



**THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON THE SURVIVAL OF THE WELSH  
LANGUAGE 1801 – 2011: A TALE OF TWO CENTURIES.**

**SUBMITTED FOR DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID**

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### *Tŵr Babel*

Disgynnodd yr Arglwydd i weld y ddinas a'r tŵr yr oedd y pobl wedi eu hadeiladu, a dywedodd, "Y maent yn un bobl a chanddynt un iaith; y maent wedi dechrau gwneud hyn, a bellach ni rwystir hwy mewn dim y bwriadant ei wneud. Dewch, disgynnwn, a chymysgu eu hiaith hwy yno, rhag iddynt ddeall ei gilydd yn siarad."

*Genesis 11, v 5-7, Y Beibl Cymraeg Newydd, 2004.*

### *The Tower of Babel*

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the men were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

*Genesis 11, v 5-7, New International Version, 1983.*

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own work; due reference is made in footnotes and in the Bibliography to the published work of others. This work has not been submitted to any other institution for the purposes of a higher degree.

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Sydney, Australia

February 16, 2013

**Word Count 21,686**

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Above all I thank my beautiful wife Elaine, our four children Amy, Laura, Huw and Stephanie, and my five grandchildren Abigail, Zachary, Evangeline, Rowan and Arianwen, for their encouragement and support in my pursuing this degree over the last three years or so. I dedicate this thesis to my family.

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## Survival

**Pronunciation:**/sə'vʌɪv(ə)l/

*noun*

[*mass noun*] the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances

[*count noun*] an object or practice that has continued to exist from an earlier time

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## INTRODUCTION

The Welsh language is derived from what has been termed “Common Celtic”, itself a derivative from an Indio-European root. In the outer regions of the Roman Empire, two branches of Celtic emerged – Brittonic (P Celtic), spoken throughout most of Britain including lowland Scotland, and Goidelic (Q Celtic) – the language of Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> Brittonic remained the language of Britain through the Roman invasion but the eventual eastward pressure of the Anglo Saxon expansion in the sixth and seventh-centuries effectively separated the *Cymry* and their language from their Celtic cousins in Cornwall and Southern Scotland, thus isolating them west of Offa’s Dyke.<sup>2</sup> The earliest example of written syntactical Welsh is found on a single page of an eighth-century gospel book - the Gospel Book of St Chad,<sup>3</sup> now housed in Lichfield cathedral.<sup>4</sup> For all its brevity it is an important fragment of written literature emphasizing that Welsh “was already a vehicle for legal, technical use in a secular record of solemn and lasting importance”.<sup>5</sup>

To state that the Welsh language would be subjected to sustained and repetitive negative pressure over and beyond the next millennium would be regarded as an

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<sup>1</sup> J. Aitchison and H. Carter, *Language, Economy and Society. The Changing Fortunes of the Welsh Language in the Twentieth-Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> L.B. Smith, ‘The Welsh Language before 1536’ in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, ‘The Welsh Language before 1536’, p. 15.

understatement. Offa's Dyke would become a geographic and ethnic boundary up to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Wales, c 1070, the catalyst to further westward retreat of the language.<sup>6</sup> The Norman system of manorial cultivation based on open-field agriculture established itself across the lowlands of South Wales in particular, including southern Gwent, the Vale of Glamorgan, the Gower Peninsula and South Pembroke. Whilst these areas of Anglicizing influences were significant, at no time in the period between Anglo-Norman invasion in the eleventh-century, and the Act of Union in the sixteenth-century was there a feeling that Welsh was in peril.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless there was a gradual and insidious diminution in the dominance of Welsh, not only in geographic terms, but in the limitation of domain and status. Welsh law was essentially customary and within the Wales of the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries the formal language of administration on legal documents was previously Latin or French, but with time became replaced by English. This exclusion of the Welsh language in legal and administrative affairs would become formalized in the so called Act of Union.

The Act of Union of 1536, enacted by the Tudor dynasty, is frequently cited as the first decisive milestone in the erosion of the Welsh language.<sup>8</sup> In the Act, more accurately titled 'An Act for Laws and Justice to be ministered in Wales in like form as it is in this Realm' the Welsh language may not have been proscribed by the Act, but its demise was seen to be desired.<sup>9</sup> Although the phrase 'to extirpate all and singular the sinister usages and customs differing' was meant to apply directly to law and administration, it unequivocally implied a process of cultural assimilation and language erosion.<sup>10</sup>

The eighteenth century was the Age of Enlightenment, the age of science and the Royal Society. The diffusion of new ideas was related to social standing and to settlement size, and was thus bound into social class and the English language.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Aitchison and H. Carter, *Language, Economy and Society*, pp. 23-33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> R.O.Jones, 'The Sociolinguistics of Welsh' in M.J. Ball, ed. *The Celtic Languages* (New York and London, Routledge, reprinted 2000), p. 536.

<sup>9</sup> Aitchison and Carter, *Language, Economy and Society*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Science and free thinking was a domain in which Welsh took little part.<sup>11</sup> There were however occasional periods of growth and optimism in the Welsh language in the eighteenth-century. A large number of books were printed in Welsh, not only in the field of religion but also encompassing vocabulary, grammar, linguistics, botany and archaeology. Welsh became established as a written medium and the printed word gave the language prestige and status. The imminent prospect of the extinction of Welsh as the language of culture seemed to concentrate the minds of writers and spur them into action.<sup>12</sup> The proliferation of printing presses on Welsh soil from 1718 onwards led to an extraordinary expansion in book production and other printed material. Between 1660 and 1799 a staggering 2633 books were published in the Welsh language.<sup>13</sup>

Another catalyst for the growth of literacy and Welsh-medium education was Griffith Jones and his circulating schools.<sup>14</sup> Jones was a rector at Llanddowror whose educational zeal was fired following a lethal typhus outbreak in south-west Wales. Although Jones' original motivation was saving souls from eternal damnation, he felt salvation could be best achieved in the native tongue. The schools were held in the winter months to coincide with down time in agriculture. The medium in Jones' circulating schools was mainly Welsh, but English was also used in more Anglicized parts of Wales.<sup>15</sup> By the time of Jones' death in 1761, at least 200,000 children and adults had been taught in 3,325 schools, which is the more staggering when one considers the mid eighteenth century population of Wales was only 480,000.

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century it is likely that the bulk of the population of Wales habitually spoke Welsh. More than half a million, out of a population of some six hundred thousand, were probably monoglot Welsh, that is more than 80

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>12</sup> G.H. Jenkins., 'The Cultural Uses of the Welsh Language 1660-1800', in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 371.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>14</sup> E.M. White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language 1650-1800', in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 324 – 341.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.



per cent of the population. Their most powerful unifying bond was their language.<sup>16</sup> Although Welsh was excluded from official life, at that time there were no fears it might perish as the principal medium of daily communication. Within one hundred years, by 1911 the population of Wales increased from 601,767 to 2,442,011, and the proportion of monoglot Welsh speakers fell to 8.7 per cent of the population.<sup>17</sup> It is a profound fact that there are unlikely to be any surviving monoglot Welsh speakers today.

In his essay on *The Sociolinguistics of Welsh* Robert Owen Jones wrote:

“It is a minor miracle that Welsh has survived to this day. Throughout fourteen centuries of its existence the Welsh language has been under siege and during that period whenever bilingual and linguistically mixed communities have come into being, linguistic erosion has occurred with a resultant rejection of Welsh as the primary language”.<sup>18</sup>

In 1885 D. Isaac Davies looked forward to a Welsh speaking population of three million by 1985, some one hundred years later. In contrast Saunders Lewis in 1962 predicted the terminal decline of Welsh as a living language by 2000.<sup>19</sup> Clearly neither prognosis was absolutely correct. Nonetheless there have been other Doomsday merchant. In a keynote address to the 2000 conference of the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History, Geraint Jenkins painted a most dismal and bleak future for the Welsh language, predicting its extinction “...not as a sudden apocalyptic event – more a case of a tortuous death by a thousand cuts – but its demise is assured”.<sup>20</sup> Other commentators have been more

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<sup>16</sup> G. Jenkins, *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) 1.

<sup>17</sup> Jenkins, *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, ‘The Sociolinguistics of Welsh’, p. 536.

<sup>19</sup> J. Aitchison and H. Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language 1961-1991* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> G.H. Jenkins, ‘Terminal Decline? The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century’, *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, vol 1,2 (2001), pp. 59-67.

circumspect. As stated by O' Neill: "The present state of Welsh gives reason for both optimism and concern".<sup>21</sup>

This thesis explores two broad aspects relating to the survival of the language during the nineteenth and twentieth-century. The first aspect will deal essentially with the **geography** of the Welsh language, drawing on data principally from the decennial censuses. Data will be presented in tables and maps showing changes and trends in language densities in different parts of Wales.

The second aspect of this dissertation relates to the place of **organized religion** in day to day Welsh life, and its relationship to the Welsh language. In his *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae* in 1621, Dr John Davies of Mallwyd claimed that God had preordained the Welsh people to communicate with Him in the Welsh language, believing that were it not for divine providence the language would not have survived. The Welsh were encouraged to believe that their language was a pure and sacred tongue bequeathed to them by Gomer, the grandson of Noah. Such a claim would fuel an irrefutable argument for preserving and teaching the language.

Eighteenth century authors also cautioned the possibility of divine retribution should anyone strive to abolish the Welsh language, effectively voicing anew an old theme of divine providence dating back to the twelfth-century, whereby Gerald of Wales recorded the famous alleged utterance of the "old Welshman of Pencader" to Henry II. In that exchange, it was claimed that the Welsh people could "never be totally subdued through the wrath of man, unless the wrath of God shall concur". It was further claimed, "Nor do I think that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language.....shall in the day of severe examination before the Supreme Judge, answer for this corner of the earth".

Furthermore, the translation of the scriptures into Welsh at the command of Elizabeth I in the late sixteenth-century had a profound impact on the language and

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<sup>21</sup> O'Neill, Diarmuid, 'What is the Way Forward?', in D.O'Neill, ed. *Rebuilding the Celtic Languages* (Y Lolfa Cyf., 2005), p. 429.

identity of the Welsh people and guaranteed a close relationship between Christianity in Wales and the language for the next three or four centuries.

The fortunes of the Welsh language and organised Christian religion have ebbed and flowed, sometimes in striking parallel, although it is not always clear whether the robustness or frailty of each is consistently independent of, or dependent on, each other. This lack of clarity about the nature of the relationship is the *raison d'être* for this dissertation. In order to retain some focus, the period of examination for this thesis will span approximately two centuries, choosing a starting point of 1800-1, coinciding with the Classification of Ecclesiastical Returns and the first decennial census. The end point for this dissertation is the recent release of data pertaining to the state of the language in the 2011 decennial census. This dissertation will concentrate on the Established Church and the Nonconformist Chapel Movement and their relationship to the Welsh language and people during the period under examination.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE.

### 1.1 The Classification of Ecclesiastical Returns c 1800 – 1880

Until recent times, the known evidence on linguistic situations in the past two centuries has been fragmentary and sketchy. The first population census in England and Wales was not taken until 1801, and although the 1851 census recorded information on religious affiliations within Wales, details relating to the language spoken at home were not recorded officially in the census until 1891.<sup>22</sup> Therefore one has to turn to sources outside of the decennial censuses in order to retrieve information concerning the geolinguistics of the Welsh language through the 1800s. Fortunately, despite the vigorous growth of Nonconformity, the specific language mix of Welsh and English used in Anglican churches (also known as the Church of England, Church in Wales and Established Church for the purposes of this thesis) closely reflected contemporary local circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

The Act of Uniformity of 1662 had mandated that the bishoprics of St David's, St Asaph, Bangor, Llandaff and Hereford ensured that 'the whole of the Divine Service shall be said throughout Wales, within the dioceses where the Welsh tongue is commonly used, in the British or Welsh language'.<sup>24</sup> These requirements were taken seriously, and local church administrators monitored use of the Welsh language in church services and the results were included in the 'notes and queries' issued prior to episcopal visitations. Even when the rector had chosen to live a more comfortable life outside of his parish, even as far afield as England, nonetheless excellent records were kept at a local level by curates who knew the local community well. These Episcopalian visits occurred usually every three years or so

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<sup>22</sup> W.T.R. Pryce, *Language Zones, Demographic Changes, and the Welsh Culture Area 1800-1911*, in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

and many of these records, although somewhat incomplete, survive today as a record of linguistic patterns throughout eighteenth and nineteenth-century Wales.<sup>25</sup>

The questions regarding language were surprisingly consistent and standardised. Essentially the notes and queries recorded the principal language categories of:

1. Welsh is the sole language of worship
2. Welsh is the main language of worship
3. Bilingual status (i.e. Welsh and English used on an equal basis)
4. English is the main language, with some Welsh
5. English is the sole language of worship.

Recognising that such records are likely to be flawed and incomplete compared to the discipline of modern census collection, we can nonetheless project snapshots of language changes in each parish using the representative dates of 1750, 1800, 1850 and 1900. After 1900 the decennial censuses yield more consistent and accurate data regarding the language distributions.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 1, taken from a detailed and systematic review of language zones and demographic changes in Wales during the nineteenth-century by Dr. W.T.R. Pryce, summarises the principal language zones in the early 1800s and the distribution of parish churches as they relate to the categories enumerated above.<sup>27</sup> The figure provides valuable insights into the linguistic conditions in Wales at that point in time. Clearly, most of Wales was a Welsh-speaking country, where the bilingual zone was restricted to the border with England, the coastal parishes of the Vale of Glamorgan and the Gower Peninsula, and south Pembrokeshire below what is termed the *Landsker* line.<sup>28</sup> Throughout most of Wales, bishops received reports that underlined the deep and intense commitment to services in Welsh for what was effectively a Welsh monoglot population. A few churches had introduced the

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-44.

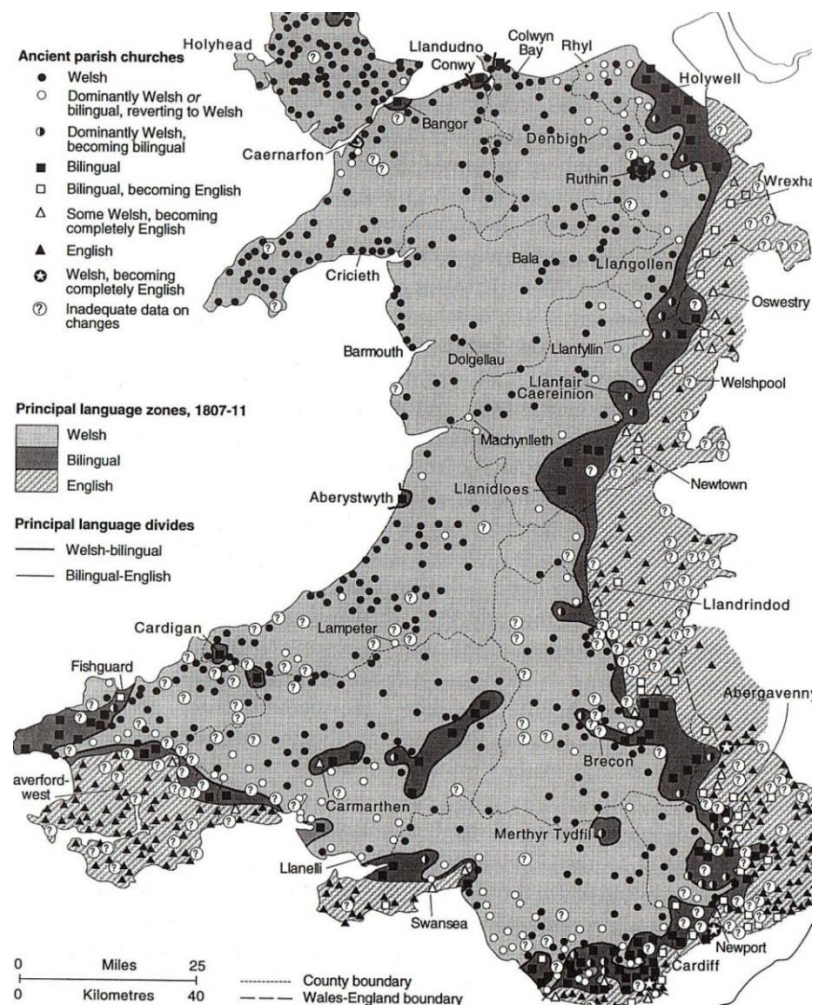
<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-44.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> B.S. John, *The Linguistic Significance of the Pembrokeshire Landsker*, *The Pembrokeshire Historian*, vol. 4 (1972), pp. 7-29.

occasional use of English either to meet the needs of holiday visitors or to satisfy the whims of Anglicised local gentry. In general, most of these English language services were not well attended and indeed all it achieved was to drive a Welsh speaking congregation from the Established Church to Nonconformist chapels. <sup>29</sup> It can be appreciated that by the early nineteenth century a bilingual zone had begun to shift further from the Wales/England border towns such as Oswestry and Welshpool into Welsh-speaking Wales (Figure 1), 'leaving behind it only memories of a time when the national language of Wales was widely spoken in those parts of England'. <sup>30</sup>

Figure 1: Language zones c 1800<sup>31</sup>



<sup>29</sup> Pryce, , Language Zones, Demographic Changes, and the Welsh Culture Area 1800-1911, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The territorial relationships between Welsh and English are of considerable interest because progressive shifts in balance can be linked to regional economic developments. By the early nineteenth-century the former subsistence economy of the eighteenth-century was transformed from an agrarian to an industrialised situation. The circumstance and effects of industrialisation and urbanization on the Welsh language over the next two centuries are explored in detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Geolinguists have recognised that “Language mapping is more than an academic exercise. It is an enquiry into the identity of a people....”.<sup>32</sup> A number of different approaches continue to be widely used as an interpretative framework for explaining changes over time and the underlying dynamics which continue to shape the regional geography and culture of Wales. Harold Carter and J. Gareth Thomas essentially employed the ‘Meinig model’ to describe geographic and cultural changes in different parts of Wales.<sup>33</sup> The details of the Meinig model are outside the scope of this thesis, but essentially the principle regards minority cultures and language existing in a series of concentric zones around a central ‘core’.<sup>34</sup> In terms of the Welsh language in Wales, Meinig’s culture region model describing a central ‘core, domain and sphere’ correspond to Pryce’s Principal Language Zones in Figure 1 of Welsh, Bilingual and English (see Table 1).

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<sup>32</sup> Aitchison and Carter, *Language, Economy and Society*, pp. 1-22.

<sup>33</sup> H. Carter and J.G. Thomas, ‘The Referendum on the Sunday Opening of Licensed Premises in Wales as a Criterion of a Culture Region’. *Regional Studies*, vol. 3 (1969), pp. 61-71.

<sup>34</sup> Pryce, , *Language Zones, Demographic Changes, and the Welsh Culture Area 1800-1911*, pp. 45-47.

