The Vernacular Origin of Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

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Summary

Some Welsh Nonconformist chapels, particularly those having two doors in the entrance façade, have been characterised as an indigenous vernacular building type, distinguishing them from the more grandiose chapels of the later nineteenth century that were associated with urbanisation and industrialisation. This thesis questions this characterisation, firstly through a comparison of chapel buildings with their contemporary domestic vernacular and with chapels built elsewhere and secondly through the presentation of a new architectural history of Welsh Nonconformist chapels.

The architectural history of Welsh chapels is constructed with reference to specific chapel buildings and through a synthesis of social and religious history and literary evidence. It is shown that the buildings would have carried meaning and symbolism evident to contemporaries, since the arrangement of chapel façades was representative of a non-ritualistic, sermon-centred religious practice. Welsh chapels were built by congregations with aspirations for social improvement and always designed to be recognisable and distinguishable from their contemporary domestic vernacular buildings. There is no discontinuity between the more simply-expressed lateral-façade chapels and the later gable-ended designs, a division that supports a particular interpretation of Welsh identity. The plan of the worship space is the same in both and Nonconformist congregations always built chapels that were intended to be recognisable as such and distinguishable from their contemporary domestic vernacular. Rather than adaptations of domestic architecture, chapels should be thought of as vernacular interpretations of a formal and theorised design.
NOTE

Chapel locations refer to the pre-1974 Welsh counties throughout the thesis

Map of Welsh Counties before 1974 reorganisation, taken from The Handy Shilling Atlas of the World, 1910. At that date, Monmouthshire was English not Welsh, although some laws were effective in 'Wales and Monmouthshire'.

1 http://www.maproom.co.uk/maps/brit/wales.html < 1 September 2008>
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The Vernacular Origin and Status of Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Aim and Scope of the Thesis

Welsh Nonconformist chapels have been built from the later decades of the seventeenth century onwards to accommodate a form of Christian Protestant religious practice, centred on the Word of God as conveyed in the Bible and expounded in sermons and prayers. They may be classified into two broad types according to the arrangement of the entrance façade. These are firstly, the long wall or lateral-façade chapels and secondly, gable-entry chapels. Lateral-façade chapels have a pitched or hipped roof with the ridge parallel to the entry façade, which is on the long wall of a rectangular plan. These chapels usually have two doors, placed symmetrically with one at each end of the facade (figure 1.1, and Appendix 1).

Figure 1.1: Gideon Independent Chapel, Dinas Cross, Pembrokeshire (c. 1830). The attached building to the right is the old schoolroom.
For gable-entry chapels, the entrance, usually a single door placed centrally, is under the gable end of a pitched roof where the ridge runs from front to back (figure 1.2 and Appendix 2). In gable-entry chapels with more than one door, the façade usually retains a symmetrical arrangement (Appendix 3).

Figure 1. 2: Bethel Baptist Chapel, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, by Hans Price of Weston-super-Mare (1873-5). The date prominently displayed on the front façade building, 1845, is the date that the first chapel was built.

The lateral-façade chapels tend to be earlier in date, with few new chapels of this form being built after the middle of the nineteenth century. They are therefore mainly rural in location. The earliest Welsh chapel still remaining relatively unaltered, Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Radnorshire (c.1696) is of this form, as is the eighteenth-century Pen-riw, the example of a Welsh chapel reconstructed at the Welsh National Museum at St Fagan’s, near Cardiff. Gable-ended chapels form the majority of chapels overall and are more readily associated with the urban development that took place in Wales during the nineteenth century.

The first of these two broad types, the earlier, lateral-façade chapels built in Wales from the end of the seventeenth up to the middle of the nineteenth century, are the main subject of the thesis. As will be shown in chapter two, they have been characterised by many
authors as deriving from a rural vernacular, either directly through conversion of cottages or barns, or indirectly by a congruence of form. A discontinuity is assumed between the lateral-façade chapels, interpreted as the unsophisticated products of local artisan builders, and the gable-ended types that are associated with urbanisation and a more self-conscious attitude to design. The aim of this study is to question the characterisation of lateral-façade chapels as vernacular in origin, firstly through comparison with their contemporary domestic vernacular buildings in Wales and with chapels elsewhere, and secondly by the presentation of an alternative interpretation that encompasses both types of chapels and does not depend on a wholly indigenous developmental process. The primary evidence for the study therefore comprises the corpus of buildings known as Welsh chapels, especially lateral-façade chapels and those with an early date of foundation, and the historiography of writing about them.

Objectives and Approach of the study

The aims of the thesis cannot be approached directly through a collective and inclusive formal analysis of chapel buildings, since no comprehensive survey of Welsh chapels has yet been carried out. Until very recently, it was difficult even to estimate the number of chapels in Wales. The database of historic buildings compiled by the Royal Commission for Historic and Ancient Monuments in Wales (RCHAMW) has revealed that there are more chapels than was previously thought. It has been suggested that there are some 6,700 Nonconformist chapels still in existence. Not all the chapels listed in the database are in use and many are derelict or have been converted to other uses. It is not known, and difficult to estimate, how many have already disappeared without trace. The RCAHM database of chapels is ordered by parish and map reference, so assumes prior knowledge of location, whilst Welsh chapels have not yet been comprehensively and consistently documented for all of Wales.

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Welsh Nonconformity is divided into a number of separate and independent organisations that historically had no interest in co-operation and were often in competition or even conflict with each other. Consequently, there has never been, and still is not, any over-arching or central organisation for administration, funding or record-keeping across all the denominations. Because of the frequent rebuilding and renovation, chapels are difficult to date on stylistic grounds alone, so there are no reliable statistics categorising chapels by date, denomination or location. Sampling is a problem, since without an overview of all chapels it is uncertain how representative any given chapel is of the whole corpus or a genre of the buildings. One objective of the thesis has been the primary documentation of a number of chapels in support of the arguments of the thesis. The chapels included in this study have been chosen because other commentators have included them in their critiques, because of their historical importance or in order to illustrate a point in the argument rather than as the result of objective sampling criteria. The study is therefore presented as a preliminary enquiry, suggesting a new interpretation of Welsh chapel architecture, rather than a detailed analysis of an existing body of knowledge.

Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Glasbury, Radnorshire (1697) is the oldest chapel in Wales and the only seventeenth-century chapel remaining relatively unaltered. As such, its interpretation has been influential in the architectural history of Welsh chapels and so analysis of this building is included in the discussion in chapters two and four. The Pales Quaker meeting house, Llandegley, Radnorshire has been similarly recognised as an early foundation, whose domestic appearance and remote location have been taken as representative of the simple, small scale and vernacular building and fugitive and persecuted status of Welsh Dissenters. This building is discussed in chapter five in the context of Quakerism in Wales.

To address the aim of questioning the characterisation of lateral-façade chapels as vernacular, an initial objective is to assess the strength of the assumption and to understand the bases on which the claim has been made. This is approached in chapter two through a historiographical survey of the current interpretations of Welsh chapels.
The thesis also returns to this theme in the concluding chapter. Chapter two also critiques the characterisation of chapels as vernacular through comparison with their contemporary Welsh domestic and agricultural buildings. The term 'vernacular' is discussed in more depth in that chapter, but it carries connotations of local, indigenous origin and unsophisticated design. Therefore an alternative method of questioning the vernacular status of Welsh chapels is to explore the alternative possibilities, in the existence of a theoretical underpinning for the architectural form and by establishing correspondences and similarities with similar buildings elsewhere.

A further objective, then, is the construction of a historical narrative that enables Welsh chapels to be set in a wider geographical and historical context. The built evidence for early chapels is sparse and ambiguous. Most chapels of early foundation date were subsequently altered and documentary evidence describing their appearance before these alterations is almost entirely lacking. The approach to their architectural history must therefore be an interdisciplinary one, in which a synthesis is made of different types of evidence, including texts and buildings. The historiography of religion frequently suffers from denominational or confessional bias and histories of Welsh Nonconformity are no exception. The historical narrative, pursued in chapters three to eight, will therefore be approached through a synthesis of available sources, again not specifically confined to Wales, but rather including Wales as part of a wider view of religious, social and political history and including built evidence, enabling the construction of an architectural history of Welsh Nonconformity.

**Welsh Nonconformist Chapels**

Welsh Nonconformist chapels were built to accommodate a type of communal Christian worship, the three most prominent denominations in Wales in terms of the numbers of chapel buildings being Independents, Baptists and Calvinistic Methodists. Though there are significant differences, all of these are Protestant sects for whom the Bible is the central authority, with religious practice centred upon it. In England, there are several examples of seventeenth-century chapels, but in Wales, only one remains relatively
unaltered from that date. This is Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, formerly Radnorshire, now Powys (c.1696). The religious revivals of 1857-8 in Wales acted as a significant stimulus to chapel building, with the result that the overwhelming majority of the built fabric now standing dates from the latter half of the nineteenth century, when many chapels were built or renovated in both urban and rural locations throughout Wales. Indeed their ubiquity, superabundance and their architectural dominance of small communities are some of their most strikingly Welsh characteristics. Frequently it appears that chapel buildings must always have both outstripped the need for accommodation and severely stretched the resources of the communities in which they are situated. This seems all the more surprising when it is understood that each individual building was funded by local initiative. Many are said to have been built by the physical labour of the congregations that were to use them. For example, when Ebenezer Baptist chapel was built in 1767-8, 'the members assisted in levelling the ground, in carting stones and in mixing the mortar.'

A significant number, though scores rather than hundreds, of congregations in the southern counties of Wales claim to have become established and built chapels during the eighteenth century. A temporal distinction, significant to an architectural history of chapels but not always made by denominational histories, is the difference between the date of the establishment of a Dissenting or Nonconformist congregation or 'gathered church' or 'meeting', and their acquisition or construction of a building - a chapel - to meet in. Typically, across all denominations, the date of foundation of a cause or congregation does not coincide with the date of the first building of a chapel, nor does the current appearance of the chapel necessarily bear any resemblance to the form of the first or even second chapels built on the same site. Chapel facades frequently display a sequence of dates which may include the dates of foundation of the congregation, the building of the first chapel and any subsequent rebuilding and renovation. The date displayed most prominently is frequently inconsistent with the current appearance, as at Bethel, Pembroke Dock (figure 1.2). This indicates a concern about origins and

longevity when later renovations were carried out. It also makes the dating of chapels problematic and allows speculation about the form and appearance of the earlier buildings.

The location of the earliest Dissenting causes in Wales will be the subject of more detailed discussion below, but early Dissenting activity seems to have been associated with the most populous and prosperous areas of Wales in the seventeenth century, which were the border counties of Denbighshire, Radnorshire and Monmouthshire, and the ports and trading centres with prosperous rural hinterlands in the south and south west of Wales. In those areas, with good communications between them and with other centres of Dissent in England, radical ideas travelled more freely. Eighteenth-century Methodism, especially, was first established in the more productive agricultural areas of the south. This pattern was to change rapidly and radically in the nineteenth century as a result of the changed social and political circumstances accompanying industrialisation and following the mid nineteenth-century evangelical revivals. At the end of the eighteenth century, there were hardly any Dissenters in north Wales, apart from those in the hinterland of Wrexham, but by the end of the nineteenth century, north-west Wales had become the heartland of Welsh-speaking Calvinistic Methodism. Since this thesis is mainly concerned with the earlier Welsh chapels and the origins of Welsh Nonconformity, the chapels of the southern and western counties of Wales feature disproportionately.

**Welsh Nonconformity**

Welsh Nonconformity is not homogeneous. It comprises different denominations whose histories merge and diverge, sharing characteristics but also confronting and competing with each other and subject to repeated schism, reformation and reunification. Reference to denominations is complicated by the tendency of sects to proliferate in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries only to recombine under different names in the late twentieth century. For the sake of clarity, this thesis will refer to denominations by their early nineteenth-century names. Also, in the mid nineteenth century, separate from any
categorization based on denomination. Nonconformists came to be identified as a powerful body of political opinion, the ‘Nonconformist conscience’, associated with Liberal politics and Free Trade. This has encouraged a view of Nonconformists as a homogeneous, united body. In Wales, although common concerns of the preservation and promotion of the Welsh language and the disestablishment of the Church of England promoted cohesion, at a local level denominations and even congregations within the same denomination were sharply divided politically and socially, divisions that often remain today. After the First World War it became more usual to define denominations by more positive characteristics than their opposition to Anglican Church and the term ‘Free Church’ generally replaced Nonconformist.

The term ‘Nonconformist’, sometimes written ‘non-conformist’, may be understood in different ways, its meaning changing according to the precision of the definition, over time and with place. Indeed, the usage and meaning of the term has been manipulated by authors for their own purposes. For example, contrary to the distinction usually made between pre-Methodist ‘Old Dissent’ and post-Methodist Nonconformists, the nineteenth-century historian Thomas Rees uses the latter term to describe churchmen who, as early as the 1630s, refused to accept the reforms in church practice imposed by Archbishop Laud. This has the effect of subtly emphasising the longevity of his own Independent denomination at the same time as claiming parity with the newer Methodists in the evangelical revival of Christianity.

The history of the denominations of Dissent and Nonconformity will be given in more detail in the ensuing chapters but the following brief resumé is given in order to establish a working definition. The Protestant Church of England was established by the Act of Supremacy in 1534 under Henry VIII. After Wales was incorporated under the royal authority of the king’s realm by the Act of Union in 1536, the Church of England became the Established Church of both England and Wales. All citizens of the state were expected to subscribe to the state church, adhering to its teaching, consenting to its

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authority and supporting it financially. The Church of England was disestablished for
two brief periods. The first suspension, under the Roman Catholic Mary from 1554-8,
was brought to an end by the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. The second period of
suspension, from 1645-60 under the rule of the Commonwealth, was ended by the Act of
Uniformity of 1662, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. After this date, but
before the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 and the Church in Wales in
1920, the terms ‘Anglican Church’, ‘Established Church’ and the ‘Church of England’
were all synonymous. The Church in Wales and the Church of Ireland, alongside
Anglican churches in many other countries, often former British colonies, are now part of
the worldwide Anglican communion. The Scottish Episcopalian Church is also part of the
Anglican Communion, although it was never the established church of Scotland, where
the Calvinist Presbyterian Church prevailed.

During the Commonwealth, the enforced use of the liturgy of the Book of Common
Prayer and the episcopal government of the Anglican Church were both suspended,
enabling many incumbent clergymen to organise worship according to their own
convictions, within certain limits. The Act of Uniformity required all clergy be ordained
according to the rites of the Anglican Church, to subscribe to a statement of doctrine and
belief known as the ‘Thirty-nine Articles’ and to give their ‘unfeigned assent and
consent’ to everything in the Book of Common Prayer, which remained the only legal
liturgy to be used in the Church of England. Some of the clergy refused to conform and
either left the Church or were ejected from their livings, sometimes taking part or all of
their congregations with them, hence the origin of the term ‘Nonconformist’ as a legal
definition.

This particular definition of Nonconformist, then, only has meaning in the context of the
Christian Protestant religion of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, since it primarily
denotes a refusal to conform to the requirements of the Church of England. Since the
status of the Established Church was protected by statute, its forms of worship enshrined
in law and its governance part of the mechanism of civil administration, refusal to
conform to its precepts was a civil offence. On the re-instatement of the Established
Church in 1622, civil restrictions were imposed on those who did not conform to its requirements. These were only ameliorated by the Act of Toleration in 1689 and only removed by further legislation in the early nineteenth century. However, the term might plausibly used as far back as 1559 to denote those Protestants, known at the time as Puritans, who objected to the Elizabethan Settlement because of the slightly catholicised compromise of the revised version of the Book of Common Prayer. Thomas Rees’ alternative use has also been noted. Theoretically, Roman Catholics were also Nonconformists in 1662, but the term today is generally understood to refer only to Protestant Nonconformists.

Nonconformists are generally classified into two groups. The first group is comprised of those denominations collectively known as ‘Old Dissent’ who trace their origins back to 1662, to those who had either already left or were ejected from the Church of England at the Restoration. Initially, there was a great deal of fluidity of religious practice and belief of both individuals and congregations. Subsequently, denominations defined themselves by drawing up and consenting to a ‘confession of faith.’ The earliest denominational chapels anywhere in England and Wales do not pre-date the later seventeenth century, since before then there had been the hope, and during the Commonwealth the reality, of replacing or supplementing Anglican worship within existing buildings. The chapels built by denominations of Old Dissent commonly found in Wales belong to four denominations: the Independents (Welsh: Annibynol), now mainly part of the United Reformed Church; Baptists (Bedyddin); Unitarians (Unidiod) and The Religious Society of Friends, more popularly known as Quakers. All the seventeenth-century Presbyterian congregations in Wales either converted to Unitarianism or were absorbed by other denominations, so Presbyterianism as such disappeared in Wales. Similarly, most Welsh Quakers emigrated to the American colonies, particularly Pennsylvania, so the sect had virtually died out in Wales by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Methodism did not appear until the middle of the eighteenth century, when it arose as an evangelical, reforming movement within the Established Church, initially inspired by the charismatic leadership and field preaching of John Wesley, George Whitefield and in Wales, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland. Methodism was contained within the Established Church for more than half a century. New Dissent was inaugurated when
Methodists broke away from the Church of England to form their own independent denominations, such as Wesleyan Methodists, Bible Christians, Calvinistic Methodists, Primitive Methodists, and, sometimes briefly, many others. The Calvinistic Methodists (Methodistaidd Galfinaidd), now The Presbyterian Church of Wales (Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru), were established as an independent organisation in 1811 and quickly became the majority Nonconformist denomination in Wales. Welsh, and also Northern Irish, Nonconformity was distinctive in the nineteenth century for its general retention of a Calvinistic doctrinal underpinning for the majority of denominations of old and new Dissent alike. By contrast, the majority of both Methodists and Baptists in England rejected Calvinist doctrine in preference for Arminianism, subscribing to the doctrines of the seventeenth-century Dutch Divine, Jacobus Arminius, particularly his rejection of predestination.

Structure and Method

Part of the aim of the thesis is to critique the proposition that the lateral-façade form of Welsh Nonconformist chapels is derived from or related to the forms of Welsh vernacular or domestic architecture: the longhouses, cottages and barns of Welsh rural tradition. One way to address this is through a comparison of the architectural characteristics of these types of buildings. The difficulty with this approach is that existing data is both imprecise and incomplete, since detailed regional studies of both Welsh architecture and Nonconformity have not yet been carried out for all areas of Wales. This both precludes any approach based on quantitative analysis and limits qualitative analysis. Chapter two begins with a discussion of sources and the extent of existing knowledge concerning Welsh chapels. A working definition of the term 'vernacular' as used in the context of Welsh architectural history is given, and the extent of the assumption of a significant relationship between lateral-façade chapels and barns and cottages is established. This interpretation of the architectural history of Welsh chapels is then critiqued in two ways, firstly, by comparison with Welsh vernacular architecture, and secondly through the historiography of Protestant Nonconformity.
To further call into question the view that Welsh Nonconformist chapels are derived from the Welsh vernacular, a further aim is to present an alternative interpretation of the lateral-façade form of Welsh chapels. This is approached in chapters three to eight through a synthesis of historical narrative and built evidence, not only of the buildings of Nonconformity and Dissent, but also those of the Anglican Church from which they came. As Welsh Nonconformity is distinctive for its adherence to Calvinistic doctrine, close attention is paid to the architectural expression of Calvinism. Chapters three to five trace the development of Dissenting religious practice and its architectural expression with respect to politics, culture and social geography, from its inception in the early Reformation through to the founding of the denominations of Old Dissent. Chapters six and seven use the same approach to describe the development of Welsh Methodism, paying particular attention to the relationship of early Nonconformity to the Anglican Church from which it developed. The aim of these chapters is to establish a more detailed context, both cultural and architectural, for the birth of the new denomination, the Calvinistic Methodist Church that was to be one of the main agencies for Welsh chapel building in the nineteenth century.

In the concluding chapter, the evidence is reviewed in the light of a literary analysis that suggests why an interpretation of a vernacular origin for Welsh chapels has been accepted or promoted. The thesis concludes by summarising the findings of the investigation and proposing a new model for the architectural history of Welsh Nonconformist chapels.
Chapter 2: Chapels as Vernacular Architecture

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to critique the interpretation of lateral-façade chapels as deriving from vernacular architecture. The first part of the chapter indicates the extent of existing information and analyses of Nonconformist architecture and Welsh chapels. A working definition of the term ‘vernacular’ is then given and the subsequent discussion of the historiography of Welsh vernacular architecture traces the development of the vernacular interpretation of Welsh chapels. The final section is an account of Welsh vernacular architecture, developed through reference to both buildings and texts, in order to establish the types of buildings with which the lateral-façade chapels are being compared.

Analyses and Interpretations of Nonconformist Chapels

A detailed inventory of chapels and meeting-houses in England has been compiled by Christopher Stell. The four volumes, the result of a twenty-year research project, were published between 1986 and 2002. The well-referenced and well-illustrated inventory is arranged geographically in the form of a gazetteer and is inclusive of all denominations, listing most Nonconformist chapels of which some trace remains, whether in current use for religious meetings or not. There is a concisely written formal description of each chapel, whilst those of architectural and/or historical significance are also illustrated by photographs and architectural drawings and accompanied by referenced short histories of the buildings and congregations, forming an extremely useful resource for the study of Nonconformist architecture. Eastern England claims the largest number of the very earliest chapels, built in the seventeenth-century, with eighteenth-century chapels also

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Christopher Stell, An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Central England (London: H.M.S.O., 1986); An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-West England, (London: H.M.S.O, 1991); An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in the North of England (London: H.M.S.O., 1994); and Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Eastern England (Swindon: English Heritage, National Monuments Record Centre, 2002). Abstracts from the books were also published as booklets covering between one and three counties only.
well-represented in that region. Details of chapels in the English counties bordering Wales provide a useful frame of reference where information and a range of examples from Wales itself are lacking.

Unfortunately no such detailed survey has been undertaken for Wales. The independence of congregations and the rivalry between denominations has meant that there has been little incentive from within chapel communities to compile such an overview. Other than Ordnance Survey maps and empirical observation, the most comprehensive source for information on chapel buildings in Wales is the RCAHMW Coflein database referred to earlier, accessible at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The database may be searched by location only. Using the information included in the database as a starting point, a more detailed inventory of chapels and information relating to them has been compiled for Cardiganshire.8 Since that county had a high incidence of early Dissent and subsequently became a centre for Methodism in the eighteenth century, this is also a useful source of detailed information for this thesis.

There is no comprehensive treatment of specifically Welsh architectural history for the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The radical revision of the complete Buildings of England series, the architectural survey initiated by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in 1951, has now been completed before Wales has been completely surveyed for even the first time. The very first of the Buildings of Wales series to be published was Powys, by Richard Haslam, in 1979 and this was followed in 1986 by Clwyd by Edward Hubbard. John Newman’s Glamorgan was published almost a decade later, in 1995, with Gwent/ Monmouthshire appearing in 2000. The latest volumes in the series to be published are Pembrokeshire, in 2003, and Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, in 2006, both by Thomas Lloyd, Julian Orbach and Robert Scourfield. At the time of writing, there is no guide for the county of Gwynedd. This means that as yet there is no general architectural description of the stronghold of nineteenth-century Nonconformity in north-

The architectural history of Wales as a subject has not received much scholarly attention. There are only two books on the general architectural history of Wales, both written by John Hilling, that include Nonconformist chapels. *The Historic Architecture of Wales* and *Cardiff and the Valleys* are both relatively short at around 200 pages, and were intended as gazetteers and as introductory guides for a general readership, rather than as academic references. Published in the early 1970s, they adopt a chronological developmental approach, in accordance with the teleological theory of architectural history that was then the prevailing paradigm. In the formal, empirical analysis, chapels are listed chronologically according to a supposed order of evolutionary development (‘primitive’, ‘sub-classic’, ‘classic’ and ‘decadent’), based on their use of classical design details.

The same classification was repeated thirteen years later, representative examples being given for each type, in Hilling’s article for the Yearbook of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion for 1983. There he writes:

> The design of the main front of Welsh chapels falls into clearly defined stylistic groups. These groupings do not appear to be related to either locality or sect. They do, indeed, seem to be common to all sects and all parts of the Principality. On closer examination it is possible to see in these groupings a continuous process of evolution through five stages or phases. First there is the development from primitive barns into a standard type of chapel; then an increasing sophistication as classical features were more correctly incorporated into the designs; then a decline into decadence; and finally, the graceless decent into eccentricity.\(^\text{11}\)

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His examples are chosen to illustrate a linear developmental trajectory linking the design of chapels, which progress from simple to more complex. Included are those chapels deemed to be exemplary in terms of style as well as those by named architects, such as George Morgan, and to illustrate the ‘decadent’ category, the ‘fanciful and curious’.

The five-stage stylistic classification adopted by Hilling to describe Welsh chapels is typical of a traditional approach to architectural history whose main function is seen as ordering and cataloguing. A classificatory system is an inevitable starting point for any kind of survey as a means of ordering empirical data and is also a necessary requirement for making generalisations about the data. However, classification on the criteria of stylistic components tends to treat style as a Platonic paradigm, an independently-existing canon to which real buildings are compared. Hilling adopts an evolutionary approach to architectural history in which one form succeeds another in an ordered development. Implicit is the idea of progress, that cultural production necessarily follows an inevitable evolutionary path which may only be discerned with hindsight but which was shaping events all along. The problems inherent in such an approach are compounded when stylistic criteria are chosen a priori and applied when the empirical investigation is far from complete, since there is no way to verify how far the examples chosen are representative of the whole corpus of buildings.

Typological classification based on chronology is problematic for Welsh chapels because of their frequently complex building histories and the lack of documentation about the design or building process. The RCAHMW database may be used to find chapels by location but the number of chapels built per decade, for example, cannot be ascertained. In fact, because of the complexity of the building history of many chapels, the complete lack of records for that process and the difficulties of dating chapels by stylistic criteria, difficulties compounded by the loss of an of an unknown quantity of buildings, it might never be possible to accurately compile such information. To make a complete inventory or catalogue of Welsh chapels and their histories would be an enormous undertaking, far beyond the scope of a thesis. This study, then, will not take the form of either typological

classification or quantitative statistical analysis.

A lack of first hand accounts of chapels, either the buildings themselves or the building or design process, was noted as early as 1914 by a Welsh architect, R. P. Jones. In his opinion, ‘evidence for the complete history of the architecture of Nonconformity might now be hard to obtain, since most of the available documents are biographies of ministers or congregations, in which architectural events are alluded to only in a casual and disconnected way’. Chapel records are a poor source of information for buildings, with sketches, plans or contracts detailing work, such as might be expected for projects commanding the investment of significant resources from a community, conspicuously absent; though this is consistent with a vernacular building process. The independence of each chapel congregation, the lack of record keeping and the uneven quality and preservation of the records that were kept means that potential sources of information are widely scattered and of variable quality and often altogether lost. Much has already been lost, due to the numbers of chapel closures. The National Library of Wales is encouraging the gathering together of written material pertaining to chapels into a single archive at Aberystwyth, but much of the material already collected there remains to be catalogued and made available to researchers and it is not known how much has disappeared without trace.

There are some chapel histories amongst the random collections of papers relating to chapels. These have sometimes been kept by chapel ministers, from where they find their way into local history. Generally, sifting useful material from the huge volume of unsorted papers relating to chapels located in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, the vestries of chapels or the lofts and attics of the relatives of deacons of chapels now closed, represents a herculean task. Though in future such research might inform the history of Nonconformity, it may not be relevant to the understanding of the building of the earliest chapels. Few chapel records seem to pre-date the mid nineteenth century and a preoccupation with devotional aspects is usually accompanied by an

13 R. P. Jones, *Nonconformist Church Architecture* (London: The Lindsay Press, 1914), p 2. It is not apparent from the title, but Jones is actually only writing about Unitarians, although his comments do hold good for other denominations.
absence of concern to record the design or building process of chapels. The difficulties inherent in using such primary source material have largely conditioned the historiographical approach adopted by this study.

Quantitative Evidence: Statistics and Surveys

Quantitative methods have hitherto played little part in the history of Welsh Nonconformity, which has concentrated mainly on events and personalities. This is partly because histories of religion have been preoccupied with devotional or confessional aspects and partly because of the lack of reliability of statistics concerning religion. The first attempt to enumerate the numbers of Dissenters was made in 1667, just before the Act of Toleration, on the initiative of an Established Church anxious to understand the strength of the challenge presented by Dissent. It is known as the ‘Compton Census’ since it was carried out by Bishop Compton of London, under the instruction of Archbishop Sheldon. A major difficulty with this survey resulted from the wording of Archbishop Sheldon’s instructions. He asked his Anglican clergy for the ‘number of persons, or at least families’ residing within their parishes, and of the number of Dissenters ‘who either obstinately refuse, or wholly absent themselves from the communion of the Church of England’. Occasional conformists- those of Dissenting sympathies who nevertheless took communion in their Anglican parish church, either because they were undecided or to avoid the Test Acts- were not counted as Dissenters; nor were clergy asked to give the denomination of the Dissenters.

Michael Watts, author of a scholarly two-volume history of Dissent and Nonconformity, writes:

Thomas Richards has concluded from his detailed study of the returns for the Welsh dioceses that Dissenting numbers were deliberately minimised, and Judith Hurwich, in comparing the returns for Warwickshire with her own count of all known Nonconformists in the county, has similarly found that the Compton Census figures represent ‘an underestimate even of the most visible Dissenters’.

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Geraint Jenkins places even less confidence in the results of the survey, but turns its shortcomings into a criticism of the Established Church:

Although the returns supplied by the Compton census of 1676 were massaged by the Anglican authorities in such a way as to play down the growth and influence of Dissent, it is clear the coercive power of the state had not wiped out sectarianism. The census claimed that Welsh Dissent could boast merely 4,248 members, but this figure seriously underestimated the strength of the Dissenting cause.\(^{16}\)

A further enumeration, carried out between 1715 and 1718 by Dr. John Evans and now preserved in Dr. Williams’s Library in London, lists not only the Dissenting congregations, but also gives a figure for the number of ‘hearers’ attending those meetings. One difficulty with the Evans list follows from an observation made in the introduction to this thesis, that there are frequently discrepancies in dates between the founding of a gathered church and its constitution as a congregation with its own chapel. In the Evans list, some churches are described as having two or more different meeting places and:

it is not always clear from the list whether these different meeting places indicated separate congregations meeting regularly in different places for Sunday worship, but united in one church for discipline and organisation, or whether they simply represented villages in which occasional or week-day meetings might be held in addition to regular Sunday services in one central meeting house. In the case of Pant-teg church in Carmarthenshire the latter appears to have been the case.\(^{17}\)

Thus, not only are the numbers of Dissenters difficult to ascertain, but there is no fixed relationship between the numbers of Dissenters or Dissenting congregations and the numbers of chapels.

Canon E. T. Davies makes the same point when discussing the difficulties attendant on estimating the both the numbers of Dissenting congregations and the numbers of chapels in Monmouthshire alone at the end of the eighteenth century.\(^{18}\) He cites disparities in the number of members of individual churches when obtained from different sources, such as

the Josiah Thompson manuscript, of March 1773, drawn up to support a grant from Parliament to Nonconformist ministers, and the accounts of other denominational historians. He also draws attention to the difficulty of distinguishing between members and ‘hearers’. According to E. T. Davies, neither are the records of the registration of buildings for worship a reliable record of the numbers of chapels, since

> It is unlikely that all applications for registration have been preserved, and, what is of greater importance, many of them were duplicated. This was especially true of the earlier registrations which were issued for dwelling-houses, and later the dwelling-house would be exchanged for a larger room, and, ultimately for the first chapel to be built by that particular congregation. In many cases two, and possibly more, registrations would be applied for by the same congregation.  

