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PROTESTANTISM THE WELSH WAY. THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF WELSH NATIONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This paper analyses Welsh religious identity in the nineteenth century, especially with regard to national identity. The issues discussed include the influence of religion on Welsh patriotism, culture, language, approach to education, politics, Welsh peoples' perception of their own history, and attitudes to England.

Religious identity was an important aspect of Welsh identity in the nineteenth century. The subject is not familiar to Poles, and is thus not discussed in Polish scholarly literature. The present article is based on source materials and secondary literature written in Welsh and English. The sources discussed include transcripts of proceedings of the British Parliament, government reports, press reports and the fictional literature of the era. The original source materials are mainly held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth and the library and archives of Bangor University.

The history of Christianity in today's Principality of Wales[1] dates back to Roman times. These lands, conquered by Emperor Claudius in the first century AD, remained under Roman rule until the beginning of the fifth century. In the meantime, Emperor Constantine the Great legalised Christianity in the Empire, and Theodosius the Great made it a dominant religion, which may suggest that it was present in Wales already in the fourth century.[2] The Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity only in the sixth century, of which fact Welsh campaigners used to remind their English opponents, especially in the context of religious debates.

During the Middle Ages the Welsh Church was subject to Canterbury's authority, although Wales was ruled by native princes until the thirteenth century. Welsh lands,

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[1] The name "Principality" is often used conventionally to describe Wales. It does not, however, reflect its actual political or administrative status, but is associated with the title of Prince of Wales, which is always given to the heir to the British throne.

[2] Christianity may have reached Wales even before its legalisation in the Roman Empire, though it is difficult to determine the exact time when it became the universal religion in Wales. For more on the British Isles under Roman rule, see Tacitus, *Dzieła* [The Works], K. Górski [ed.], translated by S. Hammer, Warsaw 2004; Gaius Julius Caesar, *Wojna Galijska* [The Gallic Wars], translated and edited by E. Konik, Wrocław 2004; J. T. Coch, J. Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age. Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales,* Massachusetts 1997.

however, remained politically fragmented and their inhabitants were mainly united by their common language, traditions and laws. This lack of organised statehood was not conducive to ensuring the Welsh Church was independent from English control.

The dependence on Canterbury became more obvious with the conquest of Wales by England during the reign of Edward I (1282). In the time of Henry VIII the Act of Union (1536) integrated the two countries more closely.[3] Henry's reign brought another important change with the establishment of the Anglican Church, also referred to as the Established Church. It did not meet with unanimous approval, with the people of Ireland, for example, rejecting Anglicanism and remaining Catholics, while Puritanism gained ground in Scotland. The people of Wales, on the other hand, accepted the new denomination more easily, and they did so even more eagerly because of the first complete translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588. It should be noted here that Welsh is not a dialect of English, and knowledge of English was not widespread in the Principality even in the nineteenth century.

The Welsh attitude to Anglicanism began to undergo major change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The causes of this, although difficult to pinpoint exactly, may have included an increase in patriotic sentiment associated with the growing interest of the Welsh in their own culture and history during the eighteenth century. It was then that the Welshman Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) wrote his famous and pioneering book *Archaeologia Britannica*, in which he classified the Celtic languages. Theophilus Evans (1693-1767) published the patriotic but inaccurate historical narrative *Drych y Prif Oesoedd* "A View of the Primitive Ages" describing, not entirely factually, the deeds of the Welsh rulers of the Middle Ages.[4] Finally, we should mention the poet Iolo Morganwg, founder of the organisation called *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain*, which he claimed drew on Druidic tradition. The organisation still exists today, and is primarily known for organising the ceremonies for the major prizes at the National Eisteddfod, the most prestigious Welsh culture and arts festival. Only people of outstanding merit can join the organisation.[5]

The measure of the eighteenth-century revival described above is reflected in the number of emerging groups interested in native culture and tradition. They included, for example, the Cymreigyddion Welsh Society, focusing on the development of the native tongue, *Anrhydeddus Gymdeithas y Cymmrodorion* (the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion), focusing primarily on culture and education, and the Gwyneddigion

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[3] For more on the conquest of Wales by Edward I, see e.g. R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415*, Oxford 2000. For more on the Anglo-Welsh Union and Wales during the Tudors, see P. Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990*, London 1997; J.G. Jones, *Early Modern Wales, c. 1525-1640*, London 1994; G. Williams, *Renewal and Reformation. Wales c. 1415-1642*, Oxford 2002, pp. 233-278.