**Table 1: Principal Language Zones**

<b>Meinig's Model</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Carter</b>	<b>Pryce</b>
CORE	Zone of highest concentration with greatest density, intensity and distinctiveness of culture of language	<i>Y Fro Gymraeg</i>	Welsh
DOMAIN	Same cultural traits as CORE , but less density and more regional peculiarities. The DOMAIN is in effect a transition zone	<i>Cymru Cymraeg</i>	Bilingual
SPHERE	Zone of 'peripheral acculturation' where the distinctive culture or language of the CORE is virtually absent or represented only by certain elements	<i>Cymru ddi- Gymraeg</i>	English

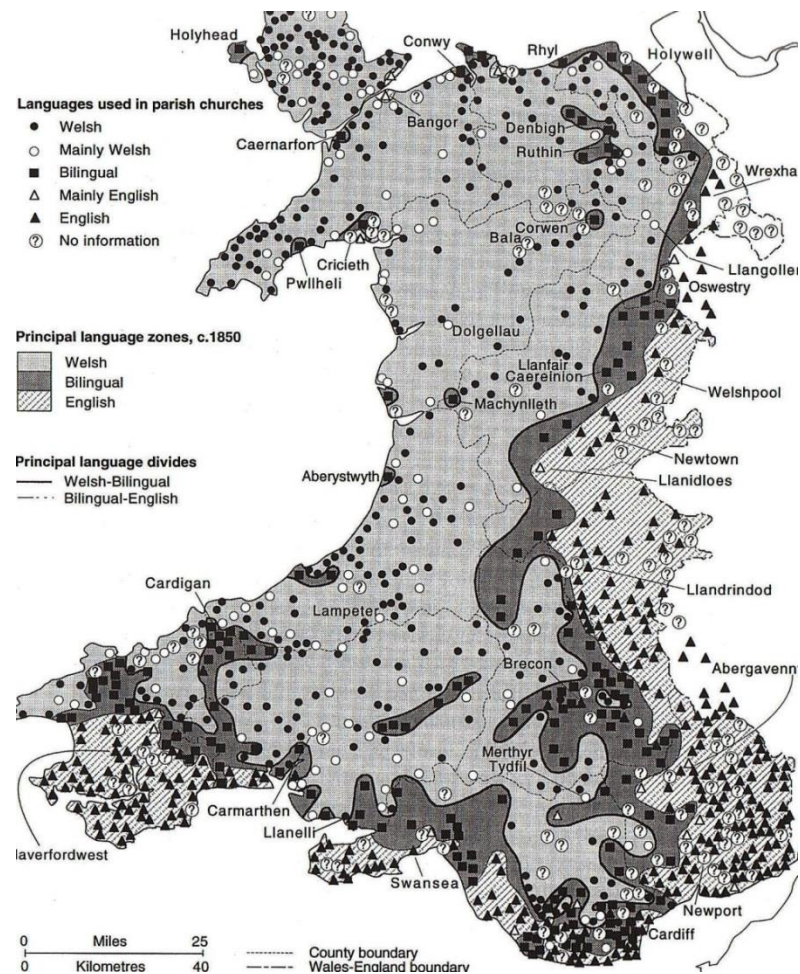
Although by the mid nineteenth-century much of Wales remained dominantly Welsh speaking, changes continued to arise in the Domain or Bilingual territories. Churches which had previously at least offered some Welsh services in the bilingual zone no longer offered services in Welsh at all (Figure 2).<sup>35</sup> The ecclesiastical records suggest strong anti-Welsh attitudes for example in some churches in the Vale of Glamorgan.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.



Figure 2: Language Zones c 1850<sup>36</sup>



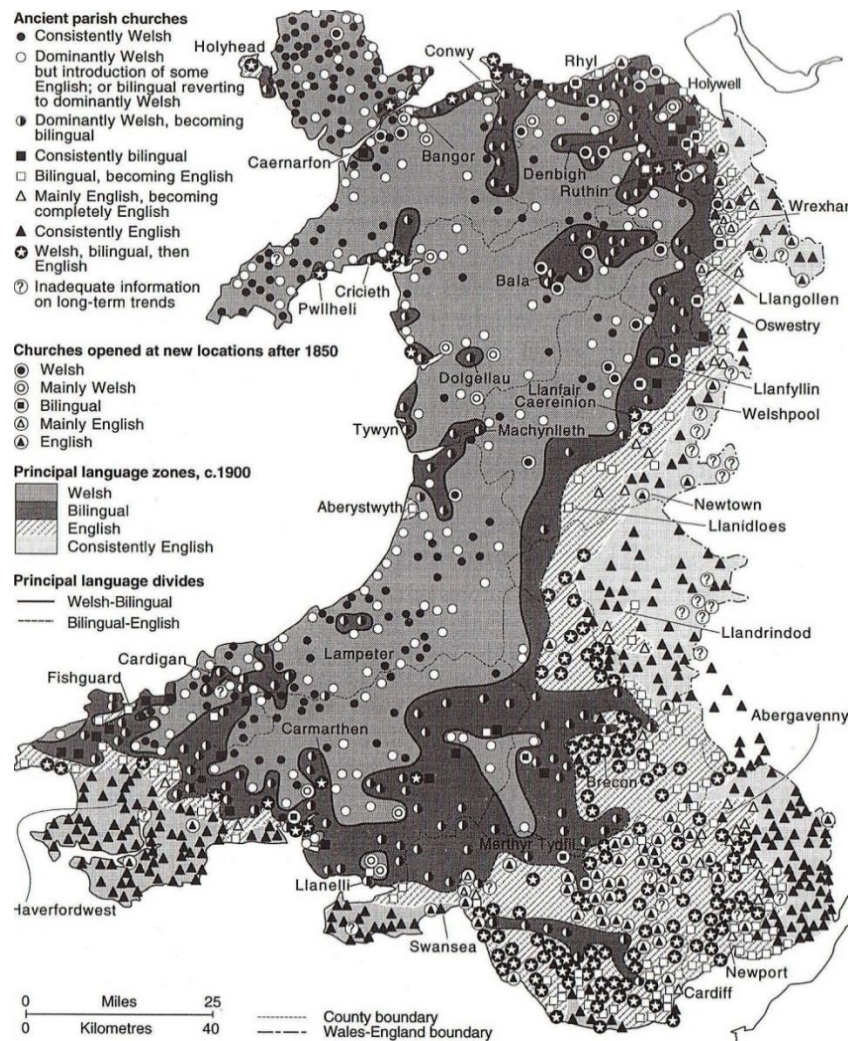
It can be appreciated that the westward advancement of the Domain or bilingual zone was particularly significant in the new industrial townships of south Wales, particularly the valleys of west Monmouthshire. East of the River Usk, Monmouthshire had become monoglot English where ‘very few speak or understand any other language than English now’.<sup>37</sup> By 1850 English had gained a strong foothold in many more parishes in the rural heartland, even in *Y Fro Gymraeg*. In part these changes accompanied the development of service occupations, the railway system, holiday resorts and the settlement in rural Wales of upper-class, often retired English gentry.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Compared with conditions in the 1850s, by 1900 many more communities had evolved towards full bilingual status. Nonetheless the inner core of Welshness, or *Y Fro Gymraeg* still dominated much of north and west Wales (Figure 3).

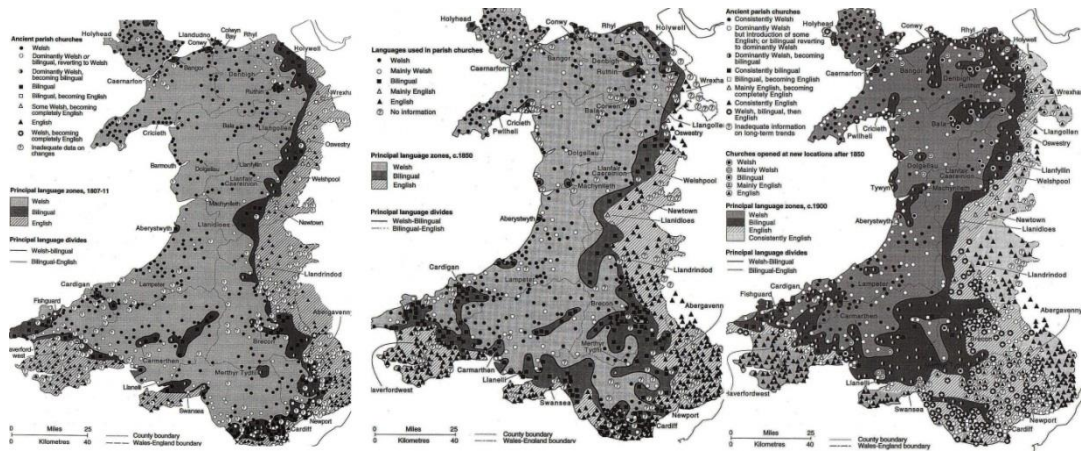
**Figure 3: Language Zones c 1900<sup>38</sup>**



The numerous outliers and penetrations from the bilingual zone into *Y Fro Gymraeg* are significant because they confirm that the cultural invasion of the core areas had become much more intensified (Figure 4). In a very real sense therefore, it was rural Wales, the countryside that had lost many of its people to the urban areas of south-east Wales and beyond from the 1830s onwards, which conserved Welshness and the distinctive cultural identity of the nation.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

**Figure 4: Composite of Language Zones c 1800, 1850 and 1900 demonstrating graphically the westward creep of bilingualism and monoglot English. (adapted from Pryce<sup>39</sup>)**



## 1.2 Population Censuses 1891 – 1911

Although population census authorities had been eager since 1801 to count the population by demographic and economic measures, they showed little interest in defining the population of Wales by language. They were still relatively unenthusiastic in 1891, giving little guidance to local enumerators and being somewhat dismissive of the results. Welsh census schedules for 1891 were very much a last minute decision.<sup>40</sup> A language question had been included for Ireland (1851) and Scotland (1881) but was not considered until late in the piece by the Westminster parliamentary committee on the 1891 census. Two Welsh MPs, Samuel T. Evans and D.A. Thomas spoke in support of an amendment to the Act ‘that a Return shall be made in Wales of the person who can speak Welsh and English or English only’.<sup>41</sup> In due course, household schedules for Wales appeared

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-79.

<sup>40</sup> D. Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 213 – 215.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 213.

with a final column headed 'Language Spoken'. With instructions, 'If only English, write "English"; if only Welsh, write "Welsh"; if English and Welsh, write "Both"'. Administrative errors were a major cause of complaint. How answers to the 'Language Spoken' question were chosen, and how to interpret the choices made were difficult and delicate issues, since they involved such matters as Welsh national pride (with a likely possibility of some bilingual speakers claiming Welsh monoglot status), and conversely the reluctance of English census officials to believe that the Welsh language was as widespread as the returns indicated.<sup>42</sup> Subsequent censuses, in 1901 and 1911, aroused less controversy. In his General Report on the 1901 census, the Registrar General, William Dunbar, found it difficult to accept the authenticity of the returns relating to monoglot Welsh speakers, but his skepticism was tempered by the recognition that 'anyone travelling in Wales, especially the remoter districts, cannot but be impressed by the frequency with which he hears the native language spoken by the people when conversing amongst themselves in their homes or elsewhere'.<sup>43</sup> In 1901 – for the first time – the census results on language spoken in Wales distinguished males and females, age groups, and rural versus urban districts.

Dot Jones has published an extraordinarily detailed analysis of the results of the Ecclesiastical Visitation Returns (which complements the analysis of Pryce<sup>44</sup>) and the census returns for 1891, 1901 and 1911.<sup>45</sup> The data from the 1891 census show a continuing robustness of the Welsh language in the north and west, and also the absolute growth (rather than percentage growth) in the numbers of Welsh speakers in many of the industrial areas of the south.<sup>46</sup> The latter was the principal location of what Brinley Thomas called 'The Cauldron of Rebirth', that is the resettlement of Welsh-speaking people who, without the economic opportunities afforded by the South Wales Coalfields, might otherwise have emigrated to England, America,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>44</sup> Pryce, , Language Zones, Demographic Changes, and the Welsh Culture Area 1800-1911, pp. 38 – 79.

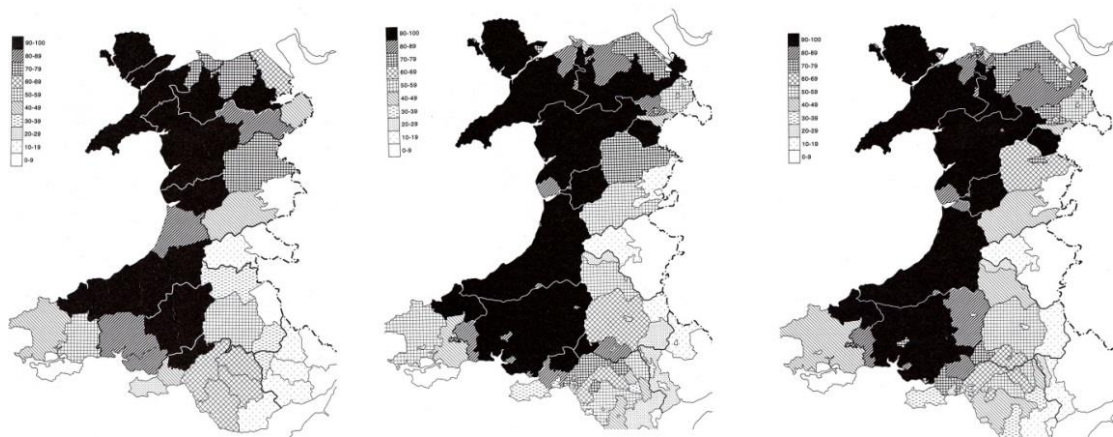
<sup>45</sup> Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225 – 226.



South Africa or Australia.<sup>47</sup> The overall picture between 1901 and 1911 did not promise well for the Welsh language. Although the absolute number of those able to speak Welsh had increased from 929,824 to 976,966, the percentage of those able to speak Welsh had fallen from 49.9% to 44.6%. Moreover the reservoir of monoglot Welsh speakers which had fallen to 8.7% in 1901 had all but been extinguished. Geographically, the Welsh language zones (especially Core or *Y Fro Gymraeg*) were shrinking and fragmenting.<sup>48</sup> This is graphically illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Composite of Language Zones from census data 1891, 1901 and 1911. The darker the areas the denser the population over the age of two years who consider themselves to be Welsh speakers (adapted from Jones<sup>49</sup>)**



The situation as demonstrated in Figure 5 is that of a country which, in the words of Kenneth O. Morgan, had reached its 'Edwardian High Noon'.<sup>50</sup> Although in some respects the sense of national awareness and confidence would grow, the everyday

<sup>47</sup> B. Thomas, *A Cauldron of Rebirth: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century*, in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) pp. 81-99.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911*, pp. 329 -333.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 331-333.

<sup>50</sup> K.O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation. A History of Modern Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 123-155.

use of the Welsh language would diminish and be less community-based. This was certainly most evident in Meinig's 'Domain' regions where the Welsh language remained alive but became increasingly confined to particular networks and social settings such as religious activities, farming, small community businesses and individual families.

### **1.3 Population Censuses 1921 – 2001**

By any standards, the twentieth-century was a tumultuous period in the history of the world. During that century the English language became the principle medium of linguistic exchange, business, academia, advertising, diplomacy, leisure and electronic retrieval. The odds were overwhelmingly against half a million Welsh speakers living in the shadow of 56 million English speakers in the UK and some 220 million English speakers in the USA.<sup>51</sup> The relatively robust position of the Welsh language at the beginning of the twentieth century, spoken by half the population, with one third of the population being monoglot Welsh, had fragmented dramatically such that by 1991 less than twenty per cent of the population spoke Welsh and the majority of those lived in Gwynedd and Dyfed.<sup>52</sup> Yet, paradoxically, the numerical and territorial decline of Welsh was accompanied towards the end of the twentieth-century by enhanced legal status and greater political and economic clout.

The period between the first and second world wars demonstrated what was really an acceleration in the decline of the Welsh population who were able to speak, read or understand Welsh, with an inexorable westward creep of both the Core and Domain areas. All counties experienced a decrease in Welsh speakers between 1931 and 1981, the magnitude in decrease varying between counties. For example

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<sup>51</sup> G.H. Jenkins. And M.A. Williams, 'The Fortunes of the Welsh Language 1900-2000: Introduction', in G.H. Jenkins and M.A. Williams, eds. *Let's do our best for the Ancient Tongue: The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 2

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

the decline, from a small base of 6.0% in 1931 to 2.7% in 1981 in Monmouth, represented over 50% loss of Welsh speakers, and in Carmarthen in *Y Fro Gymraeg*, the decline was also substantial off a high base of 82.3% in 1931 to 60% in 1971, representing a relative decrease of 25% (Table 2).<sup>53</sup>

**Table 2: The percentage of Welsh speakers by county 1931 - 1981<sup>54</sup>**

<b>County</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1951</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>
<b>Anglesey</b>	87.4	79.8	75.5	65.7	61.0
<b>Brecon</b>	37.3	30.3	28.1	22.9	19.3
<b>Caernarfon</b>	79.2	71.7	68.3	62.0	59.7
<b>Cardigan</b>	87.0	79.5	74.8	67.6	63.2
<b>Carmarthen</b>	82.3	77.3	75.1	66.5	60.0
<b>Denbigh</b>	48.5	38.5	34.8	28.1	24.2
<b>Flint</b>	31.7	21.1	19.0	14.7	13.5
<b>Glamorgan</b>	30.5	20.3	17.2	11.8	10.0
<b>Merioneth</b>	86.1	75.4	75.9	73.5	68.2
<b>Monmouth</b>	6.0	3.5	3.4	2.1	2.7
<b>Montgomery</b>	40.7	35.1	32.3	28.1	24.0
<b>Pembroke</b>	30.6	26.9	24.4	20.7	18.1
<b>Radnor</b>	4.7	4.5	4.5	3.7	5.0
<b>WALES</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>18.9</b>

Major changes in Welsh language usage were noted for example in the South Wales Coalfields. Table 3 compares the decline in Welsh speakers in the eastern and western parts of the coalfields for the period 1961 to 1971. If one compares the figures for Cwmaman with the much larger western anthracite coalfields of the

<sup>53</sup> J.W. Aitchison and H. Carter, *The Welsh Language 1921-1991: A Geolinguistic Perspective*, in G.H. Jenkins and M.A. Williams, eds. *Let's do our Best for the Ancient Tongue: The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Aitchison and Carter, *Language, Economy and Society*, p. 51.

Rhondda, it can be appreciated that Cwmaman has fared reasonably well in the period 1951 to 1971, despite a significant fall in populations in both areas.

**Table 3: Two decades of changes in two discrete areas of the South Wales Anthracite Coalfield**

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Welsh-speakers</b>	<b>% Welsh-speakers</b>
<b>Rhondda</b>			
<b>1951</b>	106,098	31,215	29.4
<b>1961</b>	95,846	23,233	24.2
<b>1971</b>	85,140	11,295	13.3
<b>Cwmaman</b>			
<b>1951</b>	4400	4007	91.1
<b>1961</b>	4107	3755	91.4
<b>1971</b>	3810	3395	89.1

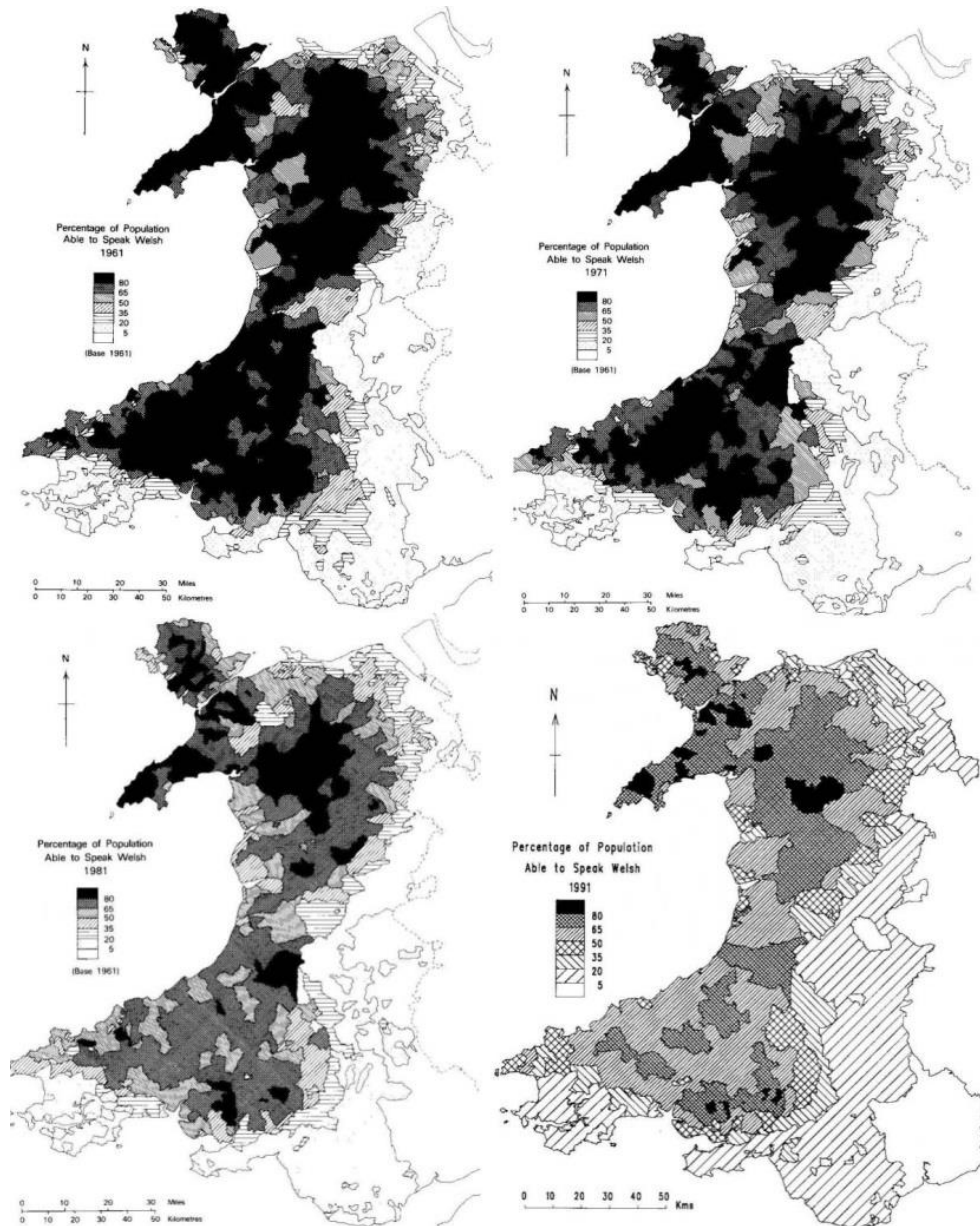
The 1991 census recorded a total Welsh-speaking population of 508,098 representing 18.6% of the total population aged three years and over (2,723,623).<sup>55</sup> The counties of Dyfed (43.7%) and Gwynedd (61.0%) continued to be the main strongholds of the language.<sup>56</sup> The composite Figure 6 is a dramatic graphical description of the rapid acceleration in fragmentation and language loss between 1961 and 1991.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-110.