Nevertheless, Watts gives a detailed analysis of the numerical strength and distribution of Dissenters, giving a careful explanation of his methods. His estimates are based on the Evans list but with adjustments prompted by checking the figures against church-membership lists, the estimates of Dissenting strength given by the Anglican clergy in their replies to Episcopal visitation queries, and the surviving baptismal registers of Presbyterian and Independent meetings. The tables of figures and distribution maps he produces will be made use of in chapters eight and nine in a discussion that relates the distribution of early chapel buildings to their numerical strength in specific Welsh counties.

Exceeding both the Compton census of 1676 and Dr. Evans’ list of 1715-18 in scale and comprehensiveness is the Horace Mann religious census of England and Wales conducted in March 1851. The aim of this survey was to compile statistics on the attendance on census Sunday at any place of worship of every man, woman and child in England and Wales. The census was compiled by ministers of religion, all of whom had a detailed questionnaire to complete. There is an enormous volume of research concerning the 1851 census; Snell and Ell list some twenty-two detailed studies. Two recent studies have resulted in very detailed accounts of particular communities, in order

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to gain an understanding of change at a very local level, using quantitative methods applied to the census data. However, Snell and Ell are of the opinion that the use of quantifiable evidence 'has still not developed into any significant broader analytical advance'. Notable omissions from the religious census were the Anglican returns for Merthyr Tydfil and Cyfarthfa; no explanation was offered for their absence.

Watts is specific in his criticism of the census procedure:

The basic problem which confronts any historian who seeks to make use of the religious census of 1851 is that of converting the statistics for attendance into an estimate of the size of the worshipping community. Horace Mann’s formula, of counting all the morning attendances, half the afternoon attendances, and a third of the evening attendances, was arbitrary in conception and unfair to Nonconformists in operation.

The Horace Mann Religious Census of 1851 also gathered statistics concerning the seating accommodation in churches and chapels. E. T. Davies, considering Monmouthshire alone, suggests that the Established Church could provide accommodation for 22.9% of the population that day, mostly in the ancient churches in the rural areas, whilst Nonconformity could accommodate 73.8% of the population. This was a pattern that was repeated, though not to such an extreme, in other areas where rapid industrialisation had led to urbanisation in previously sparsely populated areas, rendering inadequate the provision of Anglican parish churches. This reasoning has been used to support the theory that it was the lack of provision by the Anglican Church that lead to a rapid increase in the increase in the numbers of Dissenters. Again, this serves to criticise the Anglican Church whilst emphasising the differences between it and Dissent and Nonconformity. No detailed analyses have been undertaken for Welsh counties where society remained rural.

23 Snell and Ell, Rival Jerusalems, p.7.
25 Davies, Religion in the Industrial Revolution, p. 35.
The mechanism of the transfer of architectural ideas from the rural vernacular to chapels given by Jones is that the experience of early congregations of meeting in barns and cottages, either because of persecution or lack of funds to build a chapel, later influenced the form of their chapels when they came to build them. This suggests that there were significant numbers of congregations either choosing or forced to meet in this way. It will be apparent from the above discussion that this assumption has not been made on the basis of any documentation or statistical evidence. The assumption therefore rests mainly on built evidence. The following section examines the assumption through a comparison of chapels with vernacular buildings.

**Vernacular Architecture**

The term ‘vernacular’ has strong linguistic roots and ethnic connotations. A recent definition draws attention to its Latin root in the word used to describe the local languages other than Latin of the subject peoples of the Empire. As such it carries connotations of parochialism, primitivism and ethnic minorities, subjected to a greater power. As applied to architecture, it remains a contested term. The serious academic study of vernacular architecture is a relatively recent discipline. The definition of the term, its subject area and the legitimate field of enquiry remain the subject of active debate, with several definitions currently in use, each with differing emphases. It is significant for this study that the earliest interest in systematically observing and documenting vernacular architecture dates from the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of the adjective ‘vernacular’ begins with five entries that are concerned solely with language, for example:

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2. a. Of a language or dialect: That is naturally spoken by the people of a particular country or district; native, indigenous. *c1645 Howell* Lett. II. iv. 78

The Welsh...is one of the fourteen vernacular and independent tongues of Europe.*30

This highlights that the meaning of ‘vernacular’ in Wales is especially nuanced, since it is intimately involved with issues of language and national identity. The sixth entry is:

6. Of arts, or features of these: Native or peculiar to a particular country or locality. *spec.* in *vernacular architecture*, architecture concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental. *1857 G. G. Scott Remarks Secular & Domestic Archit.* p. ix, I want to call attention to the meanness of our vernacular architecture, and to the very partial success which has hitherto attended the attempts at its improvement. *Ibid.* 6 Look at the vernacular cottage-building of the day. *a1878—Lect. Archit.* (1879) II. 315 The revived knowledge of the architecture of Greece rudely disturbed the vernacular style derived from Rome. *1893 Harper's Weekly* 21 Oct. 1011/2 The theatre is a big, rather bare room, apparently of vernacular Javanese construction. *1939 Country Life* 11 Feb. 154/2 It is as delightful an example as one could find of Georgian vernacular architecture. *1976* [see *SPINNING* *vbl. n. 7c*]. *1977 Daedalus* Summer 3 The studies of so-called vernacular architecture (like barns) no longer seem eccentric in an atmosphere in which architecture can be defined not in terms of monuments but as any changes at all that man makes in his environment.*31

The essential elements in this definition associate vernacular architecture with place, status and function. It is notable that, in one example above, the great Victorian architect, George Gilbert Scott, draws attention to the ‘meanness’ of vernacular architecture.

The *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* is more specific as to building type:

Unpretentious, simple, indigenous, traditional structures made of local materials and following well-tried forms and types, normally considered in three categories: agricultural (barns, farms, etc.), domestic, and industrial (foundries, potteries, smithies, etc.).*32

This definition accords with that of Professor R.W. Brunskill, who states specifically:

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30 Oxford English Dictionary Online:
http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50276520?single=1&querytype=word&queryword=vernacular&first=1 &maxToShow=10 <5th June 2008>
31 Ibid.
Among the other buildings which some people consider to be examples of vernacular architecture are the very simplest village churches, such as one may find still in remote valleys of upland England, and the even more simple early non-conformist chapels. The early Quaker and Unitarian chapels of certain parts of the North of England, and the late but humble Methodist chapels of much of Wales, as well as the small meeting houses of East Anglian Dissenters, all owe more to the traditional design and construction of houses and barns than they do to the relatively sophisticated design of parish churches firmly in the mainstream of the development of polite architecture in Britain.33

R. W. Brunskill thus characterises some Dissenting meeting-houses and some Welsh chapels, specifically mentioning the Methodist denomination, as vernacular on the grounds of ‘simplicity’. His definition is illustrated by a page of hand-drawn sketches of generic buildings (figure 2.1)34.

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Figure 2.1: Drawings by R. W. Brunskill, indicating representative examples of domestic, agricultural, industrial and other types of vernacular building, from *Traditional Buildings of Britain* (1993).

**Welsh Vernacular Architecture: Studies and Approaches**

Iorwerth Peate’s *The Welsh House: a study in Folk Culture* (1940) was the first scholarly history of Welsh vernacular architecture to bring the subject to the interest of a wider public.35 Peate was not the first to write about Welsh vernacular architecture, as his own bibliographical references show. However, his was the first work undertaken as a

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scholarly enterprise, which he described as ‘based on a field survey and the facts so collected have been supplemented by material from various written sources’ \[36\] *Welsh Houses* was the first survey of traditional buildings to cover all of Wales, thus defining Wales as a distinct geographical and cultural entity. In an introductory commentary to a new edition of *The Welsh House*, the naivety of the early researchers into folk culture is acknowledged. Iorwerth Peate believed that the *gwerin* (folk) were inseparable from their homes and traditions, and so for him, raising vernacular buildings to the status of a national architecture was an exercise in celebrating his nation. As the newly written introduction states, ‘In a period when most would have looked to the ‘English’ castles of Edward I if you had asked them to name a Welsh historic building, Peate introduced the idea that the traditional cottages and farmsteads of Wales are the Welsh heritage.’\[37\]

Iorwerth Peate’s attitude to the architectural history of Nonconformist chapels is illustrated by the following story:

Llwyn-rhys, near Llangeitho, Cardiganshire, was photographed before the 1914-18 war by the late W. R. Hall of Aberystwyth. The photograph shows a long-house of great interest. Through great good fortune the house was examined shortly afterwards by Mr. W. J. Hemp, M.A., F.S.A., who pronounced it to be of 15\(^{th}\)-century date, with a 17\(^{th}\)-century addition built to serve as the first Nonconformist Meeting House in Cardiganshire. The house had a thatched roof. It was again photographed by Mr. D. J. Davies, of Lampeter, when it had a corrugated roof. I visited the district in 1930 to make a detailed survey and plan of this important structure, but to my consternation it had completely disappeared. This is what had happened: during the last years of the war, corrugated-iron sheeting became scarce. The owner of the now-uninhabited Llwyn-rhys...stripped the sheeting, which he required for other purposes, from the roof. The rain penetrated through the leaky thatch and completely ruined the mud walls which fell in. The timbering which endangered the farm stock was then pulled down and in this way one of the most important historical monuments in Cardiganshire disappeared for all time.\[38\]

The tangible sense of loss here articulated by Iorwerth Peate shows why he chose to become involved in the setting up of St Fagan’s. At the same time, it demonstrates his selective appreciation of Welsh history, in that he was not in the least interested to

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discover or document the successor to the first Nonconformist meeting-house in Cardiganshire, or what happened to the congregation that had formerly met there.

The central concern of the early researchers was to identify and document the vernacular cultural heritage before it disappeared as the result of modernisation. Iorwerth Peate's contemporaries, Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, had a similar concern to document traditional buildings, later publishing a trilogy of books on Monmouthshire houses. Fox was director of the National Museum of Wales between 1926 and 1948 and, with Peate, was instrumental in the creation of the Welsh Folk Museum as it was known when it was opened at St Fagans, near Cardiff, in 1948 (hereafter referred to in this thesis as St Fagans). Iorwerth Peate's background and interests were in archaeology and ethnology rather than architecture and he had previously carried out investigation into the geographical distribution of the local dialects of his native Welsh. He became the first curator of the Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagans.39

The domestic vernacular was conceived by this group of scholars as the characteristic building forms indigenous to a particular area, with an emphasis on the buildings of a rural, pre-industrial society. Their method of analysis was visual, centred on describing and categorising buildings by their formal properties, and analytical, taking into consideration the construction materials and techniques. This approach was subsequently followed in the work of, for example, Alec Clifton-Taylor and R.W. Brunskill. Clifton-Taylor's work was concerned with the spatial distribution of indigenous forms and materials, defining vernacular by location. He did not cover Wales.40 Brunskill, an architect rather than an historian, was concerned with categorising generic building forms and plan types, exploring how these were conditioned by the availability of materials and the skills and techniques of construction that had developed in their locality in order to exploit them.41 Two surveys, of Welsh farm buildings and Welsh workers' housing

respectively, follow a similar approach.\textsuperscript{42} Generic building types and house styles are described by D. Huw Owen in \textit{Settlement and Society in Wales}, a volume that generally has a geographical emphasis.\textsuperscript{43} All of these analyses are centred on description of the form of the buildings, divorced from any social or historical context. The people behind the buildings are left out and the form of the buildings is interpreted as an unproblematic response to location as defined by climate and the availability of materials.

For Fox and Raglan, in particular, a defining characteristic for a distinctively Welsh domestic architecture seems to have been that it is only discernable up to the seventeenth century, after which time the influences on building design from further afield become more pronounced: 'After about 1714 our farm-house building loses much of its interest, subsiding into a rather prim and dull Georgian.'\textsuperscript{44} Peter Smith, following Peate, Fox and Raglan, who were his mentors, adopts the same criterion, curtailing his survey at the same date.\textsuperscript{45} Brunskill, mainly working on English regional types, includes the buildings of early light industry, but industrialisation was of a different character in Wales. The nature of the heavy industries of mining and smelting and their rapid escalation in scale made Welsh industrial developments seem far more disconnected from the rural, agricultural past.

For Iorwerth Peate, the main defining feature of a specifically Welsh vernacular architecture was that it was rural. He identifies the indigenous Welsh from the early modern period to the nineteenth century as a completely rural, peasant \textit{volk}:

\begin{quote}
the rich in Wales were almost universally anglicised and the prosperous towns were those of the industrial areas which were then breaking away from the traditional Welsh culture to become anglicised but deracine (sic) areas. There
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{43} D. Huw Owen (ed.), \textit{Settlement and Society in Wales}, op cit.


was no incentive or need for a school of professional architects in the Welsh rural community. Consequently the mansions of the country squires and the buildings of the anglicised towns are almost without exception English in inspiration. In this respect, it is true to say that there is no Welsh architecture. Such buildings are the work of Welsh- or English-born architects working in a supra-national tradition which has not found a peculiar Welsh expression. Is there then such an expression in any Welsh building? The answer is to be found in the dwelling-houses of the Welsh people.  

This statement unequivocally identifies a Welsh national architecture as emphatically rural and vernacular. Vernacular architecture is that which is indigenous and of peasant origin, not associated with wealth or geographic and social mobility, conscious design or urbanisation.

Barns as Chapels
A chapel was one of the earliest exhibits to be reconstructed at the museum. Pen-rhiw Unitarian chapel originally stood in Dre-fach, Felindre, Carmarthenshire, but was re-erected at the National History Museum (formerly known as the Welsh Folk Museum and after that The Museum of Welsh Life), St. Fagans (henceforth St Fagans), near Cardiff in 1956 (figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Pen-rhiw chapel, National History Museum, St Fagans, West Glamorgan.

46 Iorwerth Peate, _Welsh Houses_, pp. 3-4.
The information board accompanying the chapel reads:

This Unitarian chapel was moved from Dre Fach Felindre, Dyfed and is typical of early Welsh Nonconformist architecture. It is a simple, severe structure reflecting the experience of the early congregations which often met in barns. An earlier structure was adapted for the purpose and opened in 1777, when the first lease was granted. It originally had a loft but no gallery. In the early years of the nineteenth century the loft was removed and the present gallery built to increase accommodation without adding to the size of the building.

It is not specifically stated that the chapel building was formerly used as a barn, since this is not known for certain, but the connection is made by implication. A less tentative link was made in a previous description displayed at the time of the museum’s inception and which would have been displayed when Jones was writing his book. This is currently available online on a website concerned with the history of Welsh culture and it reads:

Pen-rhiw Unitarian Chapel was opened in 1777 and is typical of early Welsh Nonconformist chapels. It is a simple, unadorned structure with entrances in one of the long walls; later chapels are much grander and have doorways in ornamental gable walls. In this instance an earlier building, very possibly a barn, was adapted in 1777 for the use of the Unitarians, a tolerant denomination with a long and interesting history in Wales.47

There are no descriptions or accounts of the farm buildings or barns of eighteenth-century Cardiganshire that could have been converted into a chapel building. There are examples of Welsh barns re-erected at St Fagans, but none could have been easily converted to look like Pen-rhiw. Neither is it explicitly stated what formal properties, if any, of the previous building were carried over into the chapel. It might be deduced that these would include the rectangular plan, the local materials and a vernacular form of construction. However, that much would be true for any building of a similar scale, erected with limited means before the age of easy transportation of heavy materials. There is no compelling necessity for a barn as an intermediate step.

Furthermore, the façade has formal properties in the proportion, symmetry, regularity and rhythm in the size and locations of the openings. Even if the original building had been a barn, it was substantially altered by a thoughtful and informed design process. This

seems to deny any connotation of rough and rural spontaneity, if that is what is implied by the word ‘barn’. The façade is a consciously conceived arrangement of windows and doors that suggests either a compelling utility or the existence of a prior model. The construction, of stone, timber and slate, is of good quality and workmanship, and consequently Pen-rhiw could instead be interpreted as a sophisticated and elegant building. This is especially clear when the building is placed in the context of its contemporary low status cottages and farm buildings. In eighteenth-century Cardiganshire these were likely to have been clom (the local name for clay or rammed earth construction) and thatch buildings, as will be described below.

A further implication of the current description, that the simple, severe structure reflects the experience of early congregations, is also a striking claim for architecture. It is suggested that built form of the chapel is a reflection of the character and experience of its users. The honest expression and simplicity of construction and the durability of the materials is equated with the existence of the qualities of honesty, faithfulness and tenacity in the builders. It is also assumed that it is an unsophisticated approach to design that allows these laudable qualities to be expressed, although simplicity in built form does not necessarily imply lack of design, but more frequently the opposite.

A final criticism of the presentation of Capel Pen-rhiw at St Fagans concerns the lack of historical context. Although a date is given, there is no indication of the significance of that date, although ‘the experience of the early congregations which often met in barns’ is mentioned. This implies that persecution, or at least the memory of it, was still current when the chapel was built, when in fact the Act of Toleration of 1689 had sanctioned the erection of Dissenting meeting-houses more than a century before. The Unitarian denomination for whom Pen-rhiw was built is described in positive terms as ‘tolerant’ and ‘with a long and interesting history’. However, Unitarians remained a very tiny minority amongst Welsh Nonconformists, treated with suspicion by other Dissenters because of their extreme views in denying the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. They remained a proscribed sect even when other denominations gained greater social acceptance and political rights. Since this is not explained, an interpretation of
chapel congregations as persecuted but fiercely determined people can be transferred to Nonconformity as a whole.

The caption includes a description of the barn loft being removed and a gallery being built during the nineteenth century in order to ‘increase the accommodation without adding to the size of the building’. This implies modesty and frugality, in the reluctance to increase the size of the building, and also that there was an inexorable increase in the size of congregations. The former contributes further positive qualities to the character of the congregation, whilst the latter contributes to the narrative of the progress of Nonconformity as an irrepressible process, spontaneously arising from the hearts of the Welsh. The view that the number of seats in Nonconformist chapels was increased because of ever expanding numbers of worshippers is erroneous and easy to disprove.48 The less heroic reason of denominational rivalry was much more frequently the cause for chapel enlargement, especially in rural areas. The large urban chapels of the late nineteenth-century more reliably reflect Nonconformist expansion. These chapels constitute the majority of the buildings, yet they are not represented at St Fagans. The inclusion of small rural chapel from a minority, persecuted denomination has the effect on a visitor to the museum of firmly locating Nonconformist chapels alongside domestic and vernacular buildings in rural locations.

The view of Welsh vernacular architecture promoted by St Fagans has been widely influential, appearing as the theoretical underpinning of the only book dedicated to the subject of the architecture of Welsh Nonconformity, Anthony Jones’ *Welsh Chapels*. Jones takes his definition of ‘vernacular’ from a publication, *Home-made Homes*, written in 1988 by Eurwyn Williams, a former director of the Museum. It reads:

> Vernacular architecture is concerned not with great works of architecture designed by a professional architect at great expense and using the latest materials and technology, but with the homes of ordinary people built in the fashion traditional to that particular locality, using local materials with a minimum of expense and skill necessary...New architectural ideas usually start with the upper classes and as their ideas pass down to those below, so the buildings of the less wealthy people become increasingly architect-influenced. A large farmhouse of

the sixteenth century would have been vernacular in style, but by the middle of
the eighteenth century or the early nineteenth century, it would certainly have
been built in a Georgian-inspired textbook fashion, and would have lost most of
its local characteristics.

Jones transfers this reasoning to chapels:

That transformation in domestic architecture in Wales exactly parallels the
development of chapel architecture from its grass-roots traditions to the often
meretricious architecture of the nineteenth century that disregarded the historic
caracter of Nonconformity or Welsh building traditions entirely.49

The argument is weakened by lack of any specific historic or religious context, but the
inference seems to be that only lateral-façade chapels are representative of an
uncorrupted indigenous vernacular.

The view that Welsh Nonconformist chapels were directly derived from vernacular
buildings is unequivocally expressed in Welsh Chapels:

These chapels grew from domestic meetings in ordinary houses....When the
congregations designed their chapels, they had only to look over their shoulder to
what they had left behind for an idea about what they were to build, and they
modelled their chapel on the kind of practical and flexible preaching space that a
barn provided for them.50

As Jones explains, his book originated as the textual accompaniment to an exhibition of
his photographs of Welsh chapels that took place under the auspices of the National
Museums and Galleries of Wales in 1984. In its emphasis on the domestic vernacular
and on practicality and function, Jones shows himself to be the heir of the Welsh Folk
Museum tradition. His commentary throughout the book is shaped by the assertion that
Welsh Nonconformist chapels are direct descendants of barns and early Welsh
longhouses, the implication being that they are entirely indigenous to Wales and therefore
representative of Welsh character.

Maesyronnen Independent Chapel

Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Glasbury, Radnorshire, as the oldest Dissenting
chapel in Wales remaining intact and relatively unaltered, is a unique representation of

49 Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 11.
50 Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 19.
seventeenth-century Welsh chapel architecture. Maesyronnen was in use as an Independent meeting-house within a decade after the Act of Toleration, but there is evidence within the built fabric of earlier construction and materials.

The chapel was finished by 1697, the date of registration at the quarter-sessions at Presteigne (N. L. W. MS. 384), but there are remains of medieval and Elizabethan work on the site.\(^5\)

A meeting-house and a dwelling house are incorporated within the same building envelope, as may be seen in the plan (figure 2.3) and photograph below (figure 2.4).

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Figure 2.4: Maesyronnen Independent Chapel (whitewashed building to the right) and adjoining house, photographed in January 2009 after a recent restoration.

The recent survey carried out under the auspices of the Royal Commission of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales describes the building as follows:

Maesyronnen is a converted longhouse of hall-house origin. The farmhouse of hearth-passage type was re-planned as a chapel-house of central-entry type. The passage and downhouse were rebuilt as a meeting-house but a cruck-truss characteristically embedded in the rear of the existing chimney stack was left intact. 52

The cruck-truss may be clearly seen in the photograph below (figure 2.5), embedded in the stone wall that now forms the division between the house and the chapel. This wall was part of the original construction and pre-dated the use of part of the building as a chapel.

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Figure 2.5: Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, interior looking west, showing the cruck-truss embedded in the wall between the chapel and the house. Photograph taken January 2009.

Although the front façade of the house and chapel taken as a whole is now asymmetrical, Suggett suggests that some features added in the seventeenth century have now been lost:

Exterlnlly the meeting-house was a good and early example of an attempt at a symmetrical elevation. The tall windows were set between two end doorways surmounted by diminutive ornamental gables ('gablets') probably in imitation of, and to balance, the dormers of the house.\textsuperscript{53}

The perspective sketch reproduced below (figure 2.6) restores the original elevation, including the lost pentice to the house, suggesting that Maesyronnen was an early attempt at architectural symmetry.

That the single room that comprises the chapel was newly built for that purpose is suggested by the relationship of the internal arrangements to the built fabric.

The central window [of the rear or north façade] is set at a high level to light the pulpit. Beneath this, a little to the west on both sides of the wall can be seen the
ends of a timber structure by which the pulpit used to be cantilevered out at a much higher level than at present.\textsuperscript{54}

The position of the cantilevering structure passing through the wall may still be seen in the stonework and plaster of the chapel both inside and on the rear elevation, indicating that the cantilever supported a substantial construction coeval with the building (figure 2.8)

\begin{figure}[h!]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{maesyronnen_exterior_from_graveyard_to_north}
\caption{Maesyronnen, exterior from the graveyard to the north, showing the high window above the pulpit and some traces in the stonework of the wooden cantilevered structure that formerly supported the pulpit (to the right of the handrail). The wooden structure covers the north west door and contains the new W.C.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{54} Hague, p.145.
The planning and interior fittings of Maesyronnen will be discussed in more detail at the end of chapter four as an example of a Calvinist chapel interior.

Maesyronnen is described in *Welsh Chapels* as having been 'converted from a cow house in 1696, and still largely in original condition' and as the 'key to understanding all subsequent chapel buildings', providing the link between chapels and vernacular architecture.\(^5\)\(^5\) The building is described as having been built entirely from materials available locally, with the cruck-frame construction of the seventeenth-century farmhouses and farm buildings of the area and as retaining its seventeenth-century furnishings, amongst them a moveable wooden table for the celebration of communion rather than a fixed altar, giving the interior a domestic appearance.

Jones is emphatic that 'Maesyronnen is architecturally and historically grouped with the converted barn-chapels of the period'.\(^5\)\(^6\) He states that:

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The early chapels were built by congregations who simply did not care what the Established Church thought of people who worshipped in a converted cow-shed. They had been forced to meet in such places before so it seemed not to matter to them that they would continue to do so, provided that such places were now properly cleaned and prepared, and provided with what they called ‘a worshipful atmosphere’. The congregations embarked on the fitting up of buildings as meeting-houses, though they increasingly used the word chapel to describe their place of worship. The essence of the endeavour of these ‘Enthusiasts’ was to create a functional preaching-room, and their chapels are crisp and simple designs, prim little meeting-houses that were as unassuming, dignified and austere as the faithful who erected them. It was a ‘folk architecture’ that had a very clear stylistic recollection of the domestic and agricultural buildings of rural Wales. It was a reference that they were happy with, for it implied that the building was at one with the land and their faith, and a natural expression of both.\textsuperscript{57}

No other examples of ‘converted barn-chapels of the period’ are given, nor is there given any more specific religious, temporal or geographic context for the actions or attitudes of the congregations, although a confrontational attitude towards the Established Church is assumed. Welsh chapels are therefore generalised as an indigenous development that is indicative of Welsh character.

Jones specifically compares Maesyronnen with a Welsh long house, Cilewent farm, as reconstructed at St Fagans (figure 2.10). Although acknowledging that Maesyronnen may have been ‘largely purpose-built’, Jones emphasises that Maesyronnen should be ‘architecturally and historically grouped with the converted barn-chapels of the period’.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} Jones, \textit{Welsh Chapels}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{58} Jones, \textit{Welsh Chapels}, p.7.
The oldest surviving chapel in Wales, Maesyronnen, near Hay-on-Wye, was converted from a cow-house in 1698, and is still largely in original condition. Most chapels from the period of Maesyronnen and into the 1700s were similar conversions.

... but even new purpose-built chapels retained this vernacular architectural style and looked like barns or the traditional Welsh longhouses like Cilewent Farm, Rad., built around 1750.

Figure 2.10: Illustrations of Maesyronnen and Cilewent Farmhouse (Jones, Welsh Chapels, pp. 6-7).

An interpretation of this early chapel as a rough-and-ready conversion of a barn, with its assumption of an unsophisticated local vernacular, may be contrasted with an analysis of Maesyronnen as both an early representation of architectural symmetry and an example of radical Calvinist planning in a purpose-built structure. These themes will be further explored in chapters four (in connection with Calvinist planning) and eight (in the discussion of the vernacular status of Welsh chapels).
In *Welsh Chapels*, the lack of specific historical context at times becomes error rather than omission, as in:

> Methodism is associated in the popular mind with John Wesley in England, but it developed quite independently and earlier in Wales, as a spontaneous Welsh movement that owed nothing to its English counterpart.59

As later chapters will show, Methodism developed as a reform movement from within Anglicanism and was contained within the Church of England for more than half a century. Welsh Methodism actually asserted its independence from the Established Church some fifteen years later than Wesleyan Methodism. Despite such inaccuracies, and the lack of specific supporting evidence for many of the claims made, in the absence of other books on the specific subject, *Welsh Chapels* has become a standard reference and the views it expresses to some extent normative. It is cited, for example, for a Masters course on Welsh ethnography in the School of Welsh at Cardiff University and in the ‘further reading’ sections of two of the volumes of the *Buildings in Wales* series: ‘For chapels, Anthony Jones, *Welsh Chapels* (1996) remains the overview’.60

Michael Watts, the author of a scholarly two-volume history of Nonconformity, also refers to the book as an authoritative source, quoting uncritically: ‘before 1800 most Welsh chapels were converted barns or houses’ and ‘even when these were not converted from cottages or barns and were specifically built for worship they usually looked like domestic buildings from the outside.’61 Similarly, following Jones’ interpretation, a gazetteer and largely pictorial account of Radnorshire chapels describes the Calvinistic Methodist chapel at Sychnant, St Harmon (c. 1825) as ‘resembling a Welsh longhouse’ (figure 2.11).62 The long-wall façade, with its typical arrangement of windows and

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doors, is equated with a specifically Welsh vernacular and detached from any other possible interpretations.

Figure 2.11: Sychnant Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, St Hermon, Rhaeadr, Radnorshire (c. 1825). The minister’s house is on the left and the chapel is indicated by the paired entrance doors with the two windows flanking the central pulpit between them (source: Sinclair and Fenn, Marching to Zion, p.79).

A popular gazetteer of Welsh churches has recently been published, in conscious emulation of the very successful England’s Thousand Best Churches. It aims to select the most interesting places of worship in Wales and has the following evocative description under the heading of ‘chapel’:

The early chapels, the most beautifully preserved of which is at Maesyronnen near Glasbury, echo the early churches, simple, communal, conveying the feeling of a small likeminded gathering pressed up close, and made in the wood and stone vernacular of the Welsh aesthetic which gives them their particular beauty. Some of them, like Capel Pen-rhiw and Capel Newydd at Nanhoron, started life as barns. Like so many of the churches, they were built in places sought for rural seclusion, beside running streams which provided for the congregation and their ponies – another sign in another generation of how in Wales the urge for spiritual renewal seeks out the open landscape and an immersion in the natural world, as if from some deep ancestral memory.

Again, the emphasis is on rural simplicity, with the unequivocal statement that two out of the three early chapels named ‘started life as barns.’ Hughes’ description poetically

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64 T. J. Hughes, Wales’s Best One Hundred Churches (Bridgend: Seren, 2006), p. 36.
equates rural simplicity with a romantic past and an archetypal spirituality that, transcending time, is rooted in nature, landscape and tradition.

Robert Scourfield has drawn attention to the error of equating chapel architecture with barns in his account of Brynberian Independent Chapel (figure 2.12).

Figure 2.12: Brynberian Independent Chapel, Pembrokeshire (c. 1842-3).

Brynberian, like Pen-rhiw and Maesyronnen, is of random rubble stone construction and rectangular in plan, with the paired entrances on the long wall. The main façade has a symmetrical arrangement of two large windows in the centre flanked by the paired outer doors, all the openings arched with recessed voussoirs of painted Cilgerran stone. The plaque in the centre of the façade is written in English and reads: ‘Brynberian Independent Chapel. Built 1690, Rebuilt 1808, Rebuilt 1843, Restored 1882, Restored 1961, Rev E Lewis, Minister.’ Scourfield says:

With this seemingly simple type arises much myth about congregations harking back to the vernacular of their earlier meeting houses, but ‘throwing in’ a little detail, such as the use of round arched sashes to give the building some distinction. However, nearly two centuries of Toleration had passed, and congregations were larger, able to raise money and manpower for building works: it seems scarcely credible that the Nonconformists had such conservative views of
There is no record of the appearance of the original building of 1690, nor of the rebuilding in 1808. It is assumed that the building now standing is substantially that of 1843, hence Scourfield’s reference to ‘nearly two centuries of Toleration’.

The difficulty with an emphasis on development from an unselfconscious local vernacular is that it closes off the possibility of comparison with similar buildings in other places. In recognition of the likelihood of an alternative to an indigenous agricultural vernacular as the model for early chapel buildings, Scourfield goes on to say:

these lateral fronted chapels were surely inspired by a similar trend followed by many almost identical rural Protestant churches of the seventeenth century in Holland, some of which remain intact. More investigation would yield more sources, but for our purposes, it is clear that the Welsh chapel builders, albeit at a later date, were using well-established models, and not simply building barns with a ‘hint of architecture’.

