made by Fr. Owen Dudley on the martyrdom of the two Monmouthshire priests, Frs. John Kemble and David Lewis. There was not, he had claimed, any evidence to implicate these last two martyrs of England and Wales in any plot or any kind of treason¹⁵⁴. One correspondent in the Monmouthshire Beacon stated that Dudley's 'outburst' was 'the kind of stuff that has already pretty well emptied the Churches and turns people away from so-called religion of to-day with disgust'. Dudley spoke of Protestant cruelties, and yet the history of his own Church could be traced back through rivers of blood and outrageous crimes. 'Not only have the vile instruments of the Vatican put to death countless innocent individuals but have wiped out whole provinces with fire and sword'. The rape of the Albigenses was but one example of what Rome was capable. 'It is not so many years ago ... people were destroyed for doubting many of the priestly codes - now perhaps they ought to be destroyed for believing them'¹⁵⁵. A similarly hostile and anti-Catholic letter came from A.W. Martin who asserted that 'it has been a much used method of propaganda by Roman Catholic writers and speakers for some time now, to tell a perverted story about their so-called "Martyrs"'. This glorification of those executed for treason was part of Rome's great plan to regain the country. The continuing devotion to national traitors 'shows that it [Rome] still retains its old anti-Christian and anti-British position. The most loyal subjects of the Pope are the most disloyal subjects of the King'¹⁵⁶. Catholic reaction was swift. L.E. Bellanti noted that Kemble and Lewis 'became technically "traitors" simply because an unjust penal code designated them "traitors"'. Their only crime was celebrating Mass. Furthermore, to suggest

¹⁵³*The Tablet*, 24 June 1933, 778.

¹⁵⁴*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 27 Aug. 1943, 5.

¹⁵⁵*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 3 Sept. 1943, 5; another letter (17 Sept. 1943, 5) claimed that past Popes had poisoned dinner-guests, the Inquisition had murdered hundreds of people, there was a massacre of Protestants in France on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572, there was great suffering in the reign of Queen Mary, and the Pope gave King Philip of Spain his blessing as the Armada set out to destroy England. The laws passed against Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth century were therefore justified; the rebels Kemble and Lewis clearly 'disobeyed, and therefore suffered the penalty'.

¹⁵⁶*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1943, 5.

devotion to martyrs and loyalty to the Pope meant Catholics were disloyal to their country was ludicrous. 'We yield to none in our loyalty to King and country. Indeed "the Faith" is that which gives courage in danger, willingness to endure, and a fine edge to loyalty'¹⁵⁷. Even a letter from a non-Catholic correspondent stated that such anti-Catholic remarks were both unfair and uninformed. 'I believe that the Roman Catholic community in the British Empire is quite a large one, and it is probable that they love their country quite as much as members of other denominations'¹⁵⁸.

A similar controversy took place in late 1953 in the letter pages of the Western Mail. In the course of a paper on 'The Welsh People and the Reformation' at a conference organised by the Union of Catholic Students at Cardiff, R.O.F. Wynne had suggested that the martyrs should be revered and esteemed by the Welsh nation above Owain Glyndwr and Llewelyn the Great. 'The story of their fortitude is part of the story of Wales', he announced, 'and one in which all Wales has the right to rejoice'¹⁵⁹. Following a report of this meeting a 'Student' from Carmarthen instigated a debate which continued for almost two months, before being brought to a close by the Editor. There was, claimed the initial letter, a 'strong resentment' to the prominence the newspaper gave to the meeting 'at which laudable and exaggerated tribute was paid to certain Welshmen who are reported to have been put to death for adhering to the Romish faith'. He reminded Catholics that there were many Protestant martyrs too, such as Dr. Ferrar at Carmarthen and Meredydd Gwynne at Chester, who refused to subscribe to the superstition and domination of Rome. In fact 'history is full of the acts of violence and bloodshed of the Roman Church', such as the atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition and the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre¹⁶⁰. While many Catholics defended the history of their Church¹⁶¹, numerous other letters

¹⁵⁷ *Monmouthshire Beacon*, 24 Sept. 1943, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Western Mail*, 23 Nov. 1953, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Western Mail*, 8 Dec. 1953, 6; see E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968), p. 13 such accusations were common in nineteenth century England with the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre 'almost as familiar to the Victorians as the Bible itself'.

¹⁶¹ *Western Mail*, 17 Dec. 1953, 6; 4 Jan. 1954, 6.

supported the sentiments of this initial letter¹⁶². Finally H.W.J. Edwards expressed his sadness that such blatant bigotry should have resulted because of the newspaper's fair coverage of historical lectures on Catholic martyrs. Student, he wrote, 'regards the space you devoted as far too generous, simply because he happens not to like the Roman Church. You, sir, are biased because he is biased'. He concluded by noting that 'it looks very much as if the news item has been made an excuse for polemic'¹⁶³.

In 1960 questions surrounding the Welsh Catholic martyrs and the historical cruelty of Rome surfaced again. 'Romanists who were put to death', wrote Walter H. Denbow, 'were not condemned for simply religious reasons, but for the treasonable implications of their loyalty to Papal policy'¹⁶⁴. M.J. Williams of Welshpool asserted that the sadistic tendencies which Catholics perceived in Protestantism 'are to be found to a far greater extent in Roman Catholicism'. This was the Church which persecuted Meister Eckhart, attacked Jacob Boeme and victimised Dr. John Tauler whose only crime was to endeavour to 'save the human soul from that theology that created horrid phantoms and named them God in order to scare simple people into their organisation'¹⁶⁵. In reply to Denbow's letter Francis A. Fogarty of Boncath claimed that the martyrs 'died for religion alone and they are thus venerated'¹⁶⁶. Denbow responded by insisting that 'those Roman Catholics who died a judicial death after 1571 were mainly the victims of the presumptuous interference of Pope Pius V'. In Queen Mary's reign, however, there were around 250 Protestant martyrs against whom not a trace of treason can be found¹⁶⁷. As late as 1964 in a sermon on Martyr's Sunday at Belmont, J. Barrett Davies claimed that a number of non-Catholic Welshmen were still insisting that the martyrs 'were not put to death primarily for their religion ... they insist that at the time the English government honestly thought they were

¹⁶²*Western Mail*, 28 Dec. 1953, 4; 30 Dec. 1953, 6; 15 Jan. 1954, 8 (W.M. Watkins of Llanginor asked 'Are Roman Catholics ashamed? Will they frankly confess that the policy of their Church pursued over so long a period was wicked and cruel?').

¹⁶³*Western Mail*, 4 Jan. 1954, 6.

¹⁶⁴*Western Mail*, 25 Feb. 1960, 4.

¹⁶⁵*ibid.*

¹⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 3 March 1960, 4.

¹⁶⁷*Western Mail*, 15 March 1960, 4.

involved, to some extent at least, in the real or imaginary plots their spies were busily discovering or inventing'¹⁶⁸.

*h) The early Welsh Church*¹⁶⁹

Aside from historical disagreements concerning devotion to the martyrs, between 1916 and 1962 Nonconformists largely concerned themselves with criticising Catholic doctrine. Debates between Welsh Anglicans and Roman Catholics, however, were very often of a historical nature. These centred upon the claim to continuity with the early Welsh Church. 'The exact position of the Early British Church is a subject of considerable importance,' wrote J.E. De Hirsch-Davies in 1926, 'the subject is not merely an academic one : it affects present-day problems'¹⁷⁰. Thirty years later Catherine Daniel could still claim that for Anglicans 'the issue seems to turn on a point of the life of the Church in history'¹⁷¹; the 'Celtic Church' had become 'an increasing problem'¹⁷². Likewise, the poet D. Gwenallt Jones (Senior Lecturer in Welsh Literature at Aberystwyth) stated that 'no issue will rival this in importance for the religious destiny of Wales'¹⁷³. The Anglican claim upon the early Welsh Church resulted from the crisis of disestablishment which had compelled the Church to find its own identity independent of Canterbury. The claim, however, was not new. The theory of an independent Celtic Church in communion with the Church of England in Wales had originally been put forward following the Reformation¹⁷⁴. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the threat of Catholic emancipation gave this theory a new impetus¹⁷⁵, as did the disestablishment campaign a half century later. The creation

¹⁶⁸*Cardiff Archdiocesan Year Book 1965*, p. 150.

¹⁶⁹The phrases 'Celtic Church', early Welsh Church, and early British Church, are used loosely to constitute the band of Christian churches, all belonging to the 'Catholic' Church, which were to be found in 'Celtic' Britain and Ireland before the Saxon invasions, and subsequently survived those invasions.

¹⁷⁰J.E. De Hirsch-Davies, 'Wales and Catholicism I', *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (2) (1926), 43.

¹⁷¹*Menevia Record*, 3 (2) (1955), 9.

¹⁷²*Menevia Record*, 5 (2) (1957), 21.

¹⁷³Quoted in Daniel, 'Wales', 122.

¹⁷⁴See Glanmor Williams, *Welsh Reformation Essays* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 207.

¹⁷⁵See Saunders Lewis, 'Damcaniaeth Eglwysig Brotestannaidd', *Efrydiau Catholig*, 2 (1947), 36-55.

of the Church in Wales in 1920 established the theory as a virtual fact, with the great majority of its members now accepting it without question.

After the acceptance of the Constitution of the Church in Wales in April 1922 Lord Sankey emphatically stated that

the Church in Wales is a Catholic and National Church ... As a national church we are the old Christian Church in these islands. The saints of the Church of God are sons of the race. They sleep in Welsh soil, hard by the shrines they loved and served so well. The self-same prayers which moved their lips move ours. Today we are the heirs of their beliefs and of their traditions¹⁷⁶.

There were, however, differing views among Welsh Anglicans concerning continuity with the Celtic Church. Many held that the independent Celtic Church was eventually forced to succumb to the Rome, regaining its independence at the Reformation. Others, however, combined their insistence on the independence of the Celtic Church with the general Anglican theory of unbroken continuity with the Early Church. It was suggested that the independent Welsh Church united with the Church of England and remained a part of the Catholic Church. It did not separate from any other Church at the Reformation, it merely purged itself from Roman errors. It was not 'a new Church at the time of the Reformation' but rather 'the old Church reformed'¹⁷⁷. Such views, however, were not exclusive and there was no tension between holders of the different theories. For Welsh Anglicans the important fact was that their Church was in continuity with the ancient and Catholic Church of the Welsh nation.

At this same time, the Roman Catholic claim on the pre-Reformation Welsh Church as its own was also increasing in prominence. With the conversion of Wales increasingly seen as a realistic possibility, Welsh Catholics believed it was essential to convince the indigenous inhabitants that the ancient Church which moulded them into a nation was none other than the Church of Rome. Before 1916 discussions surrounding the nature of the Celtic Church had been largely between Anglicans and Nonconformists. With the political, financial and religious

¹⁷⁶D.T.W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century* (1990), p. 22.

¹⁷⁷*Pembroke County and West Wales Guardian*, 13 Dec. 1929, 4.

aim of enforcing disestablishment having been reached, however, Nonconformist interest in the theory waned. Now it was clear that such discussions would continue with Catholics. The Tablet noted that ‘disestablished and disendowed, Anglicanism in Wales steps down from its pedestal, and is now universally recognised as the alien Church it has always been’¹⁷⁸. The ancient Welsh Church, it claimed, was both Catholic and Roman, which left the Anglican Church as an anglicised institution imposed on the Welsh people at the Reformation¹⁷⁹. It was, therefore, very clear that both Anglicans and Catholics placed a great importance on their claims to be heir to the early British Church. This led to much hostility between the opposing factions, with mutual polemic clouding serious discussion.

The Roman hierarchy was certainly fervent in its criticism of the increasingly vocal claims of the Church in Wales. On his move to Cardiff, Mostyn (who was later to incite controversy by claiming that the old Welsh Cathedrals ‘stood as cold and empty shells awaiting the time when new life would be infused into them, and they would be once more used for the purpose for which they were erected’¹⁸⁰) almost immediately dedicated a pastoral letter to the contention that the early British Church was ‘united to the rest of Christendom in its allegiance to the See of Rome’¹⁸¹. Likewise, Bishop Louis Casartelli of Salford refuted those historical statements centred on the Celtic Church ‘that every Catholic must repudiate as entirely fantastic’ contained in an Anglican financial appeal to counterbalance losses sustained through disendowment¹⁸². In his forward to T.P. Ellis’s The Catholic Martyrs of Wales Bishop Vaughan wrote that ‘in vain has Imagination’s uncharted sea been sailed again and again by our romantic Madocs in search of [the independent Celtic Church]; their quest was always doomed to

¹⁷⁸*The Tablet*, 12 Feb. 1916, 200.

¹⁷⁹*The Tablet*, 26 Feb. 1916, 267.

¹⁸⁰*Western Mail*, 15 Oct. 1929, 10 : Referring to the archbishop’s ‘most astounding assertion’, Dean William Williams reacted by stating that it was ‘difficult to believe that anyone who possessed a certain amount of knowledge and a grain of charity could be capable of perpetrating such a travesty of history, on the one hand, and a parody of Christian love on the other’ (*Western Mail*, 18 Oct. 1929, 7).

¹⁸¹Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1922* : Documentary Evidence ‘proves most conclusively that from the earliest period the Celtic Church not only believed in the Mass, the Sacraments, and the other doctrines of the Catholic Church, but was also in communion with the See of Rome’; apart from the Anglicans, the Baptist minister David Davies also incessantly condemned Mostyn’s assertions as ‘utterly unhistorical’ (*Western Mail*, 5 Dec. 1922, 10 see also *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (1) (1926), 9 and *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 3 (1) (1923), 12-16).

¹⁸²*The Tablet*, 21 July 1923, 83.

failure'. To Vaughan the early British Church was unquestionably both Catholic and Roman, which meant that Wales owed a far more extensive debt to the Catholic Church than she realised. There was, he claimed, no such place as Wales before the sixth century Roman Catholic monks 'welded that motley collection into one homogenous whole, and made them a people who took the national name of "Cymru"'¹⁸³. Following the war, McGrath lamented that work of re-Catholicising Wales had been made difficult because of the 'false history and distorted views of Catholicism (distortions due to malice or ignorance) which are pumped into the people's minds continually by learned book and popular pamphlet alike'. Through its separation from the Latin Gaelic lands the early Welsh Church had certainly grown insular in its ways and practices, which led to the misunderstanding between its leaders and 'the somewhat tactless Roman missionary, St. Augustine'. This, however, in no way implied that the Church was independent from Rome¹⁸⁴. In his joint pastoral letter with Petit two years later, McGrath again criticised these Anglican claims. 'He [Bishop Havard of St. David's] arrogates to himself the title of "Catholic" which his Communion for centuries rejected in favour of that of "Protestant" - ... a Communion, which, even *to-day*, contradicts all idea of unity and catholicity of doctrine by its comprehensive toleration of opposing doctrine and religious practices'¹⁸⁵.

The bishops of the Church in Wales were just as zealous as their Roman counterparts in their insistence on continuity with the early Welsh Church. Even the Anglican Rev A.W. Wade-Evans denounced the 'anti-Roman' service at St. David's Cathedral on 14 July 1925 to commemorate the sixteenth centenary of the Council of Nicea. Among those who attended were representatives of the Welsh Nonconformist denominations¹⁸⁶ and the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria. At the celebrations, Archbishop A.G. Edwards

¹⁸³Vaughan, 'Foreword', p. xv.

¹⁸⁴Michael McGrath, 'Wales and Monasticism : A Brief Review.', *Blackfriars*, March 1948, 115-6 : 'As long as the Welsh people are fed on material of this kind it is vain to hope for the rapid progress of Catholicism amongst them'.

¹⁸⁵McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

¹⁸⁶A 'special invitation' was offered to David Davies : 'a Champion of the Ancient British Church as against the See of Rome'. That Davies also believed that this early Church was a primitive Nonconformist establishment and that the modern Church in Wales could not claim continuity from it was of no consequence.

emphasised that the Church in Wales was the heir of the early Welsh church which was ‘Catholic, not Roman’ and was ‘Oriental in its origin, not Western’. Wade-Evans pointed out the hypocritical inconsistency of the Welsh bishops who, not long before, had claimed that a severance from the Church of England would destroy their link with their mother-church. ‘Only till yesterday Wales was being told, year in and year out, that the four Welsh dioceses were merely a portion of the Province of Canterbury, and what a wicked, wicked thing it was to sever so sweet a connection (indignation on the face of Dr. Edwards, tears in the eyes of Dr. Owen)’. Following Edwards’s address, Wade-Evans noted that the Nicene Creed was recited in Welsh, English, Greek and Russian. The absence of the Latin version was conspicuous and deliberate. Even the Creeds which were recited were *not* the same (because of the *filioque*), and so the joy at the unity of East and West was false. ‘They had indeed met as one, but only to say that they were two’, Wade-Evans concluded, ‘... Two in their views about God, but One in their opposition to Rome. They were united only on a negation. Their gathering was but an anti-Roman gesture’¹⁸⁷.

Following the war, the new Anglican bishop of Monmouth, Edwin Morris (later archbishop of Wales), blatantly stated in his *Primary Visitation Charge* that ‘the Church in Wales is the Catholic Church in this land, and we cannot, without denying our very nature, yield one iota of this claim’. Roman priests, along with Nonconformist ministers, were therefore ‘intruders’ in Wales; even if there had been an ‘historical excuse for their being here ... we cannot recognise their right to be here’¹⁸⁸. In the inter-war years similar sentiments had often been expressed¹⁸⁹, yet it was Morris’s remarks which caused the greatest stir¹⁹⁰. McGrath

¹⁸⁷*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (1) (1926), 9-10.

¹⁸⁸*Western Mail*, 2 Sept. 1946, 3.

¹⁸⁹Not long after Roman Catholic parishes were officially constituted (*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 5 (12) (1925), 374) an Anglican correspondent in the *Western Mail* (4 Feb. 1928, 9) had insisted that the Roman use of the word ‘parish’ in Wales was ‘in defiance of the accepted interpretation of both the Civil and Ecclesiastical Law of the land’, and was therefore ‘simply a misnomer’; five years later Norman E. Martin of Port Talbot bluntly asserted that ‘up to the reign of Elizabeth there were no Roman Catholics in this country, and it was under Elizabeth the Papal party broke away from the real Catholic Church and so became the first dissenters. It follows that Romanists are, therefore, in schism by intruding in the Catholic dioceses of England and Wales’ (*Western Mail*, 22 June 1933, 11).

¹⁹⁰Price, *History of the Church in Wales*, p. 31 : The “intruder” remarks ‘wounded very deeply for many years’.

immediately commissioned Fr. Ivor Daniel to present the Roman Catholic attitude to the 'Monmouth controversy' in the Western Mail. Daniel simply replied that 'the Church of England in Wales - "the Eglwys Loegr" or "Foreign Church" to any native Welshman - was, and is, an English importation'. It was precisely because she had been starved of her Roman traditions that Wales, in rejecting the Elizabethan compromise, had been forced to turn to Nonconformity. 'What can we say of a Church which began life as an imported schism', asked Daniel, 'and now thinks that the recent restoration of Mass vestments and episcopal regalia prove its continuity with the ancient Faith of Wales?'¹⁹¹. Morris's fervent insistence on the catholicity of the Church in Wales¹⁹² again revealed deep anti-Roman prejudice. This was reflected in 1952 and 1953 in his nationally-reported objection to the word 'Protestant' in the Coronation Oath. His biographer Peart-Binns suggests that during much of this controversy his view was clearly 'anti-Roman not historical'. In one letter to Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury he even suggested 'that we should now even go over to the offensive and call in question Rome's right to the title Catholic'¹⁹³. Among his fellow-bishops, however, Morris was far from being alone in his views. In a B.B.C. radio discourse in 1952 Bishop John Charles Jones of Bangor was adamant that the ancient Welsh Church 'was not the Roman Church; it is a great mistake to speak of Deiniol and Dewi as Roman Catholics'¹⁹⁴.

From the 1920s onwards the question of the Celtic Church was aired repeatedly in both periodicals and newspapers. In the Welsh Outlook in 1926 J.E. De Hirsch-Davies insisted that the 'anti-Roman assumption is an anachronism; it has a modern and Puritan parentage'. The key to understanding the disagreements between Augustine and the early Welsh Church was 'to be found in the attitude which may be called - anti-Saxon, anti-English, anti-Canterbury, anti-

¹⁹¹ *Western Mail*, 10 Sept. 1946, 2.

¹⁹² Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris*, p. 86 : 'Rome was incensed by Morris's deliberate omission of the word "Catholic" in describing them'.

¹⁹³ Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris*, pp. 93-4.

¹⁹⁴ Edward Lewis, *John Bangor, the People's Bishop : The Life and Work of John Charles Jones, Bishop of Bangor 1949-56* (London, 1962), pp. 145-7; with the Church again in need of financial assistance, the appeal once more relied heavily on the ideal of continuity, with a leaflet of Bangor Diocesan Appeal Committee for the fourteenth centenary of the Cathedral stating that it had always been part of the 'Welsh Church'.

Innovation, anti-anything-else, according to the nature of the dispute, but not anti-Roman¹⁹⁵. The Anglican Lewis Davies, however, retorted that Hirsch-Davies's article should have carried the heading 'The Romance of the Roman Position'¹⁹⁶. The debate continued unabated for months¹⁹⁷ until Wade-Evans launched another attack on his fellow Churchmen's belated and vain attempt to shake off their Church's 'sham-English pose'. When Archbishop Edwards was fighting against disestablishment he put his trust in London and Canterbury. Yet now, 'with Rome knocking at the door', he turned to Wales. 'When Dr. Edwards contemplates the Welsh Roman hierarchy, with a Welsh Roman at their head, he betrays signs of agitation. The ground shakes. He cries aloud "Catholic, not Roman"'¹⁹⁸. Later in the decade and into the 1930s the Anglican Dean of St. David's, William Williams, and the Roman Catholic priest of Pembroke, Ivor Daniel, were particularly prominent in debates about the position of the early Welsh Church. Their own discussion of the question of continuity led to lengthy correspondences on the subject in both the Pembroke County and West Wales Guardian¹⁹⁹ and the Western Mail²⁰⁰. In these debates the Vatican was accused of not allowing its adherents to use true historical evidence²⁰¹, and Welsh Roman Catholics of 'cultivating a persistent hostility in every direction against the National Church ... and its continuity'²⁰².

The importance which both Catholics and Anglicans continued to place on the position of the Celtic Church was reflected in the Western Mail in 1953. After

¹⁹⁵J.E. De Hirsch-Davies. 'Wales and Catholicism I', *The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (2) (1926). 43-5.

¹⁹⁶*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (4) (1926). 109-10 : De Hirsch-Davies 'takes his stand upon the unhistorical pretensions of the Papacy. and from there he tries to read the history of the ancient British Church. An impossible feat', the early Welsh Church accepted the bishop of Rome only as equal to any other bishop.

¹⁹⁷*The Welsh Outlook*, XIII (5) (1926). 137-8; (6) (1926), 165-6; (6) (1926). 166-7; (8) (1926), 216-8; see also (2) (1927), 46; (3) (1927), 84.

¹⁹⁸A.W. Wade-Evans. 'Wales and the Church of Rome', *The Welsh Outlook* XIII (12) (1926). 320-2.

¹⁹⁹*Pembroke County and West Wales Guardian*, 20 Dec. 1929, 4 : 'the "Anglican Communion" is, as every schoolboy knows, the creation of the Elizabethan Settlement: it has little connection with the Pre-Reformation Church that the Dean's logical predecessors did all they could to ruin the old Popish Cathedral'; see also 27 Dec. 1929, 4; 3 Jan. 1930, 4; 10 Jan. 1930, 4; 17 Jan. 1930, 4; 24 Jan. 1930, 4 etc.

²⁰⁰*Western Mail*, 23 July 1930, 12; 26 July 1930, 9 etc.

²⁰¹*Pembroke County and West Wales Guardian*, 10 Jan. 1930, 4 : One could no more discuss a historical question with a Catholic 'than one could discuss a mathematical problem with a man who believed that "twice two equals five"'.
²⁰²*Western Mail*, 16 Aug. 1930, 9.

a month-long correspondence reacting to John Eilian's reference to the Anglican Church as 'the Church of St. David ... the national Church ... the *Ecclesia Wallicana*'²⁰³, the paper's editor was eventually forced to bring it to a close. One contributor concluded that he was 'convinced that pride, egotism, prejudice, falsehood and misrepresentation are the basis of the anti-Papal view'²⁰⁴. Throughout the decade, sentiments surrounding the nature of the Celtic Church were reiterated incessantly. Catholics dealt with the question in the *Menevia Record*²⁰⁵, *Western Mail*²⁰⁶, *Review*²⁰⁷ and *Blackfriars*²⁰⁸, Anglicans did so in *Y Faner*²⁰⁹ and on many occasions in *Province*²¹⁰. When attending ecumenical conferences, delegates of the Provincial Youth Council of the Church in Wales were taught that they alone were representatives of the early Welsh Church. According to their study notes the ancient Welsh Church 'remained autonomous and independent of Papal rule', and 'the Church in Wales continues as the historic Catholic Church of this land, teaching the same faith which Dewi taught'²¹¹.

The contention that the Anglican Church was an anglicising institution imposed in the sixteenth century on an unwilling Wales, complimented the Roman Catholic insistence that the ancient Welsh Church was subject to the Papacy. This claim had often been made in the inter-war years. T.P. Ellis considered this to be the very reason why there were so many Welsh Catholic martyrs. 'The Reformation made little or no appeal to Wales,' he wrote, 'she regarded it as the

²⁰³*Western Mail*, 9 March 1953, 4.

²⁰⁴*Western Mail*, 26 March 1953, 6.

²⁰⁵*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 9.

²⁰⁶*Western Mail*, 22 Nov. 1957, 6.

²⁰⁷*Review*, 1 (3) (1957), 5; 5 (4) (1962), 14 : Etienne Raven urged his fellow Catholics to visit Llandaff Cathedral by claiming 'however at home its present tenants seem, we are the rightful owners!'

²⁰⁸Daniel, 'Wales : Catholic and Nonconformist', p. 101 : From the very first centuries of Christianity in Wales it was indisputable that 'on every plane, religious, social, and political, we Welsh regarded ourselves as peculiarly the protégés of Rome'; see also sermons reported in *North Wales Weekly News*, 3 Aug. 1950, 5; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 March 1951, 3.

²⁰⁹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 8 : 'na, nid Eglwys Harri'r Wythfed yw'r Eglwys yng Nghymru, ond yr Eglwys a sefydlwyd yn nyddiau cynnar hanes ein cenedl; ac nid oes sôn am y gair "protestant" yn ein Llyfr Gweddi'.

²¹⁰*Province*, 4 (2) (1953), 175; 5 (4) (1954), 143; 8 (3) (1957), 74-5; 3 (1) (1952), 19 : 'Anglicans must dwell on this point, because they believe it to be true, and fundamental to their whole position' (Ewart Lewis).

²¹¹*The Provincial Youth Council of the Church in Wales : Preparatory Study Notes (for Aberystwyth 1959) for the Use of Church in Wales' Delegates to Ecumenical Conferences (Penarth, 1959)*, p. 9, 12.

imposition upon her of a strange and alien faith, the “ffydd y Saeson”, “the faith of the Saxons”²¹². This was also seen as the reason the Welsh people eventually embraced Nonconformity. Vaughan noted that the real explanation for the nation’s Nonconformity was ‘the nation’s rejection of the Church of the Saxon and its pathetic effort to save as much as possible of its past religious institutions and build up something to replace what had been lost’²¹³. Following the War such claims became far more prominent as part of the Cylch Catholig’s insistence that their Church, and not the Anglican Church, was the national Church of Wales. In the *Efrydiau Catholig* in 1954 a number of articles emphasised the unpopularity of the Reformation in the Celtic lands²¹⁴. Three year later, Catherine Daniel reiterated the oft-made claim that Nonconformity was a desperate attempt to fill the spiritual and national vacuum which the anglicising Established Church had created. Cut off from its spiritual nourishment, Wales ‘gradually sank into a state of social and moral disintegration’. The new State Church became known as *Yr Hen Estrones* (The Old Foreigner), its religion as *Crefydd y Sais* (The Englishman’s Religion), and its services amounted ‘to an empty formalism devoid of spiritual content’²¹⁵. For Etienne Raven, the Nonconformist revival was therefore ‘not a harking-back to some mythical pre-Roman standard of faith, but, psychologically, a return to the ancient Catholic rhythm of religious life’²¹⁶.

Responding to these accusations, many Anglicans complemented their insistence on the continuity of their Church with a zeal for Welsh culture. ‘If the Church in Wales is to play her full part her leaders must realise that she is a Welsh Church, not an English one imported into Wales;’ the *Province* noted in 1954, ‘she must not give the impression that she is lukewarm about the Welsh language and Welsh culture’²¹⁷. Two years earlier in an address given to Llandaff Diocesan Council of *Cymry’r Groes*, the youth movement of the Church in Wales, Martin Bowen had rejected all charges that the Church had ever been an anglicising influence. ‘We are not a mission from across the English Border, strong as our

²¹²Ellis, *Catholic Martyrs of Wales*, p. xix.

²¹³Vaughan, ‘Foreword’, p. xiv.

²¹⁴R.O.F. Wynne, ‘Y Cymru a’r Diwygiad Protestannaidd’, *Efrydiau Catholig*, 6 (1954), 17; ‘Detholiad o Englynion Hiraeth am yr Hen Ffydd’, *Efrydiau Catholig*, 6 (1954), 5-12.

²¹⁵Daniel, ‘Wales : Catholic and Nonconformist’, p. 103.

²¹⁶*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

²¹⁷*Province*, 5 (4) (1954), 110.

ties are with the Church of England, nor were we founded through the divorce of an English king (as Protestants at times unite with Papists in asserting, and as some of us at times seem all too ready to imply) but “the Church in WALES”²¹⁸. Similarly, a number of leading Churchmen, led by Bishop Glyn Simon, also insisted that, contrary to Catholic accusations, their Church had ‘saved the language and thereby Welsh nationality at the Reformation’²¹⁹. All Anglicans were therefore urged to take a special interest in the preservation of the native tongue. Despite the set-back of 1957, with the Church’s governing body appointing an Englishman as archbishop, the fostering of a Welsh consciousness among Anglicans was relatively successful. In addition to the increased use of Welsh in Anglican services, traditional Catholic practices such as pilgrimages²²⁰, the saying of Mass and the hearing of confessions²²¹ were also fostered. Through all this it was believed that identification with the ‘original’ Catholic Church in Wales would be further promoted.

In 1933 the Anglican Dean J.L. Phillips of Monmouth noted that whether the Roman Church or the Anglican Church would absorb the declining Nonconformity depended ‘partly on a correct presentation of history and much more on the conception of which Church is best adapted to express national spirit and national righteousness’²²². Likewise, a year later the *Church Times* suggested that ‘the success that is beginning to attend the efforts now made by the Roman Catholic communion to secure adherents in the Principality’ was due directly to the fact that many ‘scholarly converts’ were succeeding to persuade their fellow Welshmen that the early Welsh Church was Roman Catholic²²³. As late as the 1950s many Anglicans still believed that Roman ‘propaganda’ insisting the ancient Church of Wales to be both Catholic *and Roman* was succeeding to win converts²²⁴. Similarly, J.P. Brown suggested that the reason that the Anglican

²¹⁸ *Province*, 3 (2) (1952), 39.

²¹⁹ Owain W. Jones, *Glyn Simon : His Life and Opinions* (Llandysul, 1981), p. 66.

²²⁰ See *Province*, 1 (3) (1950).

²²¹ Daniel, ‘Wales’, p. 121.

²²² *Western Mail*, 8 June 1933, 5.

²²³ *Church Times*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Sept. 1934, 291.

²²⁴ *Province*, 4 (1) (1953), 139; 8 (3) (1957), 73-4; 13 (3) (1962), 86-91 : ‘Roman propaganda is aimed at the intellectuals; look after the intellectuals, and the plebs will look after themselves. is their motto’ (Aneurin Talfan Davies).

Church was gaining ground in Wales was that it was able to appeal both to early Welsh history and to Catholic doctrines 'without what is felt to be the oppressive discipline of Catholicism'²²⁵. Although these claims were certainly exaggerated, the memoirs of Archimandrite Barnabas do show that the question of the early British Church did have some practical effect at this time. As an Anglican Minor Canon at Bangor Cathedral during the Second World War, Barnabas writes that he finally came to the conclusion that he 'could not honestly believe that this was the ancient Catholic Church of Wales, and again my gaze turned longingly to the Roman Church'²²⁶. During the 1960s, however, denominational propaganda surrounding the position of the ancient Welsh Church rapidly decreased, until by the end of the decade the problem had become academic²²⁷. Although there were undoubtedly many who still held to the same facts concerning the Celtic Church, in the interest of ecumenical harmony they refrained from over-emphasising their position. With the move towards ecumenical dialogue and the general consensus now against inter-Christian proselytization, discussions surrounding the position of the early Welsh Church (which until the preceding decade had been so important) became suddenly anachronistic.

i) Moral Issues

Although there was denominational consensus upon the vast majority of moral issues in Wales, there were a number of questions which caused disagreement and friction between Roman Catholics and non-Catholics. In an article in *Y Faner* in 1948 Rev. T. Lloyd Evans claimed that Nonconformity held higher moral standards than Catholicism. 'Protestaniaeth iach', he wrote, 'yw halen y ddaear'²²⁸. By the 1950s, however, a number of traditional Welsh Nonconformist moral principles were under great strain. The opening of public houses on Sundays was one greatly discussed issue. While there were significant exceptions (almost exclusively *Cylch Catholig* members), it was clear that the

²²⁵*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1957*, p. 102.

²²⁶Archimandrite Barnabas, *Strange Pilgrimage* (Welshpool, 1985), p. 30.

²²⁷Compare Glanmor Williams, *Reformation Views of Church History* (London 1970), p. 70 with Leslie Hardinge, *The Celtic Church in Britain* (London 1972) p. 17-28.

²²⁸Evans, 'Protestant a Phabydd', p. 3.

majority of the largely English and Irish Catholic population of Wales supported Sunday drinking. By the time the issue went to the ballot box in 1961 neither of the Catholic bishops of Wales, Archbishop Murphy nor Bishop Petit, held any great conviction on the issue. This caused a certain amount of hostility towards Catholics in Wales who were seen as helping to undermine Welsh culture. Similarly, the Nonconformist belief in the evil of gambling was also disregarded by Catholics who had no qualms about sweepstakes or lotteries to raise money for church funds. When some non-Catholics began to participate themselves in Catholic sweepstakes, the question of morality became acute. The Western Mail noted that opinion among non-Catholics in Pontypridd was divided as to whether they could justify entering a sweepstake being successfully run by the local Catholics. The Nonconformist ministers would certainly have been enraged that their members were not only gambling but also supporting the already growing Catholic Church. One writer in a local Anglican parish magazine had suggested that they too should consider running a sweepstake, but the vicar, Rev. Cyril H. James criticised lotteries as being morally wrong. 'It pampers to the greed of people', he wrote. Other Anglicans wrote to the Western Mail criticising the hypocrisy of their fellow Church members. 'Most of these folk have nothing good to say of the Roman Church; yet they are helping to support it'. Another letter noted that 'the Church that says we are "schismatics" is quite prepared to accept our money by corruption!'²²⁹.

Aside from these non-Catholic scruples, there were also aspects of the specifically Catholic moral code which caused conflict. Strictly following Papal policy Catholics in Wales often condemned birth control. While many Welsh non-Catholics accused the Church of curbing freedom, Catholics continued to denounce the growing acceptance of contraception unperturbed. In St. Peter's Parish Magazine in 1924 Robert Wade condemned the 'monstrous' doctrine of birth control which was being 'unashamedly advocated in our midst'²³⁰, and by 1962 the Lamp Society was distributing 9,000 leaflets around Menevia

²²⁹ *Western Mail*, 9 March 1953, 2.

²³⁰ Robert Wade, 'Catholics and their Social Responsibilities', *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (7) (1924), 199; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 5 (2) (1925), 55.

condemning contraceptives²³¹. Birth control was also often condemned by the bishops. In a pastoral letter Vaughan warned of ‘the vice of birth control ... a horror before God’²³², while in his 1948 Lenten pastoral McGrath condemned birth control as one of three issues which were ‘threatening the foundations of British society’, the others being divorce and abortion²³³. The extent of hostility against the Catholic standpoint was reflected in the letter pages of the Western Mail in 1932 following the Cardiff Health Committee’s discussion on the question²³⁴. J. Bensom of Cardiff claimed that hostility towards birth control led to over population, and large families which were a great burden on the State. ‘It would be interesting to learn’, he concluded, ‘how many of these necessitous children belong to parents of the Catholic faith’²³⁵. A report in The Tablet a year later highlighted the problems this stand was causing. The failure of the Cardiff City Council to appoint Dr. McSweeney, its Deputy Health Officer, to the post of Senior when it became available was said to be because he was ‘a Roman Catholic and against Birth Control’²³⁶.

Another contentious moral issue came to prominence at the end of 1951. In an address to the Congress of the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives, Pope Pius XII had announced that, while the saving of a mother’s life was a most noble end, ‘the direct killing of the child as a means to that end is not permissible’. The Swansea Corporation Health Committee met almost immediately to discuss the ramifications of the Pope’s statement. At the meeting Dr. T.C. Mort said that no authority had the right to impose upon the individual doctor his duty in this regard, and his personal view was that he would save the mother rather than the child²³⁷. Although the Vatican’s newspaper Osservatore Romano tried to calm the situation by claiming that the Pope was merely stating that an unborn infant possessed the same rights as the mother²³⁸, discussions surrounding the issue intensified. At the Monmouthshire Diocesan Conference Bishop Edwin Morris

²³¹Christopher Magner, *The Lamp Society and the Welsh Travelling Mission* (1997).

²³²Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1932*.

²³³Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1948*.

²³⁴*Western Mail*, 2 May 1932, 9; 14 May 1932, 9.

²³⁵*Western Mail*, 3 May 1932, 11.

²³⁶*The Tablet*, 8 July 1933, 36.

²³⁷*Western Mail*, 6 Nov. 1951, 1.

²³⁸*Osservatore Romano*, quoted in *Western Mail*, 8 Nov. 1951, 1.

was very critical of the Pope's statements. Pius XII seemed to be suggesting that the life of the child must be preferred even to the risk of the mother. 'If this is the Pope's meaning,' Morris announced, 'I must speak out against it'. He claimed that it was unfair to speak of a 'deliberate killing' on the part of the doctor as 'his aim is to save life [whether the mother's or the child's], and he should not be branded a murderer'. Furthermore, the death of the mother may mean that children who would otherwise be born would never exist, or may leave young children motherless. The woman herself was the proper person to make the decision, not the doctor, midwife or religious leader. Morris concluded that the Pope's pronouncement might effect most vitally those who repudiate his authority as it 'has created the fear that doctors and midwives who accept this ruling will, in such cases, take the decision upon themselves, always in favour of saving the child's life at the cost that of the mother'²³⁹. Following this widely publicised address, Morris received much correspondence from Roman priests and laity. Although one Catholic priest in seminary actually supported his stand, 'for the most part Morris was besieged with cut and dried Roman moral theology'²⁴⁰.

It was not only Anglicans who took objection to the Pope's statements. At a conference of the Monmouthshire Baptist Association at Pontypool a resolution was unanimously passed pledging 'all moral support to those endeavouring to remove the great widespread anxiety' the statement had caused, and expressing support for those wishing to change their doctor on religious grounds. Rev. Emlyn Stephens of Bargoed stated that in view of the clarity of the Pope's words any explanations would be disregarded, while W.J. Trace of Ebbw Vale remarked that he believed he was expressing the sentiment of every father and husband by saying the wife should come first²⁴¹. The issue had also been raised at the Upper Montgomery Presbytery of the Calvinistic Methodist Church, where the secretary, Rev. D.J. Owen, stated that the Pope's proclamation had affected 'cryn anesmwthyd a thrafod, gyda dicter ymhlith merched'. Rev. W.O. Barnett of Trefeglwys, however, warned members not to form any rash opinions on the basis of press reports on the Pope's declaration. Although he was certainly not

²³⁹*Western Mail*, 14 Nov. 1951, 2.

²⁴⁰Peart-Binns, *Alfred Edwin Morris*, p. 151.

²⁴¹*Western Mail*, 29 Nov. 1951, 3.

defending the Roman Church, the Pope's original pronouncements had been translated into so many languages that there was a good possibility that his words had been taken out of context²⁴².

Two Old Issues Come to the Fore

a) 'One True Church' - accusations of Catholic arrogance and intolerance

Although hardly new, the contingencies of the twentieth century made the claim of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ('outside the Church no salvation') particularly problematic. Since the First World War ecumenical unity became an increasing ideal among non-Catholics. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 marked the beginning of the Anglican attempts at Christian reunion. In some quarters there was genuine optimism that reunion between the Churches in Wales was a real possibility. A number of Anglo-Catholics even hoped that Rome would soon join the ecumenical discussions, or even take the lead. Charles Alfred Green, Anglican Bishop of Monmouth, then Bangor and from 1934 Archbishop of Wales, 'greatly desired reunion with the Roman Catholic Church'²⁴³. As ecumenism flourished, however, Rome remained steadfast in its belief that it was the only Church whose origin was truly divine. Catholics were strictly forbidden to attend non-Catholic services as all other Churches, being man-made institutions, were *ipso facto* heretical. Unless they returned like the prodigal son to the Catholic Church, then they could not be saved. Since the nineteenth century and before the Roman Church been accused of intolerance for such an attitude²⁴⁴. In the atmosphere of ecumenism and Christian unity, this spirit was regarded more than ever as narrow, exclusive and conceited. Until the Second Vatican Council

²⁴²*Y Cymro*, 30 Nov. 1951, 4; see also discussions in the letter-pages of the *Western Mail* : 15 Nov. 1951, 4 and 19 Nov. 1951, 4 'it would almost seem as though the aim of some of the contributors to this controversy was rather to discredit the Pope and the authority of the Catholic Church than to examine the truth'.

²⁴³A.J. Edwards, *Archbishop Green : His Life and Opinions* (Llandysul, 1986), p. 74.

²⁴⁴Norman, *Anti-Catholicism*, p. 16.

transformed the Catholic attitude to non-Catholics, the Church would officially remain as aloof and remote as ever from the other denominations in Wales.

Pius XI's *Mortalium Animos* (1928) described the doctrine of the one true Church as the only basis for true religious unity. Of ecumenism it noted that 'such efforts can meet with no kind of approval among Catholics'. Following the encyclical Mostyn dedicated his Lenten Pastoral to the subject of 'Christian unity'. He claimed that never since 'the breaking away from the Catholic Church by heretics and schismatics' had there been such a desire for union. There could, however, be no 'give and take' regarding Catholic theological teaching as that would render the doctrine of apostolic succession void. Christian unity could happen 'in no other way than by the submission of those outside the Catholic Church to the teaching and authority of that Church. Without this the unity of Christendom is a mere pious wish, which can never be attained'²⁴⁵. It is not surprising that Mostyn had virtually nothing to do with other denominations in Wales²⁴⁶. He was, however, quick to warn of the dangers of Catholics developing a sense of complacency because of their belief in the one true Church. 'We are Catholics,' he wrote in 1933, 'and we are proud of the name Catholic, but we must not imagine that the mere fact of calling ourselves Catholics is to be the means of securing for ourselves a place in the Kingdom of Heaven'²⁴⁷.

Welsh Catholic publications also continually reiterated this position on Christian unity²⁴⁸. In *St. Peter's Parish Magazine* in 1924 Robert Wade criticised the futility of non-Catholic ecumenism : 'the only unity they seem capable of attaining is unity in rejecting those very principles which are the foundation and indispensable basis of real unity'²⁴⁹. Three years later, Dr. Miall Edwards reacted to the Roman view by stating that 'the re-union of Christendom will come, not by one communion absorbing all the others, but by large-minded mutual recognition'.

²⁴⁵Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1928*.

²⁴⁶*The Tablet*, 4 Nov. 1939, 537.

²⁴⁷Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1933*.

²⁴⁸*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1928*, p. 55 : joint acts of worship were 'absolutely contrary to the Catholic doctrine of the Church of Christ', this did not 'imply that we are "bigoted" or "narrow-minded" ... it is no more narrow to say that there is but one true Saviour, or one true Creator'; *Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1935*, p. 71 : 'Outside the Church, No Salvation' is 'an article of faith we cannot deny'.

²⁴⁹Wade, 'Catholics and their Social Responsibilities', p. 199; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 5 (12) (1925), 378.

True Catholicity was ‘inclusive and comprehensive and tolerant, not exclusive and narrow and excommunicative. Catholicity is a bigger thing than Catholicism’²⁵⁰. It is interesting to note that many Welsh Anglicans also held narrow attitudes at this time. In 1933 under the heading ‘Culni yng Nghymru’, *Y Cymro* reported on Bishop Charles Green of Bangor’s claim that no one belonged to the true Church unless he or she was in communion with the Anglican Church²⁵¹. An increasing number of Anglicans, however, were less dogmatic, and became themselves highly critical of Rome’s exclusive attitude. In 1928 Rev. J. Gower Jones claimed that Mostyn’s label of ‘heretics and schismatics’ to describe those urging amity with Catholics was ‘an exhibition of pride and arrogance and totally incongruous with the humility of Christ’²⁵². The Dean of St. David’s, W. Williams, also strongly criticised the refusal of Rome to participate in ecumenical discussion²⁵³, and many other Churchmen urged the Rome to hold out the hand of friendship to the other Churches in Wales²⁵⁴. Welsh Catholics, however, reacted predictably. T. Bede Wills of Merthyr Tydfil urged Anglicans to ‘face the realities of re-union’ however ‘displeasing and disappointing’ they may be to them²⁵⁵. Nonconformists were also highly critical of such Catholic attitudes towards ecumenism. In 1937 a Cardiff Catholic had described that ‘on the one side we have the Roman Catholic Church, founded by God, undivided now and forever; on the other side we have the Protestant Church, founded by man, divided now and forever into many hundreds of different sects’²⁵⁶. Rev. M. Watcyn-Williams replied that such

²⁵⁰*The Welsh Outlook*, XIV (1) (1927). 28.

²⁵¹*Y Cymro*, 15 July 1933. 5: Archbishop Edwin Morris also made such claims throughout his ministry.

²⁵²*Western Mail*, 23 Feb. 1928. 7 : Mostyn’s attitude had ‘revealed a thing which we have always dreaded, viz., that union with Rome means a return to bondage’; Rev. J.D. Hughes similarly accused Mostyn of being ‘pompous’ and ‘presumptuous’ in his pastoral.

²⁵³*Western Mail*, 30 Jan. 1930. 8 : ‘If the Church of Rome by the claim to infallibility so palpably absurd, and by adding dogmas to the Christian faith that affront the intellect and the conscience, keeps aloof from this general movement, it is to her great loss. In time she will see her sin and join’; see also *Western Mail*, 23 July 1930, 12.

²⁵⁴*Western Mail*, 16 Aug. 1930, 9; see also 29 July 1930, 5.

²⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 7 Aug. 1930. 5 : They must face the fact that on the question of Sacraments alone there could never be the unity they so desired. Both Eastern and Western Churches declared all Seven Sacraments to be absolutely fundamental, the Anglicans had only two, and the Nonconformists regarded them as non-essentials. ‘That is the real position which must be faced’.

²⁵⁶*Western Mail*, 14 Aug. 1937, 11 : The Catholic Church had never perpetuated schism so ‘never having broken away from anything has nothing with which to reunite’. All non-Catholic denominations could be seen as ‘chips off the rock, which is the Roman Catholic Church’. Non-

'ridiculous claims' were statements of faith, not of fact, and were 'typically Roman and arrogant'²⁵⁷. Another correspondent asserted that the letter 'shows the mentality of Roman Catholics to-day'. The Catholic Church had 'no monopoly of God's grace or of His goodness and love towards mankind'²⁵⁸.

In the face of a gradually expanding ecumenical ideal during and after the Second World War, Welsh Catholics stood firm to their definition of 'Christian unity'. In 1941 McGrath wrote that Catholics who worried that they were seen as 'narrow-minded and even intolerant' in their beliefs, should 'remember that Christ founded only one Church ... Her teaching is dictated by Her possession of Christ's doctrine and guaranteed by the presence and direction of the Holy Spirit'²⁵⁹. This intransigence was reflected in his forthright disapproval of Cardinal Hinsley's 'Sword of the Spirit' movement. Launched in 1940 to show Catholic support of the war effort, the Sword of the Spirit became one of the few pre-Second Vatican Council ecumenical movements which included the Catholic Church²⁶⁰. McGrath, however, fervently condemned the instances of common prayer between Catholics and Protestants which the Sword had led to, noting the 'impudence of lay folk who, of course, do not know the implication of many of the acts they perform'. He told Hinsley that they had 'occasioned great scandal to our people. Both clergy and laity have been shocked'. Even the proposal that the inter-denominational meetings should be prefaced by silent prayer was scorned by McGrath. Simply by associating with non-Catholic dignitaries the Church was brought 'on to the same level as heretical bodies'. He strictly forbade the establishment of the 'Sword of the Spirit' in his archdiocese. 'The movement, carried on as it has been in England so far,' he concluded, 'would prove a catastrophe to the Church in Wales'. Although Bishop Hannon was not as outspoken as McGrath in his views on the subject, in a personal letter to the

Catholic Churches had, in fact, 'no divine right to exist at all', being 'all man-made, founded in opposition to the Catholic Church'.

²⁵⁷*Western Mail*, 17 Aug. 1937, 9.

²⁵⁸*Western Mail*, 28 Aug. 1937, 11 : Rome certainly needed to be reunited with the other Churches, as it too had 'broken away' from the original Church, being 'to-day ... as unlike the original Church of, say, the first century as it could possibly be'.

²⁵⁹Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on 'Mixed Marriages' 1941*.

²⁶⁰Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 393-8; Stuart Mews, 'The Sword of the Spirit', *Studies in Church History*, 20 (1983), 409-30.

