



Introduction

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This book marks the centenary of the foundation of the Church in Wales, *Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru*, as a separate province of the global Anglican Communion. It seeks to describe, explain and evaluate landmark developments in the life of the Church in Wales, following the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales in 1920, as they have unfolded during the course of the century. The book focusses on key areas of activity of the Church over the years and the challenges and opportunities which these have involved as the Church has sought to carry out its mission and ministry in witness to the Christian faith and in service to the people of Wales. Each chapter seeks to explore the evolution of the mind and practice of the Church in each of these areas in terms of theology, law, policy, impact and experience.

The book is divided into five parts, each one dealing with a cluster of related topics. Part I provides a historical overview by way of general background. There are four chapters on: the church from the Age of the Saints to Victorian times; the campaign for disestablishment; the place of Christianity in Wales since 1920; and the broad issues faced by the Church in the course of the century. The four chapters of Part II explore matters of church governance and ministry, namely: the Constitution; bishops and archbishops; clergy (priests and deacons); and the laity and new patterns of ministry. Part III examines a further four areas: doctrine, liturgy, the rites of passage, and relations with other faith communities. Part IV – in its four chapters – deals with the Church and wider society: cultural debate; education; the Welsh language; and the Church's social responsibility work. The book ends with discussion, in the two short chapters of Part V, of the images of the Church as developed by it and by the media, how these have helped or hindered the Church in its mission, and with reflections by the archbishop of Wales on lessons learnt over the century, the Church today and its future.

In terms of method, while the first four chapters set the scene historically, the principal task of each subsequent specialist chapter is to identify

continuity and change within the particular field studied, in the form of landmark developments and issues. First, generally, the chapter sets out the position of the church on the topic at, and where appropriate immediately before, disestablishment, and then describes whether this position continued or changed over the century, until the present, indicating when change occurred. Chapters then either present developments in distinct periods or they do so thematically. Secondly, each chapter explains the continuity and/or change – typically, who drove it, the reasons and stimulus for it, the attendant debate, and justifications for and the extent of the continuity/change in theology, law and practice. Reasons more often than not include initiatives and pressures within the Church and its various constituencies, or responses to stimuli, including pressures, from outside the Church. Thirdly, each chapter evaluates the continuity and change in terms of the significance of the effects of these on the Church, its integrity, mission and place in society. This is the critical aspect of the studies – and various criteria are used to measure a position.

Within this methodological framework, therefore, the evaluative aspects of the studies often suggest (sometimes uncomfortable) conclusions about the national ministry of the Church, whether it has become more or less relevant to Welsh life, more or less liberal or tolerant, and more or less traditional. Some also express concerns about the extent to which the Church perpetuates elements of the former established position of the English Church in Wales (and how these have helped or hindered it in its mission across the decades), and the benefits and challenges of these for Anglicans (and other Christians) in Wales today and in the future. The book also questions various assumptions, in public debate and scholarship, about the Church in Wales. These include: the persistently articulated view that it is a disestablished church – it is not, but, rather, a new ecclesial institution – it was the English Church in Wales that was disestablished; the use of its freedom; its distinctive Welshness; its willingness to collaborate with other faith communities; its place in and contribution to global Anglicanism; its approach to innovation; and how it has faced challenges and opportunities posed by the State and wider world in the increasingly pluralist and secularised nature of Welsh society over the century. The book is, therefore, also designed to stimulate debate – some chapters propose changes. For example, there are explicit or implicit calls for the Church to deal with different visions within it of the nature of the church, for renewal of the Constitution (on the basis that it is better to have it and not need it than to

need it and not have it), for the greater involvement of the laity in ministry, for more clarity on rights of admission to some rites of passage, for fuller engagement with other world religions represented in Welsh society, and for clearer appreciation of the impact of media portrayals of the Church on the effective discharge of its mission. In other words, whilst the book is designed to enhance our understanding of this institution of Welsh society, and at the same time to celebrate, it also seeks to generate thoughtful reflection on what has and has not worked across the century.

The contributors are all distinguished in various fields of expertise across a wide and diverse range of aspects of the Church's corporate public life – strategic and operational. An effort has been made to include contributors from as wide a spectrum as practicable. As a result, the contributors include: ordained people (archbishops, bishops, archdeacons and others); lay people and office-holders across the various levels of the Church (provincial, diocesan and parochial); educators, ministers, governors, theologians and historians; those still in active public ministry and those retired from it; and people from a range of theological positions and perspectives – traditional, liberal, catholic, evangelical and high and low church. One contributor is a distinguished historian from outside the Anglican tradition. What is also evident is the direct role played by many contributors in developments of more recent years affecting the Church – and, needless to say, their experiences add to the authenticity or richness of the book, subject to caveats about possible subjectivity. As will be seen, some chapters refer occasionally to the same historical events as treated in other chapters – it is hoped that such apparent repetition will be forgiven on the basis that all the topics treated are fundamentally interrelated and each event susceptible to new and different interpretations.