Although Scourfield acknowledges the possibility of an architectural precedent for Brynberian, rather than its conversion from a barn, his proposed model retains the connotations of the vernacular simplicity of a rural location. Some reasons why it has been important for both Nonconformist history and Welsh identity that the idea of a vernacular origin for chapels of some kind remains unchallenged are discussed below.

The idea of the development of the design of chapels from vernacular models is repeated in some of the Buildings of Wales series:

Chapels before the 1850’s were simple, utilitarian buildings with rendered walls and no dressed stonework. The internal layout of pulpit and galleries dictated the pattern of windows and doors. Since so many congregations in the C18 had worshipped in converted cottages, it is not perhaps surprising that early purpose built chapels were arranged cottage-wise, with a long wall, not a gable end, facing the road.

Similarly, the Buildings of Wales guide to Gwent and Monmouthshire has the following:

66 Scourfield, Jottings, p. 4.
When, at the end of the C18, typical chapel façade compositions crystallized, they retained the memory of the cottage chapels in being entered on the long side wall, not the short end.68

As this thesis will show, the lateral-façade composition had ‘crystallized’ well before the eighteenth century, outside Wales. It does not seem credible that the Welsh version should have developed in isolation and independently. It is also an odd notion that a building converted to another use should retain a ‘memory’ of its former purpose.

The interpretation of the lateral façade as originating in a terrace of cottages is also problematic from the point of view of building construction. The main requirement for a chapel is a unified interior space. Beginning with two cottages, this could only be accomplished by a considerable amount of structural alteration, in the removal of interior walls and floors. It would seem altogether more reasonable to start afresh. That buildings were converted from domestic use into chapels is certain from evidence in England, as will later be described, but the original buildings were of a different scale and character than the hovels built by the lowest strata of society in eighteenth-century Monmouthshire.

The volume on Pembrokeshire is less emphatic but still subscribes to a similar view:

Architecturally nothing survives of the C17, and almost nothing of the C18, testimony to the growth of individual congregations that could see up to four rebuildings in a century, as at Llwynyrhwrd, Llanfymach. The earliest rural chapels were cottage-like, a long-wall façade with generally two doors, and one or two raised centre windows lighting the pulpit. Rhodiad y Brenin, St David’s, 1788, the former chapel at Felindre Farchog, 1805, and Burnett’s Hill, Marteltwy, 1813, are of this type, and there must have been a smaller cottage type, thatched and simple, all since rebuilt.69

The two assumptions underlying this account are firstly, that of an evolutionary development from simple and unsophisticated to a more complex, considered design and secondly, that there was a period when many congregations were accommodated in

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buildings other than chapels. The first assumption will be questioned by the proposal of an alternative genesis for the lateral-façade format. As regards the second assumption, it will be shown that the social history and demography of Welsh Nonconformity suggests that there never was a time when large numbers of worshippers were forced to meet in barns, nor were there the buildings to accommodate this.

Accounts that equate Welsh Nonconformist chapels with the authenticity and simplicity of a rural vernacular in the context of an indigenous unsophisticated rural independence also indicate a lack of approval or appreciation of later Victorian architecture. It is evident that Jones finds little to admire in the later chapels:

> By the middle of the nineteenth century (and earlier in the towns of the south) the news of current ‘foreign fashion’ building practice was broadcast not only by journals, but also by the men of that practice, the trained professional architects. These were men who had no allegiance to the vernacular expressions of Welsh buildings: they were trained to propose and impose an entirely different architectural expression that was elevating, inspirational, in excellent taste, and was meant to ‘improve’ those who experienced it.70

In this reading, the more elaborate chapels that follow fashionable styles imported from outside Wales are morally unsound, associated with the corrupting influence of moneyed sophistication. Jones is embarrassed by the pretensions of later Victorian chapels, which he finds insincere and of lesser artistic value. One of the reasons for his emphasis on the vernacular origins of the early chapels is to disassociate them from the grandiose late Victorian chapels, which are then characterised as foreign imports.

The character with which chapel architecture is imbued becomes especially important when they are made to represent a ‘national architecture’. There is something of a paradox, then, in the greater significance later attributed by Jones to industrial Wales over and above the agricultural Wales of the past:

> The history of that transformation.....from 17th century agricultural society to 19th century industrial powerhouse.... is contained in the stone-and-slate chapels of Wales, for they stand as the physical symbols of a driven evangelical mission and faith that captured the hearts and minds of the Welsh, who made Nonconformity the national religion. The chapels that they built were in Wales,

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of Wales, and for Wales: those buildings were in those centuries, without question, the national architecture of Wales.71

An onerous responsibility is ascribed to Nonconformist chapels, as the ‘national architecture of Wales’, that of architecturally representing the nation. The chapels are therefore made to stand for a stereotypical Welsh character, here portrayed as an unsophisticated, natural, rugged and self-reliant worker, spiritually at one with his landscape and his fellow native Welshmen. The early rural chapels from which all other worthwhile chapels are said to be derived exemplify the positive qualities of simplicity, authenticity and independence. Such an approach experiences difficulty in accounting for what are probably the majority of chapels, many of them urban, and usually dating from the later nineteenth century, that very obviously did have pretensions to ‘architecture’. An overwhelming desire for simplicity and retention of an expression of rural origins is amply negated by the fact that so few chapels now remain in their original form, whatever that might have been, because as soon as congregations were able, they refurbished or rebuilt their chapel in as high a style as money and prevailing tastes allowed.

In none of the above instances where chapels have been equated with cottages or barns has this been substantiated by reference to any specific research or examples. This is partly because such research is generally lacking, since, to re-iterate an earlier point, the most detailed surveys of vernacular buildings: ‘end early in the eighteenth century. The year 1714 was finally chosen because, as has long been realized, it marks (as far as any one year can) a cultural as well as a dynastic change in Britain’.72 There is a considerable body of literature concerning farm buildings, recounting the agricultural improvements that were made in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.73 These show that it was the exchange of ideas throughout Britain and indeed Europe that encouraged change, the

71 Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. xi.
very process that prompted the mid-twentieth-century researchers at St Fagans to draw their temporal line for the existence of an indigenous vernacular at 1714. The following section places the agricultural and domestic vernacular buildings of Wales in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the context of their social geography.

The Social Geography of Wales, Seventeenth to the Nineteenth centuries

When Maesyronnen was built in 1696, Wales was impoverished and sparsely populated, with no large towns and no developed urban architecture. Estimates put Wrexham as the largest town, with a population of 3,200, whilst Carmarthen, Brecon and Haverfordwest had each about 2,000. Caernarvon, Cardiff and Swansea were smaller with about 1,700 and Pembroke smaller still with only about 1,200 people. All other Welsh towns, with populations of between 500 and 1,000 inhabitants, were smaller than most of the local market centres that ranked at the bottom of the English urban hierarchy.74 Communication by road was poor and there were no Welsh regional capitals comparable with those in England such as Bristol, Norwich and Newcastle, which at that time had populations of around 11,000 people. Brecon, Carmarthen, Caernarvon and Denbigh functioned as the regional centres of government administration, with chanceries, exchequers and assize courts. Carmarthen, with good communications by river and sea, was effectively the economic capital of south-west Wales with a thriving trade with the west of England, Ireland and France. There was a cultural distinction, evidenced by language and systems of land tenure and settlement, between the more Anglicised, manorial lowlands of the south and borders, including Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Monmouthshire, the lowlands of Glamorgan and the river valleys of Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire on the one hand, and the uplands and more isolated valleys of puria Wallia, now represented by the counties of Powys, Gwynedd and parts of Clwyd on the other.75

75 Matthew Griffiths, Emergence of the Modern Settlement Pattern, p. 238.
It was the former areas that first experienced an increase in population as commerce began to expand at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The most dramatic demographic changes in Wales, however, took place in the nineteenth century. Due to rapid industrialisation, the population of Wales increased more than fourfold, from just over half a million in 1801 to almost two and a half million in 1911. Nor was this increase evenly spread, with the agricultural areas of mid and west Wales experiencing a relative decline in population as the industrial areas of the south east expanded. In 1871, more than 30 per cent of the inhabitants of the counties of Brecon, Glamorgan and Monmouth had not been born there. Conversely, Anglesey, Caernarvon, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Montgomery and Pembroke each represented the birthplace for 80-90 per cent of their respective residents.76 The change was most marked, then, for the county of Carmarthenshire. The county town of Carmarthen was the most important cultural and commercial centre of south Wales in the middle of the eighteenth century, but less than a century later it had been eclipsed by the industrial towns of the south east.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Wales remained overwhelmingly agricultural, rural, and relatively sparsely populated, with poor communications and no sizeable towns.77 Important Welsh towns such as Lampeter, Hay, Llandeilo and Knighton had populations of less than 1000 people. In 1750, the largest towns in Wales, given in descending rank order, were: Wrexham, Brecon, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest, Cardiff and Caernarvon, all with populations of around 2,500. All except Caernarvon were located either in south Wales or near the English border. By 1801 the expansion of industry had changed this order, with Merthyr Tydfil suddenly becoming by far the largest town in Wales, with a very roughly estimated population of some 6,000, followed by Swansea and Holywell, then Carmarthen, Wrexham and Haverfordwest.78

Wales was home to only a few great estates, such as Wynnastay in Denbighshire, Margam in Glamorgan and Golden Grove in Carmarthenshire. Most land was divided into either

relatively small estates owned or rented by lesser gentry, or the smallest viable owner-occupier properties, from 20 up to 400 acres, farmed by resident yeomanry. Although there are no official measures of the apportionment of cultivated land into rented and owner-occupied for the eighteenth-century, David Howell infers this statistic from late-century land tax returns:

Out of a total 2,596 ‘tenements’ assessed for land tax in some ninety-nine Pembrokeshire parishes in 1786, for instance, only 468, i.e. 18 per cent, were owner-occupied. Preponderant among these owner-occupiers were small freeholders or yeomen, lesser gentlemen, and clergy. But the figures demonstrate that most of the land - over 80 per cent - was farmed by tenants. ⁷⁹

South Wales has the larger share of useful agricultural land, its rolling hills and wide coastal belt contrasting with the narrow coastal lowlands and rugged mountains of the north. The differences in terrain and agriculture resulted in differing settlement patterns, the scattered farmsteads and cottages of the uplands linked by a network of footpaths and poorly surfaced roads, whilst the southern vales were more densely populated with better roads. Communications both between communities and with England were easier in the south, facilitated by the wide river valleys that cut through the uplands. The Wye valley connects Builth to Hay and Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, and the Usk connects the Vale of Glamorgan to Abergavenny and Brecon, which town is in turn connected by an easy pass to the Tywi valley, Llandeilo and Carmarthen, and thence to Pembrokeshire and Cardigan. Easier still were communications by sea from the multitude of small ports ringing the coastline of the south and south-west, with regular sea traffic to Bristol, south-west England and the near continent. It was in these interconnected areas that Dissent became established in the seventeenth century and Methodism flourished in the eighteenth century.

As well as better communications, the southern lowlands - including South and West Pembrokeshire, the Vale of the Tywi above Carmarthen, the Gower peninsula, the Vale of Glamorgan, the Vale of Usk - and the Severn lowlands, along with the northern exception of Anglesey, afforded the best returns from agriculture. In these areas, some

arable and dairying supplemented the raising of stock cattle, especially after the Napoleonic Wars raised the price of corn. However, the inherent conservatism of a remote agricultural region offered resistance to the adoption of agricultural improvements, such as the adoption of rotation crops, then taking place in the southern and south-eastern counties of England. Howell suggests that ‘such progress was mainly to be found on the home farms of the aristocracy and gentry, on the small freeholds of enterprising farmers and clergymen, and on the holdings of a limited number of substantial tenant farmers.’

Areas of West Pembrokeshire, coastal Cardiganshire and the eastern Vales of Montgomeryshire still clung to the ancient arrangement of open arable fields as late as the 1790s. Agriculture and society were even more conservative in north Wales. Iorwerth Peate describes how archaic farming practices, such as transhumance (the moving of livestock between lowland in the winter and upland pastures in the summer, in the absence of any permanent cow-house) persisted there into the late nineteenth century.

The pattern of the Welsh landscape had been set in the ‘long slow centuries’ before early modern times persisted into the eighteenth century: ‘in south Wales, ‘open field’ villages in the coastal lowlands and main valleys, where English influence was strongest, contrasted with the scattered homesteads of the pastoral uplands.’ In the agrarian phase of the industrial revolution, from 1750-1820, the most progressive Hanoverian farmsteads were systematically planned, with corn barn, stable, cow-house and open sheds arranged around a yard, but in Wales, where longhouses remained in use until the early twentieth century, the new pattern was found only on the large farms of the aristocracy, for example the Chirk Castle Estate. Two improvements in farm buildings took place in this period:

the first was the thatched timber skeleton which later developed into the metallic Dutch barn. The idea had reached this country in Elizabethan times but it was not until the later years of George III that a permanent shelter for hay rather than

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stacking in ricks, open to the weather, was widely used by farmers. The second was the cowhouse which, in the later years of this period, changed on the better farms from a crude hovel to a recognisable version of its modern design.\textsuperscript{83}

Dutch barns, the ‘hanging roofs on postes’ first noticed by Sir Hugh Platt in Holland in the sixteenth century, had been introduced into the productive and profitable agriculture of Hertfordshire by the mid eighteenth-century, but they were not found before the nineteenth century elsewhere, where the common practice was to store grain that had not been threshed in thatched ricks outside in the fields.\textsuperscript{84}

Improvement in the quality of cattle through selective breeding was characteristic of the later phase of agrarian reform that took place after the first quarter of the nineteenth century, to fulfil the needs of the growing populations of the industrial cities and in response to the restricted importation of food that resulted from the Napoleonic wars. However, improved cattle breeds required improved housing if they were to repay the time and skill which had been invested in them. The Government’s Agricultural Reports of 1794 were very critical of the inadequacy of farm buildings throughout Wales.\textsuperscript{85} As late as 1852, a report spoke of ‘inconvenient, ill-arranged hovels, rickety wood and thatch barns and sheds devoid of any known improvement’; whilst

half a century after the turnip had helped to revolutionise the system of fodder production, the farmers of south Wales answered those who recommended this crop to them with a simple question: ‘What is the use of growing turnips when we have no sheds to feed them in?’\textsuperscript{86}

These descriptions suggest that, before the nineteenth century, many Welsh farms were far from the level of prosperity that would enable them to erect comfortable houses, let alone substantial farm buildings. Histories of agriculture and farm buildings show that substantial farm buildings were generally relatively rare before the eighteenth century, even in more prosperous agricultural regions and were always associated only with

\textsuperscript{83} N. Harvey, \textit{A History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales}, p.90.
\textsuperscript{86} N. Harvey, \textit{A History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales}, p. 129.
substantial holdings. The poverty and small size of most Welsh farms before the end of
the eighteenth century precluded any great investment in farm buildings.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{Welsh Vernacular: Houses}

Domestic buildings were of a similarly low standard in Wales. A recurring reason for
non-residency of beneficed clergy of the Established Church was the lack or low standard
of available accommodation. Howell gives a succinct description of Welsh vernacular
housing:

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the most humble dwellings were
made of clum: mud mixed with chopped rushes and straw, with perhaps a wattle
or basketwork chimney, and thatched with local rushes or short straw. In west
Wales, especially Cardiganshire and north Carmarthenshire, more substantial
farmhouses were constructed using these methods, with timber farm houses more
frequently found in north east Wales and good quality stone more or less
restricted to Gower and the Vale east of Neath. Some improvement in the
structure of Welsh cottages was achieved by the late 1840’s for now the walls
were being made of stone and mortar and the roofs of slate, but they were still
darkly lit, poorly ventilated and too confined for health and comfort.\textsuperscript{88}

Fox and Raglan’s survey of Monmouthshire revealed that even in a relatively prosperous
agricultural region, ‘most cottages...sited in the countryside and regarded as ‘old’ are of
late eighteenth century date.’ It is later remarked that:

The famous hovel at Strata Florida, Cardiganshire, though larger than any
dwelling we are here considering, gives perhaps the best idea now available in
Wales of the improvised, unimprovable, craftless- and yet, in a sense, traditional-
character of such early building as was carried on without skilled help by
cottagers themselves.\textsuperscript{89} (figure 2.13)

\textsuperscript{87} Eurwyn William, \textit{Historical Farm Buildings of Wales}, pp. 7-8; 65; 88-89.
\textsuperscript{88} Howell, \textit{The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales}, p. 90, quoting C.S. Read, ‘On the farming of
\textsuperscript{89} Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, \textit{Monmouthshire Houses: A Study of Building Techniques and Smaller House
Plans in the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries, Part III: Renaissance Houses, c. 1590-1714} (Cardiff:
Figure 2.13: An old House at Strata Florida: drawing made in 1888 by the artist Worthington Smith for the antiquary Stephen Williams. The post supporting the roof may have been a temporary repair, suggesting that this building may not be entirely representative as it had been poorly maintained (source: Peter Smith, *Domestic Architecture...Cardiganshire*, p. 254).

For vernacular buildings, the local availability of materials strongly influences the built outcome. Although there are isolated outcrops of good building stone, as detailed in the introductory chapters of the *Buildings of Wales* series, most regions of Wales lack this advantage. South-west Wales was characterised by a clay and thatch domestic architecture, whilst timber framing, later superseded by brick, was more common in the border country, especially the north-east.\(^9\)\(^0\) The eastern, border counties also contrasted with the more remote west chronologically (figure 2.14).\(^9\)\(^1\)

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\(^9\)\(^0\) Eurwyn William, *Historical Farm Buildings of Wales*, p. 51.

Figure 2.14: Welsh building regions; inset: building regions of the British Isles, suggesting west Wales belongs to a ‘highland zone’ defined by the absence of any substantial early gentry or farmhouses (source: Peter Smith, ‘Domestic Architecture’, p. 251 in Cardiganshire County History).

The practical availability of materials altered drastically with early nineteenth-century industrialisation, whilst the expansion of urban populations increased the profitability of agriculture. Welsh farms were consolidated into fewer, larger and better capitalised units with increasing frequency after about 1820: ‘it was not until the expansion and unification of estates in the nineteenth century that owners had sufficient funds and interest to make any appreciable difference to the condition and quality of their farm buildings.’\(^{92}\) At the same time, the growth of the great slate quarries of north-west Wales from the late eighteenth century, followed by the radical changes in the transport and communications associated with industrialisation, meant that regional constraints on building materials applied less and less:

By the early nineteenth century, slate roofs seem to have become fairly universal on farm buildings in all parts of the country except the south-east, where heavy

\(^{92}\) Eurwyn William, Historical Farm Buildings of Wales, p. 43.
stone slates derived from the local Pennant sandstone were common and where
West Country tiles were also used.\textsuperscript{93}

An interpretation of chapels as vernacular architecture should take into account regional
and temporal variations in the availability of materials. It follows from this that slate-
roofed and stone-built lateral-fronted chapels, which mostly date from the early
nineteenth century, were built either slightly earlier or at least at the same time as the
barns that they are said to have evolved or been converted from. This casts doubt on an
interpretation of chapels as congruent in form or converted from barns and cottages.

An analysis of the dates given in the inventory of chapels in Cardiganshire for an initial
building, as opposed to the foundation of a cause or any subsequent rebuilding, suggests
that by the end of the eighteenth century there were ten Baptist, twenty-two Independent
and five Unitarian chapels, thirty seven chapels of Old Dissent in total.\textsuperscript{94} According to
the inventory, thirty three Calvinistic Methodist chapels had also been built by that date,
giving a total of seventy buildings. Of these, only Pen-rhiw remains unaltered. Following
the interpretation of chapels as having developed from vernacular buildings, it has been
suggested that the remaining eighteenth-century chapels, effectively the majority but no
longer extant, were cottage-like in appearance: ‘there must have been a smaller cottage
type, thatched and simple, all since rebuilt.’\textsuperscript{95} Rhodiad y Brenin is given as an example
(figure 2.15).

\textsuperscript{93} Eurwyn William, \textit{Historical Farm Buildings of Wales}, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{94} David Percival, ‘Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Sunday Schools in Cardiganshire,’ in
\textit{Cardiganshire County History, Volume 3}, pp. 508-536.
\textsuperscript{95} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, \textit{Buildings of Wales, Pembrokeshire}, p. 68.
Similarly, Anthony Jones, in a chapter in *Welsh Chapels* entitled, ‘little granaries of god’, cites two chapels that now exist only as photographs, the thatched Capel y Bryngwyn, Abergele, Denbighshire (c.1720) and the Baptist Bwlch-y-rhw, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, of a similar date (figures 2.16 and 2.17).
About these he says, poetically:

Some chapels survived long enough to be captured by the camera, and their ghosts show us quite how small and humble these meeting-houses were, while emphasising how reluctant the Nonconformists were to abandon the grass-roots vernacular traditions of their buildings.96

This assertion is contradicted by the constant rebuilding and renovation programmes that chapels underwent, which demonstrate that any humble beginnings were left behind as quickly as possible.

Lateral-façade chapels from the seventeenth-century Maesyronnen through the eighteenth-century Pen-rhiw to the early nineteenth-century Brynberian show similar formal properties of symmetry and proportion that results form the arrangement of paired outer doors. For chapels altered in the late nineteenth century, but originally built before the middle of that century, it is often plausible to deduce that the original chapel was of the lateral-façade form, as with Nantgaredig Calvinistic Methodist Chapel (figure 2.18).

96 Jones, Welsh Chapels, pp. 27-29.
Figure 2.18: Nantgaredig Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Nantgaredig, Carmarthenshire (1817, altered 1893, by George Morgan and son; first chapel said to have been built 1760). Although now entered by a central doorway, there were formerly paired doors on the long wall. The pulpit remains in the centre of the long wall opposite the entrance, faced by a three-sided gallery.

Examples are also given in Appendix 3 of chapels that may be described as intermediate between the two forms that, after alteration to increase seating capacity, retained paired doors but under the roof gable. The consistency of form over a long period suggests a shared model that is not discernable in the contemporary vernacular architecture. The problem with a vernacular interpretation is that it effectively closes off the possibility of external influence. The following chapters will explore alternative interpretations by tracing the history of Dissent and Nonconformity outside Wales.

**Chapels as Barns**

It is also possible to critique the literal interpretation of chapels as deriving from barns through historiography as well as through comparison with contemporary vernacular buildings. As the following chapter will show, the idea of a return to the worship practices of the early Christians underpinned the Protestant Reformation. It became known as ‘primitivism’ and continued to be a significant concern of Protestantism over a long period, finding many expressions in built form.
St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, 1631-3, was the first complete building of a new Anglican Protestant church, prominently sited in what has been described as the first of London's formal open spaces. The new piazza was lined on two sides with buildings of a classical character. It was designed by Inigo Jones (1573-1652) for Francis, the 4th Earl of Bedford, as part of a development that included both housing and public space, the first piazza in an Italianate style in London. The anecdote of the encounter between Inigo Jones and his patron is well-known and oft-repeated. The reputedly Puritan Earl of Bedford, on commissioning the church, is said to have commanded Jones that he 'would have it no better than a barn', to which Inigo Jones replied 'then you shall have the finest barn in England'. The story is repeated in many popular books on architectural history, for example: 'Referring to its use of the rustic Tuscan order, Jones called his church the “handsomest barn in England”;' and ‘the piazza of Covent Garden (the first London square), with its barn-like church of St Paul’s’. Whether this apocryphal conversation was about economy or about Puritan simplicity being ennobled by principles of design, is not recorded. However, Summerson goes on to make the interpretation that:

As Palladio associated the Tuscan order with farm architecture, the anecdote has considerable point. The church is a Tuscan study, which is to say a study in classical architecture at a primitive level; and it is possible that this direction was taken by Jones not merely to satisfy the Earl’s desire for cheapness but to symbolize the fundamentalist character of the Protestant religion. […] The Vitruvian Tuscan was the furthest an architect could reach to the ‘natural’ beginnings of architecture, unalloyed by association with the corrupt mutations of the Roman church.

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Figure 2.19: St Paul’s Church, Covent Garden, London, 1631-3, Inigo Jones

St Paul’s is rectangular in plan, with the famous Tuscan portico on the east end (figure 2.19). Behind the portico is a false door, with the real entrance at the opposite, west end, formerly accessed from walkways leading from gates symmetrically placed on either side of the portico. The building is a single volume, although ‘almost nothing is known of the interior as he designed it’ because of the catastrophic fire of 1795, apart from the insistence of Archbishop Laud that an altar should be placed at the east end. St Paul’s was designed as an integral part of an urban development, Renaissance in planning and detail. London was developing as an international centre of commerce and trade with an ever-expanding population. The Earl of Bedford’s commission was a speculative investment in urban development, conceived as a new district with houses, shops, a public open space and a church, and in building on the land he owned at Covent Garden, he expected to make a profit from sales and rents. Although St Paul’s was associated with a Palladian interpretation of farm buildings, its elegantly proportioned and finely detailed design bears no resemblance to seventeenth-century barns.

Inigo Jones was famously the first architect to bring the Palladian Renaissance architectural principles of clarity and proportion to London. He had accompanied Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel, on a visit to Italy in 1613-4 with the specific intent of systematically collecting and studying antiquities in the Renaissance manner. Jones acquired a set of Palladio’s drawings and also kept a sketchbook, both of which he annotated with his observations of buildings and musings on architecture. Inigo Jones’ presentation drawings for the design of St Paul’s are in the manner of Palladio.

In a sketchbook compiled on his return to England in 1615 Jones wrote: ‘In all inventions of capricious ornaments, one must first design the ground, or the thing plain, as it is for use, and on that vary it, adorn it. Compose it with the decorum according to the use and the order it is of.’ He disparages the Baroque architects who ornament their facades: ‘And to say true all these composed ornaments which proceed out of the abundance of designers...do not do well in solid architecture’. Here Jones seems to be advocating unadorned structure as the most important attribute of aesthetic value.

He goes on to describe what is appropriate in architecture:

For as outwardly every wise man carrieth a gravity in public places, where there is nothing else looked for, yet inwardly hath his imaginacy set on fire, and sometimes licentiously flying out as nature herself doth oftentimes extravagantly, to delight, amaze us, sometimes move us to laughter, sometimes to contemplation and horror, so in architecture the outward ornaments ought to be solid, proportionable according to the rules, masculine and unaffected.

Elizabeth Jordan draws attention to similar statements in Ben Johnson’s Discoveries, which appeared a decade later, finding in them evidence of a seventeenth-century sensibility of the qualities such as noble self-restraint and modesty, decorum, orderliness, seriousness and proper behaviour that are to be found in the classical authors, particularly Horace, Virgil and Martial.¹⁰²

Jones is also articulating the classical idea of decorum, expressed in Henry Wotton’s Elements of Architecture (1624) as ‘commodity’, which, along with ‘firmness’ and

‘delight’ are the three essential elements of design as translated from Vitruvius. The Renaissance brought with it a sense of propriety and the moral responsibility of architects based on Aristotle’s injunction that construction and decoration must be in accord with the position and resources of the patron. Similarly, the classical authors named above, in extolling the virtues of rural retirement, emphasise that dwellings ought to be responsive to the needs and scope of their owners and avoid sophisticated urban indulgence that leads to moral corruption. The architectural historian David Watkin interprets Jones’ words as ‘summarising the purity at which he aimed’.

Sir Henry Wotton, in his work of architectural theory *The Elements of Architecture* (1624), advocates an astylar proportion of parts and orthogonal simplicities of plan and volume, with cuboids especially commended. He also expresses a scorn for superfluous ornament and a preference for plain brickwork or ashlar stone, emphasising the importance of function as part of commodity and encouraging a pragmatic approach to design and expenditure. Wotton’s sophisticated preferences for simplicity could be said to be shared by the Welsh chapel builders who have frequently chosen to regularise the appearance of random rubble construction with a layer of cement stucco.

It has been proposed by the scholar Elizabeth Jordan that the poem ‘Upon Appleton House to My Lord Fairfax,’ by Andrew Marvell, is a mid seventeenth-century reflection of the new morality and new classicism as exemplified by Inigo Jones. Similarly, Professor of Architectural History at Bristol University, Timothy Mowl, suggests that principles of lack of ostentation and economy are combined with the proportions and detailing of classicism in the design of the houses of Protestant gentry. Mowl, giving the house designed for Lord Maltravers in 1638 as an example, considers that although Jones had been born into a time of decorative excess, he had the ability to strip away extraneous detail in order to show the ‘the platonic essence of a house.’ Using Vitruvius as an

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authority for design enabled the aesthetic condemnation of excessive display and raised functional essentials, aided by sparing use of classical details, to central importance in architectural design. Simplicity and lack of ostentation do not denote either spontaneity or a lack of intentional design or sophistication, but the opposite.

**Protestant Primitivism**

As indicated in the discussion above with respect to Inigo Jones, Primitivism was one of the themes underlying the Protestant Reformation. The rejection of the accumulated ritual and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in order to return to the simplicity and authenticity of Christian worship in the age of the apostles was a major rationale of reform, as will be shown in the following chapter. The sixteenth to nineteenth centuries witnessed successive waves of reforming zeal in Protestantism, including the Pietists and Moravians in the Lutheran Church, and in England and Wales, seventeenth-century Dissenters, eighteenth-century Methodists and nineteenth-century Primitive Methodists and Plymouth Brethren. Each had the aim of returning religious practice to a faithful emulation of the early Christian church. The theme is prevalent in sermons and writings throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.107

As chapter four will show, one aspect of the Protestant return to fundamentals was a reliance on the Bible as the primary source of doctrine, so it was logical also to turn to the Bible for advice on buildings. In addition to an aesthetic rationale, the virtues of economy and simplicity may also be justified by a biblical reference: ‘Enter ye in at the straight gate..Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it’ (Matthew 7:13-14). Protestants continued to turn to an idea

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107 William Cave, *Primitive Christianity: or, the religion of the ancient Christians in the first ages of the gospels* (London: J. M. for Richard Chiswell, 1673); William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d* with an appendix containing the author’s persecution at, and banishment from, the University of Cambridge (London: printed for the author, 1711); Robert Nelson, *Some Important Points of Primitive Christianity maintained and defended in several sermons and discourses by George Bull*; 3 vols. (London, R. Smith, 1713-14) -George Bull (1634-1710) was the Bishop of St Davids; William Jones, *Primitive Christianity illustrated in thirty sermons, on various doctrines, ordinances, and duties, taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles* (London: G. Wightman, 1837). All these books were formerly in the library of the Dissenting Academy at Carmarthen.
of the Primitive as a means of investing doctrine throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the discussion in chapters four to six will show.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the existing body of knowledge concerning Dissenting meeting-houses and Nonconformist chapels in Wales and shown how the interpretation of chapels as barns was influenced by the nationalistic rationale of the National Museum at St Fagans, near Cardiff and the ethos of the research carried out there.

Despite a widespread assumption of a correspondence between early chapels and vernacular buildings, comparison of lateral-façade chapels with their contemporary domestic and agricultural buildings in Wales has shown that it is unlikely that a Welsh vernacular was of any significant influence on the appearance of chapels. In addition, it has been shown that the connection between barns has a literary basis, in the interpretation of Protestant architecture as an expression of the Primitive or Early Christian Church as represented by the apocryphal description of St Pauls, Covent Garden, as a barn. The Protestant impetus towards Primitivism was means of asserting the authority and legitimacy of the new religion, an idea that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.
Chapter 3: Reformation Changes

Introduction

The majority of the lateral-façade Welsh chapels, of the type that has been termed 'vernacular', were built in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the similarities in design of Maesyronnen, built at the end of the seventeenth century, and Pen-rhiw, built during the eighteenth century, suggest threads of continuity throughout the two centuries. As an alternative to assuming that this continuity is due to a resemblance to Welsh vernacular architecture, this and the following four chapters explore alternative models for Protestant places of worship.