[4] T. Evans, *Drych y Prif Oesoedd, y ddwy ran. Rhan I. Sy'n traethu am hen ach y Cymru, o ba ley daethant allan... Rhan II. Sy'n trefnu am bregethiad a chynnydd yr efengyl ym mrydain... Gan Theophilus Evans,... Yr ail argraphiad yn llawnach o lawer na'r cyntaf* [undated]; or T. Evans, *Drych y Prif Oesoedd. Yn ôl yr argraffiad cyntaf:1716*, G.H. Hughes [ed.], Cardiff 1961.

[5] Iolo Morganwg, real name Edward Williams. For more on Iolo Morganwg and Gorsedd see e.g. *Welsh Biography Online*, http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-WILL-EDW-1747.html?query=Edward+Williams &field=name [accessed 05.11.2015]; www.gorsedd.org [accessed 05.11.2015].

Society, which was slightly more political in character.[6] All of this meant that the Anglican Church, in which for years the most important positions had been filled by English-speaking clerics, did not meet the expectations of the Welsh people, whose flourishing national consciousness called for a different treatment. These feelings seemed to be amplified by the poverty prevailing at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Privation, diseases, overpopulation, unemployment and difficult working conditions led to mass frustration. Many sought consolation in religion, but the Anglican Church, deaf to the ills of Wales, failed to meet the new challenges. With time, such names as *Yr Eglwys Estron* (The Foreign Church), *Eglwys Loegr* (England's Church) or even *Yr Hen Fradwres* (The Old Traitor) started to be used with reference to the Anglican Church.

The first radical changes occurred with the movement known as the Methodist revival. It began as a movement to reform the established Church, and ended up strengthening the position of non-Anglican Protestant churches, referred to as Nonconformist churches. The year 1823 is often referred to as a watershed, for it was then that the Calvinistic Methodist Presbyterian Church of Wales, which later enjoyed great popularity, was established.

It should be emphasised that the Nonconformist churches corresponded much more closely to the spiritual and intellectual needs of the Welsh people. First of all, they could now pray and listen to services in their native language. Secondly, the structure of the community was based on local authority and not on distant Canterbury. Individual churches enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy and remained under the care of local communities, which regarded God as the true and only guide. In addition, great emphasis was placed on reading and learning the Scriptures. All of these qualities, constituting the essence of Nonconformity, are well described by lines from a Welsh hymn:

Nid oes i ni offeriad	*/ We have no priest*
ond Iesu Grist ei hun	*/ but Jesus Christ himself*
nac ordeiniau eraill	*/ We have no orders*
ond geiriau Mab y Dyn:	*/ but the Son of God's words:*
I ryddid pur y'n galwyd;	*/ we were called to absolute freedom*
O cadw ni'n dy waith	*/ Let us persevere in the fulfilment of your work*
Nes elo cyfraith rhyddid	*/ as long as the law of freedom prevails*
Dros wyneb daear faith.[7]	*/ over the broad expanse of land*

The new reality was also associated with the development of religious poetry and literature, in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At that time, the works of the hymn writers praised above all God-created nature and simple, hard-working life.

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[6] For more on Gwyneddigion and Cymmrodorion see J. Davies, *History of Wales*, London 2007, pp. 328-329; cf. *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, M. Stephens [ed.], Cardiff 1998 (Cymmrodorion – p. 135, Cymreigyddion – p. 135).

[7] "Elfed", *O Arglwydd Dduw ein tadau*, in: *Caneuon Ffydd. Hen Nodiant*, Pwyllgor y Llyfr Emynau Cydenwadol [ed.], Llandysul 2001, p. 761, author's own translation.

Among the most famous representatives of this literary tradition were William Williams Pantycelyn (1717-1791),[8] best known for his hymns about the beauty of nature, Ann Griffiths (1776-1805),[9] author of the still popular hymn *Wele'n sefyll*, and Daniel James (1847-1920),[10] author of one of the most popular and frequently performed hymns *Calon Lân* ("A Pure Heart"). Its words accurately reflect the nature of the value system associated with Nonconformism:

> *Nid wy'n gofyn bywyd moethus, / I don't ask for a luxurious life,*
> *Aur y byd na'i berlau mân: / the world's gold or its fine pearls,*
> *Gofyn 'rwyf am galon hapus, / I ask for a happy heart,*
> *Calon onest, calon lân. / an honest heart, a pure heart.*
>
> *Calon lân yn llawn daioni, / A pure heart full of goodness*
> *Tecach yw na'r lili dlos: / Is fairer than the pretty lily,*
> *Dim ond calon lân all ganu / None but a pure heart can sing,*
> *Canu'r dydd a chanu'r nos. / Sing in the day and sing in the night.*
>
> *Pe dymunwn olud bydol / If I wished for worldly wealth,*
> *Chwim adenydd iddo sydd; / It would swiftly go to seed;*
> *Golud calon lân, rinweddol, / The riches of a virtuous, pure heart*
> *Yn dwyn bythol elw fydd. / Will bear eternal profit.*
>
> *Hwyr a bore fy nymuniad. / Evening and morning, my wish*
> *Gwyd i'r nef ar adain cân / Rises to heaven on the wing of song*
> *Ar i Dduw, er mwyn fy Ngheidwad, / For God, for the sake of my Saviour,*
> *Roddi i mi galon lân. / To give me a pure heart.* [11]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Methodist revival temporarily lost its momentum. Workers' issues, due to progressive industrialisation, were at the forefront at that time. Chartism, a movement to improve the conditions of workers and to lower the property-based suffrage qualification, was becoming more and more popular. In Wales, the 1830s and 1840s were known primarily for uprisings and riots aimed at improving the lives of the poorest, both in the villages and in the industrialised areas. However, the continued attachment of the Principality to religion can be noted even in times of social unrest. Examples include the so-called Rebecca Riots – mass protests of the rural population against excessive road charges and unfavourable aid measures for the poor. The Welsh farmers considered themselves to be sons (or daughters) of the biblical Rebecca, whom her siblings greeted with the words "Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of

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[8] For more on William Williams see e.g. *Welsh Biography Online*, http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-WILL-WIL-1717.html?query=William+Williams+&field=name [accessed 05.11.2015].

[9] For more on Ann Griffiths see e.g. *Welsh Biography Online*, http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-GRIF-ANN-1776.html?query=Ann+Griffiths&field=content [accessed 05.11.2015].

[10] For more on Daniel James see e.g. *Welsh Biography Online*, *http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-JAME-DAN-1847.html?query=Daniel+James+&field=content* [accessed 05.11.2015].

[11] *Caneuon Ffydd*, Pwyllgor y Llyfr Emynau Cydenwadol [ed.], Llandysul 2001, p. 948, English translation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calon_L%C3%A2n.

those which hate them."[12] This quotation was probably used by the protesters as justi-fication for destroying the toll-gates set up on the roads.[13] It should be noted here that Rebecca was not the only example of a biblical figure regarded by the Welsh people as a mythical leader or protoplast. The son of Japheth and the grandson of Noah, Gomer, often considered the legendary father of the nation, also enjoyed great popularity. One of the most popular publishing houses in Wales, Gomer Press (Welsh *Gwasg Gomer*), founded in 1892, was named after him.

By the end of the 1840s, working class issues in the United Kingdom had died down somewhat, and some experts regard a general improvement in the living con-ditions of the working class as a cause of that process.[14] However, the problem had a wider dimension in Wales. The cessation of the riots meant a definite turn in the direction of political loyalism and legalism, as well as the strengthening of the link between Wales and Nonconformism. To a large extent this was connected to a seem-ingly minor event: the publication of a government report on the state of education in Wales in 1847.[15] The report includes descriptions of schools and statistics on the number and age of pupils, teachers' levels of education and their salaries. However, these statistics are infused with unjustified comments and many were irritated by its condescending tone. To add fuel to the proverbial fire, the authors of the report were Englishmen, R.R.W. Lingen (1809-1905), Jelinger C. Symons (1809-1860) and H.R. Vaughan Johnson, who were unfamiliar with the problems of Wales and did not speak Welsh. These commissioners described the Welsh as an extremely ignorant, filthy, un-civilised, riot-prone and morally suspect nation, and the blame for this state of affairs was placed on the values so dear to the Welsh people, namely Nonconformism and the Welsh language. According to the commissioners, the latter should be eradicated, because unlike English it was allegedly unable to express more complicated ideas. In support of this argument, the report stated that as far as secular themes were concerned there was nothing in the Welsh language that could be called literature, although in fact literature had been produced in Wales as early as the sixth century.[16] Such critical opinions also fuelled English-Welsh animosities, which were already numerous with regard to the language. It is enough to mention the practice of filling church positions

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[12] *Holy Bible. Old and New Testaments [conformable to the edition of 1611 commonly known as the Authorized or King James Version]*, London 2009: Tophi Books, Genesis 24:60, p. 15.