<sup>56</sup> In 1974, the administrative county council of Dyfed was created by the amalgamation of Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, but later divided back into Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire under the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994. Similarly Gwynedd has been the subject of amalgamation in 1974 and subsequent fragmentation in 1996. At the time of the 1991 census, Gwynedd constituted Anglesey, Caernarfon, most of Merioneth, and a few parishes in Denbigh.



Figure 6: Composite of Language Zones from census data 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991. The darker the areas the denser the population who consider themselves to be Welsh speakers (adapted from Atchison and Carter<sup>57</sup>)



It can be appreciated from Figure 6 that in 1991, in terms of relative proportions or density, the main strongholds of the language are still to be found in rural Wales even though the absolute numbers are largest in urbanized areas.<sup>58</sup> Previous

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-158.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

censuses have all drawn attention to the gradual break-up of a once discrete and dominant Core or *Y Fro Gymraeg*. As emphasized by Aitchison and Carter, the notion of a westward-moving frontier of Anglicization may have initially sufficed to define the encroachment on the Welsh-speaking heartland, but the situation eventually became more complex as a variety of *internal fracture lines* established themselves.<sup>59</sup> They summarized the sequence of geolinguistic change in terms of the Core area in Table 4 thus:

**Table 4: Major geolinguistic changes 1901 - 1981**

1901	A clear and dominant core can be identified where > 90% spoke Welsh
1931	The qualifying proportion of the core is reduced to > 80% spoke Welsh
1951	Core still identifiable but qualifying threshold reduced again to > 75% spoke Welsh. Internal fracture lines begin to appear
1961	Qualifying proportion reduced to > 65% spoke Welsh. Four main fracture lines: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Menai Straits</li> <li>2. Conwy-Porthmadog 'trench' across Snowdonia</li> <li>3. Severn-Dyfi break</li> <li>4. Depression between rural and industrial Dyfed</li> </ol>
1971	Fracture lines now very apparent. In order to retain > 65% threshold, now necessary to recast interpretation in a series of sub-cores: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ynys Môn</li> <li>2. Llŷn and Arfon</li> <li>3. Merionydd-Nant Conwy</li> <li>4. Rural Dyfed, north of the Landsker line</li> <li>5. Industrial east Dyfed and western parts of West Glamorgan</li> </ol>
1981	The processes of fragmentation since 1951 continue apace, and the Core is deeply severed.

Whereas the 18.6% of the population who spoke Welsh in the 1991 census may have represented the nadir of the language in terms of relative fluency in the language, the census of 2001 seemed to give rise to a degree of optimism, showing that the percentage of people speaking Welsh had increased marginally from 18.6%

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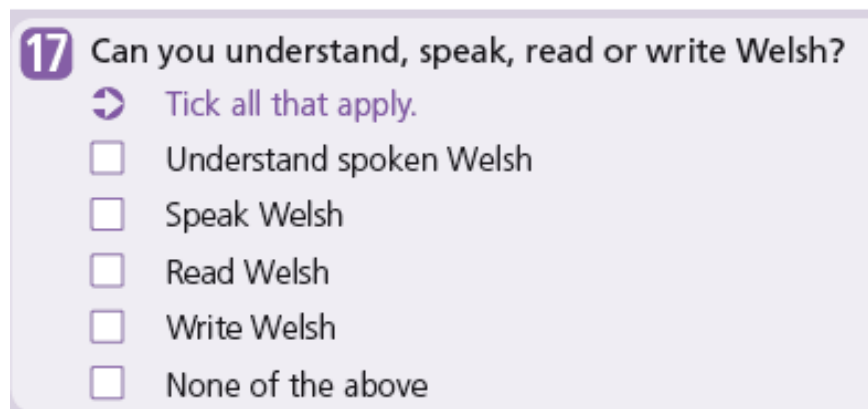
<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

in 1991 to 20.8% in 2001.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately the optimism may have been short lived, as will be discussed in the next section

#### 1.4 Population Census 2011

The 2011 decennial census was held on March 27, 2011, and the first results pertaining to the Welsh language released on December 11, 2012.<sup>61</sup> In terms of the Welsh language, the census asked ‘Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?’ – answered by ticking one or more of five boxes (Figure 7), as in the census of 2001. It is noteworthy that the question about language was changed between 1991 and 2001. In 1991, the question was ‘Does the person speak, read or write Welsh?’, but in terms of comparing across censuses the change is unlikely to be significant and certainly not in itself sufficient to explain changes in the numbers of Welsh speakers.

**Figure 7: Question 17**



**17** Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?

➤ Tick all that apply.

- Understand spoken Welsh
- Speak Welsh
- Read Welsh
- Write Welsh
- None of the above

<sup>60</sup> H.M. Jones, *A Statistical Overview of the Welsh Language*. Welsh Language Board (Cardiff, February 2012) 13.

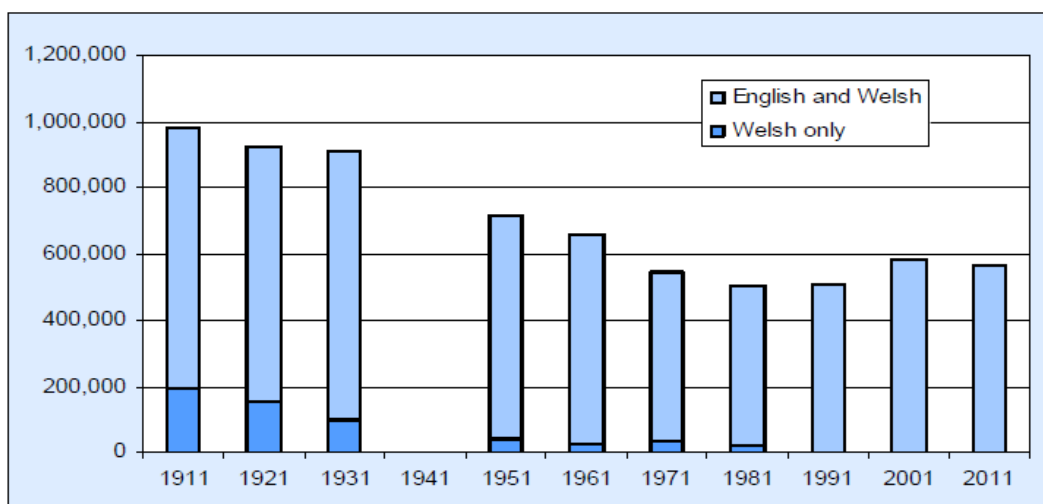
<sup>61</sup>Welsh Government. 2011 Census: First Results on the Welsh Language (online). Available: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/121211sb1182012en.pdf> <accessed December 11, 2012>

Between 2001 and 2011, there was a decrease in the number and proportion of people aged 3 and over able to speak Welsh in Wales. The decrease was due to demographic changes in the population, including fewer children, the loss of older cohorts with higher levels of Welsh speakers, migration and changes to people's skills between censuses.

The key results of the 2011 census as they relate to the Welsh language can be summarized thus:

- The *proportion* of people able to speak Welsh decreased from 20.8 per cent in 2001 to 19.0 per cent in 2011. Despite an increase in the size of the population, the *number* of Welsh speakers decreased from 582,000 in 2001 to 562,000 in 2011.
- Although lower than 2001, the proportion and number of Welsh speakers in 2011 were higher than the equivalent figures for 1991 (18.7 per cent and 508,000 people).
- Differences between 2001 and 2011 varied by age group – with considerable increases for younger children (aged 3-4), a slight increase for adults 20-44, and decreases for other age groups.
- The proportion of people aged three and over able to speak Welsh decreased in nearly all local authorities. The largest decreases were in areas with the highest proportions of Welsh speakers (Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion)
- Nearly three quarters of the population (73.3 per cent) had no Welsh language skills in 2011. This is an increase from 71.6 per cent in 2001.

**Figure 8: Number of people aged three and over able to speak Welsh, 1911 - 2011**



As can be appreciated from Figure 8, there has been an unrelenting decline in the numbers of Welsh speakers as discussed earlier, but disappointingly the upward inflexion seen in the 2001 census has not continued and the numbers have drifted back to 562,000 from 582,000 compared to 2001.<sup>62</sup> If one analyses the results according to age, the data showed that:

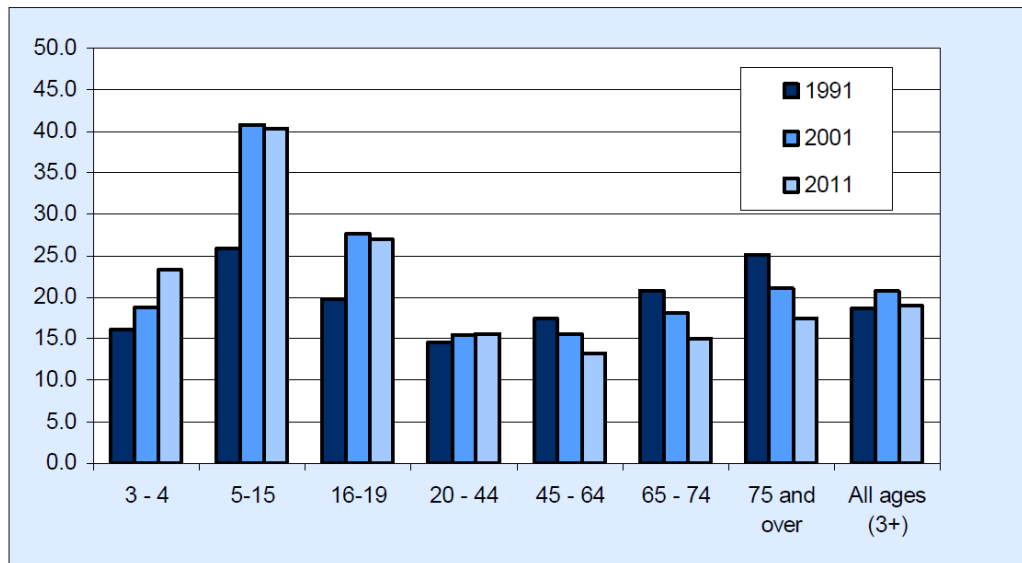
- The proportion of children aged 3-4 able to speak Welsh increased considerably from 18.8 per cent in 2001 to 23.3 per cent in 2011 (resulting in 3,300 more 3-4 year olds able to speak Welsh in 2011). The proportion of children aged 5-15 able to speak Welsh in 2011 (40.3 per cent) was lower than the equivalent figure for 2001 (40.8 per cent). There were 41,300 fewer children aged 5-15 in 2011 than in 2001, and the number of children able to speak Welsh decreased by 18,900 from 171,200 to 152,300.
- The proportion of people aged 20-44 able to speak Welsh increased very slightly between 2001 and 2011 (15.5 per cent and 15.6 per cent respectively).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

- The number and proportion of people able to speak Welsh for the 45-64, 65-74 and 75 and over age categories decreased between 2001 and 2011 with a larger decrease for the older age group.
- The overall number of people aged 45-64 increased by 91,500 over the decade. This coupled with 4,800 fewer Welsh speakers meant that the proportion of 45-64 year olds able to speak Welsh decreased from 15.6 per cent to 13.3 per cent.
- In 2011, high proportions of people in the younger age groups were able to speak Welsh, with the proportion at its highest for the 10-14 age group (42.2 per cent).
- There was a large downward step in the proportion of people able to speak Welsh between the 10-14 and 15-19 age groups, and again between the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. Given the equivalent age cohorts ten years previously ( 5-9 and 10-14 year olds in 2001) indicated higher levels of people able to speak Welsh , this is likely due to be the impact of migration (see below) or respondents recording different Welsh language skills than they had done in the previous census.
- The proportion able to speak Welsh gradually decreases with age, and was at its lowest for those aged 45-49 (13.0 per cent). The proportion then increases gradually by age reaching 19.1 per cent for the over 85s.

These data are graphically represented in Figures 9 and 10:

**Figure 9: Proportion of people able to speak Welsh by age group, 1991 - 2011**



**Figure 10: Proportion of people able to speak Welsh, detailed by age groups, 2011**

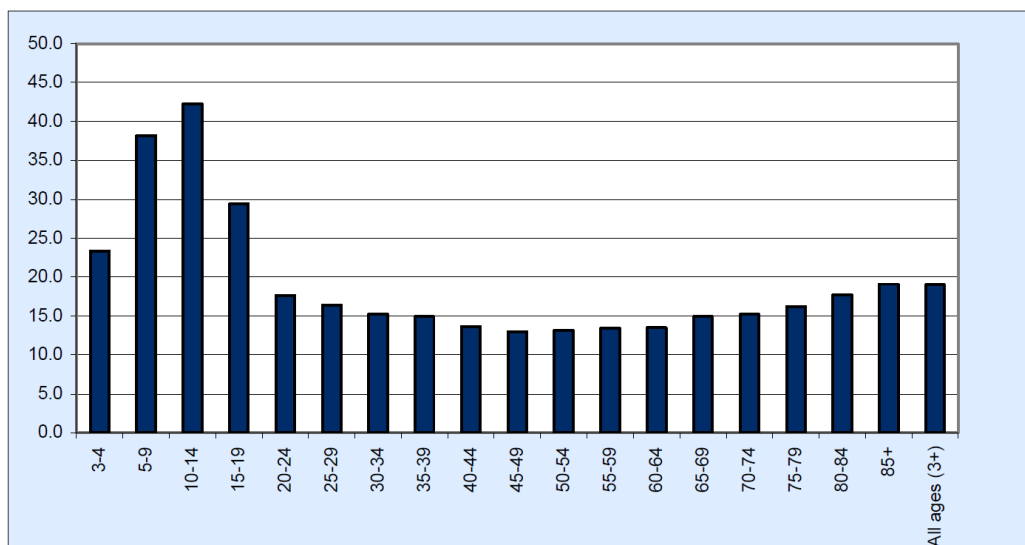
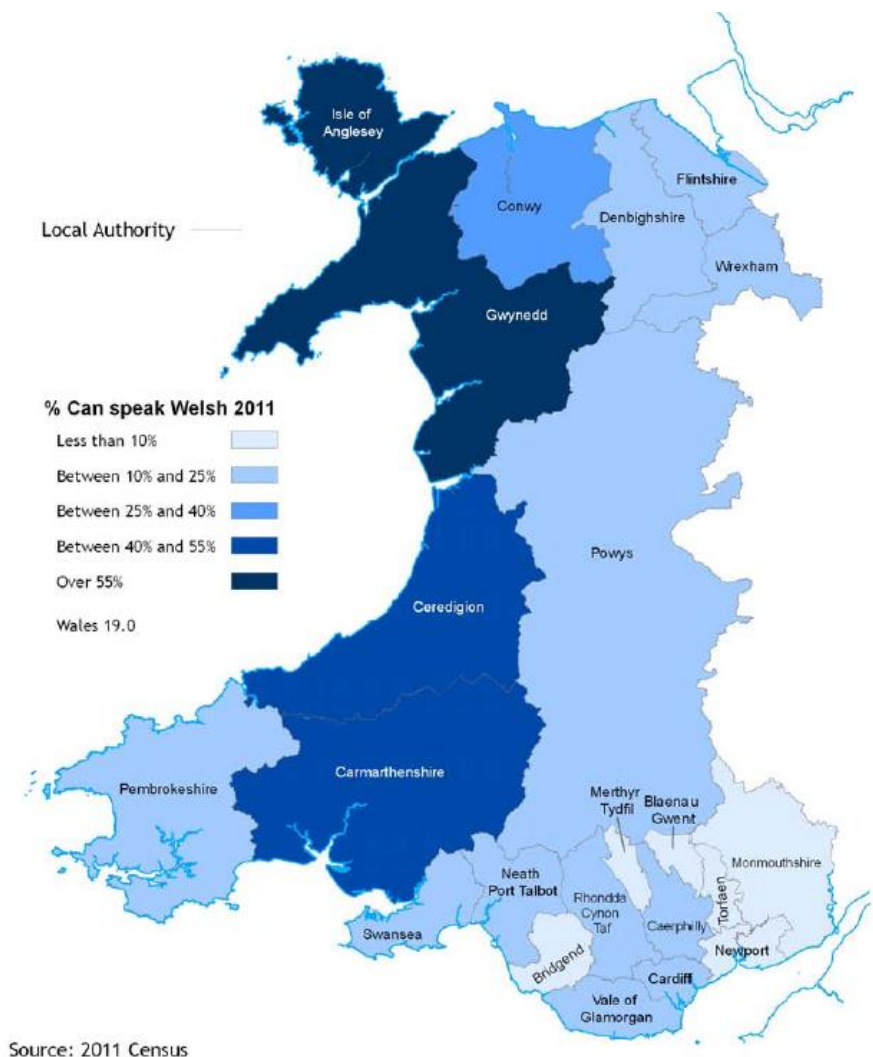


Figure 11 is a graphical representation of the proportion of the population able to speak Welsh by local authority.

**Figure 11: Proportion of people (aged 3 and over) able to speak Welsh, by local authority, 2011**



Source: 2011 Census

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 Geography & Technology  
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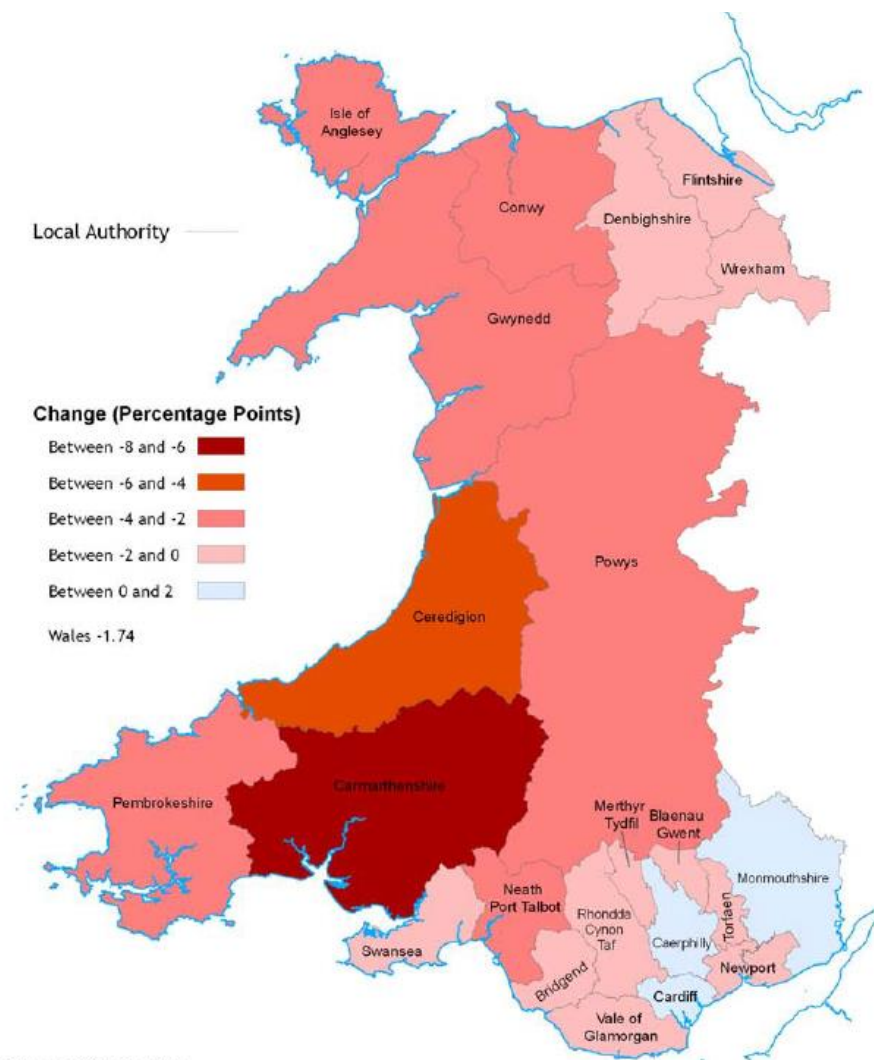
In summary:

- The proportion of people aged three and over able to speak Welsh in 2011 was at its highest in Gwynedd (65.4 per cent), Isle of Anglesey (57.2 per cent), Ceredigion (47.3 per cent) and Carmarthenshire (43.9 per cent).
- Carmarthenshire remained the local authority with the highest number of Welsh speakers (78,000), though this was now closely followed by Gwynedd (77,000).