To begin this contextual analysis, the aim of this chapter is to establish the liturgical prerogatives that determined the changes made to the existing Christian churches, and the form of the first purpose-built Protestant churches, following the Reformation. The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation was an international phenomenon that had political, social and economic as well as religious causes and effects and the complexity of these ensured that in some locations, architectural adaptations to Reformation doctrine remained matters for negotiation for some time. The approach of this and the following chapters is to look for continuities over time and between worship practices, rather than to adopt either a confrontational sectarian position or a parochialism that interprets Welsh chapel architecture as an indigenous phenomenon.

The Protestant Reformation, so far as it may be said to have begun at any particular time and place, was set in motion when the professor of Holy Scripture at Wittenberg University, Martin Luther (1483-1546), nailed a placard entitled Ninety-five Theses upon Indulgences to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral on 31 October 1519.108 Lutherans were the first to express their Protestantism in built form. Later, in the eighteenth century, Lutheran hymnody and the Lutheran Halle Pietists were to influence the Church of

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England and the development of Methodism. This chapter explores Lutheran church practice from its initiation up to the eighteenth century.

Welsh Nonconformity is distinct for its adherence to Calvinist doctrine, across all denominations (except Unitarianism), well into the nineteenth century, at a time when the strength of Calvinism had waned elsewhere. This thesis, therefore, pays particular attention to the development and spread of Calvinism and its architectural expression. In this chapter, an account of the early expressions of Calvinism in France and Geneva is followed by that of the establishment of the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (The Netherlands Reformed Church) in the seventeenth century.

The final section of the chapter outlines the initial establishment of the Protestant Church of England and especially the extent of Calvinist influence on the new church, including its reception in Wales. The conflict between tradition, supported by the legacy of medieval buildings, and the new Reformation concepts of worship, resulted in controversy concerning the rearrangement of Anglican Church interiors that continued until it was resolved by the Ecclesiologists in the nineteenth century. The initial changes are documented in this chapter.

The Protestant Reformation

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England and Wales were uniformly Roman Catholic, largely dependent on agriculture for prosperity, on hereditary land tenure for status divisions within society, and ruled by an absolute monarch, whose mandate was ordained by God. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Act of Toleration meant that the official religion of the Established Church was legitimately supplemented by other forms of religious organisation. There were also new routes for individuals to wealth, status and power through trade and commerce. The country was ruled by a new form of leadership, essentially a civil authority ordained by a theoretically elected, but in reality oligarchic, parliament, with English as the official language of government. The Protestant Reformation meant a re-negotiation of the relationship not only between an
individual and God, but also between religion and the state, and between religious beliefs and their material expression. The churches of a community are the visual evidence of the relationships, whether imposed or negotiated, between religion and society.

Throughout Western Europe, the pre-Reformation Catholic Church could assume the illiteracy of the masses, so that there was a need to present doctrine sensually through visual imagery, the chanting of the Offices by monks, the drama and mystery of the mass and the rituals of the church year and local cults. The sacraments marked the stages of an individual’s life, from baptism through confirmation, marriage, the Eucharist and the confession of sins to the last rites at death. The seventh sacrament, the ordination of priests, set them apart from the laity. Apostolic ordination authenticated the sacraments through the claim of an unbroken succession of the laying on of hands, connecting contemporaries to the presence of Christ on earth. The Roman Catholic Church, then, in addition to faith, had emphasised the mystery of the sacraments and the necessity of the ordained apostolic church to administer them. Priests, and the community of saints with the Blessed Virgin Mary at their head, became the essential intermediaries between individuals and God.

Attainment of an eternal life for the soul amongst the saints in heaven after mortal death was dependent on the accrual of merit. This could be obtained by works of charity and by obedience to and support of the Catholic Church. Sinfulness resulted in a negative tally of merit but this could be reduced by absolution, which only the Pope, as Christ’s vicar on earth and acting through the ordained ministers of the church, was allowed to dispense. It was famously the transformation of the doctrine of remission of sins into the sale of indulgences, as a means of raising the cash for rebuilding St Peter’s in Rome that finally prompted Luther’s action. The result of the Reformation in those areas that became Protestant was to repudiate the authority of the Pope and sweep away the mechanisms and expressions of religious devotion accumulated by the Roman Catholic Church.

There were two important concepts that were to reverberate through religious doctrine and practice for the following three centuries. The first was the necessity of a return to the religion of the early church, Christianity as it had been practised in the Age of the
Gospels, before its ‘corruption’ by Roman Catholicism. The second, consequent upon the first, was a reliance on the direct Word of God, represented by the Bible, rather than as interpreted by priest or pope. The immortal soul could only be redeemed from eternal punishment through ‘justification by faith’, rather than by observation of religious codes and laws or by acts of charity and living a good life. The essentials of Christianity were enshrined in the Bible, rather than the edicts of the Pope and his intermediaries, and this necessitated its universal accessibility. The primacy given to the written word, above ritual and ceremonial, ultimately implied nothing less than universal literacy and the availability to everyone of the Bible translated into their vernacular language.

It is a commonplace of history that this coincided with the means to make this possible, in the invention of the movable-type printing press. However, the advance of Protestantism amongst the population in any given area also depended firstly upon the availability of the Bible in the vernacular language and secondly on the ability and opportunity of the people to read it and discuss and understand what they had read. New ideas were always more likely to be received and spread more quickly where there was a high proportion of literacy and where the traditional ties and obligations of individuals were reduced, typically urban areas dependent upon commerce and trade. The spread of the Reformation amongst the populace, rather than as imposed by authority, depended upon international communication and increasing mobility within society and, crucially, with literacy and the availability of books. In Welsh history, this conjunction has been seen as especially significant because of the relationship between religion and the preservation of the Welsh language.109

**Lutheranism**

The central and northern German states, along with Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and the northern and central states of Germany were the earliest to adopt Lutheranism as the state religion, with Prussia for example becoming Lutheran in 1525 and Sweden by 1527. In these regions, there was generally a less radical repudiation of Catholic

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ceremonial and symbolism than elsewhere. In accordance with the doctrines outlined above, early Lutheran reform concerned the translation of the scriptures from Latin. The New Testament of the Bible had been translated into German as early as 1522, the year after Luther's public criticisms of the Catholic Church had resulted in his excommunication, with the translation of the Old Testament following in 1534. Roman Catholic Church government and the authority of the Pope were also repudiated.

Although placing new emphasis on the understanding the Word of God, Luther did not wholly repudiate the mass. Lutherans were content to leave church ritual intact, retaining a Eucharistic mass and belief in the community of saints, and a strong sense of continuity with the Catholic past. A reformed and simplified liturgy was spoken in the vernacular language but Lutheran churches retained an east-west orientation with a fixed altar as an object of reverence at the east end. It was relatively simple to convert the existing churches previously used for Roman Catholic worship to an arrangement suitable for Lutheran practice. This was accomplished in most buildings fairly simply, by the provision of fixed seating facing an enhanced and a more prominently-placed pulpit, in functional and symbolic confirmation of the centrality of the Word. Large, prominently sited pulpits, canopied by elaborate sounding boards, were significant new additions to Lutheran churches. In Lutheran Schmalkalden in 1590 the towering pulpit so overshadowed the altar as to be built over the top of it, and in Lauenburg in 1615, the pulpit was placed directly in front of the altar, obscuring it from view.

Luther encouraged the use of music in church as an aid both to individual spirituality and to congregational worship:

Next to the word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions- to pass over the animals- which govern men as masters or, more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can be found- at least, not by us. For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate- and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that

110 Chadwick, Reformation, pp. 64-66.
impel men to evil or good? —what more effective means than music could you find?\textsuperscript{111}

Lay participation in a service that all could understand, including congregational singing, represented the 'priesthood of all believers' that Luther had emphasised.

To encourage congregational singing, Lutheran hymns were set to tunes taken from popular music. It was characteristic of Protestant church music that it absorbed all levels of music culture, calculatingly transforming existing traditions:

The most important of the components, corresponding to the significance of vernacular language for the Reformation, was the national: the German folk song as expression of the broadest social strata, whose revolutionary mood was to be caught up and made fruitful.\textsuperscript{112}

Luther also recommended the use of music on pedagogic grounds, that a greater understanding of religion could be promoted effectively through church and school choirs and congregational singing in the vernacular, an attitude that informed the music and worship of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival in Wales. But inclusion of the vernacular did not necessarily imply the repudiation of high culture:

I will in no way allow the Latin language to be removed completely from the worship service, for young people mean everything to me. And if I were able, and if Greek and Hebrew were as familiar to us as Latin and had as much fine music and as many fine songs, we would hold Mass, sing, and read one Sunday after the other in all four languages—German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.\textsuperscript{113}

Luther did not reject and condemn all church ceremony but, in placing the experience of God within the individual, hoped for a 'piety of the world', with every man in his station a spiritual being, able to unite with others through religious experience to form a community of shared belief.\textsuperscript{114} Nationalism, the use of the vernacular language to promote a sense of community and the use of music to promote congregational participation are all characteristics of nineteenth-century Welsh Nonconformity.

Lutheranism assimilated both high culture and vernacular sources of music:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Blume, \textit{Protestant Church Music}, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Blume, \textit{Protestant Church Music}, p. 13.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Blume, \textit{Protestant Church Music}, p. 122.
\end{itemize}
Luther, always a moderate, retained many features of the Latin service, including some of the popular office hymns, but he introduced German Hymns alongside them. While retaining the polyphony of trained choirs, he encouraged at the same time a more homely type of choral music, in which amateurs could join in four-part harmony in the singing of both Latin and German hymns: this was partly to wean the youth away from their "carnal and lascivious songs", and he expected the singers to feel in their hearts what they sang with their lips.\textsuperscript{115}

In the same way, Lutheranism utilised existing, formerly Roman Catholic architecture. Architecturally, the Renaissance had already prompted the development of centralised plans and classicism in church architecture and so Lutheran churches did not necessarily entail a radical departure from existing church design. Roman Catholicism had already experienced many reform movements, such as the formation of the orders of preaching friars. The intention of St. Francis of Assisi (1170-1221) was to found an order of itinerant preachers who repudiated personal possessions, including homes and fixed places of worship, but the Order soon acquired premises. S. Francesco in Assisi was begun 1228, as a preaching hall without aisles.\textsuperscript{116} The Dominicans had also concerned themselves with teaching, especially in urban areas, where their distinctive hall churches were built for preaching. In some ways, the reforms promulgated by the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent revived and strengthened this tradition, especially through the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, who also proselytised and preached in the vernacular, often taking over the hall churches built by the Dominicans.

From the sixteenth century onwards, the Germanic lands became a mosaic of different confessions of Christian faith and practice, with some states remaining Roman Catholic whilst others converted to Lutheranism, along the principle of \textit{cuius regia, eius religio}. Craftsmen and builders and indeed musicians moved from state to state, working in the context of different religions. Catholic use of visual iconography and symbolism, particularly in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist, was rejected by Protestants, but not necessarily the enhancement of the place of worship by architectural means. Lutheran churches largely preserved the liturgical arrangements of the Roman Catholic worship they replaced, with the important addition of fixed seating and a more prominent pulpit:


Nidda Church, Hesse: built 1618: was a rectangular room with galleries, the altar in a recess at the east end with the pulpit and font at either side of the arch to the recess. The most common arrangement in Germany from the late seventeenth century was a grouping of together of the altar, with candlesticks and crucifix, the pulpit, behind and above the altar, and the organ on the east wall: this was the arrangement of the Frauenkirche, Dresden, built 1722.117

A church organ that had accompanied the chant in the Catholic rite was equally useful as an accompaniment to hymn tunes in unison.118

The early establishment of Lutheranism as the official religion in some states meant that, in the interests of authority the stability of the state, by the seventeenth century Lutheranism had succumbed to a rigid doctrinal orthodoxy. 'Every leaf of the tree of life', said Herder, 'was so dissected that the dryads wept for mercy'.119 Professional performances of church music had increasingly replaced the congregational singing encouraged by Luther as the Lutheran services became as remote from the people as the Catholic mass they had replaced. However, Lutheranism became revitalised from the end of the seventeenth century by a renewed Protestant evangelicalism. Luther had previously used the term 'evangelical' to describe those who accepted the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he saw as the core of the gospel, and by the early eighteenth century the term was almost synonymous with Protestant. Pietism, as the new movement was called, re-affirmed the need for personal devotion in religion, retrieving the idea of a living faith incorporated into all aspects of life, encouraged by warm communal worship and emotive preaching. Pietism was also evangelical in its energetic proselytising, advocating active missionary work. During the eighteenth century, under the influence of the Halle Pietists, the Lutheran church experienced a period of revitalisation which was to have repercussions in Britain and America, just as, in Britain, the Anglican Church, also the state church, was similarly to be revitalised by Methodism.

The University of Halle in Prussia, under Spener, was founded in 1694 to act as a centre for the new Pietist movement and thousands of Lutheran students were trained for the

118 Temperley, Music of the English Parish Church, p. 19.
priesthood there. Equally important as the University were the orphanage, printing press, Bible institute and schools attached to it that were founded by August Hermann Francke. The Moravian Brethren were a further development from Pietism. An eccentric aristocrat, Count Zinzendorf of Berthelsdorf in Saxony, was educated at the University of Halle under Francke, and under the influence of Pietism he decided to devote his life to religion. In 1722, representatives of the persecuted remnant of the Unitas Fratarum, the ancient Protestant church of Bohemia and Moravia, sought refuge on Zinzendorf’s estate and he allowed them to establish the settlement that later became known as Herrnhut. Zinzendorf insisted that the ‘Moravians’ remained within the Lutheran church in order to revitalise it from within and under his leadership the quarrelling refugees became a body of dedicated evangelists, sending missionaries overseas in the 1730’s. Both John and Charles Wesley and Howell Harris were influenced by Moravian beliefs, which included a reliance on faith alone for forgiveness, and by their practice of communal hymn-singing. It was during the reading of a Lutheran exposition on a Biblical text concerning St Paul, being given by a young Moravian missionary, Peter Bohler, in London in May 1738, that John Wesley underwent his conversion experience, feeling his heart ‘strangely warmed.’

Because of both the emphasis Lutheranism placed on the Word of God, as read from the Bible and interpreted in sermons, and the importance of music in Lutheran worship, whenever new churches were built in the eighteenth century their interior arrangement was that of a performance space. An example is St George’s, Alie Street, Tower Hamlets, central London, built in 1762-3, in the final year of the reign of George II, for a German Lutheran congregation. The interior is a single hall with a gallery around three sides supported by Tuscan columns (figure 3.1). The pulpit is the liturgical focus, towards which is orientated a central block of pews. The altar is placed below and in front of the pulpit.

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122 Stell, Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England, p. 118.
Figure 3.1: St George's Lutheran Church, interior looking east (source: Historic Chapels Trust website, http://www.hct.org.uk/chapel13stgeorges.html <11 August 2008>).

Figure 3.2: St George's Lutheran Church, Alie Street, Tower Hamlets, London, 1762-3.

The entrances in the outer bays of the façade give access to the two walkways on either side of the central block of pews and to the two sets of stairs leading up to the gallery above (figure 3.2). The paired doors may thus be interpreted as part of the aesthetic of a symmetrical classical façade, and as a pragmatic response to access.
Early Calvinism

After establishing that the Roman Catholic Church had forfeited its legitimacy and respect and therefore the primacy of its leadership, the problem for subsequent generations of Protestants was the construction of a new system of authority in religion and the negotiation of its relationship with secular authority. There was also the necessity of establishing the authority and legitimacy of a ministry that did not depend on the skill and charisma of the original activists, concerns that remained central to Nonconformity into the nineteenth century. Reformation ideas had been introduced into France with the translation of the New Testament of the Bible into French in 1523, the Old Testament following in 1530. Jean Calvin (1509-1564) formulated a new over-arching structure as a replacement for that of medieval Catholicism, equipped with a theology that legitimised its institutions. Calvin’s *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, published in Geneva in 1536, was a definition of Protestant Christian practice that appealed to the literate and cultured and to those who questioned established authority. In France, its appeal was to the rising merchant class, reacting against the strictures imposed by the aristocracy and court. Unlike Luther, Calvin sharply rejected the mass and, along with it, organ music, altars with candles and anything associated with ceremonial, promoting instead unadorned preaching and teaching as a more authentic interpretation of early Christian practice.

Early Church Fathers, such as St Augustine of Hippo, had already formulated the doctrine of predestination, so that its adoption could be rationalized as a return to the teachings of the Early Church. The vesting of individuals with total responsibility for their own salvation was perceived to be problematic, as it seemed to undermine the sovereignty of a God who transcends time and space and all knowledge. The doctrine had many contentious repercussions, but one inference taken up by early Calvinists was the idea of the ‘elect’, those whom God has already set aside for salvation. The question of the identification of the elect was the challenge presented to communities of Calvinists and the source of much controversy between denominations and soul-searching on the
part of individuals. On one level it is easy, since the elect are those that are able to
recognise themselves as such, primarily by becoming Calvinists.

Calvin also advocated the Presbyterian system of church government, in which
individuals elect pastors, elders and deacons to superintend congregations, which in turn
contribute to a pyramidal structure of consistory, colloquy and synod, justifying his
recommendation as being a more faithful interpretation of Biblical description. Calvin’s
intention in writing *The Institutes* was to establish an organisation of the Christian church
and ministry and of society that accurately reflected the practices of the Early Christian
Church as the New Testament disclosed them. ‘Calvin believed that in organising the
church at Geneva, he must organise it in imitation of the primitive church, and thereby
reassert the independence of the church and the divine authority of its ministers’. Beza, Calvin’s adjutant and successor, firmly declared that the Calvinist church order was
faithfully modelled on that of that of the primitive church as contained in the Acts of the
Apostles.

The most original of Calvin’s institutions was the consistory, which replaced the one-to-
one relationship between priest and sinner with a community relationship between
elected elders and ministers and their congregations. This intentionally defined a new
social unit, disruptive of the power and status structures of old communities, or indeed,
able to construct a new social contract when existing systems became ineffective. This
characteristic of Calvinism, of enabling and promoting constitutional self-help, was of
potential significance whenever the existing structures of society were weakened, as was
the case during the rapid industrialisation of south Wales in the nineteenth century, as
will be argued below. However, the simultaneous questioning of existing systems of
authority and emphasis on the necessity of hierarchical organisation also provided the
mechanism for repeated schisms.

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Although predestination has been taken as a defining doctrine of Calvinism, it was not at the forefront of *The Institutes*. The fundamental doctrines were salvation through Christ and the absolute authority of the Bible, ‘sola scriptura.’ Calvinism could be pragmatic and flexible as well as dogmatic and the recommendation of Presbyterianism ‘did not mean that in practice Calvin was not prepared to allow bishops or patriarchs, as he made clear in his correspondence with the governors of England in Edward VI’s reign and with the King of Poland’. 125

Calvin left France for Geneva, where he and his followers could more fully realise their ideal of setting up a Christian society with worship modelled on that of the early Christians. The first buildings in which Calvinists worshipped openly were pragmatic adaptations of existing, formerly Roman Catholic churches. The cathedral of S. Pierre, Geneva, a medieval cruciform church, was altered to accommodate Calvinist worship by the removal of Catholic imagery and statuary and the removal of the choir and fixed altar. In a move that effectively demonstrated the colonisation by the laity of space previously reserved for the clergy, tiered banks of seating were positioned in the former chancel as well as the nave and transepts. All seats faced the centrally-placed pulpit, which was the new and now only liturgical focus (figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Sketch plans of St. Pierre, Geneva, before and after Calvinist reorganisation. The plan on the left shows the arrangement of the interior for Catholic worship: the pulpit (A) is on front of a separate choir for the clergy (B) within which is the main altar (C), with ambulatory behind (D). The plan on the right shows the choir removed, galleries with tiered seating inserted into the transepts (E) and tiered seating filling the ambulatory and transepts (C and D), the pulpit (A) moved to one corner of the crossing.

Whilst the Protestant Reformation re-affirmed the centrality of preaching and hearing the Word of God, Calvin emphasised the spiritual and material interdependence of the community of worshippers who met together as one body. A centrally-planned building with uniformly good visibility and seating to accommodate a static, attentive audience fulfilled the requirements of Calvinism both practically and symbolically, whilst classicism endowed the buildings with authority and an historic connection to the early church.

French and Swiss Calvinist churches were often called temples, in a Primitivist reference to the biblical Temple of Solomon, and to emphasise their different trajectory of development from that of the Catholic Church. Drawing parallels between the design of Reformation churches and synagogues and their shared origins in Biblical descriptions of the Temple of Solomon, Helen Rosenau affirms the use of the word ‘temple’ to describe a Christian church:

It was Calvin (1509-1564) who first introduced it for the churches following his own persuasion in Switzerland and France, establishing in this manner not only his challenge to the Roman Church but also the primacy of his religious leadership as a continuation of the ancient priesthood.  

The first Calvinist synod convened in France as early as 1559. It devised a confession of faith, defining doctrine and inaugurating a pyramidal structure of church government of consistories, colloquies and synods. Calvinism spread quickly, with some estimates of the numbers of Calvinists in France in 1560 as high as around two million, roughly ten per cent of the population of France. There may have been as many as 1,750 Protestant churches. The doctrine of predestination was especially appealing to the emerging middle class of businessmen, artisans and craftsmen since the status of ‘the elect’ transcended the traditional hierarchy of aristocrat and peasant: Calvinism infiltrated all levels of society in the mid sixteenth century, but artisans predominated. In areas where

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127 Prestwich, *International Calvinism*, p. 73.
Protestantism became established, there was a large overlap between the elders of a church and the notables of a town or village:

An investigation of the social background of three hundred elders in thirteen localities in the Midi over forty years reveals that less than one sixth of the elders were artisans or peasants and that the overwhelming majority was drawn from office-holders, lawyers, merchants and, in the country, from seigneurs.\(^{128}\)

Three Protestant Temples were built in Lyons in 1564, although all three were subsequently destroyed in anti-Protestant riots only three years later. The ‘Temple De Lyon Nomme Paradis’ is depicted in a painting, now located at the Musée Internationale de la Reforme in Geneva. The painting shows a substantial building which appears to be circular, or at least having a curved gallery with a central pulpit surrounded by benches, on which men and women sit separately. The interior appears well-lit, spacious and airy and is arranged as a lecture hall, with no obviously religious iconography.

By the second half of the sixteenth century, Calvinists had become sufficiently visible in French society to be perceived as a threat by the Roman Catholic aristocracy. Four decades of intermittent riots and attacks upon persons and property culminated in the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of August 1572. With the collusion and encouragement of the Catholic Queen Catherine de Medici, perhaps as many as three thousand Protestants were murdered and their homes and businesses looted, most of them in Paris, but also in other locations throughout France. Some of the killings may have been retribution for vendettas that had been exacerbated by differences in religion, but others were undoubtedly the result of envy, since many Protestants were successful artisans and businessmen. There were also significant numbers of noblemen among the dead.

The Edict of Nantes of 1598 was, to some extent, a conciliatory reaction to the massacre. It accorded the Calvinist Reformed Church in France a privileged political status, allowing it to build churches and worship openly, but it was proscriptive about the design of Protestant places of worship. They were expressly forbidden from resembling Catholic churches in having spires or bell-towers and they were ordered to limit their size

to the minimum necessary to accommodate their worshippers. Many places of worship were built, the majority being single rooms with benches and a pulpit for the preacher. Internal galleries fulfilled the requirements of the Edict by concentrating the maximum number of people within a limited volume.

Jacques Perret, a ‘Savoyard gentleman’ as he described himself, designed three different types of Protestant temples in his Des Fortifications et Artifices published in Frankfurt in 1602. The small, middle-sized and large buildings, basically conceived in a sober and functional style, show the division in seating between men and women of different ranks and, except in the small one, places are allotted to signeurs and their ladies, while galleries are provided for the lower orders.129

Charenton, near Paris, is the most well-known example of the seventeenth-century French Protestant temples.

Figure 3.4: The Calvinist Temple, Charenton, France (1623) by Saloman de Brosse; source: C. Wakeling, ‘Nonconformity and Victorian Architecture’, p. 60 in Bridget Cherry (ed.), Dissent and the Gothic Revival (London: The Chapels Society, 2007).

The first building was erected in 1606 and when this was destroyed by anti-Protestant fanatics in 1621, it was immediately rebuilt to a design by Salomon de Brosse (figure 3.4).

129 Prestwich, International Calvinism, p. 93.
Although Protestant, Salomon de Brosse was a leading French architect who had been called upon to design the Palace of Luxembourg for the Catholic Queen and was consulted over the 1618 restoration of Orleans Cathedral. Because Charenton was designed by an architect of repute, it has passed into the canon of architectural history as the most significant Calvinist temple. Based on a Vitruvian basilica, it was rectangular in plan and spacious and well-lit by large evenly-spaced windows. Inside, full-height columns supported two tiers of galleries to maximise the seating whilst enabling all to see and hear preaching from the pulpit.

Although Calvin forbade the use of images in church and considered that paintings and sculpture should be concerned only with the visible world, he was willing to allow portraits, landscapes and townscapes, and commemorative history pictures. Protestant architects such as Salomon de Brosse and cultivated patrons such as Sully were at the forefront of cultural achievement in early seventeenth century France. Calvinism emphasised the spiritual and material interdependence of the community of worshippers. Protestant architects and artists formed a tight group, drawn together by patronage, marriage and membership of the Académie Royale de Peinture, founded in 1643: ‘Out of the twenty three original members, nearly one third were Calvinists.’

Paris, as the commercial centre and most cosmopolitan city of France, had the highest concentration of Calvinists and the wealthiest patrons. The grandeur and quality of design of the French temples owes nothing to reticence or domesticity. The urbane lifestyle of the Protestant cultural elite denies an interpretation of Calvinism as a harsh, ascetic, austere and intolerant creed, a contemporary view perhaps coloured by popular representations of Scottish Presbyterianism or even Welsh Methodists.

The temple at La Rochelle in western France, which became the fortress and headquarters of the French Calvinist resistance, was an even more radical plan in the form of an octagon, designed to give unequivocal emphasis to the centrally-placed pulpit. Octagonal Protestant churches were also built in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1641, Middelburg in the United Dutch Provinces in 1647 and in Norwich, England in 1723. In the eighteenth

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130 Prestwich, International Calvinism, p.12.
century, an octagonal plan was to be recommended by John Wesley as an ideal model for a Methodist preaching house.

The international solidarity of Calvinism in the sixteenth century was expressed in the form of financial assistance asked for and obtained from the City of London by the Genevan city magistrates during a siege in 1572. Later, when Geneva was threatened by the Duke of Savoy in 1589, 1590 and again in 1602, the Swiss Protestant cantons, the Count Palatine and the states of Holland and Frisia all responded with loans. The Habsburg conquest of the Palatinate in 1621 also stimulated fund-raising in England and Holland for the refugees. French Huguenots maintained a strong presence in London, where the Calvinist 'Stranger Church', a substantial building formerly occupied by the Austin Friars, had been given its Royal Charter as early as 1550. Elizabeth I continued to give political aid to continental Calvinists and the Calvinism of the Elizabethan church is evidenced by the popularity of the Genevan Bible and Heidelberg catechism.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 set in motion the persecution of French Protestants, condoned by the state. The Huguenots were driven from their homes, their property confiscated and temples destroyed. The Temple at Charenton was finally demolished in 1686, the year after the Revocation. Britain, Holland, Switzerland, Brandenburg, Prussia and other welcoming German states all opened their doors to the Calvinist refugees. When it became clear that France was not to be a Protestant country, the focus of Calvinism outside Geneva moved to the Netherlands.

**Dutch Calvinism**

The establishment of Protestantism in the Low Countries was a protracted struggle bound up with the assertion of nationalism and independence but, unlike the French Calvinists, the Dutch were to achieve their aim of a national Protestant Church. The New Testament of the Bible was translated into Dutch as early as 1523, the Old Testament in 1527, but the Roman Catholic Habsburg Spanish rulers of the Netherlands proscribed and actively

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persecuted the new religion. Calvinism offered not only an alternative religious organisation, but in a new Europe, where traditional social structures and hierarchies based on land tenure and genealogy were breaking down, it offered a new form of social organisation, legitimised by theological argument, with a power structure open to all who could prove themselves able and worthy. In a discussion of the role of Calvinist biblical exegesis in revolution, Christopher Hill says that some contemporary activists were:

more conscious of the risks of uncritical application of the Bible to sinful seventeenth-century society, [and] thought that change, however desirable, could be justified only if supported by the authority of the magistrate. Lesser magistrates might take the initiative if the sovereign did not.132

That is, civil disobedience was justified where the authorities were not behaving according to Calvinist precepts, as was later believed by Parliamentarians in the English Civil War.

Drawing on the precedent of the Early Church, Calvinist doctrine rejected the necessity of a sanctified and special place of worship, emphasising instead the ‘church invisible’, the body of Christians gathered together for worship rather than the place they occupied. This conferred both legitimacy and sanctity on what, to the authorities, were subversive gatherings. For the Dutch, the zeal of religious reform was added to the excitement of subterfuge and heroism of resistance to foreign rule. This was represented in Dutch history as the story of the heroic struggle of an oppressed people for self-determination, recognition of their nationhood, and freedom of worship in their own language in a way that has many parallels in Welsh Nonconformist historiography.

Open rebellion against the Habsburgs began in 1568 and resulted in independence by 1572. In a reaction that was as much political as religious, the Reformed Church (Nederlands Hervormde Kerk) was made the privileged faith of the Dutch Republic. Roman Catholicism became persecuted and clandestine and Catholics had to meet secretly in houses or rooms converted into chapels. In the Netherlands the Catholic mass

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was outlawed in March 1581 and the States-General declared the Hapsburg Philip II had forfeited his sovereignty over the United Netherlands because of his persecution of the Calvinists. Calvinism urged respect for authority and acknowledged the necessity for the rule of law, but also authorised rebellion or indeed repression where the law was not in accordance with Calvinist doctrine. The rationale was not religious freedom, but the creation of a Calvinist Protestant society.

Although Calvinism denied the intrinsic sanctity of a building used for worship, it was acknowledged that a place of assembly facilitated the habitual gathering together of Christians. The ambition to create a Christian society necessitated a sufficiently recognisable and dignified physical presence as the visible focus not only of worship but of the reformed Christian community. In the early Dutch Republic, the erstwhile Catholic churches, being the most significant buildings in most settlements, were converted to Calvinist worship, this having the additional advantage of the visible displacement of Catholic by Protestant worship. Calvinism was more radical than Lutheranism in its repudiation of all fixed liturgy and ceremonial. Holy Communion, characterised as a commemorative act rather than a necessary sacrament, was not expected to be celebrated often, so there was no need for a fixed altar and the pulpit became the sole liturgical centre (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Plan of the new fixed seating inserted in the sixteenth century into the former Augustinian Priory Church at Dordrecht. The liturgical focus has been moved from the altar in the chancel at the east end to the pulpit in the middle of the north wall. The former chancel and south aisle chapels are both filled with pews (source: C. A. van Swigchem, T. Brouwer, W. van Os, Een Huis Voor Het Woord: Het protestantse kerkinterieur in Nederland tot 1900 (Staatsuitgeverij: 's-Gravenhage, 1984), p. 94).
The Catholic churches in the Protestant Netherlands were made suitable for Calvinist worship by the removal of iconography, the demotion or removal of the altar and font, and the provision of fixed seating facing a new type of pulpit whose design reflected its central importance.