[13] There are also other theories which explain the name "Rebecca Riots". In addition to the biblical justification, it is pointed out that the rioters took part in the rebellion dressed in women's clothes, taking the names of women from whom they borrowed them. According to an alternative theory, Rebecca was supposed to be the person who lent clothes to one of the first symbolic uprising leaders, Twm Carnabwth. For more on this subject, see e.g. P. Molloy, *And they blessed Rebecca: an account of the Welsh toll-gate riots 1839–1844*, Llandysul 1983, p. 29.

[14] Paul Johnson, the author of *A History of the English People*, even writes about the period of "Vic-torian stabilisation" and the working class becoming more and more apolitical because of improvement in their living conditions. See Johnson, 1985, *A History of the English People*. New York: Perennial Library.

[15] *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, Appointed by the Committee of Council of Education*, London 1847.

[16] *Ibidem*, part 2, p. 66, part 3, p. 61.

with English-speaking clergymen, or the system of punishments inflicted on children for speaking Welsh, known as *Welsh Not*, which was used in many schools.

As in the case of the native language, the government report was quite critical of dissident churches. The credibility of the report leaves much to be desired, given the fact that the commissioners' informants, cited frequently in the account, were often Anglican clergymen. Besides the Welsh language, Nonconformism was also supposed to be a cause of backwardness, the tendency to incite rebellions, drunkenness and moral debauchery. As evidence of this, it was reported that the fact that people of opposite sexes lived together in a single room, irrespective of family relationships, was generally accepted in Wales. Services and religious instruction were described as excuses for trysts.[17] Furthermore, being a dissident was also associated with dangerous fanaticism, which allegedly manifested itself strongly during the aforementioned Rebecca Riots. The rebels, according to the commissioners, would kill animals and smear their hands with blood while performing dramatic rituals.[18] Nonconformism was also supposed to be responsible for the general ignorance allegedly prevailing among the inhabitants of Wales, and the situation was aggravated by exceptionally ignorant clerics and preachers, who had considerable standing in society. Moreover, the Welsh people, according to the report, read no other papers but religious ones, thereby isolating themselves from the surrounding world.[19] Sunday schools, although generally appreciated for their value, were also criticised. The report stated that the standard of teaching was very low there, and that teaching was almost exclusively limited to reading Bible passages and asking series of trivial questions. The rooms in which the classes took place were poorly equipped. There were no maps, books or notebooks, and children's knowledge about the world or religion itself was exceptionally low. All of this was allegedly accompanied by deep-seated prejudices and the already mentioned fanaticism.[20]

Considering these charges, it is not surprising that the report sparked widespread indignation among the Welsh. This is shown by the infamous name "The Treachery of the Blue Books" (Welsh *Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*) which came to be commonly applied to it. The name alluded to a legendary event of the fifth century, when the Saxons, ancestors of the English, were said to have invited the Britons, ancestors of the Welsh, and the Saxons' former allies, to a feast and then slaughtered them.[21] It is not known when exactly the phrase "Treachery of the Blue Books" was coined, but it is likely that it might have been introduced, or at least popularised, by Robert Jones, the author of a play of the same title published in 1853. The publication was a decisive and bold response to the accusations put forward by the English commissioners. The drama, written in Welsh, described the situation from a completely different

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[17] *Ibidem*, part 1, pp. 21-22, part 2, p. 59.

[18] *Ibidem*, part 1, p. 6.

[19] *Ibidem*, part 1, p. 6.

[20] *Ibidem*, part 1, pp. 4-5.

[21] For more on the subject see e.g. *Nennius. British History and Welsh Annals*, J. Morris [ed.], London, pp. 26-33; *Gildas. The Ruin of Britain and other documents*, J. Morris [ed.], London 2002, p. 26.

perspective. It ridiculed the authors of the report, accusing them of being biased and deliberately asking Welsh children misleading questions. The Welsh themselves were portrayed as a people particularly beloved by God, whom the commissioners, the devil's messengers, had the task of destroying.[22]

Publication of the play was by no means the end of the matter, and the report soon had far-reaching repercussions in Wales. Many of the initiatives undertaken at that time, either consciously or not, sought to prove the inaccuracy of the "blue books" allegations. Since the report accused the Welsh of being uneducated and socio-economically backward, campaigners set about reforming schools with great enthusiasm, and also founded the University of Wales.[23] More protection and even reverence was given to the native tongue. This is well illustrated by the phrase "O may our old language endure" (*O bydded yr hen iaith barhau*), the final line of the first verse of the Welsh national anthem *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* (*Land of My Fathers*), composed during the 1850s.[24] In the face of disrespectful remarks on Welsh culture, decisive steps were taken to strengthen that culture and to manifest it even more. A visible testament to these activities was the establishment in the mid-nineteenth century of the National Eisteddfod festival (*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol*), which was to take place annually, in North and South Wales alternately.