Cardinal he also questioned Hinsley's efforts. Although he claimed he would welcome a Catholic campaign of prayers and study, he warned that those 'uneducated and ignorant' Catholics might misinterpret the present co-operation with non-Catholics²⁶¹.

During the 1950s the concept of the one true Church was discussed on numerous occasions in the Western Mail. In 1950 A.J. Mills of Cardiff suggested the reason for the Welsh Catholic Church's growth²⁶² was simply due to the fact that it was 'the Church that was founded by Jesus Christ himself, with Peter as its head, and He promised that He would be with it even unto the end of the world'²⁶³. In reaction to such claims Rev W. John Samuel bluntly asserted that any discussion with Catholics was 'a waste of time'. The authoritarianism of Rome lead those who accepted it to be 'utterly intolerant of any other point of view - they cannot by the very nature of things grant that any one else is right'²⁶⁴. Three years later George Davies of Swansea reopened the debate by stating that religion was a search by finite man for the Eternal, and Catholics merely 'reveal their earthly inspiration when they claim finality in their quest, and to be the one channel to God'²⁶⁵. In reply to this and to suggestions that the Pope should consider ecumenical unity with other denominations²⁶⁶, Margaret Ward of Llandaff submitted that non-Catholics 'would do well to jettison wishful thinking'²⁶⁷. In an impassioned reply to this and other such Catholic letters²⁶⁸, one Anglican referred to the narrow-mindedness, 'senseless bigotry' and 'arrogant

²⁶¹ Westminster Diocesan Archives : Bourne Papers Box 1/174.

²⁶² An editorial (*Western Mail*, 16 May 1950, 2) had speculated as to the secret of the continuing success of the Roman Church.

²⁶³ *Western Mail*, 22 May 1950, 4: K.J. Popham of Cardiff (2 June 1950, 4) supported this view : 'Christ delegated the propagation of His teaching to His Church, and not Churches, and guaranteed its infallibility'.

²⁶⁴ *Western Mail*, 7 June 1950, 6 : No one, he wrote, had the right to profess an exclusive way to salvation : 'I object to any Church claiming what amounts to almost proprietary rights over God and the Holy Spirit'.

²⁶⁵ *Western Mail*, 28 Dec. 1953, 4.

²⁶⁶ *Western Mail*, 30 Dec. 1953, 6.

²⁶⁷ *Western Mail*, 5 Jan. 1954, 4 : Christian unity was certainly 'dear to the heart of the Holy Father, but for him and for Holy Fathers until the end of time there can be only one unity', which was best summarised in one intercessional prayer : 'Intercede for our separated brethren that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the Chief Shepherd, the Vicar of Thy Son'.

²⁶⁸ *Western Mail*, 7 Jan. 1954, 6 : 'I am sure that if "Student" will prepare [a body of doctrine which would be acceptable to all] he will for the rest of his life understand the virtual impossibility of such a task and appreciate the wisdom of the attitude of Rome to this question'.

attitude' of Rome. 'Is this Christian?', he asked, 'Is this that true religion for which we all strive to labour under One Church, One Faith, One Lord?'²⁶⁹. In 1957 another Anglican correspondent reacted similarly to McGrath recent criticism of the futility of non-Catholic ecumenical efforts : 'it is idle to suppose that any union of Christian bodies can be brought about by yielding a principle here, or gaining a point there'²⁷⁰. It was incredible, he wrote, that the Church of Rome 'should be so blind and pompous to suppose it is the only true Church of Christ'. It was, he continued, the duty of every 'non-Roman Catholic Christian' both to pray for the Welsh Roman hierarchy and 'to attack them strongly in the matter of their intolerance'²⁷¹. Summarising the continuing belief of his Church, A.G. Evans of Penarth replied that 'unity is something that the Roman Catholic Church does, and always has, possessed, and so we also pray that you may one day be brought into the one true fold of Christ'²⁷².

In the 1950s accusations of Catholic arrogance were again expressed as a result of the Welsh Catholic insistence to use the Prayer for Wales (which prayed for the conversion of Wales) in their BBC broadcasts. Bishop W.T. Havard of St. David's led the objection to the prayer, condemning it as sectarian and narrow. Its petition for God to 'return' Wales to the 'true faith' was particularly noted as unacceptable. Furthermore, as the English hierarchy had dropped the prayer for the conversion of England from their radio services it was only right that the Welsh hierarchy should do the same. In reaction to these objections the BBC Welsh Religious Advisory Committee insisted that the prayer should be omitted from the service due to be broadcast from St. Mary's Cathedral, Wrexham in January 1956. Petit refused to yield to this demand and so the service was cancelled. The veto against the prayer continued until the early 1960s which resulted in no radio Catholic services. There had initially been some efforts to compromise. Fr. J. Barrett Davies, one of two Catholics on the advisory committee, wrote to Petit with a modified version of the prayer. 'I hope your

²⁶⁹*Western Mail*, 20 Jan. 1954, 6.

²⁷⁰*Western Mail*, 21 June 1957, 4.

²⁷¹*ibid.* : Rome had much to offer in guidance on matters of doctrine, but 'until this Church comes down off its pious pedestal and admits openly that it is not absolute truth, and that others may be able to offer something towards it, then it is limiting the power of the Holy Spirit'.

²⁷²*Western Mail*, 1 July 1957, 4.

Lordship', he wrote, 'will acquit me of any desire to alter the prayer to placate Havard, or any other heretics'. He suggested that the amended version should, however, perhaps be used out of courtesy, as it was a version 'to which no Christian could take exception'. Petit, however, was uncompromising, writing that he was 'completely opposed' to the altered prayer. 'In its amended form it would be acclaimed as a victory of their broadmindedness over our special intolerance'. There was, he insisted, only 'one true Church', yet 'looked at through Protestant eyes this amended form reduces us all to a common level'²⁷³.

As late as the early 1960s Welsh Catholics were still staunch in their disdain towards other denominations and resolute in their insistence on the unique position of their Church²⁷⁴. There seems to have been no evidence in Wales of the tension between the inclusivist and exclusivist Catholic minds which was apparent in England by the late 1940s²⁷⁵. It was to be left to the Second Vatican Council, or at least its preliminaries, to begin to change the attitude of Welsh Catholics. Yet even on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, Petit was still making it quite clear that any Catholic attendance at non-Catholic services was strictly anathema. He reacted swiftly and angrily to the 'scandal' of the attendance at non-Catholic civic services by the Catholic Mayor of Aberystwyth, Alderman W.G. Kitchin. 'There can be no giving way', he noted, 'on the accusation that the Mayor has broken the rule of the Church'. To do so, he wrote in a letter to Kitchin, 'is bad example to fellow-Catholics and, the higher the Office that is held, so much worse is the bad example'²⁷⁶.

²⁷³Wrexham Diocesan Archives : BBC File.

²⁷⁴In reaction to M.J. Williams of Welshpool's claim that 'for a group of finite, fallible beings to call itself the Body of Christ, to me, is utter blasphemy' (*Western Mail*, 25 Feb. 1960, 4) Daniel O. Davies of Aberystwyth wrote that 'as Catholics we believe that Christ founded only **one** Church. The other Churches have separated from the Catholic Church by denying her teaching. The variety of beliefs that are permitted within them about such fundamental doctrines as the Divinity of Christ and the Incarnation, & c., show them to be quite unlike the Church of the New Testament' (*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4).

²⁷⁵Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 488-9.

²⁷⁶Mcnevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

b) Assumption of the Virgin Mary to heaven

Nonconformist and Anglican criticism of Marian beliefs, including the centuries old belief in the assumption of Virgin Mary to heaven, was nothing new in Wales. In 1950, however, the critique was rekindled when Pius XII's *Munificentissimus Deus* defined the dogma of the bodily assumption thus making the belief necessary for salvation. For the last few months of 1950 and well into 1951, an intense controversy raged surrounding the Pope's *ex cathedra* promulgation, described by McGrath and Petit as 'the last jewel of Our Lady's crown'²⁷⁷. The letter pages of the Welsh national papers were full of debates, and there were many articles in both secular and religious newspapers and magazines dealing with the subject. At the time of the promulgation itself McGrath and Petit published a joint pastoral letter defending the dogma, while in a notable article in Y Faner at the beginning of 1951 Saunders Lewis forwarded a similar apology. These merely intensified the fervent criticism which was coming from Welsh Anglicans and Nonconformists in equal measure. The discussions had begun in August 1950 when Rome announced that Pius XII was to proclaim the Catholic belief of the assumption of the Virgin Mary to heaven as a dogma. It would now be compulsory for Catholics to believe the article unconditionally.

Nonconformist response was swift. Asserting support for the English Anglican archbishops' condemnation of the proposal, Y Goleuad lamented that 'un o'r pethau amlycaf ym mywyd yr oes hon ydyw'r llif rhyfedd sydd ynddi yng nghyfeiriad ofergoeliaeth a phaganiaeth'. This had been seen in Nazi Germany and in the Communist countries, but most of all it was apparent in Catholicism. The new dogma was nothing but 'ffiloreg ofergoelus a disail', promulgated out of fear rather than faith. With the secularisation of society Rome had decided that it must react. 'Yr un cymhelliad yn union yn ein barn ni sydd o dan ddogma anffaeledigrwydd y Pab a'r dogma newydd am gorff Mair, â'r rhyfel gwaedlyd presennol y Corea. A dyna ydyw hwnnw, Ofn', it concluded²⁷⁸. Seren Cymru²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷McGrath and Petit *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

²⁷⁸*Y Goleuad*, 30 Aug. 1950, 1.

²⁷⁹*Seren Cymru*, 25 Aug. 1950, 1, 3 : 'Dywedir mai dyma'r [dogma] drydedd mewn canrif - y mae un o'r rhain mewn tair canrif yn ormod ... ni ddarfu paganiaeth y Babaeth'.

and Y Tyst²⁸⁰ also strongly criticised what they saw as the deification of Mary. Likewise, in the letter pages of Y Faner William R. Hughes of Coedpoeth and later William Watkins of Llangeinor both condemned the Pope's action. Watkins wondered whether the New Testament prophecy that people would eventually turn away from the truth and wander into myths (2 Tim. 4:4) was coming true²⁸¹, while Hughes asked 'sut yn union y mae'r ddogma newydd ynglyn â Mair Forwyn ... yn mynd i helpu i wynebu problemau moesol a chymdeithasol yr oes hon'^{282?} Instead of adding to his list of dogmas, he wrote reflecting the vital difference between Catholicism and Nonconformity, the Pope should put his energy into more useful proclamations - such as an announcement in support of pacifism. 'Yr ydym bellach', Hughes wrote, 'wedi cael 2,000 o flynyddoedd o gredoau ar wahanol bynciau. Mae ofergoeliaeth wedi cael hoedl go dda, ac yn y dyddiau diwethaf hyn - Hiroshima!'²⁸³. Fr. Dafydd Crowley, the priest at Rhuthin, defended the dogma against both Watkins and Hughes. 'Yr ydym ni, Gymry,' he wrote, 'yn hoff iawn o'r hen ddywediad - "y gwir yn erbyn y byd". Dylem lawenhau pan roddir ef mewn gweithrediad'²⁸⁴. The history of Catholicism, Hughes was to reply, was rather best summed up with the phrase 'Y Pab yn erbyn y gwir'²⁸⁵.

The promulgation of the dogma of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary took place on 1 November 1950, on which occasion the Western Mail published an article by J. Barrett Davies defending it from the criticism to which it had been subject. This was certainly not, Davies began, an example of an dictatorial Pontiff imposing a belief on a submissive Church. Rather, Pius XII was 'yielding to petitions that have been sent to Rome from all parts of the world since 1870'. He then answered the accusations that the belief was unscriptural by

²⁸⁰*Y Tyst*, 31 Aug. 1950, 2 : 'Cam bras, ar ran y Babaeth, yw'r dwyfoli ar Fair ... Onid yw'r Babach yn llwyddo yn y hymgiprys gwleidyddol, y mae hi'n symud at ddewinio llygad addolwr ar y gwrthrychol'.

²⁸¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 Nov. 1950, 4; see also 29 Nov. 1950, 4.

²⁸²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 23 Aug. 1950, 2; see also 6 Sept. 1950, 2.

²⁸³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Sept. 1950, 2.

²⁸⁴*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30 Aug. 1950, 4; he also answered Hughes's question on the usefulness of the dogma by asserting 'nid yw crefydd neu eglwys a ymwnel yn unig â "bywyd-bob-dydd" ei haelodau yn rhywbeth goruwchnaturiol ac ysbrydol, ond yn hytrach mae'n faterol a bydol'; see also 13 Sept. 1950, 2; 22 Nov. 1950, 2.

²⁸⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 Sept. 1950, 2.

noting that doctrine could be revealed without being contained in scriptures. Furthermore, the silence of the first five centuries did not mean that the belief was not held by the early Church. 'It should not be assumed that the tradition of the Church must be explicit in each century : the Holy Spirit can enable the Church to preserve a belief implicitly'. The feast of the assumption certainly formed part of the Western Church's liturgy from the sixth century. Had the doctrine been new at that time, then there would surely have been evidence of opposition to the feast. Wales, concluded Davies, should have an especial interest in the dogma. There was no evidence that Rome kept the feast before the seventh century, yet St. Gregory of Tours reported that it was being kept in Gaul in the sixth. There was, therefore, 'a strong presumption that when St. Augustine came to England in 597 this feast was already being kept by the Welsh Church'²⁸⁶.

Later in that same month a detailed defence of the dogma was forthcoming from McGrath and Petit in a joint pastoral letter. Again it reminded all that there was nothing new about the belief. Even in the literary tradition of pre-Reformation Wales, which for a long period had a 'very deep and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary', there were many bards, such as Bleddyn Ddu, Dafydd ab Edmwnd and Iolo Goch, who referred to the assumption. Moving on to William R. Hughes's question as to how the doctrine could make Catholics better Christians, the bishops claimed that 'devotion to Mary is, by God's will, morally necessary for their salvation'. The higher moral standards of Catholics down the centuries developed naturally from this devotion, as did their love for Christ. The pastoral also answered the objections of Bishop W.T. Havard who (in the *Carmarthen Journal*) had written that this 'doctrine of most doubtful repute' was being 'thrust' upon 'the conscience of members of the Roman communion'²⁸⁷. The letter noted that there was certainly no opposition at all by Catholics to the promulgation. In fact, the Catholic Church had accepted and welcomed this doctrine, which harmonised so fully with Mary's supernatural office, 'with a most remarkable unanimity and spontaneity'. As both Hughes and Havard had condemned the dogma for being unscriptural, the bishops noted that

²⁸⁶*Western Mail*, 1 Nov. 1950, 4.

²⁸⁷*Carmarthen Journal*, 27 Oct. 1950.

the Church had had precedence and authority to decide on the extent of the New Testament canon. Furthermore, although revelation was safeguarded by the apostolic tradition, even biblical doctrine developed historically, as an acorn into an oak. The dogma of the assumption therefore developed naturally from the Biblical evidence of the importance of Mary as ‘Mother of God’ (Luke 1:43). The new doctrine, concluded the pastoral, also served to bring spirituality to the fore against the increasing materialism and agnosticism of the modern world. ‘After two world wars, and a persecution of the Church unequalled in history for ferocity with men choosing materialism instead of Heaven, forgetting their sonship of the common Father, losing sight of their eternal destinies, what better remedy is there than to raise them from the swamp of materialism’²⁸⁸.

Both the bishops of Monmouth and St. David’s answered this pastoral letter in detail. Bishop Edwin Morris had already written on the subject in the Monmouth Diocesan Gazette where he had lamented that the dogma had all but ruined any hope of the possibility of reunion. ‘Arising out of this there were already formidable obstacles to reunion between us and Rome. The new dogma will add yet another’²⁸⁹. In the later article in the Western Mail Morris noted that, in claiming that the doctrine had been held since the seventh century, the pastoral had failed to recognise that the word ‘assumption’ covered two beliefs. The earliest and most widely accepted belief was that Mary’s *soul* was taken to Heaven. It was the later and less well-supported belief, concerning the assumption of her *body*, that the Pope had recently defined. Although the Roman Missal contained 39 feasts in honour of Mary, not one of them mentioned such a physical assumption. Even if these references were understood as referring to a bodily phenomenon, there remained ‘one very awkward fact’. This was that, for many centuries, the readings in the Roman Breviary during the octave of the Feast of Assumption stated there was uncertainty what happened to Mary’s body after death. It was not until 1570 that readings ‘of dubious origin’, which related a story of a bodily assumption, were added²⁹⁰. In the second half of his exposition, Morris asserted that there was no evidence that any of the early Church fathers

²⁸⁸McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia* 1950.

²⁸⁹*Monmouth Diocesan Gazette* Oct. 1950.

²⁹⁰*Western Mail*, 14 Dec. 1950, 4.

held the belief. The logic of the letter was that this was not important, as a dogma need not have been apostolic in origin or have been believed from the beginning by the Roman Church. In contrast, Anglicans clearly taught that 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation'. 'It is not enough that a doctrine does not contradict Holy Scripture;' the bishop concluded, 'it must be provable thereby. On this Anglicans stand; by this the new dogma fails'²⁹¹.

In reply to the Roman hierarchy's criticism of his earlier article Bishop W.T. Havard wrote that, although it was true that all Churches were indebted to the Catholic Church for the New Testament, 'we beg leave to state that we do not identify the Roman Catholic Church with the Primitive Catholic Church'. While 'modern Roman Catholic propagandists' claimed they were the heirs of this Church, it was in fact only the Anglican Church whose faith and practice was rooted in the Apostolic Faith and tradition as reflected in the New Testament. In the Roman Church the beliefs of the Early Church had been vastly augmented. 'Had the corporal Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary been believed by the Early Church, is it conceivable that a place - and an honoured place - would not have been given to it in the New Testament. But no! There is not even an echo of it ... the silence of the early centuries bears out our contention'. Devotion to Mary to this extent could, in many cases, lead to many treating her as 'a divine-human goddess'. It may deepen the love of Christ for the few, but 'to the simple and ignorant she will be raised to the level of deity ... thus disturbing the true proportion of the Christian faith to the point of distortion'²⁹². Havard continued by referring to the pastoral's use of Welsh poetry, claiming that 'to try to persuade Welshmen of to-day that Wales of the Middle Ages was the golden age of faith and piety is to set too great a strain upon credulity'. Finally, he questioned why the pastoral had also congratulated him for recognising Mary's divine motherhood. 'Why congratulate me? Is not this scriptural? (St. Luke 1:46-55). My contention has all along rested upon our belief in the testimony of Holy Writ'²⁹³.

²⁹¹ *Western Mail*, 15 Dec. 1950, 4.

²⁹² *Western Mail*, 25 Jan. 1951, 4.

²⁹³ *Western Mail*, 26 Jan. 1951, 4.

In January 1951 in Y Faner's 'Cwrs y Byd' column, another Welsh Anglican, 'A.T.'²⁹⁴, also wrote challenging the letter. He began by noting that many Anglican feast-days were connected to Mary, the Anglican creeds included the words 'a aned o Fair Forwyn', and the Magnificat was sung at Afternoon Prayers. The Church in Wales, then, faithfully kept to the Holy Scriptures and to the best tradition of the Catholic Church. 'Crwydrodd Eglwys Rufain oddi ar y llwybrau Catholig yma', he insisted. The earliest date given by the bishops for a belief in the assumption was the fourth century, in St. Epiphanius's *Panarion*. A.T. claimed that this, in fact, gave little evidence as to Mary's death or to the bodily assumption 'oherwydd y mae'n amlwg na wyr ef fwy am y naill nag am y llall'. Likewise, the early Fathers would have been very familiar with the idea of assumption, yet they gave no reference whatsoever to the belief. Even sixth century evidence was so patchy that little credit could be ascribed to it. It is clear, then, 'ni all y greddo ddal dau funud o ymchwil hanesyddol'. Even Benedict XIV believed there was not enough evidence to make it into an infallible truth. Furthermore, there was nothing in the works of the Welsh poets which supported the belief as defined by the Pope. 'Welsh Catholics', that is Anglicans in Wales, would agree with the praise to Mary given by these bards, but no more. In conclusion, A.T. asserted that the definition had dealt a great blow to ecumenical relations and could therefore be seen only as an act of treachery against Christ. 'Yn lle cymodi, codi rhwystau; yn lle galw ynghyd, gwasgaru a chreu ofn a digasedd ... Yn lle "porthi'r wyn", fe'u gwasgarwyd gan "olynydd" Pedr!'. The only reason the Pope announced the new dogma was to please the multitude, 'am ei fod yn beth dymunol yng ngolwg lliaws mawr aelodau'r Eglwys Rufeinig; nid am ei fod yn wir, ond am ei fod yn eu barn hwy yn ychwanegu at ogoniant Mair'²⁹⁵.

A week previously, an article published in the 'Cwrs y Byd' column of Y Faner was to stimulate discussions for months to come. This was a defence of the belief by Saunders Lewis²⁹⁶. The fervent protests of the Welsh denominational papers against the assumption as proof of the growth of superstition showed

²⁹⁴Possibly Aneurin Talfan (Davies)?

²⁹⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 8.

²⁹⁶'A.T.' had *not* seen Lewis's article before writing his own.

conclusively that their editors were ignorant of the true teaching. The bodily assumption, explained Lewis, was that following her natural death and burial Mary's undecayed body was taken by Christ and raised to heaven to be united with her soul. The New Testament both described Jesus's body being ascended and claimed this would eventually happen to every person who was saved. Was this also superstitious? Mary's bodily assumption was the guarantee that the bodies of all who believed would be ascended. Although this (along with much of the Christian Faith) was beyond human reason, it was certainly not superstitious. This criticism was made even more woeful by the fact that it was so-called 'men of God' who were accusing Catholics of superstition and idolatry. 'Pe byddent Gomiwnyddion neu anffyddwyr, ni chwynwn ddim. Ond gweinidogion a phregethwyr a golygyddion papurau enwadol!'. For Lewis it was obvious that the Welsh people rejected belief in the assumption because they had lost their belief in the incarnation. 'Y mae'r gred yn nyrchafiad corff Mair i'w uno âi henaid hi yn ofergoel ac yn gabled gennym am y rheswm syml nad ydym ni ddim o ddiffrif, o wir argyhoeddiad deallol, yn credu yn ymgawdoliad Duw'. Lewis concluded by explaining why the Pope had chosen the middle of the twentieth century to announce the dogma. With the increasing struggle between the materialism of Hollywood and that of Moscow and with industrialism being offered to the Third World as a Messiah, the Pope was reminding man of the spiritual nature of life. With atomic bombs causing mankind fear and wild hysteria, the Pope was calling on men to look beyond place and time to the glorious uniting of bodies with God and His Son²⁹⁷.

Those Nonconformist newspapers which Lewis had criticised, naturally reacted vehemently to his charges. Y Goleuad insisted that the chapels had always held fast to the essentials of the Christian Faith 'fel y dysgir hwy yn yr Ysgrythau Sanctaidd ac fel y sicrhawyd hwy rhag heresiâu ac ofergoelion gan Gredoau mawr yr Eglwys Gristnogol'. In dealing with the body of Christ, however, Lewis had used phrases like 'corff Duw ei hun', 'cig ac esgyrn Duw' and 'Duw a sugnodd ei bronau hi'. Had he been living in 451 A.D., claimed the article, he would have been condemned as a disciple of Eutyches, who denied the

²⁹⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 3 Jan. 1951, 8.

true humanity of Christ. ‘Y mae pob un o’r ymadroddion yna, ac eraill y gellid ychwanegu atynt o’r ysgrif, yn hereticaidd’²⁹⁸. Similar accusations were voiced in Seren Cymru. Lewis, it claimed patronizingly, was ‘[yn] ddyn mawr yn siarad y tu allan i’w faes’. In an article betraying deep hostility and misunderstanding, T. Ellis Jones tried to turn the tables on him. ‘Y gwir plaen yw i’r Babaeth ddwyfoli Mair am i’r Babaeth anghredu yr ymgrawdoliad mawr ei hun’. Furthermore, Nonconformists did not reject Mary, they merely objected to the idea that, contrary to Scripture (1 Tim. 2:5), man needed any other intermediary between himself and God apart from Christ. ‘Parchwn ei fam Ef, ond Ef, ac Ef yn *unig*, a addolwn. A gwrthodwn i neb, er iddo fod yn Bab, ei symud Ef allan o’n gafael, trwy osod rhyngom ag Ef offeiriad, seintiau, merthyron a Mair’²⁹⁹.

Such was the controversy which Lewis’s defence of the dogma engendered that letters about the assumption were still being published in Y Faner as late as October 1951. On 24 October the editor finally closed all correspondence on the dogma and its related subjects. ‘Dyma’r llythyr olaf yn y drafodaeth hon;’ he wrote, ‘cafodd ein darllenwyr ddigon o gyfle bellach i wyntyllu’r bwnc’³⁰⁰. In many of these letters hostility and prejudice clouded much of the serious discussion. One early letter claimed to have been stunned by Lewis’s folly. ‘Os rhoes y Creawdwr i ddyn feddwl a rheswm,’ he wrote, ‘ni roes hwynt gan fwriadu iddo eu troi o’r neilltu a’u cuddio fel y dalent honno yn nhywod daear dywyll, gaëdig dogma’³⁰¹. Following the initial articles, further debates were conducted between D. Jacob Davies and Roy A. Lewis, William George and Gwilym Jones, and ‘Hesgin’ and a Fr. J. Pargiter of Machynlleth. The debate between D. Jacob Davies, a Unitarian from Aberdâr, and Roy A. Lewis, a Catholic from Bangor, began in the January and the last letter in their discussion appeared seven months later³⁰². After the fairly serious and thoughtful

²⁹⁸*Y Goleuad*, 17 Jan. 1951, 1: see also *Y Goleuad*, 15 Nov. 1950, 1: ‘Dyry hi erbyn hyn fwy o le i fam yr Iesu nag iddo Ef ei Hunan, a sonia fwy amdani’.

²⁹⁹*Seren Cymru*, 26 Jan. 1951, 1, 5: ‘Gan y Pab y mae’r hawl i ddweud wrth Dduw “Gelli faddau hyd y dyddiad a’r dyddiad, and dim diwrnod wedi hynny”. Onid ofergoel a rhyfyg ofnadwy yw’r fath syniad?’.

³⁰⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 Oct. 1951, 2.

³⁰¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 2.

³⁰²Other readers, such as T. Ll. Stephens of Talgarreg (*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 Jan. 1951, 4) and Rev. Dewi W. Thomas of Llanfyrnach (14 Feb. 1951, 2) also commented on this debate.

initial letters³⁰³ the debate degenerated into a barrage of accusations and imputations³⁰⁴. ‘A oes rhaid i ni roi anffaeligrwydd Mr. Davies yn lle anffaeligrwydd y Pab?’, asked Lewis³⁰⁵. ‘Nid wyf yn credu yn fy anffaeledigrwydd fy hun’, Davies answered, ‘- nid wyf chwaith yn credu yn anffaeledigrwydd y Pab na’r Eglwys a’i herthyglau a’i chredoau na’r Beibl na Mr. Roy Lewis, ond yr wyf yn credu fod hawl gan hyd yn oed Unodwr i’w farn, ac i’r farn honno ei llafar’³⁰⁶.

The discussion between William George, a Baptist from Cricieth, and Gwilym Jones, a convert from Nonconformity then residing in Rome, also degenerated rapidly. Two old accusations surfaced persistently in George’s letters. Firstly, the claim that Catholic Mariology elevated her to the position of mediator between God and man : “Gan edrych ar Iesu” medd yr Apostol Pawl. “Gan edrych ar yr Arglwyddes Fair” medd y tad o Rufain; gan gefnogi math o “soft option” rhwng y Llwybr Cul a’r Ffordd Lydan - cwrs poblogaidd efallai, ond hollol anysgrwthol cyn belled ag y gwelaf fi’³⁰⁷. Secondly, Catholics were accused of having no freedom of thought but were compelled to reiterate the Pope’s view : ‘gwae neb a ddiystyrio ddyfarniad yr Unben hwn; er nad oes ganddo ar hyn o bryd hawl i ladd y corff, honna eto awdurdod i fwrw corff ac enaid i uffern’³⁰⁸. After three months of letters, Jones advised George to read the Pope’s encyclicals on the Bible, whereupon he would realise ‘pa mor annheg yw ei ddehongliad o’r agwedd Gatholig tuag at yr Ysgrythur Lân’³⁰⁹. Similarly, the debate between ‘Hesgin’ and a Fr. J. Pargiter of Machynlleth lasted for nearly two months. Hesgin’s anti-Catholic attitude, which reflected the prejudice of many of the

³⁰³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 2; 24 Jan. 1951, 2 etc.

³⁰⁴Lewis wrote ‘os derbyniwn air Mr. Davies, rhaid i ni gredu mai ffyliaid llwyr yw holl Gristnogion y ddaear’ (*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21 March 1951, 2) and asked Davies why he believed he understood God’s nature better than the Roman Church’s saints, theologians and philosophers had done : ‘Ai am fod ei feddwl yn ddisgleiriach, am ei fod ganddo gydwbod mwy goleuedig? A ddaeth rhyw ysbrydoliaeth bersonol iddo oddi wrth yr Hollalluog?’ (27 June 1951, 2); Davies wrote ‘fy ngofid yn awr yw paham mae’r awdur galluog yn crwydro oddi wrth ei faes (sef fy llythyr) a gosod cocyn hitio hwylus i fyny a’i daro’i lawr yn ebrwydd’ (31 Jan. 1951, 4).

³⁰⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 2 May 1951, 4.

³⁰⁶*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 Aug. 1951, 2.

³⁰⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 17 Jan. 1951, 4 : ‘Y gwir syml, yn fy marn i, yw y gwrthodir derbyn y ddogma hon am nad oes rithyn o sail ysgrythurol iddi fel y tystia, absenoldeb cymaint â brawddeg o’i phlaid yn erthygl Mr. Saunders Lewis o ben i ben’.

³⁰⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21 March 1951, 2 : ‘Onid yw cyn eglured â haul ganol dydd nad oes gan Gatholig hawl i farnu dros’i hun pa beth a ddywed yr Ysgrythur’.

³⁰⁹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 11 April 1951, 2; see also 14 Feb. 1951, 2 etc.

letters in this lengthy controversy, was harshly criticised by Catholics. ‘Ai anwybodaeth neu ynte esgeulustod rhagfarnllyd sydd wrth wreiddyn ei osodiad?’, asked one correspondent³¹⁰. Even Pargiter concluded that Hesgin’s letters were a ‘gymysgedd o amerch a chamddyfyniad. Y mae’n siomedig na chanfyddir yn ei lythyr[au] ef nac ysbryd Christnogol, nag ysgoloriaeth ddirifol’³¹¹.

In the *Efrydiau Catholig* Saunders Lewis replied to the criticism his original article had been subject to, especially to the claim in *Y Goleuad* that he was heretically denying the true humanity of Christ by seeing Christ as God, and Mary as ‘Mother of God’. A later article in this publication, Lewis claimed, was far more objective. This was by Dr. John Owen, a Presbyterian pastor then in retirement in Morfa Nefyn, who explained the Early Church declaration at the Council of Ephesus that Mary was the ‘Mother of God’. Every mother was a mother to a person, he had concluded, and Mary was a mother to a person who was truly God³¹². Certainly, Lewis continued, the Fathers of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism would not have made the charge of heresy against the sentences such as ‘corff Duw ei hun’ and ‘cig ac esgyrn Duw’. Aside from earlier evidence, including a letter from William Williams Pantycelyn to Thomas Charles in 1791, this belief was summarised in the ‘Cyffes Ffydd’ of 1823. Article XV clearly stated that ‘... oherwydd yr undeb, y mae gweithredoedd y naill neu y llall yn cael eu priodoli i’r Person. Y mae undeb y ddwy natur yn aros, ac i barhau byth, ym Mherson Crist. Duw-ddyn fydd efe byth’. The Methodist Fathers stood with the Ephesus Fathers, and with the Catholic Church, in acknowledging that ‘Mother of God’ was a term that every Methodist had a right to use. ‘Nid oes dim yng Ngyffes Ffydd y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd - nac yn Ffydd y Cyrff eraill yng Nghymru sy’n dal yr un gred am Grist -’, he concluded, ‘sy’n groes i’r ddysg Gatholig am Fair Fam Duw. A diolch i Dduw am hynny’³¹³.

Catholic defences and explanations of Marian questions, resulting from the defining of the dogma of the bodily assumption, continued throughout the early 1950s. In the Archdiocesan Yearbook for 1952 Fr. H. Bowes of Griffithstown

³¹⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 9 May 1951, 2 : Hesgin’s views were criticised for being ‘gwbl anheilwng o unrhyw un sy’n honni parchu’r gwirionedd a “chwarae teg”’.

³¹¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30 May 1951, 4.

³¹²*Y Goleuad*, 18 April 1951, 5.

³¹³Saunders Lewis, ‘Nodiad ar Ddadl’, *Efrydiau Catholig*, 5 (1951), 46–47.

claimed that much of the criticism of the Pope's declaration was 'unfriendly and displayed anti-Catholic bias'. There were some less hostile non-Catholics, however, who had harboured genuine perplexity over the definition and who were themselves beginning to recognise the importance of devotion to Mary. He therefore attempted to explain in a lucid manner why the Pope defined the assumption³¹⁴. In the very first issue of the Menevia Record in August 1953 there appeared a similar article by Dom Ernest Graf³¹⁵. The promulgation of the dogma by Pius XII on 1 November 1950 had certainly led to much debate in Wales. From the prominence and length of the discussions following, it can be viewed as the greatest doctrinal controversy between Catholic and Protestant in Wales during the modern period. Serious discussion, however, had become indistinguishable from the hostility which had been so frequent in the Protestant-Catholic doctrinal clashes during these decades.

The Roman Catholic Critique of Other Denominations

Although largely expressed against Catholicism, misunderstanding, ignorance and prejudice, was actually prevalent on both sides. In the Review in 1961 Etienne Raven admitted that for many years Welsh Catholics had been so busy accusing their Protestant neighbours of misrepresentation that they had not realised their own guilt. 'Ignorance begets prejudice,' he wrote, 'and prejudice invariably favours fiction at the expense of fact. Thus, on both sides, understanding has for centuries been swamped by misconceptions and fantasies'. Just as Nonconformists had believed that the Pope claimed to be God and that Mary was worshipped in the same way as Christ, so 'Catholics have been convinced that Protestants worship only one day a week, that they are usually hypocrites, or that they knowingly misinterpret the Bible in order to bolster their false claims'³¹⁶. Similarly, in The Tablet in 1955, Christopher Dawson reacted to

³¹⁴H. Bowes, 'The Assumption of Our Blessed Lady', *Cardiff Archdiocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 129-135.

³¹⁵Ernest Graf, 'Queen of Heaven : Thoughts on the Assumption of Our Lady', *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 18-20.

³¹⁶Etienne Raven, 'At the Frontiers of Christian Unity', *Review*, 5 (3) (1961), 10.

a number of recent references to Wales. 'I do not see how Catholics can hope to convert Wales to the faith so long as they remain blissfully ignorant of the religious forces that have had such a profound influence on Welsh culture and the mind of the people'³¹⁷. Such ignorance of Protestant beliefs and prejudice towards those who held them could on occasion be seen in Catholic criticism of the non-Catholic denominations. Finding themselves in the ascendant, Catholics in Wales began to believe that they need not continue to placidly defend their Church's tenets but instead show how their own beliefs were superior to the mishmash of convictions which they thought were held by the other religious traditions. 'Up to the present', announced the organising Secretary of the CTS in Cardiff in 1924, 'the Catholic Church has been on the defensive side'. It was now, however, 'high time they went on the aggressive side'³¹⁸. This 'aggression', however, only served to fuel the flames of inter-sectarian contention.

A number of articles in The Tablet in the 1920s, which were highly critical of Nonconformity, reflected the new found confidence. Because ministers were dependent on their congregation 'for daily bread and for the still sweeter morsel of popularity', they were accused of giving the people of Wales what they wanted to hear rather than what they needed. The chapels were criticised for making 'the pulpit more important than the altar' and allowing 'authority to the pew'³¹⁹. 'Welsh religion', claimed another article, 'has its centre in the creature rather than the Creator'. Sunday worship with the sermon as its focus and a great stress on community singing appealed to what was base. Welshmen enjoyed themselves at chapel just as Englishmen enjoyed their Sunday golf. 'Too many "services" in Welsh chapels are services rendered to men and women rather than to Almighty God'³²⁰. In reporting on a speech in October 1929 by 'a Mr. Saunders Lewis' The Tablet took the opportunity to reiterate similar criticisms. Lewis claimed that Nonconformity had led to a loss of aesthetic beauty and inspiration in Wales. The Principality was instead suffering from 'a terrible moralism' which was eating at the fabric of society³²¹. The report continued by maintaining that the chapels were

³¹⁷*The Tablet*, 20 Aug. 1955, 187.

³¹⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (11) (1924), 336.

³¹⁹*The Tablet*, 27 Dec. 1924, 864.

³²⁰*The Tablet*, 15 Aug. 1925, 206.

³²¹*The Tablet*, 19 Oct. 1929, 504; see also *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 July 1926.

not fulfilling the true needs of the Welsh people. This was due to the fact that they had too little of the true idea of worship. ‘Hundreds of thousands of Welshmen go to what they call “places of worship” on Sundays when they are really going to places of entertainment’. Although Lewis was adamant that to remedy Nonconformity’s decline it was essential to create ‘a Welsh Government, a Welsh Metropolis, and a new Welsh aristocracy’, the article urged that Wales’ only true salvation would be for her to recover her old religion, ‘the religion of the Mass, of Our Lady, of the Saints and of the Pope’³²².

In the Welsh Outlook in 1926 J.E. De Hirsch-Davies had also claimed that Wales needed to turn to Catholicism as Nonconformity ‘lacks stability, authority, cohesion’. The usual Nonconformist protest against the alleged dogmatism of the Catholic Church was nothing but blatant hypocrisy. Their own unofficial religious guides ‘generally manifest a “dogmatism” compared with which the Infallibility of the Pope, as Bernard Shaw explains in one of his plays, is modesty itself!’. The Welsh Catholic Church was not growing because of some trend towards authoritarianism, but because it was attracting ‘intelligent, cultured and highly educated men who, with the “obsession of God” weighing on their souls, are tired of the negations of Protestantism; of the nebulosities and barren abstractions of “Modernism” in all its forms’. A Christian Church ‘claiming a divine authority to teach mankind a gospel of revealed truth, but split into a hundred fragments with discordant messages to a bewildered world, is an impossible creed for intelligent men’³²³. Nonconformity, regarded as the ‘religion of Wales’, bore the brunt of most of this criticism, but the Anglican Church was certainly not free from such cavilling. In Mostyn’s first advent pastoral as archbishop he strongly criticised the Church in Wales for its lack of an authoritative guide. Anglicanism, he claimed, was a ‘religious body where each member, be he cleric or layman, has a perfect right to hold himself or to teach others the doctrines which appeal most to his own ideas or fancies’³²⁴.

Throughout the 1930s criticism of both Nonconformity and Anglicanism continued unabated. In 1930 The Tablet criticised individual Nonconformist

³²²*The Tablet*, 19 Oct. 1929, 504.

³²³Hirsch-Davies, ‘Wales and Catholicism II’, p. 75-6.

³²⁴Francis Mostyn. *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1921*.

ministers for not standing up to oppose official teaching which was blatantly unfair in its criticisms of Catholics in Wales. The reason was that all ministers ‘live and teach under a Reign of Terror’; they were married men ‘whose food and shelter depend upon subservience to official policies’³²⁵. Five years later Fr. Eric Green claimed that ‘Nonconformity, through the death-dealing influence of modernism, has ceased to be a religion, and has become an affair of village politics’. The Welsh people were hungry for religion and yet ‘going to their chapels to ask for bread, they are given the stone of respectability, Sunday observance, with a long face and a big black book, and total abstinence where one is known’³²⁶. In the introduction to his *The Catholic Martyrs of Wales*, T.P. Ellis also attacked the influence of modernism in Welsh religion. God, he claimed, was becoming ‘an abstraction and a myth’ and Christ himself ‘a mere interesting, semi-mythical, legend’³²⁷. When the Dean of Monmouth questioned this assertion in the *Western Mail*, Ellis replied that anyone who saw ‘how both the Elizabethan Church and Nonconformist bodies are riddled with Modernist attacks on the “personality” of God and the Incarnation of Our Lord will recognise that my assertion is an under-statement’. It was ‘the Catholic Church alone which is united in maintaining these truths’³²⁸. This was also emphasised in an article printed in the Archdiocese directory two years later. ‘Outside the Church’, it claimed, ‘there is a general whittling down of revealed truth, a trying to make the claims of God suit the passing whim and taste of the mob’³²⁹. Aside from criticism of non-Catholics in the press, there were also some priests who would take such cavilling into the pulpit. In 1930 Lieutenant J. McGuire of Brecon wrote to Bishop Vaughan to protest against the sermons of his own parish priest. ‘The sermons’, he wrote, ‘are 75% controversial and 50% Henry VIII, Elizabeth, Luther and the Reformation in general ... I submit that sermons on Love and Service would do more good than Cranmer and Luther did harm’³³⁰.

³²⁵*The Tablet*, 4 Oct. 1930, 428.

³²⁶*The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

³²⁷Ellis, *Catholic Martyrs of Wales*, p. xxi.

³²⁸*Western Mail*, 12 June 1933, 9.

³²⁹*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1935*, p. 71.

³³⁰Menevia Diocesan Archives : Brecon File.

In 1936 *The Month* published an especially hostile condemnation of Welsh Protestants. Both Nonconformists and Welsh Anglicans, wrote J.T.F. Williams, were 'woefully ignorant of the nature of God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'. He claimed that God was for Nonconformists the *Bod Mawr*, 'dwelling in Heaven remote from any real connection with the common life of men'. Ironically this imputation was virtually identical to the Nonconformist accusation of the remoteness of God in the Catholic Faith. Jesus, Williams continued, was 'not the Second Person of the Trinity, but a man of the Jewish race born of the woman Mary by her spouse Joseph'. The Nonconformist views of sin and prayer were claimed to be similarly deviant. For the Welsh Free Churches true sin was 'non-existent'; it was regarded as being 'far more heinous if it brings the good name of a *Capel Salem* into disrepute than as a breach of an eternal law of God'. Prayer, on the other hand, was for them 'the ability of addressing beautiful phrases to the Great Being for the edification of an admiring congregation'. Following his fervent condemnation of Welsh Nonconformity, Williams simply dismissed the Church in Wales as 'Conservative in politics, anti-Nationalist in sentiment, and Anglican in religion'. Williams was confident that if non-Catholic ignorance of 'true religion' were countered, the conversion of Wales would be imminent. 'The Welsh nation has to be won back from a cold, individualistic and sterile religion into the warm, corporate, and active profession of Catholic Christianity'³³¹.

Writing for 'Cyfeillion Cymru' in the early 1940s, N. Wynne again strongly criticised the influence of the chapels on Wales. They had, she claimed, given the Welsh people 'a melancholy subjectivism, a theology deeply tinged with Calvinistic fatalism and gloom, which is really foreign to their natural temperament'. Without the Mass, she claimed that even the incarnation was 'bound to become at best a mere shadowy belief'. Despite their undeniable *hiraeth* for a genuine Catholicism, it was their gloomy and repressive Nonconformity which was the stumbling block to their return. 'What joy there must be in Heaven,' her article concluded, 'when even one small Church rises in their midst to challenge their belief - or lack of belief'³³². Such denunciations of

³³¹Williams, 'The Conversion of Wales', p. 256-7.

³³²N. Wynne, 'Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Lampeter', *Daffodils Under the Snow* (Liverpool, 1946), p. 36-7.

Nonconformity continued into the 1950s. In the Western Mail in 1950 Illtyd Morgan of Cardiff wrote that the Protestant Church was a man-made institution which permitted so much toleration that ‘different sects accept directly opposite doctrines’. Morgan concluded that Nonconformists who so often emphasise scriptural authority should remember that ‘the Roman Church came first and the Bible followed many years later’. The Bible was, indeed, ‘a product of the Catholic Church, who compiled it, edited it, and declared it to be authentic’³³³. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the reaction to these suggestions was impassioned. Rev. W. John Samuel of Llanelli, among others, wrote refuting such an allegation. ‘The Bible is the Word of God’, he claimed, ‘and that is not the product of the Roman Church or any other’. The canon of the New Testament was agreed upon by both Western and Eastern Churches after its books had been written and the Roman Church had at that time ‘no more existence [i.e. authority] than the Church at Ephesus or Antioch or Corinth’³³⁴.

In Review in 1958 Fr. Christopher Thomas, who had converted to Catholicism from Nonconformity through Anglicanism, strongly criticised both his former denominations. Like N. Wynne, he also mentioned ‘the gloom of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel’ and claimed that his strict parents even forbade him to whistle on the Sabbath day. Although Anglicanism was for him ‘something brighter, more colourful, more pleasant’, he soon became disillusioned with the warring factions within the Church in Wales. “High Church” or “Low Church” was the choice all Anglicans were given, and ‘like oil and water, they did not mix’. There was further separations even within these divisions, with Anglican theology being left in a state of utter confusion³³⁵. This ostensible doctrinal chaos was often alluded to in Catholic justification of Papal infallibility. ‘The members of the Catholic Church, unlike those of non-Catholic communions,’ wrote McGrath and Bishop Petit in 1950, ‘are not liable to be blown hither and thither by every wind of erroneous views and, at times, of even contradictory doctrines’³³⁶. In the Western Mail in 1960 even Etienne Raven, who would later

³³³*Western Mail*, 13 June 1950, 4.

³³⁴*Western Mail*, 21 June 1950, 6.

³³⁵Christopher Thomas, ‘Conversion’, *Review*, 2 (1) (1958), 4.

³³⁶McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

write an enlightened article in Review urging closer co-operation between Welsh denominations, was highly critical of the Protestant faith. Protestantism was not only largely political in its origins but it was also 'a manifestation of intellectual pride, of the will to spiritual laissez-faire'. Furthermore, 'whatever else may be said, the Roman Catholic Church has not participated in the gradual whittling-down of Christian belief, to suit the whims and fancies of weak human natures'³³⁷.

Accusations such as these would have certainly caused increased hostility towards Catholic beliefs, although specific reactions to these indictments were rare. Petit's suggestion in 1948 that Nonconformists had purposely told lies about Catholics, however, did provoke some very fervent reactions³³⁸. An article in Y Cymro claimed that recently Nonconformists had become the scapegoat for all Wales's troubles and ills. They had been accused by Catholics of narrowness, slackness, blindness, hypocrisy and now deceit. 'Llacrwydd yr Ymneilltuwyr a barai bod ysgariadau ar gynnydd trwy'r wlad; dallineb yr Ymneilltuwyr sy'n hybu Comiwnyddiaeth ymhob cwr; rhagrith yr Ymneilltuwyr a wnaeth ein bywyd mor ddiliw; amhendrantrwydd yr Ymneilltuwyr a fygodd yr Eglwys ac a agorodd ddrws y gorlan i'r defaid ddianc i'r byd'. The article called on the Nonconformists to speak out against the unfair accusations made by Petit. In fact, it claimed, when Nonconformists did oppose Catholics it was not because they were ignorant of the facts but rather it was because they knew them only too well. 'Os amgylchynir y Pabyddion gan unrhyw gamddealltwriaeth,' the article concluded, 'camddealltwriaeth Rhufain yw hwnnw'³³⁹. There was, indeed, much criticism and denunciation of doctrine and religious practice from all sides during this time. With the growth of Catholicism such criticism intensified. There remained a thin line between justifiable debate and criticism which was borne out of hostility and prejudice. The latter, unfortunately, was undoubtedly far more common than the former.

³³⁷*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

³³⁸*Western Mail*, 6 Sept. 1948, 1.

³³⁹*Y Cymro*, 10 Sept. 1948, 5.

Chapter 4

Reactions to Catholic Educational Schemes in Wales

Background

a) Catholic education

‘I am delighted’, Pius XI told Mostyn while discussing education in 1922, ‘to know that this is a matter that is so dear to you and the Catholics in the Principality of Wales to-day’¹. Following strict Papal policy as set out in encyclicals such as *Divini Illius Magistri* in 1929, Welsh Catholics believed education was not complete unless it allowed for religion to permeate the whole of a child’s life. The need for specific schools for the Catholic children of a Principality whose proto-martyr Richard Gwyn had himself been a schoolmaster was, therefore, continually emphasised. ‘Catholics believe’, asserted Robert Wade in 1924, ‘that religion is as necessary an element in education as oxygen is in the air we breathe’². The religious lessons of state schools were not good enough, even if provision was made for Catholic children to attend special Catholic lessons. Bishop Petit claimed Catholicism could ‘only be taught by being lived, and a person lives all day long, not a half-hour or an hour in the morning’³. At the opening of the Blessed Richard Gwyn School, Flint, in 1954, he explained that education was an extension of the Catholic home. ‘We Catholics’, he declared, ‘are indissolubly bound to our schools because they are for us the extension of that Catholic family life before which we eternally place the ever-living example of the Holy Family of Nazareth’⁴.

¹*Western Mail*, 4 Dec. 1922, 9.

²Robert Wade, ‘Catholics and their Social Responsibilities’, *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 4 (7) (1924), 199.

³*Western Mail*, 13 Sept. 1948, 3.

⁴*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 18.

It was taken for granted that these schools would be staffed by Catholic teachers. Mostyn described the ‘spirit of self-sacrifice and unselfishness’ of a Catholic teacher, whose work was more apostolic than a profession⁵. In 1952 Petit claimed that the Catholic teacher’s work ‘is, or should be, a vocation, not a job’, and teachers should be a living example to their pupils. ‘A teacher today, humanly speaking, is the most powerful influence for good and evil in the community’⁶. Four years later the Menevia Record noted that Catholic teachers should co-ordinate all aims and activities to the one purpose of preserving the Faith in children’s hearts⁷. The Catholic school, which Mostyn referred to as ‘the cradle of the mission’⁸, was seen as one of the primary means of stemming leakage from the Church. The non-Catholic atmosphere of state schools was regarded as anathema. A Joint Pastoral of the hierarchy of England and Wales in 1905, confirmed in 1918, condemned the frequentation by Catholics of non-Catholic schools as a ‘very serious danger to Catholic faith and spirit’ and a ‘grave departure from Catholic teaching and tradition’. This pastoral was often reprinted in the Welsh yearbooks⁹. Although Catholic parents in many areas of Wales had no alternative but to send their children to non-Catholic schools, those who refused to send their children to Catholic schools which were near at hand were, in the words of Mostyn, committing ‘a grievous sin’¹⁰.