A frequent alteration was to replace the longitudinal, east-west axis of the rectangular plan of a Gothic building by an emphasis on the short, north-south axis, by placing an elaborate pulpit in the middle of the north wall and orientating the fixed seating to focus upon it, as in the Dordrecht church illustrated in figure 3.5. The Gothic chevet of the formerly Roman Catholic church was either filled with seating or largely ignored, the fixed altar removed. Examples of churches where this took place include Tzum, Buitenpost, and Huizinge. Larger buildings were sometimes subdivided or parts demolished to create suitably centralised plans. On the exterior, Gothic stone mullioned lancet windows might be removed and replaced by Classicising round-headed windows, made in wood and painted white. The change demonstrated the replacement of medieval Roman Catholicism by the Classicism of the Early Church, representing modern, reformed Protestant Calvinism that could be recognised and understood without any knowledge of architectural theory.

The first purpose-built Protestant church in the Netherlands, in the new fortified town of Willemstad in Noord-Brabant, was built in 1598 in the form of a centrally-planned octagon. The ostentatiously radical plan demonstrated both the centrality of the Word and a decisive break with the Catholic past (figure 3.6).

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Churches in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland were built in a Classical style and further centralised churches were built, such as the octagonal Oostkerk in Middelburg, 1647-67 by Arend van 's-Gravesande and the churches of Greek Cross plan built in Amsterdam (the Noorderkerk, 1620) and in Maassluis (1629-39). Dutch Calvinist architecture was neither modest nor reticent, aiming instead to establish a dominant physical presence in the towns and cities of the United Provinces as a visible demonstration of the new political and religious order. During the early seventeenth century, the population of the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam increased dramatically in size, through a combination of inward migration from rural areas and refugees from the persecution of Calvinism elsewhere. Some of the new churches erected to accommodate the growing numbers of Calvinists were built in an ostentatious, mannerist style of classicism, with Hendrick de Keyser's Westerkerk, 1620-31, being for some time the largest church in the world built specifically for Protestant use (figure 3.7).

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The Reformed Church, although of privileged status, was not formally the state church and membership was voluntary. The supremacy of Calvinist doctrine did not remain uncontested even from within Protestantism. C. H. Parker, in a detailed examination of contemporary Dutch historiography, discusses the challenge posed to orthodox Calvinism by the followers of Jacob Arminius:

 Until the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), however, the most pernicious religious conflicts focused on the extent to which church leaders could choose their own officers and discipline their congregation independent of political control. An eclectic body of ministers and urban magistrates, derisively labelled Libertines, envisioned the Reformed Church as a public religious institution for all people under magisterial control. Calvinists resisted these political constraints, because they regarded consistorial discipline and clerical autonomy to be indispensable to the establishment of a morally pure Eucharistic community of believers. The Reformed moderates who followed Arminius in the early seventeenth century appropriated many of the earlier Libertine criticisms of stringent Calvinism. They opposed the more strict form of discipline, doctrinal rigidity, and absolute predestination.135

Controversy between Protestants holding different doctrinal viewpoints was endemic in the Reformation, as it was between denominations in nineteenth-century England and Wales. The Arminian rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination was a doctrinal division that was to emerge as divisive in Methodism and between other sects of Welsh Nonconformity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the ‘pluriformity of the Reformation in the Netherlands [...] did not hinder Reformed Protestants with differing opinions about predestination from working together in order to build up a Reformed Church.’\(^\text{136}\) The Calvinist Presbyterian church order emerged triumphant from the National Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. The debate was seen as being of international, not just Dutch, concern, with bishops from the Church of England attending the synod and supporting the decision to dismiss the Dutch clergy who did not accept orthodox Calvinist discipline. After it had been affirmed that orthodox Calvinism was the doctrine most favoured by the state, membership levels in the Reformed Church grew quickly, from 20 per cent of the total population in 1620 to around 50 per cent by 1650.

Although there were some Protestants in the Netherlands who wished to have a more comprehensive church, the majority recognised that discipline was essential to stability and structure. After the Synod, the Dutch Reformed Church became increasingly preoccupied with the creation of a Christian society. In the interests of religious conformity, the Dutch began to discourage the more radical Protestant sects and the formerly minority, radical sect, once it had achieved dominance, adopted a rigid and exclusive orthodoxy. Sects who rejected infant Baptism, such as the Baptists, and Anabaptists, such as the Mennonites and Moravians, who also rejected both Episcopal and Presbyterian forms of church government and many existing structures of society, were confined to foreigners’ churches in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and their proselytising forbidden.

The commercial success of the new Republic meant that money was available to build many more new churches specifically designed to accommodate Calvinist worship. Whilst there was the possibility of radicalism in plan, most new churches increasingly

conformed to an undemonstrative sober classicism in opposition to counter-Reformation Baroque exuberance and a unified volume in which everyone could hear and see the minister remained the essential requirement. Puritans in enforced or voluntary exile from Britain in the early seventeenth century would have had first hand experience of worship in Dutch Calvinist churches. At the same time, merchants and seamen from English and Welsh ports who became involved in the vibrant Dutch commercial economy would have become familiar with the buildings of the Reformed Church in every town. There were thus plenty of opportunities for the transfer of the new architectural ideas.

Protestant Liturgy in the Church of England

Although the Reformation in England and Wales was initiated by statute in the early sixteenth century, it took a further two centuries to complete. The temporary reversion to Roman Catholic practice under Mary, the inertia of habitual religious practice and the legacy medieval built fabric all held back reform. Although generalisations must be qualified by significant regional variations, some observations are widely applicable.

The medieval churches of England and Wales, as had been the case throughout Europe, were subdivided into relatively, and often definitively, distinct spaces, described by Addleshaw and Etchells as a ‘mysterious succession of self-contained rooms’. The chancel screen and rood loft physically divided interiors into two distinct spaces. The chancel, containing the altar, was the exclusive preserve of the clergy, with the congregation in the nave effectively separated from the most sacred parts of the church. The responsibility for the upkeep of the chancel lay with the clergy but donations towards its embellishment were counted as meritorious acts, contributing towards an individual’s progress towards heaven. The system of patronage also resulted in the successive enlargement of churches, resulting in an increasingly complex plan, by the addition of chapels and sometimes extra aisles.

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Protestant doctrine removed the necessity of any intermediaries between an individual and God and one-to-one relationship of sinner and priest was replaced by a Calvinist public scrutiny of conduct and consensus of morality. The Catholic sacrament of Confession ceased to be compulsory in England and Wales after 1548, whilst chantry chapels were suppressed by legislation in 1547. The individually-sponsored and dedicated altars and chapels of parish churches were made redundant and with no funds forthcoming for their upkeep, they fell into disrepair. Their removal expedited the simplification of church interiors. Calvin recommended that Holy Communion was to be treated as a commemoration of the Last Supper of Christ only, with no other meaning or mystery and without any emphasis on the spectacle of mass or the Elevation of the Host at the altar. The elimination of the performance of ritual removed the need for an axial, processional route or any hierarchy of spaces within the church. The use of the term ‘auditory,’ to denote a hall-like space used for preaching, first appeared in the English language in 1548. A single, unified volume with fixed seating from which all could see and hear the preacher was the main requirement for Calvinist worship and so, as had happened in The Netherlands, attempts were made to adapt existing buildings. Removal of chancel screens and rood lofts, for example, had the double benefit of unifying the interior space of a church and removing Catholic imagery.

As early as 1550, a church was established in London for foreign Protestant communities, in which Calvinist Reformed services were conducted in French, Dutch, German and Italian under the general supervision of a former Polish bishop. The Privy Council made over to the French and Dutch refugees the abandoned Augustinian church of the Austin Friars, and allowed them to hold their own services there. As Professor Temperley points out: ‘This was the first time that a fully Reformed service had been legally permitted on English soil, and the example in practice must have won over many more converts than the unproved arguments of theologians.’ The Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 confirmed the Protestantism of England and Wales and ratified the use of the Book of Common Prayer that had been written by Thomas Cranmer in 1549. In 1563, in response

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to the continuing challenge of English Catholics, the ‘Thirty-Nine Articles’ were drawn up, summarising the doctrinal position of the Established Church. The Articles specifically reject the authority of the Pope and although open to interpretation, they are broadly Calvinist in doctrine, for example in an emphasis on the depravity of mankind and the acceptance of predestination.

The adoption of a vernacular liturgy in the form of the Book of Common Prayer assumed corporate worship, for which the laity needed to be able to see and hear the minister officiating and understand and reflect upon the words of the service. The many daily liturgical acts of the medieval church, such as the singing of the Hours by the clergy, were replaced by just two, Matins and Evensong, and these became the norm for Sunday worship. The Thirty Nine Articles specify that participation in Holy Communion is necessary for membership of the church, but there is much uncertainty as to the frequency with which it was sought or administered in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Some parishioners may have taken Communion as little as once or twice per year. Non-sacramental services might be conducted by a curate in an unconsecrated Chapel-of-Ease, in which no altar was necessary.

The rood screen that had separated the clergy in the chancel from the laity in the nave was denuded of crucifix and statuary and sometimes removed altogether. The demotion of the chancel from a sacred space and the altar from a sacred object was also effected by the removal of the tabernacle for the chalice, the painted reredos and the crucifix, possibly replacing these by a handsomely-bound copy of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. The walls of the chancel, now re-named the communion room, were whitewashed and - in a practice that prefigures the ‘big seat’ of Welsh Nonconformist chapels - might be furnished with seating for elders in the community.¹⁴⁰ The processional space of pre-Reformation churches was replaced by fixed box pews, enabling or perhaps enforcing the congregation to remain static throughout the service. In the seventeenth century, Laudian bishops were to come into conflict with congregations

who had erected pews in the nave of the church, effectively transforming it into an auditory.\textsuperscript{141}

Iconoclasm was not necessarily the work of destructive fanatics, but was carried out in a carefully considered way by lawfully-constituted authority and a convincing case has been made that it had popular approval.\textsuperscript{142} This was in part because the destruction of Catholic imagery and furnishings was not a cause for regret and destruction was mitigated by the reconstruction that made churches suitable for Protestant worship. The pulpit emerged as the liturgical focus of the re-ordered church, and enlarged and enhanced by non-iconographic decoration, it surpassed the altar in visual significance. The chapel at Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, was renovated in 1624, with a new roof and a coat of whitewash on the interior, covering medieval wall paintings. The size of the chancel was reduced and that of the pulpit increased, to demonstrate the new liturgical arrangements (figure 3.8).

![Figure 3.8: The pulpit and reading desk of 1624 in the chapel at Haddon Hall, Derbyshire.](image)

This alteration was carried out by an aspiring member of the English aristocracy as part of the self-conscious English Renaissance that was committed to the vision, first promoted by Elizabeth I, of England as the foremost Protestant nation.

There continues to be disagreement amongst scholars as to the willingness with which Reformation changes were accepted by the majority of the population in the lower strata.


of society. Some see the Reformation as having been opposed by the deeply-held attachment to Catholic practice of the majority and imposed by an intellectual minority aided by Tudor coercion and the dedicated proselytising of determined individuals.\textsuperscript{141} Scholars who argued for the popular espousal of Protestant Reforms cited anti-clericalism due to the corruption and neglect of the clergy, lack of respect for a spiritually moribund church and the detachment of congregations from poorly-understood rites and services.\textsuperscript{144}

The Reformation came not so much because Europe was irreligious as because it was religious. The medieval church begat repeated waves of fervent idealism, and was doing so again. The abuses now condemned were always abuses and always condemned at the bar of public opinion ... Most of the abuses were not so much worse. What was new was the extent of men's awareness of the defects in Church order and the possibility of remedy.\textsuperscript{145}

The success of Methodism in Wales would later be explained by similar reasoning.

A new awareness of religious doctrine had been promoted not only by the availability of the Bible in the vernacular, but also by the many Protestant commentaries and devotional works available in English from the sixteenth century onwards. Cultural production was transferred from a medieval preoccupation with imagery to a post-Reformation preoccupation with text. That Calvinism became an international religion was partly the result of the translation, publication and dissemination of Calvinist texts, from \textit{The Institutes} themselves to commentaries and catechisms, some specially written for children. Both John Locke and John Knox travelled to Geneva and wrote favourably on their return to Britain, speaking of the city and its government as having been established according to God's word and the rules of the Early Church. Calvin's insistence upon the Bible as the primary source of knowledge and authority promoted the idea of a common cultural foundation for religion. The Genevan version of the English Bible published in 1560 had marginal cross references and Calvinist glosses, devised to give Calvinists the edge when engaged in argument or controversy, whilst some editions published after 1579 had Calvinist catechisms, supporting the doctrine of predestination, bound up with


\textsuperscript{144} Examples include G. R. Elton, \textit{Reform and Reformation} (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) and A. G. Dickens, \textit{The English Reformation} (London: Batsford, 1989).

\textsuperscript{145} Chadwick, \textit{The Reformation}, p. 22.
them. The Calvinist consensus within the Church of England had only just become widely established when, in the early seventeenth century, it was challenged from within by Archbishop Laud, as will be reviewed in the following chapter.

The Reformation in Wales

Henry VIII had confirmed the severance of English Protestant Christianity from Roman Catholicism in 1534 by the Act of Supremacy. The powers of leadership of the Church were declared to be God-given but to have been usurped by the Pope. Subsequently, Wales was incorporated under the royal authority of the king’s realm by the Act of Union in 1536. In contrast, the Royal Supremacy never operated in Scotland, where the Established Church preserved its Calvinist independence. Henry appointed the committed Protestant Bishop Barlow to the see of St David. Barlow moved his bishop’s palace from the remote St David’s to a more central location at Abergele, near to the important Welsh town and port of Carmarthen, suggesting that he intended both to participate more actively in Welsh affairs and to strengthen contacts between Wales and England.

There is evidence that affection for the Tudor dynasty and the Elizabethan recognition of the Welsh language promoted the Reformation cause in Wales. Elizabeth seems to have been welcomed as ruler, following the Roman Catholic interlude of Mary’s reign:

> Nowhere, perhaps, was she received more affectionately than in Wales, where there was a particular twist to the people’s allegiance. Her Welsh subjects reserved a special warmth for ‘one of their own’, the heiress of that Tudor line reputed to spring from Cadwaladr, the last ‘true’ king of Britain, and even from Brutus, mythical founder of the ancient kingdom. Poets would hail her enrapturedly as ‘Sidanen’ (‘the silken one’), ‘Sideanen fawr o Frutus’ (‘great Sidenan, progeny of Brutus’) and ‘Sidenan Maelgwyn Gwynedd’ (‘Sidenan, descendant of Maelgwyn Gwynedd’).

The acknowledgement of the Welsh language was absolutely crucial, both to Welsh acceptance of Protestantism and the preservation of the Welsh language. An Act for the translation of the Bible into Welsh was passed in 1563 by the Elizabethan

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government, but it was not until 1588 that the translation by William Morgan was published, with his Welsh translation of the Book of Common Prayer following in 1599. The New Testament, the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Psalms from the Old Testament had been translated by William Salesbury and Richard Davies in the previous decade, but there were syntactical and other problems with this translation. It was Morgan's work that received popular acclaim and the approval of the Welsh bards:

At a fateful juncture for the language, when the bards, hitherto the guardians and exponents of its classic strength and purity, had entered into a period of irreversible and accelerating decline, Morgan embodied in his translation all that was best and finest in their tradition.149

In 1559 Elizabeth ordered a 'visitation' by a Royal Commission conducted by clergics and lawyers, some of whom were Welsh by birth or had connections with the Welsh dioceses, to inspect and enforce the Elizabethan Settlement. The Welsh bishops had by then all taken the Oath of Supremacy confirming their loyalty to Elizabeth as Head of the Church of England and the majority of the Welsh clergy similarly complied.

How far the visitors were able to bring their influence to bear to secure the removal of altars, mass books, relics, roods, images, paintings and other survivals from the Marian "wilderness of superstition" it is difficult to tell. [But] the churchwardens' accounts of the parish church of St Mary's, Swansea, recorded the taking down of two stone altars and their replacement by a wooden communion table, for which 4d. was paid. At the same time, 4d. was paid for the removal of the great rood, though the loft itself was retained as a singing gallery.150

In 1560, Elizabeth ordered works of restitution to ameliorate the effects of the destruction of images, commanding that "the tables of the commandments be comely set or hung up in the east end of the chancel".151 The display of the written statement of Christian Law, in the form of the clearly displayed Decalogue (or Ten Commandments) emphasised the primacy of the Word and the connection of the Reformed church to Old Testament principles. The Royal Coat of Arms similarly displayed in proximity to the Decalogue underlined the establishment of the Church of England as the national church, a political statement that was to reverberate through the history of religion in Wales. By the

149 Glanmor Williams, Wales and the Reformation, p. 353.
150 Glanmor Williams, Wales and the Reformation, pp. 221-223.
liturgical reforms brought about by the use of the Book of Common Prayer, Elizabeth hoped to accommodate a range of opinion and unite them in the national church. Separatism was condemned as subversive by the Conventicle Act of 1592, which made religious gatherings outside the Established church illegal and the term ‘conveticle’ suggestive of disloyalty to the Crown. John Penry, a native of Breconshire but active in London as an early advocate of the separation of religion and state, was executed under this legislation, giving Welsh Dissent its first martyr.

The dissolution of the monasteries in Wales had not yielded much in the way of revenue for the Crown compared to the richer pickings of southern England. There had only been fifty houses of religion in Wales at the height of monasticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, only one monastery remained for every twenty parishes, or 250 religious out of a total population of about 250,000, compared to at least one religious house for every ten parishes in England. Without any strong economic base or powerful patronage to support it, Welsh monasticism was in decline even before the Dissolution. The parish church of Llanelieu in the Brecon Beacons (figures 3.9 and 3.10) was possibly once associated with a fourteenth-century monastic cell connected with Llanthony Priory, located at an adjacent building that had become Lanelieu Court by the seventeenth century.

Figure 3.9: St Ellyw, Llanelieu, Breconshire, thirteenth century (recently re-roofed). The top of the priest’s door into the chancel may just be seen on the far right.

152 Williams, Wales and the Reformation, pp. 73-79.
Remote, small-scale and lacking in grandeur though it is, St Ellyw, Llanelieu shows successive adaptations to prevailing orthodoxy. The single chamber was formerly divided into three by wooden screens, the nave separated from the altar sanctuary by a ‘choir’ less than two metres wide. The chancel screen, with a central opening narrower than the lateral ones, originally supported a rood loft and wainscoting enclosing the side altars. The present appearance results from Reformation changes, when the rood, ciborium and wood panelling of the chancel screen were removed to give the current more open arrangement. The font is of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century date; and there are burial slabs of 1610 and 1669 near the altar and a sundial of 1686 outside near the porch. The altar is now enclosed in Laudian railing and a royal coat of arms, perhaps eighteenth century, has been partially revealed from beneath whitewash by recent restoration.\footnote{Richard Haslam, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Powys}, pp. 333-334.}

The due process of transforming the four Welsh cathedrals - Bangor and St Asaph in the north and Llandaff and St David’s in the south - and local parish churches into buildings more suitable for Protestant worship in the later sixteenth century should have entailed the confiscation of church plate and vestments, the destruction of imagery in stone and stained glass and the removal of stone altars and their settings and decoration. Where it
was scrupulously carried out, it must have made already relatively small scale and often poorly-constructed buildings seem bleak indeed; but as Sir Thomas Myddleton’s Parliamentarian troops, when they crossed the Dee in 1643, still found ‘superstitious images’ in the form of fonts, brasses and stained glass to destroy, perhaps the stripping was not so drastic as it could have been. The destruction of shrines and suppression of holy places like St Winifred’s Well was perhaps an even greater loss to Welsh religion than the suppression of the monasteries. Pilgrimages and festivals at shrines had been a popular form of expression of religious devotion and a welcome opportunity for social gatherings in thinly populated and remote Wales. A letter written c. 1590 testified that Welsh people still went ‘in heaps to pilgrimage to the wonted wells and places of superstition, and to chapels and former sites thereof.’

It is difficult to make generalisations that hold good for both wealthy, populous nucleated settlements that had invested heavily in their parish churches, and the extensive and sparsely populated parishes of more remote and upland areas, whose churches reflected the poverty of the region. Wales has many examples of the unembellished single-chamber churches of vernacular construction that served as the place of worship for large tracts of countryside, as did Llanrhychwyn (figures 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13).

Figure 3.11: Llanrhychwyn, Gwynedd, south elevation showing single entrance.

Figure 3.12: Llanrhychwyn, interior looking northeast, towards the pulpit situated on the north wall. The central row of pillars in the virtually square interior supports the valley of the double roof.

Figure 3.13: Llanrhychwyn, pulpit and reading desk, dated 1720.

In Wales, the economic and demographic expansion consequent on industrialisation and the large numbers of chapels and churches built in the nineteenth century effectively obscures earlier patterns of the distribution and built form of earlier places of worship.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly outlined the changes places of worship brought about by the Reformation. In Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican Churches, the new emphasis on the Word of God as central to the Christian religion gave new emphasis to the pulpit. The
most frequent adaptation of existing churches, and the chief concern of those newly built, was the provision of fixed seating with the pulpit as the focus of attention so that all could see and hear the preacher. The Lutheran Church retained the ceremonial aspects of worship to a greater extent than Calvinists, with the incorporation of congregational singing as part of worship.

Calvinism was more radical in its reliance on the literal interpretation of the Bible to inform liturgy. Calvinist worship took shape from what was Biblically ordained and what was thought to be the form of worship of the Early Christian church. The Catholic liturgy was repudiated and Holy Communion was thought of as a commemorative act only. The word of God was the focus of worship, either in the form of sermons, extempore prayers, Bible readings or the congregational chanting of psalms. This type of worship demanded clear lighting to enable reading, and the pulpit and seating arrangements of an auditory. The examples of new Protestant temples in France and the Nederlands Hervormde Kerken in Holland showed that Calvinism need not necessarily be linked with austerity and modesty. Moreover, since Calvinism promoted the establishment of a ‘new Jerusalem’ on earth, with a moral community and personal immediacy of belief replacing the remote hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, its buildings were to be prominently situated amongst other buildings of daily life, rather than be sanctified and set apart.

In England and Wales, successive compromises between various religious and political factions contributed to broadly Calvinist declaration of faith known as the ‘Thirty-Nine Articles’, drawn up in 1563, that formed the doctrinal underpinning of the Church of England. Some aspects of religion, such as the use of the Book of Common Prayer, participation in Holy Communion and the acceptance of an episcopal system of church government, were enforced, but there was some flexibility and a comprehension of differing views. As elsewhere in Europe, existing medieval churches were adapted to Protestant worship by the removal of the physical divisions, relics of saints and iconography that were characteristic of Catholic religious practice. No new buildings were constructed, but there were attempts to mitigate destruction by the substitution for
Catholic imagery of features designed to emphasise Protestant word-centred religious practice.
Chapter 4: Calvinism and Laudianism: The Established Church and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined some of the changes in church liturgical arrangements that were brought about by the Reformation. This chapter adopts the same approach to the architecture of church and chapel to follow the expression of Protestant religious practice through the turbulent changes of the seventeenth century. It has been suggested that Maesyronnen (c.1697), the earliest example of a Welsh Dissenting chapel remaining relatively unaltered, was derived from the Welsh vernacular, as were subsequent lateral-façade chapels. The aim of this chapter is to establish the historical context of the building of Maesyronnen to enable an alternative interpretation.

Welsh Nonconformity is distinctive for its Calvinism. Denominations such as Baptists and Methodists that elsewhere became Arminian remained Calvinist in doctrine in Wales. A major thread running through this chapter is the continuity in religious practice between the Anglican Church and Dissent, and between Wales and England, that resulted from the Calvinist influence on architectural expression. During the seventeenth century, Protestants in England and Wales included Calvinists and others who wished to see greater freedom in religious practice and those who wished to maintain or reinstate a more ritualistic or High Church form of worship. The political manoeuvrings of Archbishop Laud and the Stuart kings precipitated confrontation, which turned into armed conflict in the Civil Wars of the mid century. Following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, clergy and congregations who were unwilling to compromise either left or were ejected from the reinstated Established Church, initiating the separation of Dissenting congregations.

The chapter begins by identifying evidence for Calvinism within the Established Church, first of all in London and then in Wales. The origins of Dissent are then explored through an account of Separatist groups, again in England and Wales. A brief discussion of the
Calvinism and Laudianism in the Established Church

Architectural history, written from the point of view of the nineteenth-century triumph of the High Church movement, has tended to emphasise the continuity between the Church of England and the Catholic Church that preceded it. The period between the Reformation and the Civil War has been characterised by some historians as one chiefly of destruction and debasement. It has been assumed that the dissolution of the monasteries and the stripping of churches under Edward VI led to the widespread neglect of church architecture, with expenditure on church goods and fabric never regaining their former levels after 1540. Some historians have argued that, despite destruction of some church fabric, at the parochial level, a medieval or traditional religious practice continued relatively undisturbed wherever possible. Where this was not the case, the inevitable result of the Reformation changes and the imposition of the word-centred Protestant liturgy under Elizabeth, was that churches were in a state of dilapidation by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The subsequent emphasis on Anglo-Catholic continuity from the late nineteenth century onwards, and the alterations to the liturgical arrangements of church interiors promoted by the High Church movement, have tended to obscure any positive aspects or innovations of the intervening period.
However, Diarmaid MacCulloch makes the case that this is to view both the theology and practice of the Elizabethan and Jacobean church through a ‘Laudian prism.’ He writes:

> The myth of the English Reformation is that it did not happen, or that it happened by accident rather than design, or that it was half-hearted and sought a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism; the point at issue is the identity of the Church of England. The myth was created in two stages, first in the middle years of the seventeenth century, and then from the third decade of the nineteenth century; and in either case it was created by one party within the church, largely consisting of clergy, with a particular motive in mind. This was to emphasise the Catholic continuity of the church over the break of the Reformation, in order to claim that the true representative of the Catholic Church within the borders of England and Wales was not the minority loyal to the bishop of Rome, but the church as by law established in 1559 and 1662. In the seventeenth century the group involved was called Arminian by contemporaries, and in later days it came to be labelled High Church, or Laudian, after its chief early representative William Laud. In the nineteenth century the same party revived was known variously as Tractarian, Oxford Movement, High Church, Ritualist, and, most commonly in the twentieth century, Anglo-Catholic.\(^1\)

MacCulloch concludes that the Church of England from its establishment up to the mid-nineteenth century was ‘ranged firmly alongside churches in the Reformed and Calvinist tradition rather than those in the Lutheran camp: nearer Zurich and Geneva than Wittenberg.’\(^2\) He includes as evidence for this view the moral legalism of the Anglican Church enshrined in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the wholehearted acceptance of the doctrine of predestination and the view that the Eucharist was a commemorative act only, as indicated by reference to it as the ‘Lord’s Supper’.

Yates suggests that:

> the one period in which some recent changes of emphasis might have an impact on architectural and liturgical history is the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, where a growing consensus is beginning to emerge about the development of a specifically Anglican religious position rather earlier than had previously been detected.\(^3\)

He similarly asserts that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Church of England was broadly Calvinist in doctrine and that this was expressed in religious practice:


The Articles of 1563, the nearest the Church of England ever came to a formal
confession of faith, are a clear statement of Reformation principles and in terms of
their ideology link the Church of England very clearly with those principles as
accepted by most Calvinist groups in Europe. For much of the late sixteenth and
early seventeenth centuries most Anglican theologians would have regarded
themselves as Calvinists.161

As detailed in the previous chapter, what this meant in practice was that churches were
not, in themselves, regarded as holy places, but more as lecture rooms or meeting places.
There was no accommodation of liturgical ritual and altars were replaced by Communion
tables, placed table-wise near to the congregation or moved there as and when necessary,
rather than fixed items set apart in a sanctuary.

William Laud (1573-1645) was made archbishop of Canterbury by Charles II in 1633.
He had earlier been bishop of St David’s from 1621 to 1626, and was subsequently
Bishop of Bath and Wells (1626-1628) and London (1628-33). He opposed the
prevailing Calvinist theology and sought to restore something of the pre-Reformation
liturgical practice of the Church of England.162 During the 1620s and 1630s, Laud
insisted that his clergy conform to the use of the Prayer Book and wear a surplice. To
reinstate the ceremonial of the Eucharist and the sanctity of the altar, communion tables
should treated as altars, placed at the east end of the chancel and railed off from the laity,
so that people were compelled to kneel at the rails to receive the sacrament.163 Essential
to this programme was the east-west axial orientation of churches, so that the altar was
the focus of the interior with, preferably, a processional route to it, in order to enhance
the sanctity and drama of the Eucharist. Contrary to Calvinist doctrine, Laud had
asserted that the built fabric of the church should be regarded as something set apart and
sacred in itself and that its appearance ought to reflect its status as the ‘house of God’.164
It should be noted that, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Calvinism did not
preclude the construction and use of a beautiful building, but only treating the building as
though it were any way sacred. Similarly, imagery was not proscribed, only sacred

164 Graham Parry, Glory, Laud and Honour (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006).
imagery. Since Laud’s claims that churches were in a state of dilapidation were made in order to justify his own intervention, there is cause to doubt them.

**Calvinism in the Established Church: Early Seventeenth-Century London Churches**

Recent research on this hitherto neglected period has suggested that ‘we may need to revise many of our presuppositions about, and also our very approach towards, the nature and significance of the physical structure of the church in seventeenth-century religious thought and society.’ In particular, Julia Merritt’s research on archival material concerning London’s parish churches, especially the detailed account of church refurbishment in London from 1603 to 1633 compiled by Anthony Munday, has found that ‘at the very least sixty-three London parish churches were either rebuilt or significantly repaired and beautified during the reign of James I.’ Merritt asserts:

> Many of these programmes of rebuilding and refurbishment were substantial and impressive. Churches were enlarged, walls taken down and repositioned, chancels rebuilt, galleries added, steeples repaired or rebuilt entirely, windows re-glazed, often with livery company or personal coats of arms, stonework repaired, and interiors newly paved and whitewashed. Church furniture also received due care and attention, with new and elaborately carved pulpits, new communion tables, and new pews all frequent additions to London’s Jacobean churches.

The example of St. Paul’s, Covent Garden, and its Calvinist patron, shows that it was not only the followers of Archbishop Laud who were concerned to improve and beautify both their churches and their city. Although the disruption of Civil War inevitably restricted opportunities for new building later in the century, recent scholarship has uncovered a high level of upkeep and investment in church fabric in the early seventeenth century. Chapels-of-ease were established and churches were enlarged in response to population growth, to remedy the perceived deficiencies of the existing church fabric, or simply to demonstrate local pride. Since improvements were generally funded through local or parish initiatives, with funds, often consisting of small donations, raised from a wide

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range of sources, most change would thus reflect what was collectively acceptable rather than the vision of any single wealthy individual.

Church repairs carried out at the beginning of the seventeenth century were deliberately played down by Archbishop Laud and his followers, who accused Puritans of neglect in order to justify their own interventions in church interiors from 1630. This is demonstrated by the results of the investigation carried out by John King, Bishop of London. As a moderate Calvinist and opponent of Laud, he made enquiries into building works of repair or innovation carried out in London’s churches between 1603 and 1633. Drawing on the records of this commission, Merritt finds evidence of Puritan parishes and ministers expending significant sums on the refurbishment of their churches and characterises the period as the high water mark of moderate Puritanism. In order to illustrate this view, she quotes how Andrew Willet, a noted contemporary moderate Puritan divine, was:

> eager to record and applaud Londoners ‘building and beautifying their churches’. There is a certain uneasiness evident in his attitude. He granted that churches ‘ought decently to be kept; yea, and with convenient cost and seemly beauty to be built and repaired, and church vessels with other necessary furniture, to be of the best, not of the worst, sort.’ But he also stressed that the need for reverence towards the church building did not mean ‘that such immoderate and excessive cost should be bestowed upon the walls of the Church and idols, to garnish and beautify idolatry and poore people in the meane time to want.’ Willett emphasised that people should not feel apologetic at avoiding such ‘immoderate cost’: it was ‘no sinne at all not to bestow princely cost in garnishing of a Church’, although he added the reservation ‘for moderate and seemly cost, we speak not against.’ ‘A Matrone’, he declared, ‘ought to goe comely and decently appareled….not tricked up with the jewels and ornaments of an harlot’.168

Despite Laud’s pronouncements, the accommodation of Calvinist church practice in the Church of England in the early seventeenth-century may be discerned in London. Peter Guillery writes of modest buildings ‘at the heart of the post-Reformation reshaping of England’s ecclesiastical architecture’, offering examples of Calvinist influence from as early as 1613-14 and providing evidence of inventive and adaptive continuity through the period.