As a result of these efforts and changes, such terms as *Gwlad y Gân* (Country of Song) and *Cymru Lân, Cymru Lonydd* (Pure Wales, Peaceable Wales) came to be commonly used when referring to Wales. These terms reflect the growing focus of Welsh patriotism on culture and the sidelining of political issues.

If in the case of Wales we can speak of "cultural patriotism", we can certainly speak of "Christian patriotism" as well.[25] Religion gradually became one of the most important elements of national identity, and being Welsh more and more often meant being a religious dissident. Anglican churches in Wales were becoming increasingly deserted, while the new Protestant denominations rapidly increased in popularity. To illustrate the scale of the process we may refer to the 1851 census, according to which about 80% of the Welsh were already Nonconformists.[26] This demarked them clearly from their English neighbours, just as in Poland, during the Partitions, Catholicism distinguished the Poles from Orthodox Russians or Protestant Germans. Soon Nonconformism also changed the Welsh landscape. Each denomination, most often at the congregation's own expense, built more and more chapels, with several chapels, each

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[22] R. Jones, *Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*, Rhuthyn 1854.

[23] St. David's College, associated with the Anglican Church, has existed in Lampeter since 1827. The University of Wales, founded owing to the efforts of nineteenth-century activists, was established in 1893.

[24] *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau,*, now widely recognised as the national anthem of Wales, was written in 1856 by Evan James (lyrics) and his son James James (music).

[25] For more on the contemporary concept of Christian patriotism, see e.g. J. Williams, *Christian patriotism: a discourse delivered at Llandingad church, Llandovery at the opening of the Welsh Educational Institution, March 1, 1848*, Llandovery 1848.

[26] *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship, England and Wales. Report and Tables* (1853), pp. 122-125, after: K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, Cardiff 1980, p. 12.

representing a different denomination, often in one village. To this day, they are one of the distinctive hallmarks of the Welsh landscape. Modest, usually built of stone or brick and covered with slate roofs, from the outside, to Polish eyes, they do not differ much from the ordinary houses. The strength of Nonconformism was also linked to native culture, which the Welsh people treasured so much and the Anglican Church had ignored for years. The dissident churches guarded the native language because it was in that language that services were conducted and Welsh hymns sung. This, in turn, was connected to the strengthening of the tradition of choral singing. Moreover, Sunday schools, to a certain extent, solved the problem of education by effectively fighting illiteracy.

As far as political, or more broadly ideological, issues are concerned, it is no exaggeration to say that Nonconformism by nature favoured legalism more than, for example, the use of force to settle matters. In the spirit of Christian learning, it was often considered better to endure injustice from the Crown rather than to have blood on one's hands. This conciliatory attitude began to be regarded as an almost innate characteristic of the Welsh people. Welsh people themselves and others began referring to them as the "peaceful nation". K. O. Morgan, one of the leading historians of nineteenth century Wales, and one who has researched Welsh identity extensively, has written of the "irrational harmony" between their patriotism and pacifism.[27]

Therefore, as time went by, a new ideal of a Welshman began to develop, and it now referred less frequently to past heroes such as the last princes, insurgents, or advocates of the labour movement. The new model Welshman was a deeply religious and morally upright man, abhorring violence, formed by a mixture of the Methodist revival and indignation at the "blue books". Such an image also emerges from the literature of the time. An example is the poem *Myfanwy Fychan of Dinas Brân* by John Ceiriog Hughes, which describes an ideal Welsh woman – beautiful, moral and religious. The poem won a prize at the Eisteddfod in Llangollen in 1858 and quickly gained enormous popularity. Similar values are reflected in the story *David* by Mallt Williams.[28] This tells of a Methodist who does not lose faith and does not change his religious beliefs despite loss of love and wealth and rejection by his family and people around him. He does not sacrifice any of his values to adopt the Anglican faith. Focused on helping the sick and on praying, he lives modestly, devoting himself entirely to God. At the same time he is full of love for the Welsh land and often dreamily longs for his native landscapes.