Such was the importance of education that in populous parishes a school was often seen as the first priority, over and above even a church. ‘The living stones that form the glorious pile of Christ’s spiritual temple - the children - have the first claim to our attention’¹¹. Likewise, St. Patrick’s Notes in the Newport Catholic Magazine declared that ‘no Parish has ever been, is, or ever will be, *or can be* healthy without its own schools. Let us, then, BUILD SCHOOLS’¹².

⁵*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 2 (3) (1922), xv.

⁶*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 14.

⁷*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 13.

⁸*The Tablet*, 16 Dec. 1922, 832-3.

⁹*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Year Book 1936*, pp. 102-103; *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 40.

¹⁰Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1935*.

¹¹*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 2 (2) (1922), vii : ‘Church and school must be erected as soon as possible and the school must be our first concern’; the school was ‘the bed-rock foundation’ of a Catholic parish.

¹²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (2) (1928), 64.

Certainly in the decades before the Second Vatican Council much effort went into erecting schools, and Catholics contributed vast amounts of money to the cause, either through donations or through attending fund-raising activities. Once built, schools were subject to the strict Board of Education guidelines, so money was needed to bring them into line with modern requirements. Priests especially were tireless in their efforts collecting money for their schools. Having died at the age of 52 The Tablet wrote of Fr. Earnest Samuel Hill of Newport that ‘his early death was probably hastened by his unflagging efforts to raise the large sum of money required for the rebuilding of his schools’¹³. Later in the decade a new school he had been strenuously labouring for was named the Father Hill Memorial School as a tribute to his dedication.

b) Appeal for more financial aid

In England and Wales the 1902 Balfour Act set up the dual system of education and recognised that voluntary schools should in some way be supported by the state. Whereas the denomination should pay for the sites, buildings, and structural repairs, the new Local Education Authorities would undertake the educational maintenance of the schools. At the time Catholics welcomed the Act with Cardinal Vaughan stating ‘we are not likely ever to get a more satisfactory settlement’¹⁴. The financial strain the 1902 Act left on the Catholic community, however, was considerable and constantly increasing. The Fisher Act of 1918 raised the school-leaving age to fourteen. By 1929 Mostyn was claiming that the burden had become ‘beyond our strength to bear in consequence of the demands of the Board of Education and the extra cost of building brought about by the war’¹⁵. In the next thirty years these ‘demands’ would become even more taxing.

Following the First World War, Catholics began to protest against the ‘grave injustice’ of the whole situation¹⁶. Catholics felt themselves to be paying to build and maintain both their own schools voluntarily and state schools through

¹³*The Tablet*, 16 Jan. 1926. 94.

¹⁴A.C.F. Beales. ‘The Struggle for the Schools’. in G.A. Beck (ed.). *The English Catholics 1850-1950* (London, 1950), p. 384.

¹⁵*Archbishop of Cardiff's Pastoral Letter on Catholic Schools Nov. 1929.*

¹⁶Mostyn, *Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1935, 13.

their taxes. 'We Roman Catholics pay our rates and taxes,' Mostyn announced in 1935, 'but in spite of that no money comes out of the public purse towards giving us schools'¹⁷. In his advent pastoral for 1930 Vaughan had written of the need for a 'permanent and satisfactory solution' for the 'vital problem' of the relationship of Catholic schools and public money. 'We have fought hard for our just rights; we have made great sacrifices; we have scrutinised various schemes and proposals with anxiety; but the end is not yet'¹⁸. Pius XI's *Divini Illius Magistri* had justified and confirmed this stand for educational rights, and in order to be able to argue the justice of their claims during the inter-war years Welsh Catholics were encouraged to learn the Church's official attitude to education¹⁹. The Scottish Education Act of 1918, which gave much more financial assistance to denominational schools than any Acts thus far passed for England and Wales, was often used as an example of how a largely Protestant country should be treating Catholic schools. In a speech at Nottingham in 1932 Mostyn referred to the Scottish Act²⁰, as did Saunders Lewis in *Y Faner* in 1943. During his candidature for the University of Wales seat at the by-election of 1943, he insisted that Wales had the right to settle this problem herself. If all the leaders of the Welsh Christian bodies met to agree on principles and a policy then he was confident 'yr hyn a lwyddodd Sgotland Brotestannaidd ni chredaf na fedr Cymru Brotestannaidd hefyd ei lwyddo'²¹.

As the twentieth century progressed difficulties surrounding education were exacerbated with Catholics slowly finding themselves as the sole supporters of denominational schools in Britain, the Anglicans having transferred many of their schools to the care of local education authorities. 'The Church has surrendered its position:' noted the *Western Mail* in 1930, 'the Roman Catholics have strengthened theirs'²². On his first official visit to the Rhondda in 1921 Mostyn described 'dark clouds gathering on the horizon - the education horizon'; he was reacting to the increasing agreement between Anglicans and

¹⁷*ibid.*

¹⁸Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1930*.

¹⁹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (10) (1928), 320; *Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (4) (1929), 119.

²⁰*The Tablet*, 26 March 1932, 418.

²¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Jan. 1943, 8.

²²*Western Mail*, 7 Oct. 1930, 8.

Nonconformists that all schools should be controlled by the local authority, with an agreed syllabus of religious instruction²³. At Newport later in the year, he claimed that the Catholics of the Archdiocese were 'exceedingly anxious' about the debates concerning education between the other denominations in Wales. There was a slow realisation that it would not be long until they would be the only religious body holding non-provided schools, and would have to fight their educational battles absolutely alone. Many feared that those dark clouds on the horizon 'might burst, and in doing so even threaten to sweep away their Catholic schools'. He insisted that he would never allow this to happen, and he urged all Welsh Catholics to 'be ready should they be obliged to fight; keep their powder dry, and then stand together as one man'²⁴.

The importance of the educational question was clearly shown in Mostyn's call in his 1928 advent pastoral for Catholics to vote for the party most likely to support State aid for Catholic schools²⁵. In an address at the 1929 annual conference of the Catholic Federation of Teachers of England and Wales R.J. Hegarty, the headmaster of St. Peter's School in Cardiff, echoed these sentiments. With the Hadow Report placing further impositions on an already financially struggling Catholic community, he insisted that 'all [political] party interests must be subordinated in the endeavour to secure for Catholic Education in this country complete emancipation from the penalties which hamper and oppress it'²⁶. When the election was called, Mostyn circulated all candidates requesting their views on the education question and threatening to boycott in light of their replies. This issue, he claimed, was 'not a question of party but of principles'²⁷. At a gathering at Cory Hall, Cardiff, he urged Catholics to 'form a solid phalanx at this election and vote with no uncertain voice'²⁸. Names of those candidates who had sent satisfactory answers to his questionnaire were read out in the churches of the Archdiocese in preparation for the election²⁹. Although these tactics were strongly criticised by non-Catholics, Mostyn was not deterred. In 1935, for

²³*The Tablet*, 17 Dec. 1921, 820.

²⁴*Monmouthshire Evening Post* in *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (11) (1921), vi.

²⁵Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1928*.

²⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (2) (1929), 37.

²⁷*Western Mail*, 22 April 1929, 7.

²⁸*Western Mail*, 2 May 1929, 10.

²⁹*Western Mail*, 27 May 1929, 7.

example, he again warned that ‘no candidate in the next Parliamentary election would receive a Roman Catholic vote unless he was prepared to uphold the Roman Catholic right, legal or otherwise, to their schools’³⁰. Such tactics, however, were clearly unsuccessful. Facing the danger of losing many votes, many prospective candidates answered Mostyn’s questionnaire in the affirmative only to return to their former anti-Catholic position once elected³¹. Mostyn’s election schemes, however, did have some positive effect. They brought the question of Catholic education into the limelight, engendering much discussion on the subject and helping pave the way for further financial assistance. ‘Certainly the cause was never brought so well before the public as during the last few weeks,’ concluded the *Newport Catholic Magazine* in 1929, ‘and we all certainly owe a great debt of gratitude to our good Archbishop for all he has done’³².

There was no doubt that Mostyn was greatly influential in the pre-war Catholic educational cause. He was an incessant campaigner for a just settlement and played a leading role in the national debate. His discussions with David Lloyd George in the years following the 1902 Education Act were a sign of things to come³³. As Archbishop his letters on education in the late 1920s ‘attracted world-wide interest’³⁴, his 1928 advent pastoral being so influential that the Liverpool CTS wanted to reprint it as a pamphlet³⁵. Likewise, his speeches on Catholic education were noted nationally, with one such address³⁶ securing the attention of both the Association of Education Committees³⁷ and the President of the Board of Education³⁸. During the 1929 general election Mostyn reportedly ‘gave himself up to the task in many parts of the country where his services were in demand’,

³⁰*Western Mail*, 11 Jan. 1935, 10.

³¹At the 1929 election the member for Newport, James Walker, ‘accepted without qualification’ the principle that the cost of Catholic schools ought to come out of public funds (*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (6) (1929), 177); two years later, however, the emptiness of this original pledge was shown when he ignored petitions from Catholic groups in Newport by voting against helping non-provided schools (*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 4 (2) (1931), 19).

³²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (6) (1929), 182.

³³A.G. Edwards, *Memories by the Archbishop of Wales* (London, 1927), pp. 192-3.

³⁴*Western Mail*, 25 Oct. 1939, 7; *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 8 (12) (1928), 371; see Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1928*; *Archbishop of Cardiff’s Pastoral Letter on Catholic Schools Nov. 1929*.

³⁵*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 8 (12) (1928), 371.

³⁶See *The Tablet*, 31 Oct. 1925, 586.

³⁷*Education in The Tablet*, 7 Nov. 1925, 626.

³⁸*The Tablet*, 7 Nov. 1925, 626.

speaking at rallies in London, Bradford, Preston, and Birmingham. ‘If the cause of our Schools and our children’s education should be victorious,’ enthused the Newport Catholic Magazine, ‘the Catholics not merely of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, but of the whole of England and Wales, will be deeply indebted to Archbishop Mostyn’³⁹. Likewise, he was very influential in discussions surrounding the 1936 Education Act, which in its handling of the voluntary schools issue can be seen as a blueprint for the 1944 Act. After the Bill was made public on 31 January 1935 he fervently led the opposition to some of its recommendations by addressing a number of MP’s in the House of Commons two weeks later⁴⁰. In that same month he was also in correspondence with the President of the Board of Education, Oliver Stanley⁴¹.

‘Whatever the issue,’ announced a joint statement from the Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales shortly before the 1944 Education Act was finalised, ‘we shall do our best to keep pace with any national advance in the educational system, but we shall never surrender our schools’⁴². The Butler Act, which had its precursors in the Hadow and Spens reports, was to remodel the British education system completely. It had especially far-reaching results for denominational schools, which became known as ‘Voluntary Aided Schools’. In these schools it was agreed that the Catholic Church would retain a majority on the governing body, would have full control of religious education and would have the right to appoint and dismiss teaching staff. It would then be left to the Local Education Authorities to pay the teachers’ salaries and provide for running costs. Catholics were required to pay for 50% of any alteration or improvement to the schools, and to continue to pay for the building of any new schools. The financial burden for the Catholic Church still remained great, as a massive programme of reconstruction was needed to cope with the burgeoning of secondary education. The Act raised the school leaving age to 15 and stipulated that free secondary education should be available to all. Such a burden led the Catholic Church to become the Act’s most persistent critics.

³⁹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (6) (1929), 182.

⁴⁰*Western Mail*, 10 Feb. 1936, 5.

⁴¹*The Tablet*, 14 March 1936, 343.

⁴²*Western Mail*, 6 Jan. 1944, 2.

The Welsh hierarchy immediately realised the necessity of setting up a Catholic system of secondary education throughout the Principality. As former all-age schools were made into primary schools, if there were no Catholic secondary schools children who were aged over eleven would be sent to state secondary schools. With the perceived danger of leakage the Bishops were not keen for this to happen, so Catholic secondary schools were planned for many areas. A group to fight for Catholic schools had been set up in the Archdiocese in the years before the Act was passed. With the threat of so many Catholic children being compelled to attend non-Catholic secondary schools, the group issued pamphlets reiterating that parents had a right to any education which they chose, and for Catholic parents this meant Catholic education in a Catholic school. 'It is God', insisted one pamphlet, 'who gives children to their parents to educate their children and not the state'⁴³. Similarly, in a *Y Faner* a year before the passing of the 1944 Act, Saunders Lewis asserted that Wales must recognise the rights of parents from any denomination to run their own schools according to their own religious creed. 'Os ydym yn gwadu ac yn gwrthod yr hawl yma,' he concluded, 'yna yr ydym eisoes wedi ymroi yn llwyr i Hitleriaeth ormesol ac wedi cyhoeddi mai'r Wladwriaeth piau'r plant. Yr wyf yn sicr fod holl ysbryd Cymru yn gwrthod hynny'⁴⁴.

In the years following the Act, as new schools, both primary and secondary, were being built across Wales, the financial encumbrance on Catholic communities did indeed become taxing. With Catholics still having to pay the whole cost of erecting new schools, the old complaint that they were paying twice for their schools began to be aired once again. Like Mostyn before him, McGrath urged Catholics to only vote for parliamentary candidates who recognised the continuing injustice of the new Act's legacy. He recommended that group meetings be arranged for candidates to answer questions on this matter. 'Any Catholic who in the face of injustice supports a candidate who will not pledge himself sincerely to the removal of this injustice', he wrote, 'does not realise the facts and shows that he is swayed by purely political considerations and is

⁴³Attracta Josephine Egan, 'The Development of Catholic education in Gwent 1840-1979' (unpublished MEd Thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff 1979), 191.

⁴⁴*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Jan. 1943, 8.

extremely foolish'⁴⁵. The financial onus placed upon the Archdiocese was so heavy, that in 1951 McGrath announced he was imposing a penny-a-week school levy on every Catholic in the Archdiocese⁴⁶. A year later he raised the sum to five shillings per head per annum, and in 1956 to ten shillings. This enabled the establishment of a relatively strong secondary school system in the Archdiocese between 1944 and the late 1960s. In 1954 a letter from the "Sacred Congregation for the Promotion of Religious Instruction throughout the Catholic Church" in Rome 'wholeheartedly' congratulated McGrath 'upon the zeal shown by your Archdiocese in the provision of new schools'⁴⁷.

The situation in Menevia was much worse, with few Catholic schools and very little financial resources. In 1948 Petit, who would eventually undertake the duties of a consultant on education on behalf of the hierarchy of England and Wales⁴⁸, stated that the school issue was one of the two 'great problems' of his diocese. There were, he noted, only 17 elementary schools in Menevia, with eight of these in the county of Flintshire. This left many Catholic communities as much as 50 miles away from the nearest Catholic schools. The financial implications of the Butler Act, with improvements needed to old schools and the need to build more primary schools and to set up some sort of secondary system, were clear. 'It will cost half a million pounds to implement the Development Plans of the LEA's,' he declared, 'we have not got half a million pence'⁴⁹. In welcoming the Ursuline sisters to Brecon in 1948 he admitted that at times his heart sank 'for the task seemed beyond human power'⁵⁰. Four years later he lamented that the provision of Secondary Schools was becoming such a burden on finances that it 'bids fair to disrupt, if not extinguish, the steady and ordered progress of the Catholic Church in rural Wales during the last 25 years'⁵¹. He continued to maintain, however, that 'if we are to save our children from the Nonconformist mind' schools were desperately needed in his diocese⁵². In his campaigning

⁴⁵Egan, 'Catholic education in Gwent', p. 193.

⁴⁶*Western Mail*, 19 Feb. 1951, 2.

⁴⁷Egan, 'Catholic education in Gwent', p. 196.

⁴⁸*The Times*, 4 June 1973, 16.

⁴⁹*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

⁵⁰*Western Mail*, 9 Sept. 1948, 2.

⁵¹*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 15.

⁵²*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

against Catholics having to pay twice for their education, Petit often stated that the Government should be doing all it could to help Catholic schools as they taught sound morals and ‘stood for the very fundamental things of God’⁵³. During the Cold War he particularly emphasised that their schools were ‘the training grounds of anti-Communists’⁵⁴. ‘I hope that the Government, in its fight against Communist infiltration in this island,’ he announced in 1948, ‘will realise that in the Catholic children of England and Wales it has close on 500,000 allies, to say nothing of their parents and families. It is not a force to be squandered, but to be fostered and protected’⁵⁵.

Like McGrath, Petit also imposed an annual levy of £1 on each Catholic to try to alleviate the burden of paying for schools. In 1952, however, he admitted that even this practice was ‘to demand blood from stones’. Three years later he still referred to the ‘fantastic sum’ of over £750,000 which needed to be found for the schools in Menevia. ‘This is a very large sum to pay for our consciences,’ he announced at the opening of St. Mary’s primary school at Rhyl, ‘it is a very much greater sum than was ever visualised by those who passed the Education Act of 1944’⁵⁶. His visit to the United States in 1955 was largely to collect money for the Diocese’s schools⁵⁷. The Education Act of 1959 increased grants to Catholic schools which led to the Menevia Record noting how ‘generous’ the Act was and claiming that the Catholic Church in Wales would derive ‘very considerable benefits’ from it⁵⁸. By 1963, however, Canon J. O’Connor maintained that the Act’s legacy had been superficial. The Welsh Catholic financial situation remained desperate. ‘With building costs all the time on the increase,’ he wrote, ‘the financial burden for the building of denominational schools still remains a crushing one for the promoters’⁵⁹. However, the finding of finances to build their schools had been just one of the difficulties Catholics were facing in Wales in

⁵³*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 129; as early as 1926 *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine* (6 (6) (1926), 158) noted that ‘the Catholic school alone can stem the tide which has come to vulgarise modern life’.

⁵⁴*Western Mail*, 14 March 1955, 7.

⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 30 Dec. 1948, 3.

⁵⁶*Western Mail*, 14 March 1955, 7.

⁵⁷*Menevia Record*, 3 (1) (1955), 4.

⁵⁸*Menevia Record*, 7 (2) (1959), 18.

⁵⁹*Cardiff Archdiocesan Yearbook 1963*, p. 135.

relation to their educational plans. The hostile reaction of Nonconformists to Catholic schools was often almost as great a problem in the way of establishing a Catholic educational system than this burden of finance.

Nonconformist Reaction

a) Before 1944

i) Opposition and hostility to Catholic schools

There was much Nonconformist enmity to the concept of Catholic education during the first half of the twentieth century. Not only were Welsh Nonconformists generally hostile to Rome, but the Free Churches had been fiercely opposed to denominational schools since the nineteenth century battles against the Church of England. In the run-up to the 1902 Education Act Wales had been 'the storm centre of Nonconformist resistance'⁶⁰. Following the First World War, Catholic education became the main target for Nonconformist hostility. Undoubtedly the Catholic Church's growing strength would have heightened opposition. In the Diocese of Menevia, where Catholics were fewer in number and less integrated into their societies than those in the larger towns of South Wales, the opposition to any sign that Catholics wished to build a school was impassioned. The primary example of such a reaction occurred in Colwyn Bay where a Catholic primary school was established amid fervent hostility from not only the Free Church Councils but from the Denbighshire Education Committee as well⁶¹. At its opening in 1931 Mostyn noted that, whereas the usual complaint was that the government would not allow Catholics financial assistance in building their schools, the complaint in Wales was that they were not allowed to build them with their own money⁶².

⁶⁰Beales, 'The Struggle for the Schools', p. 402.

⁶¹See Appendix (a).

⁶²*The Tablet*, 12 Dec. 1931, 806.

In the Archdiocese of Cardiff Nonconformist opposition was almost as impassioned and far more frequent. In 1929 R.J. Hegarty, the headmaster of St. Peter's, Cardiff, referred to 'the extravagant and denunciatory clamourings' of the opponents of Catholic schools, who used 'both "platform" and "press" to ventilate their prejudices'⁶³. Certainly newspapers and reports from Free Church councils in the late 1920s and early 1930s gave evidence of a fervency of opposition which had not been seen since the 1902 Act. At the South Wales annual synod of the Primitive Methodist Church in 1927, Rev J.T. Ecob of Cardiff expressed concern that Catholic propaganda was drafting Nonconformist children into their schools, and that Catholics were deceitfully trying to win more of the tax-payers money to run these schools. This was not only a matter for Nonconformists, as all representatives on public bodies should ensure that they were 'not easily hoodwinked into allowing public money to be spent for sectarian purposes'⁶⁴. At the Cardiff Free Church Council's annual meeting a year later, Dr. H.M. Hughes echoed both concern about Nonconformist children attending Catholic schools and dismay at the extent City Council financed them⁶⁵. In the letter-pages of the Western Mail there then followed a debate between Hughes himself and Fr. C.F. Ottway, parish priest of St. Joseph's, Cardiff. Ottway wrote that Nonconformists 'can, and do, have their children taught their religion in schools wholly provided by the public authority' with Catholics contributing in tax towards these schools. 'Is this fair play? Is this justice?', he asked⁶⁶. Hughes replied that confusing the Biblical instruction of council schools with Nonconformist teaching was 'not only very wide of the mark but unjust'⁶⁷. The discussion ended with Hughes accusing Catholics of proselytising to persuade Nonconformists to send their children to their schools⁶⁸.

⁶³*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (2) (1929), 37.

⁶⁴*Western Mail*, 2 May 1927, 8.

⁶⁵*Western Mail*, 28 Jan. 1928, 10.

⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 3 Feb. 1928, 9 : 'Is Dr. Hughes, in supporting such a system, practising the command of Him who said "As ye would that men should do to you do ye also to them likewise"?'.

⁶⁷*Western Mail*, 6 Feb. 1928, 11 : 'We Nonconformists are not only called upon to do to others as we would that others should do to us, but are compelled by the monstrous Balfour Act to do to others far more than they are willing to do to us'.

⁶⁸*Western Mail*, 2 Feb. 1928, 11; 6 Feb. 1928, 11 : Ottway replied that 'Dr. Hughes is not so simple as not to know the reason why [Nonconformist children attend Catholic schools], and he

Another subject which caused controversy was the suggestion that there should be Catholic representation on Local Education Authorities. This matter was still being hotly contested in Pembrokeshire as late as the 1950s⁶⁹, but it was a request for such representation to the Merthyr Corporation in 1929 which caused the most disruption. At a meeting of the Education Committee a spokesman for the Catholics, D. Hennessy, suggested that with one third of the school children of the borough attending Catholic schools it was only fair that two Catholics should be co-opted into membership of the Committee. Replying to the suggestion that Catholics intended to bring their denominational viewpoint to bear on educational administration, he claimed that 'sectarian bitterness had been introduced into the topic by non-Catholics'. Opposition to the suggestion at the meeting, however, was widespread. T.J. Evans suggested that co-opted membership was 'wrong in principle and dangerous in practice', and the democratic way for Catholics to secure representation was to seek election at the polls. Alderman Hugh I. Williams claimed that Catholic efforts in education merely 'aimed at regaining their lost power of centuries ago'. Catholics, he continued, were not 'concerned about education as such, but about getting the thin end of the wedge into educational affairs'. Likewise, heading a deputation from the Evangelical Church Council of Dowlais, Rev. Gwyrfai Jones announced that to grant the Catholic demand would be 'to stir up sectarian strife and antipathy'. There was some non-Catholic support for the request. Ernest Jones, a Nonconformist, noted that neither Anglicans nor Jews had joined the anti-Catholic protest, while Tom Phillips added that Nonconformists had become 'unnecessarily alarmed' by the request, from which religious factors had been carefully excluded. However, this support was minimal, and when the motion rejecting the Catholic proposal was carried it was only Jones and Phillips who voted against⁷⁰. Some months later the Corporation rejected a further appeal for representation. Tempers flared when Alderman Williams claimed that on hearing that he was going down the Ocean Colliery, a Catholic had replied 'then I hope

must know that Catholic authorities are not to blame; we do not proselytise' (*Western Mail*, 3 Feb. 1928, 9).

⁶⁹*Y Cymro*, 16 May 1952, 1.

⁷⁰*Western Mail*, 24 April 1929, 9.

you won't come up alive'. Shouts were heard from the public gallery. Although support for the Catholic proposal did increase by one vote, in the end the Corporation decided once and for all against co-opted membership⁷¹.

Mostyn's request at the 1929 general election that Catholics only vote for candidates who were ideologically sound on the education question, engendered a hostile reaction from the Free Churches. Some Nonconformist candidates pointedly refused to change their original anti-Catholic stance. Dr. R.D. Chalke, the Liberal candidate for Rhondda, announced he had replied to Mostyn's questionnaire saying that he was in favour of the equal treatment of all religions, but could not agree to denominational teaching maintained by public money⁷². Similarly S.I. Cohen, the Liberal candidate for Newport, stated bluntly that he could not support the Catholic perspective. Other Nonconformist candidates, however, realised the importance of the Catholic vote in South Wales, and many of them were left with little choice but to pledge temporary support to Catholic educational claims.

When Mostyn finally announced that all the candidates in Cardiff's constituencies had given satisfactory replies to his questionnaire there was an outcry from local Nonconformists. 'The news alarms me exceedingly', wrote one correspondent to the Western Mail. How could the Liberal candidates have 'adjusted their views to the betrayal of one of the strongest principles of the Nonconformist position'? It was not conceivably possible to be true to Free Church principles and have the blessing of the Catholic priesthood. 'The very idea such a possibility is grotesque and a sad reflection upon the bona fides of politicians'. The only way the people of Cardiff could show their disgust at this 'amazing desertion' of Liberal principles was 'to refrain from voting for men who have forfeited our confidence as Nonconformists'⁷³. Another correspondent claimed that Free Churchmen had been 'betrayed so shamefully'⁷⁴, while Dr. H.D. Llewelyn of Dinas and Rev. David J. Evans of Pontygwaith wrote of 'a violation of the principles of religious equality which Protestants have fought for all along

⁷¹*Western Mail*, 11 Nov. 1929, 8.

⁷²*Western Mail*, 28 May 1929, 11.

⁷³*Western Mail*, 28 May 1929, 9.

⁷⁴*Western Mail*, 30 May 1929, 11.

the years'⁷⁵. A number of Nonconformists retorted that Liberal candidates, although they had provided Mostyn with 'satisfactory answers', had not wavered from their original position on the question of denominational schools⁷⁶. A Conservative supporter ridiculed the whole predicament. 'Can it be that at last the lions and the lambs are lying down together? ...', he asked, 'if the Liberal candidates have satisfied the extreme Nonconformists on the one hand and the Roman Catholics on the other the cause of Christian Unity is indeed getting on - amongst candidates seeking votes!'⁷⁷. Likewise, the Catholic J.B. Maddocks noted that Liberal candidates such as J.E. Emlyn-Jones were deceiving the electorate by promising Catholic support. 'If Catholics were foolish enough to vote for him, and should he be returned,' he asserted, 'he would be obliged to obey the Liberal Whip - a whip which is in the hands of an arch-enemy of our Catholic schools, viz. : Mr. Lloyd George'⁷⁸. Rev. D. Winter Lewis of Bridgend accused Mostyn of being both 'exquisitely naïve' and unfair in his tactics. It was unfair on the Catholics themselves to expect them to vote, not as the welfare of the nation dictated, but for 'the material endowment for the building of Catholic schools'. It was also unfair on the rest of the electorate as they would never consent to maintain Catholic schools with public money, a privilege no other religious body enjoyed. Finally, it was unfair to conscientious candidates who run the risk of losing many votes. 'It is unworthy of a Church of high morals to employ rush tactics', he concluded, 'and to appeal to the baser creeds of the candidates at the time when they are most open to temptation of making rash and unconsidered promises in order to gain votes. The matter is too serious and important for precipitate action'⁷⁹.

Following the election the annual conference of the Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire Baptist Association passed a resolution in which they expressed 'an emphatic condemnation of all the Parliamentary candidates of the three political parties in South Wales who gave satisfactory replies to the questionnaire of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Wales [*sic.*]'. The replies of these candidates

⁷⁵*Western Mail*, 29 May 1929, 9.

⁷⁶*ibid.*

⁷⁷*Western Mail*, 30 May 1929, 11.

⁷⁸*Western Mail*, 29 May 1929, 9.

⁷⁹*ibid.*

were regarded as ‘a gross betrayal of the Nonconformist faith’. The only fair method of education was an abolition of the dual system, and if Protestants and Catholics could not agree on a syllabus of Bible teaching then ‘elements of morality’ should simply form part of the curriculum. The resolution concluded by calling the ‘serious attention’ of Nonconformist parents to the great peril of sending their children to Catholic schools ‘in which Romish atmosphere is provided detrimental to and subversive of the Protestant Reformation’⁸⁰.

There was a further outcry against Catholic educational claims in reaction to Mostyn’s well-publicised pastoral letter at the end of 1929. Rev. D. Winter Lewis summarised the typical Nonconformist reaction in an article in the Western Mail. Mostyn’s claim of injustice, he began, was ‘fundamentally misleading’. British tolerance was such as to allow sectarian bodies to build their schools, with the State contributing liberal grants out of the rates and taxes for their maintenance. ‘What Romanist country ... accords such “justice” to dissentients?’. Mostyn, however, wanted financial aid for building Catholic schools as well. ‘Surely it is reasonable to expect that if the Roman Catholics fail ... to conform to State requirements they should ... modify their ambitions rather than press claims in excess of their dues’⁸¹. In a later letter he added that ‘the Catholics are certainly free to solicit such concessions, but not on the grounds of equity or justice’⁸². Defence of Mostyn’s pastoral was just as zealous, with J. Daley of Cwmbran pointing out that were Catholics to close all their schools a huge burden would fall on ratepayers who would be forced to build provided schools for the children. Furthermore, ‘we have been bled white in our efforts to purchase land, to build schools, and to keep in repair the structure, and at the same time we have had to pay rates and taxes to build other schools for other people which we could not in conscience use. Is this British justice?’⁸³.

An editorial in Y Faner in 1930 goes some way to explaining the vehement Nonconformist opposition to Catholic education. Again much of the opposition

⁸⁰*Western Mail*, 13 June 1929, 6; an article by D. Tecwyn Evans (*Western Mail*, 12 June 1929, 9) also reacted harshly to Nonconformist parents sending their children to Catholic schools and ‘institutions where many Protestants send their girls so that they may “learn French”’.

⁸¹*Western Mail*, 17 Dec. 1929, 4.

⁸²*Western Mail*, 24 Dec. 1929, 5.

⁸³*Western Mail*, 27 Dec. 1929, 9.

was borne out of fear of the growing Welsh Catholic Church. The editorial claimed that Rome was working ‘yn ddyfal mewn llawer dull ac mewn llawer modd i geisio ennill Cymru yn ôl eto i Babyddiaeth’, and its educational policies were simply a part of this greater plan. Public money was being used to promote Catholicism in Wales, and the Minister of Education was intent on conceding more to the Catholic cause. ‘Ni all ond dinistr ddyfod i ran addysg ein gwlad os yw i ymhel fwy-fwy ac enwadaeth, ac yn enwedig os yw arian Ymneilltuwyr i’w defnyddio i ledu terfynau Pabyddiaeth fel hyn’. Nonconformists had to realise the seriousness of the situation, as the present predicament was ‘groes i bob egwyddor yr ymladdodd ein tadau yn lew drostynt, ac yn groes i amcan goreu addysg genedlaethol’⁸⁴. A week later the editor again warned Welshmen of the danger of Catholicism, claiming that every Welsh Protestant should take the opportunity to ‘wrthweithio propaganda a haerllugrwydd Pabyddol, ac i beri ei bod yn amhosibl i’r Llywodraeth ddefnyddio arian o bwrs y wlad i hyrwyddo sectyddiaeth’⁸⁵. Likewise, in the same year a letter from the President and the Secretary of the Cardiff and District Evangelical Church Council, which had just passed a resolution reaffirming the conviction that in education ‘public control should always accompany the expenditure of public money’, was published in the Western Mail. They could not, they claimed, refrain from ‘expressing our apprehensiveness of the disastrous consequences to our Realm and Empire if the claims of the Roman Catholic Church in this connection are entertained’. In view of the increasing temporal aims of the Vatican, MPs pledging support to Rome’s ‘unjustifiable and indeed preposterous claim to special and favoured treatment’ in return for votes was ‘tantamount to the treasonable support of an alien and hostile *imperium in imperio*’⁸⁶.

ii) Slowly changing attitudes in the Archdiocese of Cardiff

Although most Nonconformists were fervent in their opposition to Catholic education, it is clear that the non-Catholics of the larger towns were

⁸⁴*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 June 1930, 4.

⁸⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 1 July 1930, 4.

⁸⁶*Western Mail*, 19 June 1930, 6.

slowly becoming more tolerant. With the increasing integration of the predominantly Irish Catholic communities into the large industrial towns, such as Newport and Cardiff, so Catholics and their claims became accepted by many of their fellow-townspersons. Individual Catholics exerted their influence by becoming involved in the municipal life of these towns, and by doing so they not only promoted Catholic ideals themselves but also influenced the views of their fellow-members on the Councils. This was clearly apparent in the field of education, where the prejudice of Nonconformists had been most strongly manifested in the past, and continued to be so for many more decades in the rest of Wales. From the 1920s there is definite evidence of a change in attitudes towards Catholic educational claims in both the Education Committees of Cardiff and Newport. This naturally delighted Catholics. Staunch Nonconformists, however, reacted with great hostility to the new situation.

In 1923 Alderman Turnbull, a Catholic city councillor in Cardiff, noted that 'most cordial relations' existed between the Education Committee and the Catholic Schools authorities⁸⁷. Six years later in an address at the annual conference of the Catholic Federation of Teachers of England and Wales held at Leeds, R.J. Hegarty noted that Cardiff was 'a fair-minded and sympathetic Authority'⁸⁸. Unlike many other councils, Cardiff City Council certainly showed that it had nothing against Catholics erecting their own schools. In 1922 when the Cardiff Education Committee was informed by the Board of Education of the proposed erection of a new Catholic elementary school, it officially stated that it would not offer any opposition⁸⁹. A year later the Board of Education received plans for the new school from Fr. C.F. Ottway of St. Joseph's⁹⁰, and the Building and Sites Committee of the Education Authority accepted the blueprint⁹¹. After this confirmation of the Committee's support, St. Peter's Parish Magazine enthused at the attitude that it had taken which 'displays their appreciation of the

⁸⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (8) (1923), 236.

⁸⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (1) (1929), 13.

⁸⁹*City of Cardiff : Proceedings of the Education Committee. From November 1922 to November 1923* (Cardiff, 1923), Paragraph 173.

⁹⁰*ibid.* Paragraph 1443.

⁹¹*ibid.* Paragraph 2165.

Catholic position and which does credit to their high sense of justice in dealing with local Catholic Educational matters'⁹².

The old prejudice, however, did not die out completely in the city, as Nonconformist city councillors opposed the claim for the rate-aid legally due to the new Heathfield House Roman Catholic Secondary School. The Secretary of the Board of Education, J.E. Talbot, had already announced that the school was eligible for a grant, and in September 1926 Cardiff's Education Committee acknowledged 'the principle that a grant-in-aid should be made to ... Heathfield House'⁹³. A sub-committee was formed under the chairmanship of Alderman Thompson to consider how large a grant the school should be given, and this is where the problems began. This sub-committee recommended the grant should be 'in aid of £6 per pupil per annum'⁹⁴. When this went before the Education Committee, however, the figure was judged to be far too low, and under the proposal of Alderman Turnbull the Committee agreed to recommend to the City Council that the grant to be paid should be 'such a sum as will meet the deficiency on the working of this school'⁹⁵. A fiery debate ensued at the subsequent general meeting of the City Council, after a letter was read from the Council of Evangelical Churches. The Council approved of the original attitude taken by Thompson, but 'noted with regret' Turnbull's proposal. After all, Heathfield House belonged 'to a certain religious denomination over which the Education Authority has no effective supervision'. Giving a grant to it would therefore be 'a breach of the fundamental principles for which our Churches and fathers have always fought'⁹⁶. Following the reading of the letter Thompson immediately moved an amendment that Turnbull's motion should be deleted and replaced with his original recommendation. A long discussion followed in which the Council was split into those supporting Turnbull and those supporting Thompson.

⁹²*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (11) (1923), 332.

⁹³*City of Cardiff: Proceedings of the Education Committee. November 1925 to October 1926* (Cardiff, 1926), Paragraph 2361.

⁹⁴*City of Cardiff: Proceedings of the Education Committee. November 1926 to October 1927* (Cardiff, 1927), Paragraph 695.

⁹⁵*ibid.* Paragraph 705.

⁹⁶*City of Cardiff: Proceedings of the Council and the Several Committees of the Council. From November 1926 to November 1927* (Cardiff, 1927) Paragraph 1502.

‘It is not unlikely’, declared St. Peter’s Parish Magazine, ‘that many of the Councillors who opposed the recommendation of the Committee, had secured the public backing of their clerical friends, many of them being leading Free Churchmen’⁹⁷. Certainly at the debate Councillor Donovan, a prominent Catholic, accused these councillors of religious intolerance. Alderman Sir Amos Kirk supported Donovan by claiming he did not see the basis for differentiation between financial support for these Catholic Elementary schools and that for Catholic Secondary Schools. Others, however, zealously supported Thompson’s proposed amendment. Alderman W.R. Williams was uncompromising in his attitude towards the Catholic school system, asserting that ‘expenditure of public money and absolute control should go hand in hand’⁹⁸. Thompson’s amendment, which had the support of both the Lord Mayor and Sir John Daniel was finally defeated by 26 votes to 16⁹⁹. The Catholic councillors had ‘refused to be influenced by religious bigotry’¹⁰⁰ and had won over many supporters. Turnbull’s proposal, the recommendation of the Education Committee, was finally adopted and resolved.

Although this heated debate shows that opposition to Catholic education claims still existed in Cardiff City Council, it should be remembered both the fact that the Council had already agreed that the school should have a grant (the dispute being over how much this should be) and the fact that it did finally deliberate to give the school the higher sum¹⁰¹. Three years later a similar grant was also given to St. Illtyd’s School¹⁰². The original award to Heathfield House, was seen in the Church’s press as a great victory for the cause of Catholic education nationally. ‘The decision of Cardiff ...’, recorded The Tablet, ‘will strengthen the hands of the Catholic Education Council in any approach which may be made to local authorities which so far have not treated Catholic secondary

⁹⁷*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 7 (3) (1927), 79.

⁹⁸*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 7 (3) (1927), 80.

⁹⁹*City of Cardiff : Proceedings of the Council and the Several Committees of the Council. From November 1926 to November 1927* (Cardiff, 1927) Paragraph 1503.

¹⁰⁰*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 7 (3) (1927), 80.

¹⁰¹*City of Cardiff : Proceedings of the Council and the Several Committees of the Council. From November 1926 to November 1927* (Cardiff, 1927) Paragraph 1503.

¹⁰²*The Tablet*, 26 April 1930, 562.

schools within their areas reasonably'¹⁰³. Even a leader in the Western Mail criticised those Councillors in Cardiff who stood against a fair grant for the new school. It was argued that the Council would have no control over the expenditure of the money granted, yet five out of nine seats on the governing body would go to Councillors. It was also argued that the Council would not be able to control the appointment of teachers in the school, yet no person could be appointed without having qualifications proved by Board of Education tests. Rather than oppose the school, the article concluded, the Councillors should be glad that, in an increasingly secular society, such schools exist. 'In view of the fact that the moral and religious needs of the pupils are not properly catered for in ordinary schools, a welcome should be accorded to a school which has a definite religious atmosphere'¹⁰⁴. Four years later, at the laying of the foundation stone of the new Heathfield House school, Mostyn thanked the LEA for their 'generous support of the school'¹⁰⁵. The annual meeting of East Glamorgan Baptist Association in Aberdare, however, condemned this generosity¹⁰⁶. 'The Catholics of Cardiff are ratepayers of Cardiff, not people who have no right to a share of the public funds;' St. Peter's Parish Magazine replied to such criticism, 'some of our fellow-citizens seem to think that Catholics *as such* are precluded from obtaining assistance from rates but not (alas) from contributing to them'¹⁰⁷.

By the late 1920s, the Newport Education Committee was also treating Catholic education claims with respect and sympathy. Earlier in the decade, a controversy concerning the appointment of a headteacher in a Catholic school reflected the former attitude of the Committee. The Catholic managers of St. Mary's school chose Mary Carroll as headmistress, yet the LEA rejected the appointment 'on educational grounds'. Following a hostile debate a public enquiry was held by the Board of Education. The Tablet asserted that, with twenty years having passed since the 1902 Act, the right of the managers of voluntary schools to appoint teachers should have been 'safe from invasion' by an LEA. This case, however, showed how necessary it was for Catholics to be 'ever

¹⁰³*The Tablet*, 19 Feb. 1927, 242.

¹⁰⁴*Western Mail* in *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 7 (3) (1927). 80.

¹⁰⁵*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (6) (1931). 96.

¹⁰⁶*Western Mail*, 18 June 1931, 11.

¹⁰⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (7) (1931). 109.

vigilant for the safeguarding of the rights conferred upon them by the Act of 1902 to secure the religious freedom of their schools'. It was reported that the LEA 'made a rather sorry show at the hearing'¹⁰⁸ with the 1902 Act clearly not allowing such opposition. The Board of Education decided in favour of the Catholic managers¹⁰⁹.

By 1929, however, the attitude of the Newport Education Committee to Catholic schools was seen to be changing. The laying of the foundation stone of a new Catholic school was attended by the Lord Mayor, the Chairman of the Committee, and a number of other non-Catholic councillors¹¹⁰, reflecting the general opinion of the City Council towards the educational claims of Catholics by this time. In reporting the LEA's acceptance of the proposed name 'Father Hill Memorial School' for the school later in the year, the Newport Catholic Magazine complimented the town councillors for their fair treatment. 'We would like to publicly state that the Local Education Authority has been most kind and helpful to us in every way'. One member of the authority announced that the LEA desired the school 'to have a perfect start', and, after furnishing and equipping the school 'to the last detail', the LEA 'ungrudgingly' granted as many teachers as the Catholic authorities thought necessary¹¹¹. The Committee's treatment of the existing Catholic schools was also good. In 1929, for example, St. Michael's Catholic school received a friendly letter from the Secretary of the Committee, T. Arthur Eaves, congratulating the school achievements. 'The Committee', wrote Eaves, 'desire me to convey to you and your staff, and particularly the children in attendance, their congratulations upon the success which has attended their efforts'¹¹².

In fact, in 1930 Newport Town Council was to adopt a ground-breaking resolution in favour of financial aid for voluntary schools. Proposed by Catholic councillor Fred Ryan, the resolution which reacted to the government's attempt to enforce the expensive proposals of the Hadow Report was passed by a large majority. 'This Council', it read, 'is of the opinion that any grant given to

¹⁰⁸*The Tablet*, 13 May 1922, 596.

¹⁰⁹*The Tablet*, 27 May 1922, 678.

¹¹⁰*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (6) (1929), 184.

¹¹¹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (1) (1930), 10.

¹¹²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (11) (1929), 345.

provided schools to enable them to meet the requirements of the Board of Education should in equity be given also to non-provided schools, because it has been made clear to the Board of Education that Provided schools are unable to carry into the effect the scheme of educational reorganisation and development required by the Board without large financial aid from the Treasury; it is obvious therefore that the non-provided schools are far less able to do so without similar financial aid'¹¹³. The influence of the Council's declaration was immense as many other municipal bodies throughout the country followed in the steps of the Council by accepting what became known as 'the Newport Resolution'. 'It is a proof', stated Newport Catholic Magazine, 'of the change of mind that has come upon people generally with regard to this question and gives us every reason to hope that our case will be considered with much more fairness than it has been in the past'¹¹⁴.

The Newport Resolution was immediately discussed at Cardiff City Council, with Turnbull moving the motion that it should be endorsed. The opposition to the motion from some of the Nonconformist councillors was fierce, although (significantly) unsuccessful. Alderman C.F. Saunders interrupted Turnbull's claim that Catholics had to pay twice for their schools, with a shout of 'No! No! Absolute nonsense'. Turnbull replied that such behaviour was 'the sort of thing we had in 1902'. Another councillor, Henry Johns, claimed that it was the duty of the State to provide education 'in order to make good citizens and not good Catholics, Anglicans or Baptists'. Despite this opposition, the Newport Resolution was endorsed by 23 votes to 20, with many non-Catholics in support. 'It is abominable', stated the non-Catholic Councillor R.G. Robinson, 'to ask non-provided schools to come into the scheme without a grant'. If all denominations did not work together for the success of the scheme, 'we shall only create bad feelings and bitterness'¹¹⁵. Following the Council's decision an editorial in the Western Mail noted that 'there was, happily, little disposition to revive the old controversy as to religious teaching'. Although there had been 'faint echoes of that controversy', it claimed that the outcome proved that the majority of

¹¹³*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (2) (1930), 23.

¹¹⁴*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (3) (1930), 43.

¹¹⁵*Western Mail*, 11 Feb. 1930, 6.

members ‘found little difficulty in treating the problem as one of finance and equity rather than sectarian rivalry’. After describing in detail why the onerous alterations in question should be paid for out of public funds, the editorial concluded that ‘those who take the standpoint of equity are bound to hold the opinion that those who made the sacrifices to provide the schools are entitled to fair treatment’¹¹⁶.

The changing attitudes towards Catholic schools in Cardiff and Newport naturally caused a backlash from some of the less tolerant Free Churchmen. Reacting to the Western Mail’s support of the Newport Resolution, Rev. D. Winter Lewis claimed the newspaper had ‘naïvely complimented the Cardiff City Council’ which had endorsed the declaration. Catholics, he insisted, demanded State subsidies merely to promulgate their own faith¹¹⁷. There was similar hostility two years later in response to a speech Cardinal Bourne made at Heathfield House School. ‘I should like to voice the gratitude universally felt towards the Cardiff City Council;’ he had announced, ‘we are not, unfortunately, universally treated with the same consideration as that shown in Cardiff’. A Nonconformist correspondent in the Western Mail expressed anger that the Council was allowing rate-payers’ money pay for sectarian teaching. Congratulating the anti-Catholic education protest of the Congregational Union of Wales at Denbigh, he asked ‘why are the Independents of Cardiff so apathetic in the matter?’¹¹⁸. Another letter also condemned Catholic educational claims. ‘They demand Roman Catholic teachers’, it noted, ‘not only to educate their children, but to propagate dogma. Therefore, let those who call the tune pay for it’. Furthermore, it concluded, ‘why should Cardinal Bourne expect financial aid from those whom his chief has excluded from Divine favour?’¹¹⁹.

The policies of the councils of Newport and Cardiff certainly influenced many LEA’s in England and helped pave the way for the fairer treatment of denominational schools in the Education Acts of 1936 and 1944. It was clear, however, that in Wales such sympathy was confined almost exclusively to these

¹¹⁶*ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Western Mail*, 13 Feb. 1930, 9 : ‘The main concern with them is not the financing of education but the financing of their religious propagation’.

¹¹⁸*Western Mail*, 27 May 1932, 11.

¹¹⁹*Western Mail*, 31 May 1932, 11.

towns. In the Diocese of Menevia especially, the picture was very different. The Colwyn Bay controversy reflected the fact that Catholics and their educational objectives were very far from becoming accepted. Although it was claimed that Catholic education was opposed because there was plenty of room in existing schools, it is clear that much of this opposition was simply due to prejudice against Catholicism. Why should a church alien to Wales, with its foreign customs and language and its talk of the conversion of the nation, be allowed to set up its own centres of propaganda in the country? In towns and villages throughout Wales the prejudice of the Nonconformist ministers and the LEA's made both establishing and running Catholic schools extremely difficult, both in terms of morale and finance. Meeting at Llandrindod Wells in 1943, the Association of the Education Committees of Wales and Monmouth passed resolutions opposing the existence of denominational schools and pledging itself to their extinction¹²⁰. In the years immediately following the 1944 Act, as Catholics attempted to build more and more schools in the Diocese, such ardent opposition continued unabated.

b) After 1944

i) Continuing opposition

The reorganisation needed after the 1944 Education Act left the Catholic Church with a great financial burden. With hindsight, however, it is clear that the Church was 'the one great religious beneficiary of the 1944 Act'¹²¹. With Welsh Nonconformists recognising just how much had been conceded to the Catholics, the Catholic school reorganisation needed following the Act caused immediate friction and complications. The English LEAs generally administered the new act favourably. In Wales, however, even the 1936 Act which had enabled local authorities to give grants to denominational schools had been treated with contempt. The LEAs of Llanelli, Swansea, and Caernarfonshire flatly refused to

¹²⁰*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 105.

¹²¹Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 1991), 421.

offer such aid¹²². By the 1944 Act the situation had changed little. In the Diocese of Menevia the authorities continued to be largely made up of Nonconformists and Catholic schools were still regarded as centres of propaganda and indoctrination. In 1949 H.W.J. Edwards wrote that the education difficulties that Catholics in Wales were experiencing 'may amount to that degree of hostility known as persecution'. In Menevia, he claimed, 'the Catholic school is fighting not so much for survival as for birth, and there can be no doubt that the Local Education Authorities have expressed most emphatically their opposition to Catholic claims'¹²³.