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168 Willett, Synopsis Papismi, pp. 484-6 in Merritt, Puritans and Laudians, p. 954.
traumas of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{169} In particular, The Broadway Chapel, Westminster (1635-9), now demolished but well documented, and the similar Poplar Chapel (1642-54), which still exists, are presented as models for seventeenth-century Calvinist churches and chapels, having been themselves influenced by Dutch Calvinist churches. In what is presented as a mechanism for the transfer of ideas, Shadwell Chapel (1656-7) is described as following from these earlier exemplars. All of these buildings were initially chapels of ease, funded locally, usually from within the parish, by private subscription. Only later did they become parish churches. Because of their locations, in the Port of London and other ports alongside the Thames, they would also have been highly visible to merchants and seamen, the class of people later to form the majority of Dissenters.

These chapels are described as exhibiting a moderate Calvinism:

This moderate or conformist Reformed position, between the Laudian and the Puritan, was committed to maintaining the sixteenth-century Reformation's clean break with medieval traditions but had little interest in further radical reform.\textsuperscript{170}

As detailed in the previous chapter, Calvinist worship was centred on preaching, with the pulpit the focus of attention in a unified, centralised space. Communion was demoted to a commemorative act and might only take place infrequently, perhaps as little as once a year, so communion tables were generally moveable and placed with their long sides facing north and south, avoiding the traditional orientation of an altar. Internal imagery would have been avoided, and whitewashed walls preferred. Kneeling and processing were thought popish, so that seating could be tightly packed, so long as there was reasonable access.\textsuperscript{171} Filling the interior with fixed seating would eliminate any central aisle, effectively preventing any processional entrances.

Guillery cites two examples in illustration of this assertion:

St John Wapping of 1615-17 (replaced 1756) was a humble chapel of ease, built and paid for by the eastern riverside district's inhabitants at a cost of £1,600.


\textsuperscript{170} Guillery, \textit{Calvinism and Continuity}, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{171} George Yule, 'James VI and I: furnishing the churches in his two kingdoms', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), \textit{Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain: Essays in honour of Patrick Collinson} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 188, 193-7, 204.
Brick built and outwardly Gothic, it had a nave and two aisles of equal height, together nearly square on plan, though wider than long, with a short chancel and a south tower with a ‘Tuscan’ doorcase. The south gallery said to be ‘Tuscan’. St James Clerkenwell of 1623-7 (replaced 1788) was a comparably modest and short box-like replacement of a former nunnery church, built for about £1,400, and also partly Tuscan.172

The significance of the use of ‘Tuscan’ detailing has already been explored in connection with the idea of the primitive or early church as a legitimising model for Reformation changes. During the seventeenth century, both Laudians and Calvinists sought to justify their preferences with reference to the primitive church. To illustrate the Calvinist interpretation, Guillery quotes from two seventeenth-century texts:

The first principle of Independency in the 1640’s was said to be “to follow the pattern and example of the churches erected by the Apostles” from Anon., An Anatomy of Independency (London, 1644); and Congregationalists in the late 1650’s wished to emulate “the Apostolicall Primitive Churches” from Anon., Certaine Propositions Tending to the Reformation of the Parish Congregations in England (London, 1655), p.9.173

The two chapels, at Westminster and Poplar are used to illustrate the type of church interior that could be interpreted as expressing a moderate Calvinism. Both are described as having centrally-planned Tuscan interiors, modestly classical brick exteriors and no west entrances but instead, ‘unconventionally’, four entrances, at either end of each long elevation. The separate entrances give direct access to fixed and enclosed blocks of seating so that those attending worship. The preacher must also have used one of these entrances, placing him on a par with his congregation and preventing any possibility of a processional entrance for the minister. The plans were carefully proportioned and centralised crosses-in-rectangles, resulting in a north-south as well as east-west symmetry that removed all eastwards emphasis. In 1711, the pulpits in both buildings were just east of the crossings. There were no galleries to start with, but west galleries were early additions, and, at Poplar, north and south galleries followed after 1700. The simple classical interior survives at Poplar (figures 4.1 and 4.2).

172 Guillery, Calvinism and Continuity, pp. 70-71.
173 Guillery, Calvinism and Continuity, p. 71.
part of the older Churches in England, you shall plainly see, that the Chancells are but additions’, and ‘a number of our old Churches have their Iles of such perfect Crosse, that they cannot possibly see either high Altar or so much as the Chancell’. Williams was a mainstream Calvinist, but, unusually, he was also an enthusiastic ceremonialist, keen on ornament, stained glass and music. Despite this, the Laudian attack portrayed Williams’s moderate Calvinism as Puritanism, a typically counterproductive and radicalising strategy that gave Williams’s trial undue sectarian resonance.\textsuperscript{174}

The centralised space reflects the main function of a Reformed church, that of a lecture room. Rather more self-consciously, the classical interior represents a primitivist interpretation of architecture. The design was without close English precedent at that time, but, as illustrated in the previous chapter, the Dutch were building new Calvinist churches, and adapting existing buildings, to fulfil the requirements of Calvinist worship. Similarly, Shadwell Chapel, now St Paul’s, Shadwell, may also be characterised as Calvinist, and as ‘prompting comparison with De Keyser’s churches’, particularly the Zuiderkerk, Amsterdam, built 1603-11, internally a six-bay rectangle with Tuscan arcades and vaults along nave and aisles (figure 4.3).\textsuperscript{175}

\textbf{Figure 4.3:} De Keyser, Zuiderkerk, Amsterdam (1603-11), interior. Now deconsecrated, the interior hosts a permanent exhibition of the development of the plan of Amsterdam and current planning proposals for the city.

\textsuperscript{174} Guillery, \textit{Calvinism and Continuity}, pp. 77-78.

\textsuperscript{175} Guillery, \textit{Calvinism and Continuity}, p. 79.
Broadway chapel is confirmed as Calvinist in intent, through a series of pamphlets which publicised the contemporary feud between John Williams (1582-1650), the Dean of Westminster Abbey who had consecrated the chapel, and Canon Peter Heylyn, who spoke for the Laudian view:

A letter of 1627 from Williams to the vicar of Grantham had become, in the early 1630s, the clearest and best known articulation of an anti-Laudian approach to communion, wherein Williams advised that rather than being an altar fixed at the east end of the church the communion table should be moveable, for use in a position where the minster would remain most audible. Heylyn’s published refutation of this letter was countered in 1636 with publication of *Holy Table name and Thing*, in which Williams invoked primitive precedent, claiming that ‘Herods Temple was 60 cubits long; 20 within, and fourty without the Veil; and this Altar was close unto the Veil.’ He also thought that ‘if you mark the most
East London was a place of merchants, artisans and the poor, where Calvinism and Puritanism were dominant, and where many separatist congregations were formed in the seventeenth century. Some of the earliest separatist congregations became established in the port towns and trading centres of eastern England, where contacts with the Netherlands were strong. The experience of Puritans who chose exile in the Netherlands, rather than persecution at home, but who were later able to return to England is recounted below. Other authors have drawn attention to the closeness of the cultural links between the English and the Dutch and between English and Dutch architecture in the seventeenth century.176

The Established Church in Wales in the Early Seventeenth Century

The Calvinism of the London churches described above was not just a metropolitan phenomenon, but part of a national and international network. The triumph of Calvinism in the Dutch United Provinces was confirmed in 1618 by the Synod of Dort, which was attended by Anglican clergy from England and Wales. There, a comprehensive Presbyterian system of church government had been set up. Similarly, in Scotland, the Reformed Church of Scotland had been established on Presbyterian lines after John Knox had returned there from Geneva in 1559.177 When James Stuart, already James VI of Scotland, succeeded to the throne of England and Ireland as James I on the death of Elizabeth in 1603, he already had experience in resisting the manipulations of power-seeking Presbyterian clergy. In supporting the Church of England he managed to avoid favouring either Puritans or Roman Catholics and also began to disentangle England from its alliance with the Dutch United Provinces.178 The perceived sympathies of the Stuarts towards Roman Catholics and their opposition to the Calvinist Dutch were a source of disquiet for the majority of Calvinist Anglicans throughout the century.

It is difficult to gauge the state of religion in Wales in the early seventeenth century. One view is that 'neither the Catholic nor the puritan element was especially strong in Wales', although 'the most devoted groups of Roman Catholics and of Protestants had been found in much the same areas of Wales – Wrexham and Flintshire in the north-east and Monmouthshire in the south-east.'\textsuperscript{179} Geraint H. Jenkins, in common with other historians, describes Wales as one of the 'dark corners of the land'.\textsuperscript{180} The poverty and ignorance of the Welsh clergy have frequently been cited as one reason for this.\textsuperscript{181} In his nineteenth-century description of the translation of the Bible into Welsh by William Morgan in 1588, Rees stresses Morgan's personal determination to complete the task, and suggests that he was hindered rather than encouraged by his 'popish parishioners.'\textsuperscript{182} Despite the availability of the Bible in Welsh, Huw Lewys, in a seventeenth-century petition to parliament, claimed that 'most copies of it were kept locked up in parish churches and could be read only once a week, though many neglected even that opportunity.'\textsuperscript{183}

Amongst the obstacles to the progress of word-centred religion in seventeenth-century Wales was the paucity of books in the Welsh language, when the majority of the population were monoglot Welsh, and the level of literacy, which may have been as low as 10 per cent:

The difficulties of the clergy were intensified by two other sets of circumstances: first, the widespread illiteracy existing among the mass of population; second, the absence of any printing press in Wales. It is very difficult to tell just how many of the people of Wales were able to read in the early seventeenth century, but it is almost certain that it could not have been more than 20 per cent of them, at best, and the actual figure may have been as low as ten per cent. Adding to that difficulty was the absence of a printing press. Indeed, the former may well have arisen from the latter- because there was no printing press, there was little opportunity for people to learn to read. Wales was economically such a poor

\textsuperscript{179} Glanmor Williams, William Jacob, Nigel Yates, Frances Knight, \textit{The Welsh Church from Reformation to Disestablishment, 1603-1920} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{181} Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, \textit{The Welsh Church}, pp. 12-14.
\textsuperscript{182} Rees, \textit{Protestant Nonconformity}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{183} Glanmor Williams, \textit{Reformation}, p. 383.
country and the printing industry so capital intensive that the money simply did not exist to establish it.\textsuperscript{184}

Despite this, from the 1630s onwards, a Calvinistic Protestantism based on catechising, the Bible and sermons, does begin to be more visible in Wales. The tenor of this instruction was that of the moderate Calvinism that had been expressed in the Elizabethan Settlement more than fifty years before and that had since become accepted as the basis of teaching in the Church of England:

Puritans like Oliver Thomas and Evan Roberts mapped out the new discipline and morality implicit in Calvinism in Welsh manuals. Most of all, Morgan Llwyd of Cynfal explored in memorable (if sometimes opaque) Welsh prose the complex and intriguing connection between the language of God and human language.\textsuperscript{185}

There were determined efforts in evidence to raise the standard of contemporary religion in Wales through the provision of Welsh translations of popular religious books.\textsuperscript{186} A broadly comparable version of the King James Bible was published in Welsh in 1620, a new Welsh translation of the Book of Common Prayer in accordance with the text of the new Bible following in 1621. The Book of Common Prayer was frequently bound with the Catechism, as it was in English editions. The first modestly-priced Bible, \textit{Y Beibl Bach} (The Little Bible) was published in 1630, although sources indicate that its possession was still not widespread, and the problem of illiteracy remained.\textsuperscript{187}

The Calvinist emphasis placed on the sermon was addressed by the publication in 1606 of a Welsh translation of the \textit{Book of Homilies}, a manual of sermons that had been available in English parish churches since 1580. The emphasis on the effective use of the pulpit is also evidenced by ‘the increasing tendency on the part of the corporations of towns like Haverfordwest and Swansea to pay for sermons delivered by visiting lecturers’, whilst clergy were increasingly ‘university graduates and former pupils of grammar schools’.\textsuperscript{188}

Taken together, these measures indicate a general improvement in the standard of

\textsuperscript{184} Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, \textit{The Welsh Church}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{187} Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, \textit{The Welsh Church}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{188} Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, \textit{The Welsh Church}, p. 16.
worship during the early seventeenth century, with Welsh speakers able to experience in
their native language the same church services as their fellow Anglicans in England.

A concern with morality and discipline is a distinctively Calvinist trait. It was the
responsibility of each individual to demonstrate that they were members of God's elect,
chosen for salvation, through their everyday conduct and morality. Books of religious
instruction and moral exhortation were aids to this end. Calvinist attitudes within the
Established Church in Wales were represented by *The Practice of Piety*, by Lewis Bayly,
Bishop of Bangor from 1616 to 1631, translated into Welsh by Rowland Vaughan; and
by the verse of Rhys Prichard (1579?-1644), known as *Yr Hen Fiar* (the old vicar).
Glanmor Williams describes Prichard's verse as being similar to that of a number of
cwmdihwr (popular poets) in south-east Wales, who also employed their verses, written
in popular measures and colloquial language and sometimes set to well-known tunes, to
make Protestant views and scriptural knowledge more familiar among the people.189 At a
time when the bardic tradition of poetry in strict metres was in terminal decline, a new
oral tradition was being created to replace an old one that was dying out.190

Vicar Prichard was the son of a considerable land owner and he had a successful career in
the Established Church. He was made Prebendary of Christ Church College, Brecon in
1614 and later became a Canon of St David's Cathedral, to which post the living of
Llawhaden parish in Pembrokeshire was attached, giving him a substantial income and
social status.191 Vicar Prichard was a proverbial pillar of the establishment, yet his
populist and popular verses express a Calvinistic interpretation of religion. The verses
became widespread reading after the complete works were published by Stephen Hughes
in 1681 under the title *Canywll y Cymru* (The Welshman's Candle). By that date,
Hughes, an ordained priest, had himself left the Established Church to become Dissenting
minister, founding a number of Independent chapels in Carmarthenshire. His interest in
publishing Vicar Prichard's verse shows the continuity of views between Dissent and the
Established Church, whilst the enduring popularity of the book, which was published in

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189 Glanmor Williams, *Reformation*, p. 304.
191 The National Library of Wales Dictionary of National Biography online, entry for Prichard, Rhys ('Yr
NLWDNBI).
fifty-two editions between 1682 and 1830, shows the enduring popular appeal of sentiments informed by Calvinist beliefs.

Separatism: The Origins of Old Dissent

The discussion of Calvinism in the previous chapter has shown that for the seventeenth century it is anachronistic to make any great distinction between politics and religion. The Laudian reforms were of political as well as religious significance. Laud was made Archbishop of Canterbury by Charles I in 1633 and in 1640 Laud introduced into Convocation new canons proclaiming the Divine Right of Kings and compelling whole classes of people to swear never to consent to alter the government of the Church. Like James I before him, Charles wished to distance himself from the Calvinist Dutch. As Christopher Hill points out:

Laud seemed to Puritans the true schismatic, not only because of his attempt to enforce new doctrines and ceremonies, but also because he ended intercommunication with the Dutch and Huguenot churches. This isolated England from the Calvinist international at a time when the threatened advance of Catholicism in the Thirty Years' War seemed to make unity among Protestants politically as well as theologically essential. Oliver Cromwell thought of emigrating; in fact he stayed on and led the policy of co-operating with lower-class sectaries to rescue England [sic] from the threatened return of popery.192

In this interpretation, it was Archbishop Laud who was the extremist, forcing the moderate Calvinists that made up the majority in the Church of England into rebellion by his intransigence and their fear of a return to popish practices.

As Anthony Milton demonstrates in his study of the intellectual history of the early seventeenth century, opinion among clergymen was not polarised into just two or even three camps, Puritans, moderate Calvinists and Laudians.193 Instead, as well as the radicalism of separatists and recusancy of Catholics outside it, there was a spectrum of overlapping and constantly changing views even within the church. As early as 1616, a congregation had gathered together in London under the leadership of the radicals Henry Jacob and Henry Jessey (1601-1633).194 They adopted the practice known as 'the New

194 Henry Jessey, NLWDWB.
England Way', which included supporting their pastors by voluntary alms and allowing gifted laymen to expound the scriptures. Henry Jessey was an ordained minister of the Established Church, and an early proponent of adult Baptism, but remained in close contact with other Puritans:

It is clear that throughout his sectarian career he moved easily and co-operatively among the gathered churches and their leaders, especially the Independents. For, although he became a Baptist in a formal sense and published his Baptist opinions, neither he nor his church was actively involved with the nationwide programme and organisation of the closed-membership Calvinistic Baptists. That Jessey remained as an ordained minister within the Church of England until his death in 1663 was not unusual. Laud’s enforcement of his reforms had the effect of radicalising more mainstream Calvinist opinion so that for some, separating from the Established Church began to seem more acceptable than continuing within it.

To emphasise the fluidity of belief of individuals and congregations, Hill suggested that there were two different types of Puritans. First, there are those he termed ‘official Puritans’, the clergymen with Calvinist convictions. Included in this category would be the Bishop of London, John Kent, referred to earlier, and those merchants and intellectuals who remained communicants within the Church of England while continuing to hope for further significant reform. Secondly, there were the more radical lower-class movements:

from Lollards through Marian martyrs to Elizabethan Familists and the radical sectaries of the sixteen-forties and fifties, [with] a tradition of hostility to the state and its church, to clerical pretensions, to tithes, church courts and oaths, to military service.

These latter, he suggests, were more closely associated with areas of the country with a well-developed urbanism, and with the concentrations of lower-class wage labourers associated with trade and commerce in ports and cities. Hill’s is a rather Marxist interpretation of the history of Dissent, in that it assumes that revolution originates with the working classes and the dispossessed. Christopher Stell also refers to ‘Puritan

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strongholds of East Anglia where continental influences and trade connections were strong\(^{198}\), but the inference here is that it was the merchant class that was more influential in the establishment of Dissent, since it was they who could later afford to build their own meeting-houses. As Stell shows, the first chapels were built by congregations with members who were affluent and well-travelled, with experience of worship in the newly-expanding cities of the Calvinist Netherlands. This suggests that the influence of ‘polite’ architecture on design was likely to have been stronger than that of a local vernacular.

**Separatists in Wales**

The earliest incidence of Puritan preaching in Wales seems to have been that of William Wroth (1576-1641), rector of Llanvaches, a small parish near Chepstow in Monmouthshire. For nearly twenty years, before he came under the censure of his bishop in the 1630s, Wroth had, by means of his eloquent preaching and the example of his personal sanctity, succeeded in converting many. These converts he subsequently gathered into the ‘Gospel Order of Church Management’\(^ {199}\). The reference to the ‘Gospel Order’ indicates a wish to return to the worship practice of the early church. In practice, this was the ‘New England’ method described earlier, of a voluntary gathering, for mutual encouragement through sermons, extempore prayers and biblical exposition, set up alongside the worship of the Established Church.

However, following his elevation to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, Laud revived the Court of High Commission, with powers to examine the conduct of religion and prosecute misdemeanours. Local enforcement was delegated to bishops, elected for their sympathy to Laud’s regime. Wroth, and William Erbury, the minister of St. Mary’s and St. John’s in Cardiff, were cited in the Court of Assize in 1635 for refusing to comply with Laud’s injunctions to wear a surplice. Church vestments were a continued source of controversy, with those of Calvinist sympathies unwilling to distinguish themselves from their congregation by special clothing or to subscribe in any way to Roman Catholic ceremonial. Similarly, Wroth would not read out in church the Jacobean ‘Book of

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\(^{199}\) Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, *The Welsh Church*, p. 29.
Sports’, which stipulated that Sunday should be a day of no work but encouraged social activities such as sports and dancing. Both Wroth and Erbury was castigated for their outdoor preaching. The hearing was adjourned until 1638, suggesting that the authorities were in no hurry to take decisive action, at which time, Erbury resigned his living and Wroth conformed. Wroth therefore remained as minister of the parish church at Llanvaches when a gathered church ‘was established’ there in 1639 under the patronage of Sir Edward Lewis of Y Fan, near Caerphilly.200

Contrary to a view of the continuity of belief between the Established Church and Puritans, the history written by the Independent minister Thomas Rees in the nineteenth century emphasises the distinctiveness of the Calvinists, subject to the oppression of Archbishop Laud. He claims that there was ‘systematic persecution of all those pious clergymen in their dioceses who were not strict conformists’, for instance: ‘1640- St Asaph- A conventicle of mean persons was laid hold on, and complaint was made to the council of the Marches.’201 This group may well have been influenced by Walter Cradock (?1610-59), also Monmouthshire in origin and formerly Erbury’s curate in Cardiff. Cradock was also a renowned preacher, who was curate in Wrexham, the largest town in north Wales, for eleven months in1635-36. Wrexham became another centre of radical belief, with Morgan Llwyd (1619-59) and Vavasor Powell (1617-70) also attending meetings and preaching there. Both Cradock and Powell later emerged as leading radicals of considerable authority during the years of Parliamentary rule, before Cromwell became Lord Protector in 1653.

Cradock was deprived of this curacy because of his inflammatory preaching, but was befriended by a locally influential Herefordshire family, the Harleys, who were Puritan sympathisers and who were able to promote the careers of radical clergymen.202 Rees also describes how he is visible subsequently during the Interregnum as a member of the parliamentary Assembly of Divines, convened in 1643 to discuss church government, speaking on the right of ‘mechanic sorts’ to preach. Both these early centres of

200 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, The Welsh Church, p. 11-12.
Puritanism in Wales, then, had the support of wealthy families of some social standing. Llanvaches was supported by a knight and landowner, who perhaps owned enough property to provide alternative premises or was wealthy enough to finance them; whilst Cradock had the support of the Harleys.

Wroth was said to have attracted such large crowds to his sermons that he had to preach outdoors when the parish church was full. It is not known whether the ‘gathered church’ led by Wroth had separate premises from the parish church; if so, no trace of the building survives. Thomas Rees, however, describes how Wroth and others were prompted to leave their parish churches and set up alternative prayer meetings in whatever premises they could obtain, stating that Wroth was deprived of his living in 1638 under Laud and in the following year founded the first Independent Church in Wales at Llanvaches, near Chepstow in Monmouthshire.

He includes an emotive description of Wroth’s dramatic conversion from an easy-going, violin-playing ordained minister of the Established Church to the evangelical ‘Apostle of Wales’. Quoting from a pamphlet, William Erbury’s Apocripha of 1652, the popularity and effectiveness of Wroth’s preaching after his conversion is described:

There were not more spiritual and suffering saints in any part of English ground than were in Wales; so self-denying and dying to the world – yea, so wise-hearted and knowing Christians: let all the English counties about them testify, and tell how many saints from Somerset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Radnorshire, Glamorganshire, &c., came in multitudes to Llanvaches.

During the Civil War, fearing Royalist victory, Walter Cradock, Wroth’s successor, fled to Bristol with some of their followers, where they are described as meeting:

first in the Dolphin, in the great room, then afterwards sometimes at a baker’s house, upon James’ Back, who was a member of the church; after that, they had he use of a small public place to themselves, called ‘T’Ewins by the Tolzey, where they used to preach and celebrate the ordinance of the Lord, as it was delivered.²⁰³

In this account, Rees’ emphasis is on the persecution that Cradock and his followers had to endure and this is achieved by the description of their having to use whatever premises they could obtain. It also serves to illustrate the close connections between Welsh Puritans and Puritan sympathisers in the adjacent English counties, especially Bristol,

²⁰³ Thomas Rees, Protestant Nonconformity, p. 49.
which became a centre for Dissent in the seventeenth century and remained so until the eighteenth century, when some of the first Methodist meeting rooms were built there.

The Laudian canons of 1640 insisted on the acceptance by all the king’s subjects of the doctrine, ceremonies and government of the Anglican Church and laid down that the whole population must attend their parish church to receive communion. Laud was not prepared to allow the compromise of the ‘New England way’, so precipitating the move outside the Anglican Church of those groups with separatist tendencies, such as the meeting at Llanvaches. However, the Puritan activists in Wales before the Civil War were a tiny minority:

The large majority remained loyal in their allegiance to the Church ‘by law established’, even though so many of them continued to be woefully ill instructed and badly informed about the nature and teaching of that Church. They were its adherents far more by inheritance and usage than from conviction or belief.

This situation was changed as a result of the Civil War. During the Commonwealth, Puritan preachers were encouraged to occupy the pulpits of the parish churches, disseminating more radical Calvinist views. At the Restoration, many of the clergy who were ejected from their livings set up schools as a means of income, ensuring the continuity of their views by direct proselytising and, crucially, by increasing access to literacy.

The Civil War and Cromwell’s Presbyterian Church

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1642, the loyalties of the Welsh, unsurprisingly, were divided. In Wales, as in England, the more sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped areas of the north and west generally supported the Crown, whilst the more populous areas, particularly ports and markets open to the communication of radical ideas, supported parliament. There were influential Roman Catholic aristocrats and landowners such as Lord Raglan and the Earl of Worcester, who could command a following. In 1629, a large gathering at the ancient site of pilgrimage in northeast Wales, St Winifred’s Well, Holywell, Flintshire, had shown the strength and solidarity of Roman

\[ Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, The Welsh Church, p. 33. \]
\[ Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, The Welsh Church, p. 32. \]
Catholic sympathies. However, to set against this was the traditional enmity of the Welsh towards the Irish, which could now be justified and amplified by an abhorrence of their religion.

Support for Parliament consistently came from those areas that had already been receptive to radical ideas:

those who had imbibed the Puritan faith in religiously minded enclaves along the Welsh borders, notably at Llanvaches in Monmouthshire and Wrexham in Denbighshire, and among those whose finely tuned commercial instincts had induced within them a fundamental mistrust of the king’s financial policies. Economic considerations were of crucial importance to some. Merchants in Haverfordwest, Pembroke, and Tenby depended heavily for their livelihood on a substantial sea-trade with Bristol, which was renowned for its fervent Puritanism. Ties of kinship were of special importance in Pembrokeshire, where the rebel cause was favoured by families linked to the commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces, Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, who owned extensive estates in south west Wales. Two of the most prominent supporters of Parliament, Rowland Lake and Rice Powell, had served under Essex in the Low Countries and the German states.

Elsewhere, landowners and aristocrats with personal vendettas against the king’s supporters, such as Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, of Cardiff Castle, and Henry Herbert of Coldbrook in Monmouthshire, also supported parliament, as did Sir Thomas Myddelton of Chirk Castle, whose father was a former merchant who had risen to become Lord Mayor of London.

Debates about reforms to the liturgy and government of the church took place to an unprecedented degree at all levels in society:

The de facto religious toleration of the sixteen-forties allowed the really radical sects to emerge from underground, to meet and discuss in public, to organise themselves under their own mechanic preachers, free from all control, either of the state church or of their social superiors.

At the same time, there was an accommodation of a wide range of belief and practice and a vestigial preservation of the existing system:

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Cromwell’s state church reunited moderate Episcopalians, Presbyterians and many Congregationalists, together with some Baptists, in a loose federation of fairly independent congregations; it preserved tithes (until some better form of maintenance could be devised) and patronage.209

After the execution of Charles I in January 1649, Parliament took more decisive action to institute a new form of church government. Cromwell’s hope was that it would be possible to re-unite Britain, after the strife of Civil War, in a national church with the Presbyterian form of organisation recommended by Calvin. The Episcopal church government of the Church of England would be replaced by a system of representatives forwarded from the local presbytery, replacing the parish, thence to regional assemblies and synods and finally to a national assembly. In 1642, the House of Commons endorsed the recommendations of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, to replace the Book of Common Prayer with a new Presbyterian Directory of Worship.

The progress of the Presbyterian system in Wales was dogged by a lack of sufficiently able and qualified new Puritan preachers and accusations of nepotism, greed and corruption. Language was a major difficulty, since Cromwell assumed that English would be the language of government of both the country and the church in a Protestant United Kingdom, but there were insufficient English-speaking parishioners in Wales. Also, the use of the Welsh translation of the Book of Common Prayer had begun to achieve popular acceptance so that its proscription caused resentment. The ‘Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales’ was passed in February 1650 to promote reform. The intention was to expedite the progress of the Presbyterian system in Wales and also to set up schools in all the major market towns in accordance with Calvinist precepts.

Seventy-one commissioners were appointed to oversee the seizing of church assets and the appropriation of Church livings and tithes and their re-allocation to Puritan ministers and the new schools. A body of ‘Approvers’ was appointed to assist in the examination of existing incumbents of parish churches and their removal if found wanting. This group consisted of sympathetic clergymen and included all the existing leaders of radical

Protestant groups in Wales, including Walter Cradock, Morgan Llwyd, Vavasor Powell, Ambrose Mostyn (a preacher from north Wales) and John Myles, an exponent of adult baptism despatched to Wales from the London centre of Baptist belief. This committee is known to have removed 278 of existing clergy from their livings; there may have been more, unbenefficed clergy, whose details were not recorded. However, there were not enough adequately qualified or talented preachers to replace them, encouraging the practice of itinerant preaching as few men had to cover wide areas, setting a precedent for the Methodism of the following century.

The Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales was in force for only three years. It was not renewed by parliament when it expired in 1653 and subsequently a more centralised approach to the setting up of a new administration was taken, at least partly in response to the fear of radicalism prompted by the emergence of more extreme views. The anarchy unleashed by the lack of authority during the 1640s had alarmed the conservative mainstream Calvinists in the Church and government sufficiently for Parliament to restore censorship in the 1650s. More extreme sects, such as the Levellers, Diggers, Ranters and Fifth Monarchists, were all suppressed. When Cromwell allowed himself to be declared Lord Protector, also in 1653, he lost the support of the Millenarians and Fifth Monarchists such as Vavasor Powell, since he had now assumed the central authority they wished to see destroyed. The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 was generally welcomed by a population tired of war and afraid of the anarchy of extremists.

The Restoration of the Monarchy, the Clarendon Code and the Act of Uniformity

Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660. The Episcopal system of the Anglican Church was re-established as the state church in 1661 by the Act of Uniformity, as detailed in the introductory chapter. The Act was one of four, known collectively as the

210 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, The Welsh Church, pp. 38-42; Geraint H. Jenkins, Modern Wales, pp. 46-53.
Clarendon Code, passed by the Restoration Parliament to give additional reinforcement to the position of the Established Church of England and restrict the activity of Dissenters. The Corporation Act was also passed in 1661, requiring all municipal office holders, within one year of taking office, to receive the sacrament (Holy Communion) after the forms of the Church of England. They were also called on to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant, an oath that pledged solidarity with the Scottish Presbyterians and the international cause of Calvinism. This effectively barred Dissenters from holding any public office until its repeal in 1828 and ensured that there was no solidarity between those who held office and Calvinists elsewhere. Dissenters were unable to matriculate at an English University, since that required confirmation by church ceremonial, so they were also debarred from entering the church or practising law.