Some areas of Wales saw rather alarming percentage falls in residents able to speak Welsh. These data are shown graphically in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Change in proportion able to speak Welsh, by local authority, 2001 to 2011 (percentage points).**



Source: 2011 Census

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 Geography & Technology  
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In summary:

- Carmarthenshire saw the largest percentage point drop – from 50.3 per cent in 2001 to 43.9 per cent in 2011, meaning that less than half the population could speak Welsh by 2011.
- In addition to Carmarthenshire, other local authorities in the West of Wales (Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot) all saw a decrease of 2 or more percentage points in the proportion of Welsh speakers. They also saw decreases in the numbers of Welsh speakers.
- The decreases in the proportions of people able to speak Welsh were smaller for East Wales authorities.
- The number of people in Cardiff able to speak Welsh increased from 32,500 in 2001 to 36,700 in 2011, but a substantial increase in the overall Cardiff population over the same period meant that the proportion able to speak Welsh remained fairly stable (11.1 per cent in 2011 compared with 11.0 per cent in 2001).
- Monmouthshire saw a small increase in the proportion of people able to speak Welsh (from 9.3 per cent in 2001 to 9.9 per cent in 2011).

These data are consistent with those Aitchison and Carter (2004), who showed that the area of greatest concern is that of the industrial south-west, the former anthracite mining and tin-plate producing areas of east Carmarthenshire and West Glamorgan, where the language decline between 1991 and 2001 has been described as a ‘catastrophic collapse’.<sup>63</sup> Because of its significance in language shifts, the area of Cwmaman and Cwm Gwendraeth were selected for special review by the Welsh Language Board. The authors were not optimistic with respect to Cwmaman, where there was a fall in percentage of Welsh-speakers from 77% in 1991 to 67% in 2001. They reported that the family unit was a much less efficient

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<sup>63</sup>J. Aitchison and H. Carter, *Spreading the Word: The Welsh Language 2001* (Talybont, Ceredigion: Y Lolfa Cyf., 2004) pp. 130-133.

agent of language transmission, for reasons which remain unclear, further exacerbated by out-migration of Welsh-speakers.<sup>64</sup>

What remains somewhat unclear is the proportion of school age children who are able to speak Welsh in a school environment actually speak Welsh at home. Tables commissioned by the Welsh Language Board underline the potential frailty of the language according to the so called 'language profile' in the home.<sup>65</sup> The 'best' scenario is where parents are married, and both speak Welsh and the 'worse' scenario is where neither parent speaks Welsh or in a single parent family where the sole parent is also non-Welsh speaking (Table 5).

**Table 5: Language profile of children > 4 years who could speak Welsh**

<b>Married couples with Children</b>	Percentage
• Neither Partner Welsh-speaking	11.6
• Male partner Welsh-speaking	40.2
• Female partner Welsh-speaking	52.1
• Both partners Welsh-speaking	86.5
<b>Single female parent</b>	
• Unable to speak Welsh	13.0
• Able to speak Welsh	60.9
<b>Single male parent</b>	
• Unable to speak Welsh	13.7
• Able to speak Welsh	71.0

The other unresolved issue with the encouraging increase in proportion of schoolchildren who can speak Welsh is whether they will continue to speak Welsh when they enter the work force or enroll in higher education. This is of particular

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Jones. *A statistical Overview of the Welsh Language.*

concern for fluent Welsh speakers who become out-migrants after they complete their higher education. The Welsh Diaspora (*Cymry ar wasgar*) may account for as many as 2,200 fluent Welsh speakers annually, ending up in England (the majority of exiles), Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.<sup>66</sup>

Overall one would have to concede that the results of the 2011 census in terms of absolute numbers and also proportions of Welsh people who are able to understand, speak, read or write the Welsh language make for concerning reading. The apparent improvement, albeit small, in the 2001 census has not continued, and has actually regressed. The political commentators are already sounding the death knell of the language, or at least baying for a demonstration of aggressive crisis management by all layers of government. As outlined recently by Betsan Powys, BBC political editor for Wales:

“Here's another, big factor to add to the mix - the facts around inward migration. Just over a quarter of the population of Wales was born elsewhere. In fact take a look at the figures from other European countries and you'll find only one where an even higher proportion of the population was born outside its borders - Luxembourg. Most by far of those who've moved to Wales have come from England. That inevitably goes some way to explain how the language is being diluted in areas where Welsh has been dominant for centuries. And one more set of figures: back in 2003 the Welsh government set a target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers by 5% by 2011. It's a target that seems entirely unrealistic now, in particular when you consider the irresistible force of demographics in all of this. They quietly scrapped it last year. Today it's become clear just

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<sup>66</sup> Welsh Language Strategy Evidence Review. Welsh Government Social Research Document 09/12 (online). Available: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/120301welshlanguageen.pdf> <accessed December 27,2012>

how far it was out of their reach, long, long before they dropped it.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> B. Powys. 2012: The Year of Sharp Decreases (online). Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-20684975> <accessed December 27, 2012>

## CHAPTER TWO: THE RISE AND DEMISE OF ORGANISED RELIGION IN WALES, IN PARTICULAR THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH AND NONCONFORMIST MOVEMENT.

### 2.1 Prologue

Wales is a country whose population and public institutions have historically had a close relationship with Christianity, particularly Nonconformity. The twentieth-century has witnessed the progressive collapse of the public hegemonic status of Christianity in Welsh society and a higher than average (compared to the rest of the United Kingdom) rate of decline in membership in, and attendance at, Christian churches and chapels.<sup>68</sup> The collective Welsh reputation for piety was a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged in the late eighteenth-century, reached its zenith in the late nineteenth-century and was effectively exhausted by the twentieth-century.<sup>69</sup> Although the focus for this dissertation is on organised religion (the Established Church and the Nonconformist Chapels) in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, in order to appreciate the important roles of these institutions in what was a predominantly Protestant Wales, it is instructive to look back further, and to summarize the establishment and growth of Protestantism in the Principality since the Reformation. One of the most comprehensive studies of the Reformation and its influence on politics and religion in Wales was written by Glanmor Williams but its details are outside the scope of this thesis; nonetheless it provides an invaluable introduction to the subject and is summarized thus:<sup>70</sup>

In Tudor times Christianity in Wales was going through bleak times, and administratively Henry VIII and his advisers were committed to making Wales an indivisible part of England. Whereas the lamp of faith in these days burnt low, the story was very different on the European continent where new forces and ideas were wielding a powerful influence. In October 1517 Martin Luther nailed his

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<sup>68</sup> P. Chambers and A. Thompson, *Public Religion and Political Change in Wales*, *Sociology*, vol 39:1 (2005a), pp. 29-46.

<sup>69</sup> P. Chambers and A. Thompson, *Coming to Terms with the Past: Religion and Identity in Wales*, *Social Compass*, Vol 52:3 (2005b) pp. 337-352.

<sup>70</sup> G. Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991b).

Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and effectively gave life to the Reformation.<sup>71</sup> From country to country throughout Europe, new forces were stirring and learned books were being replaced by the Bible, while human prowess was being replaced by the grace of God.

The arrival of Protestantism in Wales was less dramatic than in continental Europe, and was the fruit of government policy rather than a revolution. Henry VIII was determined to separate the church from the papacy, and the proposed union of England and Wales under the Act of Union in 1536 was part of the scheme to ensure support for religious change. Henry's daughter Elizabeth I ensured that the English monarch would replace the Pope as head of the church by the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1559, and the subsequent Act of Uniformity ensured that the public services of the Church would be regulated by the 1552 Book of Common Prayer (BCP). Unfortunately for Wales, the compulsory BCP was in English and not understood by the Welsh people.<sup>72</sup> The Catholic Church had been lacking in spirited defenders of its faith and order in Wales, a sad outcome of the long depredation of the Catholic Church in Wales. Nonetheless, what was the point of removing Latin as the principal language of church service and replacing it with another foreign language, English, which the people could not understand? Fortunately there were zealous Protestants with close links to Wales, who realized that the growth of Protestantism in Wales depended on preaching and teaching in the Welsh language. In this respect the partnership of Bishop Richard Davies and William Salesbury was to be extremely fruitful.<sup>73</sup> Davies and Salesbury played a prominent part in persuading Elizabeth I and her parliament to pass the 1563 Act ordering the translation of the Bible and the prayer book into Welsh. The translation of the New Testament was followed by a translation of the Old Testament by William Morgan in 1588 (and revised by Richard Parry), and *Y Beibl Cyssegr-lan* (The Holy Bible) would endure until the appearance of a new translation in 1988, to become 'the most

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<sup>71</sup> R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004b), p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>73</sup> G. Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991b), pp. 338 – 360.

important book in the Welsh language'.<sup>74</sup> Ironically, what had begun as an attempt to extinguish the Welsh language and replace it with English had effectively halted the progressive marginalization of the Welsh language and ensured its survival as a literary form.<sup>75</sup>

Not all were happy with the direction taken by the now Established Church, or Church of England. "Extreme" Protestants were openly critical of the Episcopalianism of the Anglican Church, arguing a more scriptural basis for Presbyterianism, the pattern adopted by John Calvin. These more extreme Protestants would later become to be known as Puritans.<sup>76</sup> But Presbyterianism, with its democratic elements, and its readiness to judge even the Queen by the Word of God, was not going to be acceptable to Elizabeth I. One such vocal Presbyterian Puritan was the Welshman, John Penry, who would also champion the importance of preaching in his native tongue. At a time when the Presbyterian movement was at a crossroads, Penry argued that where a parish failed to recruit a minister, the people should meet in the church, or a suitable building, and have one of their own number read the Word and offer suitable prayers. This of course was the basis of Congregationalism, and in time the Independent (*Annibynwyr*) or Congregational Church or Chapel would become one of the cornerstones of the Welsh Nonconformist Movement in Wales. John Penry became a martyr to the cause and following a scandalously unfair trial he was found guilty and hanged in 1593.<sup>77</sup>

It is worth reiterating that the chapel religion of Nonconformity is not a peculiarly Welsh phenomenon. Three of the largest Nonconformist bodies, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, and the Wesleyans, had come into Wales from England, the first two during the seventeenth-century, and the third at the

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<sup>74</sup> R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*. P. 8.

<sup>75</sup> P. Chambers, *Secularization and Welsh Religiosity* in Manuel Franzmann, Christel Gartner and Nicole Köck, eds. *Religiosität in der säkularisierten Welt; Theoretische und empirische Beiträge zur Säkularisierungs – debate in der Religionssoziologie* Wiesbaden (Vs Verlag Für Soziologie, 2006) pp. 223-239.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10 – 17.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



beginning of the nineteenth-century. Only the Calvinistic Methodists (Welsh Presbyterians), who had seceded from the Established Church in 1811, had explicitly Welsh roots.<sup>78</sup> However ‘the specifically Welsh character of Protestant Dissent was unselfconscious and pragmatic rather than being a matter of principle’.<sup>79</sup> By the end of the nineteenth-century Nonconformity had displaced Anglicanism as the principal form of Welsh Christianity, and preaching, worship and spiritual fellowship were vibrant and seemingly enduring, conducted through the medium of Welsh for the simple reason that that was the language of the people and indeed the only language most of them could understand.

This thesis will now trace the fortunes of the Established Church and the Nonconformist chapels through an often tumultuous two centuries, divided into portions of approximately fifty years.

## **2.2 Religion and Welsh Society 1801 to 1851**

In the mid eighteenth-century the parish of Merthyr Tydfil, in Glamorgan, was something of a backwater, its size and population exemplified by the fact that there were only twenty-seven baptisms in the year 1750. By 1801 the four great ironworks of Dowlais, Cyfarthfa, Plymouth and Penydarren had caused a community expansion in the town to 7,705 people, increasing to an astonishing 46,378 by 1851.<sup>80</sup> As noted eloquently by Evans:

“Those who settled in the new Klondike-like settlements had travelled from rural areas on foot and in carts. They came as Christians and pagans, thrifty and profligate, clean and dirty. Once they settled in their new surroundings, most fell back on

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<sup>78</sup> D.D. Morgan, ‘The Essence of Welshness’?: Some Aspects of Christian Faith and National Identity in Wales, c 1900-2000, in Pope, Robert, ed. *Religion and National Identity. Wales and Scotland c1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge Printing, 2001) p. 141.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>80</sup> D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989) 75 – 95.

their traditions and customs; and one important, stabilizing tradition was that of religious affiliation".<sup>81</sup>

### 2.2.1 Established Church 1801 -1851

It is clear that the Established Church had failed to adapt to this new environment of industrialisation and urbanization. Traditionally and constitutionally the Church in Wales was part of the Church of England, and the four Welsh dioceses were part of the province of Canterbury. The administrative structure of the Established Church was devised for a more placid, agricultural society which it had served for centuries. In order to understand the failure of the Church to keep pace with changes, it is necessary to discuss the issues of industrialization and population growth, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3. In the fifty years between 1801 and 1851 the population of Wales increased from 587,245 to 1,163,139, and the greatest impact was in Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, which in the case of Glamorgan now held a fifth of the Welsh population by the mid nineteenth-century.<sup>82</sup> The major hurdle for the Church was the long established parish system. The boundaries for each parish were legally constructed and there was no administrative body which was legally empowered to alter these as social situations changed. Each parish had a church and a priest, and was responsible for raising its own finances from tithes and rent from properties. There were 853 parishes in Wales, and nearly half of these were in the large rural diocese of St David's.<sup>83</sup> Some rural parishes were 50,000 acres in size but conversely parishes of less than half this size had to serve the industrial towns of Monmouth and Glamorgan. Clearly by the eighteenth-century the Church was totally ill equipped to provide sufficient places of worship in the industrialized areas of south Wales.

In addition, the Welsh dioceses were poor financially compared to their English counterparts due partly to the smaller tithe incomes collected by the parishes. To

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81- 82.

add insult to injury, much of the remainder of ecclesiastical income from Welsh parishes went to English bishops and to entities outside Wales, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and Eton College. Much of the tithe incomes went to so called *lay proprietors*, and this phenomenon of “advowson of parishes” by influential lay proprietors could be sold as an asset by companies. The influence of these lay “benefactors” extended to appointment of clergy to various parishes and some of the power to hire and fire was not in the hands of the bishops. Additionally these lay proprietors were inclined to appoint monoglot Englishmen to Welsh livings.

Which raises one of the fundamental questions central to this dissertation – ‘*What influence did the Established Church have on the survival of the Welsh language in the first half of the eighteenth-century?*’. By any criterion it will be evident that, in terms of furthering the Welsh language cause in the early 1800s, the Established Church was not only found wanting, but was often an active campaigner against maintaining the Welsh language in day-to-day parish life.

Throughout the nineteenth-century the Church in Wales was still a part of the Church of England and in the view of the ecclesiastical leaders the Church in Wales, being represented by the province of Canterbury, should be treated no differently to the other dioceses. It was therefore natural that the Established Church refused to countenance any linguistic differences on the somewhat feeble grounds that the Welsh language caused inconvenience administratively, and interfered with the movement of non-Welsh-speaking clergy to various parishes throughout Wales.<sup>84</sup> The Church was also heavily influenced by the prejudices and assumptions of English political leaders, as will be illustrated in Chapter 3 in relation to the Blue Books report of 1847. The burden of the twenty-fourth article of the Articles of Faith of the Church of England was simple and unambiguous: ‘It is contrary to the Word of God, and to the practice of the Early Church, to pray publicly in Church, or to administer

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<sup>84</sup> R.T. Jones, *The Church and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century*, in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000a), p. 215.

the Sacraments, in an idiom which the people may not understand'. Despite this there were religious motives behind the desire to suppress the language, despite the fact that the law made it clear that Welsh-speaking clerics were to be appointed to Welsh-speaking parishes.<sup>85</sup> Of the twenty-five bishops appointed to the four Welsh dioceses in the nineteenth-century, only five were Welshmen, and the simple fact was that the majority of these 'alien' bishops had no understanding of the special needs of the Church in Wales, and had no interest in the Welsh language nor the culture and literature of Wales.<sup>86</sup> The knock-on effect of course was that non-Welsh bishops were inclined to appoint non-Welsh clergy, 'an alien Episcopate productive of a clergy in its own likeness'.<sup>87</sup> Indeed many 'alien' clergy chose not to even live in their own parishes and the onus of running the local parish church was left to poorly paid Welsh-speaking curates, for whom promotion to parish priest was unlikely to eventuate.

There were exceptions to the antagonism against promotion of the Welsh language in the Established Church in Wales, such as Bishop Thomas Burgess (an Englishman from Hampshire) who held the Bishopric of St David's for twenty years from 1803, and his most lasting contribution was the establishment of St. David's College, Lampeter.<sup>88</sup> Somewhat ironically, it was left to expatriate, Welsh-speaking clergy living and working in England to champion the survival of the Welsh language in the Church in Wales, by petitioning the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel in 1835, and by writing to any bishop in Wales who was thought to contravene the principle of appointing Welsh-speaking clergy to essentially monoglot Welsh parishes.<sup>89</sup>

In summary, there was considerable tension between two parties in the Established Church in the nineteenth-century. On the one hand the bishops and Church dignitaries cared little for the Welsh language, and knew practically nothing of the literature, culture and history of Wales. With exceptions such as Thomas Burgess, it

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222 – 225.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226 – 228.

was inevitable that alien bishops would appoint like-minded non-Welsh-speaking clergy to Welsh livings. On the other hand, there were champions of the Welsh language amongst the clergy who considered that the Church was nonetheless a Welsh institution. But it was not easy for these relatively less powerful parochial priests and curates to lobby for the language against their powerful Anglophile superiors in Canterbury. To their credit, they continued to campaign hard, as exemplified by Canon David Jones who viewed the battle thus:

‘Authority and power are from above; popular influence and reform are from below. The inferior clergy are winning their way among the Welsh-speaking masses in the face of formidable difficulties; but the dignitaries are still content to confine their attention to the English-speaking section..... (the Church) was saved from extinction in Welsh centres ..... by Welsh-speaking curates who kept alive the fire on her altars’.<sup>90</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth-century the disestablishment of the Church in Wales would become a heated debate. The fact that it had been an inextricable part of the Established Church of England for so long had undoubtedly cost the Welsh language dearly.<sup>91</sup>

### *2.2.2 Nonconformist Movement 1801 – 1851*

In the years 1801 to 1851 Protestantism was the religion of the Welsh people and Nonconformity strengthened its hold, famous for its doctrinal orthodoxy and the simplicity of its denominational structure. Among the ‘old Dissenters’ the Independents (Congregationalists) were the most numerous, followed by the Baptists and the Unitarians. The Welsh Methodists had escaped the factionalism which had splintered the Wesleyan Connexion in England and retained their intense

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236 -237.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

evangelicalism and revivalism.<sup>92</sup> One reason for the success of Nonconformity in Wales was the importance of the laity in its structure, and the lack of central control, in marked contrast to the Established Church. In effect, as in-migrants moved into the industrialized areas of South Wales, they were free to set up their own congregation, meeting in their own homes, long rooms and public houses, well before the funds were forthcoming for the construction of *Bryn Seion* or *Bethel Newydd*. Between 1800 and 1850 there was a tremendous increase in the number of Congregational chapels in Wales. A new cause was established every five weeks.<sup>93</sup> From 87 Congregational chapels in 1742, this figure rose to 257 in 1815, and to 684 by 1851, an eight-fold increase in a century.<sup>94</sup>

Most preachers had to find supplementary income as carpenters, miners, shopkeepers or farmers until the congregations grew to an economically sustainable size. The Sunday Schools, an integral part of the Nonconformist chapels, served to promote the interests of laity and provided a democratic organization within which chapel members could hold office as teachers, treasurers, superintendents and secretaries. It gave the common folk a sense of identity and ownership.<sup>95</sup> Equally as important in guaranteeing the success of Welsh Dissent was powerful and effective preaching. Its characteristics were sound doctrine, perspicuous style, richness of thought, animated and earnest delivery, solemnity and a directness of appeal.<sup>96</sup> Initially the ministers were itinerant and essentially toured the country before individual chapels could afford a resident minister. Notwithstanding the poor pecuniary awards great preachers were born of Dissent, including Christmas Evans, John Elias, William Williams (*Y Wern*), added to which were men of great intellect arising from the movement, including Dr Thomas Rees, Evan Jones, Robert Ellis (*Cynddelw*) and Dr Thomas Price of Aberdare.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, p. 77.