The pre-war hostility in Menevia to Catholic elementary education, had continued after the 1944 Act. In the late 1940s the Pembrokeshire Education Committee, for example, rejected a Catholic application for a primary school at Pembroke Dock. When the vote rejecting the Catholic proposals was declared one councillor reportedly said: 'Sir, the Christians win'¹²⁴. At Llandudno in 1946 the Arfon Education Committee decided against supporting the establishment of a new Catholic primary school, stating that Catholics would now have to send their claim to the Ministry of Education¹²⁵. The Minister of Education asked the Committee to further discuss the matter, and in 1948 they met again. Alderman William George urged that the Committee reaffirm their original stand. The school, he claimed, would be an unfair strain on taxpayers who would have to pay for children to travel to Llandudno from as far as Penmaenmawr and Conwy. 'Er nad ydym yn gwrthwynebu egwyddor y cais am ysgol gynradd', he maintained, 'teimlwn yr un pryd eu bod yn bwrw eu rhwyd yn rhy bell ac yn gosod baich diangenrhaid ar drethdalwyr y sir ... Os yw'r cyfeillion hyn mor awyddus i achub eneidiau eu plant dylent dderbyn y draul ychwanegol eu hunain'. Other Councillors clearly resented even the principle behind Catholic schools. Hugh Owen from Llandudno showed deep hostility in announcing 'pan oedd ein cyn-dadau ni yn yr un safle ag y maent hwy ynddi heddiw beth a wnaethant hwy, y Pabyddion? Eu merthyru, a'u lladd a'u llosgi'. The Committee voted to remain

¹²²Edwin Jones. 'Roman Catholic Education in Wales', *Welsh Journal of Education*, 5 (1) (1995), 112.

¹²³*The Tablet*, 22 Jan. 1949, 55.

¹²⁴*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 107; see also *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 5 Jan. 1949, 2.

¹²⁵*Y Cymro*, 14 June 1946, 7.

firmly in opposition to the school¹²⁶. This opposition continued for a good number of years¹²⁷. At Llandudno in 1953 Petit claimed that to prevent Catholics building schools 'is to attack our consciences - an attack which is not the less effective because done in a plausible and gentlemanly fashion'¹²⁸. As late as October 1954, when permission was finally given for building the school, prejudice was still strong. One Presbyterian Minister objected that the planning committee had allowed the Catholics to build their school but had refused permission for Llandudno Rugby Football Club to build a clubhouse¹²⁹. Eventually the Catholics of Llandudno did establish their new primary school, the foundation stone being laid in April 1960 and the official opening just over a year later¹³⁰.

ii) Secondary education reordering

'Against the background of centuries of persecution and ingrained mistrust, heightened in Wales by peculiar social and nationalistic connotations,' writes Gareth Elwyn Jones, 'local authorities, not surprisingly, were often not prepared to look kindly at the [Catholic] claims'¹³¹. Because of the vast reorganisation needed following the 1944 Act, especially as far as giving free secondary education to all was concerned, the LEA's were required to submit "Development Plans" to show their intended reconstruction. The hostility to Catholic requests to be included in these plans was fervent, with the result that in 1948 Petit was received by the Ministry of Education for informal talks about his school problems. The Arfon Education Committee rejected outright the suggestion of a Catholic secondary school at Bangor¹³², and the Anglesey

¹²⁶*Y Cymro*, 9 July 1948, 16.

¹²⁷See *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 July 1949, 5.

¹²⁸*Western Mail*, 9 Sept. 1953, 5.

¹²⁹G.B. German, 'A History of the Diocese of Menevia : 1898-1987' (unpublished MA Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1991), 53.

¹³⁰Margaret Amiel and Madeline Dunphy, *Our Lady Star of the Sea, Llandudno 1893-1993 : The Growth of a Parish : Glimpses over a Century* 1993, p. 27.

¹³¹Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Which Nation's Schools? Direction and Devolution in Welsh Education in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 1990), p. 100.

¹³²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 July 1949, 5.

Education Committee refused to make any provision for Catholics¹³³. However, the greatest post-war controversy over a proposed Catholic secondary school took place in Flintshire. The committee, which was adamant that the school would not be built, was eventually forced to give up its opposition¹³⁴. There had also been smaller acts of defiance from the same committee, such as the refusal in the late 1940s to pay the travel fares for a number of older Catholic children to attend a school at Shotton. After the lobbying of MPs by Catholic parents the committee was made to back down¹³⁵.

In its reorganisation brought about by the 1944 Act, Denbighshire County Council was also 'particularly anti-Catholic'¹³⁶. In view of the length and fervency of the Colwyn Bay controversy, this was no surprise. Although Catholic secondary schools were eventually to be erected in both Wrexham and Rhyl, Denbighshire's initial development plan made no mention of any provision for Catholic children. The Nonconformist influence behind this original decision was reflected in November 1950 when the Education Committee decided to forward to the Ministry of Education the resolutions framed by the North Wales Association of the Presbyterian Church and passed by the Vale of Clwyd Presbytery of the Calvinistic Methodist Church. These referred to 'general opposition' to denominational schools, and expressed 'wholehearted opposition' to any change in legislation which might give Catholic schools a more favourable treatment than they had under the 1944 Act. At the Committee meeting an amendment by Colonel R.G. Fenwick-Palmer that the resolutions should not be sent was defeated by a large majority. The resolutions, claimed J.C. Davies of Denbigh, could not be ignored as they represented the views of over 40,000 people, including councillors and lawyers, while R.F. Watkin of Ruthin simply exclaimed that 'we should not implement these denominational expressions of opinion'¹³⁷.

¹³³Jones, *Which Nation's Schools?*, p. 158.

¹³⁴See Appendix (b).

¹³⁵Margaret Joy, *A History of St. David's Roman Catholic Parish, Church and School, Mold*, p. 34.

¹³⁶Jones, *Which Nation's Schools?*, p. 153.

¹³⁷*North Wales Weekly News*, 9 Nov. 1950, 6.

That the Nonconformist denominations played a large part in influencing the County Councils in their opposition to Catholic educational plans is indisputable. Meeting at Caernarfon in 1949, the Union of Welsh Independents echoed the belief of many Nonconformists that behind Catholic education was an insidious plot to win Wales over to Rome. Rev. R.H. Williams of Chwilog claimed that Catholics simply wanted their own schools at the public's cost so as to establish the Roman Church in Wales. Rev. J. Dyfnallt Owen added that it was not education as such that was important for Catholics, but promoting the authority of Rome. A motion was passed stating that the conference 'cannot fail to observe with profound disquiet the efforts made by Roman Catholics to extend and multiply facilities for instructions in their peculiar tenets through the educational organisation contrary to the general Welsh traditions of a free and unsectarian system'. Copies of the motion was sent to the Minister of Education and to a number of Welsh MP's¹³⁸. Five years later at a meeting at Cardiff of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales it was alleged that the 1944 Act had done nothing for Wales as a nation, except for allowing Catholics to spread their propaganda. Principal W.R. Williams of Aberystwyth Theological College claimed that the time would come when Catholics would not be satisfied until their schools were completely paid for. 'They will be able', he said, 'to build these schools as centres of Roman Catholic propaganda to which no-one can say anything'. Welsh Nonconformists should oppose their increasing claims. 'We are a reformed Church and cannot sit back and allow our country to be taken over to the Roman Catholic faith without some protest'¹³⁹.

Such impassioned hostility to Catholic proposals occurred more frequently in Menevia than in any other diocese throughout Britain. Opposition, though, was not confined to that diocese. In both Cardiff and Newport, where pre-war attitudes towards Catholic schools had been far more sympathetic, the reorganisation following the 1944 Act went through quite smoothly as far as Catholic schools were concerned¹⁴⁰. By 1963, for example, there was Catholic

¹³⁸*Y Tyst*, 2 June 1949, 4; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 1 June 1949, 1.

¹³⁹*Western Mail*, 18 June 1954, 7.

¹⁴⁰Jones, *Which Nation's Schools?*, p. 90.

secondary education for all pupils in Newport and Monmouthshire¹⁴¹. Catholics still had to fight, however, for their educational rights in the Archdiocesan secondary school reorganisation outside of Newport and Cardiff. As late as 1955 McGrath told Cardinal Griffin that the archdiocese continued to be ‘in the throes of the 1944 Secondary School Act struggle for our rights’ against ‘hostile Local Education Authorities’¹⁴². At Merthyr Tydfil a strong Catholic minority had had to compile a petition of around 1,700 signatures to protest that a Catholic secondary school was not in the county’s plan¹⁴³.

It was Swansea, however, which witnessed the most enmity to Catholic efforts to establish a school within the Archdiocese. Commonly known in the nineteenth century as ‘the Mecca of Nonconformity’¹⁴⁴, the attitude of Nonconformists in Swansea remained fervently against Catholic school proposals. The request for a Catholic secondary school was refused by Swansea Education Committee on the grounds that there were already sufficient facilities for the education of the children in the State schools, and that the number of Catholic children in the area did not justify its establishment. ‘We are up against very bigoted opponents in Swansea’, McGrath told Cardinal Griffin¹⁴⁵. He therefore appealed directly to George Tomlinson, the Minister of Education, who overruled the decision. This angered many local Nonconformists, with both the Morriston Council of Evangelical Churches and the Morriston and District Baptist Churches strongly objecting to the decision. Percy Morris MP told Tomlinson that he had ‘set the gorse on fire in Swansea and West Wales’¹⁴⁶. When the South Wales Association of the Welsh Presbyterian Church met at Carmarthen in September 1948 Rev. D. James Jones, its Secretary, accused Tomlinson of foolishness, as the Education Committee ‘knew all the circumstances better than he did’. After a committee was formed to ‘deal with the universal repercussions of the Swansea problem’, a motion was passed against the Ministry of Education’s decision¹⁴⁷. Support for this stand by fellow Nonconformists was unequivocal. In the Western

¹⁴¹Egan, ‘Catholic education in Gwent’, p. 130.

¹⁴²Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/148.

¹⁴³Jones, *Which Nation’s Schools?*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁴Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation : Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1981), p. 14.

¹⁴⁵Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/148.

¹⁴⁶Jones, *Which Nation’s Schools?*, p. 172.

¹⁴⁷*Y Goleuad*, 22 Sept. 1948, 2; *Y Cymro*, 24 Sept. 1948, 12; *Western Mail*, 15 Sept. 1948, 2.

Mail Rev. Ridley Williams of Treorchy noted that the Butler Act did not mean that ‘a sectarian school can be erected anywhere and everywhere on the pretext of the presence of an insignificant religious minority’. He reflected on what the country’s education system would be like if Catholics always got their own way, as ‘this fanaticism carried to an extreme would eventually land our education in a dilemma of the direst kind’¹⁴⁸.

Catholics reacted swiftly to the Association’s remarks which represented the general Nonconformist attitude to their proposed school. In the Western Mail James Toomey of Merthyr wrote that Catholics in Wales had done nothing to warrant the continuing prejudice inherent in the hostile protest against the school. ‘The Presbyterians’, he angrily wrote, ‘would be better occupied in solving the problem of their empty chapels and the apathy and indifference of religious worship in the industrial towns and villages of South Wales, than in objecting to the progress of education as is now and always was, the desire of the Roman Catholic community’¹⁴⁹. T. Bede Wills, the Headmaster of St. Mary’s Catholic school in Merthyr, pointed out that the Minister of Education simply gave ‘equality of opportunity and parity of status’ to the Catholic children of Swansea. Tomlinson was himself a staunch Nonconformist, and so would be unlikely to favour Catholics unfairly. ‘The Minister was merely carrying out both the Spirit and the letter of the (1944) Act’¹⁵⁰. It is interesting that one letter criticising the Nonconformist attitude came from Rev. D. Griffiths, the Anglican vicar of Llangurig. Most Anglican schools had by this time become Voluntary Controlled, being wholly maintained by the LEA though remaining the property of the Church with a number of governors representing it on the governing body. Griffiths claimed that the Butler Act promised aid to all Voluntary schools, whether Aided or Controlled, and reliable LEA’s should therefore support Church schools. This point ‘must not be sacrificed to the clamour of sectarian interests’. The agreed syllabus was not enough as far as religion was concerned, and surely no one would begrudge giving the young a practical religion. ‘The importance of the Church school’, Griffiths insisted, ‘is that we can teach the religion we believe in.

¹⁴⁸*Western Mail*, 27 Sept. 1948, 3.

¹⁴⁹*Western Mail*, 20 Sept. 1948, 3.

¹⁵⁰*Western Mail*, 30 Sept. 1948, 3.

Let the Sasiwn think again whether it is worth while protesting against this principle¹⁵¹.

iii) Catholic reactions to opposition

Bishop Petit

‘We ask our fellow-countrymen’, pleaded Petit at the Rhyl and District Literary and Debating Society in 1952, ‘that even if they cannot fully appreciate the reasons which actuate us they will at least give us their sympathy and understanding’¹⁵². When addressing a rally of over 2,000 at Llandudno four years earlier, he criticised the LEA’s for the narrow-minded attitude they were displaying towards Catholic schools. Nonconformists, he claimed, had strongly resented the growth of Catholicism, and it was because of this resentment, coupled with ignorance of Catholic teaching, that the Welsh LEA’s never used their discretion in the favour of Catholics¹⁵³. Speaking at Llanelli a week later, he denied he had attacked Welsh Nonconformists per se, rather ‘what I have attacked is the attitude of mind which refuses to recognise that Catholics have any rights, an attitude of mind which results in so many injustices’. The principal injustice was, of course, the ‘school question’. In an emotional plea he reminded Nonconformists that in the past they had been given a ‘raw deal’ at the hands of Anglicans, so ‘why won’t they give us the same treatment they fought for themselves - freedom to live our own way of life’. All Catholics, he claimed, ‘have a right as citizens to schools provided by the State and a right as Catholics to a Catholic atmosphere in those schools’. In Llanelli itself a fire at the local Catholic school had meant that an experiment had taken place where the children of 12 years and older were sent to the State non-Catholic school. This experiment, claimed Petit, had failed, and Catholics of the area all now agreed of the need to provide the children with a Catholic secondary school which could not be done without the co-operation of the LEA. The Bishop, then, begged the

¹⁵¹*Western Mail*, 22 Sept. 1948, 3.

¹⁵²*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 15.

¹⁵³*Y Cymro*, 10 Sept. 1948, 1; *Western Mail*, 6 Sept. 1948, 1.

authorities to help, and to do so willingly rather than grudgingly¹⁵⁴. At the annual conference of the Catholic Teachers' Federation in Chester in 1950, Petit once again struck out at the 'lack of co-operation' of the Welsh LEAs. He asked whether these authorities realised that a 'similarity of policy of repression is falling on one group of citizens and so assumes the proportion of a religious persecution'. The only way which Catholics could re-arrange their schools to fit with the 1944 Act was with the 'goodwill and co-operation' of the Authorities, yet they were not even getting this. Giving instances when LEA's had refused to pay the fares of Catholic children attending Catholic schools, Petit claimed that only one local authority in the whole of Wales (Pembrokeshire) had granted the cost of transport to children travelling from a distance until the Ministry of Education had brought pressure on them. It was not unreasonable, he concluded, to talk of those 'whose ambition it is to do away with the Catholic voluntary school', and he prayed that 'the powerful weapon of finance may not be used to squeeze out the schools of our working class Catholics'¹⁵⁵.

Nonconformists reacted to such accusations by Petit of unfairness. Charged by the Bishop with not giving Catholics their legal rights, Rev. E.K. Jones of Wrexham replied on behalf of the Education Committees by strongly asserting 'nid oes gysgod o sail i'r cyhuddiad'. Protestants, he claimed, were used to unfair struggles having fought a long and costly battle to get rid of the Pope, and so 'nid yw'n debyg y ceisiwn roi'r iau hon ar ysgwyddau neb arall pwy bynnag'. In fact, Petit was welcome to his schools, but only if he was prepared to pay for running them himself¹⁵⁶. Jones was again to make these views known at a meeting of the Denbighshire Education Committee in 1948. At that same meeting J.C. Davies, in reacting to Petit's accusations, summarised the Nonconformist case against Catholic schools. 'O dan amgylchiadau modern', he asserted, 'y mae addysg enwadol, yn arbennig felly addysg Babyddol, yn rhwystyr i hyrwyddiad gwir addysg a rhyddid meddwl'. Listing some objections to such schools he claimed that their teachers were almost exclusively women, mostly nuns, the absence of men being a great disadvantage. It was also clear, he maintained, that

¹⁵⁴*Western Mail*, 13 Sept. 1948, 3; see also *Y Cymro*, 17 Sept. 1948, 10.

¹⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 30 Dec. 1948, 3.

¹⁵⁶*Y Cymro*, 24 Sept. 1948, 4.

sectarian school could not assure as good teaching as State schools as their choice of teachers was so confined. Davies concluded by noting that if the Welsh LEAs were to give in to the Catholic claims, what would happen if other minority groups, such as the Jews or Communists, asked for the same treatment? What would happen if the majority groups, such as the Nonconformists, began to demand such special treatment¹⁵⁷?

At the beginning of 1949 Petit was invited to a meeting of the executive committee of the Council of North Wales Evangelical Churches at a chapel at Denbigh to state the case for the proposed Catholic secondary schools in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Caernarfonshire. At the meeting he asserted that the 1944 Act provided that children should be educated in accordance with parents' wishes, and so 'we ask precisely for what the law allows'¹⁵⁸. The committee eventually passed a motion disapproving the proposal for the establishment of the Catholic schools. The cost, the resolution claimed, would be 'excessive and unfair', and, furthermore, facilities in the State schools were perfectly adequate without such schools. It concluded by insisting that the 'educational system will not be protected from materialism and secularism by supporting sectarian education'¹⁵⁹. An antagonistic editorial in *Y Tyst* reacted to Petit's presence at the meeting by claiming 'daeth i'r gynhadledd yn Ninbych, nid fel arwydd o frawdgarwch a dymuniad am gyfathrach (ni allai ddod mewn cymeriad felly, gan fod Anghydfurfiaeth yn anathema yng ngolwg ei eglwys) ond daeth yno - i gartref yr hereticaid, i geisio gan Ymneilltuwyr dalu trethi i gynnal ysgolion o dan llywodraeth yr Eglwys Babyddol'. No other denomination would ask the country to pay for special education for their children. 'Anodd i ddyn unplyg, gonest a phlaen ei feddwl yw deall ystumio mynd i gapel a hawlio trethi at addysg sect, ond fel rhan o'r math hwnnw o feddwl ac ymresymu a eilw'r Sais yn "casuistry"¹⁶⁰. Another article a few weeks later claimed 'ni chymer Anghydfurfwyr eu huddenu gan Esgob y Pabyddion sydd â geiriau mêl ar ei wefusau er mwyn cael addysg ei sect ei hun ar drethi'r wlad a llywodraeth ei ysgolion yn ei law'. The

¹⁵⁷ *Y Cymro*, 5 Nov. 1948, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Western Mail*, 6 April 1949, 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Western Mail*, 7 April 1949, 3; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 April 1949, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Y Tyst*, 21 April 1949, 1.

lack of sincerity of Catholics, it continued, was abundantly clear and Nonconformists should be careful not to 'gwerthu ei genedigaeth-fraint am eiriau gwâg a phroffess o frawdgarwch pan yw hynny yn elw'¹⁶¹.

Further reactions

In the Diocese of Menevia, more than in any other area of Britain, Catholics struggled to adapt to the 1944 Act against the deeply entrenched prejudices of Nonconformity. This fact was often emphasised by Catholics outside the Welsh hierarchy. In 1950 H.W.J. Edwards declared that he was 'profoundly irritated by the hostile attitude of a naturally Catholic people to the Faith'¹⁶². Likewise, in addressing a rally at Rhyl in 1954, Bishop G.A. Beck of Brentwood claimed that Welsh Nonconformists had never grasped exactly what Catholics were fighting for educationally, with 'ignorance and biased history teaching' prolonging their hostility. Yet Welshmen had always had a great tradition of individual liberty and respect for freedom of choice. 'No matter how much we may differ in our religious outlook,' he asserted, 'surely we may appeal to Nonconformists, brought up in this tradition of liberty and respect for conscience, to help Catholic parents to maintain their liberties in matters of education against the all-persuasive collective system'. The Bishop concluded by urging Catholics to make allowances for Welsh bigotry, claiming the best way forward was to 'show by the achievements of our schools and our homes that what we are fighting for is something worth having which others will admire'¹⁶³.

In Blackfriars in 1948 Saunders Lewis had written a fair appraisal to explain the reason for Welsh Nonconformist opposition. Its roots, he began, was in the nineteenth century opposition to the National schools of the Church of England, which, with the increasing progress of the Oxford movement, the Free Churches feared was on its way over to Rome. Since then, 'the Welsh Nonconformists are found consistently battling against the teaching of any dogmatic Christianity'. It was, however, 'dangerously easy to leap to the

¹⁶¹ *Y Tyst*, 5 May 1949, 7.

¹⁶² *The Tablet*, 4 Feb. 1950, 88.

¹⁶³ *Western Mail*, 8 Feb. 1954, 5.

conclusion that they hated Rome and even Canterbury so heartily that they preferred irreligion and an education that ignored God and revealed truth. To come to such a conclusion would be a grave error'. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Nonconformity became 'the very nationhood of Wales', with its whole cultural life centred in the chapel. The community, however, had economic needs and so found it had to read and write English and do simple arithmetic. It therefore fought hard against compulsory Anglican religious education and attendance at Anglican services at 'day school'. This left ample time at Sunday School for the denominations to further educate the children. Although there had been little resistance to the invasion of state education into social life during the twentieth century, the Welsh Nonconformists clung to their traditional position in opposing dogmatic religious education¹⁶⁴.

In reiterating and developing some of his views on the Nonconformist reaction to Catholic education a year later, Lewis sparked a small controversy in the Welsh press. In his "Cwrs y Byd" column in *Y Faner* he reacted to Rev. J. Dyfnallt Owen's claim that it was not because of education that Catholics were insisting on their own schools but to help Catholicism prosper and grow in Wales. Owen, the editor of *Y Tyst*, had claimed at a meeting of the Welsh Independents that 'yr eglwys yw'r canolbwynt mawr yng ngolwg y Pabydd, ac nid yr ysgol. Yn eu golwg hwy y mae popeth yn ddarostyngedig i'r eglwys ac amcan y cyfan yw ffyniant Pabyddiaeth yn y tir'. By saying this Lewis accused Owen of condemning the whole life of Nonconformist Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Did Owen not realise that by replacing 'Roman Catholic' with 'Nonconformist' in his assertion he would be left with '[y] dehongliad cywir o nerth ac o ffydd ac o onestrwydd ac o argyhoeddiad cadarn yr hen Gymru Ymneilltuol Gymraeg'? The problem with modern Wales, he concluded, was that the school had replaced the chapel as the most important centre, and Welsh religion, language, and spiritual values had become subject to conditions dictated by the English government¹⁶⁵. In replying to Lewis's accusations, Owen accused him of distorting his (Owen's) original words. When he had stated that 'the Church' was the focal point for

¹⁶⁴Saunders Lewis, 'A Note on Welsh Education', *Blackfriars*, 29 (336) (1948), 139-141.

¹⁶⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 June 1949, 8.

Catholics, he had meant the Church of Rome and not, as Lewis had misinterpreted, the local churches. 'I'r gwir Babydd', he stressed, 'y mae diwylliant, gwleidyddiaeth, addysg, etc., etc., yn gyfryngau i hyrwyddo'r Eglwys Babyddol'. Lewis had, he continued, also falsely used the Nonconformist Fathers for his own means. If one thing was certain about the old Nonconformists it was that they were nothing like the present Catholic Church. Their schools and academies were run not for denominational purposes but for spiritual and mental development. Similarly, the Nonconformist Fathers would never have visited a Church Conference to beg for sympathy, nor would they beg for money from the state. 'Diben addysg i'r Pabydd', he concluded, 'yw hyrwyddo'r Eglwys Babyddol : hawlia arian oddi ar law y wladwriaeth i helpu hynny, ond rhaid i'r cwbl fod yn llaw awdurdod y Pabyddion'¹⁶⁶.

Further reactions to Lewis's article in Y Faner came in the letter pages of that publication. Dr. Iorweth C. Peate reminded Lewis that, although the old Dissenters may have believed that education was a matter for the church, 'yn wahonol i'r Pabyddion, yr oeddynt hefyd yn barod i dalu amdani'. It was very naïve of Lewis to reproach Nonconformists for not taking their religion seriously when Catholics were not even willing to pay for their own special schools¹⁶⁷. A non-Catholic correspondent from Montgomeryshire, however, suggested that, in an increasingly immoral and agnostic world, there was no positive step being taken for religion by making it harder for Catholics to run their schools. Although he paid taxes 'nid wyf i yn cwyno am fy mod yn cynnal ysgolion Pabyddol, meddylier am yr holl bethau y mae'n rhaid imi eu cynnal - y fyddin, y bom atomig, heb sôn am wigiau i rai moel a dannedd gosod i rai a fu'n rhy ddiog, neu'n rhy ddi-fater i lanhau eu dannedd yn gyson'. He then asked Peate whether he would prefer to see Wales Catholic or atheist. 'Drwgdybiaf fod casineb enwadol', he concluded, 'wedi dallu'r doethur braidd'¹⁶⁸. Peate replied 'byddaf well o lawer gennyf weld Cymru yn ddigrefydd yn yr ystyr honno na'i gweld yn Babyddol'. If Catholics wanted any respect, then they should not expect 'heretics' to pay for the

¹⁶⁶*Y Tyst*, 30 June 1949, 1.

¹⁶⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 June 1949, 2.

¹⁶⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 22 June 1949, 4.

erection of their schools¹⁶⁹. An angry Fr. J. Barrett Davies reminded Peate that ‘yni y Catholigion a dalodd am godi pob ysgol Gatholig yn y wlad heb i neb un o’r “hereticiaid” (chwedl yntau) orfod cyfrannu dimai goch at y gost’. The 1944 Act, however, placed a huge burden on the Catholic community, who were having to pay to replace old schools and build new ones. ‘Pob clod i’r hen Anghydfurfwyr an eu sêl,’ he noted, ‘ond nid gwiw i Dr. Peate gymharu eu gwaith hwy â’r dasg ganwaith trymach a osodwyd arnom heddiw’. Davies concluded by noting that in Ireland there was no opposition to Protestant schools. ‘O na bai Cymru Ymneilltuol yn fodlon dysgu gwers mewn goddefgarwch gan Iwerddon Gatholig!’¹⁷⁰.

In an article in *Y Faner* in 1953 Saunders Lewis went a step further than merely asking Nonconformists to cease their hostility towards Catholic education; he suggested that they too should begin to run their own denominational schools. ‘Erbyn hyn’, he wrote, ‘fe ddylai gweinidogion yr eglwysi ymneilltuol Cymraeg fod wedi dysgu fod addysg grefyddol yr *agreed syllabus* yn yr ysgolion eilradd yng Nghymru yn gyfangwbl ddiwerth o safbwynt crefydd’. The shocking situation had arisen that school children in Wales could not answer simple questions on the Bible and had not heard of Williams Pantycelyn and Ann Griffiths. Religious instruction lessons at state schools had become ‘un o’r parodiau mwyaf cableddus a gynlluniwyd erioed gan bwyllgor sobr a phurion ddirwestol’¹⁷¹. In the same year, Petit was also to criticise the syllabus for religious instruction in state schools. The failure of this syllabus, set by both Free Church and Anglican representatives, was that ‘it could not produce Nonconformists or Churchmen’¹⁷². Lewis’s article continued by comparing religious lessons at state schools with the Welsh lessons. These were both ‘yr un mor effeithiol, yr un mor ddibwys, yr un mor ddigysylltiad â’r pethau sy’n cyfrif ym mywyd yr ysgol a bywyd y byd’. Only denominational schools could save Welsh culture. The recent calls for a Welsh Secondary School could not save Welsh language and culture, unless this school was to nurture worshippers of

¹⁶⁹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 June 1949, 2.

¹⁷⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 July 1949, 2.

¹⁷¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 Jan. 1953, 8.

¹⁷²*Western Mail*, 9 Feb. 1953, 5.

God. 'Nid pregeth mo hyn, ond rhesymeg;' he concluded, 'addysg enwadol - y peth fu mor erchyll gennyh - dyna'r maen praw'¹⁷³.

iv) Gradual change

Some amount of Nonconformist hostility to Catholic schools continued well into the 1960s with a number of letters in the Western Mail revealing that passions could still be aroused. G.M. Williams of Devizes noted that in debates on increased aid to denominational schools 'the suggestion was implicit that wicked and intolerant Protestants were seeking to deny them this freedom'. Continuing Catholic zeal for the conversion of Wales, however, threw light 'on the Catholic's real ambitions'¹⁷⁴. Similar opposition to Catholic schools could be seen at Pembrokeshire Education Committee at this time when it claimed that the Catholic Church showed 'a ghetto mentality' in calling for its own secondary school in that county¹⁷⁵. However, since the Second World War there were signs that the situation was changing, even in the most Protestant counties of Wales. This was due, chiefly, to integration of Catholics into their respective societies. General increasing tolerance and, sadly, religious indifference also played a part in the gradual subsiding of the former antagonism against Catholic education. In the reorganisation following the Butler Act fiery opposition was certainly far more widespread than magnanimity, but there were many signs that the situation was to change.

Although the Arfon Education Committee in 1948 refused to support the application made by Catholics for a new school in Llandudno, Petit expressed his delight that 18 out of 44 councillors had voted in favour of the school with a number of leading non-Catholics fervently defending the Catholic's right to the school. Meurig Roberts noted that in an increasingly secular society, it would be a great advantage to Christianity in general if children were brought up in what they believe to be the true faith. 'Dyma'r bobl', Roberts continued, 'sy'n mynd i achub y byd; hwy a fydd yn gosod y cadarn-fur yn erbyn Comiwnyddiaeth yn

¹⁷³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 Jan. 1953, 8.

¹⁷⁴*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

¹⁷⁵*Western Mail*, 6 July 1966.

Ewrop'. It was a disgrace, he claimed, how little religious instruction was given at the state schools which the Council was advocating. 'Teimlai y dylem eu cymell. O safbwynt Cristnogol dylid bwrw y rhwyd mor bell ag sydd bosib'. Although Roberts was forced to sit back down as voices of protest broke across his speech, other members continued his support of the legal right of the Catholics. Alderman R.W. Williams explained that Catholics could not separate religion from education and 'beth bynnag yw ein barn ni ar y cwestiwn hwn rhaid inni oddef eu barn hwy a'i pharchu'. As the Catholics would almost certainly get the backing of the Ministry of Education, it would be better to gracefully accept their application. Even Alderman William George, who spoke against the school, had high praise for Catholic educational ideals. 'Y mae eu barn hwy yn un y byddai ond odid yn dda i ninnau fyfyrion arni yn y dyfodol'. The Catholic school system was, for George, what all denominations should be striving towards. 'Credant mai'r peth pwysicaf ym mywyd plentyn', he explained, 'yw ei fagu yn y ffydd sy'n ystyried bod Duw yn bresennol yn yr ysgol fel y mae yn yr eglwys. Ni aethom ni cyn belled â hynny, er hwyrach y dylem fynd. Nid hyfforddir ein hathrawon ni yn yr ysbryd hwnnw'¹⁷⁶.

Even at a fiery anti-Catholic meeting of the Denbighshire Education Committee in 1948, there were a number of non-Catholic members who supported the Catholic right to establish their schools. Councillor McMahon from Wrexham argued that the 1944 Act allowed Catholics to build their own schools and 'nid gwaith y pwyllgor oedd newid y deddf, ond ei gweinyddu'. Rev. T.D.C. Williams of Llai suggested that Christianity should surely be taught to children by those who professed it, which was simply what denominational schools were trying to guarantee. 'Yr ydym yma i weinyddu'r deddf fel y mae,' he declared, 'a theimlaf bod achos cryf dros egwyddor gyffredinol o ysgolion enwadol'¹⁷⁷. Again two years later Colonel Fenwick-Palmer spoke 'as a Protestant' at a meeting of the Committee. He noted that the fact that Catholics were prepared to build their own schools would be a great financial advantage for the county¹⁷⁸. Likewise in Flintshire, where relations between Catholics and Nonconformists over Catholic

¹⁷⁶*Y Cymro*, 9 July 1948, 16.

¹⁷⁷*Y Cymro*, 5 Nov. 1948, 5; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 3 Nov. 1948, 3.

¹⁷⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 Nov. 1950, 2.

education claims had up until this time been impassioned and heated, there were signs of a change in the 1950s from when the Blessed Richard Gwyn School in Flint was finally opened¹⁷⁹.

As the 1950s progressed much of the former Nonconformist hostility towards the claims for a separate 'Catholic' system of education would subside. Letters from non-Catholics supporting the Catholic right to their educational claims began to be published in the Welsh press¹⁸⁰, and even former stalwarts like W.J. Gruffydd began to soften their attitudes to Catholic schools¹⁸¹. At Haverfordwest there was no opposition to the erection of a new Catholic school when the plans were being discussed. The *Menevia Record* claimed that the town had clearly moved away from its former anti-Catholic prejudices¹⁸². Such was the transition that by the early 1960s at St. Helen's School in Caernarfon was possibly the only Catholic school in the world with a Protestant headmistress¹⁸³! The Education Acts of 1959 and especially that of 1967 had given Catholics better financial deals for the maintenance of their schools, yet Welsh Nonconformist opposition was a far cry from the animosity of past years. By the time of the Second Vatican Council, G.D. Bateman was writing in the *Review* that the fierce and hostile opposition to Catholic schools was almost a thing of the past¹⁸⁴. 'We have broken down the barriers of prejudice,' announced Lord Heycock, the chairman of the Glamorgan Education Authority, in opening a Catholic school at Port Talbot in 1969, 'we have got a sense of unity and a sense of purpose. There is a close liaison between the Authority and Catholic representatives'¹⁸⁵.

¹⁷⁹*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 20.

¹⁸⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 22 June 1949, 4.

¹⁸¹*Y Llenor* 30 (1) (1951), 2.

¹⁸²*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 12.

¹⁸³Caernarfon Archives : Michael Farmer and Nigel Evans, *Survey of St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church, Caernarfon* (School Project 1963).

¹⁸⁴G.D. Bateman, 'A Catholic Wind of Change', *Review*, 6 (4) (1963), 4.

¹⁸⁵*Port Talbot Guardian*, 9 May 1969, in Jones, 'Roman Catholic Education in Wales', p. 113.

Chapter 5

Gradual Acceptance of Catholics and Change in Attitudes towards the Church

Integration

Although the gradual integration of Irish and English Catholics into Welsh society had initially caused leakage, it also contributed to the lessening of prejudice and hostility and left the way clear for denominational relations to improve. Naturally, this integration occurred sooner in the larger towns of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. John Hickey noted that it was in the late 1920s and 1930s that the isolation of the Irish Catholic community in Cardiff began to be broken down. Up to the 1920s the Irish Catholic community was conscious of its unity as a group, which was reflected in the annual St. Patrick's day celebrations. Once begun, however, assimilation occurred swiftly, as Catholics filtered into the social framework of the city¹. This integration was largely due to mixed marriages. In 1923 St. Peter's Parish Magazine noted that increasing intermarriage 'shows that whereas a generation ago our people did not as a whole mix with the people of this country, to-day the blending of the Irish and the Welsh in South Wales is going ahead at a great pace'². The tendency to marry non-Catholics increased as the century progressed. In Cardiff, for example, the figures increased from some 30% at the turn of the century to around 50% in the 1920s, and to over 60% in the 1930s³. Another factor leading to integration was the emergence of a thriving Catholic middle or professional class in the Welsh towns, largely as a result of the emphasis which had been put on education.

¹John Hickey, *Urban Catholics : Urban Catholicism in England and Wales from 1829 to the Present Day* (London, 1967), p. 133.

²*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (2) (1923), 52-3.

³Hickey, *Urban Catholics*, 122-4.

The gradual acceptance of Catholicism through integration was reflected in the municipal life of the larger towns of the Archdiocese, where Catholics, having had members on the civic councils since the late nineteenth century⁴, became more prominent in the inter-war years. This not only showed that integration itself was taking place, but also hastened further integration through the influence which Catholic councillors could wield in public life. 'We should be grateful to any Catholic, no matter what his politics that enters public life,' the Newport Catholic Magazine stated, 'for they can do much for their own people, and bring in Catholic principles to bear in civil matters'⁵. In a lecture to the Cardiff Catholic Social Guild in 1931 Alderman Turnbull made 'a special appeal to Catholic folk to ... go forward to take their part in the public life of the State'⁶. Social Guild and CYMS Study Clubs educated Catholics in subjects such as housing, health, and local rates with the hope that they would become involved in public life. According to the Newport Catholic Magazine, the large attendance of St. Mary's study club's lectures on 'Local Government and Public Administration' in 1928 was 'an indication to our fellow citizens that Catholics are prepared to educate themselves and so be fitted to take a part in the public life of their native town'⁷. In the same year a study club at St. Patrick's, Newport was also holding lectures on local government issues. 'One of the main causes we have regret', the parish notes claimed, 'is the all too inadequate representation of the Catholic Body both in Parliament and on the local Councils. Study, provided it is systematic is the first step on the way to Municipal or National honours'⁸.

At Cardiff the prominent positions of Catholic councillors in the inter-war years was particularly striking. In 1921 Francis Harold Turnbull was unanimously chosen by the City Fathers, most of whom were Nonconformists and Anglicans, to become Lord Mayor. Turnbull, who had been made a Papal Chamberlain in 1915, was the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Cardiff. After his installation at the City Hall, the City Fathers led a procession to St. David's Cathedral where

⁴Paul Brendan O'Leary. 'Immigration and Integration : A Study of the Irish in Wales 1798-1922' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 1989), 185-220.

⁵*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (11) (1929), 346.

⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (6) (1931), 103.

⁷*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (1) (1928), 19.

⁸*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (10) (1928), 320.

Mostyn sang Pontifical High Mass and Bishop Burton of Clifton gave the sermon⁹. After his year as Lord Mayor, a local secular newspaper announced that Turnbull's 'name and year of office will always be remembered in a wide circle with real gratitude'. He had 'rendered such beneficent service, in an unostentatious way, in relieving distress and poverty in the city'. There was no doubt that his influence had 'done something to break down the barriers of prejudice which other people set up against Catholics'¹⁰. Aside from Turnbull there were a number of other Catholics who became prominent on Cardiff City Council at this time, including Alderman Augustine J. Stone¹¹ and John Donovan who in 1922 became the first working class Irishman to be made a magistrate¹². 'Catholics take their share in the public life of the city,' noted St. Peter's Parish Magazine, 'and experience a tolerance worthy of the city's greatness'¹³.

In Newport there were similar signs of Catholic integration reflected in municipal service. During the inter-war years Catholic Councillors such as William Casey, Fred Ryan, and W.F. Smith engendered the respect of both their fellow-Councillors and the ordinary people of the town. Following Smith and Casey's election as Chairmen of different Committees the Newport Catholic Magazine reported: 'We are always pleased to see the confidence thus shown in our own in public life, of their fellow members'¹⁴. In 1935, the year John Donovan had become the Mayor of Cardiff, Smith was to be made the Mayor of Newport¹⁵. The same trend was apparent in other towns in the Archdiocese. In 1924 James O'Brien became the first Port Talbot Catholic to be appointed Justice of the Peace¹⁶, and eight years later K.S. Wehrle was installed as the town's first Catholic Mayor¹⁷. Largely due to their influence town Councils throughout municipal South Wales began to treat Catholic issues, including education, with far more sympathy and tolerance than had previously been the case. Before the

⁹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (12) (1921), iii-viii.

¹⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (11) (1922), vii.

¹¹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (2) (1924), 44-5, 55-8.

¹²*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (1) (1922), xi.

¹³*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (6) (1922), v.

¹⁴*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (1) 1930, 12.

¹⁵*Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Yearbook 1936*.

¹⁶*St. Joseph's, Port Talbot: Commemorative Brochure Diamond Jubilee 1931-1991* (1991), p. 52.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 15.

Second World War, then, Catholics in the Archdiocese had become Councillors, Alderman, Mayors and Lord Mayors. One Cardiff Catholic, Sir James Collins, even received a knighthood¹⁸.

In the Diocese of Menevia integration was slower, especially in the more rural areas. Again mixed marriages played a great part in this process, although the lessening of prejudice which complemented integration was due primarily to the fact that Catholicism and its practices were becoming more familiar to the native Welsh. Where Catholics had become part of everyday life, the initial hostility towards a new mission or religious house would gradually subside. Fr. Trebaol's experience at Llanrwst was typical : he encountered 'tolerance and ... the weakening of prejudices accumulated by three centuries of lies and ignorance'¹⁹. During the Second World War this acceptance was hastened by evacuation, as many of the Nonconformist communities in the remotest parts of Wales came into contact for the first time with practising Catholics²⁰. 'Many of the villages never saw a Catholic', noted Bishop Petit in 1948, 'till the war drove them from bombed areas into the shelter of rural Wales'²¹. Forced together at this time of national crisis, the indigenous population of rural Wales often left religious hostility to one side to help these evacuated victims of the war. In Llandeilo, for example, Catholic children from Croydon, London and Bootle, were treated with sympathy and kindness²². Later, the Menevia Travelling Mission continued to bring Catholicism into the fore in remote parts of Wales. The initial antipathy towards Catholics and their worship soon faded as the missionaries became a familiar sight, hastening integration. 'The Travelling Missioners are breaking down by their mere presence,' wrote Petit in the Lamp Society's report for 1952, 'centuries old hatred of the Faith'²³.

By the 1950s Menevia too began to witness integration through civic service. Catholics had, in fact, already begun to achieve positions of prominence in public affairs in some North Wales towns during the inter-war years. As early

¹⁸G.D. Bateman. 'A Catholic Wind of Change (Feb. 18, 1962)', *Review*, 6 (4) (1963). 4.

¹⁹G.M. Trebaol. 'The Cambro-Breton Missions (1900-1914)', *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 150.

²⁰*Menevia Record*, 6 (1) (1958). 6.

²¹*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

²²Alan Randall. *Catholic Llandeilo : A History of St. David's Parish* (Llandeilo, 1987). p. 19.

²³Christopher Magner, *The Lamp Society and the Welsh Travelling Mission* (1997). p. 11.

as the 1920s the Catholic convert Arthur Johnson Hughes played a prominent role in public life of Aberystwyth as the town's Clerk²⁴. By 1936 Caernarfonshire County Council had chosen M.E. Nee as its Chairman²⁵, while in Mold even the parish priest, Fr. Thomas Eadsforth, had been elected onto the local council²⁶. In Bangor Alderman F.W. Pozzi became the first Catholic Mayor in 1954, which meant an official civic service was held at the Catholic church for the first time in the city's history²⁷. Three years later William Nevin of Pembroke Dock, who had been councillor since 1945, was chosen as Mayor²⁸. In 1961 Aberystwyth too had its first Catholic Mayor in the person of Alderman William Kitchin²⁹. Most striking, however, was at Llandovery, Carmarthenshire in 1957, when Fr. Stanley Vince had become the first Catholic priest in Wales ever to occupy the office of Mayor. An Englishman who had only been priest in the town for three years, Vince was held in high regard among non-Catholics for having headed a movement to save the local state grammar school from closure³⁰. One secular journalist wrote that 'this Mayoral appointment is a splendid testimony of the sterling worth of the Catholics of Llandovery and indicates the esteem in which they are held by their fellow-townspeople'³¹. By 1960 another Menevia priest, Fr Eric Green of Haverfordwest, was also elected Mayor of his town³².

Respect for Catholic Individuals

Before the First World War, despite initial hostility many Catholics soon found themselves being accepted and valued members of the communities in which they served. This was certainly true of members of Religious Orders. The

²⁴M.B. Kiely, *Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride's, Aberystwyth : Centenary 1874-1974* (1974), p. 95.

²⁵*The Tablet*, 6 April 1935, 444.

²⁶Margaret Joy, *A History of St. David's Roman Catholic Parish, Church and School, Mold* (1992), p. 33.

²⁷*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 7.

²⁸Charles O'Brien, *A History of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Pembroke Dock* (1967), p. 17.

²⁹M.B. Kiely, *Annals of the Parish of Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winefride, Aberystwyth* (1973), p. 15.

³⁰*Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 10.

³¹*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 8.

³²*Menevia Record*, 7 (3) (1960), 4.

Ursuline Sisters in Llanelli earned much admiration for their tireless charity work³³, while both at Monmouth³⁴ and at Abergavenny³⁵ the sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost soon became respected and loved. Likewise, the Passionist Fathers of Carmarthen³⁶ and the students at St. Beuno's Jesuit College in Tremeirchion, Clwyd, where the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins had spent three years, were well respected by their neighbours³⁷. Aside from Religious Orders many individual Catholics, especially some of the hard-labouring priests, also gained the respect of the local inhabitants. As early as 1899 it was written that 'Anglican clergymen hold aloof from, and take upon themselves to look down upon, their nonconformist brethren; Roman Catholic priests mix freely with them and openly attend their places of worship'³⁸. Priests such as Fr. Mulligan of Llandudno³⁹, Fr. John Hayde at Cardiff⁴⁰, Fr. Frederick Dent of Rhymney⁴¹, Fr. Finian Connell of Carmarthen⁴², and Fr. Patrick Kane of Llandrindod⁴³ were well-liked among non-Catholics. In view of such attitudes it is clear that the polemic from the chapel authorities was far more prominent than hostility from the lay congregations.

In the inter-war years Catholics gained respect in many general ways, such as through social action, personal sanctity, and through efforts to foster Welsh culture. In the Archdiocese priests such as Fr. Michael Fennell of Cardiff⁴⁴, Fr. Hickey of Newport⁴⁵, Fr. Van Den Heuval of both Cardiff⁴⁶ and Newport⁴⁷, and

³³*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 23.

³⁴David A. Powell, *St. Mary's Catholic Church, Monmouth 1793-1993 A Short History* (Monmouth, 1993).

³⁵Attracta Josephine Egan, 'The Development of Catholic education in Gwent 1840-1979' (unpublished MEd Thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff 1979), 65.

³⁶*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1949*.

³⁷Paul Edwards, *Canute's Tower, St. Beuno's* (England, 1990), p. 104.

³⁸*South Wales Daily News*, quoted in *Welsh Catholic Herald*, 22 Sept. 1898, 1.

³⁹Margaret Amiel and Madeline Dunphy, *Our Lady Star of the Sea, Llandudno 1893-1993: The Growth of a Parish: Glimpses over a Century* (1993), p. 17.

⁴⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 8 (3) (1928), 85.

⁴¹*The Tablet*, 1 July 1916, 28.

⁴²Alan Randall, *The Passionists at Carmarthen 1889-1986: A Commemorative Booklet* (1986), p. 18.

⁴³*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 4.

⁴⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (8) (1923), 239; *Western Mail*, 23 July 1926, 8.

⁴⁵J.H. Canning, *St. Mary's Newport 1840-1940: A Brief History* (Newport, 1940), p. 21; *Western Mail*, 13 Sept. 1926, 10.

⁴⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (7) (1922), v.

⁴⁷*Diocesan Yearbook: Archdiocese of Cardiff 1938*, p. 117.

the Vicar General Canon O'Reilly⁴⁸, were revered and esteemed among non-Catholics. As 'one of the best loved figures in the town' the Protestants of Barry congratulated parish priest Fr. Francis Vaughan at his appointment as bishop⁴⁹; the congregation of St. John's chapel even prayed for the Divine blessing on his new work⁵⁰! The Western Mail referred to this as 'a unique occasion of fraternal interest', reflecting the fact that Vaughan was 'so widely esteemed that the townspeople were loath to lose him on his appointment to the see of Menevia'⁵¹. At his episcopal consecration he was described as 'everywhere honoured by all classes, and indeed by all creeds'⁵². It was such respected Catholic priests as all these, noted the Archdiocesan yearbook at the death of Van Den Heuval, that 'have done much in modern times to soften asperities, break down prejudice, and dissipate ignorance'⁵³.

In the Diocese of Menevia too, many Catholics won the respect and admiration of their Protestant neighbours. Religious Orders, such as the Capuchins at Pantasaph⁵⁴, the Poor Clares in Flint⁵⁵, and the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word at Carrog⁵⁶, were again held in high regard. Likewise, individual secular priests, such as Frs. Sylvester Brown and Thomas Eadsforth of Mold⁵⁷, Fr. Joseph Higgins of Cardigan⁵⁸, Canon Eustace Carew of Llanelli⁵⁹, Fr. Patrick Shannon of Llangollen⁶⁰, Fr. Patrick McCulloch in Conwy⁶¹, and Fr. John Coffey of Llandoverly⁶², became cherished by both Catholics and Protestants alike. It was written of Mostyn himself that as bishop 'both friend and

⁴⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 8 (4) (1928), 111.

⁴⁹*Western Mail*, 14 March 1935, 6.

⁵⁰E.J. Brook, *A Brief Account of the Barry Catholic Mission* (1989).

⁵¹*Western Mail*, 14 March 1935, 8.

⁵²*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (10) (1926), 306.

⁵³*Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1938*, p. 117.

⁵⁴*The Tablet*, 15 Dec. 1923, 784.

⁵⁵*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 11-15; Donald Attwater, *The Catholic Church in Modern Wales : A Record of the Past Century* (London, 1935), pp. 205-6.

⁵⁶*Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 20.

⁵⁷*Joy, St. David's, Mold*, p. 31.

⁵⁸*Menevia Record*, 6 (4) (1959), 9 : some of his 'closest friends' were 'sturdy Nonconformists'.

⁵⁹*Menevia Record*, 3 (2) (1955), 4.

⁶⁰*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 23.

⁶¹Margaret Williams, *Catholicism in Conwy 1186-1993* (1993), p. 17.

⁶²John Rudd, 'Catholic Life in Llandoverly', *Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 10.

foe began to respect him as a Man of God'⁶³. By 1953 Peter Morgan could write that old hostility was 'giving way to a genuine respect and a discreet friendliness'. Priests, he claimed, 'are liked for their zeal; nuns are admired for their charity and utter selflessness'⁶⁴. Four years later a Welsh convert described how priests were helping remove the old prejudices through their quiet and patient work, their genuine friendliness, and their lack of luxuries, sometimes even of ordinary comforts⁶⁵. As well as priests, many prominent Catholic laypeople were similarly winning the respect of non-Catholics, especially those who won positions of authority in public life. In Towyn, Meirioneth in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, H.V.W. Robinson and his wife were held in great esteem by their fellow townspeople and were awarded MBE's for their services to the community⁶⁶. While during the first half of the century the Catholic landed gentry, families such as the Morgans of Tredegar Park, the Vaughans of Courtfield, the Feildings of Denbigh⁶⁷, the Mostyns of Talacre, the Herberts of Llanarth, and the Butes of Cardiff⁶⁸, were both fervent in their faith and popular among the people at large.