The book is ground-breaking as a centenary study and seeks to fill a gap in the academic literature. As the Bibliography shows, there is an abundant body of secondary literature on historical aspects of the life of the Church in Wales, both before and after disestablishment. However, there is little literature on the Church in Wales as it has developed in the past century in terms of the specialist areas covered in this volume.¹ Nevertheless, D. T. W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century*, is a notable exception and takes the story to 1990 in

¹ Of the eight excellent chapters in D. Walker, ed., *A History of the Church in Wales* (Penarth: Church in Wales Publications, 1976), only the final chapter deals with the twentieth century.

its masterly treatment of broad themes. This book studies a wider range of church activities and issues, and in greater depth, and to the present. There are also books on aspects of the life of the Church in Wales, from, for example, ecumenical, sociological and legal perspectives, such as G. Abraham-Williams, ed., *Towards Making an Ecumenical Bishop* (1997), or C. Harris and R. Startup, *The Church in Wales: The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (1999), or Philip Jones, *The Governance of the Church in Wales* (2000). Our book draws on the learning of such scholars not only in re-examining topics such as these but also in continuing the story to the present. And it seeks to innovate in so far as studies in it are based on a very wide range of hitherto untapped primary sources, such as the minutes of provincial and diocesan bodies, including their committees or commissions.

It is hoped that the book will appeal not only to those who wish to celebrate the centenary of the Church in Wales, but also to scholars and students of theology, ministry, church history, religious studies, Anglican studies, ecumenical studies, interreligious studies, the sociology of religion, and the study of religion and law. The book may also be relevant to those engaged in debate about the continued establishment of the Church of England, from which the four Welsh dioceses separated in 1920. Studies such as R. M. Morris, ed., *Church and State in 21st-Century Britain: The Future of Church Establishment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), indicate vividly the topicality of the (dis)establishment issues in England today. As with the Church in Wales, the life of the Church of England too over the past hundred years has been characterised by continuity and change – of the latter, from the field of ecclesiastical law for instance, we might note: the setting up of the National Assembly of the Church of England under an Act of Parliament of 1919; the furore over the 1928 prayer book; the reconstitution of the Church Assembly as the General Synod in 1970 (under the Synodical Government Measure 1969); the passing of the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974 (giving greater freedom to legislate by canon on doctrinal and liturgical matters); the rough parliamentary passage of the Churchwardens Measure 2001; and the requirement in relation to a host of areas of church life for the Church of England to obtain the consent of Parliament for the enactment of its legislation in the form of measures, and to obtain the consent of the Crown in the appointments of its bishops. For the Church in Wales (with the rare exceptions of such areas as marriage and burial law), the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales and the separation of the Church in Wales from the State – both effected by the Welsh Church

Act 1914 – and the ecclesiastical separation of the four Welsh dioceses from the Province of Canterbury in 1920 provided the basic freedom which the Church in Wales still enjoys. And this book is about the use of that freedom over the course of one hundred years, a freedom to plan, articulate and live out its understanding of Christian faith.

The book is also designed to assist the bishops, clergy, officers and members of the Church in Wales, whether involved directly in its institutional administration and ministerial practice or as beneficiaries of its ministry, to learn about the church and to reflect on its legacy. It is hoped, therefore, that it will afford for policy-makers in the church an overview of the way in which the church has developed over one century of its activity, providing lessons to be learnt from the challenges it has faced, and elucidating the strategies it has evolved to deal with them, as well as evaluating the impact of these on the life of the church as it functions in wider society. Equally, it offers those engaged in training for ordained and other forms of church ministry – teachers and ordination candidates – essential reading to understand the historical development of the church since disestablishment. Finally, it is hoped that the book will provide for those beyond or in dialogue with the Church in Wales – ecumenical partners, interfaith interlocutors, and government officials – an opportunity better to understand the Church in Wales, its longstanding aspirations and its needs in a single accessible volume. This is so, not least, as to the opportunities and constraints which its own beliefs, practices, and rules place on the Church in Wales in developing relations with other churches, other faith groups, the government and society. Above all, however, the book is a lasting tribute to all those who have served and helped the Church in Wales as it embarks on its second century.