The Conventicle Act of 1664 rendered anyone over 16 who was convicted of attending a conventicle liable to a fine or imprisonment. A conventicle was defined as a meeting of four or more people, without a family relationship, assembling for worship other than according to the Prayer Book of the Church of England. It expired in 1667, but was revived three years later, with reduced fines for attending meetings but heavier ones for those supplying premises for them. In a move intended to be divisive of communities, enforcement was encouraged by awarding a proportion of the fine levied to the informer whose intelligence had led to the convictions. The Five Mile Act of 1665 required potential schoolmasters or tutors to take an oath of non-resistance to royal authority before undertaking teaching duties and prohibited Dissenters from living within five miles of any corporate town or place in which they had previously served as a minister. These Acts were intended to inhibit Dissenting pedagogic activity of any kind and prevent ejected clergy from simply taking their congregations with them to alternative premises near the parish church. The Acts necessitated the use of whatever alternative premises might be available and since these also had to be out of town, they may have been barns and farmhouses, though the small numbers involved, the social status of Dissenters and a lack of suitable barns, suggests the latter. Necessity, rather than any affinity with the vernacular, may have promoted the use of barns in the twenty-five years during which the Acts were fitfully and patchily enforced.
The First Baptist Congregation in Wales

The significance and importance of baptism, and at what stage in a Christian’s life it should occur and by what method, remained controversial issues throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with much public argument and pamphleteering. There were many Baptist sympathisers amongst the New Model Army and some were given church livings during the Commonwealth. John Myles, a Cambridge graduate who had become convinced of the scriptural precedent and evangelical necessity of adult baptism, was given the living at Ilston, on the Gower peninsular near Swansea, where he remained for four years, choosing to emigrate to New England in 1653, well before he would have been ejected from his living by the Act of Uniformity in 1660.

John Myles kept a diary during his ministry at Ilston, but he took this with him to Massachusetts where he settled, founding a Baptist church there in a new town called Swansea. The diary remained largely unknown in Wales and unused by Welsh historians until complete facsimiles were sent, firstly to the Baptist historian D. Rhys Philips of Swansea in 1929, and subsequently to the newly-founded National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth in 1939. It has only very recently been transcribed from the original manuscript and published.\(^{212}\) The opening hand, proposed to be that of John Myles himself, reveals ‘a wealth of scholarship as well as a profound personal knowledge of the early development of the cause’.\(^{213}\) The book includes lists of members and correspondence between individuals and congregations in Ireland, London and Devon and Llanwenarth near Abergavenny, Hay, Aberafan and Llantrisant in Wales. Although it was never lost sight of in Swansea, Massachusetts, where it had remained, its authenticity was questioned since the entire volume is written in English and it was assumed that an early register of a Welsh church would have been written in Welsh.

Although Myles himself emigrated, the Baptist church at Ilston survived to found churches at Hay and Abergavenny, nuclei from which Baptist convictions could be spread, so that by the early eighteenth century the Baptist denomination had gained a solid following in south Wales. In 1928, the year before the first facsimile of Myles’s

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diary arrived in Britain, it was decided that the founding of first Welsh Baptist church should be commemorated by a permanent memorial at Ilston. Since no remnants of any Baptist chapel could be found, the site chosen was the ruin of a pre-Reformation chapel known as the Chapel of Trinity Well, and a monument was duly erected that visitors still seek out. The monument takes the form of an artificially constructed ruin, suggesting the walls of a rectangular building, with a stone structure representing a raised pulpit at one end (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: The 'pulpit' of the memorial to the first Baptist chapel in Wales at Ilston, Gower, West Glamorgan.

Given the historical circumstances, it seems certain that 'the publicke meeting howse at Ilston'\textsuperscript{214} mentioned in the entry for 16 August 1650 refers to the parish church of Ilston (figure 4.5) where John Myles served as Puritan preacher during the period 1657-60. This is supported by the comment of the historian of the Welsh Baptists: 'Services were usually held in the parish church'.\textsuperscript{215} The Baptists of 1928 preferred to ally themselves with a medieval Catholic site rather than with the Established Church of England.

\textsuperscript{214} Owens, \textit{The Ilston Book}, mentioned in 16/8/1650, C23 in the transcript.  
A similar story to that of John Myles was repeated throughout England and Wales, with many dissenters, especially those of the most extreme and so the most persecuted sects, the Baptists and Quakers, emmigrating to the new American colonies. However, many other erstwhile radicals, particularly Independents, were able to continue their membership of a gathered church, not always in exclusion of attendance at the Established Church. Participation in experimental and informal acts of worship and debates on the importance and biblical precedence for church organisation and liturgy continued throughout the years of intermittent persecution. Christopher Hill emphasised the fluidity of belief between radical groups and the Anglican Church ‘in deliberate reaction against those denominational historians who are apt to push the origins of their own sect in an organised form too far back’.

The Emergence of Dissent

The fluidity of belief can be illustrated by a Bedfordshire parish. The reforms promoted during the Commonwealth were aimed at the establishment of Calvinist sermon-centred religious practice, with new ministers appointed by the Parliamentary commissions chosen for their preaching abilities. Although university-educated and ordained ministers

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were preferred by Parliament, those of the artisan class, lacking any formal education but renowned for their preaching abilities, might also be promoted to parish church livings. Such was the Bedfordshire tinker John Bunyan:

An Independent church was formed in Bedford in 1650 with John Gifford as pastor and this later met in the parish church of St. John, to which Gifford was appointed rector in 1653. After Gifford’s death in 1655 the services were frequently conducted by John Bunyan, who was ordained pastor 21 October 1671 and continued until his death in 1688. After c. 1660 the church, which under Bunyan’s influence came to disregard differences over baptismal practice, was obliged to meet elsewhere. The present site was acquired in 1672 and a barn fitted up for use, which was replaced by a permanent meeting house in 1707. The Old Meeting-house, as it came to be called, costing £400 and seating 700 persons, was a square timber-framed building with three parallel roofs supported by posts with triple gables to the north and south; the interior, partly refitted in 1769, had a pulpit against the east wall between tall windows and galleries around three sides.

Thus, some of the Church of England parishioners, convinced by John Bunyan’s charismatic leadership and preaching, retained a strong enough sense of conviction to overcome the challenge of their ejection from their parish church and persecution under the Clarendon Code. The group was sufficiently coherent to acquire premises, adding to its self-definition and possibly involving them in a financial commitment. In this case, the gathered church was sufficiently well-established to continue to thrive without the personal leadership of Bunyan, gaining enough self-confidence and having the financial resources to build a rather grand chapel by 1707. Later, in 1772, doctrinal differences caused further divisions in the church, when ‘the Independents objected to the pronounced Baptist emphasis of the minister; and in 1793 when Baptists objected to his less rigid successor’. 218

The events of this story were repeated in many other parishes throughout England and perhaps Wales and may be summarised as follows. The Commonwealth disestablishment of the Anglican Church enabled a gathered church to assemble for worship in the former parish church (Separatists called themselves ‘gathered churches’ to denote that they gathered together voluntarily, rather than as obliged by statute). Subsequently, either under the duress of the Act of Uniformity or in many cases earlier and voluntarily, the

217 Christopher Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 2.
218 Christopher Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 3.
minister and congregation moved to temporary premises, which they adapted for their purpose. These are the rooms, cottages and barns of Dissenting martyrologies, occupied by Dissenting congregations during the period of persecution. If the group remained committed, they acquired more permanent premises as soon as they were able, purchasing or leasing either a building for conversion or a plot of land for the erection of a purpose-built chapel.

Where the minister was formerly an artisan, without any formal education as was the case with Bunyan, their promotion to a person of some significance in the community, the leader of a congregation with its own premises, represented an enormous increase in social status. In addition to the personal fulfilment of the formulation and expression of deep personal convictions, the foundation of a new chapel represented an extraordinary opportunity for self-determination, either as the leader or as a member of a new congregation. Charismatic individuals with preaching and pedagogic abilities might be released from the strictures of a humble place in the social hierarchy to one that attracted significant respect, commanding an audience through preaching and exerting a strong influence over the lives of others.

The Old Baptist Chapel, Tewkesbury

The building known as The Old Baptist Chapel in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, was one of the earliest Baptist meetings to be established. A Particular (that is, Calvinist) Baptist church was in existence in Tewkesbury by 1655 in which year it was represented at the first meetings of an association of Midland Baptist churches. Although the first deed of the property in Old Chapel Court (formerly Millington’s Alley) is dated 1620, being a conveyance from Edward Millicheape to Thomas Harris, no specific reference to a meeting-house appears until 1711. No licences for Baptist meetings were issued under the 1672 Indulgence, but there are monuments in the burial ground dating from c.1680. As a deed of 1686 mentions only a ‘messuage divided into several tenements in Millington’s Alley’, the formal conversion of part or all of the property to a meeting-house may have been delayed until after the Toleration Act of 1689. Further alterations were carried out in the late eighteenth century, but when the Baptist congregation moved to a newly-built chapel in 1805, the Old Chapel was partially converted into cottages,
leaving only the central portion intact. By 1968 it had fallen into disrepair, but it has since been restored and reinstated to its former size.219

Located in a narrow alley near to the ancient Abbey Church, the Old Baptist Chapel is a timber-framed building with a tiled roof, the structure originating about 1500 as a hall-house of three bays (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: The Old Baptist Chapel, Tewkesbury (source: Stell, Inventory...Gloucestershire, p. 98).

The long side of the rectangular plan forms part of a row of cottages in a lane that leads down to the river, where adult baptism by full immersion could take place; although, by the end of the eighteenth century, a Baptistry had been installed inside the chapel. The building adjoining the meeting-house was used for the minister’s house, an arrangement that remains common in Wales, and another was used to stable the horses of those attending meetings (a further indication of their status). Following its restoration, the

meeting-house is now readily identifiable by the pair of doors, flanking two large windows of plain glass (figures 4.7 and 4.8).

Figure 4.7: The Old Baptist Chapel, Tewkesbury, before restoration in 1976-79 (source: Stell, Inventory...Gloucestershire, p. 99).

Figure 4.8: The Old Baptist Chapel, Tewkesbury, photographed in 2004.

These doors were used as the entrances to the two cottages created by the nineteenth-century alterations, when walls were also built along the north and south galleries, although the gallery fronts remained intact, an interior arrangement illustrated in figure 4.9.
Inside, the pulpit is located centrally on the west wall between the two long windows. The recent restoration has restored these and the interior of the chapel to their original dimensions (figure 4.10). The original seventeenth-century oak communion table has been preserved and the interior arrangement of a single galleried room with the table set up as and when necessary reflects the informality of the early gatherings. The domestic appearance of the exterior may have been to escape notice, but was also practical and economic since such premises were readily available or could easily be built by local artisans, and if they were no longer needed for worship, they could be simply returned to domestic use.220

The Old Baptist Chapel at Tewkesbury bears a complex relationship to domestic architecture. The earliest conversion to a chapel was from a substantial house of the period, one that was large and well-built enough to enable conversion to provide a spacious interior by the removal of floors, leaving the structure intact. This implies patronage of some substance, rather than a meeting-house of those without means. This status was later obscured by the conversion to a smaller chapel and two small cottages, when the congregation itself moved elsewhere, giving the appearance of much lower status buildings to later observers.

Walpole Old Chapel, Suffolk

The conversion of Walpole Old Chapel, Suffolk (figures 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13) was a similar process to that of the original conversion at Tewkesbury. Their website tells a familiar story of the Independent congregation of Walpole enduring through the Restoration persecutions by meeting in a farmhouse, which they were finally able to enlarge and renovate into a substantial chapel in 1689.221

221 http://www.walpoleoldchapel.co.uk/History.htm <accessed January 2009>
This they did by removing ceilings and adding an interior gallery, supported on wooden columns, with sightlines converging on the central canopied pulpit (figures 4.12 and 4.13). Again, it should be noted that the building in question was not a humble cottage but a large farmhouse of two storeys, associated with a family of secure means and social standing.

The chapel also has the arrangement of a door at each end of the long façade, this time providing access to the gallery above them, whilst the pulpit is on the opposite wall between two long windows. There are enclosed box pews facing the pulpit, and to either
side of it. The wooden columns supporting the gallery have Tuscan capitals and bases (figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13: The Old Meeting-House, former Independent Chapel, Walpole, Suffolk, interior showing gallery and pulpit. The black column is the stovepipe (source: Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, frontispiece).

Some details of Walpole Independent Chapel, such as the use of the Tuscan order and the entrance doors giving direct access to the fixed seating, correspond to those of Poplar Chapel described earlier. Within the constraints of plan and construction imposed by the existing building, Walpole Independent Chapel emphatically denies any High Church or ritualistic internal organisation which, as at Poplar, is a reflection of Calvinist principles.

Norwich Independent Chapel

William Bridge was an ordained minister of the Established Church, the rector of St. Peter’s, Hungate, Norfolk, during the early seventeenth century. Becoming convinced of the necessity for further reform of the church along more pronounced Calvinist principles, rather than endure further persecution in England, Bridge chose voluntary exile in Rotterdam, taking some of his congregation with him:
He was followed to Rotterdam by Jeremiah Buroughs, who had been suspended from his rectory at Tivetshall in Norfolk in 1636, and by Sidrach Simpson, once curate of St. Margaret's, Fish Street, London. John Archer, who had been silenced as a lecturer at All Hallows, Lombard Street, in 1629, and Thomas Goodwin, formerly vicar of Trinity Church, Cambridge, similarly fled to the Netherlands in the late 1630's, joining the church at Arnhem of which another English exile, Philip Nye, had been pastor since 1633.  

Five of these men returned to England between 1640 and 1642, to become the core of the Independent party in the Westminster Assembly. In 1643, Bridge took up a prominent place in the Westminster Assembly of Divines. This was the committee of ministers that recommended the Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales; the Westminster Confession, a definitive statement of Presbyterian doctrine, was also drawn up by them and approved by Parliament in 1648.

The other members of the Rotterdam congregation returned to England with Bridge and together they founded the Norwich Independent Meeting. As Stell recounts:

The Society then constituted under the pastorate of William Bridge included members both in Norwich and Great Yarmouth. The inconvenience of this arrangement was soon apparent, and in 1644 the Norwich members separated. During the Commonwealth, the church met in St George's, Tombland, in which they erected an east gallery, which was removed 1680. By 1672 meetings were being held in the West Granary, formerly part of Blackfriars Convent; soon after 1685, a brewhouse in St Edmund’s parish was converted for use as a meeting-house.

Note that, as in the other examples so far considered, the gathered church initially met in the parish church, which they altered for their own use. The present chapel was opened in 1693, less than four years after the Act of Toleration. The congregation was able to build a new chapel in a surprisingly short time after the Act, suggesting both that it had remained as a coherent group despite persecution and that it must have had adequate funds readily available to construct such a substantial building so quickly. The congregation was able to draw on their experience in the Netherlands, of both the

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222 Watts, Dissenters: Volume I, p. 64.
224 Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 256.
conversion of existing churches and of buildings newly constructed for the purpose of Calvinist worship. Theirs was emphatically not an experience of makeshift buildings and furtiveness, but one full of the confidence of a new beginning.

The Norwich Independent chapel was ‘described by Blomefield in the mid eighteenth century as ‘a large handsome square building with a roof flat at top and covered with lead, and the hipped part of it with tiles’. A detailed description of the present day appearance follows:

The walls are of brickwork and the hipped roof, reconstructed without the lead flat, is covered with pantiles. The S. front of five bays, divided by pilasters of rubbed brick with carved stone Corinthian capitals and terminated by brick quoins, has in each bay two tiers of windows with moulded brick architraves separated by short brick bands, doorways with bracketed canopies in the end bays, and a moulded and modillioned eaves cornice which continues around the E and W end walls.. The rear N wall has a plain eaves cornice and a plat band at mid height; windows in the end bays mark the returns of the gallery while between them two tall round-arched windows with altered heads flank the pulpit.. All the windows have hung sashes with narrow glazing bars of the late eighteenth century replacing cross-framed windows with leaded casements. On the interior is a flat plaster ceiling and a gallery around three sides with a panelled front and supported by eight Roman Doric columns, with an upper order rising to the ceiling of four-sided Ionic capitals. The pulpit is in the centre of the north side, on the long wall facing the doors, and although the present pulpit and seating date from a nineteenth century refitting, they remain in their original location.226

(figures 4.14 and 4.15)

225 Stell, Inventory... Eastern England, p. 256.
226 Stell, Inventory... Eastern England, p. 257.
Vic Nierop-Reading has made a convincing case for the decisive influence of the architecture of the Calvinist Netherlands on the grounds of the detailing of the construction and elevations of Norwich Old Meeting House.\textsuperscript{227} Discounting the influence

of contemporary local country houses and those buildings such as 18, Colegate, Norwich that were influenced by them, Nierop-Reading looks to Hugh May’s Eltham Lodge, directly influenced by Dutch classicism, and thence to such buildings as the Mauritshuis in The Hague (1635) by Jacob van Campen. After detailed research, his opinion is that:

It is van Campen’s work for the Dutch Calvinists and the ideas of both churchmen and architects of the time that seem to provide an explanation of the principal elevation of the Old Meeting House.\textsuperscript{228}

One of the most influential of the ‘ideas of churchmen and architects’, that Nierop-Reading uses to support his argument, is that of Primitivism. In addition, Tewkesbury Baptist Chapel, Walpole Independent Meeting house and Norwich Old Meeting, like Poplar Chapel, all illustrate a strongly anti-Laudian arrangement. The pair of doors on the entrance façade effectively indicates that the worship space lacks a central processional aisle, whilst long central windows demonstrate the centrality and importance of the pulpit. The arrangement of the façade thus becomes a distinctive and recognisable one, able to be easily understood from the exterior and interpreted by contemporaries as a location for low-church services. Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, a British interpretation of a model for a place of worship informed by Calvinist doctrine has already been established.

\textbf{Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Radnorshire (c. 1697)}

Maesyronnen, the only Welsh example of a seventeenth-century chapel, may now be interpreted in the context of its contemporaries in England. It was suggested in chapter two that, although some of the pre-existing structure of the cruck-framed longhouse was retained, the chapel itself was purpose-built the seventeenth-century and the attached dwelling was enlarged. The whole building gained a new main façade, with the paired doors and gables of the chapel building balanced by a similar arrangement of the façade of the dwelling house (perspective sketch of reconstructed elevation, figure 2.6, p.43). Rather than evidence of a rural lack of sophistication, the substantial cruck-framed longhouse itself may be interpreted as an indication of relative prosperity:

\textsuperscript{228} Nierop-Reading, \textit{Two Classical Nonconformist Chapels}, p. 27.
The free tenants of the middle March were probably in an increasingly favourable economic position after Owain Glyndwr’s rebellion as the ties of lordship loosened. They and their heirs had a permanent interest in the land, they paid small fixed rents, and they had unlimited access to the vast upland commons. Some tenements may have become small, but access to the commons continued to make them a viable means of subsistence. The documentary record of the period is meagre, but surviving houses are an intriguing and complex indicator of the growing prosperity of the free tenants. Survey has now established that dwellings of fifteenth- or sixteenth-century date form the core of numerous farmhouses in upland Wales. Many of these structures are fragmentary but it is clear that in upland Wales a great, late-medieval and Tudor rebuilding took place. The sheer quantity of surviving cruck-trusses shows that Radnorshire was a relatively prosperous region in the late-medieval period, with many successful tenements able to generate a surplus which was spent on construction permanent dwellings that have now endured for half a millennium.229

The chapel now has four doors, more or less opposite each other on the north (graveyard) and south (main) facades. There seem to have been three doors originally, as described by Hague and indicated on his plan in 1956 (figure 4.16).

The present east door to the graveyard was originally a window. At the west end is a blocked doorway, the lower part being below ground level. The door was blocked in the nineteenth century and the sound upper part of the frame reused in the east doorway; the rebate for the original fanlight glazing can still be seen below the present doorhead.230

Figure 4.16: Plan, Maesyronnen, Glasbury (from Hague, Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, p. 145).

229 Suggett, Houses and History in the March of Wales, p. 35.
230 Hague, Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, p. 145.
The door that was blocked in the nineteenth century was reinstated in the recent renovations and now gives access to the newly built washroom and toilet, for the convenience of those who still use the chapel for services.

The two doors on the south façade remain in their original positions. The door to the west is at the end of the façade under a gabled pediment whilst that at the opposite end is west of the window that is under the gabled pediment (figure 4.17).

Maesyronnen is a single volume, rectangular in plan, with an elevated wooden pulpit located in the middle of the long north wall, backlit by a high window (see figure 2.8, p.44). Hague describes the pulpit as having 'occupied the present site from the beginning, but it has been lowered nearly 3ft. and moved a few inches to the east.'

The chapel retains its seventeenth-century furnishing of wooden box pews and benches and a moveable communion table (figures 4.18 to 4.20). Hague suggests that, although 'the wall plastering ante-dates the fixed seating,' there are 'three box pews probably contemporary with the building. All, including the pulpit, are constructed of moulded vertical boards; the slight differences suggest that they are the work of different carpenters. All have original seats and floor boards and bracketed book-rests formed of continuous planks.'

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231 Hague, p. 146.
232 Hague, p. 145.
233 Hague, p. 146.
Figure 4.18: Maesyronnen, interior view, showing fixed pew in the centre of the south wall, opposite the pulpit, and eighteenth-century loose wooden benches (and some contemporary chairs).

Figure 4.19: fixed pew on south wall, eastern corner, showing integral book rests and relationship to south east door and window. The communion table is in the foreground.
Figure 4.20: Maesyronnen, interior looking north, towards the door leading to the graveyard at the rear of the building. Above right may be seen the pew adjacent to the pulpit and on the right hand side is the south wall fixed pew with integral book rest. The communion table, not fixed in position but placed perpendicularly to pulpit and pews, is central.

The roof is tiled with local stone and 'consists of six bays with five tie-beams at wall plate level carried through beyond the outer face of the wall where they are slotted to take long wedge-shaped pegs intended to prevent the further spreading of the walls. Spreading has been and is taking place in spite of the ties.\textsuperscript{234} The tie beams, painted white, are visible in all the photographs of the interior and the pegs are visible in the photographs of the exterior facades. The continuing worry over the structural instability of the building was what prompted the major restoration programme that took place in 2007-8.

Maesyronnen is described by Anthony Jones in \textit{Welsh Chapels} as having been 'converted from a cow house in 1696' and the 'key to understanding all subsequent chapel buildings',\textsuperscript{235} since it provides the link between Welsh chapels and Welsh vernacular architecture. Jones is emphatic that 'Maesyronnen is architecturally and historically grouped with the converted barn-chapels of the period,' going on to state that:


\textsuperscript{235} Jones, \textit{Welsh Chapels}, p. 6.
The whole feeling and originality of appearance of Maesyronnen, sited at the end of a lane, is entirely consistent with farm-buildings (the direct relationship with domestic architecture is strikingly apparent if Maesyronnen is compared with a classic Welsh house-and-byre like Cilewent Farm, Radnorshire, of 1750, now at the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, Cardiff).\textsuperscript{236} (figure 4.21).

![Cilewent Farmhouse, St Fagans, near Cardiff, Galmorgan, photographed in 2007](image)

Figure 4.21: Cilewent Farmhouse, St Fagans, near Cardiff, Galmorgan, photographed in 2007

Jones seems to have made this interpretation based on the construction history of Maesyronnen, in particular the cruck-frame visible in the west wall of the chapel.

In a comparison of the façades of Cilewent and Maesyronnen, differences seem more apparent than superficial similarities. The tall mullioned windows and gabled pediments of the chapel are refinements which do not feature on the façade of the farmhouse. The overall symmetry of the original seventeenth-century façade of Maesyronnen (figure 2.6) would have made the contrast even more marked. In addition, and as indicated by the placement of the openings in the façade illustrated in figure 4.21, the farmhouse is constructed as a series of functionally and structurally separate rooms.\textsuperscript{237} The doors on the main façade at Cilewent are not placed symmetrically and are entrances to separate rooms, with only the domestic part of the building visually enhanced by the chimney and pent window.

\textsuperscript{236} Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{237} Euryn Wiliam, Welsh Longhouses: Four Centuries of Farming at Cilewent (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1992).
At Maesyronnen, the paired entrance arrangement of the chapel may be plausibly interpreted, as in the previous examples, as an expression of Calvinist, anti-Laudian principles, following the precedent of existing buildings. The interior arrangements, including the prominent pulpit sited on the long wall and lit by an intentionally-positioned window, fixed box pews and the replacement of an altar by a moveable communion table, are consistent with this. Suggett writes:

Two important points relating to housing culture emerge from consideration of this meeting-house, whose congregation was drawn from local farming families. Firstly, although the materials of the chapel were local and vernacular, the planning was not ‘traditional’ and unreflective but consciously radical and indeed trans-national with its roots in Geneva. Secondly, although the meeting-house was not externally ostentatious, the building was full of furniture and artefacts of good craftsmanship that were not cheap to buy. These included the multi-paned mullioned and high-transomed windows, the pulpit, the box pews, the communion table, and the pewter communion vessels of porringer type. In the chapel – as in the farmhouse – an attitude of ‘make do and mend’ in relation to building coexisted with an increasing interest in furniture and furnishings of a high standard.238

The only window at Maesyronnen retaining some of the original glazing is illustrated below (figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22: the west window in the north wall at Maesyronnen, with original glazing and glazing bars in the lower right hand side; photograph taken January 2009.

A leaflet on the history of Maesyronnen, available in the chapel, states:

The most prominent minister at Maesyronnen was Henry Maurice. It was necessary then to have a licence to preach but he ignored this; hence the meetings held at night in a barn—Y beudy. Often worshippers had to flee when news came that the constable was on their track.²³⁹

This refers to the twenty-four year period, between the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662 and the Act of Toleration in 1689, during which time Dissenters were intermittently persecuted. After this time, buildings could be freely used as Dissenting meeting houses if a licence was obtained. It unclear why or in what way the experience of having to worship secretly in a barn or cottage would inform the later design of a purpose-built place of worship. It seems more logical that a congregation would not wish to remember its proscribed status but, instead, to assert its legitimate foundation.

The leaflet goes on to describe how the present building was erected in around 1696 where an old barn or cow house [y beudy] had stood and that it had been registered as a place of worship in 1697 at the Presteigne Assizes. Further to this, Lewis Lloyd of Maesilwch, in his will dated 27th March 1714, had stated that a Church or Meeting House for the worship of God by Protestant Dissenters had been erected on his lands at Maesyronnen in the County of Radnor. His will granted the land, Meeting House and adjoining dwelling house to seven trustees, chosen from chapel members, for the benefit of the congregation in perpetuity. This seems to confirm that the chapel, although necessarily built from local materials using local craftsmanship, was sponsored by someone of substantial local social standing and means. Observation of the formal properties of the building seems to support this.

As at Pen-rhiw, Maesyronnen represents a move towards formal architecture more than it recalls a barn that has been up-graded. An early date, small scale and construction using local materials and techniques should not necessarily be equated with a lack of sophistication in contradiction to the formal properties of the building. The paired entrance doors of the long wall façade echo those of the buildings already detailed in this

²³⁹ Griffiths, M. E., August 1987, unpublished leaflet available in the chapel.
chapter, which have been interpreted as a deliberate demonstration of anti-Laudian and anti-ceremonial principles. This would make the appearance of Maesyronnen the product of conscious design principles, or at least of a Calvinist tradition with its origins far outside a local vernacular. As emphasised by Suggett, the relatively high quality and craftsmanship of the building and artefacts show that this was an aspirational building for a congregation in pursuit of progress, both spiritual and social.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Anglican Church at the beginning of the seventeenth century was Calvinist in character, but this did not preclude improvement in church fabric. Rather, in London especially, there were programmes of new building and adaptation of existing buildings to render them more suitable for Calvinist worship, drawing on precedents already existing in the Netherlands. Examples have been given that demonstrate how Calvinist liturgical principles were expressed in new churches built at their own instigation by both Anglican and Dissenting congregations, showing the continuity of Calvinist influence on both. The examples also suggest that a recognisable model for a Calvinist, or at least demonstratively non-High Church, place of worship had been established by the end of the seventeenth century, whilst this was a contemporary concern. A square plan, or rectangular one oriented longitudinally, emphasised by the placing of doors at each end of a façade, effectively demonstrates an anti-ceremonial stance, whilst fenestration emphasising the centrality of preaching may also be read from the exterior as an indication of the priorities of worship.

When it became clear that Calvinist doctrine would not be fully expressed in the Church of England after the Restoration, Calvinists left the church to found their own congregations. The building of chapels-of-ease, funded by public subscription, and the setting up of groups who supplemented church worship with their own meetings, already provided a precedent for their actions. The Act of Toleration of 1689 removed any need for subterfuge or reticence in building, so that when the separatist groups came to build their own independent chapels, they were able, funds permitting, to follow models that
had already been established both within the Established Church in London and in the Calvinist churches in the Netherlands.

In Wales, the restored Established Church was Calvinist in character as shown by the popularity of the Calvinist catechism. Though the number of Puritans was very small, their establishment in Wales is evidence of the communication and spread of radical ideas amongst a relatively affluent and cosmopolitan class of people who were receptive to them. Maesyronnen, the only surviving seventeenth-century Welsh chapel, exhibits the same formal properties as Dissenting meeting houses elsewhere, which, given its well-to-do patron, were more likely to have been its precedents than contemporary cottages, barns or farmhouses.
Chapter 5: The Establishment of Dissent in Wales

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to continue the narrative of the establishment of Dissent in Wales, emphasising its continuity with the Established Church through shared Calvinist precepts and its association with a stratum of society with aspirations for social and educational progress. Following the Act of Toleration of 1689, Dissenters were allowed to worship openly in licensed meeting-houses. Denominational identities crystallised from these Dissenting congregations, becoming defined by a ’confession of faith’ or statement of doctrine and belief. In Welsh Chapels, the emergence of Welsh Nonconformity is characterised as an internal and local phenomenon, closely related to rural life, hence the adoption of a rural vernacular for the early buildings of Dissent.\textsuperscript{240} This chapter questions this mechanism by examining the character and distribution of Dissent from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century, giving further examples of early Dissenting chapels.

The chapter begins with an account of the political circumstances surrounding the accession of William and Mary, showing the relationship of politics to religion. This is followed by a description of the character of Dissent in Wales in the decades following the Act of Toleration, including their social status and attitude to education. The separate denominations of Old Dissent in Wales are defined and further examples of chapels given, with a discussion of the numbers and distribution of Dissenters in Wales. The conclusion summarises the evidence for the continuity of the Calvinist model of a chapel building over two centuries.

Political Context: The ‘Glorious Revolution’ and Act of Toleration of 1689

Using his royal prerogative, Charles II made a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, suspending the penal laws against religious nonconformity. Worship other than that in

accordance with the liturgy of the Established Church was allowed, with Protestant Dissenters able to meet in licensed buildings, and Roman Catholics in their own homes. This respite from persecution enabled many congregations, who were uncertain of their wish to remain within the Established Church, to licence a meeting-house. However, Charles was forced to withdraw the Declaration just over a year later by the Royalist and High Church Tories who had come to dominate Parliament. The High Church party, the heirs of Laudian Arminianism, gained ascendancy by supporting the king in opposition to the Whigs, who were led by the Earl of Shaftesbury in close alliance with the Dissenters. This roughly set the metropolitan political pattern for the next half century, with Tories identified as Royalists who interpreted Dissent as disloyalty to the crown, whilst Whigs showed their preferences for the toleration of Dissent and an empowered parliament: 'Persecution was now more closely related to political forces, less directly the consequence of religious views.'

Anti-catholic feeling was demonstrated by the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81, precipitated by the attempts of parliament to introduce a Bill excluding Charles' brother James from the succession. In the event, Charles II prevented the Bill being passed by dissolving three parliaments in rapid succession, so that at his death in 1685, the Roman Catholic James became king. James II built on the Tory support that had surfaced during the Exclusion Crisis to strengthen royal power and improve the lot of Catholics, culminating in the Declaration of Indulgence of 1688, which he required to be read out in parish churches. James' Declaration was more favourable towards Catholics, allowing mass to be celebrated in public, and for this reason it was condemned by Anglicans and Dissenters alike. Seven bishops were tried for seditious libel against the king because they refused to read out the Declaration in church and, especially after a son was born to James' catholic wife, they acted as the focus for the opposition to James within the Established Church.