Social Action

The vast majority of Catholics in Wales were working-class, living in the large industrial towns and cities in the South. As industrial depression struck the country, then, it was not surprising that many priests and lay-Catholics, developing the social efforts of their nineteenth century predecessors among the immigrants⁶⁹, became prominent in the drive for social equality and justice. The appalling situation in the inter-war years was reflected in St. Peter's Parish Magazine, which noted in 1922 that 'terrible misery has been rife as the result of

⁶³Francis Mostyn's Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee, 1884-1934 *SOUVENIR HANDBOOK* (Cardiff, 1934), p. 13.

⁶⁴Peter Morgan, 'The Faith and Rural Wales', *Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 2.

⁶⁵*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 17.

⁶⁶Conversation with Fr. Charles Lloyd, former priest at Towyn.

⁶⁷Although their principal residence was by this time in Leicestershire, they still owned around 3,000 acres in Flintshire.

⁶⁸See John Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute* (Cardiff, 1981), pp. 22-30.

⁶⁹O'Leary, 'Immigration and Integration', pp. 169-70.

so much unemployment, the grim spectre of starvation having stood at the door of many a home'. The magazine's words, 'it is a tale of woe, unhappily, of which we cannot yet see the end', were to prove prophetic, as the social misery got progressively worse⁷⁰. Two years later the publication noted that 'these are hard times. Poverty is everywhere. Unemployment already so widespread as to seem disastrous, is on the increase'⁷¹. In March 1929 the situation had become so bad that Mostyn dispensed the Archdiocese from the obligation of the Lenten fast. 'So much sickness and distress,' noted the Newport Catholic Magazine, 'the angel of death too has laid a heavy hand on the Parish'⁷². In 1931 the publication reported that Newport's Corpus Christi procession had been called off on account of the hard times⁷³, and even the publication itself ceased at the end of that year because of the 'acute industrial depression that we are suffering from'⁷⁴. The situation in South Wales was so serious that in 1936 The Tablet dedicated three articles describing the malaise. The Welsh coalfields, it was claimed, 'remain the most poverty-stricken of the industrial deserts which are mildly described as Special Areas'⁷⁵. One local priest described the situation in stark terms. 'These people', he claimed, 'are enduring martyrdoms worse than any in the Roman Martyrology'⁷⁶.

Adrian Hastings suggests that the Catholic Church at this time was 'so preoccupied over mixed marriages and birth control and anti-Communism that it had no word to say even when its strongholds were devastated by mass unemployment'⁷⁷. While there was, admittedly, no huge Catholic campaign in the Archdiocese to improve the social predicament, it is quite clear that local efforts were made, with Catholic calls for social reform becoming quite prevalent. The Papal encyclicals, in particularly Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), were often quoted as being the key to social harmony⁷⁸. *Rerum Novarum* had insisted that

⁷⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (1) (1922), i.

⁷¹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (10) (1924), 309.

⁷²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (3) (1929), 88.

⁷³*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 4 (7) (1931), 108.

⁷⁴*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 4 (12) (1931), 184.

⁷⁵*The Tablet*, 21 Nov. 1936, 695.

⁷⁶*The Tablet*, 28 Nov. 1936, 735.

⁷⁷Adrian Hastings *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London, 1991), p. 278.

⁷⁸See *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (1) (1931), 19.

labour must never be regarded as a chattel, but employers must respect the dignity of their workers. The importance of the encyclical for the Catholic social efforts in South Wales, as elsewhere, is abundantly clear. Numerous events were held in the Archdiocese on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary, while Councillor W. Smith of Newport even attended the public celebrations in Rome as a representative of the Catholic Social Guild⁷⁹. Further encyclicals, including Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Nova Impendet* (both 1931) and John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), developed the Church's social teaching. In 1944 the Archdiocesan yearbook had suggested that Rome's social teaching since *Rerum Novarum* had changed the attitude of the non-Catholic Welsh towards the papacy. 'A fu ef (Y Pab)', it asked, 'erioed uwch ei fri yng Nghymru nag ydyw heddiw?'⁸⁰.

There were certainly many calls for Catholics in the Archdiocese to involve themselves in social movements. In St. Peter's Parish Magazine in 1924, Robert Wade urged Catholics to endeavour to play an active part in political parties and trade unions. He warned, however, of the danger of compromising their faith and 'becoming engulfed in the stream they have set out to direct'⁸¹. Wade's article was one of many which attempted to introduce the Church's view on social issues to Welsh Catholics at this time⁸². It continued by criticising both capitalism which led to 'the oppression of the weak by the strong', and extreme socialism which would 'stifle all individual initiative and stultify those qualities with which God has endowed man'. In politics, social legislation, and industrial relations, men had come to be guided by prejudice and self-interest. The sad result of this was clear; 'some live in luxury, while many are condemned to live in avoidable poverty and unnecessarily squalid surroundings'⁸³. Following the Second World War such articles on social issues continued. In the St. Patrick's Parish Magazine in 1948 Cecil Gill condemned industrialism, getting the most out of machines and workers at the most economical cost, as being directly opposed

⁷⁹Newport Catholic Magazine, 4 (5) (1931). 70.

⁸⁰Archdiocese of Cardiff: Diocesan Year Book 1944, p. 9.

⁸¹Robert Wade, 'Catholics and their Social Responsibilities', *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (7) (1924), 200; see also *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (10) (1921), vii.

⁸²See *Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1928*, p. 63.

⁸³Wade, 'Catholics and their Social Responsibilities', p. 199.

to God's will. It was, he wrote, 'the duty of Christian men to aim at and work for the abolition of industrialism as an evil thing'. Industrialism had, he continued, 'made us all servants of materialism and the persistent practice of materialism separates us from God'. Although man could certainly not live by bread alone, 'the trouble with our civilisation is that in addition to bread we demand not only jam and cakes but ice creams and trifles'! As cinemas, radio, gambling, and gossip, took over people's lives, Wales was left believing that these were the only things which could make a dull life endurable. 'Our toys indeed have become our taskmasters, for industrialism has finally destroyed our sense of values'⁸⁴.

With such an emphasis on social issues and calls to better the worker's lot, it is little wonder that Catholic social groups were strong in the Archdiocese in the inter-war years. The branch of the Catholic Social Guild in Cardiff was particularly vibrant, holding frequent public lectures and a large annual meeting⁸⁵. There were many calls for such guilds to be established across South Wales, and for all Catholic men to be involved in them⁸⁶. Branches of the guild were formed at schools, where the older boys were grounded in the Catholic attitude to social issues. At St. Joseph's High School in Newport in 1928 a paper was read on *Rerum Novarum* before it was studied in class⁸⁷. Affiliated to the Social Guild were Social Study Clubs where members studied economics and ethics and were helped to relate Catholic principles to modern social problems. Such clubs flourished in the large towns of the Archdiocese, in such parishes as St. Peter's parish, Cardiff⁸⁸ and St. Mary's parish, Newport⁸⁹. In 1929 Councillor W.F. Smith urged all young Catholics in industrial South Wales to attend study clubs, so as to 'undertake serious study of Social Questions and Problems'. It was their duty, he claimed, to strive to 'attain better conditions in industry' through this study. Furthermore, 'it is not only the working man who needs to study Catholic social principles, and their application, but also the employer'⁹⁰. The Cardiff Archdiocesan CYMS was also keen to foster a social consciousness. Its members

⁸⁴*St. Patrick's Parish Magazine*, 1 (9) (1948), 5.

⁸⁵*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1930*.

⁸⁶See *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (1) (1931), 19; *Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1932, 8.

⁸⁷*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (12) (1928).

⁸⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (4) (1922), xiii.

⁸⁹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (1) (1928), 19.

⁹⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (12) (1929), 367.

were encouraged to attend social summer schools⁹¹, and it organised many lectures on social subjects⁹². In a 1950 article about the role of CYMS in the Archdiocese P. Reidy emphasised that all members were expected to study the Catholic solution to the social question and to take an active role in trade unions⁹³. This was also the case in the Diocese of Menevia. Here the Association of Catholic Trade Unions united Catholic trade union members⁹⁴, while in the late 1950s the diocesan Catholic Social Guild was rejuvenated through the influence of Fr. Arthur Smallwood of Connah's Quay⁹⁵. Furthermore, Wales' only branch of the Young Christian Workers was situated in Ruabon at this time. This was run by Fr. Owen Hardwicke, it included many non-Catholics among its membership⁹⁶ and drew the society's national conferences to the village⁹⁷.

With such fervency in fostering a social consciousness in Wales, it is hardly surprising that there was a strong Welsh connection with the Catholic Worker's College. This was established at Oxford in 1921 specifically to train Catholic men to play a full part in political and trade union affairs. At the Catholic Social Guild's annual general meeting in Balliol College in 1921 a Welsh railwayman, who would later become Canon A. Winsborough of Neath, made the speech which clinched the decision to found the college. Furthermore, one of its first three students was another Welsh railwayman, Bill Smith of Newport. Following his training, Smith returned to his hometown and spent many years as a trade union leader eventually becoming an Alderman on Newport Council. Between the 1920s and the 1960s Welsh Catholics were well represented at the Worker's College⁹⁸. This deepened the appreciation of the Catholic input into social discussions in Wales. By 1938 H.W.J. Edwards was suggesting that, in the Rhondda valley at least, Catholic social teaching was so widespread among the

⁹¹*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (4) (1929), 115.

⁹²*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (10) (1921); *Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1932, 8; *The Tablet*, 24 Sept. 1932, 412.

⁹³P. Reidy, 'CYMS : Archdiocese of Cardiff', *Archdiocese of Cardiff : Diocesan Yearbook 1950*, p. 98.

⁹⁴*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 100.

⁹⁵Wrexham Diocesan Archives : Catholic Social Guild File.

⁹⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

⁹⁷*Menevia Record*, 8 (3) (1961), 15-17.

⁹⁸*Review*, 7 (4) (1963), 9.

faithful that ‘there seems no reason why Catholicism ... should not provide a successful resistance to communism’⁹⁹.

Catholic social efforts in Wales, however, also faced much opposition both from within and without the Church. It was often found to be exceedingly difficult to persuade Catholics to get involved in social matters. This apathy typified the long tradition of indifference to political and social questions which had prevailed among working class Catholics¹⁰⁰. Non-Catholic hostility, on the other hand, was a reaction to the suggestion that Rome, and Rome alone, could provide the basic principles for social change¹⁰¹. This attitude was reflected in the Church’s refusal to partake in the 1924 Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC). The conference, which had considerable influence in Wales, was held to discuss the social questions of the day. Welsh reactions to the Catholic refusal to co-operate were hostile. In *Y Tyst*, Dr. T. Rees (the Principal of Bala-Bangor College) echoed the words of the Anglican Bishop Charles Gore who noted that an ‘infallible’ Church would never join a conference which was confessing failure and guilt for the social ills of the day. Yet the fact remained that society was sinking deeper into despair : ‘ni allai bod gwell praw o ffolineb “anffaeledigrwydd” na’i fod yn gofyn gwadu ffaith mor eglur’¹⁰².

Such criticism was somewhat unfair as the Welsh Catholic hierarchy’s discourses and pastoral letters often recognised that the Church had a social gospel for all the people of Wales. In 1930, as the social situation rapidly deteriorated, Mostyn condemned the excessive greed of the country’s leaders. Unemployment was on the increase and assistance was minimal. Still the leaders continued to strive after personal riches and wealth. They only ‘want their country to prosper that so they may prosper’¹⁰³. He constantly urged Catholics to involve themselves in social and political affairs by supporting the Catholic Social Guild¹⁰⁴. Many of his pastoral letters dealt with similar social issues¹⁰⁵, with his

⁹⁹H.W.J. Edwards. *The Good Patch* (1938), 145.

¹⁰⁰Hickey. *Urban Catholics*, p. 149.

¹⁰¹*ibid.*

¹⁰²*Y Tyst*, 17 April 1924, 3.

¹⁰³Francis Mostyn. *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1930*.

¹⁰⁴*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 10 (11) (1930), 198; *The Tablet*, 22 July 1933, 120.

¹⁰⁵See *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1921*; *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1935*.

1935 Lenten pastoral urging the struggling working or unemployed Catholics of the Archdiocese to take heart as ‘the souls of the rich and poor are equally valuable in the sight of God’¹⁰⁶. As parish priest at Barry, Francis Vaughan had been deeply involved in Catholic social concerns¹⁰⁷. On becoming bishop he continued this involvement; his 1932 advent pastoral emphasised the rights of every worker which he claimed the Catholic Church would defend to the end. In words which would be echoed by the South American liberation theologians half a century later he criticised the ‘greedy concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a tiny minority’¹⁰⁸. Such attitudes and calls for radical reform reflected similar calls from the English bishops. Despite opposing the 1926 general strike, Cardinal Bourne often spoke out against social injustices, as did his successor Hinsley. As president of the ‘Catholic Social Guild’, Archbishop Keating of Liverpool was fervent in his defence of the poor and unemployed. In 1942 a joint pastoral letter of the hierarchy of England and Wales summarised such ideals. These ‘ten points for social progress’ were described as the ‘minimum conditions for a Christian way of life’, and dealt with such matters as employment, living conditions, and the rich and poor divide¹⁰⁹.

Although the social situation changed somewhat with post-war prosperity, the Welsh bishops still reacted harshly to any signs of injustice to the working class. Petit, who as parish priest of Grays in Essex in the early 1930s had dedicated much time to alleviating distress among local workers¹¹⁰, was especially fervent in his reactions. In 1951 he called for more houses to be built for the poorer citizens of Wales. ‘It seems to me intolerable and disgusting that there should be imposed on the community such a high and luxurious standard of school buildings when the children have to return to share with the rest of the family a back room at night’. Such school buildings were used to advertise the efficiency of local councils, ‘but they do not go round the back streets and say, “we have neglected these and we are responsible for the infernal sanitary

¹⁰⁶Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1935*.

¹⁰⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (6) (1924), 186.

¹⁰⁸Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1932*; see also *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1928*.

¹⁰⁹*Joint Pastoral Letter of the Hierarchy of England and Wales 1942*.

¹¹⁰*Souvenir of the Consecration of the Bishop-Elect of Menevia 1947*.

conditions”. If they are going to take the praise, let them take the blame too¹¹¹. As an answer to such injustices Petit continually called for Catholic involvement in social matters. “If you are content with merely paying your [Trade Union] subscription or levy, I tell you, you are not doing your duty;’ he told the 1948 CYMS national conference at Llandudno. ‘There are sins of omission as well as commission’. He warned that those Catholics who were apathetic to social involvement were not obeying God’s will; ‘Catholics do the devil’s work for him when they carp or criticise their fellow Catholics’. All the faithful should instead make ‘an organised intelligent effort’ to partake in public life and by so doing enshrine the Church’s principles therein¹¹². Four years later he wrote that Catholics had to desist from keeping religion and business ‘in watertight compartments’, a fact which opened them to the ‘danger of worshipping money and comfort, power and position - the gods of our fellows’¹¹³. In 1957 Petit even led a pilgrimage of around 1,200 British youngsters to Rome to partake in the World Congress of the Young Christian Workers¹¹⁴.

While the Welsh bishops incessantly highlighted the rights of workers, they were certainly not socialist in their views. Their emphasis was strictly on mutual duties at the workplace. In writing of the worker’s obligations to his employer Vaughan noted that ‘for a living wage he must give a fair day’s effort, otherwise he is guilty of the sin of injustice’¹¹⁵. Such views, however, were taken to an extreme by McGrath. He would often criticise apathy at the workplace : ‘the modern idea, prevalent among many workingmen, of going slow, or of doing as little as possible as long as their position is safe, is pure, barefaced and disgusting robbery’¹¹⁶. Yet, unlike his predecessor at Cardiff and his contemporaries at Menevia (whose parochial experience, unlike McGrath’s, had been in built-up, industrial towns), he showed little sympathy with either the individual worker or the working class. He was, in fact, aloof about almost all

¹¹¹*Western Mail*, 26 Sept. 1951, 4.

¹¹²Wrexham Diocesan Archives : CYMS File; see also *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1958* p. 2.

¹¹³*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 12.

¹¹⁴*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1958*, p. 87.

¹¹⁵Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1928: The Menevia Record* (2 (3) (1955)) wrote that the true Catholic worker ‘feels no envy for “the idle rich” nor aspires to the emptiness of the life they lead’.

¹¹⁶Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1948*.

social, political and industrial issues. It was no wonder that even Saunders Lewis wrote that McGrath ‘should have been left in Menevia, - he cannot come to terms with proletariat men’¹¹⁷. Similarly, proletariat men found it difficult to come to terms with an archbishop whose nationalism betrayed his support for Plaid Cymru’s patrician and elitist politics. Although his obituary in *The Times* claimed that he often spoke on neglect of land by those seeking ease and wealth in industry¹¹⁸, his conservative attitude was better reflected in his angry reaction to correspondence in national newspapers concerning plans for a new social order after the war. While English Catholics largely welcomed the welfare state¹¹⁹, McGrath was highly critical. ‘It has been proved, time and again,’ he wrote, ‘that it is only on the operation of Christianity that any reasonable hope of the perfectibility and progress of mankind can be founded’. Any plans which catered purely for man’s material welfare ignoring his moral inadequacies ‘are not worth the paper on which they are written’¹²⁰.

Generally, however, there is much evidence that numerous individual Catholics in Wales were involved in the task of social improvement and fairness at the workplace, and in doing so engendered much respect. There were also many Catholic efforts to provide practical help for those affected by unemployment and similar hardships. In the 1920s Catholics, and especially priests, were prevalent on the Boards of Guardians of many of the Archdiocese’s larger towns. These Boards were secular bodies of elected members who helped the poor, and both in Cardiff¹²¹ and Newport¹²² Catholics were numerous on them. By 1936 a *Tablet* article on the social depression in South Wales noted that the continuing social work of Catholic priests was admired and respected in the non-Catholic as well as Catholic communities. While Catholicism was showing itself to be a very practical religion, Nonconformity was unable to free itself from the shackles of a sombre morality and inadequate theology. ‘In South Wales today,’ the article noted, ‘there is every kind of complication - racial, moral, national, economic and

¹¹⁷Letter dated July 3, 1954; Hazel Walford Davies. *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin* (Llandysul, 1995), p. 345.

¹¹⁸*The Times*, 1 March 1961, 16.

¹¹⁹Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 476.

¹²⁰Michael McGrath. *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1941*.

¹²¹*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 2 (5) (1922), iii; *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 5 (5) (1925), 152.

¹²²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 2 (12) (1929), 370.

social - but it may be a sign of new times that even the poorest, and once the most bigoted, are now making the enigmatical remark so often heard in England : “If I were anything I would be a Catholic”¹²³.

At this time of industrial depression and social distress members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) were held in particular esteem. The group laboured among the unemployed and poverty-stricken, largely (but not exclusively) their own Catholic brethren. During the inter-war years the nucleus of many South Wales branches was the Catholic middle-class which was rapidly growing at this time¹²⁴. Special distribution of relief was organised among the poor¹²⁵, and a hostel was established at Cardiff to help boys who had recently left school¹²⁶. If they were unable to find paid work for these boys there were many Catholic schemes with the aim of fostering a sense of worth. In the 1930s a parish hall was built at Dowlais, and at Caerphilly, where 92% of the population were unemployed, a church, priest’s house and school were constructed¹²⁷! Furthermore, on opening a new parish hall in Merthyr in 1934 Mostyn urged that it be used by the many unemployed of the area as a place to come to meet others, to read, and to study¹²⁸. Funds for the relief work of the SVP were collected at the conclusion of Sunday Masses, at charity whist drives and dances, and in many appeals in parish magazines. The work of the society among the poor, sick, unemployed, and needy became respected by all. Speaking in 1923 Mostyn remarked that there were very few people ‘no matter to what religious sentiment they belong’ who had not come into contact with the SVP’s good works¹²⁹.

The charity work of religious orders was also looked upon with admiration. The Sisters of Nazareth House in Cardiff were held in so high regard for their work among the sick, poor and disadvantaged that people ‘of all sects and denominations’ supported their labours generously¹³⁰. The Nazareth Sisters

¹²³*The Tablet*, 28 Nov. 1936, 734.

¹²⁴Martin V. Sweeney, ‘Diocesan Organisation and Administration’, in G.A. Beck (ed.), *The English Catholics 1850-1950* (London, 1950), p. 143.

¹²⁵*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (9) (1921).

¹²⁶*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 3 (2) (1923), 51.

¹²⁷*The Tablet*, 31 Oct. 1936, 598.

¹²⁸*Western Mail*, 31 July 1934, 7.

¹²⁹*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 3 (11) (1923), 333.

¹³⁰*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 2 (9) (1922), vii.

of Wrexham were also respected for their selfless work. ‘There have been cases’, the *Menevia Record* noted, ‘where staunch Nonconformists have confided their troubles and sorrows to these Sisters’¹³¹. In the 1953 *Menevia* yearbook Oswald J. Murphy mentioned the respect afforded the Little Sisters of the Assumption in a number of towns in the diocese. The Little Sister, he wrote, ‘can and does remove barriers of ignorance and prejudice where a priest, humanly speaking, would find himself ill-equipped’. In her relief work among the sick and distressed she would visit Catholic, Protestant, or unbeliever, and especially those who could not afford to pay for help. ‘The Welsh people’, Murphy concluded, ‘... will discover that the humble Little Sister provides in part at least the answer to the scoffing enquiry : “What is Christianity doing for the working classes?”’¹³². The respect engendered is shown in 1961 when two Nonconformists (Albert S. Jones and T.N. Griffiths) collected £5000 towards the cost of the Little Sisters convent at Holywell¹³³. A year later the Little Sisters at Wrexham were honoured by the non-Catholics of the town when the Rotary Club made them a presentation. ‘We cannot but admire and appreciate the good work you do for the sick and needy in the town and surrounding district’ said the club’s president, Delme Jenkins¹³⁴. Following the Second Vatican Council the Little Sisters were naturally recognised as a great help in the fostering of ecumenical unity, and the second annual conference between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in Wales in 1972 noted this fact¹³⁵.

Morals and Religious Stands

¹³¹*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 18.

¹³²*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 113-4; see also *Menevia Record*, 3 (2) (1955), 18.

¹³³*Menevia Record*, 8 (4) (1961), 6.

¹³⁴*Menevia Record*, 9 (3) (1962), 14.

¹³⁵*The Tablet*, 15 April 1972, 362.

a) Various issues

Many of the moral and religious stands made by the Catholic Church also engendered respect from non-Catholics in the Principality. At the Calvinistic Methodist General Conference at Oswestry in 1933 Rev. D. Jones even stated that he sometimes believed ‘fod Eglwys Rhufain yn dweud rhai pethau y dylsai’r Protestaniaid fod wedi eu dweud yn groyw ers talwm’¹³⁶. It was also realised that, in an increasingly secular society, all denominations needed to stand together on many religious and moral issues. One such illustration occurred in March 1926 when the St. Peter’s CYMS rugby football team refused to play a match on Good Friday. ‘The day’, the parish magazine had noted a year earlier, ‘is much too sacred to be a mere Bank Holiday’¹³⁷. Now a letter from the team’s captain and the Secretary of the branch of CYMS to all the main South Wales papers explained that they had ‘refused on conscientious and religious grounds to play on this day’. They also recounted the attitude the game’s organisers, the Cardiff and District League Committee, had taken to their stance, who refused to change the date as ‘Good Friday offers an opportunity for getting a good “gate”’¹³⁸.

A leading article in the South Wales News, written by a non-Catholic, supported the Catholic stand. Many people, it claimed, ‘feel a genuine repugnance concerning the practice of holding ... matches on the day which should be set apart for mourning the greatest tragedy in the history of the world’. The article claimed that St. Peter’s CYMS should be ‘entitled to public sympathy and support in the attitude it has adopted’. It was more important that the people of Wales acquired a deeper appreciation of Good Friday ‘than that the profits of sporting organisations should be augmented by making a holiday of what is, by the tradition and teaching of Christendom, a holy day’¹³⁹. Messages of support from both Nonconformists and Anglicans were received by the St. Peter’s CYMS. The Anglican Diocesan Missioner for the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, W.G.D. Wilkinson, wrote to the Society stating that the team’s stand ‘will do

¹³⁶*Y Cymro*, 10 June 1933, 13.

¹³⁷*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 5 (4) (1925), 115.

¹³⁸*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 6 (4) (1926), 113.

¹³⁹*South Wales News*, 26 March 1926, 6.

much to encourage other clubs, Rugby and Association, to take a firm stand; and will, I hope, lead many to think out afresh the implication of Good Friday'¹⁴⁰. Others messages of support appeared in the letter pages of South Wales newspapers. The Secretary of the Cardiff Sunday School Union Football League wrote to both the Society and to the Western Mail on behalf of his Nonconformist committee 'assuring you of their support in the stand you have taken'. They may, he wrote, represent a different religious body, but 'we feel that the principle for which you have made such a magnificent stand is deserving of the support of all organisations who think alike with you'¹⁴¹.

b) Marriage and family life

The Catholic belief in the sacramental nature of marriage naturally led to a fierce defence of marriage and of family life. Many non-Catholics admired the stance Catholics made against modern threats to these ideals. At a conference of Welsh Baptists at Abertillery in 1932 Rev. Ivor Evans maintained that marriage was a divine institution, and although he disagreed 'with much that is preached by the Roman Catholics but we have to admit that Catholics do indeed give a lead on this question'¹⁴². By the early 1960s this subject had produced a 'remarkable display of solidarity' in Britain when a joint statement by Anglicans, Catholics and Nonconformists was issued against Leo Abse's (the Labour MP for Pontypool) 'Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation Bill'. In Wales itself Archbishop Murphy found himself fighting the same cause as such prominent non-Catholics as Archbishop Edwin Morris¹⁴³.

As the century progressed the increasing popularity of divorce threatened the marriage ideal and the family unit. In 1923 divorce cases were heard for the first time at Cardiff, and St. Peter's Parish Magazine recorded 'the melancholy fact with pain and regret'¹⁴⁴. By 1948 in an address at a rally at Llandudno, Archbishop Godfrey, the then Apostolic Delegate, noted that divorces and

¹⁴⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 6 (4) (1926), 116.

¹⁴¹*Western Mail*, 31 March 1926, 9.

¹⁴²*The Tablet*, 14 May 1932, 624.

¹⁴³John S. Peart-Binns. *Alfred Edwin Morris: Archbishop of Wales* (Llandysul, 1990), p. 155.

¹⁴⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (4) (1923), 116.

separations had increased in Britain from 500 at the turn of the century to 50,000 by the end of the Second World War¹⁴⁵. In reaction to this predicament Catholic publications constantly emphasised the importance of marriage. In the *Menevia Record* in 1955, for example, John F. Harding noted that through marriage lay people could, in some sense, share in the priesthood of Christ. ‘Marriage is a vocation,’ he wrote, ‘a real calling from God’¹⁴⁶. Likewise, branches of the Union of Catholic Mothers were opened across Wales, with the bishops urging that there should be one in every parish¹⁴⁷. Petit was particularly active in encouraging the society, which he established in Menevia in October 1948. In the next five years over 20 foundations were opened in the diocese. Marriage, he claimed, was becoming considered as ‘merely for the satisfaction of human desire, not for the conservation of the race, still less for the raising of children for the Kingdom of God’¹⁴⁸. He regarded the establishment of branches of the Union of Catholic Mothers as a positive step to allay this increasing trend and he often enthusiastically presided at diocesan rallies and pilgrimages¹⁴⁹. In the Archdiocese of Cardiff the UCM was already very strong, and in 1953 it attempted to use its power by protesting to the General Press Council against the way some newspapers and magazines had publicised the Kinsey report. ‘The Union of Catholic Mothers’, its statement read, ‘is concerned with the safeguarding of their families and we call upon the General Press Council to desist from allowing publicity of such reports’¹⁵⁰.

Following *Casti Connubii* which denounced divorce and sexual immorality as undermining the foundations of family and social life, Mostyn commented that he could ‘well understand how our Holy Father Pope Pius XI has deemed it necessary to issue to the world an Encyclical on Marriage’¹⁵¹. Ten years later his successor at Cardiff was still urging that every Catholic should own a copy of *Casti Connubii* for guidance on marriage. McGrath was fervent in its defence of marriage. ‘The Family’, he wrote, ‘is the foundation of society. But Marriage is

¹⁴⁵*Western Mail*, 6 Sept. 1948, 1.

¹⁴⁶John F. Harding, ‘Priests You Also’, *Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 10.

¹⁴⁷See *Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1941*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 11.

¹⁴⁹*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1953*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁰*Western Mail*, 9 Sept. 1953, 5.

¹⁵¹Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1931*.

the basis of the Family'¹⁵². On various occasions he referred to divorce as an 'unmentionable crime against God's institution'¹⁵³, as an 'everspreading plague' which was 'paganising society'¹⁵⁴, and as 'threatening the foundation of British society'¹⁵⁵. In 1950 on being asked to appoint a priest representative for a committee formed to combat juvenile delinquency, he replied that these children were in trouble because of the lack of parental example at home, most of them coming from separated and divorced families. He therefore told the committee that it was a committee for adult, and particularly parental, delinquency that was needed¹⁵⁶! 'The women of to-day have stepped down from their pedestal of truth and purity;' he announced to an Archdiocesan meeting of the Union of Catholic Mothers at Cardiff in 1953, 'divorce is rotting our civilisation. It throws helpless children into a listless and uninterested world'¹⁵⁷.

c) Immoral and harmful films

In 1934 Mostyn and his 'Board of Catholic Action' made a stand against immoral films by threatening to forbid Catholics in the Archdiocese to attend cinemas if there was no improvement in standards. The Tablet noted the 'hearty support' which Mostyn's move had gleaned from 'many of our Protestant brethren'¹⁵⁸. Catholic Action, in which the numerous Catholic societies were united with the aim of having 'a powerful organisation for moulding public opinion'¹⁵⁹, was becoming prominent in Catholic circles at this time, especially following Pius XI's call in *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (1931) for Faith to be put into practice. Mostyn was at the forefront of the national movement of Catholic Action¹⁶⁰, and in 1934 he became the first Archbishop in the world to form an Archdiocesan Board of Catholic Action¹⁶¹. With its stand against 'the present-day

¹⁵²Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1941*; see also *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1936*.

¹⁵³Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on 'Mixed Marriages' 1941*.

¹⁵⁴Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1951*.

¹⁵⁵Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1948*.

¹⁵⁶*Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1950*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁷*Western Mail*, 9 Sept. 1953, 5.

¹⁵⁸*The Tablet*, 19 May 1934, 620.

¹⁵⁹*Almanac and Directory for the Archdiocese of Cardiff 1935*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁰*The Tablet*, 13 May 1933, 596.

¹⁶¹See Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1934*.

adulation of the gangster, immorality, and easy divorce' in films, the Board threatened to put Catholic Action into operation¹⁶². Pius XI, who in encyclicals such as *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) had strongly condemned immorality and evil in films and books, immediately expressed his approval at the Board's stance. While insisting that 'we Catholics are not puritanical and are not "killjoys"', later in the year both Mostyn and his Board continued to 'strongly object to films which seek to glorify vice, no matter how glamorously concealed or presented'¹⁶³.

Catholic criticism of immoral films in the cinemas opening during these years across Wales was not new. 'Unsavoury and sometimes gruesome subjects', noted *St. Peter's Parish Magazine* in 1932, 'are presented on the "silver screen" to defenceless children'¹⁶⁴. Mostyn's action was, however, the first definite stand taken, and, in the words of Bishop Vaughan, his crusade gave 'a lead to the rest of the world'¹⁶⁵. Non-Catholic support was widespread. The North Glamorgan Association of Welsh Independents passed a motion declaring 'ein gwerthfawrogiad mwyaf canolog a'n cefnogiad diffuant i waith Archesgob Caerdydd (Dr. Mostyn) a Bwrdd Gweithredu Pabyddol Caerdydd yn eu condemniad o risedd penrhydd y Cinema yn mawrhau a moli'r *gangster*, ac anfoes, a rhwyddineb yr ysgariad priodasiol, ynghyda'r mudiad hollol wrth-grefyddol a geir ynddynt'¹⁶⁶. Although it claimed it could not wield the authority to forbid its own members from attending cinemas, the Association 'seriously recommended' that they also should make a stand against such films which were nullifying the good work of chapels and Sunday Schools. 'Patronage of the cinema in its present degraded condition' was, after all, 'utterly inconsistent with their religious vow and Church covenant'¹⁶⁷. An editorial in *Y Dysgedydd* continued this praise for Mostyn's stand, which it claimed to be a positive step towards saving traditional Welsh morality. Why, it asked, was such a step left to be taken by the Catholic Church? 'Dyna rywbeth pendant o blaid glendid meddwl a moesoldeb. Ond, a yw glendid gwerin ein gwlad i'w adael yng ngofal

¹⁶²*Western Mail*, 20 April 1934, 10.

¹⁶³*The Tablet*, 10 Nov. 1934, 602.

¹⁶⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 12 (6) (1932), 185.

¹⁶⁵*The Tablet*, 22 Sept. 1934, 370.

¹⁶⁶*Y Tyst*, 24 May 1934, 14.

¹⁶⁷*Western Mail*, 28 April 1934, 10.

Pabyddion, ac yn eu gofal hwy yn unig? Byddai hynny'n newyddbeth yn hanes ein cenedl'. The publication called for chapels to take Mostyn's lead by discussing the subject in meetings at all levels, by showing Wales their own disapproval of such films, and by beginning a 'croesgad santaidd yn erbyn y mawrddrwg hwn'¹⁶⁸.

At a rally in Llandudno in 1948 Petit was to echo Mostyn's earlier condemnation of films. 'There are hundreds which are a danger to morality,' he announced, 'they set up false standards by extolling divorce, illicit love, crime, and pander to the lower instincts of man'¹⁶⁹. In a pastoral letter in the same year McGrath indicted cinemas for discharging 'moral filth into the faces of the audiences'¹⁷⁰. He later claimed that immorality in films, novels and newspapers, could have a 'devastating effect' on the hearts of the youth of Wales¹⁷¹. By the 1950s it was also clear that television could have the very same detrimental effect on the morality of Welsh society. 'Today', McGrath declared a year after Pius XII's *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) had warned of the dangers of cinema and the modern media, 'the possibilities of evil are immensely increased by wireless and particularly television. If you see anything undesirable or immodest on your television screens you are to switch off immediately and make a report to your parish priest'¹⁷². Likewise, the Menevia yearbook of 1955 had warned of the danger of television which carried 'the message of materialism, and oftentimes of immorality' into homes¹⁷³.

d) Immorality and secularism in the modern world

Reflecting their efforts to stem leakage, Catholics were zealous to preserve religious and moral standards and did all they could to resist the assault of secular values on Welsh society. Perhaps more than any other denomination in Wales, they reacted quickly and efficiently to the growth of religious indifferentism and immorality. In 1924 John J. Hickey, the president of the CYMS

¹⁶⁸*Y Dysgedydd*, 114 (6) (1934), 162.

¹⁶⁹*Western Mail*, 6 Sept. 1948, 1.

¹⁷⁰Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1948*.

¹⁷¹Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1951*.

¹⁷²Quoted in *Western Mail*, 1 March 1961, 8.

¹⁷³*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1955*, p. 114.

at St. Peter's, Cardiff, claimed that 'a godless education, pagan philosophies, and philosophies more pestilential than even paganism ever produced, infect the social atmosphere'¹⁷⁴. Following Pius XI's *Caritate Christi* (1932), which warned of the wide-spread, organised revolt of those rejecting Christianity, such alarm as to the secularising of Wales continued. At Trefforest in 1933, T.P. Ellis criticised those young Welshmen and women who were leaving college and 'spreading the nonsense that the one aim in life was to have a good time'¹⁷⁵, while Canon Flood in 1950 claimed that 'Christian tradition is being ousted in favour of paganism, and the old standards are disappearing. Erroneous views and false principles are thrust upon us in the Press, the Theatre, the Cinema, the Radio, in books and lectures'¹⁷⁶. Likewise, at Llanelli Dr. Gordon Albion, the secretary of the Catholic Record Society, called for Catholics in Wales to strive to save society 'from that disregard of God, indifference to religion, and that moral chaos that is sapping its strength and preparing the way for the atheistic serfdom that is the unhappy lot of our fellow-Christians behind the Iron Curtain'¹⁷⁷.

The Welsh Catholic bishops especially were critical of the immorality and irreligiousness of society. They often used Russia as an example of a militantly atheistic society, which attempted to obliterate the name and ways of God. Although this was usually part of their crusade against Communism, it was often warned that this country's moral and spiritual decline was leading to a similar predicament. While in the Soviet Union Christianity was being destroyed by force, in Wales it was being killed by starvation and neglect. In both cases the result was the same. 'Religion is sadly on the decline in this country ...', conceded Mostyn in 1930, 'the people are slowly but surely slipping from Christianity to Paganism by the road of Indifferentism'¹⁷⁸. At Newport five years later, he described a pagan animal, which used to be passive and show itself only occasionally, going about like a roaring lion seeking whoever it could devour and even persecuting those who refused to go along with it¹⁷⁹. Vaughan expressed

¹⁷⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (6) (1924), 176.

¹⁷⁵*Western Mail*, 11 Sept. 1933, 7.

¹⁷⁶*Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1950*, p. 140.

¹⁷⁷*Western Mail*, 30 Oct. 1950, 3.

¹⁷⁸Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1930*.

¹⁷⁹*Western Mail*, 16 Sept. 1935, 7.

similar fears that the modern world was losing its moral and religious values. In a pastoral letter in 1927 he wrote that ‘amongst people of education one hears a curious jargon about the religion of Science, the religion of progress, the religion of Humanity, the religion of everything and anything except the religion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’¹⁸⁰. Likewise, Petit often referred to the ‘troubled state of the world’¹⁸¹. At a pilgrimage at Bala in 1954, he claimed that in view of the immorality of modern society ‘prayer and penance now alone can save the world from disaster to which it is running in headlong fashion’¹⁸². In an address in London in the same year, he gave advertising as an example as to the extent of moral deterioration in Britain. ‘The animal in man’, he claimed, ‘is constantly appealed to - and to sell any and every article from power-plants to soap’¹⁸³.

More than any other Welsh bishop, it was McGrath who was most fervent in his crusade against the evils of the secular world. At his death in 1961 his obituaries noted his firm stance against immorality¹⁸⁴. One noted that in this attitude he was ‘not a seeker of popularity’, but it was certainly one of the reasons he became ‘esteemed by men not of his own flock’¹⁸⁵. This attitude resounded throughout his pastoral letters¹⁸⁶. Moral evil was certainly not new, he wrote, as man had always reflected ‘disorder, moral corruption and festering evil’¹⁸⁷. In the contemporary world, however, civilisation had become ‘unhealthy almost to the core’¹⁸⁸. He therefore reiterated the Pope’s call for ‘the Re-Christianisation of Society’ as the only answer to ‘these depressing days of frivolity, worldliness and secularism’¹⁸⁹. In 1943 he and Bishop Hannon warned that wartime conditions were making the situation even worse. Sexual promiscuity was but one evil to be found in the wartime factories and forces. There was clearly a ‘a lamentable falling away from the recognised moral standards which should distinguish the

¹⁸⁰Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Lenten Pastoral 1927*.

¹⁸¹John Petit, ‘*Ecclesiastical Education Fund*’ *Pastoral Letter 1961*.

¹⁸²*Western Mail*, 5 July 1954, 5.

¹⁸³*Menevia Record*, 2 (1) (1954), 11.

¹⁸⁴See *Western Mail*, 1 March 1961, 8.

¹⁸⁵*St. Mary’s Magazine (Newport)*, Lent 1961, 2.

¹⁸⁶e.g. Michael McGrath, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1935*; *Cardiff Pastoral Letter 1940*; *Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff on ‘Mixed Marriages’ 1941*; *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1942*.

¹⁸⁷Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1943*.

¹⁸⁸Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1942*.

¹⁸⁹Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1941*.

youth of a Christian country'¹⁹⁰. McGrath's crusade against immorality and secularism was to continue after the war, when he particularly emphasised the importance of moral education at schools and universities¹⁹¹. 'You can educate a boy, develop his mind, and build his body,' he announced at St. Illtyd's College, Cardiff in 1946, 'but if you neglect the moral side you'll turn out a Hitler or a Stalin'¹⁹².

e) Further subjects

Aside from general condemnations of the evils of the modern world and the denunciations of divorce and the harmful effects of media communications, there were other religious and moral areas in which the Catholic viewpoint engendered respect. In his 1932 advent pastoral Vaughan strongly condemned mercy-killings, criticising the arrogance of medical men 'who presume power over life and death, who would hasten the death of incurables'¹⁹³. Likewise, in an address to a CYMS Archdiocesan rally in 1950, Canon Flood condemned the 'evil' of euthanasia¹⁹⁴. In the 1930s there was even a small amount of non-Catholic support for the Catholic stand against birth control, with Dr. John Rawlings, the Senior Consulting Physician to Swansea Hospital, noting that sexual immorality would be its ultimate result. 'I should like here', he wrote in the *Western Mail*, 'to express my gratitude for the Christian and patriotic stand the Roman Catholic Church is taking against the practice of contraception'¹⁹⁵. There would also have certainly been much non-Catholic support for the sentiments behind the 1960 Christmas poster campaign, organised in the Diocese of Menevia, which aimed to remind Wales of the true meaning of Christmas¹⁹⁶.

At this time of increasing world conflict the Welsh bishops often fervently pleaded for peace among the world's nations. In the last years of the First World War Archbishop Bilsborrow wrote that the whole of Europe was mobilised 'for

¹⁹⁰ *Joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Cardiff and the Bishop of Menevia 1943*.

¹⁹¹ Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1951*.

¹⁹² *Western Mail*, 18 Dec. 1946, 3.

¹⁹³ Francis Vaughan, *Menevia Advent Pastoral 1932*.

¹⁹⁴ *Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1950*, p. 141.

¹⁹⁵ *Western Mail*, 30 April 1932, 11.

¹⁹⁶ *Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 1.

the one supreme purpose of mutual slaughter'. Only faith in Christ could bring Western civilisation through this terrible evil¹⁹⁷. Similarly, his successor's very last pastoral letter, following the outbreak of the Second World, prayed for 'an honourable and lasting peace'¹⁹⁸. Almost immediately after the war, the Welsh bishops vehemently denounced atomic weapons. The pioneering nature of such condemnations, which were also witnessed among the English hierarchy, is shown in Adrian Hastings suggestion that 'the horrifying reality of nuclear war' did not 'penetrate the imagination of the multitude' until 'the end of the 1950s'¹⁹⁹. In 1950 a joint pastoral of McGrath and Petit sternly warned that a third world war would 'shatter our civilisation to fragments'. It concluded its condemnation by noting that 'few of us have any desire to be blasted into incandescent dust by the atomic weapons of a Godless science'²⁰⁰. While usually so conservative in his condemnations of evil, McGrath's attitude to nuclear weapons was decisively radical. In a number of personal letters to Griffin in 1955 he enthusiastically supported the Cardinal's own denunciation of the Hydrogen Bomb. 'It is the colossal irony of things', he wrote during their correspondence, 'that the Prime Minister who is principally responsible for laying the awful debt of £50 millions on the Catholic Body for education, can with such composure of spirit propose £1500 millions to produce these bombs which will render all education superfluous - if they are used'²⁰¹.

In a quaint irony which reflected Welsh Nonconformist Sabbatarianism, McGrath was also zealous in his insistence on keeping Sunday as a special day. In his 1948 Lenten pastoral he strongly condemned Sunday dances, which he claimed were evidence of 'the mad craze for pleasure, one of the worst plagues in South Wales'²⁰². Petit went even further by condemning the modern dance hall completely^{2 3}. In 1957 McGrath again showed that keeping Sunday special was important to him. Criticising Catholics who worked on Sundays, he claimed that 'even respect for the law of the Sabbath observance and the Sabbath rest is going

¹⁹⁷ James Bilborrow, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1917*; see also *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1918*

¹⁹⁸ Francis Mostyn, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1939*; see also *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1933*

¹⁹⁹ Hastings, *English Christianity* p. 414.

^{2 4} McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*

- Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/148

² Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1948*

^{2 3} *Y Cymro*, 10 Sept 1948, 1

in a country in which not so long ago a strict observance of the Sabbath was a national boast'. Naturally some necessary public services had to be maintained, although 'today even Catholic workmen without necessity offer themselves for work on Sunday in order to obtain double pay'²⁰⁴. These sentiments caused quite a stir, with a steward at a Cardiff steelworks noting in the Western Mail that, on account of the size of their families, many staunch Catholics could not afford to refuse work on Sunday. 'Now what are they going to think? They are loyal towards the Church - and loyal towards their families. Which way they ought to chose is going to cause a lot of bother'. Likewise, Edward Tomkins, the secretary of Cardiff Trades Council, strongly criticised McGrath's stand. Some places, he claimed, had to be staffed all the week just to keep going, and it was up to the individual to decide whether he would work on the Sunday²⁰⁵. In this matter, however, the leaders of Nonconformity could virtually claim McGrath as being one of their own!

The Welsh Language

a) Background

By the inter-war years, the integration of the immigrant Irish and their descendants was certainly apparent, although their roots continued to be very visible to the local population. St. Peter's Parish Magazine clearly shows that during the 1920s and early 1930s Catholics in Cardiff were still very conscious of their background. There was a strong Irish Society²⁰⁶ and the Great Irish Bank was still opening new branches²⁰⁷. Most notable, however, were the well organised and enthusiastically attended St. Patrick's Day celebrations. The publication announced in 1921 that Wales 'does well, regularly and heartily ... to commemorate the feast of this great saint'²⁰⁸. A year later, after noting that

²⁰⁴Michael McGrath, *Cardiff Advent Pastoral 1957*.

²⁰⁵*Western Mail*, 2 Dec. 1957, 7.

²⁰⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (3) (1922), xiv.

²⁰⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (4) (1922), xi.

²⁰⁸*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (4) (1921), vii.

Gaelic songs had been heard at the St. Patrick's concert, it urged for more choruses 'in our mother tongue' and for modern Irish culture to be embraced so as to 'retain our individuality'²⁰⁹. While such fervency would have been influenced by the formation of the Irish Free State during that year, the zeal for things Irish continued well into the 1920s and 1930s. There were even many efforts to encourage those Catholics who considered themselves Welsh (largely converts through marriage) that they also should enthusiastically adopt the patron saint of Ireland and join in with the festivities²¹⁰. 'All Welshmen', it was written, 'should look upon the saint as their own'²¹¹. Apart from Cardiff, such celebrations were popular at Newport²¹², Swansea, and Maesteg²¹³. St. David's Day, however, was largely ignored²¹⁴. Although the Irish consciousness of Catholics in Wales gradually faded, it was never extinguished and continued for many more years, especially in the more rural areas of the Principality. In 1951 H.W.J. Edwards was still claiming that far more of the faithful would assist at Mass on St. Patrick's Day than on St. David's Day²¹⁵. Furthermore, this Irish identity was not replaced by a specifically Welsh consciousness but rather with an anglicised one instead. A social survey of the parish of Aberystwyth in 1955 revealed that only 2% regarded Welsh as their principal language. English was the most popular language among Catholics, with 68% regarding it as their *lingua franca*. The small number of Welsh-speakers is made all the more striking when compared to the number of Italian-speakers (20%) and Polish-speakers (9%)²¹⁶.

Catholic immigrants, then, made little efforts to assimilate and embrace the Welsh culture and language, which many regarded as a purely Nonconformist concern²¹⁷. In the Catholic Times in 1936 T.P. Ellis admitted that of the Catholics in Wales 'the major portion is of Irish or English extraction, with little interest in Wales as Wales. They dwell and earn their livelihood in Wales; and that is about

²⁰⁹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 2 (4) (1922), xv.

²¹⁰*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 11 (3) (1931), 41.

²¹¹*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 12 (3) (1932), 71.

²¹²*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 10 (4) (1930), 65.

²¹³*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (4) (1924), 115.

²¹⁴*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 3 (3) (1923), 80.

²¹⁵*The Tablet*, 24 Feb. 1951, 147.

²¹⁶Michael P. Fogarty, 'A Social Survey of the Parish of Aberystwyth', (1955), p. 2; in Menevia Diocesan Archives : Aberystwyth File.

²¹⁷*The Tablet*, 27 March 1965, 344.

all²¹⁸. Likewise, R.O.F. Wynne wrote in 1948 that ‘it is indeed probable that Catholics are further withdrawn from Welsh life than any other section of the community’²¹⁹. The result of all this was clear. After listing the old prejudices which were still held against Catholicism by the native Welsh, in 1948 Petit claimed that ‘what is far worse to my mind is that they identify Catholicity with another nationality ... with something foreign’²²⁰. At a Wesleyan Synod at Llangefni in 1931 Rev. Lewis Edwards confirmed this by summarising the belief of many Nonconformists at this time : ‘there is no disguising the fact that Roman Catholics are opposed to everything the Welsh people hold dear in their national life’²²¹. Hostility towards Catholics was based as much on nationality as on religion. Welshmen saw an English-speaking Anglo-Irish immigrant flock, and reacted accordingly. H.W.J. Edwards referred to this as ‘opposition by the indigenous Welsh-speaking, chapel-going peasants to the many alien and Catholic settlers’²²².