A similar image of the Welsh is presented by journalists. This is particularly noticeable in the articles of one of the most influential thinkers and politicians of the period – Henry Richard (1812-1888). Richard himself was one of the first Welsh Nonconformists elected to the British Parliament, where he campaigned for religious equality and international peace. He also served as secretary of the pacifist organisa-

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[27] K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics...*, p. 41.
[28] M. Williams, *David*, in: *A View across the Valley. Short Stories by Women from Wales c. 1850-1950*, J. Aaron [ed.], Dinas Powys 2002.

tion known as the Peace Society. He was even given the nickname "apostle of peace", and his monument in Tregaron commemorates him with parchment in his hand. We can learn about his vision of the world and Wales's place in it thanks to records of parliamentary debates, as well as his publications such as his most well-known collection *Letters and Essays on Wales*.[29] Many of these praise the native dissident churches. Richard describes Welsh preachers who had mastered oratory to perfection, skilfully using allegory and metaphor and modulating their voice accordingly. Moreover, he claimed never to have encountered such clergymen in Scotland or England. He also recalled with delight religious meetings taking place in the open air, for example, with the sea in the background or in the forest, which he remembered from his childhood, and where the words of prayer mingling with the sounds of nature produced a unique tone. Henry Richard was also one of the zealous defenders of nonconformism against the accusations of the 1847 report, and a propagator of loyalism and legalism. He preached that brooding over old wrongs and the "passionate" worship of former warrior heroes was a manifestation of "fierce and vindictive patriotism" which did not befit the inhabitants of Wales.[30] Discussing Wales in the early decades of the nineteenth century, plunged into rural riots and workers' uprisings, Richard tried to justify it, often twisting the facts. The Rebecca Riots were described by him as a completely apolitical event, and for the outbreak of the workers' insurrection known as the Newport Rising (1839) he blamed England, since it was there that Chartism, the reason for the uprising, emerged. The Welsh were supposed to have become infected with this idea by the English, but still, according to Richard, most of them looked at the events with "open disgust and horror".[31] Moreover, he claimed that such attitudes were a reflection of the unique moral condition of Welsh society, which was said to surpass that of England.[32] He wrote in *Essays and Letters*: "(…) I doubt whether there is a population on the face of the earth more enlightened and moral, more loyal to the Throne, more obedient to the laws, more exemplary in all the relations of life, than the inhabitants of Wales".[33] He also added that a religious element, which is "the main element in Welsh civilisation",[34] lay at the core of such behaviour. It was noticeable in the activity of "four or five thousand chapels and churches where the pure Gospel is preached every Sunday of the year (...) Sunday schools throughout the country where the mass of the people have their hearts and minds permeated with the great principles of Christian doctrine and morality."[35] A very low crime rate, especially in terms of serious offences,[36] as well as the particular tendency of the Welsh to carry out charitable activities, were claimed to be testimony to the uniqueness of Wales.

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[29] H. Richard, *Letters and Essays on Wales,* London 1884.
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 37.
[31] *Ibidem*, p. 82.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 53.
[33] *Ibidem*, p. 36.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 44.
[35] *Ibidem*, pp. 60-61.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 57.

However, the vision of Wales as a peaceful and non-violent country in which, with English agreement, its culture and religious identity could develop quickly and freely proved to be a fantasy. The fact is that the dissidents more and more often faced various restrictions and injustices. It must be remembered that the established Church was a state church headed by an English monarch. Lack of affiliation with the Anglicans did not absolve anyone from bearing the burden, for example, of paying tithes (Welsh *degwm*). Problems also occurred, due to both administrative and doctrinal reasons, in relation to marriages, burials, and children's education. Seeing these injustices, an increasing number of Welsh people became more and more eager to be involved in politics in the second half of the nineteenth century. In keeping with the principle of legality, they tried to solve their problems in the British Parliament. This was made possible as this period was associated with the further lowering of the property qualification for prospective MPs, making seats in the House of Commons now available to a wider range of social classes. Previously, the Members of Parliament representing Wales could only have been wealthy aristocrats. It should be noted that they, unlike Polish aristocrats, were not a social group which would be particularly interested in defending Welsh cultural interests. Many high-born citizens, due to the political situation, were Anglicised, attended the Anglican Church and sent their children to Oxford or Cambridge. A significant number of aristocrats living in Wales came from England, and their relationship with the Principality was confined to their estate or industrial interests.