<sup>93</sup> Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 149.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>95</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

The chapels grew in numbers, and Nonconformity succeeded as a movement because ironically they were not exclusively 'religious'. When the chapels sent out offshoots, they set up schoolrooms, and then chapels, in that order. The schoolrooms often existed where there were no 'British Schools', and provided education for young people and adults of various ages and abilities. They were communal centres for educational activities, lectures, *eisteddfodau*, concerts, temperance movements, penny readings and provision of meeting places for political discussions.<sup>98</sup> Nonconformity had become part of the very weave of industrial society, providing education for the masses before formal educational establishments existed, published numerous periodicals, and was even closely associated with early Savings Banks and Friendly Societies providing unprotected workers with a basic safety net. The chapel wore two hats, one for personal salvation for sinners and the other a vibrant socio-political movement for the working classes.<sup>99</sup> Arguably the greatest legacy of the movement was the writing of great hymns and hymn tunes with 'an incomparable personal and communal power'.<sup>100</sup> The first *Gymanfa Ganu* was held in Aberdare in the mid nineteenth-century, conducted by Ieuan Gwyllt, whose hymn book sold 17,000 copies.<sup>101</sup> Through the importation of the tonic sol-fa from England the common folk became musically literate, giving birth to four part and two part mixed and male voice choirs, synonymous with Wales through to the modern era.

Which again raises the fundamental question central to this thesis, as posed previously for the Established Church - – '*What influence did the Nonconformist Movement have on the survival of the Welsh language in the first half of the eighteenth-century?*' It will become evident that in terms of the Welsh language, the Nonconformist Movement fared significantly better than the Established Church.

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>99</sup> M.W. Thomas, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit. Literature and Nonconformist Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010) pp. 38-39.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Welsh was the language of the Nonconformist churches in the nineteenth-century. Their worship, administration and dealings with one another in conference, assembly, and association were carried out in Welsh.<sup>102</sup> In keeping with Protestant doctrine, the Bible was central to worship, and that Bible in the case of Nonconformist chapels was a Welsh Bible. Every member of the chapel had his or her own copy and mastering its contents was mandatory. Among the so called 'Old Dissenters' – the Congregationalists and Baptists – the learning of catechisms by rote was an established discipline.<sup>103</sup> There was widespread use of *Catechism Byrraf y Gymanfa* (The Shortest Catechism of the Assembly) as presented to the Westminster Parliament in 1648. In some chapels mastery of the catechism was a pre-requisite for chapel membership. Therefore as far as the Welsh language was concerned, this meant that the congregation were well used to treating quite abstruse subjects through the medium of Welsh. There can hardly have been a time in Welsh history when so many people were exposed to the spoken Word in their own tongue.

The coming of the railways made itinerant preaching accessible and practical. Many of these sermons have been recorded in print, and the myriad of preaching styles is evident. There was much debate about the appropriate use of grammatically correct versus colloquial Welsh in preaching and it is noticeable that the language of preachers grew simpler in style as the century unfolded. However, despite the use of both grammatically correct and idiomatic Welsh in public preaching, English retained its position as the preferred medium of instruction and teaching, even amongst Welsh theological colleges.<sup>104</sup> In many theological institutions, Welsh was either ignored or even ostracized as a teaching medium. Such was the policy in colleges such as Llanfyllin Academy, Abergavenny Baptist Academy, Carmarthen Presbyterian College, and Bala Calvinistic Methodist College. The antagonism clearly crossed denominations. Nonetheless, there were exceptions such as Michael D. Jones' Congregational College in Bala which was an essentially Welsh establishment

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<sup>102</sup> R.T. Jones, *Nonconformity and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century*, in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000b), p. 239.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-250.



that taught some English.<sup>105</sup> As in secular life, the belief that English was the language of higher education was extremely powerful and this persisted until the middle of the twentieth century at the expense of the Welsh language. It was paradoxical therefore that the theological colleges neglected the Welsh language in the main, considering the high proportion of graduates who would spend their lives preaching to Welsh-speaking congregations.

The shining light within the Nonconformist movement with respect to Welsh was the Sunday School. The dearth of educational resources meant that many children and adults learnt to read and write in Sunday School, and the fact that they were held on Sundays was advantageous to ordinary labourers who worked all week. Many readable commentaries were published to accompany Bible studies including *Yr Hyfforddwr*, *Esponiad ar y Testament Newydd* and *Y Geiriadur Ysgrythyrawl*. There was much emphasis on learning by rote or 'off-by-heart', and undoubtedly gave thousands of children and adults the opportunity of using the Welsh language, of acquiring biblical vocabulary and idioms, and of learning the nation's classical hymns. By the end of the century four out of ten of the population of Wales were Sunday School members.

To sum up, through their evangelizing, preaching, their Sunday Schools and the enormous corpus of Welsh literature they published, the Nonconformist chapels in the eighteenth-century reared tens of thousands of Welsh readers and people who were able to express their thoughts effectively through the medium of Welsh. The skills that were developed in a religious context were adapted to everyday life. It has been stated that the eighteenth-century Nonconformists were, in effect, a sect, and the peculiarity of a sect is that it erects a wall between it and a hostile outside world.<sup>106</sup> The language of the 'sects' was Welsh which was seen as a bulwark against the atheism of England and America, and its all-pervasive English language. Emrys ap Iwan powerfully expressed the conviction that the Welsh people were a people

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-250.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

of God with a pre-ordained and separate language which must strive to survive in an alien environment<sup>107</sup>:

*'Cofiwch eich bod yn genedl, trwy ordeiniaid Duw; am hynny, gwnewch yr hyn a alloch i gadw'r genedl yn genedl, trwy gadw'i hiaith, a phob peth arall a berthyno iddi....Gan i Dduw eich gwneuthur yn genedl, ymgedwch yn genedl; gan iddo gymmeryd miloedd o flynyddoedd i ffurffio iaith gyfaddas ichwi, cedwch yr iaith honno....'*

Remember that you are a nation, by the ordinance of God; therefore do what you can to keep the nation a nation, by retaining its language, and everything else that belongs to it....In as much as God has made you a nation, keep yourself a nation; since he took thousands of years to make a fitting language for you, keep that language....'

### **2.3 Religion and Welsh Society 1851 to 1906**

In the second half of the nineteenth-century, the same issues relating to the Established Church and the Nonconformist chapels in the first half of the nineteenth-century continued to develop. In addition, two other issues or phenomena deserve discussion since they had direct effects on the Established Church and Nonconformist Chapels, and indirect effects on the vitality of the Welsh language. These were the 1851 'Religious Census' and the various Revivals culminating in that of 1904 - 5.

#### *2.3.1 1851 Census*

On the last Sunday in March 1851, the first census of religion was conducted as part of the routine decennial census. It was the first official and comprehensive count of

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

the available places of worship and the attendance on that one day.<sup>108</sup> It was initiated by the Office of the Registrar-General, and essentially was the product of the continuing debate between the Established Church and the Nonconformist chapels, the latter voicing the belief that the former had no moral right to the wealth and privilege it possessed. The local machinery was the responsibility of the superintendent registrars of the registration districts. In Wales there were forty-eight such registrars, and the districts subdivided into 181 subdistricts and some 1261 parishes, towns and hamlets. The census depended on the good will of those individuals discharged with the duty of collecting the information, and the clerks delegated with the responsibility of amassing the details were forced to rely on the effectiveness of the local machinery devised for this purpose. Not surprisingly the *modus operandi* of census collection had many deficiencies and the census results are not as robust as would be expected of modern-day censuses.<sup>109</sup> The accuracy of the *attendance* figures is open to doubt compared to *accommodation* figures, and prompted heated debate when published.

There were also criticisms that there was a conspiracy amongst the Dissenters to inflate their figures of attendance. Allowing for such deficiencies, it is probably fair to claim that the system devised by Horace Mann of the Registrar-General's department did achieve a fair degree of accuracy so far as the actual counting and recording places of worship were concerned, their denominational allegiances, and the sitting accommodation provided. The census confirmed that Wales was very much more religious than England. In England and Wales taken together there were estimated to be 34,467 places of worship providing a total of 9.5 million "sittings". When one discounts for the very young, the old, those working and not able to attend on the Sabbath, then approximately half of the population of England could potentially be accommodated but in Wales some three-quarters could be accommodated. As would be predicted, large towns were generally deficient in provision of places of worship, and only about thirty per cent of the London

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<sup>108</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, 215.

<sup>109</sup> I.G. Jones, *Explorations and Expectations: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press 1981).

population could be accommodated. Wales fared better but again there was a marked contrast in provision of places of worship in rural areas (e.g. Machynlleth 124% - or more 'pews' than people) compared to industrialized areas (e.g. Merthyr Tydfil 58%).<sup>110</sup>

In terms of actual attendance on that last Sunday in March 1851, one third of the population of Wales attended a place of worship at least once. The proportion was as high as one half in Aberystwyth, Machynlleth and Bangor. The pattern of denominational allegiance is also illuminating. In Wales, of those attendees, only 9% had attended an Anglican church compared with 87% for the Nonconformist chapel. Wales was now clearly a Nonconformist country which had rejected the Established Church.<sup>111</sup> Not only had they rejected the Established Church but they had successfully provided for themselves alternative places of worship in a relatively short time period. Seventy per cent of places of worship were now of the Nonconformist movement.<sup>112</sup>

### *2.3.2 Religious Revivals*

A revival which broke out along the American frontier in 1857 soon spread to Welsh settlements and news of this reached Wales the following year. The revival of 1858 in Wales began at *Yr Hen Gapel* in Ceredigion and spread throughout south Wales. It was closely aligned with the Temperance Movement. The revival was warmly received in the slate and colliery districts of south Wales and the lead-mining communities of mid-Wales, where men worked under a common sense of danger. A number of social situations prevailed in the industrialized parts of south Wales, including a cholera epidemic in 1859, a trade depression after the Crimean War in 1856, a twenty per cent fall in wages and a series of strikes; it is often such parlous social situations which provide fertile soil for religious revivals. The year 1859 marked a climax in the tradition of popular religion. After the 1870s there emerged

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<sup>110</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

an organized evangelical mission with charismatic leaders. It was at this time that the American evangelists Moody and Sankey visited Wales in 1875.<sup>113</sup>

The last great revival was that of 1904 – 5. The main catalyst for this rebirth was Evan Roberts, born in 1878 in Loughor near Swansea. Roberts was an active member of Moriah Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in his home town of Loughor. In September 1904 Roberts became a pupil at Newcastle Emlyn Grammar School to prepare for studies at Trefecca Theological College. Within three weeks of enrolment at Newcastle Emlyn, Roberts' calling to preach was completed after his attendance at an outreach conference in Blaenannerch in Ceredigion. Roberts returned to Moriah Chapel where he shared his experiences with the congregation. Within a fortnight the Welsh Revival was national news and before too long Roberts with his brother Dan and friend Sidney Evans travelled through Wales conducting revival meetings. It is estimated that Roberts made some 7,370 converts in north Wales and Liverpool, but a staggering 76,566 converts in south Wales in 1905.<sup>114</sup>

Although many unusual psychological events accompanied the revivals, there is no doubt that they were unforgettable turning points in the lives of thousands of people. The 1859 revival had a far wider influence compared to 1904 – 5. It affected the literature and politics of the period. Spiritual energy was channeled and freed by the revival's power to give renewed energy to the Sunday Schools and to public or community work. Many commentators, including R. Tudur Jones, were quite critical of the effectiveness of the 1904 – 5 revival.<sup>115</sup> The 1859 revival had a strong evangelical foundation. After conversion the people flocked back to the chapels and became immersed in sound Bible based teaching, in their own language, and this effect was enduring. By comparison the 1904 – 5 revival was perhaps more emotional and experiential (perhaps closer to the style of the modern Pentecostal movement) but was less effective at sustained evangelism, and consequently its effect was short lived. Nonetheless the revivals of 1859 and 1904 – 5 touched

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238-239.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>115</sup> Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p. 185.

chapel people in a very powerful way, including through congregational singing, and the writing of a phenomenal number of new hymns, written in Welsh for the most part, and enduring to this day.<sup>116</sup> Sadly, the revival of 1904 – 5 was the last of its kind and it heralded the decline of organized religion in Wales.

#### **2.4 Religion and Welsh Society 1906 to 1945**

The twentieth century in Wales would see a decline in numerical strength and social influence of organized religion and the ascendancy of the Labour Party in national and social politics, two of the most dominating features of modern Welsh social history. And yet at the start of the twentieth-century, it seemed that the Nonconformist churches, on the back of at least a couple of invigorating Religious Revivals, and the Liberal Party were comfortably in control of the social and cultural life of Wales.<sup>117</sup> Churches and ministers actively supported the Liberal Party based on a common ideology of individual choice and personal freedom. Toryism had collapsed to be superseded by the ideologies of the Liberal Party, championed by people like David Lloyd George, who cleverly reinforced that Christianity, in its Nonconformist guise, and Welsh identity were one.<sup>118</sup>

Between 1906 and 1910, a royal commission inquired into the condition of the various religious bodies in Wales as a prelude to possible disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales. The commission concluded that ‘the people of Wales show a marked tendency to avail themselves of the provision made by the churches of all denominations for their spiritual welfare’.<sup>119</sup> Attendance at communion services for the Nonconformist chapels amounted to 550,280 persons and if Church communicants are added this takes the figure to 743,361. In a population of 1.86 million people over the age of three years some 40% of the total population were

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191 – 192.

<sup>117</sup> D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 - 2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) p. 37.

<sup>118</sup> D.D. Morgan, ‘The Essence of Welshness’?: Some Aspects of Christian Faith and National Identity in Wales, c 1900-2000, in Pope, Robert, ed. *Religion and National Identity. Wales and Scotland c1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge Printing, 2001) p. 143.

<sup>119</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000*, p. 38.

communicants, added to which were a significant number of *grandawyr* who were not full communicants but came along to hear the sermons and sing hymns.<sup>120</sup> The Nonconformists had reached the apogee of their success in 1906 but by 1914 all the main denominations were recording annual decreases in membership with at least 26,000 members having disappeared since the end of the revival. Between 1890 and 1914 there was an active campaign for disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales, and in 1914 the Liberal government in Westminster finally passed the bill declaring an independent Anglican Church in Wales shorn of its ancient endowments, privileges and links to the state.<sup>121</sup> The creation of the new Church in Wales would have to wait until after the Great War but finally after a mean spirited political imbroglio it finally came into being on April 1, 1920.

Though disestablished, the new Church was still hierarchical in structure, in many places gentrified and somewhat ambivalent about its status. The old hostility to the Welsh language persisted; many of its senior clergy and middle-class laity despised Welsh as an uncouth throwback to the past, 'the last refuge of the uneducated' according to A.G. Edwards who had been unanimously elected as first archbishop.<sup>122</sup> Roman Catholicism, which had been viewed by most Welsh Christians with hostility and fear with its strange *mores* and mystifying rituals, proved to be a breeding ground for Welsh Nationalism. The most notable was Saunders Lewis, the son of a Calvinistic Methodist minister of renown, who had converted to Roman Catholicism some years before, and helped form *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru*, the Welsh Nationalist Party, in 1925.

The revival of 1904 - 5, despite its lack of endurance, produced an infectious social enthusiasm and it inspired theologians and secularists alike to consider the social implications. Wales experienced the intrusion of a new social philosophy which was named 'New Theology'. Christian leaders were aware of the estrangement of certain groups within the Church. The intelligentsia no longer found Calvinistic doctrine

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>121</sup> Morgan, *'The Essence of Welshness'?*, pp. 141-144.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

convincing, whilst the working classes felt excluded by this largely middle-class aura of 'respectability'.<sup>123</sup> The New Theology appealed to both groups, with a claim that the Christian religion was a gospel for life. This New Theology was in effect a fusion of modern liberal theology, with a heightened social conscience, with an added emphasis on morality and unity and a condemnation of the existing economic and industrial system. Perhaps a less than desirable consequence of the movement was that socialism was destined to be associated with an English-language and progressive future, whilst the Welsh language would be inextricably identified with Nonconformity and a Liberal past. In effect, the language was now dependent on the survival of the two institutions of the chapel and the Liberal Party.<sup>124</sup>

As was true elsewhere, the First World War 1914-18 had an adverse effect on religious faith and affiliation in Wales. The two decades which divided the First and Second World Wars were excruciating for Wales and its people with catastrophic social dislocation and economic collapse. Suffice to say one of the major consequences of these remarkable social changes was a dramatic switch of allegiance from Liberal to Labour Party, such that by 1935 Labour controlled every single seat in the industrial south. For people like Keir Hardie, socialism was Christianity at work, the practical application of the Sermon on the Mount. However, whereas the outward trappings of a chapel culture were preserved in the guise of chapel attendance, hymn singing and appreciation of a good sermon, basic theological truths about the holiness of God, sin and redemption were being refashioned according to the doctrines of humanitarian socialism.<sup>125</sup> By the 1930s, Welsh identity was more popularly represented not by the Welsh-speaking, chapel-going James Griffiths, MP for Llanelli, but by Aneurin Bevan, the openly atheistic, non Welsh-speaking Member for Ebbw Vale. Welshness, the language, and religious affiliation were going their separate ways.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000*, 2000, p. 39.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>125</sup> Morgan, *'The Essence of Welshness'?*, pp. 145 – 148.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.



## 2.5 Religion and Welsh Society 1945 to the present day

From the standpoint of both religion and the Welsh language, the period between 1945 and the mid 1960s was one of considerable anxiety. As outlined in Chapter One, according to the 1951 census the proportion of Welsh speakers had fallen to 28.9 per cent and a decade later had fallen to 26 per cent with the terminal extinction of Welsh monoglots.<sup>127</sup> The religious statistics for the Nonconformist denominations followed the same pattern, probably reflecting the same social changes and pressures on both entities of religion and language. Between 1945 and 1955 the membership of the Calvinistic Methodists had fallen from 172,954 to 150,027, the Congregationalists from 160,519 to 142,597, the Baptists from 110,328 to 79,750, and the Wesleyan Methodists from 45,089 to 40,945. A worrying trend also emerged in Sunday School participation (potentially the Christians of tomorrow) which fell by 40 per cent between 1935 to 1955.<sup>128</sup> Two separate studies in West Industrial South Wales (WISW) and Swansea in 1949 and 1960 reveal a change in denominational allegiance after the Second World War (Table 6)<sup>129</sup>

**Table 6: Denominational Allegiance in West Industrial South Wales 1949 and Swansea 1960**

<b>WISW 1949</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Swansea 1960</b>	<b>%</b>
Congregationalists	30.5	Welsh Nonconformists	15
Baptists	23.0	English Nonconformists	24
Welsh Presbyterians	21.4	Church in Wales	51
Wesleyan Methodists	3.7	Roman Catholics	7
Church in Wales	21.4	Others	3

<sup>127</sup> Morgan, *The Welsh Language and Religion*, p. 387.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

<sup>129</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000*, 2000, p. 180.