Recognising the indifference of most of their fellow-Catholics towards Welsh culture and language, many Catholics tried to redress the balance. Their efforts to persuade their co-religionists to learn the language and cherish the culture were originally made with the aim of gaining conversions, but it was soon emphasised that this should be done for the sake of the nation as well as for the sake of the religion. Such efforts certainly engendered respect, whether outwardly or privately, from native Welshmen, and this helped lessen prejudice. Non-Catholic admiration for Catholic efforts to foster the Welsh language and culture had, indeed, been apparent since the nineteenth century. Fr. Henry Bailey Hughes was just one of a number of Welsh-speaking priests who commanded a ‘tremendous respect among Protestants’²²³. Likewise, the Breton Fathers, who used the Welsh language extensively in their missionary efforts in the years before the Great War, also became very popular personalities for this reason. ‘I have heard Welsh Protestants’, wrote Donald Attwater, ‘speak of Father Trebaol with

²¹⁸*Catholic Times*, quoted in *Western Mail*, 18 May 1936, 7.

²¹⁹R.O.F. Wynne, ‘The Wall of Brass’, *Blackfriars* March 1948, 143–4.

²²⁰*Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

²²¹*The Tablet*, 23 May 1931, 672.

²²²*The Tablet*, 22 Jan. 1949, 55.

²²³Donald Attwater, ‘A Celtic Apostle’, *The Welsh Outlook*, XVI (2) (1929), 52.

a respect bordering on veneration²²⁴. As the twentieth century progressed such respect for Catholic efforts in using and fostering the Welsh language became widespread.

b) The nurture of Welsh language and culture by the hierarchy

Rome itself showed sympathy with Wales's claim as a nation both at the end of the nineteenth century in its formation of the Diocese of Menevia and in 1916 with the establishment of the archdiocese of Cardiff. The Apostolic Letter *Cambria Celtica* of 7 February 1916 which formed the new Metropolitan stated that 'Wales, a nation of Celtic origin, differs so much from the rest of England in language, traditions, and ancient customs, that it would seem in the ecclesiastical order also to call for separation from the other churches and for the possession of its own hierarchy'²²⁵. Similar sentiments were expressed in the sermon preached by Bishop Keating of Northampton at the investiture of James Bilsborrow, the first archbishop of Cardiff. 'For all our political unity and our pride in the British name,' he announced, 'the Celtic races cling with passionate attachment to their individuality; to their almost forgotten tongues; to their national customs, national dress, national music'. Associating Rome's move to form a Welsh Metropolitan with the demise of British Imperialism, he claimed that 'the sun is rising on the smaller nationalities'²²⁶. Likewise, successive Welsh bishops were to recognise the significance of *Cambria Celtica*'s words. 'The hierarchy in Wales', R.O.F. Wynne wrote in 1948, 'have long realised the responsibility that rests with Catholics of showing open sympathy with the Welsh people in their struggle to maintain their language and their traditions'²²⁷.

Although Francis Mostyn could not speak Welsh fluently himself, nevertheless he cherished the ancient tongue and fostered Welsh culture enthusiastically. At his enthronement as Archbishop, Bishop G.A. Burton of Clifton had noted 'the zeal with which you have fostered the study of their ancient

²²⁴Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 131.

²²⁵*Cambria Celtica*, quoted in Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 149.

²²⁶*Sermon Preached at Investiture with the Pallium of the First Archbishop of Cardiff* (1916), p. 10.

²²⁷Wynne, 'The Wall of Brass', p. 143-4.

and noble language among both priests and people²²⁸. Certainly at both Menevia and Cardiff he gave his clergy ‘an outlook on the language and other questions with a distinctly national colour’²²⁹. As well as founding St. Mary’s College in Holywell, Mostyn was the first bishop to issue his pastoral letters in Welsh side by side with English, a ‘fine and fitting gesture’ which was continued by his successors at both Menevia and Cardiff²³⁰. It was little wonder that at his translation to Cardiff in 1921 even the Liberal Nonconformist Prime Minister David Lloyd George complimented Mostyn’s ‘loyalty to Welsh tradition’. In a telegram read at his enthronement, Lloyd George stated that ‘Welshmen without distinction of creed will rejoice in to-day’s ceremony’, as his appointment was ‘a signal vindication of the enduring vitality of Welsh nationhood’²³¹. At Mostyn’s resignation of the See of Menevia in 1926 he expressed his desire that his successor would ‘take a keen interest in Wales’²³². The bishop-elect’s article in St. Peter’s Parish Magazine referred to Wales’s ‘inspiring traditions [of which] we are justly proud’ and immediately showed Mostyn’s desire was to be granted²³³. Vaughan was a Welsh-speaker, and certainly showed himself to be dedicated to fostering its culture. At his death only nine years later the Western Mail claimed that he had ‘always upheld the Welsh language’²³⁴. In 1934 he appointed a committee to compile a Welsh Catholic hymnbook, ‘the contents to be drawn from all available sources’²³⁵, and also zealously appealed for Welsh-speaking priests²³⁶.

Michael McGrath became particularly renowned for his support of Welsh language and culture. At his death in 1961 The Times claimed that his knowledge of the Welsh language and interest in the welfare of Wales had gained him the ‘affection of many and the esteem of all he met in public life’²³⁷. Likewise, the Review noted that his love of all things Welsh was ‘acknowledged wholeheartedly

²²⁸*The Tablet*, 23 April 1921, 530.

²²⁹*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 6 (1) (1926), 14.

²³⁰Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 214.

²³¹*The Tablet*, 16 April 1921, 495; *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 1 (5) (1921), viii.

²³²*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 6 (1) (1926), 12.

²³³*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 6 (8) (1926), 229.

²³⁴*Western Mail*, 14 March 1935, 6.

²³⁵*Catholic Herald*, quoted in *Western Mail*, 24 Jan. 1935, 6.

²³⁶*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1934, 440.

²³⁷*The Times*, 1 March 1961, 16.

by the country of his adoption'²³⁸. An Irishman by birth, he began his lifelong passion for Welsh as a student of Celtic Studies. On moving to Wales he very soon mastered the language and became 'a brilliant Welsh scholar' who even lectured in it at the University of Wales²³⁹. He was appointed Rector of St. Mary's College, Aberystwyth, which he later set about to reopen as bishop. While researching links between Welsh and Irish poetry at Aberystwyth, he became a close friend of T. Gwynn Jones, the University's distinguished professor of Welsh²⁴⁰. As bishop, his commitment to the Welsh cause was especially reflected in his support of the nationalist movement and of Saunders Lewis's action in burning down the RAF bombing school on the Lleyn Peninsula, Caernarfonshire in 1936. Lewis and two others had set fire to the school, objecting to it on cultural, environmental and, most of all, nationalist grounds²⁴¹. In April 1937 McGrath visited Lewis at Wormwood Scrubs wearing his full canonicals. In a letter to his wife following this visit, Lewis stated that McGrath 'approved definitely of the Porth Neigwl action and had let his clergy know so'²⁴². According to J. Barrett Davies, McGrath was at Menevia 'among Welsh-speaking people with whom he was always at home whatever their creed', but on his translation to Cardiff, a more anglicised diocese, he 'found to his great sorrow that he had few opportunities of speaking Welsh'²⁴³. This did not, however, dampen his enthusiasm towards the language in any way. In his first pastoral letter as Archbishop he insisted that, in keeping with Pius XII's *Summi Pontificatus* (1939), the Church of Christ 'cannot and does not think of depreciating or disdain the particular characteristics which each people with jealous and intelligible pride cherishes and retains as a precious heritage'²⁴⁴. In his joint pastoral letter with Petit eleven years later, he again assured non-Catholic Welshmen of 'our love for the ancient Welsh language, and of our sincere

²³⁸Review, 5 (4) (1962), 8.

²³⁹Western Mail, 23 April 1940, 5.

²⁴⁰Western Mail, 1 March 1961, 8; The Tablet, 4 March 1961, 211.

²⁴¹See D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945 : A Call to Nationhood* (Cardiff, 1983), pp. 154-66.

²⁴²Mair Saunders Jones, Ned Thomas and Harri Pritchard Jones, *Saunders Lewis : Letters to Margaret Gilcriest* (Cardiff, 1993), p. 594.

²⁴³Western Mail, 1 March 1961, 8.

²⁴⁴Michael McGrath, *Pastoral Letter June 29, 1940*.

admiration for the people who preserved this language, despite all opposition²⁴⁵. This attitude was reflected in many of his actions as Archbishop. He continued to publish the result of his studies in Welsh poetry²⁴⁶, he ‘not only preached in the Welsh tongue but in a Welsh manner’ at eisteddfodau²⁴⁷, he quoted Welsh literature in his pastoral letters²⁴⁸, and he ensured that Welsh articles were published in the Archdiocesan yearbook²⁴⁹.

Following his appointment as bishop of Menevia in 1941, Daniel Hannon also devoted himself to mastering the Welsh language, respecting ‘yn ddwfn ac yn amlwg ddiwylliant a llenyddiaeth ei wlad’²⁵⁰. Likewise, his successor John Petit told the Catholic Herald in 1948 that Catholics ‘must use Welsh; Welsh literature is Catholic to the core’. The Welshman, he said, must not be approached ‘as some kind of hybrid Englishman, which he is not’²⁵¹. Throughout his episcopacy he insisted that all priests in his Diocese should have some proficiency in the Welsh language²⁵² and enthusiastically supported the Lamp Society’s venture to disseminate Welsh leaflets outlining aspects of the Catholic Faith²⁵³. By 1957 the Menevia Record noted that ‘His Lordship has always been eager that “Welsh Wales” should really be known and appreciated’²⁵⁴. Along with Archbishop John Murphy, Petit continued to show ‘quiet but active sympathy’ with Welsh language and culture in the early 1960s²⁵⁵. By this time (and to the great surprise of many non-Catholics) they had granted permission for Catholic co-operation in the joint translation of the new Welsh Bible²⁵⁶ and were represented both locally and nationally on the Interdenominational Committee for the Defence of the Welsh Language²⁵⁷.

²⁴⁵ McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

²⁴⁶ *Efrydiau Catholig*, 1 (1946), 5-9; *Efrydiau Catholig*, 3 (1948), 7-24; etc.

²⁴⁷ *The Tablet*, 3 March 1962, 209.

²⁴⁸ See McGrath and Petit, *Joint Advent Pastoral for Cardiff and Menevia 1950*.

²⁴⁹ *Diocesan Yearbook : Archdiocese of Cardiff 1941*, p. 9.

²⁵⁰ *Efrydiau Catholig*, 2 (1947), 3.

²⁵¹ *Catholic Herald*, 9 April 1948, 5.

²⁵² *Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

²⁵³ *Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 18.

²⁵⁴ *Menevia Record*, 4 (4) (1957), 2.

²⁵⁵ *The Tablet*, 21 Dec. 1963, 1380.

²⁵⁶ *Menevia Record*, 9 (4) (1962), 6.

²⁵⁷ *The Tablet*, 21 Dec. 1963, 1380.

c) *Y Cylch Catholig Cymreig*

In 1936 The Tablet expressed the fact that there had been in recent years a ‘small flow of able Welsh converts who are ready to make any sacrifices and whose general interest in Welsh affairs has softened the prejudices of “the Chapel”²⁵⁸. These converts, who included Saunders Lewis, Catherine Daniel, and R.O.F. Wynne, banded together in 1941 with a small band of sympathetic clergy and laity to establish *Y Cylch Catholig Cymreig*. Originally formed to provide fellowship for Welsh-speaking Catholics, Edna Hampson-Jones was to summarise the later aim of the *Cylch* by asserting that ‘we want to change the attitude of the Catholic Church in Wales so that it regards itself as being Welsh’²⁵⁹. During the 1940s and 1950s the society became a powerful, if still relatively small, group defending Welsh culture and language and its activities were well reported in the secular press. Its real strength lay in the potency of its leadership and membership, which included such prominent Welsh Catholics as Saunders Lewis, Robert Wynne and his mother Frances (Nanette) Wynne, Catherine Daniel, Illtud Evans, H.W.J. Edwards, John and Gregory Fitzgerald, J.P. Brown, and the calligrapher, poet and artist David Jones. Many of these Catholics contributed scholarly articles to the society’s annual periodical, the Efrydiau Catholig (edited by Saunders Lewis) and its successor the Ysgrifau Catholig²⁶⁰. The society also found strength in the support and encouragement given by the Welsh bishops, who gave all the *Cylch*’s ventures ‘not only their approval but also their active co-operation’²⁶¹. From the late 1940s onwards the *Cylch*’s activities took many forms. Welsh lessons were given to Catholics, youth branches were established²⁶², an annual pilgrimage was organised, and religious books and booklets were published²⁶³. Other activities included St. David’s Day celebrations, Dialogue Masses for the conversion of Wales, and the singing of traditional Welsh hymns. Finally, the *Cylch* tent was manned annually on the

²⁵⁸*The Tablet*, 28 Nov. 1936, 733.

²⁵⁹*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

²⁶⁰See *Ysgrifau Catholig 1961* (*Y Cylch Catholig 1961*) and subsequent volumes.

²⁶¹Wynne, ‘The Wall of Brass’, p. 144; See *Efrydiau Catholig*, 1 (1946), 48 and 4 (1949), 3.

²⁶²*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4; *Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 22.

²⁶³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Feb. 1952, 1.

National Eisteddfod field, with priest members of the *Cylch* preaching in the Welsh language there, a fact which H.W.J. Edwards considered to have specifically helped alter Welsh prejudice against Catholicism²⁶⁴.

Although the *Cylch* was non-political, many of its leading members were also members of the Welsh Nationalist Party. The situation was so striking that Fr. Eric J. Green, writing in *The Tablet* in 1935, announced to the Catholic readers that the 'leaders of Young Wales' were either received in the Church or taking instruction²⁶⁵. However embellished this claim, the Catholic element in Plaid Cymru was frequently criticised from both within and without the party. This reaction was primarily due to Saunders Lewis, who helped form Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1925, and was the party's president for many years. There were, however, certainly a number of Welsh Catholic nationalists, priests and laity, who were active among its members. These believed that the party could both preserve Welsh culture and help return Wales to a Christian order. Frances Wynne, who (along with her son R.O.F. Wynne) was a passionate supporter of Plaid, even saw a deep Catholic significance in Lewis's action at the Lleyn bombing school. Not only was the school situated on the old Pilgrim's Road to Bardsey Island, but she also suggested that the date of the fire, 8 September, was of deep spiritual importance. 'It was on Our Lady's birthday night that the fire was kindled, not by knowledge or design, but some there are who see design in that fact which sets a seal upon its essential rightness'²⁶⁶. In *The Tablet* in 1950 H.R.H. Vaughan of Rhandirmwyn summarised the position of Catholic nationalists. 'We must rid ourselves', he wrote, 'of the mailed fist that comes in the name of Whitehall'. Their nationalism was, he claimed, 'our reaction to being ruled, restricted and frustrated at every turn by a governing body in London, working through English officials whose ways are not our ways, and whose thoughts are not our thoughts'²⁶⁷. There was also much Welsh Catholic support for *Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg* formed following Saunders Lewis's

²⁶⁴*The Tablet*, 16 Oct. 1948, 247.

²⁶⁵*The Tablet*, 30 March 1935, 393.

²⁶⁶Frances Wynne, *The True Level* (Dublin, 1947), p. 86; another Catholic, the *Welsh Nationalist* editor R.C. Richards, and Victor Hampson Jones, who was later to convert to Catholicism, were among four others who were involved in the Lleyn plan of action and whose names were kept secret for many years (Davies, *Welsh Nationalist Party*, p. 175).

²⁶⁷*The Tablet*, 22 July 1950, 74.

1962 BBC Wales radio lecture which claimed Welsh would be dead by the end of the century if present trends continued²⁶⁸. Lewis became the society's president, and in a few years H.W.J. Edwards noted that many members of the *Cylch* had become enthusiastic members²⁶⁹. In *The Tablet* by the end of the decade, Harri Pritchard Jones attempted to justify the 'healthy brand of nationalism' which Welsh Catholics had been supporting for over half a century. He declared that 'there is nothing jingoistic, nothing absolute, nothing demeaning in Welsh nationalism, and it is fully in accord with *Pacem in Terris*'. Referring to the 1916 Apostolic Letter *Cambria Celtica* Jones maintained that 'it is the separation in the sense envisaged by Benedict XV that Welsh nationalism aims for'²⁷⁰.

d) Calls for Catholics to foster Welsh culture and language

'The cause of true Welsh nationalism', Denier St. Clare of Cardiff wrote in 1937, 'is one which should, no doubt, arouse every Catholic sympathy'²⁷¹. With so many Catholics in Wales having little affiliation with the land in which they were residing, however, such a sympathy was very rare. There were therefore many calls by Welsh Catholics for other Catholics in the Principality to embrace the Welsh language and culture. Whereas in the past this had been urged for the sake of Catholicism, now it also began to be urged for Wales's own benefit. The two reasons for nurturing the language, for the sake of the conversion of Wales and for the sake of Welsh culture itself, were far from being mutually exclusive either before²⁷² or after the second world war²⁷³. Increasingly, however, the emphasis on the Welsh language as a means of preserving the Principality's God-given culture took over in prominence from that older conviction of using it to secure the return of the nation to the Catholic Faith. In *Blackfriars* in 1948, R.O.F. Wynne demanded that the Catholics of Wales give their full sympathy and active support to 'all movements calculated to strengthen

²⁶⁸*The Tablet*, 1 March 1969, 202.

²⁶⁹*The Tablet*, 13 Aug. 1966, 916.

²⁷⁰*The Tablet*, 1 March 1969, 202.

²⁷¹*Western Mail*, 3 Feb. 1937, 11.

²⁷²See *The Tablet*, 3 Sept. 1927, 297; 17 Aug. 1935, 197.

²⁷³See *Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 19; *The Tablet*, 25 Feb. 1967, 203.

the language, the culture, the nationhood of Wales'. Welsh should be learned, he suggested, not with the specific aim of gaining conversions, but simply because it 'deserves honour and respect because it enshrines the thoughts and aspirations of a society that has survived fifteen hundred years of imminent peril ... and because it is itself a supple, vivid and dextrous tongue'²⁷⁴.

There were many similar articles published between the 1920s and 1960s echoing these sentiments and attempting to persuade Catholics of their duty to their country's culture. Catherine Daniel noted that Papal exhortations on the importance of defending cultural and human values gave much encouragement to the Catholics making such calls. For Pius XII the culture of a country was 'a summary of its character' (discourse to Adult Educationalists March 1953) and national life was the 'right and prize possession of a people' which should be promoted (Christmas message of 1954)²⁷⁵. In Wales it was certainly recognised that it would not be easy for Anglo-Irish Catholics to grow to love and cherish Welsh culture and heritage. 'The "discovery" of Welsh Wales', wrote J.M. Cleary in *The Furrow* in 1956, 'is as hard for one of us, possibly, as - *salva fide* - the way into the Church is difficult for a Welshman'²⁷⁶. There was, nevertheless, a belief that the conversion of Catholics to a Welsh way of life was as real as possibility as the nation's conversion to the Catholic Faith. Throughout the 1950s, contributors to the *Menevia Record* often urged its readers to learn and use the Welsh language²⁷⁷. While conceding that to turn Wales into a country whose only language was Welsh would be both impractical and impossible, in 1953 Wyn Griffith asserted that everyone living in Wales should at least make Welsh their second language if it was not already their mother tongue²⁷⁸. Likewise, in the same issue Catherine Daniel claimed that the decline of the language was a great loss to the Catholic Church and to God. She therefore urged Welsh Catholics to continue to say their prayers in Welsh, at church and at home, and to teach their

²⁷⁴Wynne, 'The Wall of Brass', p. 145; see also *Y Cymro*, 8 Dec. 1934. 10 : At a meeting of the CTS T.P. Ellis claimed that at the Reformation 'collasom bopeth, ond y mae un peth sy wedi aros, sef ein hiaith. Dyna'r unig beth sy gennym yn weddill. Yr ydym yn glynu wrthi ac yn ei charu yn nesaf at Dduw'.

²⁷⁵Daniel, 'Wales', p. 125.

²⁷⁶J.M. Cleary, 'The Irish and Modern Wales', *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956), 205.

²⁷⁷*Menevia Record*, 1 (1) (1953), 4; 2 (3) (1955), 19; 2 (4) (1955), 6; 3 (1) (1955), 16.

²⁷⁸*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 10.

children to do the same. ‘Mewn gair,’ she concluded, ‘dylai calon ei genedl guro yng nghalon y Cymro Catholig’²⁷⁹. A year later Leo Arnold again emphasised that, although Catholic use of the language was important for conversions, ‘we cannot remain for long unattracted by the language in itself; it is a fine old tongue, venerable in its age and eloquent of the spirit and even of the wonderful landscape of Wales. Thank God it has been preserved’²⁸⁰.

The drive to persuade Catholics in Wales, both priests and laity, that it was their duty to be able to speak ‘the ancestral and beautiful mother-tongue’²⁸¹ of their country was also reflected in many articles in *The Tablet* up to the 1960s. Various articles in the inter-war years showed a deep Welsh consciousness in these calls²⁸², including a leading article in 1927 which urged for full bilingualism to be taught in all schools in Wales²⁸³. Following the Second World War similar articles urging Catholics to learn and use the Welsh language continued to be published very regularly in *The Tablet*, which was commended by H.R.H. Vaughan in 1950 for treating Wales ‘as an entity and not as an extension of England’²⁸⁴. In 1951 H.W.J. Edwards implored Catholics to assimilate into the Welsh culture : ‘we have to allow ourselves utterly to be absorbed in the Welsh “thing” until no longer will we call ourselves Catholics in Wales, but Welsh Catholics’²⁸⁵. Likewise, following a report of the Welsh Advisory Council for Education on the Welsh language two years later, the Dominican scholar Illtud Evans claimed that it was the duty of Catholics in Wales to help Welsh become a living language in the community rather than ‘an acquired educational skill’. It was their responsibility to support the ancient tongue as the problems surrounding the decline in the number of Welsh speakers were ‘not merely matters for the Ministry (of Education): they profoundly affect the human situation which the Church exists to redeem’²⁸⁶. In another article, Evans appealed that Catholics

²⁷⁹*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 23–4.

²⁸⁰*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 19.

²⁸¹*The Tablet*, 3 Sept. 1927, 297.

²⁸²*The Tablet*, (14 Sept. 1912, 407); 29 July 1933, 130; 6 Oct. 1934, 422; 30 March 1935, 393; 17 Aug. 1935, 197.

²⁸³*The Tablet*, 3 Sept. 1927, 297.

²⁸⁴*The Tablet*, 22 July 1950, 74.

²⁸⁵*The Tablet*, 24 Feb. 1951, 148.

²⁸⁶*The Tablet*, 20 June 1953, 539.

should recognise 'the inherent value of a culture which the Church should always want to foster'. Evans insisted that it was down to the Catholic Church, more than any other body, to save God-given tradition and heritage of a country that was once Catholic from extinction. Welsh language and culture deserved to be preserved not as a means to conversion but for the Welshmen who were already Catholics and all those who in the future may convert to Catholicism²⁸⁷.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as concern about the general position of the Welsh language in Wales intensified, Welsh Catholics urged their fellow religionists to embrace Welsh culture as to save it was 'to preserve an essentially *Christian* way of life'²⁸⁸. As early as 1952 Petit had noted that 'where the language dies so dies also any practical concern for the things of God'²⁸⁹. Eleven years later, in an article discussing the report of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire on the Welsh language²⁹⁰ and in a letter published later, J.P. Brown suggested that 'nationhood, language and the Christian religion' had been inextricably linked in Wales over the last 1500 years. As all three were now in danger from secular society, Catholics had a responsibility to encourage a deep love of, and dedication to, all of them. With the Second Vatican Council in progress and its effects slowly being realised, it is interesting that Brown called for the Welsh language to be embraced by Catholics so as they would be able to 'take part in ecumenical discussions'²⁹¹. Catholics could not save religion, nation and language alone and so they must work closely with fellow-Christians. Such co-operation would not succeed unless all sides understood each other fully. 'To further this mutual understanding is, in itself, a sufficient reason for Catholics to learn and use Welsh'²⁹². This was again emphasised by Gregory Fitzgerald a few years later when he wrote that 'from the ecumenical point of view, the interest that a number of Catholics are taking in Welsh life and culture - not least among

²⁸⁷ *The Tablet*, 27 Feb. 1960, 201; see also 11 Jul. 1964, 772.

²⁸⁸ *The Tablet*, 15 March 1969, 278; 28 Oct. 1972, 1023.

²⁸⁹ *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 17; see also Daniel, 'Wales', p. 121 : 'the indissoluble bond between religion and the Welsh language'.

²⁹⁰ 'The Welsh Language Today' (Council for Wales and Monmouthshire, HMSO 1963).

²⁹¹ *The Tablet*, 21 Dec. 1963, 1380; see also his article in *Menevia Record*, 6 (1) (1958), 11-4 : For Catholics 'those who defend Wales and those who defend the Catholic faith have the same enemy' i.e. secular society and materialism.

²⁹² *The Tablet*, 11 Jan. 1964, 50.

them our archbishop and bishop - makes possible a dialogue that only a few years ago would have seemed impossible²⁹³.

e) Results of Welsh Catholic efforts

There were certainly a good deal of success to these calls and to the efforts of the *Cylch* and the Welsh hierarchy to promote a Welsh consciousness among Catholics in Wales. 'Yn ystod y pymtheng mlynedd diwethaf', wrote Catherine Daniel in 1948, 'y dechreuwyd sylweddoli bod gan yr Eglwys Gatholig alwad a chenadwri i Gymru fel cenedl'. Many Catholics, she continued, had begun to love Wales as a nation, and were attempting to learn the language. There had been laymen, such as James O'Brien of Port Talbot in 1932²⁹⁴, and priests, such as the Englishman Fr. Paul Hook and the Irishman Fr. T.P. Kane²⁹⁵, who had even been installed as bards at the Gorsedd of the National Eisteddfod. This new-found patriotism, Daniel concluded, could do nothing but break down the hostility and prejudices of the native Nonconformists²⁹⁶. The number of priests who enthusiastically took up Welsh was particularly striking. In an article in the *Welsh Outlook* in 1926 Dafydd Crowley, writing from the Venerable English College at Rome, described 'a group of students who have the interests of Wales at heart'. These students, he continued, were 'all real Welshmen in sentiment and sympathy', with many of them were taking lessons in the Welsh language from a priest resident in Rome²⁹⁷. Due to this enthusiasm and the training provided at St. Mary's College, during the inter-war years such Welsh-speaking priests as Fr. Ivor Daniel of Conwy, later of Pembroke Dock²⁹⁸, Fr. Thomas Eadsforth of Mold²⁹⁹, and Fr. Cunningham of Pwllheli³⁰⁰, became well-known and respected for their fluency.

²⁹³*The Tablet*, 27 March 1965, 345.

²⁹⁴*St. Joseph's, Port Talbot: Commemorative Brochure Diamond Jubilee 1931-1991* p. 52.

²⁹⁵Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 134.

²⁹⁶Catherine Daniel, 'Capel y Ffin a'r Cylch Catholig', *Efrydiau Catholig*, 3 (1948), 25.

²⁹⁷D. Crowley, 'The Exile's Corner: The Welshman in Rome', *Welsh Outlook*, XIII (1) (1926), 24.

²⁹⁸Williams, *Catholicism in Conwy*, p. 17.

²⁹⁹Joy, *St. David's, Mold*, p. 33.

³⁰⁰*Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 18.

Following the Second World War, Illtud Evans in The Tablet wrote of ‘the zeal of many priests - secular and religious - who have begun to learn the language of their adopted home’³⁰¹. By this time there were certainly many Welsh-speaking priests in the Menevia diocese³⁰², who often gave lectures and addresses in the Welsh language in the hope of attracting non-Catholics to the Faith. In Bala, for example, a series of lectures on Christian beliefs for non-Catholics were given in 1955 in Welsh³⁰³. By 1960 Ena Kendell wrote in the Western Mail that, although the great proportion of priests in Wales were either Irish or from Irish descendants, ‘many of these priests take a great interest in Welsh life and are able to speak Welsh’³⁰⁴. Fr. Gregory Fitzgerald summarised the attitude of many of these priests when he stated that, although he was originally foreign to the country, he had learnt the Welsh language and ‘if there were such a thing as Welsh citizenship I should have applied for it long ago’³⁰⁵.

Also due to Welsh Catholic efforts St. David’s Day began to take on much more significance during this time. By 1951 Y Faner noted that, while in the past the Catholic Church had not celebrated St. David’s Day in a manner worthy of a patron saint, there were definite signs that the situation was changing and the festival was claiming its place as one of the principal festivals of the Church of Rome in Wales³⁰⁶. By the 1950s celebrations on 1 March could be witnessed in almost all churches in Menevia and many in the Archdiocese of Cardiff, and there was among Welsh scholars an increasing interest in the life of their patron³⁰⁷. Welsh hymns of the great Nonconformist hymn writers also began to be used in worship. Discussions of their merit had been prominent in Catholic intellectual circles ever since Saunders Lewis had published his controversial study of Williams Pantycelyn’s writings in 1927 and had concluded that Protestantism could not provide a full understanding of the poet’s genius. ‘There were depths in

³⁰¹*The Tablet*, 21 June 1947, 319.

³⁰²P.G. Furey, ‘A Hundred Years Between : An Account of the Redemptorist Foundation in Machynlleth’, *Daffodils Under the Snow* (Liverpool, 1946), p. 55; see also *Menevia Record*, 1 (3) (1954), 1.

³⁰³*Menevia Record*, 3 (3) (1956), 28.

³⁰⁴*Western Mail*, 18 Feb. 1960, 4.

³⁰⁵*Western Mail*, 27 Feb. 1960, 6.

³⁰⁶*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 March 1951, 3; 7 March 1951, 3.

³⁰⁷See *Menevia Record*, 2 (4) (1955), 6.

his experience whose almost impenetrable darkness could only be illuminated by a profound knowledge of Catholic mystical thought' claimed Idris Foster³⁰⁸. It was not long after finishing his work that Lewis converted to Catholicism; 'he had found a strange path to Rome through the chapel doors' wrote Huw Ballard Thomas³⁰⁹. The whole discussion engendered further claims of the nascent Catholicism of the hymns of such prominent Welsh Protestants as Williams himself, Ann Griffiths and Thomas Williams, Bethesda'r Fro, and there were many calls for Catholic use of such hymns. R.O.F. Wynne, in articles in both 1934³¹⁰ and 1969³¹¹, wrote that they were 'entirely Catholic in thought and expression'³¹². Likewise, H.W.J. Edwards wrote in 1951 that 'the Pantecelyn (*sic.*) and Ann Griffiths are signal examples of the substantial survival of the Catholic spirit in the straitest of all Welsh Protestant bodies'³¹³, and later in the same year referred to 'the Teresa-like Ann Griffiths and the Athanasian orthodoxy of the Pantycelyn'³¹⁴. The Menevia Record also published a number of articles on these Nonconformist hymn writers³¹⁵.

Following a report in 1957 of a new Welsh Catholic hymnal containing such hymns to be published by the *Cylch*, the Western Mail stated that, 'odd as it may appear, there is an increase of Welsh-speaking members of the Roman Catholic Church in Wales'. It also noted that there was a 'keen interest in the Welsh language among younger members of the Church'³¹⁶. Very few Catholic schools were steeped in Welsh consciousness, a point which angered Welsh Catholics, especially Saunders Lewis³¹⁷. 'A smattering of teaching of Welsh language and grammar is mere farce,' he wrote in a letter to R.O.F. Wynne in 1945, 'and that is the practice in all the Catholic schools that I know of'³¹⁸. There were, however, at least some efforts made following the war to change this

³⁰⁸*Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954), 7. See *Y Cymro*, 22 Sept. 1934, 5: 'Er fod William Williams. Pantycelyn, yn wrth-Babydd, eto fe berthynai i enaid yr Eglwys Gatholig'.

³⁰⁹*The Tablet*, 17 Oct. 1973, 1012.

³¹⁰*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1934, 423.

³¹¹*The Tablet*, 19 Apr. 1969, 388.

³¹²*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1934, 423; see also *The Tablet*, 19 April 1969, 388.

³¹³*The Tablet*, 24 Feb. 1951, 148.

³¹⁴*The Tablet*, 6 Oct. 1951, 228.

³¹⁵*Menevia Record*, 4 (2) (1956), 5-7; 4 (3) (1957), 12-14; 4 (4) (1957), 4-6.

³¹⁶*Western Mail*, 21 Oct. 1957, 6.

³¹⁷See *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 Jan. 1953.

³¹⁸Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthewin*, p. 297.

predicament. At St. Patrick's school, Cardiff, for example, a branch of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (the Welsh League of Youth) was formed shortly after the end of the Second World War. 'No Welsh child', Glynn Evans asserted in the parish magazine in 1948, 'should be denied the rich inheritance of Welsh culture, whether he is in the City of Cardiff, or in a lonely cottage on the slopes of Snowdonia'. It was vital, he continued, that the children's enthusiasm was encouraged by parents and others within the parish. 'Let us exhort all efforts', Evans concluded, 'on behalf of a movement that serves the best interest of our children who shall become the proud citizens of Wales tomorrow'³¹⁹. A year later Evans reported on the continuing fostering of Welshness at the school, with Welsh classes being held, St. David's Day celebrated in Welsh, and successes at local eisteddfodau³²⁰. More and more Welsh began to be taught, and branches of the Urdd formed, in Catholic schools across Wales³²¹. In Brecon the Ursuline Sisters, who ran both a convent and a junior school, attended Welsh classes at the local grammar school so that they could ensure that the Welsh language was on the time-table in both schools³²², and by the mid 1960s the school magazine of Heathfield House, Cardiff, after reporting on Welsh language lessons, a branch of the Urdd, and a school eisteddfod, noted '*Cymru am Byth!*'³²³.

This new Catholic enthusiasm surrounding Welsh language and culture was naturally reflected in the growth and development of the *Cylch*. In 1953 the *Menevia Record* reported that the movement was going 'from strength to strength' in the Diocese³²⁴. A year earlier in a front-page article in *Y Faner* Victor Hampson-Jones described how the *Cylch* was beginning to reshape Catholic life at Maesteg where a monthly Welsh service and a weekly meeting for young members were held. This was, he continued, a great attempt 'i achub rhan o'n cymdeithas, na chafodd gyfle erioed i ddysgu'r iaith nac i ymgynabod â'r etifeddiaeth fawr ysbrydol sy'n eiddo iddynt'³²⁵. In the same year, H.W.J.

³¹⁹Glynn Evans. 'Yr Urdd (The Welsh League of Youth)'. *St. Patrick's Parish Magazine*, 1 (9) (1948), 10-11.

³²⁰*St. Patrick's Parish Magazine*, 4 (2) (1949), 9.

³²¹See *Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 28.

³²²*Menevia Record*, 3 (4) (1956), 15.

³²³*The Heather*, Nov. 1966, 10.

³²⁴*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 22.

³²⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Feb. 1952, 1.

Edwards noted that Maesteg had also witnessed a Welsh Catholic baptism and was soon to see a Welsh Catholic marriage, facts which reflected ‘the increasing interest’ Catholics were taking in their own country³²⁶. The success of the *Cylch* was such that by 1960 it had around 300 members³²⁷. Along with helping integration, the result of the society’s efforts was that by 1960 Ena Kendell wrote that, while some time ago Catholics in Wales had no interest in Wales as a nation, ‘now its membership is taking on a Welsh tinge, and it is making determined efforts to enter into Welsh life and to absorb Welsh character’³²⁸. There were, in fact, districts in Wales, such as at Maesteg, Blaenau Ffestiniog, and Gellilydan, where ‘a purely Welsh generation of Catholics is growing up’, and Welsh was the medium for all Church activities when not Latin. These places were ‘held as examples by some Welsh-speaking Catholics of what Welsh Catholicism could be in the future’³²⁹. H.W.J. Edwards commented that, although the situation with regards to the continuing ‘ghetto’ mentality of Catholic communities in Wales continued to be a problem, the fact that even the children of Polish farmers in West Wales had Welsh as their first language showed that ‘the walls can be broken down’³³⁰.

f) Evidence of non-Catholic respect

The conversion of Saunders Lewis in 1932 marked the change in educated Welsh attitudes to the Church’s hitherto low-key efforts to nurture the language and culture; according to J.P. Brown it was ‘a great shock to Welsh opinion and earned for the Church a new respect’³³¹. In that same year Rev. E.E. Thomas wrote that ‘among Roman Catholics there is manifesting itself a deepened sense of national sentiment which is engendering in the minds of many Welshmen the feeling that they need not lose any whit of their nationality by being members of

³²⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Dec. 1952, 6; see also *The Furrow* 7 (4) (1956), 203.

³²⁷*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4; Daniel, ‘Wales’, p. 130 : members included numerous clergy and laity in Dublin, Ireland who attended Welsh night-classes there and would visit Wales to help in apostolic work.

³²⁸*Western Mail*, 16 Feb. 1960, 4.

³²⁹*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

³³⁰*Western Mail*, 26 Feb. 1960, 6.

³³¹*Menevia Record*, 4 (3) (1957), 12.

that community'. He claimed that 'the gibe that Roman Catholicism in our midst is merely an Irish and an Italian mission is rapidly becoming untrue'³³². With the *Cylch* making great strides forward following the Second World War, respect and admiration continued. In 1948 the traditionally hostile Y Faner reported deferentially on a meeting of the *Cylch* at Denbigh, where Fr. Brennan of the Order of the Rosminians at Cardiff had spoken in Welsh. 'Gwyddel yw'r Tad Brennan ond, yn debyg i lawer o'i frodyr yn yr Offeiriadaeth, dysgodd y Gymraeg yn fwy trwyadl na miloedd o Gymry'. The article continued by claiming the *Cylch* was fulfilling an important role by introducing Welsh culture to Catholics, and through its publications it was opening a 'pennod newydd yn llenyddiaeth grefyddol Cymru'³³³.

Certainly when Saunders Lewis reported to R.O.F. Wynne that the first issue of the Efrydiau Catholig was selling very well, nearly 400 issues in the first six months, he added that the majority of purchasers were curious 'nonconformists of every denomination, but especially ministers'³³⁴. Although often critical of Welsh Catholics, the Anglican periodical Province was also complimentary to the *Cylch*'s annual publication on a number of occasions, which it considered in 1949 to be 'a new and significant Roman Catholic production'³³⁵. Two years later it awarded much praise to the scholarly work of Fr. J. Barrett Davies in particular³³⁶. Barrett Davies, whom Saunders Lewis claimed to be 'y dyn gorau sy gan yr Eglwys [Gatholig] yng Nghymru'³³⁷, was also respected by Nonconformists. 'He is today', claimed Lewis, 'a writer on theology and apologetics in Welsh who counts very much among Protestants'. Catholic fancy sometimes got the better of fact as Lewis went on to claim that Davies was 'in Protestant Wales today admitted by those competent to judge to be the most eminent theologian writing in Welsh'³³⁸. Two years later the Province reviewed Catholigiaeth a Chymru, a collection of Welsh Catholic essays, and again described three of the ten articles, those of Saunders Lewis, Fr. J. Barrett Davies,

³³²E.E. Thomas, 'Wales and Catholicism', *Welsh Outlook*, XIX (2) (1932), 47.

³³³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 Sept. 1948, 8.

³³⁴Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin*, p. 302.

³³⁵*Province*, 1 (1) (1949), 24.

³³⁶*Province*, 2 (3) (1951), 88.

³³⁷Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin*, p. 311.

³³⁸Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin*, p. 339.

and Catherine Daniel, as ‘excellent’³³⁹. Respect for the *Cylch*, its aims, and its activities certainly helped lessen prejudices against Catholicism in general, as to many Welshmen, claimed Victor Hampson-Jones in 1960, ‘Saunders Lewis and his group of converts are the Church, and that is the proper way’³⁴⁰.

Individual non-Catholic compliments for Welsh Catholic efforts were very prevalent from the late 1940s. After a report in *Y Drych* in 1949 of an Irish priest in New York who was looking to learn Welsh, Rev. E. Cynolwyn Pugh remarked ‘a hyn, cofier, pan yw’r Cymry eu hunain yn dibrisio eu hiaith!’³⁴¹. *Y Tyst* commented ‘ai tybed y gall ffaith fel hon godi cywilydd ar y Cymry glastwraidd’³⁴². Similarly, the Welsh attitude displayed in the *Menevia Record* so impressed many Welsh-speakers that by 1955 the new journal was receiving many compliments. ‘This is a real Welsh Catholic publication’, one reader wrote in a letter to the editor, ‘and it is bound to do a lot of good everywhere ... we all admire your brave venture in publishing articles in Welsh’³⁴³. Two years later the *Review* quoted a letter from a Welsh Nonconformist which had appeared in a daily newspaper. ‘Today’, the correspondent had written, ‘the Catholic Church has become very Welsh in outlook and sympathy and she deserves the highest credit for it’³⁴⁴. In 1958 Aneurin Talfan Davies, writing under the pseudonym ‘Theomemphus’, even suggested that his own Anglican Church in Wales should strive to imitate Rome’s attitude to the Welsh language. In his booklet *Bilingual Bishops and All That* he praised Catholics, who were mostly ‘foreigners, Irishmen and Englishmen’, for their enlightened attitude towards Welsh language and tradition. It was seen as so important by the Catholic hierarchy that it had become the duty of each and every priest to learn Welsh. McGrath was particularly praised for expecting his clergy to learn the language, for explaining in a radio broadcast (in Welsh) the concept of infallibility, and, in his pastoral letter after the promulgation of the doctrine of the bodily assumption, for displaying ‘a

³³⁹*Province*, 5 (4) (1954), 143.

³⁴⁰*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

³⁴¹*Y Drych*, 15 March 1949.

³⁴²*Y Tyst*, 28 April 1949, 2.

³⁴³*Menevia Record*, 2 (3) (1955), 7.

³⁴⁴*Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 13.

scholarly knowledge of the Welsh literary tradition'. This, Davies concluded, was 'not done without having a profound effect upon the Welsh people'³⁴⁵.

By the 1960s this respect for Welsh Catholic efforts was widespread. In 1959 Catherine Daniel wrote that 'so far, undoubtedly, the *Cylch*'s chief impact has been not on Catholics but on Welsh non-Catholics'. The society, she continued, formed 'a liaison group of importance between the Church and Welshmen who would not, save in the most exceptional circumstances, ever come into contact with her'³⁴⁶. The respect engendered for the *Cylch*'s efforts was reflected a year later in the Western Mail when Councillor Brinley Evans of Abertillery welcomed the fact that Catholics were beginning to use hymns written by Nonconformist authors. This, he concluded, would 'complete an historical link of great religious significance' as Welsh Calvinistic Methodists had been singing the Roman Catholic hymn by St. Bernard 'Per fydd dy gofio, Iesu da' for generations³⁴⁷. The enthusiasm of many Welsh Catholics towards their language also, as J.P. Brown had predicted in The Tablet in 1964, helped in the cause of ecumenism. This was reflected in the same year as J.P. Brown's article when Y Faner (in welcoming the warm relations being fostered between Protestant and Catholic) commented that the Church in Rome's attitude to the Welsh language was to be complimented³⁴⁸. At this time Protestant clergymen were even being invited, and were attending, the *Cylch*'s annual Triduum of Prayer³⁴⁹. By the 1970s both Nonconformist and Anglican were noting with great respect the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Welsh language and culture during the twentieth century. A letter by Rev. G.B. Hughes of Conwy in Y Llan in 1971 suggested that the Anglican Church in Wales should follow the example of the Catholic Church in its fostering of the Welsh language³⁵⁰, while J. Heywood Thomas, a Welsh Nonconformist lecturing at the University of Durham, stated in The Tablet a year later that 'it is one of the glories of contemporary Welsh

³⁴⁵'Theomemphus' *Bilingual Bishops and All That* (Llandybie, 1958), p. 17.

³⁴⁶Daniel, 'Wales', p. 130.

³⁴⁷*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

³⁴⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Feb. 1964, 166.

³⁴⁹Wrexham Diocesan Archives, *Y Cylch Catholig* File.

³⁵⁰*Y Llan*, 23 July 1971, 8.

Catholicism that it has supported the determined efforts of Welshmen to preserve their language and the Christian tradition it enshrines³⁵¹.

g) Adverse reactions towards 'Welsh Catholics'

Catholic efforts to foster a sense of Welshness among the faithful and their notable results certainly engendered much respect and admiration, and this helped lessen prejudice against what was seen as a foreign Church. Reactions, however, were not always positive and there was antagonism towards Welsh Catholics from both non-Catholics and fellow-Catholics. Adverse attitudes to Welsh Catholics from their non-Catholic compatriots ranged from them simply being regarded as 'somewhat odd'³⁵², to active hostility against them as evidenced in the animosity towards those in the Nationalist Party. 'On the Welsh side,' noted a *Cylch* correspondent in the Menevia Record, 'we are met in some quarters with the suspicion that our interest in Welsh is a sinister papistical scheme to convert people'³⁵³. Others commented that merely speaking the Welsh language did not make Welshmen. In the Western Mail in 1936 a Cardiff non-Catholic correspondent reminded McGrath that, although his dedication to the Welsh tongue was admirable, he 'should know that speaking the Welsh language does not mean winning all his Welsh battles'. The old Catholicism of Wales, the religion of Ystrad Fflur and Valle Crucis, was 'an indigenous product of the country's conscience' which did not have any English or Irish influences. 'To describe the modern, wholly alien, cult as "the faith of our fathers" merely because Dr. McGrath has struggled to learn the language is to claim something more than a just reward for his noteworthy performance'. The letter arrived at the blunt and extreme conclusion that 'today there is no such thing as Welsh Catholicism'³⁵⁴. Furthermore, in the same publication nearly 25 years later, Rev. L. Alun Page of Neath angrily commented that too much was being made of the small numbers of Welsh Catholics. 'All are thrilled when the Romans use an occasional Welsh

³⁵¹ *The Tablet*, 11 Nov. 1972. 1081.

³⁵² National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 1/3 (*Drafts of Letters to The Tablet Concerning Vernacularization of the Mass*).

³⁵³ *Menevia Record*, 8 (1) (1960), 19.

³⁵⁴ *Western Mail*, 12 Feb. 1936, 11.

hymn,' he wrote, 'forgetting that the back-bone of support for Welsh institutions, including the language, is still Nonconformity'. He mocked that 'one Saunders Lewis does not make a cultural Counter-Reformation'³⁵⁵. The sentiments behind this claim were certainly true as despite their relatively impressive progress, the *Cylch* encountered apathy, even hostility, from among fellow-Catholics, and they were to remain a 'struggling band of Welsh-speaking Catholics'³⁵⁶. The number of Welsh Catholics remained comparatively meagre. 'The Roman Church in the Welsh lands is a small minority', wrote David Jones following the Second Vatican Council, 'and Welsh-speaking Welsh Catholics are a very small minority within that minority'³⁵⁷.

The census of churches in Wales of 1982 painted a rather distressing picture of the outcome of the relationship between Catholicism and the Welsh language in the twentieth century. Catholics, claimed Prof. R.M. Jones, 'show comparatively little interest in witnessing to the Welsh speakers'. The figures given support his claim, with 88% of all Roman Catholic churches holding services in the English language only. This left only 11% holding services in both English and Welsh, and only 1% holding services in Welsh alone. No other denomination used Welsh so infrequently³⁵⁸. During the twentieth century many Catholics in Wales had, indeed, been not only indifferent but actively hostile to the efforts of the *Cylch* to foster the Welsh culture. This was due to numerous reasons. Continuing attachment to countries outside of Wales, usually Ireland and England, was certainly one of these. In 1948 H.W.J. Edwards claimed this hostility reflected 'a Hibernian - not a Catholic - hiraeth for ould Oireland'³⁵⁹. Twelve years later Victor Hampson Jones was still referring to the presence of opposing pro-Irish and pro-Welsh groups in the Church³⁶⁰. It was also true that many Catholics were wary of efforts to strengthen the Welsh language, fearing

³⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 24 Feb. 1960, 4.

³⁵⁶National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 5/5 (*Drafts of Letters Concerning Wales*).

³⁵⁷National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 1/1 (*Drafts of Letters to The Tablet*).

³⁵⁸Peter Brierly and Byron Evans, *Prospects for Wales : From a Census of the Churches in 1982* (London, 1983), p. 14.

³⁵⁹*Catholic Herald*, 11 June 1948, 2.

³⁶⁰*Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

that they (as Catholic English-speakers) would be doubly disadvantaged if this were to happen. It was not only laymen but also some clergy who actively opposed any wide use of Welsh in the parishes. These priests often regarded the language as a danger to parish unity and identified it with xenophobia³⁶¹. Even The Tablet criticised the ‘hot-bloods and die-hards of extreme and almost monolingual Welsh Nationalism’ whose zeal for the conversion of Wales was more politically motivated than religious. ‘We would rather see Wales remaining Protestant than have her re-adopt Catholicism for Nationalist or mediaevalist or literary or aesthetical or traditional or any other extraneous reason’ it said³⁶².

Numerous other reasons were given by Catholics in Wales for their apathetic or antagonistic reactions to the calls for a fostering of Welsh consciousness. Catherine Daniel had heard it said by a Catholic that, as there was no need for language in heaven, then there was no need to worry about the future of the Welsh language in this world³⁶³. A more popular argument was that Catholicism was universal and above national sentiment³⁶⁴. There was also a realisation that one of the principal reasons for learning Welsh in the past, i.e. to be able to convert Welshmen through their own language, was rapidly becoming unnecessary as the numbers of Welsh-speakers declined. ‘Many chapels are even turning to English for their services’ wrote A. Cordani in the Review in 1957³⁶⁵. It was certainly ironic that the growth of Catholicism in Wales and the decline of the native tongue facilitated each other during this period. The great increase in numbers of Catholics in Wales, almost all Anglo-Irish immigrants or their descendants, has certainly contributed to the anglicisation of traditional Welsh society. Even the Welsh Catholics themselves began to realise this ominous predicament. ‘As a Catholic I am glad that there are more Catholics;’ wrote H.W.J. Edwards in 1952, ‘as a Cymro I am afraid that ... the rise of Roman Catholicism in Wales will mean the destruction of Welsh speech and ways’³⁶⁶.

³⁶¹*The Tablet*, 21 Dec. 1963, 1381; see also *Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

³⁶²*The Tablet*, 17 Aug. 1935, 197.

³⁶³Catherine Daniel, ‘Capel y Ffin a’r Cylch Catholig’, p. 27.