After the election in 1868, Henry Richard became one of the first Welsh dissident members of Parliament. He made the fight for fair treatment of Nonconformists the centrepiece of Welsh politics. Apart from this matter, and in a pacifist spirit, he also supported the idea of international peace, opposed slavery and criticised imperialism and the colonialism associated with it.

As to religious reforms, Ireland became a natural ally or even a model for Wales, because, due to its Catholicism, it experienced similar problems. However, this was a peculiar "alliance", especially since it is difficult to speak of any "Celtic" solidarity between the two regions in the historical context. The Welsh, wishing to earn the appellation "peaceful nation" did not like being compared to the Irish, who were associated with armed insurrections and later with the IRA, a terrorist organisation. Over time, the saying *Nid Gwyddelod Mohonom* ("We are not Irish") became quite common in Wales and was seen as a symbol of distaste for military solutions. A major reform, the separation of the Anglican Church and the state (disestablishment), was promoted as the solution to the religious problems of both the Irish and the Welsh. This separation was to be introduced only in those two countries, since it was hard to imagine any separation of Church and state in England, such was their interconnectedness. Disestablishment soon became the most important political endeavour in Wales; the Irish, on the other hand, also wanted to strive for autonomy (Home Rule), which was less significant an issue in Wales.

Initially, it seemed that disestablishment would not be very difficult to achieve. The 1868 election victory of the Liberals, led by Prime Minister William Ewart Glad-

stone (1809-1898)[37] and favourably inclined towards change, increased the chances for the reform. Gladstone was known for his exceptional support for the Irish cause. In the face of favourable circumstances, leading Welsh advocates of disestablishment – Henry Richard and John Dillwyn Llewelyn – made every effort push the reform through. They put forward powerful, blunt arguments but always with assurances of respect for the rights of the Crown, the English and the Church of England itself. These MPs argued in Parliament that the connection between Church and state was by nature unfavourable, and for Wales, the religious authority of England had always been associated with injustice and had a political background. Among other things, the unfortunate policy of filling church positions with English-speaking clergymen – which, as Richard put it, rather than turning the Welsh into Englishmen made them into dissidents.[38] Unfortunately, the efforts of the MPs proved to be futile. Prime Minister Gladstone, who strongly supported and carried out disestablishment in Ireland in 1869, was not so gracious to Wales. What is more, he believed that Wales did not deserve such a reform. The arguments against its implementation were various; it was emphasised, for example, that the religious conflict was quite a recent phenomenon, having begun as late as the eighteenth century, and being connected with the Methodist revival. Ireland, by contrast, had never adopted Anglicanism, and religious conflicts there dated back to the time of the Reformation. Moreover, it was claimed that aversion to the English was much stronger in Ireland than in Wales. Gladstone also admitted that he aimed to pacify Ireland with the reforms. Wales, which sought reform by demonstrating its loyalty, lost its case.

Soon, however, the Welsh managed to achieve some success, persuading Parliament to adopt the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881. Under this law, establishments selling alcohol had to remain closed throughout Wales every Sunday. Once again, the Act was inspired by Ireland, which had already won a similar law for itself. This measure was attractive to the Welsh for several reasons. First of all, it emphasised the special nature of Sunday, and thus the religious character of the Principality. Second, the closure of pubs showed the negative attitude of the public towards excessive drinking, of which Welshmen had been accused many times in the "blue books". Finally, the new law would apply exclusively to Wales, taking into account, in a sense, its distinctiveness. The issue was popular throughout Wales and thousands of signatures were collected under the petition for the introduction of Sunday closing. Once again Henry Richard, who was also passionately involved in the popularisation of the temperance movement, became a keen advocate of the cause. He argued his case by assuring other MPs of Wales' loyalty to the throne, especially as the new law would treat it as a separate entity, which smacked of separatism. Thus Richard asserted that he did not want to act against England and he was not asking for anything that would

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[37] William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) – Liberal politician, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1886, 1892-1894.