The gloominess which characterized Welsh Nonconformity stood in contrast to the sense of rejuvenation which permeated the Church in Wales between 1950 and 1980. Whereas chapel religion was seen to be oppressive and Puritanical, Anglicanism, with its Prayer Book liturgy, sacramentalism and rounded doctrines of creation and incarnation, provided a very appealing version of Christianity for many.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps the most interesting contemporary development concerned the change of attitude within the Church to Welsh nationality, language and identity. Successive pro Welsh appointees to the sees of Bangor, Swansea, Brecon and Llandaff between 1949 and 1957 saw a repudiation of the previous ambiguity which had coloured the attitudes of previous bishops.<sup>131</sup> By the 1970s the perception of the Church in Wales as being an alien body had changed dramatically. The old dichotomy between the perception of an Anglicized Church and a thoroughly Welsh Nonconformist movement was ringing increasingly untrue. In the popular mind the contention that 'the Anglican Church is the spiritual home for a patriotic Welshman' had much to commend it.<sup>132</sup>

Despite its apparent malaise, Nonconformity was sufficiently robust to continue to contribute to healthy doctrinal debate, led by Nonconformist scholars such as Pennar Davies, Bobi Jones and R. Tudur Jones.<sup>133</sup> Although both the language and Nonconformity were under attack in the 1960s and 1970s, this was nonetheless a fruitful period from the point of view of the relationship between language and religion. Some of the young activists of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (Welsh Language Society) drew inspiration from the radical Nonconformist tradition and among their leadership Dafydd Iwan and Ffred Ffrancis considered protest to be a form of Christian discipline.<sup>134</sup>

When, in 1983, the results of a survey of the state of the churches in Wales were published, it was clear that organized religion was losing its authority and influence.

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<sup>130</sup> Morgan, *The Essence of Welshness?*, 154-157.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>134</sup> Morgan, *The Welsh Language and Religion*, p. 391.

Out of a population of about 2.85 million people, the total church membership at that time was 523,100 (24 per cent). The number of attenders was lower (c 280,000) and almost half of these were aged over fifty years. The Church in Wales had 137,000 communicants, the Roman Catholics 129,600, Calvinistic Methodists 79,900, Congregationalists 65,200, Baptists 50,200 and the Wesleyan Methodists 25,300. Compared with a survey in 1978 some five years before, with the exception of the Catholics all denominations had witnessed a decline in membership. Indeed by 1993 an estimated 8.7 per cent of people in Wales attended church or chapel, compared to 24 per cent ten years before and again the Church in Wales and the Roman Catholic churches accounted for the majority of attenders.<sup>135</sup>

The erosion of the Welsh language and the parallel decline in church attendance encouraged the Church in Wales to commission a report into the status of Welsh in church services, and to provide recommendations as to how Welsh might be more relevant to the Church in practical ways. The Bench of Bishops and the Standing Committee of the Church in Wales asked the Welsh Language Vocations Group to consider these issues, resulting in their report entitled '*Pob un yn ei iaith ei Hun*' (Each in our own language) released December 2011.<sup>136</sup>

The recommendations were broad and far reaching, and possibly ambitious, but included moves to:

- denote as many churches as possible as Welsh-medium churches
- develop more Welsh medium congregations in bilingual churches
- encourage parishes throughout Wales to download bilingual services
- draw up good practice guidelines for bilingual services
- commission a study of the potential and cost of simultaneous translation in church services

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<sup>135</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>136</sup> Welsh Language Vocations Group. '*Pob Un yn ei iaith ei Hun*. Each in Our Own Language' Report to the Standing Committee of the Church in Wales, December 2011 (online). Available: <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/structure/govbody/apr12/docs/ag17.pdf>. <accessed December 22, 2012>

Other recommendations included development of special relationships with the Welsh language education sector at secondary and tertiary levels, and to develop and encourage enrolment and graduation of Welsh speaking ordinands at St. Michael's College. These recommendations have been accepted in principle by the Church in Wales and promulgated in their Annual Review 2012.<sup>137</sup>

Despite many complexities and ambiguities, the relationship between religion and the Welsh language during the twentieth century was, on the whole, close. The fate of the language was of concern to religious believers, including those who adopted pragmatic and practical standpoints at the beginning of the century and those who espoused more doctrinal and principled considerations in the latter part. As stated by Denis Morgan, 'Whatever the new millennium holds in store, the use made of the Welsh language for religious purposes.....will remain a clear reflection of its value to a wider community'.<sup>138</sup> This value, however may have diminished since Morgan's statement a decade ago. As well as release of data for the Welsh language in the 2011 census, data have also been released for England and Wales relating to Religion. This was a voluntary question and 7.2% of respondents left the question unanswered. As one might have expected, Christianity remains the predominant religion in England and Wales, with significant increases in other religions, particularly Islam, in England rather than Wales.<sup>139</sup> Figure 13 shows religious affiliations by region across England and Wales.

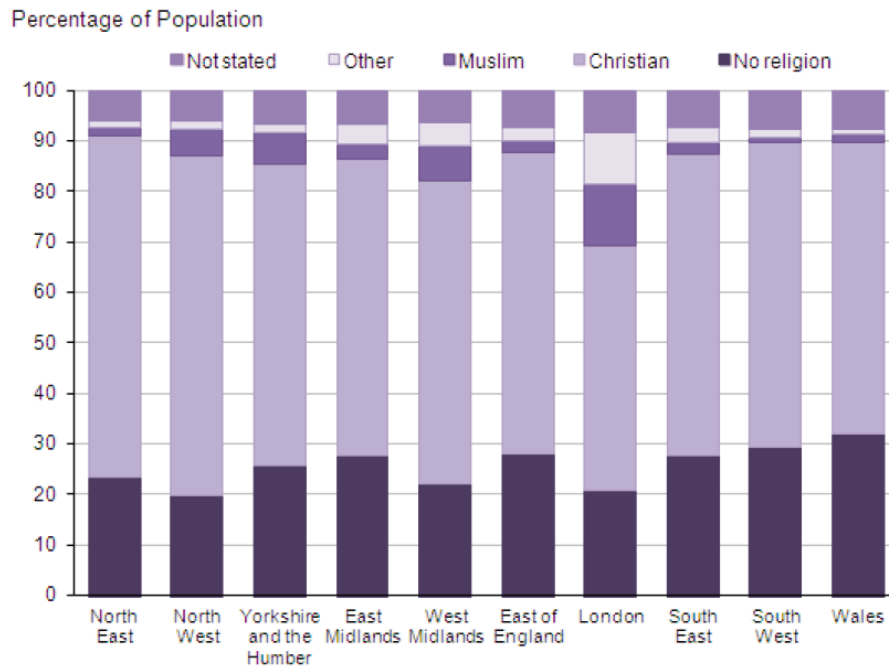
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<sup>137</sup> Church in Wales Review, July 2012, 28-29 (online). Available: <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/structure/govbody/sep12/r.pdf> <accessed December 20, 2012>

<sup>138</sup> Morgan, *The Welsh Language and Religion*, p. 396.

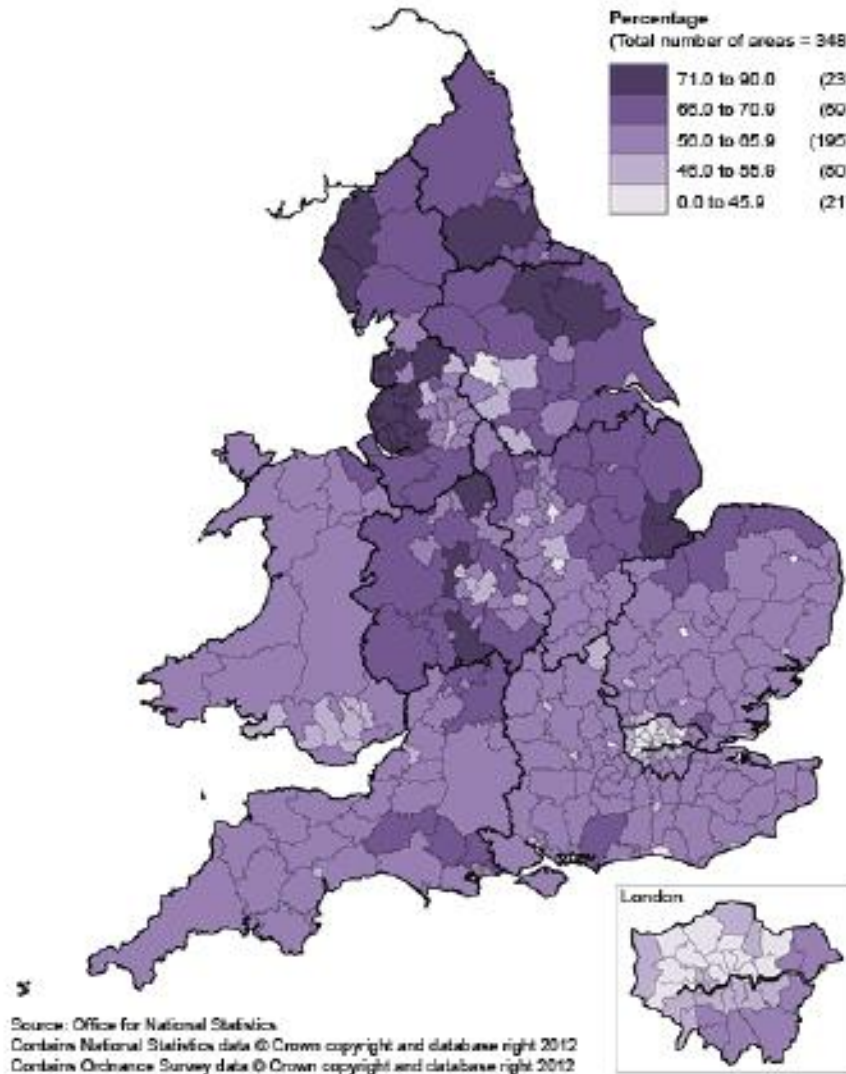
<sup>139</sup> Office for National Statistics. Religion in England and Wales 2011 (online). Available: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290510.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290510.pdf) <accessed December 27, 2012>

**Figure 13: Religious affiliation, English regions and Wales according to 2011 census**



Overall compared to the 2001 census there was a fall in the population reporting to be Christian, from 71.7% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2011 and an increase in all other religions, particularly Muslims. The North East and North West of England reported the highest proportion of Christians on a regional basis (Figure 14).

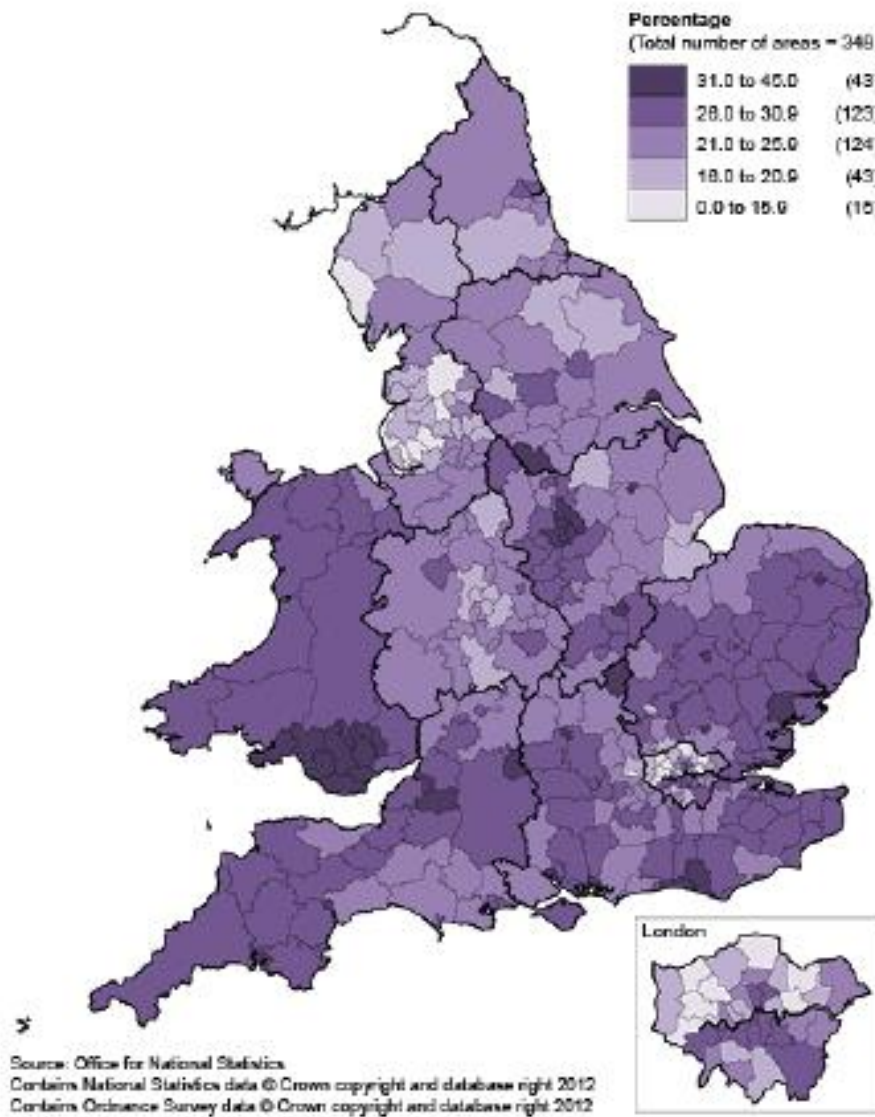
**Figure 14: Christian population according to local and unitary authorities, 2011 census**



There was an increase in the population reporting 'No Religion', from 14.8% in 2001 to 25.1% in 2011 across England and Wales. For the first time ever in decennial censuses, Wales had the highest proportion of 'No Religion' compared to any other region in England and Wales (Figure 15). Caerphilly had the largest percentage point increase since 2001 from 24.3% in 2001 to a staggering 41.0% in 2011. Large increases of 'No Religion' were noted in Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen. The data would suggest that Christianity is waning in Wales at the expense

of an increase in secularization. This phenomenon of increased secularization will be covered in Section 3.4.

**Figure 15: Population of England and Wales reporting 'No Religion' by local and unitary authority; 2011 census**



## CHAPTER THREE: CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF WALES FROM 1801 TO 2011; POTENTIAL INFLUENCES OF SUCH CHANGES ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND ON ORGANISED RELIGION IN WALES

### 3.1 *Brad y Llyfrau Gleision* - The Treachery of the Blue Books 1847

In 1847 the three-parts “Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales” was delivered to the Committee of Council on Education under the aegis of the Westminster Parliament, and its results made public. Seldom in the history of Wales has a government document been subjected to such a negative reception, and indeed outrage, within Wales and even in English magazines and periodicals.<sup>140</sup> ‘The attitudes of the authors of the 1847 Reports into the state of education in Wales has become a byword for bias; within the so-called Blue Books, prejudice of class, religion and language emerges in virtually every judgment’.<sup>141</sup> Such was the depth of outrage that the Reports became known as ‘*Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*’ or ‘Treachery of the Blue Books’.<sup>142</sup> Ieuan Gwynedd Jones emphasizes that in order to understand the content and the implications of the Reports, one has to appreciate firstly, that the Reports were not written in isolation but followed on from a number of reports on education commencing as early as 1816. Many of these reports contained the most severe of criticisms of the Welsh way of life, with inherent biases against the Welsh language, and the Nonconformist chapel movement. These preconceived biases were continued by the commissioners involved in the preparation of the 1847 Reports. Secondly, one has to appreciate the social context in which the Reports were collated and presented, particularly in industrial Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, where there was significant social dislocation which created an environment ripe for social unrest and political uprising.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, pp. 123 – 128.

<sup>141</sup> G.E. Jones, The Welsh Language in the Blue Books of 1847, in G.H. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000a), pp. 431 - 457.

<sup>142</sup> I.G. Jones, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed*, pp. 103 – 198.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103 – 109.



The thirty years between 1840 and 1870 saw dramatic social change. This was the era when Wales was transformed from a relatively undeveloped agrarian population to a region of highly specialized wealth-creating industries and commercial enterprises. Hand in hand with the development of this industrial conurbation, particularly in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire where almost half of the Welsh population lived, grew an alarming “working poor” with large families, overcrowding and poor sanitation. This was essentially a young population where every other person was under twenty years of age, and most were males who had moved to the urban areas for work. Contemporaries were probably correct when they attributed much of the disorder which seemed endemic in the iron towns to the undisciplined, rough and rowdy behavior of these matrimonially unattached young men.<sup>144</sup>

The population was becoming more politically aware. It was estimated that one in five of the adult population were committed Chartists. Here was a new kind of radicalism based on the idea of class and the conflicts of interest between the owners of capital and the workers who created their wealth. The outright rejection of the Chartists’ National Petition by the House of Commons in 1839 led to an increased militancy, culminating in the Newport Insurrection of 1839. Following the march on Newport, twenty-two of the Chartists and two soldiers were killed. Sixty of the most important Chartists were arrested and put on trial. Three of the ring-leaders were initially sentenced to be hanged but following Chartist campaigns in England and Wales, the sentences were commuted to life-long transportation.<sup>145</sup> Further dissent and rebellion was also tangible in the Rebecca Riots of predominantly rural communities in south-west and mid-Wales, in protest against exorbitant fees demanded of farmers at toll-gates. Such often violent protests, not unique to Wales, were clearly of great concern to the ruling classes and to the establishment, including Parliament and the Anglican Church. Lord John Russell, Liberal Home Secretary, attributed the disorder to a fundamental lack of a proper system of education necessary for the instillation of the virtues of obedience in

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>145</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, pp. 148 - 152

communities of people among whom deferential attitudes had not adequately developed.<sup>146</sup>

By 1846 there now existed a substantial body of evidence regarding education in Wales from a number of government commissioned reports, and a common theme was the perception that the Welsh language and Nonconformity were barriers to improving education levels in the masses.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, when in March 1846, the MP for Coventry, William Williams, moved for 'an Inquiry to be made into the state of education in the Principality of Wales, especially into the means afforded to the labouring classes of acquiring a knowledge of the English Language', it was inevitable that his request would be granted.<sup>148</sup> Williams (1788 – 1865) was a native of Llanpumpsaint in Carmarthenshire, and made a fortune in the clothing industry, and represented the seat of Coventry in Parliament, where he was known as a prominent Radical. In his defense Williams was a consistent advocate of suffrage, the ballot box, state supported education, and a proponent of Nonconformist aims and policies. However, Williams, along with a number of prominent members of the 'London-Welsh Group', believed that the Welsh language was a non-functional and romanticized language, and the English language was the only means of dragging the Welsh working classes out of their parlous social state of ignorance and poverty.<sup>149</sup> The attitude of policy makers in Westminster of course to any other language except English was not unique to Wales and was replicated by the imperial mission to bring an English-speaking civilized society to dark corners of the British Empire, whether they be in Africa, India or Merthyr Tydfil. The notorious terms of reference for the Reports, with their inherent bias, were drawn up by James Kay-Shuttleworth, Secretary to the Committee of Council on Education.<sup>150</sup>

The pedigrees of the three commissioners appointed predetermined their views on the Welsh language and on Nonconformist religion. The most prominent of the three was R.R.W. Lingen, an Oxford-educated barrister-at-law who would go on to

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<sup>146</sup> Jones, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed*, p. 114.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109 – 123.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>149</sup> Jones, *The Welsh Language in the Blue Books of 1847*, p. 432.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 434.

have an illustrious career in the Public Service, culminating in his appointment as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. J.C. Symons and Henry Vaughan Johnson were not quite as formidable as Lingen but shared his middle-class and Anglican background. The commissioners divided Wales into three sections: Lingen examined the counties of Carmarthen, Glamorgan, and Pembroke; Symons covered Brecknock, Cardiganshire, Radnorshire and Monmouthshire; Vaughan Johnson surveyed the north Wales counties. The commissioners applied themselves diligently to their appointed tasks and collected evidence from 334 witnesses, 80 per cent of whom were churchmen, most of whom were Anglican clergy.<sup>151</sup> They collected detailed statistics on scholars, teachers, buildings and equipment, and provided information on the financial arrangements of the schools. The Reports were published in three volumes, containing 1,252 pages and included statistical information on every shire, district, parish and school. A one volume epitome of 546 pages was issued at the same time and later translated into Welsh the following year.