³⁶⁴See *Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1960, 4; Daniel, ‘Wales’, p. 129 : In response to such claims Daniel maintained that the ‘universalism of Catholicism’ merely meant ‘ever fructifying what is local and localising what is universal’.

³⁶⁵A. Cordani, ‘Wales, Yesterday and Today’, *Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 13.

³⁶⁶*Western Mail*, 18 Dec. 1952, 6.

Likewise, Catherine Daniel expressed a fear that even conversions of native Welshmen to Catholicism was contributing to the decline of the Welsh language. On converting they were quickly losing their language and were not passing it on to the next generation, due sometimes to a marriage to an English-speaking Catholic and sometimes because they identified the Welsh tongue too much with the denomination they had left³⁶⁷. Just as the growth of Catholicism was contributing to the decline of the Welsh language, so this decline has made it easier for these immigrants to assimilate and for the Church to grow in the Principality. It is no coincidence that all the principally Welsh-speaking denominations have steadily declined during the century, while the Catholic Church has grown considerably.

Frictions between Welsh Catholics and those Catholics who were apathetic or actively hostile to Welsh culture and language manifested themselves on numerous occasions following the Second World War. A debate in the letter pages of the *Catholic Herald* in 1948 had reflected the great tensions which were building up. The discussion had begun when William Burchill suggested that only those Welshmen who spoke only the Welsh language - a very small number - needed Welsh-speaking priests, the rest could manage with English-speaking ones³⁶⁸. Many Welsh Catholics reacted to Burchill's claims, including R.O.F. Wynne³⁶⁹ and 'Ivor Hael'³⁷⁰ who claimed 'the Church of All Nationalities cannot and will not ignore the half-Latin language of two million people!³⁷¹. There were also, however, many supporters of Burchill's view. Edward Nevin of Aberystwyth even questioned the existence of the Welsh 'culture' which these Catholics were trying to nurture³⁷². This 'mythical popular culture', he wrote, was simply the Welsh Sabbath, the bleak chapels, the preoccupation with song and Scripture, the distrust of logic, and the absence of colour and joy. A flourishing Catholicism with its 'supra-national culture' could never 'exist within a puritan atmosphere, anymore than a flower can flourish bereft of its foliage³⁷³.

³⁶⁷ *Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 23-4.

³⁶⁸ *Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1948, 2.

³⁶⁹ *Catholic Herald*, 14 May 1948, 2.

³⁷⁰ Probably Fr. Ivor Daniel of Pembroke Dock.

³⁷¹ *Catholic Herald*, 28 May 28, 1948, 2.

³⁷² *Catholic Herald*, 30 July 1948, 2.

³⁷³ *Catholic Herald*, 3 Sept. 1948, 2.

Likewise, Olwen Evans-Rush of Aberystwyth claimed that so-called Welsh culture was merely an artificial concept made up 'in the minds of certain of the intelligentsia'. 'It is hard to see how the Church (essentially of a universal nature)', she concluded, 'can be made the excuse for a narrow, nationalistic movement, which will eventually aim at the exclusion of all things not Welsh from Wales'³⁷⁴. Patriotic Catholics were naturally angered by these assertions. Those who wrote defending their position included Frances Wynne³⁷⁵, Halliday Sutherland³⁷⁶, a Catholic priest working in Wales³⁷⁷, and Walter Dowding of Brynmawr. 'Like the majority of English people, and Anglicised Welsh,' Dowding wrote, 'they dare to pronounce judgement on one of Europe's oldest and richest literary cultures without even knowing the language which contains it'³⁷⁸.

Tensions resurfaced in 1961 when the people of Wales voted on the question of opening public houses on Sundays. A preamble to this discussion had been witnessed in the early 1950s with debates concerning the Sunday opening of cinemas. H.W.J. Edwards had noted in *The Tablet* in 1952 that, while there were a number of Welsh Catholics who defended the Welsh Sunday as part of Welsh culture, the overwhelming majority of Catholics supported Sunday opening³⁷⁹. Nine years later it was again clear that this predicament was to remain. H.W.J. Edwards explained that most Catholics were unable to comprehend the stand made by Welsh Catholics, as 'they tend to connote Welshness with Protestantism, and especially with puritanical Protestantism'. They also regarded the handful of Welsh Catholics as 'social snobs', who believed themselves to be of a 'higher' class than the average 'Catholic in Wales'³⁸⁰. Even the Catholic hierarchy held no strong views on the question of Sunday opening of public houses. John Murphy, the Archbishop-elect of Cardiff, claimed that 'he saw no reason why people should demand that public-houses close on Sundays', while Petit asserted that

³ *ibid*

³⁷⁴ *Catholic Herald*, 20 Aug. 1948, 2.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*; *Catholic Herald*, 10 Sept. 1948, 2.

³⁷⁶ *Catholic Herald*, 3 Sept. 1948, 2.

³⁷⁷ *Catholic Herald*, 17 Sept. 1948, 2.

³⁷⁸ *The Tablet*, 11 Oct. 1952, 288.

³⁷⁹ *The Tablet*, 18 Nov. 1961, 1101.

‘the Catholic Church has nothing for or against Sunday opening’³⁸¹. The words of these two English-born bishops especially disturbed Welsh Catholics in view of the attitude of the late Archbishop McGrath, who described the Welsh Sabbath as ‘our national boast’³⁸².

In the ensuing debate in the Western Mail H.W.J. Edwards, after referring to the ‘rather irreverent statements’ of the bishops, explained the nationalistic Welsh Catholics objections to Sunday opening³⁸³. Etienne Raven, a prominent Cardiff Catholic, replied by again questioning the existence of a modern Welsh culture³⁸⁴. Although in response Edwards reminded his fellow-Catholics that there had been a special Welsh pre-Reformation Sabbatarianism³⁸⁵, the main Welsh Catholic objections arose from their nationalism rather than from their Catholicism. Saunders Lewis summarised the attitude of the zealous minority in explaining his own objections to Sunday opening. As a convert from Nonconformity he retained ‘a profound respect and gratitude for all Welsh Nonconformity achieved for the Welsh community in the eighteenth and nineteenth century’. This included the Welsh Sunday Closing Act which was, after all, ‘an act of self-discipline by a Christian nation’. As a Welshman, on the other hand, he claimed that he wished to ‘preserve whatever is good and particular to Wales in our inheritance’. The 1881 Act was a result of the Welsh national movement which sprang from the eighteenth century revival which created modern Wales’s culture and national character, and therefore stood as a piece of legislature which marked the separate heritage of the Welsh people. ‘Only iconoclasts’, Lewis concluded, ‘will, in the false name of freedom and with ill-mannered sneers at Welsh ministers of religion, throw away an institution that is at once a gesture of religious observance and a memorial of the unity once made in Wales by religion itself’³⁸⁶.

Following the Second Vatican Council the main cause for the ‘tensions [which] have arisen between Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking Catholics’

³⁸¹ *Western Mail*, 21 Sept. 1961, 1.

³⁸² *Western Mail*, 29 Sept. 1961, 6.

³⁸³ *ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Western Mail*, 9 Oct. 1961, 6.

³⁸⁵ *Western Mail*, 3 Nov. 1961, 9.

³⁸⁶ *Western Mail*, 7 Nov. 1961, 9.

had to do with the question of the vernacular in the Mass³⁸⁷. Discussions surrounding the question of whether English or Welsh should be used in Catholic rites as Wales' vernacular had, however, begun long before. On 14 January 1959 the Decree of the Sacred Congregation authorised the use of the vernacular language in certain rites, and in a later letter to The Tablet David Jones questioned why the Decree referred to English as the 'mother-tongue' when 'it would seem reasonable, appropriate and opportune were the language of Wales to receive consideration in the dioceses of Wales'³⁸⁸. H.W.J. Edwards wrote supporting Jones's suggestion. He noted that, while to become more Welsh often meant embracing some parts of the culture of Nonconformity, this was surely what Pius XII's *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) had encouraged when he showed how the Church had used pagan art and thought and had sanctified popular customs and hereditary institutions³⁸⁹.

The Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1963) announced that the Latin liturgy would be replaced with the vernaculars of the modern world. Welsh Catholics were elated that Welsh was to become a vernacular language³⁹⁰, and even Y Faner enthused that this was 'an acknowledgement, in an unexpected place, of the official position of our language, and ... a helping hand to the movement, now gaining strength, to get official status for Welsh in Wales'³⁹¹. Such jubilation was, however, short lived. It was true that Welsh became a vernacular language, but as the majority of Catholics living in Wales were unable to speak or understand the native tongue, it soon became apparent that English was to become the principal language used in Catholic liturgical services in Wales. As the 1960s progressed signs of disillusionment became obvious. In outrage at the fact that the Catholic Church at Bangor was preparing to change parts of the Low Mass from Latin to English, David Jones wrote of 'the possibility of a most ironical situation arising in Wales whereby Yr Eglwys Lân Rufeinig might attach to herself the stigma of anglophilism and anglicisation which once was attached to the Church of England

³⁸⁷*The Tablet*, 25 Feb. 1967, 205.

³⁸⁸*The Tablet*, 24 Feb. 1962, 186.

³⁸⁹*The Tablet*, 3 March 1962, 208.

³⁹⁰*The Tablet*, 21 Dec. 1963, 1380; 8 Feb. 1964, 166.

³⁹¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Feb. 1964, 166.

in Wales³⁹². Many other Welsh Catholics were similarly angered at what seemed like the Church's desertion of the language cause. Owen T. Huws from Brynteg, Anglesey, lamented that 'from an Apostolic point of view, the Church is not interested in us Welsh people ... our country is regarded as a place to accommodate foreign Catholics'³⁹³. Likewise, Raymond H. Edwards of Cynwyd protested that Welsh-speaking Catholics were being 'treated as a bit of a nuisance and a hindrance' by the Church, and 'against the apathy of the clergy, from Archbishops to parish priests, towards the language and the Welsh life generally'³⁹⁴. Other Catholics, including Gregory Fitzgerald³⁹⁵ and R.O.F. Wynne in *The Tablet*, continued to urge Catholics in Wales to embrace Welsh as the language of their liturgy 'perhaps for the sake of a handful of Welsh people, perhaps even as a matter of principle only'³⁹⁶.

Although the efforts of the Welsh Catholics had certainly engendered much respect among the native population, by the 1960s despair and disappointment was clear. By this time there was also much distress that the present Welsh hierarchy was not nearly as supportive as predecessors had been, especially with regards to the new question of the vernacular. David Jones accused its members of allowing 'the convenient, the utile, the "practical", the profitable' to destroy the one time strictly Catholic tradition of Wales³⁹⁷. 'Alas,' wrote Saunders Lewis, 'I have no atom of influence with the bishops; I had rather a fierce quarrel with his grace of Cardiff over the vernacular liturgy and we are barely on speaking terms'. Lewis had suggested to Murphy that Cardiff and Menevia should join as an unit for liturgical purposes. 'Not he. He couldn't interfere in Menevia, and he was a dutiful and obedient son of the Church. I told him that that was the Nazi officials' excuse for Belsen. And so we finished'. In conclusion Lewis noted that 'now they've appointed another Englishman as

³⁹²National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 1/3 (*Drafts of Letters to The Tablet, Concerning Vernacularization of the Mass*); see also National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 5/14 (*Drafts of Letters Dealing with the Anglicisation of the Mass in Wales*).

³⁹³*Liverpool Daily Post*, 22 Jan. 1965.

³⁹⁴*ibid.*

³⁹⁵*The Tablet*, 27 March 1965, 344.

³⁹⁶*The Tablet*, 25 Feb. 1967, 204.

³⁹⁷National Library of Wales Archives : David Jones Papers Box 1/16 (*Drafts of Letters on Religion*).

auxiliary bishop of Menevia [Langton D. Fox]. It seems quite deliberate anti-Welsh³⁹⁸.

Increasing Tolerance and its Results

a) The inter-war years

i) Local level

Aside from integration and a growing respect there were certainly many other reasons which combined to help increase tolerance towards Catholics in Wales. Catholic communities in the larger Welsh towns, for example, became accepted and their beliefs tolerated as their votes began to be sought after by non-Catholic prospective councillors. The 'Catholic Vote', wrote G.D. Bateman, became valued electorally and so 'we had the satisfaction of seeing some of the anti-Catholic attitude soften'³⁹⁹. Likewise, increasing religious indifference and the onslaught of religious apathy led to a decline in the forces of anti-Catholicism. 'To quite a real extent', wrote E.R. Norman, 'it must be true that anti-Catholic feeling has waned according to a scale set by the waning of all religious feeling in English society'⁴⁰⁰. Petit recognised this when he wondered in 1952 whether the hostility of the Welsh towards Catholicism could be 'softened before it is removed by the tolerance that springs from indifferentism'⁴⁰¹. The influence of ecumenical ideals on the attitudes of different denominations, which became increasingly prominent, also played a great part in lessening hostility. Even the media were directly involved in this process. Both radio and television certainly helped dispel lingering prejudices. In the 1950s the Menevia Record noted that a BBC television programme on the Cistercian monks on Caldey had clearly shown

³⁹⁸Davies, *Saunders Lewis a Theatr Garthwin*, p. 369; in 1967 Saunders Lewis wrote : 'y mae gwaith yr csgobion Catholig yng Nghymru yn troi o'r Lladin i Saesneg yn yr isel offeren wedi torri fy nghalon i a'm chwerwi yn enbyd. Yn wir, hen ŵr chwerw a gŵr siomedig ydwyf fi' (National Library of Wales Archives : Lewis Valentine Papers).

³⁹⁹Bateman, 'A Catholic Wind of Change', p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968), p. 20.

⁴⁰¹*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 14.

Welsh viewers that 'those who are called to a vocation of silence and contemplation are anything but "cranks"'⁴⁰². Two years later, the publication claimed that another programme about the Carmelite convent had had a similar effect. This 'impressed' many viewers who were beginning to realise that 'here was no unhealthy fanaticism, no cowardly escape from the stress and strain of everyday life'⁴⁰³.

A combination of all such factors, then, contributed to a slow decline in the hostility against Catholics, the evidence of which can be seen from the years immediately following the First World War. Although much animosity towards Catholics remained even in those places where Catholic integration was taking place by the 1920s, it is clear that toleration was increasing. In Swansea this was displayed in 1928 with the deferential attitude of the largely Nonconformist citizens towards the 52nd annual conference of the Catholic Young Men's Society which was held over Whitsun in the town⁴⁰⁴. At Cardiff and Newport the attitude of non-Catholic locals to Catholic missions likewise reflected this change. Such missions were reported to be filled with respectful non-Catholics⁴⁰⁵, with Fr. Filmer, who held Evidence Missions at St. Peter's church, Cardiff, noting the change in the questions given at the end of the talks during his 20 years of mission work, 'there is not now the anti-Catholic bias in them, with quotations from anti-popery tracts'⁴⁰⁶.

By this time there was also far less hostility towards the Corpus Christi processions at the larger towns of the Archdiocese. The celebrations at Cardiff had faced much prejudice from the non-Catholic locals for almost fifty years. By 1921, however, St. Peter's Parish Magazine was writing that 'with a new spirit of toleration abroad, non-Catholics to-day can view this spectacle without being perturbed, and the silent and respectful demeanour of the people generally ... is very gratifying indeed'⁴⁰⁷. Again in 1925 the publication noted that there were but a few complaints about the stopping of traffic while the procession passed

⁴⁰²*Menevia Record*, 5 (1) (1957), 10-15.

⁴⁰³*Menevia Record*, 7 (2) (1959), 5-8.

⁴⁰⁴*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (6) (1928), 179.

⁴⁰⁵See *St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 9 (11) (1929), 337; *Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (11) (1930), 179.

⁴⁰⁶*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 4 (2) (1924), 50-52.

⁴⁰⁷*St. Peter's Parish Magazine*, 1 (6) (1921), vii.

through Cardiff : ‘thank God, most people, not matter what their creed, do not allow religious bigotry to warp their finer feelings’⁴⁰⁸. There was similar tolerance to the large Corpus Christi celebrations at Newport. A correspondent in a local newspaper described the 1928 celebrations as one of the most remarkable religious events in years. ‘It is impossible for the pen to do justice to the picture presented on the football field;’ reported the South Wales Daily Argus, ‘no artist could portray the beauty, the solemnity and the beautiful simplicity of the worship’⁴⁰⁹. Two years later the Newport Catholic Magazine again noted that ‘many congratulations and words of praise, both on the part of Catholics and non-Catholics, were heard on the success of our Annual Procession’⁴¹⁰. Indeed, at St. Peter’s church in Cardiff many non-Catholics also began to attend the Catholic Midnight Mass during this time. The Midnight Mass eventually became so popular that in 1926 St. Peter’s was forced to distribute tickets for the 1,500 places available⁴¹¹. Although this shows that prejudice and hostility towards Catholics was declining, non-Catholic attendance at Midnight Mass undoubtedly became a problem. In 1927 the parish magazine made an appeal to make the ceremony a specifically Catholic function. ‘It is undesirable to bring non-Catholics as every place is needed for our own;’ it noted, ‘it is not a “show” service: we need more piety and devotion at this function’⁴¹².

In the rest of Wales, especially in the diocese of Menevia, prejudice and hostility still far outweighed any signs of goodwill between Catholics and other denominations. There were, however, many instances at a local level when Catholics were treated with tolerance. There were undoubtedly acts of individual non-Catholic kindness, such as allowing Catholics to use places for their weekly Mass⁴¹³ or driving buses for Catholics to and from Mass⁴¹⁴. Far more important, however, were the signs of the gradual acceptance in villages and towns where Catholics were becoming part of everyday life. In Conwy in 1916, Bishop

⁴⁰⁸*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 5 (7) (1925), 214.

⁴⁰⁹*South Wales Daily Argus*, quoted in *Newport Catholic Magazine*, 1 (7) (1928), 208.

⁴¹⁰*Newport Catholic Magazine*, 3 (8) (1930), 136.

⁴¹¹*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 7 (1) (1927), 18.

⁴¹²*St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 7 (12) (1927), 373; see also *St. Peter’s Parish Magazine*, 8 (12) (1928), 370.

⁴¹³Rudd, ‘Catholic Life in Llandoverly’, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴*St. Joseph’s, Port Talbot : Commemorative Brochure Diamond Jubilee 1931-1991*.

Mostyn thanked the non-Catholic Mayor and councillors for their presence at the opening of the new church. Although they could not accept the religious views of Catholics, they had proved that Conwy wished to encourage friendly feeling between all Christians⁴¹⁵. Four years later in Bangor an event organised by Nonconformists reflected this changing attitude. In their week of 'Christian Evidence Lectures', both Michael McGrath, the future Archbishop of Cardiff, and the Fr. Hugh Pope gave discourses. It was reported that the largely Nonconformist audience was respectful and attentive in both lectures, and questions at the end were not even slightly offensive⁴¹⁶. Other signs that many non-Catholics were beginning to accept Catholics in their respective communities were seen at Ruthin in 1926⁴¹⁷ and at both Dolgellau⁴¹⁸ and Milford Haven⁴¹⁹ in 1929, where large numbers from non-Catholic denominations were reported to have attended Catholic services and shown respect therein.

This improvement was most striking in the staunchly 'Welsh' and Nonconformist areas of Menevia. At the turn of the century the Catholic worship and customs had seemed so very strange and foreign that bigotry and intolerance was the natural reaction. As Catholicism began to flourish in many of these areas, so the local inhabitants began to become familiarised with, and more tolerant of, these practices. Only 18 months after the opening of the mission at Trefriw in the Conwy valley in 1932, The Tablet noted the demeanour of the non-Catholic public at a Corpus Christi procession. This was, it claimed, 'proof of the extent to which one-time hostility has already given place to respect among the people of North Wales'⁴²⁰. Two years later the decorous attitude of non-Catholics was again noted, both at a mission at Dolgellau and at the town's Midnight Mass which was so full that many stood outside the open doors of the small church⁴²¹. In that same year similar tolerance was noted at the opening of the new Catholic Church in Abergele. 'Among the non-Catholic population of the district - more than half of whom are Welsh, and by tradition strictly Nonconformist', reported

⁴¹⁵*The Tablet*, 7 Oct. 1916, 467.

⁴¹⁶*The Tablet*, 31 Jan. 1920, 163.

⁴¹⁷*Denbighshire Free Press*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 3 July 1926, 27.

⁴¹⁸*The Tablet*, 28 Sept. 1929, 429.

⁴¹⁹*The Tablet*, 31 Aug. 1929, 280.

⁴²⁰*The Tablet*, 4 June 1932, 738.

⁴²¹*The Tablet*, 5 Jan. 1935, 24.

The Tablet, ‘- nothing but sympathy and interest has been evidenced towards this new venture of the Faith’⁴²². By the late 1930s this kind of acceptance of Catholics at a local level was to be witnessed across Wales. At Lampeter it was noted that ‘the Welsh were kindly and welcoming - not knowing whom they were welcoming’. N. Wynne wrote of the non-Catholic men employed from the neighbourhood to erect the new Catholic Church that ‘the first faint feeling of strangeness and suspicion amongst them quickly wore off, and all seemed infused with a spirit of enthusiasm and goodwill’⁴²³. Likewise, Fr. P. Furey noted that, from the moment the Redemptorists moved to Machynlleth in 1939, they had ‘found nothing but friendliness and kindness in our dealings with the people’⁴²⁴.

ii) Tolerance at a wider level

‘A quiet, but none the less revolutionary, change’, wrote the editor of the Welsh Outlook in 1926, ‘is taking place in the Welsh religious world’. The Free Churches were, he claimed, ‘shedding many of their former characteristics’ in favour of ‘a finer spirit of comradeship, and a stronger social and moral fervour’. His periodical would, therefore, give full opportunity for Catholics to express their views in its pages. Welshmen of whatever creed, he concluded, should ‘co-operate amicably and cheerfully in the great field which is open to us all, outside the sphere of theological and ecclesiastical conflict’⁴²⁵. In the same publication a year later Dr. Miall Edwards of the Independents’ Memorial College, Brecon noted that such a tolerant spirit was becoming increasingly prevalent in the Principality. ‘There is abroad in Wales to-day’, he wrote, ‘a desire to be intelligently sympathetic towards Catholicism and to see the good that is in them’⁴²⁶. Again, Rev. E.E. Thomas claimed that Welsh people were not ‘so bitter towards Catholicism as they were even a few decades ago; they are content to let it pursue its own way, and if it can claim men’s allegiance they are willing to wish

⁴²²*The Tablet*, 29 Sept. 1934, 406.

⁴²³N. Wynne, ‘Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Lampeter’, *Daffodils Under the Snow* (Liverpool, 1946), p. 38.

⁴²⁴Furey, ‘Redemptorist Foundation in Machynlleth’, p. 55.

⁴²⁵*Welsh Outlook*, XIII (1) (1926), 5.

⁴²⁶*Welsh Outlook*, XIV (1) (1927), 28.

it well'⁴²⁷. Four years later an editorial in the Western Mail noted that 'whether due to increasing tolerance or increasing indifference, the fact remains that nowhere else in the world does that Church enjoy greater freedom and respect than in Protestant Britain'. Christians in Wales, it continued, 'instead of attacking each other as heretics ... seem to have tacitly agreed that their most effective propaganda is to present their faith to the world and leave the decision with the minds and hearts of those whom they are desirous of winning to their fold'⁴²⁸.

Catholics themselves were also remarking on this general change in attitude. In a letter to St. Peter's Parish Magazine, Francis Vaughan, the bishop-elect of Menevia, wrote that 'a survey of the first quarter of this twentieth century shows a lessening of prejudice against, and an increasing understanding of Catholicism, amongst the Welsh people'. He continued by enthusing that 'in our own day we have witnessed the thaw of frozen prejudice'⁴²⁹. Likewise, in the Welsh Outlook in 1925 J. de Hirsch Davies also recognised 'the extraordinary change in the general attitude even of the "average" Welshman to-day ... towards Roman Catholicism'. He delighted at the 'departure from the previous attitude of hostility, suspicion and intolerance'⁴³⁰. While addressing the Catholic Citizens Parliament a year later, he claimed that while there was still much prejudice and hostility against Catholics in Wales, this was 'not nearly so much as there was only a few years ago; very many of the young Welshmen of to-day do not share the prejudices and the anti-Catholic views of their grandparents'⁴³¹.

The attitude that the English language secular newspapers in Wales began to take to the Catholic Church from the 1920s reflected this new tolerance. At Mostyn's enthronement in 1921 St. Peter's Parish Magazine noted that the coverage given by the local press was different in its attitude from that which would have been expected at the turn of the century, with the Western Mail, South Wales Daily News, and Evening Express all giving special prominence to the ceremony and being very complimentary to the new Archbishop⁴³². Five years

⁴²⁷ Thomas, 'Wales and Catholicism', p. 47.

⁴²⁸ Western Mail, 10 Feb. 1936, 8.

⁴²⁹ St. Peter's Parish Magazine, 6 (8) (1926), 229.

⁴³⁰ J.E. de Hirsch Davies, 'Catholicism and Protestantism', Welsh Outlook XII (10) (1925), 267.

⁴³¹ The Tablet, 10 April 1926, 506-7.

⁴³² St. Peter's Parish Magazine, 1 (5) (1921), viii.

later The Tablet commended the willingness of non-Catholic editors of papers in South Wales to find room for Catholics in their publications. The South Wales Daily News in 1926, for example, published an article on the canonisation of St. David by Fr. J.M. Cronin, Mostyn's Secretary⁴³³. Another five years later The Tablet was to praise the 'ability and fairness' of the Western Mail⁴³⁴. It is certainly notable that from the late 1920s reports on Welsh Catholic activities began to be regular in such newspapers.

Although Welsh Catholics could not become involved in any ecumenical discussion, as the old prejudice slowly subsided many began to realise that Christians had to stand together against modern evils. Writing in St. Peter's Parish Magazine in 1924 Robert Wade noted that while Catholics should continue to try to convert their fellow-countrymen, they should realise that there was a large body of sincere and zealous non-Catholics who were also trying to combat materialism and immorality. Catholics should, therefore, 'co-operate with these men and not remain isolated, self-centred and misunderstood'⁴³⁵. As society became increasingly indifferent to religion, there was also a realisation that it was better for a person to be Protestant than atheist. Donald Attwater reminded Catholics in Wales in 1935 that they should not hope and pray for the 'decay of Nonconformity' to continue, as 'the decay of non-Catholic Christianity means that people are deserting not simply their churches and sects but the person of Jesus Christ as well'. He asked if it was better 'for non-Catholic people to ignore, even despise, Christ, or to love him and believe in him?'⁴³⁶.

For their part many Protestants began to recognise that the greatest threat to their religious future was not Catholicism but agnosticism and atheism. In 1924 Saunders Lewis's aunt, after initial hostility to the fact that he was marrying a convert to Catholicism, admitted a change of heart. 'I prefer his marrying a girl who cared enough about her religion to change it than one who was perfectly indifferent to spiritual things' she said⁴³⁷. By 1935 the Western Mail was reminding its readers that 'the greatest foe which Wales has to fear is not Papal

⁴³³*The Tablet*, 13 March 1926, 351.

⁴³⁴*The Tablet*, 23 May 1931, 670.

⁴³⁵Wade, 'Catholics and their Social Responsibilities', p. 200.

⁴³⁶Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 219.

⁴³⁷Letter July 5, 1924; Jones, Thomas and Jones, *Letters to Margaret Gilcriest*, p. 544.

dominion but the forces of militant materialism in their forms'⁴³⁸. Four years earlier a Calvinistic Methodist from Bangor had written expressing 'strong dissent' from the attitude of many leading Nonconformists towards the Catholic Church. He particularly cited Rev. J.D. Evans, who, though regarded as an enlightened minister, still delighted in the decline of Catholicism abroad. 'Is it not deplorable that one Christian body should be so hostile to another? Are they not both engaged in the same work?'. He expressed disgust that his fellow Nonconformists should suggest that atheism would be preferable to Catholicism while claiming that the abuses of the Reformation period still existed. 'I admit that the Roman Church is intolerant of independent religious thought;' he wrote, 'but have we the right to find fault? Is any Christian sect less tolerant than ours?'. He concluded by asking 'ought we not, as Christians, to regard the spread of Christianity by any agency with rejoicing?'⁴³⁹. A later letter from a non-Catholic in Cardiff agreed that both Catholics and Protestants 'receive their "light" from the same source and differ but in method'. This message, he claimed, 'strikes at the root of all antagonism and hostility and should be broadcast from every wireless station every night before closing down and posted on every hoarding in the land'⁴⁴⁰.

That such views were becoming more prevalent was shown in the reaction of a number of non-Catholics in the letter pages of *Y Cymro* to Rev. Prof. W.D. Davies of Aberystwyth's statement in 1933 that he would rather see a child grow up to be an atheist than a Catholic. W.D. Morgan, an Anglican from Pembrey, protested against what he believed to be an un-Christian declaration⁴⁴¹, writing 'gorau po gyntaf y gwelwn ni yng Nghymru fod y Pabyddion yn bobl naturiol fel pawb eraill'⁴⁴². Another non-Catholic correspondent referred to Davies's foolhardy remark and extreme bigotry; 'os oes y fath beth a chabledd, dyna fe'. Davies had dwelled on the handful of Welsh converts to Rome, yet as for the thousands who turned their backs on the chapels in favour of atheism 'nid yw neb yn ysgwyd ei ddyrnau, yn ysgrechu, yn gynddeiriog, ac yn malu ewyn, oblegid

⁴³⁸*Western Mail*, 24, Jan. 1935, 6.

⁴³⁹*Western Mail*, 25 June 1931, 13.

⁴⁴⁰*Western Mail*, 27 June 1931, 4.

⁴⁴¹*Y Cymro*, 17 June 1933, 7.

⁴⁴²*Y Cymro*, 8 July 1933, 5.

hyn'. The correspondent concluded by quoting the 'common sense' of the poet Bodfan;

'Pawb a eddyf, pabyddiaeth - anoddef

A gynydda'n helaeth;

Ond yn wir nid yw waeth

Pa gynnydd wna paganiaeth'⁴⁴³.

The correspondence was terminated with the assertion that the claims of Christianity were far more important than those of exclusive Protestantism or Catholicism, and that such remarks as Davies's were doing much harm to the cause of religion in Wales⁴⁴⁴.

Even in the usually hostile Nonconformist councils and conferences Catholicism slowly began to be treated with less animosity. In Colwyn Bay in 1925 the Congregationalist Archdruid of Wales, Rev. Elvet Lewis, spoke candidly and respectfully about Catholicism, remarking that 'the wonder is that the Welsh turned Protestant at all, for Roman Catholicism had taken a deeper and stronger root in Wales than in any other country'⁴⁴⁵. Moreover, at the Calvinistic Methodist Sasiwn in Caernarfon ten years later, Rev John Owen of Morfa Nefyn announced that among the students at 'Coleg Clwyd', a Nonconformist-run establishment, were two Roman Catholics. He stated that the college was pleased both to have them and their fees! Rev. R.R. Williams supported the presence of the Catholics in the college. Inevitably there were many Nonconformists who were infuriated by their presence, both at the Sasiwn and in the letter-pages of Welsh newspapers. These should not overshadow the fact that the Catholic students had been accepted to study in the college, and that their presence was supported by a number of ministers at the Caernarfon Sasiwn⁴⁴⁶.

The slowly changing attitudes of such Nonconformist councils towards Catholics was reflected further in the fact that by 1935 the South Wales Calvinistic Methodist Sasiwn could lay aside all their religious prejudices in the interest of appealing for World peace. At their meeting at Llanymddyfri in

⁴⁴³*Y Cymro*, 17 June 1933, 5; see also *Y Cymro*, 24 June 1933, 7; *Y Cymro*, 1 July 1933, 7.

⁴⁴⁴*Y Cymro*, 15 July 1933, 5.

⁴⁴⁵*The Tablet*, 4 April 1925, 439.

⁴⁴⁶*Y Cymro*, 14 Sept. 1935, 16; see also *Y Goleuad*, 18 Sept. 1935, 5.

September the Sasiwn adopted a motion that a message should be sent to the Vatican appealing to 'his Holiness the Pope to summon immediately a conference of all Christian communities for the purpose of definitely denouncing war as an instrument of national policy and of establishing universal and enduring peace'⁴⁴⁷. It was not, however, until after a fiercely contested debate that the motion was carried, with 28 out of the 69 present voting against such an appeal to the Pope⁴⁴⁸. Rev. John Green of Rhydlewis described the motion as 'the worst of two evils', and claimed that many would see in the appeal evidence of a weak Methodist body having to appeal to the Pope, the great enemy of Protestantism, to come to the rescue. Likewise, Principal H. Harris Hughes of Aberystwyth replied to the Moderator's call for a unanimous vote for the motion by stating that he 'could never vote in favour of that'⁴⁴⁹. The majority of those present, however, were willing to lay aside religious differences in an effort to improve the world situation. Like Dr. W.E. Orchard, the pacifist Nonconformist who had converted to Rome⁴⁵⁰, they recognised that the Pope alone as a religious leader held the power to prevent war. Rev. Peter Hughes-Griffiths urged that not only would they be breaking new ecumenical ground in making the decision, but Wales, a small country, could be preventing war by carrying the motion. 'Ar y funud', he said, 'y mae un ffordd bosibl i rhwystro rhyfel, a'r ffordd honno oedd drwy gymorth y Pab ... y mae ei safle ar hyn o bryd yn un gyfrifol iawn, a dylem weddio drosto'. After asserting that the Pope was the head of the oldest Christian Church, Rev. J.L. Jenkins of Llanelli gave a stern warning to those opposing the appeal⁴⁵¹. 'My one argument', he claimed, 'is that it would be a disaster if this tremendous issue that affects the very life of the world should be mixed up with sectarian doctrine and religious prejudices. If it is possible to bring together the Church of God as a whole I am prepared to sink all differences'⁴⁵².

Prominent Nonconformists reacted to the appeal in the Western Mail. Only the vice-president of the Welsh Congregational Union, Rev. J. Dyfnallt

⁴⁴⁷*Western Mail*, 20 Sept. 1935, 10.

⁴⁴⁸*Y Goleuad*, 25 Sept. 1935, 8.

⁴⁴⁹*Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1935, 10.

⁴⁵⁰Stuart Mews, 'The Sword of the Spirit', *Studies in Church History*, 20 (1983), 413.

⁴⁵¹*Y Cymro*, 21 Sept. 1935, 2.

⁴⁵²*Western Mail*, 19 Sept. 1935, 10.

Owen of Carmarthen, seemed to criticise such an appeal, claiming that even in its own Church and country 'there has been neither light nor guidance from the Vatican'. The president of the same union, Rev. J.J. Williams, was far more open minded, stating that 'if the Pope can do something (against war) well then let us appeal to him. Without any hesitation whatsoever Welsh Congregations would join in such an appeal if invited to do so'. G.T. Lewis, Moderator-elect of the South Wales Sasiwn, appealed to all other denominations in Wales to co-operate with the cause of peace, claiming that 'all doctrinal differences and creeds should be sunk in time to save the world from disaster'. Mostyn refused to make a statement regarding the appeal, although the Western Mail claimed that it had learned 'from a reliable source' that the Sasiwn's proposal was being viewed with considerable satisfaction by Welsh Catholics as an indication that bodies outside the Church looked to the Pope for a lead⁴⁵³.

Pope Pius XI was not to reply to the Sasiwn's appeal. A Papal spokesman declared that he was not in the habit of replying to such appeals from non-Catholic organisations, especially as his views on peace were already sufficiently well known through his declarations⁴⁵⁴. This may have been taken as an insult or a rebuff, but the Western Mail claimed that the appeal remained 'manifestly far-reaching in its significance'. Welsh Calvinistic Methodism had begun a new era where religious prejudice and intolerance could be laid aside, even against bitter enemies, in relation to matters where all Christian bodies should stand together. 'In light of the denomination's history such a decision may be justly described as the most portentous in its annals'. The Sasiwn could have ensured an official reply from the Vatican if they had sent the appeal through the British Foreign Secretary, or had asked Saunders Lewis to introduce a deputation to Mostyn with the view of approaching the Pope through him. The importance of the decision to make such a move, however, should not be overshadowed by such speculation. It 'marked a remarkable change of attitude on part of the sons of the fathers of the Methodist Revival', as between the Catholic Church and Nonconformity there had always been 'an absolutely impassable gulf the bridging of which has been

⁴⁵³*Western Mail*, 20 Sept. 1935, 10.

⁴⁵⁴*Y Cymro*, 28 Sept. 1935, 10; *Western Mail*, 24 Sept. 1935, 7.

regarded as too impossible an achievement, even as an act of imagination'. Yet here was a public Nonconformist acknowledgement of the supreme place which the Pope held. This decision had 'taken the first step for the creation of a fresh watershed in the landscape of the religious life of the Principality, and, consequently, the position can never be again as it has so long been in the past'⁴⁵⁵.

Just as Nonconformist hostility towards Catholicism seemed to be abating, there was a similar trend in Anglican quarters. 'Inter-Communion with Rome is not possible at the moment,' the Western Mail noted, 'though it is said that many of the clergy and laity of the Welsh Church favour it'⁴⁵⁶. Although the Church of Rome could have no part in ecumenical dialogue, many of the Anglo-Catholics in Wales, who were especially numerous in the south-east, would certainly have favoured such talks. Archbishop Charles Green was particularly fervent in his desire for reunion with Rome, and as bishop of Monmouth took great interest in the Malines conversations on reunion between 1921 and 1925. His biographer writes that he would 'happily have aligned himself' with those at Malines⁴⁵⁷. That the Roman Church in Wales also took Malines seriously is shown in the fact that first editions of Viscount Halifax's books on the conversations were kept at the Diocesan Library at Wrexham. Although the aim of Malines and its supporters was clearly over-optimistic, it is clear that by this time many Welsh Anglicans were beginning to treat Rome with less hostility and suspicion. Following the new Pope's message of peace and goodwill in 1939, it was reported that the 'largely evangelical' Anglican congregation of Blaenavon was 'thrilled' at the announcement and requested a Te Deum should be sung to celebrate the Pope's coronation. Their vicar, Rev. D. Ivor Jones, spoke of 'the spirit of tolerance shown by Christians in this town', and stated that 'in these difficult times religious controversy is the last thing to be desired and is, we hope and pray, quite dead'. The Western Mail noted that other members of various denominations who were asked 'practically all agreed with the vicar that religious controversy should be a thing of the past, and that the suggestion [to sing a Te Deum] was indicative of a feeling of goodwill towards the Roman Church'. There were those, however,

⁴⁵⁵*Western Mail*, 28 Sept. 1935, 11.

⁴⁵⁶*Western Mail*, 11 April 1936, 10.

⁴⁵⁷A.J. Edwards, *Archbishop Green : His Life and Opinions* (Llandysul, 1986), p. 75.

who criticised this feeling of goodwill towards Rome. 'We shall sing a Te Deum', stated Rev. H.O. Williams, the vicar of Caerleon, 'when the Pope puts into action his message of peace and goodwill in religious circles'⁴⁵⁸.

At the outbreak of the Second World War hostility certainly continued at many levels in Wales. Catholics were accused of Fascist sympathies and the usual criticism of Catholic beliefs continued almost unabated. There were an increasing number of non-Catholics, however, who recognised the futility of religious controversy, especially in the face of the new problems the war had brought up. Reacting to a succession of hostile letters criticising both Catholic tenets and devotion to martyrs, one correspondent in the Monmouthshire Beacon asked 'with Martin Niemoller in a concentration camp and Kesselring besieging the Vatican have we really nothing better to do than to fan the embers of the fires of Smithfield or defend the spirit which kindled them?' Protestants and Catholics in Wales should stand together united at a time when 'every common tenet of every religion may be sunk in the night of Nazism for a thousand years'⁴⁵⁹. Likewise, other non-Catholics defended Catholics against hostile criticism. In response to W.J. Gruffydd's vitriolic attack on the Papacy in Y Llenor in 1940⁴⁶⁰, an article by a Nonconformist correspondent in Y Faner criticised him for 'tynnu darlun rhy sinistr o'r Pab' and for 'orliwio ac weithiau'n camliwio' the Papacy's aims. Contrary to Gruffydd's claims, the civil war in Spain had not been a purely religious matter and wealthy British Catholics had not sold large parts of their estates to fund Franco⁴⁶¹. Neither was there any foundation to the claim that the Papacy had any part in the present war, which was simply a war about markets, industry and money. 'Nid yw dwyn y Babaeth i mewn, o ran effaith, yn ddim ond taflu llwch i llygaid y pobl'⁴⁶². Another correspondent in the same publication, J.R. Jones of Felinheli, introduced a new perspective into the discussion, claiming that Welshmen should be opposing English influences in their lives rather than opposing Catholics. The only opposition they should have against the Catholic Church was the English atmospheres in Catholic schools. 'Y mae Seisnigrwydd a

⁴⁵⁸*Western Mail*, 6 March 1939, 9.

⁴⁵⁹*Monmouthshire Beacon*, 24 Sept. 1943, 5.

⁴⁶⁰*Y Llenor*, XIX (1940), 121-126.

⁴⁶¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 23 Oct. 1940, 4.

⁴⁶²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 6 Nov. 1940, 4.

snobyddiaeth ein holl fywyd' he wrote, 'yn gwneud llawer iawn mwy o niwed i Gymru nag ambell Babydd diddylanwad'⁴⁶³.

b) Post-war development

Following the war, although there was admittedly still a good deal of continuing prejudice, instances of non-Catholic tolerance became frequent. One of the most striking examples of such tolerance in the 1940s was the support given in Llandudno at the enthronement of Petit as bishop of Menevia in 1947. A large crowd, who were 'mainly Nonconformists'⁴⁶⁴ and even included some ministers, turned up to view the proceedings, and for the first time in any Welsh town the Papal flag flew over the Town Hall alongside the Welsh Dragon and the Union Jack⁴⁶⁵. The service itself was made easier for non-Catholics by the distribution of souvenir handbooks which contained translations and descriptions of the ceremony, and a local newspaper described the proceedings as 'both beautiful and impressive'⁴⁶⁶. Bishop Petit was so moved at the reception the non-Catholics of Llandudno had given to him that he wrote a letter of thanks to them that was published in a local paper. He wrote that he wished to 'express my deep thanks to the civic heads and citizens of the town for their kindness and courtesy to me on the occasion of the consecration'. He also thanked the leaders of the religious bodies who attended for 'their kind thought', and the non-Catholic press for 'their sensitive consideration'. He ended his letter with a vision of Wales's ecumenical future when he expressed his desire to co-operate with these other denominations 'for the spiritual and temporal welfare of Wales'⁴⁶⁷.

A similarly significant event in the relationship of Catholicism and Nonconformity took place in April 1949 when, for the first time in their history, a Catholic bishop visited a Nonconformist chapel. Petit was invited, and duly attended, a meeting of the Council of North Wales Evangelical Churches at

⁴⁶³*ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴*Western Mail*, 26 March 1947, 3.

⁴⁶⁵*Menevia Record*, 3 (3) (1956), 6; Amiel and Dunphy. *Our Lady Star of the Sea, Llandudno*, p. 27.

⁴⁶⁶*North Wales Weekly News*, 27 March 1947, 4.

⁴⁶⁷*North Wales Weekly News*, 3 April 1947, 4.

Pendref Welsh Methodist Chapel, Denbigh to state the case for Catholic schools⁴⁶⁸. The hostile reaction from some corners of the Welsh Free Church press was only to be expected. *Y Tyst* described Petit's attendance at a chapel he regarded as heretical in order to address people he condemned to damnation as 'un o ddigwyddiadau mwyaf gwrthun ein cyfnod'⁴⁶⁹. At the meeting itself, however, Rev. Herbert Evans of Caernarfon welcomed Petit by referring to his presence as 'peth newydd yn hanes crefydd yng Nghymru', while Petit himself emphasised the need for denominational co-operation to oppose the Communist threat. The Council eventually passed a resolution which foreshadowed the denominational harmony which was to develop in Wales following the Vatican Council. This resolution suggested that closer co-operation should be fostered between all denominations in Wales. There was much disagreement as to whether the Catholic Church should be included. 'Credaf mai ofer fyddai i ni gynnwys yr Eglwys Babyddol', Rev. J.P. Davies of Porthmadog declared⁴⁷⁰. The resolution, however, was passed, suggesting that 'all sections of the Christian Church in North Wales, including the Church in Wales and the Roman Catholic Church, should arrange a conference in 1950 to seek better understanding and greater co-operation in prayer, creed and procedure'⁴⁷¹.

Individual non-Catholics also began to emphasise the need for denominational harmony between Protestant and Catholic. An article in *Y Faner* in 1951, reacting to the fiery debates concerning Mary's assumption, warned that the spirit of Christian unity was being lost in the wild controversy. With the human race facing a great crisis 'wele ddiwinyddion a dysgodron eglwysig yn mynd ati'n hwyliog i ymgecru ynghylch yr athrawiaeth felys'. The article concluded by noting that the only person who had not joined in the debate was Mary herself and it stated what it believed Mary's reaction would be. 'Gofid i mi yw eich gweld chwi'n ymroddi i fân ddadleuon ynglyn â'm corff yn lle ymuno i weithredu yn y byd fel Corff fy annwyl Fab. Yr ydych chi i gyd yn blant i mi ac yr wyf yn eich caru chi i gyd'⁴⁷². Similarly, a correspondent in *Y Cymro*, while

⁴⁶⁸*Western Mail*, 6 April 1949, 3; *Y Goleuad*, 13 April 1949, 1.

⁴⁶⁹*Y Tyst*, 21 April 1949, 1.

⁴⁷⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 April 1949, 5.

⁴⁷¹*Western Mail*, 7 April 1949, 3.

⁴⁷²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 Jan. 1951, 8.

disagreeing with the dogma of the assumption, criticised his fellow Nonconformists for the hostile way they were expressing this opinion. Many of the attacks on Mary, he claimed, were far worse than the belief itself⁴⁷³. Even the formerly hostile W.J. Gruffydd, in his criticism of Nonconformist opposition to the proposed Catholic school at Flint, wrote that he had come to recognise that ‘ein dyletswydd gyntaf ni, yn wyneb cyflwr adfydus y byd a’i ymwadiad â gwerthoedd moesol yw goddefgarwch tuag at gyfundrefnau crefyddol sy’n groes i’n credoau ni’. Less than sixty years previously Y Faner’s headline at Mostyn’s enthronement had read ‘The Attack of the Antichrist on Wales’⁴⁷⁴, but now Gruffydd was using the phrase ‘Antichrist’ to refer to modern secular evils. ‘Os yw fy nghyd-Brotestaniaid yn dymuno cael crwsad,’ he concluded, ‘beth am un symudiad mawr unol i gael Eglwys Rufain i gyd-weithredu â ni yn erbyn yr Anghrist?’⁴⁷⁵. A correspondent in Y Faner immediately commended Gruffydd’s sentiments⁴⁷⁶.

It was also clear from the letter pages of the Western Mail in the 1950s that the need for Christians to stand together was being realised. In an otherwise hostile letter in 1950 Gwen John of Swansea concluded by stating that ‘while some of us maintain that the government of the Roman Church is totalitarian, nevertheless, when it is up against anti-Christian totalitarianism the other branches of Christ’s Church are prepared to stand with her in combat of such things, for in Christ’s Church on earth there are more things which unite all its branches than things which disunite them’⁴⁷⁷. A few years later a student from Carmarthen appealed to the Welsh Roman hierarchy to ‘consider the need for unity’. Many individual Catholics, he claimed, desired to be involved in ecumenical discussions, yet the leaders ‘rigidly and illogically’ decline to strive for any such unity. ‘What an impression’, he concluded, ‘the Holy Father would make on the whole world were he to announce his desire to meet the leaders of the “other churches” with a view to unity’⁴⁷⁸. Another letter illustrated why denominations were beginning to

⁴⁷³ *Y Cymro*, 11 Jan. 1952, 13.

⁴⁷⁴ Attwater, *Catholic Church in Modern Wales*, p. 126.

⁴⁷⁵ *Y Llenor*, 30 (1) (1951), 2.

⁴⁷⁶ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 18 April 1951, 8.

⁴⁷⁷ *Western Mail*, 2 June 1950, 4.

⁴⁷⁸ *Western Mail*, 30 Dec. 1953, 6.

realise the need for some sort of unity. Norman John of Cardiff wrote that the continuing disunity of Christianity with Protestant-Catholic hostility still evident was ‘even to me, an agnostic, ironically tragic. They who preach the brotherhood of man quarrel about “doctrine”! What a spectacle these Christian leaders provide for the unbelievers’⁴⁷⁹. Much prejudice and bigotry continued in the Western Mail’s letter pages, however, and in 1960 Councillor Brinley Evans of Abertillery remarked that, rather than revelling in criticism of the Catholic Church, ‘as Christians we should be seeking “areas of unity” for all denominations’⁴⁸⁰. Likewise, Dewi J. Howells of Abercynon asked ‘is it more important to be a Roman Catholic, an Anglican, a Congregationalist, a Methodist or just simply a Christian?’⁴⁸¹.

There was also a move towards actually understanding Catholicism and its beliefs. ‘Roman Catholics in Wales today’, wrote Raymond Thomas in 1953, ‘can teach us some useful lessons’. Catholics ‘will stand no nonsense from crabbed, ill-informed bigots’, and if Welsh Nonconformists were honest ‘we have to admit that Catholics possess what many of us painfully lack - spiritual vision’⁴⁸². Likewise, it is conspicuous that the attempt to reverse the BBC’s 1956 decision to prevent the Prayer for Wales from being used in Catholic broadcast services was led by two Nonconformist ministers⁴⁸³. In the same year the Menevia Record reported that the celebrations for the restoration of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Taper at Cardigan had witnessed much non-Catholic goodwill; ‘the reverence of the non-Catholic onlookers was sincere and, in a way, touching’. Many of them helped with the organisation of the celebrations and showed ‘unfailing sympathy, understanding and co-operation’. There had certainly been a number of anti-Catholic letters in the secular press during the Diocesan tour of the shrine, yet even these were criticised by both non-Catholics and Catholic alike. One non-Catholic was dismayed at a call for protest meetings and counter-processions. J.W. Sewell of Aberporth wrote of the correspondence’s ‘shocking religious intolerance’ which was an insult to most Christians. ‘I suggest that it is this very

⁴⁷⁹*Western Mail*, 12 Jan. 1954, 6.