[38] See H. Richard, *Letters and Essays on Wales...*, p. 5; The House of Commons sitting, 8 March 1872, *Hansard*, London 1872, vol. 209, pp. 1666-1667.

threaten the unity of the United Kingdom in any way.[39] In any case, an attempt was made to solve the problem by proposing the introduction of similar regulations in England, but this idea was quickly abandoned. The Welsh Sunday Closing Act was finally adopted in 1881 and remained in effect for almost of a century, being repealed in almost the whole of the Principality only in 1961. The Welsh also succeeded in another area, education, which was undergoing more important reforms in nineteenth-century Britain. The educational system was not standardised at the time, and education was in the hands of various institutions and schools created by churches, industrialists or other organisations. One of the most influential organisations was the National Society for Promoting Religious Education, founded in 1811. Associated with the Anglican Church, it was involved in, among other things, setting up the so-called National Schools, which soon became the largest beneficiaries of state educational grants. The problem, however, was that alongside secular subjects, the catechism of the established Church was taught there, which could not be accepted by the dissidents due to doctrinal differences (such as the role of godparents or the essence of the sacraments). There was often no alternative, however. Henry Richard discusses an example in his *Letters and Essays on Wales*. According to his account, in one school in the area of Merthyr Tydfil, one of the largest industrial cities of Wales, only five children out of 107 attending the school had Anglican parents. A year later in the same school only two children out of 144 had Anglican parents. This well illustrates the scale of the problem.[40] The demands put forward by the Welsh MPs were based on the assumption that universal education should be of a secular nature. They believed that, given the multitude of denominations existing in the British Empire, which was made up of multicultural territories, it was not possible to guarantee everyone instruction in accordance with their beliefs. They proposed that new schools be set up in the United Kingdom following the "British Schools" model with a secular profile. They recommended leaving religious instruction to the church and parents.[41] Such a solution was finally adopted in 1870 under the Elementary Education Act. This was another step towards the separation of Church and state, although the Welsh would have to wait until after the end of the First World War for this to happen.

The groundwork for this twentieth century reform had been laid in the nineteenth century, itself influenced by changes that had already begun in the eighteenth. The Methodist revival of the eighteenth century is considered by many scholars to be one of the most important events on the way to shaping modern Welsh identity. Such a view was expressed by the renowned Welsh historian J.E. Lloyd (1861-1947), who fought against the common belief that everything that was truly Welsh (the language, poetry, tradition) was associated with the Middle Ages. He strongly emphasised that

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[39] The House of Commons sitting, 30 June 1880, *Hansard*, London 1880, vol. 253, pp. 1175-1176.

[40] H. Richard, *Letters and Essays on Wales...*, p. 22.

[41] For more on this subject see The House of Commons sitting, 18 March 1870, *Hansard*, London 1870, vol. 200, pp. 263-275; The House of Commons sitting, 20 June 1870, *Hansard*, London 1870, vol. 202, pp. 495-510.

the Welsh were not only descendants of native rulers, heroes and poets, but also children of the Industrial Revolution and religious revival.[42]

It is hard to disagree with this statement. Nonconformism changed much in Wales. It pushed the Welsh towards active participation in political life, which led to many successes. Even in the nineteenth century they secured secular education and Sunday closing in Wales. Finally, after the Welshman David Lloyd George became Prime Minister, disestablishment became fact.[43] Nonconformism also influenced Welsh culture, creating new literary trends, developing the tradition of choral singing, and ensuring that the Welsh language had a worthy place. It strengthened the bonds in local communities and left the Welsh landscape strewn with chapels. It was a strong alternative to Anglicanism and gave the Welsh their "characteristic ethos" – based on a modest, diligent life, helping others, and patriotism with the rejection of violence. To this day, despite the significant drop in numbers of worshippers, these values take pride of place in Welsh society.

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses Welsh national identity in the nineteenth century, an identity of which religion was an important aspect. Firstly, the article summarises the history of Christianity in Wales from Roman times through the Reformation and the adoption of Anglicanism until the nineteenth century. It was during that century that an increasing number of people rejected the established Anglican Church in favour of non-Anglican Protestant churches (known as Nonconformist). In the light of these developments, issues discussed in the article include the attitude of the Welsh to England and the Church of England, the attitude towards Catholic Ireland and the impact of Nonconformism on Welsh politics, education, and literary and musical traditions. Taken together, these lead to a discussion on the influence of Nonconformism on Welsh patriotism.

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[42] See e.g. H. Pryce, *J.E. Lloyd and the Creation of Welsh History*, Cardiff 2011, p. 84.

[43] The Welsh Church Act, which provided for the separation of the Anglican Church from the state in Wales, was adopted in 1914, but only came into force in 1920.