In many respects the Reports reiterate what was already known from previous reports into education in both England and Wales; that in heavily urbanized areas, and to an extent in rural communities, provision of school facilities was sadly lacking. In the case of the 1847 Reports however, there were extra dimensions which concerned the commissioners which were peculiar to the Welsh situation. They agreed that teaching resources were wholly inadequate, that teaching standards were abysmal, that the discrepancy between the language of the hearth and the school exacerbated the problem, that the Sunday Schools had achieved much but in ways thought to be irrelevant to mid-Victorian realities, and that moral shortcomings were associated with inadequate education. However, unlike similar previous enquiries in comparable demographics in England, the blame for inadequacies in the Welsh education system was laid firmly at the feet of the Welsh language and the Nonconformist chapel movement.<sup>152</sup> Much of this criticism of course was overtly political, fuelled by the preponderance of Anglican churchmen amongst the interviewees, and as noted in the previous sub-section 2.2.1 there

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<sup>151</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, pp. 123 – 128.

<sup>152</sup> Jones, *The Welsh Language in the Blue Books of 1847*, p. 455.

already existed a deeply entrenched antagonism against the Welsh language and its bed-fellow, the Nonconformists, by the Established Church in the mid-nineteenth century.

It took some time for the literate public to comprehend the full impact of the Reports but by Christmastime 1847 the storm of criticism broke. What rankled most perhaps was the overt suggestion in the Reports that not only were the Welsh people ill-educated, poor and rebellious, but that their men and their women-folk were promiscuous and unchaste. Indeed commentators from the Established Church had lampooned the Nonconformists even to the extent of suggesting that religious revivals were occasions which encouraged immorality, and that religious enthusiasm heightened the sexual proclivities of young people.<sup>153</sup> Many other such pieces of 'documentation', some even more offensive, were collected by Lingen in an appendix of 'extraordinary power and impact'.<sup>154</sup> A back-lash against the findings in the Reports found its way into a large number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals for a year or more after the release of the Reports. 'It is this combination of writings at different levels, the books and pamphlets of the educated élite and the fugitive effusions of the humbler, less well-educated writers, that explains the spiritual power released by the Reports and the very profound effects they had in the shaping of the nation in the nineteenth century'.<sup>155</sup>

Once the initial furore had settled, the Reports had left a number of longer term effects on Wales. In some respects they paved the way for state intervention in education, so that by 1870 a wholly English system of instruction could be applied to Wales under Forster's Education Act of 1870. The Blue Books also succeeded in creating a united Welsh Nonconformist front. A political alliance was forged between the Methodists, the Congregationalists and the Baptists. The Nonconformists viewed the Anglicans as the outright enemies of Wales and Welshness, and by the mid to late nineteenth-century the Nonconformists had

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<sup>153</sup> Jones, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed*, p. 145.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

succeeded in creating a distinct impression that they alone bore the mantle of Welshness.<sup>156</sup> Although the Nonconformists regarded the Blue Books as an act of treachery, coining the name '*Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*', most of the scions and intellectual leaders of the Welsh denominations quietly accepted the findings in the Reports in time. Within a decade of the Reports' release there occurred a massive cultural and political shift to a 'Nonconformist Nation' with a new found emphasis on the Victorian ethos of self-improvement. By 1870 Wales had accepted state education and a recognition that English was the language of commerce and social improvement; 'the Nonconformists, so it is claimed, had welcomed the imperial culture into Wales'.<sup>157</sup>

### **3.2 Industrialization, de-industrialization and population movements**

The pace of industrial change in the late eighteenth-century was accelerated for a number of reasons, with subsequent implications for life in Wales in the following century. The invention of Watt's steam engine brought efficiency in hauling materials together with improvements in techniques of blast smelting.<sup>158</sup> A second factor was the inflow of large amounts of capital funding from English industrialists and merchants. The third factor was the impact of war and the need for armaments in the American War of Independence (1775 – 1783) and the Napoleonic War (1793 – 1815). War stimulated growth of iron, copper, lead, tin-plate and of course coal industries. By the end of the eighteenth-century the ground had been prepared in Wales for major industrial and economic change leading to population growth and an increasing urbanization ripe for capital investments and an improvement and increase in transport modes including rail and shipping.<sup>159</sup>

In his treatise '*A Cauldron of Rebirth*' Thomas invokes the industrial revolution in Wales as being like a drama in three acts.<sup>160</sup> In Act I between 1784 and 1800 the

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<sup>156</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906*, p. 127.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas, *A Cauldron of Rebirth*, p. 86.

substitution of timber and charcoal by coal as the mainstay fossil fuel guaranteed its immediate value and demand. In Act II between 1800 and 1846 the foundations of a modern economy were established through the creation of machine tools, railways and steamships. In Act III, from 1846 to 1900, Britain became the workshop of the world.<sup>161</sup> As outlined by Thomas, Wales played a direct role in this three Act play. It was in South Wales that Crawshay introduced 'puddling' to the iron works at Cyfarthfa in 1787 and in 1804 Trevithik ran a steam-engine along a tram-line in Merthyr Tydfil, a world first. By the mid nineteenth-century Wales would be dominant in pig iron and coal markets internationally. The nineteenth-century therefore was the unique story of a dynamic Wales with a record rate of industrial growth. Over the next one hundred or so years the population of Wales would grow from 400,000 in 1780 to over two million by 1901. Without the cauldron of economic and demographic rebirth and the creation of a large industrialized Welsh-speaking working-class, what was hailed as the rebirth of a nation by the end of the nineteenth-century would have been impossible.<sup>162</sup> Wales entered the nineteenth-century with a strong sense of nationhood.

For the first fifteen years of the nineteenth-century Britain was at war. The new iron ensured lighter cannon with greater fire power. 'The Battle of Waterloo was won not on the playing fields of Eton but in the puddling furnaces of south Wales'.<sup>163</sup> Between 1806 and 1847 in south Wales, the output of pig-iron increased tenfold and coal output sevenfold. These hives of industry attracted young, male, agricultural labourers from rural Welsh-speaking Wales such that in the first half of the nineteenth-century the population of south Wales grew from 315,000 to 726,000; the majority of these settled in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.<sup>164</sup> By 1850, the population of Wales exceeded one million people. The cradle of the industrial revolution in Wales was the town of Merthyr Tydfil. In 1846 the population of Merthyr was 33,000 and 84% were Welsh. There were 26 Nonconformist chapels with accommodation for over 13,000 attenders; there were

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86 – 87.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

entirely Welsh services and usually full or near-full each Sunday. There were almost seven thousand children of whom 70% attended Sunday School.<sup>165</sup> Christianity, and in particular Welsh-speaking Nonconformist Christianity, was in a healthy state in urbanized, industrialized south Wales in the mid nineteenth-century.

Act III of Thomas' treatise commences in 1846, the year of the terrible potato famine which devastated Ireland, and caused mass migration. It was also the year that Britain repealed the Corn Laws, thereby inaugurating a free-trade era.<sup>166</sup> Between 1871 and 1911 the population of the Rhondda Valleys grew from 24,000 to 153,000 as a result of the insatiable demand for Welsh steam coal throughout the world. At the end of this amazing expansion there were 24,000 people per square mile.<sup>167</sup> In respect of the Rhondda of 1896, the Welsh Land Commission declared: '...the characteristics of Welsh life, its Nonconformist development, the habitual use of the Welsh language...are as marked (in the Rhondda) as in the rural districts of Wales'.<sup>168</sup> The growth of the Welsh-speaking population was contributed to by both in-migration from rural Wales and also the natural increase born of what was a young population. The marriage rate was moderately high as was the birth rate. In Glamorgan two-thirds of the increase in population was accounted for by natural increase rather than in-migration. This state however was not enduring. In the 1890s over a million people spoke Welsh and the natural increase of the essentially Welsh-speaking population over English-speaking in-migrants was robust. Then quite suddenly in the first decade of the twentieth-century there was a flood of 100,000 English, Scottish and Irish in-migrants accompanied by an out-migration of mainly Welsh-speaking workers from Monmouthshire in particular as revenue from iron and coal fell dramatically. In 1851, 88% of the population of Wales were Welsh born, and predominantly Welsh-speaking. By 1911, 80% were Welsh born and 16%

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

born in England. The 'new lease of life' for the Welsh language was indeed short-lived and did not persist for more than two generations.<sup>169</sup>

Although the 1911 census recorded the highest number of Welsh speakers ever (977,366), in proportional terms Welsh speakers had become a minority (43.5%).<sup>170</sup> Between the first and second world wars sweeping socio-economic changes would envelop Wales and affect the health of the Welsh language. Some of these issues will be explored in the next section 3.3. Between 1921 and 1936, some 241 coal mines were closed in south Wales and half of the workforce laid-off.<sup>171</sup> A combination of agrarian depression and mass closures in the south Wales coalfields led to an out-migration between 1920 and 1939 of 442,000 people to the industrial conurbations of the Midlands and south-east England. Eighty-seven percent were aged below forty-five years.<sup>172</sup> Up until 1957, coal experienced little competition as a product. Since then to 1972 coal had to compete with other fuels such as cheap imports of oil from the Middle East, discovery of oil reserves in the North Sea and nuclear based power stations. Consequently 150 collieries in south Wales closed during this time period.<sup>173</sup> Due to further declines in demand, Thatcher's Conservative government decreed that the coal industry in south Wales was economically unsustainable and commenced mass pit closures. Despite the miners' strike of 1984 – 1985, pit closures continued unabated so that by 1992 only four collieries remained in south Wales.<sup>174</sup> Steel, tin-plate and slate industry, together with manufacturing, have suffered similar contractions. These closures have contributed to unemployment and forced further out-migration, and the only apparent growth in employment in the last two decades in Wales has been in service industries and tourism and hospitality.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> G. Jenkins, ed. *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>170</sup> G.H. Jenkins. And M.A. Williams, 'The Fortunes of the Welsh Language 1900-2000: Introduction', p. 3.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000*, pp. 147 – 150.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161 – 162.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165 – 171.



The nature of population movements (in-migration and out-migration) on the Welsh language has been alluded to previously in this thesis. Much of this population movement had been 'forced'. For example in-migration of Welsh-speakers from economically depressed rural areas to the industrialized Glamorgan and Monmouthshire towns in the nineteenth-century may have depleted Welsh-speakers *from Y Fro Gymraeg*, but of course strengthened the numbers and proportions of Welsh-speakers in urbanized areas. One of the beneficial effects of this migration pattern was a marked increase in Nonconformist places of worship in the new areas. Forced in-migration from economically deprived parts of Great Britain outside of Wales, such as from Ireland during the potato famine, served to dilute the Welsh language predominantly in favour of the English language. The scale of population mobility was substantial.

Between 1981 and 1990 some 600,000 people chose to settle in Wales, the majority from England.<sup>176</sup> As stated previously, Wales has the second highest proportion of residents of any country in Europe, born outside of the country, after Luxembourg.<sup>177</sup> The proportion of English-born people living in Wales has increased to one in five by 2001.<sup>178</sup> For some commentators this amounts to Anglicization which asserts an English attitude to language, culture and identity in opposition to Welsh and Welshness, the phenomenon of 'strangers in our own land'.<sup>179</sup> Special consideration has been given to the phenomenon of 'counterurbanization' in recent times.<sup>180</sup> This is the situation where a large number of previous urban dwellers, retired or close to retiring, seek to leave their city dwellings, either temporarily as in holiday-home seeking, or indeed moving permanently to rural homes. In the United Kingdom, most therefore come from the larger English cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester or Liverpool, and the most favoured areas are Wales and

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<sup>176</sup> H. Davis, G. Day, and A. Drakakis-Smith, Attitudes to Language and Bilingualism among English In-Migrants to North Wales, in Delyth Morris, ed. *Welsh in the Twenty-First Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010). P. 148.

<sup>177</sup> B. Powys. 2011: The Year of Sharp Decreases (online). Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-20684975> <accessed December 27, 2012>

<sup>178</sup> Davis, Day, and Drakakis-Smith, Attitudes to Language and Bilingualism among English In-Migrants to North Wales, p. 148.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>180</sup> Aitchison and Carter, *Language, Economy and Society*, 111 – 123.

the West Country of England. Many settle in areas favoured by tourists such as the north Wales or west Wales coastlines, suggesting that such in-migrants will in all likelihood have been occasional or frequent holiday-makers to those areas in the past.<sup>181</sup>

A second group of English in-migrants are often referred to as 'economic refugees' in the sense that they are job-seeking and may be in a position to purchase housing in Wales where house prices are significantly less than in the south of England in particular. The results of the study by Davis et al confirm that erosion of Welsh as a community language is greatest in areas where the proportion of incomers and second-home ownership is highest.<sup>182</sup> English in-migrants generally feel no compulsion to learn Welsh even if moving to areas where Welsh is routinely spoken. This is particularly the case for retirees. Nonetheless the in-migrants are generally very supportive, and show very little if any disdain for the Welsh language, to the extent that younger in-migrants with families are more likely to either take up the language, or support bilingual education for their school-age children.

Forced out-migration, due to redundancy and unemployment, of Welsh-speakers beyond Offa's Dyke, as happened for example during the Great Depression, had negative influences on the vibrancy of the Welsh language through the twentieth-century. Added to this is the effect of 'unforced' out-migration where Welsh-speakers choose to study and/or work in England or overseas. Many may not return to Wales. As mentioned previously, the Welsh Diaspora may account for as many as 2,200 fluent Welsh speakers annually, thus contributing to the dilution of the language by in-migrating English.<sup>183</sup> In his study of the results of the 2001 census, published recently, Hywel Jones has demonstrated that the lower than expected numbers of young adult Welsh-speakers in 2001 appears to be a consequence of

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.163 – 165.

<sup>183</sup> Welsh Language Strategy Evidence Review. Welsh Government Social Research Document 09/12 (online). Available: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/120301welshlanguageen.pdf> <accessed December 27, 2012>

out-migration rather than a failure to retain their Welsh-speaking ability.<sup>184</sup> He also noted somewhat alarmingly that in 2001, one in five of Wales' children of 1971 had moved to England. Being able to speak Welsh, whether born in Wales or not, does reduce the likelihood of out-migration. Teaching Welsh to English in-migrants and monoglot English-speaking Welsh residents may be another strategy to increase their local ties and social capital and reduce the odds of their becoming out-migrants.<sup>185</sup> At present it seems that the influx of in-migrants from England will continue as will the efflux of Welsh-speakers to England and abroad, presenting a significant challenge to those charged with trying to alter the language shift.

### 3.3 Two World Wars and a Social Revolution

The first half of the twentieth-century was one of major social changes, including two world wars, a major economic depression, and the rise of two major political parties in Wales. For the duration of that century the English language would become the principal medium of linguistic exchange, business, academia, advertising, diplomacy, leisure and electronic retrieval, and continue to threaten the very existence of the Welsh language. The Great War or First World War (1914 – 1918) wrought a terrible toll on native Welsh speakers. About 280,000 Welshmen enlisted in the armed forces, of whom 35,000 were killed. Given the results of the previous census of 1911, about a half of those who perished were presumably Welsh speakers.<sup>186</sup> The poet R. Williams Parry spoke of 'y rhwyg o golli'r hogiau' (the wrench of losing the lads), and how poignant was the awarding of the Chair at the 1917 National Eisteddfod posthumously to Ellis Humphrey Evans (*Hedd Wyn*) who had fallen in battle. Although the authorities went to great pains to produce recruitment posters in the Welsh language, Welsh servicemen were discriminated against on active duty and until the later years of the war the Welsh language was proscribed. Welshmen were not allowed to write home in their native tongue on the spurious grounds of 'security', since all correspondence had to be read and

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<sup>184</sup> H. Jones, *Welsh Speakers: Age Profile and Out-Migration*, in Delyth Morris, ed. *Welsh in the Twenty-First Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010). pp. 144 – 145.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>186</sup> Jenkins and Williams, *The Fortunes of the Welsh Language 1900-2000: Introduction*, p. 3.

vetted by their commanding officers, who were English. Nothing caused more bitter resentment among the next-of-kin in monoglot Welsh-speaking communities than to receive notification of a soldier's death by the War Office in English.<sup>187</sup>

It is clear that for all countries which were involved in the conflict, the Great War would mark a critical break with the past and all levels of society would be changed irrevocably. In the context of language and culture there would be profound changes in attitude to both in Wales after the war. The movement of people and the dissemination of propaganda meant that contact with the English language increased, often being the first exposure for previously rural based monoglot Welsh speakers. The attitude to religion changed. Having experienced unimaginable horror in the trenches, many soldiers who returned to the 'land fit for heroes' renounced their Christian faith. Nonetheless, the terror of war seemed to crystallize the thoughts of many influential Welsh, and focus the need for change in Welsh identity and attitude to language. For people like Lewis Valentine and Saunders Lewis, both of whom had experienced first-hand the gruesome brutality of war, it led to the rejection of British rhetoric and jingoism, and espoused a new sense of identity based on language and culture. In 1917, Valentine wrote '*Gwn heddiw am mêr fy esgyrn fod yn rhaid i mi fod byth mwy ynghlwm wrth achos Cymru*' (I know today in the marrow of my bones that henceforth I must become embroiled in the cause of Wales).<sup>188</sup> Lewis became the founding member and president of *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* (Welsh Nationalist Party) in 1926. The influences of *Plaid Cymru* will be discussed below.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's armed forces invaded Poland and two days later Britain was at war with Germany. A number of key events leading up to the Second World War helped focus concerns regarding Wales and the Welsh language. These included the arrest of three Welsh defendants, including Lewis and Valentine, following the 1936 burning of the bombing school at Penyberth, the 360,000 signatures collected at the National Eisteddfod in 1938 in support of the repeal of

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the 1536 Act of Union, and the forced acquisition of land for military purposes on the Epynt Mountain in Breconshire in 1940.<sup>189</sup> Despite protestation, the Westminster government continued to ride roughshod over genuine grievances by the Welsh people. The Great Depression had hit both rural and industrial Wales badly through the 1930s and ironically the Second World War had the effect of rejuvenating a number of ailing industries in Wales. The war eliminated the mass unemployment of the thirties. There was a sharp growth of collectivism and of intervention by the state in the lives of ordinary people; the Essential Work Order of 1941 directed workers to industries working on war contracts, and the Barlow report of 1942 advocated policies for the redistribution and relocation of industry. The wartime government secured operational control over the coal mines and other strategic industries.<sup>190</sup>

Another important feature of the war years was the development of manufacturing industries. From 1939 to 1944 there was an increase in labour supply in Wales in chemicals, paints and oils from 4,000 to 69,000; in engineering from 11,000 to 48,000; and in vehicle construction from 7,000 to 30,000.<sup>191</sup> General manufacturing now accounted for a fifth of total employment of Wales and now challenged the traditional heavy industries of coal, iron and steel as major employers. Another new phenomenon was the participation of women in the work-force, now accounting for 40% of workers in manufacturing and light engineering, Wales having one of the highest female participation rates in the work-force in the whole of Britain.<sup>192</sup> Gradually, deep-seated prejudices and misconceptions concerning the Welsh labour and industrial practices were eroded during the war years. The 'modernization' of post-war industrial Wales would prove to have further profound effects on the language and also on the relevancy of church and chapel, and this will be explored further in Chapter 3.4.