⁴⁸⁰*Western Mail*, 8 March 1960, 4.

⁴⁸¹*ibid.*; see also *Western Mail*, 14 March 1960, 4.

⁴⁸²*Menevia Record*, 1 (2) (1953), 10.

⁴⁸³Wrexham Diocesan Archives : BBC File.

narrow-mindedness', he concluded, 'that has been one reason for the falling off in church and chapel attendance'. Likewise, another correspondent reacted to the call for mass protests by asking whether those encouraging them would 'like to hear of priests pelted with pies and in retaliation violence done to vicars and ministers manhandled? This absolute disregard of the other person's religious point of view is disturbing'⁴⁸⁴.

Such changes in attitudes towards Catholic beliefs and practices were often due to the work done by the Lamp Society in distributing literature, and by the distribution of the Menevia Record. This kind of evangelisation admittedly caused much ill-will against Catholics, but, on a positive side, such publications also helped many to begin to understand and accept Catholics. J.B. Evans wrote that the Menevia Record was the first Catholic publication ever seen in his household, and the first copy they received was thrown straight into the fire. After some time, however, he began to read the magazine, and, he stated, 'though I still call myself a Methodist, honesty compels me to add that my former, stupid and suspicious attitude towards the Catholic Church has vanished forever'⁴⁸⁵. In 1955 even a Welsh Baptist minister wrote to the editor to compliment him on the publication. Though he claimed he was perhaps 'not quite the right person to pass judgement on the contents of a Catholic periodical', he felt compelled to write to 'congratulate you on the Menevia Record. Your quarterly is lively and stimulating'⁴⁸⁶.

The gradually changing attitudes of Welsh non-Catholics, was welcomed with enthusiasm in Catholic circles. In The Tablet in 1950 H.W.J. Edwards noted that there had been 'signs of a thaw' in Welsh hostility towards Catholicism, as there was a feeling in the face of an increasingly irreligious and secular society 'that Wales must be really Christian again'⁴⁸⁷. Ten years later Ena Kendall wrote in the Western Mail that, although prejudice was still active in some quarters, 'public opposition to the Catholic Church is dying fast'⁴⁸⁸. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, G.D. Bateman claimed in the Review that 'each of us,

⁴⁸⁴ Menevia Record, 4 (1) (1956), 10-17.

⁴⁸⁵ Menevia Record, 2 (2) (1954), 9.

⁴⁸⁶ Menevia Record, 2 (3) (1955), 7.

⁴⁸⁷ The Tablet, 4 Feb. 1950, 88.

⁴⁸⁸ Western Mail, 17 Feb. 1960, 4.

according to our up-bringing and environment, has sensed in our friends, colleagues and acquaintances, their changing attitudes to our faith'. Although admitting that bigotry had not yet disappeared, he maintained it was 'moribund and under the benign influence of Pope John, it should be deader still as a result of his coming great Council'. Of the increasing acceptance of Catholics in twentieth century Wales, Bateman concluded that 'a zephyr has become a breeze, the breeze has developed into "a wind of change" and now it is nearly a full gale'⁴⁸⁹.

Certainly the new Catholic spirit embodied in the Second Vatican Council was welcomed by non-Catholic Welshmen. At the end of 1960 the Province, the Welsh Anglican periodical, reacted with enthusiasm to Archbishop Fisher of Canterbury's historic visit to Pope John XXIII. 'It is devoutly to be hoped', wrote the editor, 'that this small beginning may develop into contacts and discussions which will make Oecumenical Movement in very truth what by title it already claims to be'⁴⁹⁰. Likewise, an editorial in the Western Mail enthused that the visit meant 'the ice is to be broken' and suggested it may mean the Pope 'has perceived the possibilities of Roman Catholic co-operation with other Churches'⁴⁹¹. At this time the Province also published a two part article written by C. Eurwyn Jones which aimed to 'understand the Roman Catholic position, not in any spirit of controversy and polemic in order to score points, but in an eirenic spirit, with as much detachment and objectivity'. To do this, he noted, 'one has to remove many a tenaciously held pre-supposition and prejudice, and one requires the virtues of sympathy, tolerance, charity and a great concern for the truth'⁴⁹². Although not able to free itself completely of misunderstanding, Jones's article nevertheless dealt with Catholicism in a much fairer and just way than similar articles in the past had done⁴⁹³.

As the Second Vatican Council began the Province published an article by Bishop Gwilym O. Williams of Bangor, originally published in the leading U.S. Catholic journal Ave Maria, entitled 'An Anglican Looks at the Ecumenical Council'. In it he urged that the only way that Anglicans and Catholics would

⁴⁸⁹Bateman, 'A Catholic Wind of Change', pp. 4-5.

⁴⁹⁰*Province*, 11 (4) (1960), 109.

⁴⁹¹*Western Mail*, 1 Nov. 1960, 6.

⁴⁹²C. Eurwyn Jones, 'Anglicanism and the Papacy', *Province*, 11 (4) (1960), 113.

⁴⁹³*ibid.*; C. Eurwyn Jones, 'Anglicanism and the Papacy II', *Province*, 12 (1) (1961).

realise the fellowship they already had in their common Christianity was if they began to talk openly about their differences. While admitting that Anglicans would find the more recently defined Marian dogmas as difficult to accept, he nevertheless praised the Catholic attitude to the Bible. Furthermore, the position of the Pope should not be as great a problem as it had been in the past. Although Anglicans could not accept the infallibility of the Pope, they still ‘desire to pay him the honour rightly due to the position of his See in Christian history and will regard the Council assembled with him at the Vatican as an organ of the Holy Spirit to make known God’s will in our day and our age’. Williams concluded with a strong message of hope for future relations. ‘Already there is a new confidence in our relationships with one another that makes us rejoice and thank God; may He use the Ecumenical Council to bless Christians and all mankind with the increase of faith, hope and love!’⁴⁹⁴. The Western Mail also eagerly welcomed the Council in 1962. An editorial noted that ‘it is heartening to Christians of all denominations that Pope John XXIII should say the Roman Catholic Church considered it her duty “to work actively” for Christian unity’. The hands of friendship which were now being extended from all sides of the denominational spectrum were ‘a symbol to warm all hearts’⁴⁹⁵. The Council certainly had an immediate effect on denominational relations in Wales, as, both at a local and a national level, friendship and co-operation very quickly developed. ‘The ecumenical movement is progressing’, stated the Y Faner as early as January 1964, ‘and the wind of the Spirit is blowing where it will ... The Faner - although it is Thomas Gee’s old paper - is glad to see signs that the relations between the Church of Rome and the other Churches appear to be warming’⁴⁹⁶.

With the advent of post-Second Vatican Council Catholicism, and its determination to partake in the ecumenical dialogue, a new era for Welsh

⁴⁹⁴Gwilym Williams. ‘An Anglican Looks at the Ecumenical Council’, *Province*, 13 (3) (1962). 75-8.

⁴⁹⁵*Western Mail*, 12 Oct. 1962. 6.

⁴⁹⁶*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Feb. 1964. 166.

denominational relations was instituted. Yet in the years leading up to the Council there had already been some signs that the Catholic Church in Wales was moving this way, especially since the hierarchy of England and Wales (on instruction from the Holy Office) issued directions in 1949 that non-Catholic efforts for unity should be viewed 'with sympathy' and supported 'with our prayers'⁴⁹⁷. Referring to a number of Catholic leaders on the continent who were beginning to sympathise with ecumenical aims, the usually hostile *Y Tyst* stated: 'gall gwelltyn mynydd awgrymu sut y mae'r gwynt yn symud'⁴⁹⁸. Certainly the slowly changing non-Catholic attitudes since the war and their realisation that Christians should stand together against secularism, was certainly complemented by a similar change among many Catholics. By 1957 A. Cordani in the *Review* magazine was to claim 'we must learn to sympathise with non-Catholics and appreciate their love of God, although not worshipped in this way'⁴⁹⁹.

In a far cry from Mostyn's assertion thirty years earlier that unity could only come through conversion to Rome⁵⁰⁰, Catholics in Wales began to emphasise the need to strive for some sort of ecumenical unity. 'The surest way to Christian Unity', wrote the editor of the parish magazine of St. Mary's, Newport in 1960, 'is a clear and unprejudiced understanding of Catholic and non-Catholic points of view'. With the onslaught of materialism and atheism the publication emphatically stated that 'no Catholic worthy of the name can afford to neglect an opportunity to make an individual contribution to the cause of Christian Unity and interdenominational understanding'⁵⁰¹. In the same year similar sentiments were expressed at Bangor where the celebrations marking the restoration of the Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception were fully ecumenical in flavour. In the presence of the non-Catholic Lord Mayor and other civil guests, Archbishop Gerald O'Hara, the Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, spoke of the 'wind of change' which he believed was sweeping through the Church. 'Principles do not change', he asserted, 'but we must change'. Catholics had in the past been the victims of much hatred and persecution but the situation

⁴⁹⁷*Acts and Decrees of the Synod of the Diocese of Menevia July 1961*, p. 47.

⁴⁹⁸*Y Tyst*, 28 April 1949, 2.

⁴⁹⁹*Review*, 1 (2) (1957), 13.

⁵⁰⁰Francis Mostyn. *Cardiff Lenten Pastoral 1928*.

⁵⁰¹*St. Mary's Magazine*, Christmas 1960, 1.

was fast changing, and they must now learn ‘to see the best in our fellow-men rather than the worst’. The archbishop urged that all Catholics should say ‘Our Father’ once a day for Christian Unity, with the aim of ‘a renewal of the mind and heart and a consequent healing of the wounds and factions that have so long held people apart’⁵⁰². By 1961 (the year in which Petit enthusiastically agreed to appoint two Catholic representatives on the Committee for the new Welsh Bible⁵⁰³) he even gave Fr. O’Neill of Aberystwyth permission to preside at inter-denominational Armistice prayers. ‘This service’, he wrote, ‘should give you an opportunity for conciliating non-Catholic opinion and sympathy and I hope full use may be made of it’⁵⁰⁴.

Correspondence between Petit and Bishop Gwilym Williams at this time reflected this change in Catholic attitude. Before this, correspondence between bishops of different denominations had been infrequent and formal. Early in 1961 Williams urged Anglicans of his own Bangor diocese to pray for unity with all Christians, including with ‘the Pope, the bishop of Menevia and the priest and people of the Roman Catholic Church in your neighbourhood’. ‘Nothing’, he wrote, ‘can dispel suspicion and hostility like this recognition that we belong to the same Christian family and are bound to pray for one another’⁵⁰⁵. He then sent a copy of the newsletter in which the appeal had appeared to Petit ‘with the assurance of my prayers’. In reply Petit wrote : ‘I fully agree with what you write about praying for unity’. ‘Thank you for your prayers’, his letter concluded, ‘- I will keep you in my daily Mass and I hope 1961 will be for you a year of great peace’⁵⁰⁶. A year later Williams sent another newsletter to Petit, which again had included an article on praying for unity⁵⁰⁷. Both his covering note and Petit’s reply further showed in their geniality a mutual desire for good will. ‘May this year give us many opportunities of fruitful service to one another’, wrote

⁵⁰²*Menevia Record*, 8 (2) (1960), 18.

⁵⁰³Noel Anthony Davics, ‘Agweddu ar Hanes Cyngor Eglwysi Cymru 1956-1990’ (PhD Unpublished Thesis, University of Wales, Bangor 1997), p. 152 : ‘your Council at this stage will not expect us to commit the Roman Catholic Church in Wales to all the conclusions to which the Committee may come, though we hope that disagreement on fundamental points will not arise’ (Petit).

⁵⁰⁴Menevia Diocesan Archive : Aberystwyth File.

⁵⁰⁵*The Bell : Bangor Diocesan News-Sheet*, 4 (1) (1961), 2.

⁵⁰⁶Wrexham Diocesan Archives : Denominations File.

⁵⁰⁷*The Bell : Bangor Diocesan News-Sheet*, 4 (1) (1961), 2.

Williams, 'and especially further the great task of learning the will of Christ for the unity of Christians'⁵⁰⁸.

In the Review in that year Etienne Raven had echoed St. Mary's parish magazine in an article which claimed it was 'pre-eminently a plea for charitable comprehension of our separated brethren's belief' as the means to unity. Such appeals for mutual understanding were to become even more frequent as the Second Vatican Council sat, with appeals by Canon F.H. Poyner of Cardiff in the Review⁵⁰⁹ and by J.P. Brown of Llangollen in The Tablet⁵¹⁰. To Raven it was important for Catholics not to view Protestantism as 'a mere negation'. 'It is time we began to realise that very many of our separated brethren are sincere Christians, who possess definite beliefs'. Many Catholics were, he continued, very guilty of preferring 'the pointed finger to the extended hand'. Undoubtedly there had been much hostility from Nonconformists in the past, but ignorance had led to prejudice on both sides and it was only by admitting that this was the situation that it was possible for relations to better. 'We can none of us afford to be self-righteous or over-scrupulous in our approaches to Protestants;' he concluded, 'Christian Unity is too fine a goal to be bypassed at the behest of ignorance or ignoble bliss'⁵¹¹. In the same year a letter by H.W.J. Edwards in the Western Mail perfectly reflected the way which the Catholic Church was moving. Although he noted that there should be a 'careful absence of commentary', his suggestion that groups of Christians from all denominations should 'meet together to read the Bible' was, nevertheless, a sign of changing times⁵¹². A year later the Second Vatican Council was to begin, and the future of Catholic relations with other denominations in Wales was to change for good⁵¹³. A new era of frequent co-operation and joint ecumenical services was entered, which advanced so rapidly that in 1982 the leaders of all the principal non-Catholic denominations accepted an invitation to meet Pope John Paul II in Cardiff. At long last the signs were that the Roman Catholic Church had once more become an accepted,

⁵⁰⁸Wrexham Diocesan Archives : Denominations File.

⁵⁰⁹F.H. Poyner, 'Some Thoughts on Unity', *Review*, 8 (2) (1964), 3-6.

⁵¹⁰*The Tablet*, 11 Jan. 1964, 50.

⁵¹¹Etienne Raven, 'At the Frontiers of Christian Unity', *Review*, 5 (3) (1961), 9-10.

⁵¹²*Western Mail*, 13 Oct. 1961, 6.

⁵¹³For an account of Welsh ecumenical relations involving Roman Catholics after 1962 see Davies, 'Agweddau ar Hanes Cyngor Eglwysy Cymru', pp. 151-82.

intrinsic and indeed revered part of social and religious life in the Principality of Wales.

Appendix

Case Studies of Hostile Reactions to Catholic Educational Development

a) The Colwyn Bay Elementary School Controversy

The most prominent pre-Second World War example of Nonconformist opposition to the building and running of a Catholic school was in the establishment of the elementary school at Colwyn Bay. Just as the awarding of a grant out of taxes to the Catholic seminary of Maynooth had ignited fervent anti-Catholicism in mid-nineteenth century England¹, so over eighty years later the government's decision to allow a Catholic school to be built in Colwyn Bay was to engender a similar reaction in Wales. Whereas the general population of Colwyn Bay had increased threefold in the first thirty years of the century, Catholics had increased six-fold. Now that Catholics were 'an important element in the community'², they requested permission in 1929 to build a school for over 100 Catholic children. Even though this school would be wholly built with Catholic money, there was immediate and fierce opposition from local Free Churchmen. Denbighshire Education Committee, consisting largely of Nonconformist laymen, rejected the request, claiming that there was ample accommodation for the Catholic children in state schools. The running of the school, it was argued, would also add considerably to the rates of the local taxpayer. Finally, it was also claimed that there was not even much demand for the school by Catholic parents, except when prompted by the priest. Although the Committee claimed that educational and economic reasons were behind their decision, it is clear that religious animosity was at the root of the opposition. The Nonconformist influence upon the decision to oppose the school was reflected in

¹E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London, 1968). pp. 23-51.

²*The Tablet*, 25 Oct. 1930, 334.

the support given to it by local Free Church councils (at the Dyffryn Conwy and Ffestiniog Baptist conference held at Llanfairtalhaearn for example³).

Following the LEA's decision the Catholic authorities immediately appealed to the Board of Education, and a public inquiry, which created 'intense public interest'⁴, was held in July 1930. With Bishop Vaughan in attendance, the Catholics were represented by H.C. Dicken, who admitted that the application had been met 'a gwrthwynebiad eithriadol o du'r Wasg a'r eglwysi'⁵. The representatives of the Education Committee, Clement Davies MP and Austin Jones, cross-examined Fr. Wilkinson of Colwyn Bay. The contrast in the press reports of the meeting was perhaps only natural. *The Tablet* wrote that the bigotry and prejudice of the Davies and Jones was clear⁶, while 'an excellent case' had been made by the Catholic contingency⁷. *Y Faner*, on the other hand, ignored the Catholic arguments completely in favour of reiterating Davies's defence of the LEA's action⁸. In the October of that year the Board of Education finally overruled the Committee's original decision, and approved the construction of the school. *The Tablet* naturally congratulated the Board's 'courage and fairness'⁹. This, however, was far from the end of the controversy.

A meeting of the Education Committee following the Board's decision, unanimously resolved to protest against the resolution¹⁰. Likewise, the Federation of Welsh LEAs also protested against the 'injustice' of the sanction. The situation at Colwyn Bay soon became a prevalent subject at the House of Commons, especially in debates between Dr. Morris Jones, the Liberal MP for Denbighshire, and H. Morgan-Jones, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education and MP for Caerphilly. At the beginning of March 1931 Morris Jones had suggested that the conclusions reached by the Commissioner at the inquiry 'are regarded by competent opinion as against the weight of evidence at the inquiry'¹¹. Later in the

³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 Dec. 1929, 7.

⁴*North Wales Weekly News*, 13 Sept. 1934, 11.

⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 July 1930, 5.

⁶*The Tablet*, 25 Oct. 1930, 334.

⁷*The Tablet*, 26 July 1930, 117.

⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 15 July 1930, 5.

⁹*The Tablet*, 25 Oct. 1930, 334.

¹⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 11 Nov. 1930, 7.

¹¹*The Tablet*, 7 March 1931, 322.

month he appealed that the decision be reversed 'to avoid opening the floodgates of religious controversy'. The Secretary simply replied that the new school was needed in the interests of secular education¹². A few weeks later Morris Jones reiterated the LEA's claim that the 'parents' whose wishes had to be considered before the school could be erected, should have been all parents of the area and not only the Catholic parents. From an examination of the 1902 Act, however, The Tablet claimed that this interpretation could hardly be justified, and, even if it could, the Education Acts of 1902 and 1921 allowed the Board complete discretion in the matter¹³. Indeed, by the beginning of May, Morgan-Jones, himself a Welsh Nonconformist, was reported to have told some of his friends and colleagues 'to tone down their religious animosities' in the matter¹⁴.

At the quarterly meeting of the Education Committee at the end of March 1931 the hostility towards the proposed school intensified with one speaker threatening to 'rouse the whole country'. The architect's plans for the new school were rejected by 48 votes to 5 without them having been examined or even opened. The Tablet reacted by stating that 'to refuse to consider the plans is, in the circumstances, a display of childishness'¹⁵. The Schoolmaster, the official organ of the National Union of Teachers, commented that 'the fires of religious controversy have evidently been kindled'¹⁶. At the meeting it was also decided not to even pay the cost of the public inquiry. With this move The Tablet claimed that the Committee had thrown 'all dignity to the winds'. The article continued by noting that 'speeches of utmost violence' against the Catholic Church had been heard at the meeting, 'so enraged are the "Free Church" members of the Committee at anybody being Free other than themselves'¹⁷. One member accused the Government of not viewing the issue as a matter of justice, but as 'a wangle for Roman Catholic votes'¹⁸. The Tablet, however, concluded that another speaker, David Edwards, had 'let the cat out of the bag' as to the real reason for the LEA's viewpoint. 'The only Church in Wales to-day which is increasing in

¹²*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*, 2 April 1931, 631.

¹³*The Tablet*, 11 April 1931, 495.

¹⁴*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*, 2 July 1931, 29.

¹⁵*The Tablet*, 9 May 1931, 626.

¹⁶*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*, 2 April 1931, 631.

¹⁷*The Tablet*, 4 April 1931, 468.

¹⁸*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*, 2 April 1931, 631.

numbers is the Roman Catholic Church,' he stated, 'and if they are going to get the day schools as well we shall be shut out; ... the old preachers will rise in their graves if this thing is allowed to go on quietly'¹⁹.

Nonconformist endorsement of the LEA's stand came from every corner of Wales. 'Sectarianism, always an inflammatory commodity,' noted the Schoolmaster, 'is spreading rapidly'. The reaction of the Free Church councils were but one 'indication of the extent to which religious passions have once more been aroused'²⁰. In Colwyn Bay itself the annual meeting of the North Wales Union of Evangelical Churches praised the work of the Committee²¹. Likewise, both Wesleyan Methodist meetings for North Wales in 1931, at Rhyl²² and at Llangefni, passed unanimous motions strongly supporting the LEA. At Llangefni Rev. T. Gwilym Roberts suggested that the school would force taxpayers to 'ddwyn y draul o ddysgu syniadau crefyddol i'r rhai y mae ganddynt wrthwynebiad pendant', while Rev. Lewis Edwards expressed 'siomiant yn yr aelodau seneddol Cymreig am na baent wedi sefyll yn gryfach a mwy unfrydol yn erbyn y dyfarniad uchod o eiddor'r Bwrdd Addysg'²³. Other councils, such as the Llein and Eifionydd Presbytery of the Calvinistic Methodists and the North-East Wales Baptist Assembly, passed like motions²⁴. In South Wales there was similar support. The annual meeting of the East Glamorgan Baptist Association at Aberdare congratulated the Committee on its defiance²⁵, as did the Welsh Baptist Union meeting at the Porth, Rhondda²⁶.

There was also, however, a small amount of non-Catholic support for the Board's decision in favour of the Catholic school. A non-Catholic resident of Colwyn Bay, for example, had, on hearing that the decision, handed a £5 note to the parish priest 'with a congratulations on the success of a just cause'²⁷. The Archbishop of Wales, on the other hand, congratulated Catholics on their success

¹⁹*The Tablet*, 4 April 1931, 468.

²⁰*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle*, 2 July 1931, 29.

²¹*Y Gwilyddydd Newydd*, 14 May 1931, 5.

²²*Y Gwilyddydd Newydd*, 7 May 1931, 2.

²³*Y Gwilyddydd Newydd*, 14 May 1931, 1.

²⁴*Seren Cymru*, 3 July 1931, 6.

²⁵*Western Mail*, 18 June 1931, 11.

²⁶*Seren Cymru*, 25 Sept. 1931, 2.

²⁷*The Tablet*, 25 Oct. 1930, 534.

and stated it would have been a travesty of justice if their application had not been granted²⁸. Similarly, there was non-Catholic criticism of the LEA's actions in the months following the Board's decision. Even at the meeting which sent back the architect's plans, two members, Fenwick and James Darlington, had courageously warned their colleagues against 'lighting a fire which it might be impossible to quench'²⁹. Following this meeting even the Times Educational Supplement saw it to criticise the LEA's action³⁰. The most surprising criticism, however, came from Caernarfonshire's Education Committee, which refused to support a Calvinistic Methodist resolution condemning the Board's support of the school. 'Welshmen', enthused The Tablet, 'can live under the shadow of Snowdonia without walking in the fog of Free Church inconsistency'. At the committee meeting Ellis Davis, a former MP of Denbigh, admitted that religious teaching to suit Nonconformists was given at state schools at the public's expense. 'You are not averse from taking public money for the furtherance of your own religious views,' he asserted, 'so how can you deny the Roman Catholics?'. The Catholic claim was 'irrefutably logical', while the Free Church idea of tolerance was 'tolerance of only our own pet views and nobody else's'. A refusal to condemn the Board's action was passed by a majority of three to one³¹. This decision, however, was very unusual, and the vast majority of non-Catholics in Wales, and especially the Nonconformists, fully supported the LEA's attitude to the proposed school.

Building finally began on the school when, in December 1931, the foundation stone was laid by Mostyn³². Discussions surrounding the events at Colwyn Bay continued in the national educational and Catholic press throughout this period. The Schoolmaster enraged the Catholic press in July 1931 by suggesting that the only way that such religious animosities could be removed was by getting rid of educational separatism and non-provided schools. 'The Denbigh dispute', it noted, 'is another example of the sordid controversy inherent in the

²⁸*The Tablet*, 11 July 1931, 44.

²⁹*The Tablet*, 4 April 1931, 468.

³⁰*Times Educational Supplement*, in *The Tablet*, 9 May 1931, 626.

³¹*The Tablet*, 30 May 1931, 704.

³²*The Tablet*, 12 Dec. 1931, 806.

dual system³³. In reaction The Tablet accused the publication of glorifying a group of Welsh Nonconformists for resisting application of the 1921 Education Act³⁴. A month later The Tablet again criticised the organ of the NUT for implying that the LEA was the aggrieved party in the controversy³⁵. The matter, it claimed, was now ‘simply a childish act of disobedience on the part of a disgruntled education authority, which has lost its temper as well as its case’³⁶. At the beginning of 1932 The Tablet denounced another educational publication, the official organ of the Association of Education Committees, for its defence of the LEA. ‘Why should Education’, it asked, ‘support a recalcitrant education authority, which is trying to defy the law?’³⁷. In reply ‘Our Welsh Correspondent’ in Education accused the Catholic view of education of being ‘as illogical as keeping your cake and eating it’, as public money should mean public control³⁸. Following a continuing discussion surrounding the Colwyn Bay situation in both publications, Education concluded that ‘The Tablet is shallow, fallacious and arrogant’³⁹ while The Tablet closed the debate by simply noting that ‘invective is not argument’⁴⁰.

In August 1931 the words of one of the County Council members, who swore that he would go to prison rather than ‘pay for sectarian teaching’, reflected what became the attitude of the LEA for a good number of years. The Tablet lamented that Colwyn Bay would willingly have ‘boys and girls grow up atheists than see them receiving religious and moral instruction from Catholic teachers’⁴¹. By August 1932 the new school was ready for occupation, but the LEA sternly refused to maintain it. The Tablet replied that it hoped ‘wiser counsels will prevail’ in the time allowed by the Board of Education for reconsideration. ‘The local authority has made its protest, and should now “bury the hatchet” and endeavour to work in amity with those responsible for the new

³³*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher’s Chronicle*, 2 July 1931, 29.

³⁴*The Tablet*, 11 July 1931, 44.

³⁵*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher’s Chronicle*, 20 Aug. 1931, 248.

³⁶*The Tablet*, 29. Aug. 1931, 278.

³⁷*The Tablet*, 9 Jan. 1932, 46.

³⁸*Education*, in *The Tablet*, 13 Feb. 1932, 211.

³⁹*Education*, in *The Tablet*, 19 March 1932, 386.

⁴⁰*The Tablet*, 19 March 1932, 387.

⁴¹*The Tablet*, 15 Aug. 1931, 198.

school⁴². At a special meeting of the Committee, however, it was almost unanimously decided to ignore the communication of the Board with regards to the school, and not to, therefore, furnish or maintain the school. The Tablet replied that ‘this action is unworthy of a constitutional country ... [it] will, we are confident, be regretted by all men of good will’⁴³. Even Education was to take a very different view of the situation following this action. ‘The Authority will gain nothing by their objection;’ it stated, ‘they will incur much bad feeling among those who are, after all, a section of their ratepayers and will, in the end, be compelled to acquiesce in the position against which they have protested’⁴⁴. The LEA, however, continued its stand following the opening of the school, leaving the Board of Education no choice but to annually deduct the full cost of maintaining the school from Denbighshire’s grant.

The matter reared its head once again in 1934 in the letter pages of the Western Mail and the North Wales Weekly News in the correspondence between Morgan-Jones and Alderman Robert Sauvage of Denbighshire County Council and chairman of Wrexham Education Committee. After criticising Welsh MPs for not supporting the authority in its fight, Sauvage quoted what he referred to as a ‘parallel case’ in Tottenham, London in which the Board upheld the local authority’s decision not to allow a Catholic school to be built⁴⁵. This proved the unfair inconsistency of the Board ‘in dealing with a comparatively small Welsh authority and with a large and powerful English one’. In view of this he demanded that the Board should, out of decency, stop deducting anything from their grant, and pay back the money (over £740) ‘which they have unfairly, if honestly, deducted’⁴⁶. Morgan-Jones soon replied in what The Tablet described as ‘a firm, dignified, and crushing letter to some of the Colwyn Bay bigots’⁴⁷. He began by noting that, although the authority had ‘flouted’ the Board’s decision from the very beginning, the Board had ‘scrupulously followed’ procedures in the Education Act. It was the duty of both the Board and the LEAs to administer an

⁴²*The Tablet*, 1 Oct. 1932, 435.

⁴³*The Tablet*, 22 Oct. 1932, 538.

⁴⁴*Education*, in *The Tablet*, 29 Oct. 1932, 570.

⁴⁵*The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher’s Chronicle*, 30 Aug. 1934.

⁴⁶*North Wales Weekly News*, 13 Sept. 1934, 11.

⁴⁷*The Tablet*, 29 Sept. 1934, 406.

Act made by Parliament, however much they may despise it. Jones then asked the important question of whether education and economy alone had dominated the mind of the authority in its opposition, 'or was there not some antagonism to a Roman Catholic school because it was Roman Catholic?'. Jones concluded by claiming that the situation had 'become a question of "Diamond cut diamond" between Denbighshire and Whitehall. Meanwhile certain children in the area suffer educationally. Is it not time this rather silly controversy ceased?'⁴⁸. Sauvage replied to Jones's plea by stating that if he thought that educational efficiency and economy of the rates was 'silly' then 'one can understand the action and decision of the Board'. It was, Sauvage continued to maintain, 'perfectly clear that the decision of the Board was contrary to the weight of evidence', and 'what Denbighshire wants at present is not a new Act but a fair and impartial administration of the Act of 1902'⁴⁹.

Indeed, the whole 'bitter controversy'⁵⁰ at Colwyn Bay shows the extent that prejudice against Catholicism in the 1930s was far stronger in Wales than in other parts of the country. However much Sauvage insisted that any denominational school, whether Catholic, Anglican or Nonconformist, would have been opposed with the same vigour, it is indisputable that opposition from the largely Nonconformist authority was rooted far more in religion than in education or economics. The decision of the Board of Education in 1931 was decisive and conclusive, and even among those 'Protestant' members of the Board it was agreed that, under the Education Act, Catholics in Colwyn Bay were entitled both to build their own school and to have their due financial assistance in running this school. Denbighshire Education Authority, however, desperately continued to oppose and protest against the small Colwyn Bay Catholic School. At the end of 1934 The Tablet lamented that 'the bigots of Colwyn Bay are at it again'. The LEA were refusing to supply, even after a special plea from the Board of Education, medical inspection and treatment to the Catholic children at

⁴⁸*Western Mail*, in *North Wales Weekly News*, 4 Oct. 1934, 11.

⁴⁹*ibid.*

⁵⁰*The Tablet*, 29 Sept. 1934, 406.

the school. ‘Their action’, the Catholic publication concluded, ‘is simply beneath contempt’⁵¹.

b) The Flint Secondary School Controversy

Following the 1944 Act ‘the most vociferous denominational protests in Wales’ came in Flintshire County Council’s opposition to Catholic demands⁵². In August 1947 Petit complained to the Minister of Education that he believed that the secondary school development plan for Flintshire did not provide for the Catholic children of the area. A year later, after much discussion, the Catholic authorities asked for a secondary modern/grammar school at Flint, and the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education informed the local authority that this was acceptable. The result was a controversy which was just as fervent as that at Colwyn Bay had been less than 20 years earlier. This, however, differed in one vital way. While Denbighshire LEA had claimed that educational and economic reasons were behind their stand, it was very clear to all that religion was the principal objection. At Flintshire, though, both the largely Nonconformist authority and the Free Church support it engendered, often attempted to gloss a veneer of respectability over the controversy. Once again the original objection was one of education and economics, but as the controversy developed it was insisted that this was not a battle against Catholics, but against the interfering bureaucracy of an ‘English’ government. Although this may have been a genuine complaint, it was so intertwined with the old prejudices against Catholic education that it became very hard to distinguish between them. From many of the Nonconformist reactions it seems clear that the situation was once again seized upon as yet another opportunity to voice hostility against the growing Catholic Church.

Flintshire County Council immediately objected to the proposed Catholic school, claiming that such a ‘multilateral’ school would undermine their original plans and would cause local protests against the ‘preferential opportunity’ which

⁵¹*The Tablet*, 1 Dec. 1934, 703.

⁵²Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Which Nation’s Schools? Direction and Devolution in Welsh Education in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 1990), p. 99.

it would afford to Catholic children. At stormy meetings at the end of 1948 between the LEA and both a Catholic contingent and the Welsh Department, the 'incensed' authority announced they would resist not only the proposed multilateral school but any Catholic school in Flint, while the Welsh Department came down strongly on the side of the Catholics⁵³. A public inquiry ensued, with the Minister of Education as arbiter. At a special meeting of the Education Committee at Mold in December 1950, it was disclosed that George Tomlinson was to support the Catholic application. A strong protest against his interference was therefore sent. It was claimed that Catholics would build an expensive secondary school while their present schools were unhealthy for children to be in. The Director of Education, Dr. Haydn Williams, also accused Petit of breaking an agreement he had made with the LEA that he would build a needed primary school before considering a secondary school. The first sign of the claim that this was now a nationalistic power struggle rather than a denominational quarrel came at this meeting. 'Nid cwestiwn enwadol ydyw', claimed Councillor H.T. Edwards, 'ond brwydr rhyngom ni a Whitehall'⁵⁴. Likewise, an editorial in Y Faner insisted that this had now become a protest against the meddlesome and officious actions of the Minister. 'Rhaid croesawu'r ysbryd annibynnol iach a gafodd fynegiant cryw yn y pwyllgor addysg yn yr Wyddgrug -', it stated, 'y mae'n arwydd na fyn rhai o'n cynrychiolwyr lleol blygu glin i Whitehall'⁵⁵. Even the Nonconformist denominational newspapers were noting this. 'Nid brwydr yn erbyn y Pabyddion yw hyn,' noted Seren Cymru, 'ond brwydr yn erbyn biwrocratiaeth ac ni fynn y pwyllgor sirol blygu i Whitehall. Gofynnwn unwaith eto - pa fath ar lywodraeth sydd yng Nghymru heddiw, democratiaeth neu fiwrocratiaeth?'⁵⁶.

However much it was insisted that this was merely a power-struggle between Wales and Whitehall, even in this claim there was no escaping the fact that it was a Catholic school that was being imposed on Nonconformist Wales. Catholics, continued Y Faner's editorial, had no right to interfere with the plans of

⁵³*ibid.*, 102.

⁵⁴*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Dec. 1950, 3.

⁵⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Dec. 1950, 4.

⁵⁶*Seren Cymru*, 12 Jan. 1951, 1.

an LEA which represented the majority of parents and children in the county. ‘Pan ganiateir i ddylanwadau cudd, sy’n cynrycholi barn y lleiafrif,’ it noted, ‘wyrdroi bwriadau’r mwyafrif mewn llywodraeth leol, yna gellir canu cnul democratiaeth a chanu’n iach i gyfiawnder’⁵⁷. The Welsh Independent’s newspaper, Y Tyst, betrayed a far more explicit link between criticism of Tomlinson and denominational hostility, accusing Whitehall and Roman Catholics of insidious co-operation. It was not, the paper insisted, a matter of prejudice against the Catholic Church, but rather a protest against ‘corff crefyddol yn cydweithio â phennaeth y Bwrdd Addysg i gael ei ewyllys ar draws trefn gydnabyddedig awdurdod democrataidd’. This combined danger of Catholicism and Whitehall was a great threat to the nationhood of Wales and to Nonconformity, and the Welsh people had to unite against this. The fact that this was at root the old problem of whether Welsh taxes should pay for Catholic ‘propaganda’, however, was reflected throughout the article⁵⁸.

In a declaration in January 1951 Flintshire Education Committee made a bitter attack on Petit and his educational policies, clearly showing that, although there was certainly some amount of genuineness in the complaints against the Whitehall’s imposition, the root of the problem was still denominational. There was, claimed the declaration, co-operation between the Committee and Catholics before Petit became Bishop, but ‘ni wnaeth ei areithiau a’i weithredoedd trahaus ef ddim ond rhwygo’r berthynas hon o’r cychwyn’. The Committee, it stated, would not sacrifice the educational needs of the county’s children to Roman influences⁵⁹. Y Tyst summarised the declaration’s derogatory accusations towards Petit by stating ‘mai dylanwad yr Esgob Pabaidd yng Nghymru sydd wrth wraidd yr helynt. Gŵr dieithr o ran gwaed, iaith a magwriaeth yw’r Esgob, i Gymry. Ni wŷyr ddim am wir ystyr Anghydfurfiaeth’⁶⁰. A report in Y Faner also criticised Petit for not really caring about the education of the county’s children, as he betrayed ‘ancanion enwadol amlwg’⁶¹. In the same publication a few days later a correspondent from Old Colwyn betrayed that to many this had again

⁵⁷ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 13 Dec. 1950, 4.

⁵⁸ *Y Tyst*, 14 Dec. 1950, 6.

⁵⁹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 3 Jan. 1951, 8.

⁶⁰ *Y Tyst*, 11 Jan. 1951, 1.

⁶¹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 3 Jan. 1951, 8.

simply become a struggle against a growing Catholic Church. Catholics were constantly striving to convert Wales, and Catholic schools were an important part in their campaign. The Committee's stand was, therefore, 'un o'r pethau mwyaf calonogol o safbwynt Cymru, Cymro a Chymraeg y dyddiau diwethaf hyn'⁶². Another letter a month later accused the Catholic authorities of deceitfully co-operating with Tomlinson without consulting the LEA. 'Dyma i chwi ducefnrwydd noethlymun;' it announced, 'a oes dull mwy melltigiedig? Gweithio o'r tu cefn yn y tywyllwch'. The angry reaction of the Committee to this deceit was not 'sectarianism' as some were claiming. Sectarianism could, rather, be seen in the proposed Catholic school. 'Cwbl Babyddol fydd yr ysgol hon o bant i bentan. Stamp Pabyddol ar bopeth, a hynny ar gost y wlad'⁶³. One Nonconformist even went as far as to warn Petit that if he persisted with his educational proposals then there would be such a religious war that 'even the Reformation itself would pale into insignificance'⁶⁴.

Official Nonconformist support for the Committee's stand was also fervent. On 20 January 1951 a large conference of the North Wales Evangelical Churches Union met at Rhyl to back Flintshire's Committee. 'Nid ein bwriad o gwbl yw ail-ennyn yr hen gynnen enwadol,' noted Rev. E. Ffestin Williams from Llannerch-y-medd before the meeting, 'ond y mae'n rhaid i ni amddiffyn egwyddorion ein hetifeddiaeth Brotestannaidd'⁶⁵. At the conference itself, which was attended by over 600 representatives of all denominations, a number of aldermanic members of the County Council spoke, although members of the Catholic Church, including Petit's lawyers, were refused their request to speak. Two motions were passed after a fiery meeting. One motion protested against the Tomlinson's interference in the Committee's building programme. The other motion betrayed the real reason why Nonconformist North Wales took up the Committee's case with such fervour. This was 'yn erbyn y cynnydd a welir yn ymyriad y Catholigion a'u gwaith yn hawlio mwy a mwy o le ym mywyd y genedl'⁶⁶. Y Tyst took heart that Nonconformists were proud to bravely stand

⁶²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 2.

⁶³*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21 Feb. 1951, 2.

⁶⁴*Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 106.

⁶⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10 Jan. 1951, 1.

⁶⁶*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 Jan. 1951, 1.

against the Catholic Church. ‘Na phoned Ymneilltuwyr Cymru fod rhywrai’n galw’n hegwyddorion yn “rhagfarnau” a chulni. Ffordd bwt o fychanu argyhoeddiadau!’⁶⁷. Further support for the Committee’s stand came from numerous Nonconformist councils immediately following this conference, including pledges of support from the Anglesey Baptist Association, the Flintshire Presbytery of Calvinistic Methodists⁶⁸, the Anglesey Presbytery of Calvinistic Methodists⁶⁹, and both the Mid and South Wales Evangelical Church Unions⁷⁰. There was similar encouragement from other Welsh Education Committees, such as the motions of support passed by the Education Committees of Cardiganshire⁷¹ and Merionethshire⁷².

Catholic defence of their position was also impassioned. Speaking at the annual dinner of the Council of Catholic Parents and Electors Association at the end of 1950 Petit angrily refuted all allegations of deceitfulness. However much people claimed otherwise, he stated that the whole situation was merely a resurrection of the denominational phantom of past times⁷³. He and his lawyers were in continuous written correspondence with the Education Committee⁷⁴, and there were even members of the Committee at a large Catholic rally at Flint which he organised in April 1951 to discuss Catholic education⁷⁵. ‘I have never met such unscrupulous opposition or methods before’, he wrote to Cardinal Griffin’s secretary in that year, ‘and it is a surprise to me, who thought I could not be surprised by the dirt of political life’. He even referred to the tactics of the LEA as ‘quite Sovietish’. ‘They are stopping at nothing,’ he later wrote to Griffin himself, ‘lies, insults and general misrepresentation, threats and administrative devilment; they are diabolically clever at the game’⁷⁶.

⁶⁷ *Y Tyst*, 8 Feb. 1951, 1.

⁶⁸ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 Jan. 1951, 2.

⁶⁹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 Feb. 1951, 7.

⁷⁰ *Menevia Diocesan Yearbook 1952*, p. 107.

⁷¹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 Jan. 1951, 5.

⁷² G.B. German, ‘A History of the Diocese of Menevia : 1898-1987’ (unpublished MA Thesis. University of Liverpool. 1991), 50.

⁷³ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 Dec. 1950, 2.

⁷⁴ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 17 Jan. 1951, 8.

⁷⁵ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 25 April 1951, 5.

⁷⁶ Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

Other prominent Catholics also became involved in the controversy. Rev. Dafydd Crowley of Rhuthin responded to the Nonconformist critics in a lengthy letter in Y Faner. ‘Nid cwestiwn o fraint ydyw i gyd ond o gyfiawnder,’ he wrote, ‘bydded iddynt gael eu hysgol! Na amddifader hwy ohoni o achos dallbleidiaeth grefyddol neu anniddigrwydd’⁷⁷. Even Saunders Lewis dealt briefly with the ‘brwdfrydedd rhyfedd’ against this Catholic school in an article in Y Faner in 1951. Welshmen, he noted, should rather be worrying about the decay in the use of the Welsh language at schools, which was far more of a threat to Welsh Nonconformity.

‘Ni all ysgol uwchradd Gatholig - boed hi mor anghymreig ag y bo - ladd capeli Cymraeg nac effeithio’n ddrwg ar fywyd crefyddol plant o gapeli Cymraeg. Ond fe all ac fe wna addysg grefyddol Saesneg yn yr ysgol droi geirfa’r bregeth Gymraeg a’r weddi Gymraeg a geirfa diwinyddiaeth a defosiwn Cymraeg yn gwbl ddieithr i blant y gynulleidfa yn y capel Cymraeg a pheri ffalster niweidiol yn eu holl fywyd a thlodi ysbrydol’⁷⁸.

Although most Nonconformists were fervent in their opposition to the proposed Catholic school, there were a number of non-Catholics who were critical of the Education Committee’s stand. At the meeting of the Cardiganshire Education Committee in which they declared their support for their North Wales counterparts, there were a handful of votes against the decision. Councillor Phillips announced that he did not wish to see Cardiganshire meddling in denominational strife. He concluded by claiming ‘fod y peth yn dangos annioddefgarwch crefyddol ar ei eithaf’. Other councillors, however, insisted that this was not a religious matter, but a question of whether the Minister was right to interfere⁷⁹.

There were also a number of non-Catholic correspondents in Y Faner who, although largely supportive of the Committee’s stand for the freedom of local authorities, were highly critical of some of the Nonconformist protests to the school. One of them noted ‘nid oes gennyf i yr un affliw o gydymdeimlad â’r rhai

⁷⁷*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 27 Dec. 1950, 2.

⁷⁸*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 25 April 1951.

⁷⁹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 Jan. 1951, 5.

sydd yn gwrthwynebu cais y Pabyddion o'r safbwynt Protestannaidd. Pryd bynnag yr edrych un o'r rhain yn y drych fe wêl ragrithiwr'⁸⁰. Likewise, Emyr Roberts of Bodffordd asked 'ysgwn i a fuasai'r Ymneilltuwyr yn heidio i'r frwydr oni bai mai ynglyn ag ysgol Babyddol y mae'r ffrwgwd? Mae'n amlwg mai rhagfarn wrth-Babyddol sydd wrth wraidd eu gwrthwynebiad hwy'. Would as many Nonconformists as gathered at the Rhyl conference, he continued, have gathered to unite in a declaration condemning war and to refuse to assist the Minister of War in his plans? 'Mae'n amlwg', he concluded, 'nad yw Protestaniaid Gogledd Cymru eto wedi sylweddoli bodolaeth y fath beth â goddefgarwch'⁸¹. Roland Owen of Bethesda, who attended the Rhyl conference, noted that 'yr hyn a gododd arswyd arnaf fi oedd ymddygiad llawer o'r gynulleidfa : deuai rhyw wên sbeitlyd ar eu wynebau bob tro y rhoddai un o'r siaradwyr beltan go galed i'r Pabyddion. A pheth hyll yw gwên sbeitlyd ar wynebau gweinidogion yr Efengyl'⁸². Perhaps the most surprising criticism of Nonconformist support of the LEA came from W.J. Gruffydd, editor of *Y Llenor* and erstwhile opponent of Catholicism and Catholic education. The Free Church Council had, he claimed, taken a 'cam trychinebus' by backing the Committee against Tomlinson, who was himself, somewhat ironically, a prominent leader of the English Wesleyan Methodists. Of the situation itself Gruffydd noted 'bod y Swyddfa Addysg wedi gweithredu braidd yn fyrbwill ac wedi rhoi rhy ychydig o ystyriaeth i anghenion y Fflint, ond er hynny wedi cadw at lythyren y gyfraith yn Neddf Addysg 1944'. What was important, however, was that this was an administrative matter, not a religious question. The Free Church Council's public backing would do nothing to add to the spiritual life of the Protestant Churches, and even if Flintshire's Committee succeeded against the Ministry of Education 'ni wna hynny ddim gwahaniaeth i'r math arbennig a addysg a roir i blant Eglwys Rufain; yr unig beth a wna yw ei gwneud hi'n llawer mwy anghyfleus iddynt'⁸³.

After much discussion at the House of Commons and some small changes in the exact details of the original proposal, Tomlinson announced in May 1951

⁸⁰*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24 Jan. 1951, 2.

⁸¹*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 Feb. 1951, 2.

⁸²*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 14 Feb. 1951, 2.

⁸³*Y Llenor* 30 (1) (1951), 2.

that he would not change his mind⁸⁴. Even a motion passed by the LEA in August 1951 ‘yn datgan anfodlonrwydd llwyr’ with the Minister’s judgement and a direct appeal to the Prime Minister, could not stop the building of the school⁸⁵. A development plan which included the Catholic secondary school was finally approved in October 1952. This was not, however, the end of controversy surrounding Catholic education in the county. ‘Wild words have been hurled in Flint,’ reported the Times Educational Supplement early in 1954, ‘where relations between Roman Catholics and Free Churchmen are not of the best’. This was in reaction to a controversy over Shotton Catholic school admitting without permission 23 Catholic pupils who were attending non-Catholic schools. Eventually, after the Flintshire LEA had angrily censured them, the Managers of the school appealed to the Minister of Education. The appeal was seen by Nonconformists as yet ‘another shot in the religious war’. The report in the supplement was sympathetic to the Catholic cause, seeing denominational intolerance as behind the action of the LEA. ‘Catholics who consider themselves mulcted unfairly’, it concluded, ‘cannot be blamed for making sure of all the public assistance the law entitles them to’⁸⁶.

The Blessed Richard Gwyn Secondary School was officially opened at Flint in October 1954 in the presence of Cardinal Griffin of Westminster. The fervency of the controversy at Flintshire was unique and so Griffin claimed to have followed the struggle ‘with great interest’. Three years earlier he had sent Petit a gift, which he wished to stay anonymous, of £5000 towards the school⁸⁷. By the time of the school’s opening, the attitude of many councillors was changing. Whereas twenty years earlier the Colwyn Bay dispute had officially continued for many years after the opening of the school, at Flint the new school was by 1954 respectfully accepted by the Committee. The opening of the new school was attended not only by the non-Catholic Mayor and Mayoress of the town, but also by Dennis Griffiths, the Vice-Chairman of the Flintshire Education Committee. Speaking on behalf of the members of the Education Committee at

⁸⁴See *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 2 May 1951, 1; 23 May 1951, 6.

⁸⁵*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 Aug. 1951, 7.

⁸⁶*Times Educational Supplement*, 12 March 1954, in *Menevia Record*, 1 (4) (1954), 10.

⁸⁷Westminster Diocesan Archives : Griffin Papers Box 2/44.

the ceremony, Griffiths wished every success and happiness to the school, and to all who used it⁸⁸. At a meeting of the Catholic Parents and Electors Association at Rhyl in that month the Chairman, J.A.W. Bate, congratulated Petit's 'great qualities of leadership, drive and initiative' without which the new school would not have been opened. The school was, after all, 'the culmination of many years of grand work, and a complete and final victory after a long and bitter struggle'⁸⁹. There may well have been some genuine reasons for opposing the school on administrative grounds, such as the question of the freedom of the Local Council. The fervency of the opposition within the Committee and the support of the Nonconformist Churches, however, shows that, for many, administrative and educational objections were a facade for the re-emergence of anti-Catholic prejudices.

⁸⁸*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 20; *Western Mail*, 16 Oct. 1954, 3.

⁸⁹*Menevia Record*, 2 (2) (1954), 22.

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