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>190</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000*, p. 34.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34 – 35.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Prior to the Great War, the politics of Wales was linked almost exclusively with the Liberal Party. The General Election of 1906 was a landslide for the Liberal Party capturing all thirty-four seats with the exception of the seat of Merthyr Tydfil, won by Keir Hardie for the Labour Representation Committee.<sup>193</sup> The Liberals campaigned on a platform of free trade, church schools, temperance and the rights of labour, and notably the future of the Liberals was seemingly welded to the Nonconformist movement, and by default the Welsh language. The Welsh Liberal scene was dominated by coteries of small, locally-based, and self-perpetuating middle-class élites who linked the world of municipal government, local politics, the chapels and social leadership in an intimate, democratic community. The ‘darling’ of the Welsh Liberals was David Lloyd George, a Welsh speaking member for Caernarfon Boroughs since 1890. Although initially opposed to involvement in the Great War, he went on to hold key ministries as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Minister for Munitions and then Secretary of State for War during the period 1914-18. From 1916 onwards he led a Coalition Government, becoming the only Welsh man or woman to hold the post of Prime Minister to date. No sooner had an armistice been called on November 11, 1918 than Lloyd George called a snap election.<sup>194</sup> His Coalition government was returned with a huge margin, but the result disguised what was to be an inevitable demise of the Liberal Party. In Wales there was dismay at Lloyd George’s government’s failure to support Welsh devolution, and to combat growing unemployment in the Valleys. The collapse of Welsh Liberalism was confirmed at the elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924.<sup>195</sup> The major beneficiary of Liberal collapse was the Labour Party.

The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed in 1893 and was launched in Wales by Keir Hardie the following year, and Hardie would go on to win the seat of Merthyr Tydfil in the 1900 General Election. The period between 1906 and the outbreak of the Great War witnessed a prolific growth in the influence of the ILP. During this time there had been a surge of union activity across the waterfront and

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

industrialized towns of south Wales. A decisive step was the merger of trades councils, unions and socialist societies into a Labour Association and the subsequent close association between the ILP and the trades union movement at a time of significant industrial militancy in south Wales all but guaranteed the ILP a sound base and future in industrial Wales.<sup>196</sup> With the appearance of the new Labour Party constitution in June 1918, constituency Labour Parties sprouted not only in the coalfields but also in industrial north Wales. The emergence of the labour movement, as well as new scientific and philosophical ideas, challenged the cultural dominance of Nonconformity by associating the Welsh language with discredited Liberal policies and blinkered rural lifestyles. In industrialized Wales, chapel-based religion, which attached importance to thrift, self-help, sobriety and respectability, held little appeal to people in soup kitchen queues or were on strike.<sup>197</sup> People turned to Socialism for their salvation rather than the Bible, whether the Labour Party or the Communism of Marx and Engels. The language of meetings and printed socialist material was English rather than Welsh and the growth of socialism in Wales would continue to stress both the Welsh language and formal Christianity.

Within this cauldron of socialism, the inter-war years saw the rise of another political party in Wales – *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* (Welsh Nationalist Party). Westminster had shown little regard for any sort of devolution for Wales at any level including the failure to establish the post of Secretary of State for Wales.<sup>198</sup> A combination of factors had revived the nationalist cause, including the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, and the observance of the principle of nationality in the formation of new European states as enunciated by President Woodrow Wilson after the Great War. Following a meeting at the Pwllheli National Eisteddfod, *Plaid Cymru* was formed in 1925. The six founder members were Lewis Valentine, Moses Gruffydd, H.R. Jones, Fred Jones, D.J. Williams and Saunders Lewis. At first, the principal concerns of *Plaid Cymru* were not for independence for Wales, but for specific values and way of life - religious, co-operative, highly individualist and

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81 – 85.

<sup>197</sup> Jenkins and Williams, *The Fortunes of the Welsh Language 1900-2000: Introduction*, p. 8.

<sup>198</sup> Evans, *A History of Wales 1906-2000*, p. 104.

opposed to the consequences of urbanization and industrialization. Their principal concerns were the Welsh language, Welsh identity and Christianity in Wales, none of which seemed to be major concerns for either the Liberal Party or Labour Party.<sup>199</sup> After 1932, there was a change in the manifesto, whereby all members were required to agree to three principles: self-government; the preservation of the Welsh language and culture; and the representation for Wales at the League of Nations. The party gained prominence in 1936 when three of its members, Saunders Lewis, Lewis Valentine and D.J. Williams were subsequently jailed in Wormwood Scrubs following an arson attack on the RAF bombing school at Penyberth.<sup>200</sup>

Growth in the movement was slow since its inception. It took twenty years for the membership to grow from the original six to 2500 in 1945. The party adopted a neutral standpoint during the Second World War and encouraged conscientious objection, a philosophy that did not endear them to the average Welshman. Other factors which impeded their growth was the perception that *Plaid* was rooted in university-based intellectualism and the concept of Home Rule for Wales seemed anachronistic in the turbulent world of industrial-based politics. It would not be until 1966 that *Plaid Cymru* won its first seat at Westminster with Gwynfor Evans stealing the seat of Carmarthen from Labour. Perhaps the defining moment in the recent history of the Welsh language occurred in February 1962 when Saunders Lewis delivered his historic BBC radio lecture *Tynged yr iaith*. In this hard-hitting broadcast, Lewis stated: “*Mi ragdybiaf hefyd y bydd terfyn ar y Gymraeg yn iaith fyw ... tua dechrau’r unfed ganrif ar hugain*” (“I shall also presuppose that Welsh will end as a living language ... about the beginning of the twenty-first century”), but he added an important caveat – “*ond parhau’r tueddiad presennol*” (“should the present trend continue”).<sup>201</sup> This broadcast engendered a new mood of activism amongst young people which led ultimately to the founding of ‘*Cymdeithas yr iaith Gymraeg*’ (Welsh Language Society) in 1962.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>201</sup> Aitchison and Carter, ‘*Spreading the Word*’, p. 29.

<sup>202</sup> P. Chambers, *Secularization and Welsh Religiosity*, pp. 223-239.



### 3.4 Secularization in a Modern Wales

As can be appreciated from previous sections, the twentieth century was a century of great change, and modernization would have profound effects on the Welsh language and on Christianity in Wales. Preceding chapters in this thesis have demonstrated that the Welsh language, industrialism and Nonconformity were the triple foundations of a communitarian and working class way of life that was to dominate society, culture and politics in the early decades of the twentieth-century.<sup>203</sup> In 1915 the journalist Caradoc Evans published *My People*, a scathing portrayal of the widespread venality and hypocrisy which underpinned the so-called Nonconformist idyll. He asserted that the momentum of Nonconformity had only been maintained by periodic religious revivals and in the increasingly Anglicized industrial areas the competing claims of socialism and secularism were already to the fore. He was viciously attacked by the Liberal-Nonconformist élite in Wales for his musings.<sup>204</sup>

In practice the chapels were largely managing an illusion and within the chapel culture, perhaps implicitly rather than explicitly, poverty was equated with low religious standing and vice-versa. How far this stance could be maintained within an industrialised environment marked by hardship, danger and grinding poverty was therefore questionable. Following the 1904 – 1905 Revival, with its failure to re-evangelize the Welsh people beyond a decade, there was a radical shift in the relationship between Nonconformity and the Welsh people and the progressive fragmentation of culture and identity in the face of widespread social, cultural and political changes. Competing social and cultural attractions, most notably the cinema and Hollywood, and the rise of socialism would undermine the position of the chapels.<sup>205</sup> By the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, great fissures were appearing in the edifice which was Nonconformity. There was now an over-provision of places of worship, and impoverished congregations were no longer able

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

<sup>205</sup> Jenkins and Williams, *The Fortunes of the Welsh Language 1900-2000: Introduction*, p. 8.

to afford the upkeep of their chapels. Greater social and geographic mobility took many members out of the orbit of their home chapels.. The progressive erosion of the Welsh language led to a marked decline in that sector of the religious economy, and almost everywhere in Wales the local influence of the chapels on morals and manners was declining. Religious institutions became increasingly disengaged from the general population and Welsh society became marked by increasing differentiation between religious and secular spheres.<sup>206</sup> The status of religion would revert to a private religion of individual salvation rather than a public religion of social control.

Secularization may be defined as the by-product of the unintended consequences of the process of modernization. Religion loses its presence in everyday life and its sense of mission, and ultimately its being becomes hard to sustain.<sup>207</sup> It has been argued that for a time at least religion in Wales behaved outside of the 'secularization paradigm' in that religion thrived and expanded at a time when industrialization was waxing rather than waning.<sup>208</sup> Indeed it was under conditions of advancing modernity that Nonconformity became a pervasive influence in Welsh society, and the combined effects of social change, industrialisation and urbanization saw the emergence of an industrial society where religious institutions were at the heart of proletarian life.<sup>209</sup> Chambers considered four factors which were quite unique to Wales under the influence of 'secularization'.<sup>210</sup> The first factor identified was the decline of the Welsh language under economic influences, where English had become the language of commerce, thereby steadily undermining the status of the Welsh language and ultimately the very *raison d'être* of the Welsh medium chapels. While the chapels were the defenders of the language in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, it was the state that took over religion's

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<sup>206</sup> Chambers, *Secularization and Welsh Religiosity*, 235.

<sup>207</sup> P. Chambers, Economic Factors in Church Growth and Decline in South and West Wales in D. Goodhew, ed. *Church Growth 1980- 2011* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), p. 221.

<sup>208</sup> P. Chambers, *The Changing face of Religion in Wales*. *The Expository Times*, 122:6 (2011) pp. 4 – 6.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

cultural defence role with the Welsh Language Act 1967.<sup>211</sup> The second factor was the ‘professionalization’ of the Welsh Nonconformist ministries with the resultant loss of ‘ownership’ of the chapels by their congregations, where religious leaders had previously evolved from within the chapel membership. The emergence of a university educated religious élite did much to undermine customary patterns of religious life and ultimately transformed congregations from active agents to passive recipients.<sup>212</sup>

A third factor identified by Chambers was the economic transformation and the growth of socialism as outlined in section 3.3. The effects of economic downturn on the industrial communities in Wales were catastrophic up to the modern day. Communities became increasingly fragmented, eroding local community solidarity with very negative consequences for religious institutions predicated on that solidarity.<sup>213</sup> The fourth factor relates to the rise of the Welfare State, where governments have become more centralizing, taking on many of the traditional welfare functions of religious organizations.<sup>214</sup> Life in Wales during the zenith of the chapel movement was hard, dangerous and fraught with economic uncertainty. Religion offered a high level of social capital as well as providing a buffer against the vagaries of life through the provision of active social solidarity and mutual self-help. In the industrial regions the emergence of trade unions and the progressive increase in the Welfare State did much to undermine the communitarian rationale and ultimately the reach of organised religion. In recent times there has been something of a rearguard action by evangelical churches for an increased participation in social issues. *Gweini* (The Council of the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales) was established in 1999, and has become an increasingly significant player in some of Wales’ more deprived communities offering a broad range of services and support through their evangelical congregations. This represents a significant theological shift towards a ‘social gospel’ that would have been anathema to the Welsh

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

evangelical sphere a decade before.<sup>215</sup> Nowhere in *Gweini's* mission statement is the promotion or protection of the Welsh language mentioned.<sup>216</sup>

In terms of the Welsh language, the perennial problem remains: the dominance of the English language. The dominant language in 'cyberspace' continues to be English which threatens to engulf and eventually destroy minority languages which are not able to adapt. Welsh speakers are encouraged to embrace new communicative technologies and opportunities exist for Welsh language versions of front-end interfaces and web-sites. As stated by Jenkins: "Just as Welsh speakers appropriated the printing press in Tudor times, so must they now promote a progressive image of themselves by penetrating the fastest-growing communications phenomenon in history".<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>216</sup> *Gweini*. Available: <http://www.gweini.org.uk/aboutus/index.htm#Mission>. <accessed January 8, 2013>.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND ORGANISED RELIGION - CONCLUSION

Chapters one to three have attempted to document the rise and decline of the Welsh language and organized religion in Wales in some detail, as well as focusing on some of the major socio-economic events over the last two hundred years. To paraphrase Charles Dickens, the health and well-being of the language and of the churches and chapels in Wales between 1801 and 2011 could well have been entitled 'A Tale of Two Centuries'.<sup>218</sup> Indeed the opening chapter of Dickens' novel seems particularly applicable to the waxing and waning fortunes of the Welsh language and the Christian churches and chapels over that period:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.....”<sup>219</sup>

The stated *raison d'être* for this dissertation was an attempt to ascertain whether the fluctuating fortunes of the language and of religion in Wales were linked directly or indirectly, or conversely were independent of each other and simply subject to the same external socio-economic influences. Given the complexity of societal hierarchies and systems, which are always evolving and changing, cause and effect are often difficult if not impossible to prove over a given period in time. The situation in Wales over the last two centuries is no different. On the other hand, a summary of what has been discussed in some detail in chapters one to three will assist to establish the relationship between language and religion, and to help decide whether a co-dependency existed.

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<sup>218</sup> A Tale of Two Cities was written by Charles Dickens in 1859, and is set in London and Paris during the French Revolution. Available: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581402/A-Tale-of-Two-Cities>. <Accessed January 6 2013>

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*.

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, any keen observer of the Welsh language would have felt optimistic regarding the health of the language. The Classification of the Ecclesiastical Returns by the Anglican or Established Church in 1800 suggested a predominantly monoglot population of Wales. In terms of religious affiliation Wales was a peculiarly religious country, and the 1851 Census confirmed this. Wales had sufficient 'seatings' of worship for three-quarters of its adult population and on the day of the 1851 Census an astonishing one-third of the adult population of Wales attended a place of worship on that day. The effects of urbanization had no demonstrable deleterious effect on religion, as might normally be predicted by conventional secularization paradigms. On the contrary, the increased population in the industrial areas of South Wales resulted in an explosion of chapel building, not constrained by the Anglican parochial system. Almost 90% of Welsh Christians professed Nonconformity as their faith, which would continue to enjoy unprecedented growth throughout the nineteenth-century, fuelled by a number of Religious Revivals. Chapels would become not only places of worship but community centres with a demonstrable social conscience.

The Welsh language would be a beneficiary of this spectacular growth in Nonconformity. Building upon the success of Rev. Griffith Jones and his circulating schools in the late eighteenth-century, the Sunday School movement would become the shining light of the Nonconformist chapels. They would allow tens of thousands of adults and children to learn to read, and the medium of reading would be the Welsh Bible, assisted by Bible commentaries, also in Welsh. By the end of the nineteenth-century, four out of ten of the population of Wales would be Sunday School members. By contrast, the Established Church failed to adapt to the new industrialized, urbanized environment, failing to nurture the status and growth of the Welsh language in the nineteenth-century, and was openly antagonistic to the language. The most damning condemnation of the Established Church is the fact that it threw in its lot with the 'Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales' in 1847, which was a scandalous slur on the very morality of the Welsh people. The Report's open attack on the Welsh people, their language and their Nonconformity in most probability had the paradoxical effect of

galvanizing the Welsh people after its release. Thomas provided a very positive view of mass population explosion, in-migration, industrialization and urbanization and their effects on the Welsh language, and its symbiosis with Nonconformity throughout the nineteenth-century.<sup>220</sup> Within this 'Cauldron' the language and the chapels would continue to benefit from each other's growth and stability. By the end of the nineteenth-century, and the beginning of the twentieth-century, the absolute numbers of Welsh speakers in Wales would be at its highest ever, at almost one million. Commentators towards the end of the nineteenth-century would have been reasonably optimistic about the seemingly enduring nature of the Triumvirate of the Liberal Party, the Nonconformist chapel movement, and the Welsh language.

If the nineteenth-century was a time of growth and harmony for the language and the chapel, the twentieth-century would prove to be disastrous for both the Welsh language and Christianity in Wales. The weight of evidence suggests that there would be a declining fortune for both language and religion under relentless negative socio-economic pressures in the twentieth century. In this sense, language and religion would no longer be in a strong enough position to assist each other but rather follow parallel, independent and relentlessly declining fortunes. Major socio-economic events would continue to erode both entities for the next one hundred years.

The Great War of 1914-18 would start this decline, and had a direct effect on the Welsh language, in the loss of a significant number of young Welsh speaking Welshmen in the trenches of France and Belgium. Those who survived would return home with a great deal of cynicism. Christianity and the chapels which had provided spiritual nourishment and stability before the war no longer held credibility or meaning. Welsh speakers would look elsewhere for their inspiration. The Liberal Party and its Nonconformity alliance would be shattered by the rise of socialism in the Valleys. The Labour Party would now be the party of the people; its manifestos,

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<sup>220</sup> Thomas, *A Cauldron of Rebirth*.

written unashamedly in the English language, the language of modernity and advancement, would have more currency than the Welsh Bible. The rise of the trade union movement in the early part of the century held the only real prospect of meeting social needs, particularly during the Great Depression of the thirties. Desperate people were more likely to turn in those days to the Gospel of Marx rather than the Gospel of John.

Between 1911 and 2011 the number of Welsh speakers would continue to fall from its peak of almost one million in 1911 to almost half that number within one hundred years. The proportion of people over the age of three years able to speak Welsh would decrease to less than 20% of the population. The Welsh monoglot has been extinct for at least twenty years. Modernization continued to erode the Welsh language after the Second World War. Globalization has left the Welsh language at a critical juncture. Other factors, which include out-migration of Welsh-speakers, and a numerically larger in-migration of monoglot English-speakers, will continue to stress the language, unless there is a conscious and concerted effort to 'Reverse Language Shift'. This will take a tremendous amount of effort, time, money and commitment from government and non-government bodies. The Welsh Government has restated its commitment to a thriving, living Welsh language, and has updated its Welsh Language Strategy 2012 – 2017, in "*A Living Language: A Language for Living*".<sup>221</sup> The Vision and Aims of the 2012 document are commendable and time will tell whether they are achievable and successfully implemented.<sup>222</sup>

The phenomena of urbanization, counter-urbanization, modernization and secularization, could also be shown to have a similar and somewhat parallel negative influence on Christianity, particularly Nonconformity. Across England and Wales the proportion of respondents in the 2011 Census claiming to be Christian continues to fall. In Wales the decrease in Christianity has occurred on a background

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<sup>221</sup> Welsh Government. *A Living Language: a Language for Living*. Welsh Language Strategy 2012 – 17. Available: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/122902wls201217en.pdf>. <accessed February 1, 2013>

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*.



of an increase in 'No Religion' respondents. Indeed, for probably the first time in the history of censuses, and in marked contrast to the first 'religious census' of 1851, Wales now has the highest proportion of 'No Religion' compared to any other region in England. Wales is now truly becoming a secularized state.

The religious statistics for the Nonconformists have paralleled the decline in the Welsh language, with significant falls in membership for each Nonconformist denomination. The number of chapels boarded-up or converted to private dwellings and bingo halls is testimony to the parlous state of Welsh Nonconformity. In contrast, those who profess Christian beliefs are returning to the Church in Wales, or alternatively embracing the Pentecostal movement, which is particularly attractive to young people. Certainly the Pentecostal churches, with their strong American roots, are unlikely to be of any assistance to the promotion of the Welsh language. The Church in Wales however, needs to be commended for its recent report '*Pob un yn ei iaith ei Hun*' (Each in our own language), where it has demonstrated a concern for the vitality of the language and has made recommendations to effectively promote the widespread use of Welsh in their services as much as practicable.<sup>223</sup> Before it can seriously promote growth of the Welsh language, the Established Church has to address the need to increase its membership base, competing not only with other Christian denominations but also the growing tide of secularization, agnosticism and atheism in modern Wales.

In conclusion, in the nineteenth-century, the Welsh language and Welsh Christianity, in particular the Nonconformist movement, were comfortable bed-fellows. Both were in their ascendancy, and as the one flourished, so did the other. Each seemed to promote the other, and without the success of the one, the other would have likely faltered under mass urbanization and industrialization. In contrast, the twentieth-century demonstrates a fragile and possibly irredeemable position for the Welsh language as well as for traditional Christian worship in Wales.

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<sup>223</sup> Welsh Language Vocations Group. '*Pob Un yn ei iaith ei Hun*. Each in Our Own Language' Report to the Standing Committee of the Church in Wales, December 2011 (online). Available: <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/structure/govbody/apr12/docs/ag17.pdf>. <accessed December 22, 2012>

Overwhelming socio-economic factors, modernization and secularization will continue to severely erode both religion and the language unless drastic remedial programs are initiated as a matter of some urgency. At the present time both the Welsh language and Christianity (Established Church and Nonconformist chapels) are independent victims of 'progress' and neither appears in a suitably robust position to help the other. The 2011 Census makes sobering reading for both Christianity in Wales and the Welsh language, and in the absence of Divine Intervention, it is likely that each will have to formulate its own survival plan, independent of each other.

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