William of Orange was a Protestant, a moderate Calvinist who issued his own Declaration of Rights, quoting Calvin in stating that it was proper to use force against

tyrannical and ungodly monarchs, and also that he intended to restore England’s laws and liberties. When William landed at Torbay on 5 November 1688 and marched for London with 20,000 men, James lost his nerve and fled to France, making the accession of William and his wife Mary a fait accompli. A number of High Church Tory clerics refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new monarchs in 1689, on the grounds that they had sworn allegiance to a lawful king who was still alive, and they were deprived of their livings. Others whose views were similar remained within the Established Church as non-jurors. William naturally appointed Latitudinarian Whigs as bishops so that ‘the church was now divided into two wrangling factions: Latitudinarian Whigs and High Church Tories’. Later, after the Act of Settlement of 1701, which ensured the Hanoverian succession and excluded the Roman Catholic Stuarts by requiring the sovereign to be Anglican Protestant, some 400 High Church clergy similarly refused to acknowledge Queen Anne in 1702 and formed their own Presbyterian church. There was thus a continuous spectrum of political and doctrinal ideas within and surrounding the Established Church rather than any distinct division between Anglicans and Dissenters.

The Act of Toleration of 1689 allowed Protestant Dissenters to license meeting houses for public worship, so long as the licensee swore an oath of loyalty to the Crown (thus excluding republicans) and repudiated transubstantiation (thus excluding Roman Catholics) and affirmed belief in the doctrine of the Trinity (thus excluding Unitarians). Quakers were excluded because of their refusal to swear oaths. However, the declaration still only suspended the penal laws against Nonconformity and dissenters still could not be certain that their chapel licenses would not be revoked. ‘The trust deeds of meeting-houses built in the reigns of William and Mary and of Anne contained provisions that, in the event of the proscription of dissenting worship, the buildings should be sold and the proceeds used for the benefit of the poor.’ This uncertainty, in conjunction with economic prudence, may have contributed to the domestic appearance of some early meeting-houses.

242 Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason, p. 61.
Dissenting Schools and Academies

The implication of the Protestant emphasis on the necessity for each person to read and reflect upon the Bible was the provision of education to achieve universal literacy and teaching and catechising were always part of the remit of Dissent. The setting up of a system to provide accessible education had been central to Cromwell's policies aimed at bringing about a more Godly society. The Clarendon Code was an acknowledgement of the importance of education, since the Five Mile and Tests Acts were specifically aimed at prohibiting Dissenters from teaching. It was largely unsuccessful in this aim, since after only ten years the legal validity of disqualifying non-communicants of the Established Church from teaching was challenged. The legal ruling that resulted from the 'Bates' Case', that if a schoolmaster were a nominee of the founder or of the lay patron, he could not be ejected for teaching without a bishop's licence, effectively privatised education. Further legal challenges established that there was no ecclesiastical control over schools other than the cathedral grammar schools. The de facto independence of education was acknowledged in an Act of 1714, exempting all elementary schools from the Conformity legislation.

However, the Established Church and state retained control of university-level education in England and Wales, since it was not possible to graduate from Oxford and Cambridge without being a communicant of the Church of England. It fell to Dissenters, therefore, to put in place their own system of higher education. These institutions became known as Dissenting Academies, following Calvin's use of the term 'academy', invoking Plato to legitimise the new institutions by invoking classical precedent. The earliest of these, twenty-three in number, were established by ministers who were either ejected from, or chose to leave, the Restoration church. The former minister was generally the only tutor. Amongst these earliest institutions were Islington, where Edmund Calamy was a student, and Newington Green, Clapham, where the students included Daniel Defoe and Samuel

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244 Irene Parker, Dissenting Academies in England: Their Rise and Progress and their Place among the Educational Systems of the Country (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 49.
Wesley, father of the future Methodist leaders, John and Charles Wesley. Philip Doddridge, a leading Dissenter, became principal of Northampton Academy.

The first dissenting academy in Wales was established at Brynllywarch, near Bridgend, Glamorgan, in 1668, by Samuel Jones (1628-1697), former Fellow and Tutor of Jesus College, Oxford, following his ejection from his living at St Cynwyd parish church, Llangynwyd, in mid Glamorgan.²⁴⁵ James Owen (1654-1706) received his higher education there and also as assistant minister to Stephen Hughes of Swansea, whose career will be described below. Owen subsequently founded an academy at Oswestry sometime between 1676 and 1680, but moved to become a tutor at the Academy at Shrewsbury in 1700. Whilst there, he wrote *Vindiciae Brittanicae*, in order to prove the existence of a pre-Roman civilisation in Britain, identified with the Welsh.²⁴⁶ Geraint H. Jenkins interprets as the significance of the dissenting academies that: ‘Welsh Dissent began to nurture a new generation of gentlemen preachers’ ²⁴⁷

The setting up of the London Congregational Fund Board in 1695 to co-ordinate the raising and distribution of funds shows that although Independent congregations were autonomous, they were not isolated. Fund-raising enabled the establishment of a further thirty-five academies, which aimed to provide a university level education, but with additional emphasis on the teaching of ‘modern’ subjects. These included history, which encouraged an emerging sense of nationalism amongst the Welsh, and modern languages, taught because of their importance for missionary work and indicating that early Dissent was not parochial in its views. Also taught were geography and science, or ‘natural philosophy’, which contributed to the development of industry and agricultural improvement. As the eighteenth century progressed, dissenting schools and academies became known for their excellence, so that middle class Anglicans as well as Dissenters sent their sons to them. With more secure funding obtained from a wider range of sources, including public subscription and private benefactors, the dissenting academies

²⁴⁵ Parker, *Dissenting Academies*, p. 136.
founded in the eighteenth century tended to be more substantial than their predecessors, having more extensive libraries and several tutors. Amongst these were Carmarthen (founded 1700), Abergavenny (1757), and the first Baptist Academy at Bristol (1720).248

At first, Baptist education had different aims than that of other denominations:

Early Baptists were amongst the most strongly orthodox Calvinists, but at first there were fewer specifically Baptist academies, so that many Baptists were to be found at certain Presbyterian or Independent academies. The earliest Baptist Academies were founded at Trowbridge and Bristol in 1697, but it was not thought necessary to employ graduates as tutors, or to reproduce a university training, since the aim of the academies was both more limited and more radical, being solely to give an appropriate training Baptist ministers.249

Biblical exegesis was central to the curriculum at Baptist Academies, but largely confined to a literal, rather than allegorical, interpretation of the scriptures. The Calvinist norm there was that scripture be allowed to speak for itself, rather than be tied down by the commentaries of fallible men, and this was the educational approach promoted in the academies.

Later, this ethos changed and Thomas Llewellyn (1720-93), a tutor at Trowbridge, became one of the most distinguished classical scholars of his time. He had been trained at Trosnant Baptist Academy, Pontypool, at Bristol and in London at the King's Head Academy. He was able to discuss philology in Hebrew, Greek, Welsh and English, criticising on such grounds the common belief that Hebrew was the root language of all living languages. He decided that similarities between Welsh and Greek, and between Welsh and Latin, are in each case of a type attributable to a common source rather than to borrowings. He also passionately promoted education in whatever vernacular language was appropriate to the region, actively promoting the Welsh language.250

The exclusion of Dissenters from professions such as Law or the ministry and from government office meant that many able intellects turned their attention to medicine.

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248 Parker, Dissenting Academies, pp. 137-143 is a list of all the eighteenth-century Dissenting Academies, with their dates of foundation and the names of significant tutors and students.
249 Smith, Birth of Modern Education, p. 256.
science, commerce and industry. Warrington Dissenting Academy was established in
1757 with the specific intention of providing a modern, practical university-level
education. The Academy initiated courses in 'commerce', designed for those who
wished to work in banking and finance, with other courses including law, medicine and
divinity. The Unitarian and scientist Joseph Priestley was a tutor there from 1761 to
1767, writing in 1765 an Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active
Life, in which he presented the case that education should not be confined to the clergy
and should encompass a wider range of subject. Because of difficulties over funding,
Warrington closed in 1783, but its library was moved to a new institution at Manchester,
where it now forms part of the John Ryland's Library Collection at Manchester
University.\textsuperscript{251} Similarly, the Carmarthen Dissenting Academy library is now part of the
Salisbury Collection at Cardiff University. As the eighteenth century drew to a close,
dissenting academies became more strictly denominational in their entry requirements
and teaching, increasing the tendency for denominational differences to become more
entrenched after the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The dissenting academies were the most modern educational establishments of their day
and the Dissenters who taught or attended as students were amongst the intellectual elite
of the early eighteenth century. They created an educational network for the exchange of
ideas and for the expansion of Dissent and support of existing congregations.

Maesyronnen, established at the end of the seventeenth century, was as much a school as
a place of worship. It is notable that Howell Harris, although brought up as an orthodox
member of the Church of England, not only obtained his early education at Maesyronnen
under the tutorship of an Independent minister, but expected to go on from there to a
university education and ordination in the Anglican Church. Many Independent and
Presbyterian ministers kept schools to supplement whatever stipend they received from
their congregation. This practice was to gain greater momentum and significance,
especially in Wales, as the 'Sunday School Movement' in the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{251} Parker, Dissenting Academies, pp. 105-108.
The Character and Extent of Dissent in Wales after 1689

Despite hagiographic emphasis on the sufferings endured by Dissenters during the years of persecution between 1660 and 1689, the survival of Dissent in Wales seems to have been partly the result of the support of an established elite who were favourable towards it. A number of individuals and families who came to power and improved their financial and social standing during the Republican years, especially in south Wales, were able to consolidate and continue their social and political influence after the Restoration:

The roundheads survived, they maintained their family traditions and personal connections, and they were united by common membership of dissenting congregations, and by the patronage of the same Whiggish courtiers.\(^252\)

A few of the radicals refused to conform even in the worst time of persecution, including the Baptist former Major-General Rowland Dawkins. Dawkins had served as M.P. for Carmarthen and on the ruling Committees for several Welsh counties during the Commonwealth. He held no public office after the Act of Uniformity until his death in 1691, but he nevertheless remained an influential supporter of the Baptist cause. Both his son and his grandson became active in local politics as Whigs in the early eighteenth century, implying that some accommodation was made between the faith of their upbringing and the Establishment by subsequent generations.

Philip Jenkins describes the support for Dissent in south east Wales:

Presbyterianism was strong only in Glamorgan: in the other south-eastern counties the Independents and Baptists were predominant. In west Glamorgan, Philip Jones’ old circle continued to maintain the Baptist cause, and lay supporters in the 1670s were not only old radicals but also military veterans with ‘major-general’ Dawkins, the captains Gethin and Griffiths, and officers like Jenkin Franklen and Evan Lewis. In Breconshire, the Vavasorian families at the centre of the county committees continued to maintain the Baptist tradition with the widely influential church of Llanigan, membership of which extended into Glamorgan and Radnorshire.\(^253\)


\(^{253}\) Philip Jenkins, The Old Leaven, p. 813.
Merthyr Tydfil, on the border of Glamorgan and Breconshire, remained a centre of radical Dissent after the Restoration. Vavasor Powell was arrested there in 1688, after preaching at a meeting estimated (by supporters) at a thousand strong. He spent most of the rest of his life in prison in London. Merthyr was one of the first four Glamorgan congregations to build a permanent meeting house, the chapel later becoming Unitarian and a centre of the most extreme Arian views. Charles Lloyd, who founded Maesyronnen in the 1690s, had been a follower of Vavasor Powell.

The Restoration elites within the establishment in south and west Wales were not uniformly high Anglican Royalists, since not all the old republicans dissented from the new order in church and state, although they usually continued to support those Dissenters who did. The former Parliamentarian, Colonel Philip Jones, conformed to the Church of England. He purchased the large estate of Fonmon in the Vale of Glamorgan and served on the Glamorgan Bench of the Justices of the Peace in 1672. In Cardiganshire, the local magistrate, Sir John Vaughan of Crosswood, was tolerant of Dissent: ‘as long as persons conform outwardly to the law, we have no inquisition into opinion’. Likewise, in Carmarthenshire, Sir Rice Williams of Edwinsford was prepared to be lenient.

The restoration of the Established Church did not represent a clean break, with individuals attending both Dissenting meetings for sermons, prayers and psalms and their parish church for Holy Communion. Some also moved between Dissenting congregations. During the Civil War, Captain Jenkin Jones of Llanddeti, whose Baptist opinions were widely known, held that those of other sects should be allowed to commune with Baptists and, indeed, urged those who believed as he did not to join the ‘strict’ Baptist churches. There were those, like Colonel Philip Jones, who might conform by taking the sacrament in the Church of England only rarely, as a formality, whilst remaining members of Dissenting congregations or supporters of Dissent. Taking

254 Philip Jenkins, The Old Leaven, p. 814.
256 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 54.
the sacrament in an Anglican church, as little as once a year, enabled the Conformity legislation to be circumvented in order to qualify for public office. The Occasional Conformity Act, passed in 1711 by the new Tory government, was intended to curtail this practice; the need for the act suggests that it was widespread.

That there were very few cases of Dissenters refusing to pay church rates in the diocese of St David’s during the first half of the eighteenth century suggests either few Dissenters or an amicable relationship between Dissenters and their parish churches.257 The close connection that might, in some cases, be maintained between the Church and Dissent is illustrated by the career of Stephen Hughes (1622-1688). Hughes, although an ordained clergyman, felt he could not continue in the Established Church after the Restoration and left his living at Pantcreddyn Church, Meidrim, Carmarthenshire, enabling him to concentrate on preaching and publishing. Both Edmund Calamy in the eighteenth century and Thomas Rees in the nineteenth referred to him as one of the ‘suffering saints.’ He is also dubbed the ‘apostle of Carmarthenshire’258 for continuing to preach throughout the years of persecution and for his efforts in publishing the Bible and other devotional works in Welsh. Popular accounts report that during the years of persecution his ‘early meetings were secretly held at Cwmhwplin cave’.259

In the early eighteenth century, Edmund Calamy (1671-1732) wrote a series of books and pamphlets in defence of ‘moderate nonconformity’, becoming embroiled in the ‘Bangorian Controversy’, after Bishop Hoadley of Bangor preached a sermon that advocated comprehension of some forms of Dissent within the Church of England. In 1713, he published a work that listed the ministers ejected at the Restoration, describing in heroic terms how they had continued their ministry despite persecution and their loss

257 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 72.
258 Geraint H. Jenkins, Protestant Dissenters in Wales, p. 51.
of status and income.\textsuperscript{260} Calamy categorises Hughes as one of the ‘suffering saints’ and says of him that:

> His moderation and lively preaching recommended him to the esteem of the sober part of the gentry, by whose connivance he often preached in the publick churches, which were much thronged by the vast numbers that came to hear him from the neighbouring parishes.\textsuperscript{261}

In fact, Hughes was able to give up his living in the Anglican Church because he had made an advantageous second marriage into a well-established family that was both sympathetic to his evangelical views and ambitions and sufficiently wealthy to support him in them. He lived comfortably, having a town house in Swansea, one of the largest towns in Wales at the end of the seventeenth century, and making frequent business trips to London. The romantic image of a persecuted Independent minister preaching in caves has understandably taken precedence over that of the comfortably well-to-do and well-connected publisher.

Hughes had been concerned with the publication of devotional books in Welsh since 1658, when he had managed to publish the initial volume of Rev. Rhys Pritchard’s religious verses. He received the support of both Nonconformists and churchmen for his efforts to publish religious books in the Welsh language. In London in 1672 and again in 1677-8 he arranged the publication of two composite volumes of devotional writing and a cheap edition of the Bible in Welsh.\textsuperscript{262} In 1681 he published the complete works of Rev. Prichard, giving them the title of \textit{Canwyll y Cymru} (\textit{The Candle of the Welsh}). With the help of three others, he also translated John Bunyan’s \textit{Pilgrim’s Progress}, which he published in 1688 as \textit{Taith neu Siwrnai y Pererin}. These books, cast firmly in the populist Puritan mould, remained the most popular Welsh language devotional works for Anglicans and Nonconformists alike for more than a century, and kept the Calvinistic

\textsuperscript{260} Edmund Calamy, \textit{An Account of all the ministers, lecturers, masters and fellows of colleges and schoolmasters, who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration in 1660, by, or before, the Act of Uniformity} (London: J. Lawrence, 1713); Bishop John Hoadley, \textit{The Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England, together with the reply to Mr. Calamy’s Defense of Moderate Nonconformity} (London: J. Knapton, 1712).

\textsuperscript{261} E. Calamy, \textit{Account of the Ministers... Ejected}, p. 718.

\textsuperscript{262} Stephen Hughes, NLWDWB.
attitudes of the seventeenth-century church alive in Wales. Hughes continued to preach as an Independent minister to the scattered congregations of Carmarthenshire until his death in 1688.

Hughes' ministry was instrumental in the founding of several Independent chapels in Carmarthenshire: 'at least eight of the meetings recorded in the Evans list claimed to have been founded by him'. Pant-teg Independent Chapel, Abergwili, Carmarthenshire, was in existence by 1699. The chapel was located in the countryside only three miles away from the residence of the Bishops of St. David's that had been built by the Protestant Bishop Barlow under Henry VIII. Although the Bishop's Palace was described as being in a ruinous condition in the later sixteenth century, in 1625 Bishop Laud had consecrated a new chapel there. The parish church at Abergwili was rebuilt in 1842, but is said to be a copy of the previous church, a double-naved hall church that did not have a tower. Calamy notes that Hughes continued to preach in parish churches. The experience of worship in the hall-like space of the parish church, with Hughes delivering the sermon, may not have differed substantially from that of the Independent meeting-house. The present-day appearance of Pant-teg chapel dates from 1856, when it underwent extensive renovation and it retains an interior of that date. There is no record of its former appearance, but the existing chapel retains the lateral-façade form (figures 5.1 to 5.3).

\[263\] Geraint Jenkins, Literature, Religion and Society, p. 82.
\[265\] Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, p. 113.
Figure 5.1: Pant-teg Independent Chapel, Abergwili, Carmarthenshire (date of last alteration: 1856; founded 1669, built 1751).

Figure 5.2: Pant-teg Independent Chapel, Abergwili, Carmarthenshire, showing rural location.
Similarly, Yr Hen Gapel, Pencader, Carmarthenshire (figure 5.4) is said to have been one of the churches founded by Hughes in the late seventeenth century, but again the present-day appearance dates from the early nineteenth century (1827). Archdeacon Tennison wrote in 1710:

The meeting-house is seated, the pulpit made neat, the floor even and the gallery decent. In these particulars it reproaches the churches in Wales, which lie generally in a very nasty condition.266

Figure 5.4: Yr Hen Gapel, former Independent Chapel, Pencader, Carmarthenshire (present appearance dates from 1827).

The plaque on the front of the chapel gives 1650 as the date the chapel was founded, 1780 as the date the present building was erected and 1827 as the last renewal. The remark quoted above suggests that there was a substantial building, with a gallery, already in existence at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The nearest Anglican church, St Mary at Pencader, was built as late as 1880 on the site of a former chapel-of-ease to the then nearest parish church at Llanfihangel ar Arth, which was ruinous in 1710. It might reasonably be suggested that the local congregation chose to direct their resources towards the building of their own chapel, in which they could install their own choice of minister, rather than to support the Anglican chapel-of-ease, which they were similarly obliged to finance but without the power to appoint the preacher.

In addition, there is a Calvinistic Methodist chapel, the New Inn Chapel of 1832, also of the lateral façade form, in this village (figure 5.5). Although no trace of any eighteenth-century building survives in these examples, it seems reasonable that they would have followed the same format as the lateral-façade model known to have existed at the end of the seventeenth century and that also informed building in the nineteenth century. It is notable that, if this was indeed the case, then eighteenth-century chapels would have stood out from their contemporary rural vernacular as being more formal in design and of higher status and this is in agreement with the sociological evidence.

Figure 5.5: New Inn Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Pencader, Carmarthenshire (built 1832, stuccoed and refitted in 1893).

An Independent congregation whose chapel is located in Carmarthen town centre also claims to have been founded by Stephen Hughes in the seventeenth century. Heol Awst Independent chapel was first built in 1726. From the mid eighteenth century, Carmarthen was a market town of some importance, the location of a renowned Dissenting Academy and the centre of Welsh publishing. Its fashionable refinement was demonstrated by the building of the new Guildhall in 1767-77, which has been described as a ‘precise design’ and ‘perhaps the first use of Lord Burlington’s north façade at Chiswick House in a public building’. The presence of an Independent chapel in a prominent position near the centre of this thriving town contradicts an interpretation of Welsh Dissent as a rural phenomenon. By 1826 Capel Heol Awst was sufficiently well-established and self-confident to erect a new building, the largest in the region with seating for up to one thousand people, designed by William Owen of Haverfordwest and built at the phenomenal cost (for that time) of £2,582 (figures 5.6 and 5.7).

Figure 5.6: Capel Heol Awst, Independent, Carmarthen, 1826. The attached building on the left is the school and meeting rooms.

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It does not seem very credible that this building was in any way referencing a rural past, especially considering its similarity in form to Norwich Old Meeting, which would have been more apparent before the addition of the schoolroom. It would also seem relevant to consider the architecture of the Anglican parish churches in which minsters such as the Rev. Hughes had preached, and this research informs the next chapter.

The Denominations of Welsh Dissent

The Act of Toleration of 1689 allowed Dissenters of sufficient conviction and means to build their own meeting-houses. Four main denominations were in evidence in Wales by the end of the seventeenth century: Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers. All rejected completely the authority and episcopal organisation of the Church of England and all except Presbyterians rejected the imposition of liturgy and ritual through the enforced use of the Book of Common Prayer. Denominations defined themselves by a statement of doctrine and belief known as a ‘confession of faith’. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, individuals within the same congregation might hold differing views, and individuals, and sometimes whole congregations, sometimes changed denomination, as in the example of the Bunyan Meeting given in the previous chapter. It
was only during the nineteenth century, when both chapel buildings and Nonconformists became more numerous, that denominational divisions became more rigidly fixed.

Presbyterianism was the doctrine and hierarchical form of church government recommended by Calvin that Cromwell had wished to instigate in England and Wales in place of the Church of England. The Westminster Confession, a statement of orthodox Calvinism drawn up by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and approved by Parliament in 1648, remained its confession of faith. Scottish Presbyterians realised their nationalistic ambitions in 1690, when the Church of Scotland became Presbyterian and separate from the English state system. During the suspension of the Church of England, all church congregations were nominally Presbyterian. After the Restoration, for the Presbyterians in England and Wales, the Reformation remained incomplete, since the Calvinist system of church government did not prevail. Some congregations continued to hope for further reform of the Church of England, enabling their return to it. When, by the mid eighteenth century, it became apparent that this would not be the case, many Presbyterian congregations became Independent or Congregationalist. It has been suggested that in Wales, from 1714, Presbyterians and Independents were completely indistinguishable. However, a small number of Presbyterian congregations in southwest Wales abandoned their Calvinism to become Unitarians, as will be described below.

The Independent Denomination

The main difference between Independents or Congregationalists and Presbyterians was their preferred system of church government. Whereas Presbyterians endorsed a hierarchical system, for Independents, as the name suggests, the autonomy of each individual congregation was paramount. Both groups claimed that their form of organisation was closest to the practice of the early church. There were some theological differences, which meant that attempts to unite the two denominations were

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270 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, *Welsh Church*, p. 75.
unsuccessful. Although the Independent (Annibynol) denomination, more frequently termed Congregationalist elsewhere, remained close in doctrine to the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration of 1658 was adopted as their Confession of Faith. Christopher Hill has suggested that, in England and Wales together, Independents formed the largest group of ejected ministers, since, following the Act of Uniformity, 'nearly a quarter of the 1,760 ministers ejected ... were Congregationalists'.

Each Independent congregation claimed the prerogative of choosing and appointing their own minister and devising their own form and procedure of service. In 1542, Calvin had produced a liturgy in which the communion service was presented as no more than a commemorative meal preceded by a long sermon. This was the Lord's Supper, the form of Holy Communion that was recommended in the Westminster Confession and which Independents continued to practise. High Church Anglicans, such as Archbishop Laud at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and High Church Tories at the beginning of the eighteenth century, strongly disagreed with this lack of ceremonial and regard for the sanctity of the altar and Eucharist.

However, that the character of Welsh religion, both within and outside the Established Church, remained staunchly Calvinist is indicated by the use of the Shorter Catechism, which had been prepared by the Calvinist Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1647:

After the Restoration it became 'the most widely recognised manual of instruction' among orthodox Dissenters. In essence, the Shorter Catechism laid great stress on the condition of the individual believer and the means of salvation through justifying faith. It figured prominently in the syllabus of unlicensed Dissenting schools in the years of the persecution and most expositions, especially those published by the Welsh Trust, were based on it. The Shorter Catechism also appealed to moderate churchmen. William Evans's exposition in 1707 was financed by Anglican patrons, printed and published by an Anglican, John Rydderch, and eventually issued with a copy of the Thirty-Nine Articles.


272 Christopher Hill, Occasional Conformity, p. 212.

The Welsh Trust was a charity set up in London by Thomas Gouge, which was sponsored by both Anglicans and Dissenters. Its aim was to make books of religious instruction, Bibles and catechisms written in the Welsh language more widely available in Wales and it was the Welsh Trust that supplied Stephen Hughes with Bibles.\(^{274}\)

Presbyterians and Independents were the closest to the Established Church, especially where the parish churches retained a more orthodox Calvinism, as they did in Wales. This meant that their liturgical requirements, and therefore the interior arrangement of their places of worship, remained similar. Independents differed markedly from the Church of England in their repudiation of all traditional ceremonial, ornaments, and vestments and any set form of liturgy. Calvinist prayer books provided guidance as to the general structure of worship and the type of prayer, but the whole act of worship was based around the sermon and readings from the Bible. The interior of Maesyronnen demonstrates the informality of the liturgical arrangements, with a prominent pulpit and moveable communion table placed lengthwise in the church. This interior arrangement, particularly the type and placement of the communion table, is open to interpretation as deriving from meetings in farmhouse kitchens, but the foregoing history has shown that the arrangement also had a deeper symbolic meaning of greater longevity.

**Congregational Singing**

Congregational hymn-singing had been incorporated into Lutheran Church services from the beginning of the Reformation, but Calvin had rejected hymns as part of worship, since they were not directly the Word of God. Instead, he endorsed the chanting of psalms in metre, since these were effectively readings from the Bible set to a memorable rhythm. Metrical psalms were not strictly part of the liturgy of the Established Church, but congregations were allowed to sing them before and after a service and also before the sermon, when the minister retired to the vestry to exchange his surplice for the plain black 'Geneva gown' that he wore when preaching the sermon. The parish clerk, a

layman who had traditionally headed the choir before the Reformation, became the leader of singing and the person who both chose the psalm and set it to an appropriate tune. Alongside the reader, also a layman, he thus assumed a significant role in the church service, that of leading the congregational singing. The clerk would announce the psalm and the tune and then read it out line by line for the congregation to sing after him. "Although the original purpose of this usage was didactic and possibly anti-aesthetic (since it tended to destroy the poetic and musical integrity of the singing) it was rapidly taking on the character of a performance."275 'Lining out' was still the tradition in psalm-singing in some Pembrokeshire Baptist chapels within living memory.

The transformation of congregational singing was begun by the Congregationalists, in whose services, following the Westminster Directory of Worship, congregational singing of the psalms had a more central role. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), was taught by his father and at the dissenting academies he attended to read Latin, Greek, French and Hebrew. He objected to both the arcane language of the psalms and to their irrelevant references to Jewish history. In an effort to make the Bible more intelligible to his contemporaries, he wrote hymns comprised of paraphrases of New Testament passages and verse of his own composition, and these were first published as *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1709. The hymns 'Our God, Our Help in Ages Past' (a paraphrase of Psalm 90); 'Joy to the World, the Lord is Come' (Psalm 98) and his own composition 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross' were included in this collection.276 He also made a new translation of the metrical psalms in 1719, published as *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, although this did not achieve the popularity of the Tate and Brady version until some time later. James Owen, Presbyterian minister and tutor at Shrewsbury Dissenting Academy, published one collection of hymns in Welsh, *Hymnau Scrychurol*, in 1705, publishing a further collection in 1717, whilst Thomas Baddy, Presbyterian minister at Denbigh, had published *Pasc y Christion* in 1703 and this was followed by his *Caniad Salomon* in 1725.277 The Moravians, a Lutheran Pietist sect, also adopted the congregational singing of hymns, not only as a significant part of worship, but as an

accompaniment to everyday life, to express both their piety and their community spirit. Their habit of hymn-singing in public whilst on any journey, but particularly when walking to and from a religious meeting, had a particularly strong influence on John Wesley.

**Baptists**

Baptists, along with Quakers, were initially the most radical of the Dissenting sects. The first Baptist Church in England was led by John Smyth, an ordained minister who became convinced of the scriptural precedent for believers' or adult baptism by full immersion. He fled to Amsterdam to avoid persecution, and there in 1609 he instituted the baptism of committed believers as the basis of the fellowship of a gathered church. The first Baptist Church in England consisted of members of Smyth's congregation who had returned to London in 1612 under the leadership of Thomas Helwys. The churches which sprang from this were Arminian in theology and came to be known as 'General Baptists'. In 1633 the adoption of believers' baptism by a group of Calvinistic London Separatists gave rise to the 'Particular Baptists'.

Particular Baptist churches were established in Bedfordshire as well as London, all being part of the London Association, which the Welsh churches also joined. They were constituted as a separate denomination by the confession of faith drawn up by the London Association in 1689. It was also based on the Calvinist Westminster Confession of 1646 and defined the Baptist Association's jurisdiction over individual congregations, but additional clauses laid down the definitive attitude to believers' baptism. The Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol and the Bristol Baptist Academy were crucial in the development of Particular Baptist doctrine and the proselytising of the Baptist faith.

The Welsh churches were subsequently founding members of the first Western Baptist

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Association that was formed in Bristol in 1692, subsequently meeting sometimes at
Bristol and sometimes at Taunton.

The purpose of the regional meeting was to give evangelical support and guidance to
members on matters of doctrine, and to give encouragement and material help where
possible in obtaining premises or erecting chapels. A separate Welsh Association was
established in 1700, with a total membership of about 550, although some Welsh Baptist
churches, for example Glascwm, did not join it. The Baptist confession of faith was first
translated into Welsh in 1721.280 The Baptist denomination remained poorly represented
in north Wales in the early part of the eighteenth century. The first Baptist chapel to be
built in north Wales was Glyn Ceiriog, Llwyn, Llangollan, in 1762, but it was without its
own ordained minister until 1770. Baptist records speak of 'a mission' to north Wales
during the mid eighteenth century, and more meetings had been established there by the
end of that century.281

Besides believers' Baptism, and the Calvinist beliefs enshrined in the Westminster
Confession, other tenets of Baptist belief came to include the necessity of independent,
rather than state-supported, finance for the Baptist Association and Baptist ministers.
Areas for debate amongst Baptists in the eighteenth century included the necessity for a
type of 'apostolic succession' of ministers, with authority transferred through a
ceremonial 'laying on of hands', and the role of psalm singing in the Baptist service. The
issue of whether Baptists should share Holy Communion with those who had not
undergone believers' baptism divided congregations. Those who felt unable to receive
communion with others who did not share their views came to be called 'strict' Baptists.
Most Welsh congregations at the beginning of the nineteenth century remained 'Strict
and Particular' Baptists, that is, Calvinists who partook of closed communion, only
amongst themselves. However, until the nineteenth century, when many new chapels
were built and denominational loyalties became more fixed, many individuals and
sometimes whole congregations changed denomination.

280 Bassett, Welsh Baptists, p. 69.
281 Bassett, Welsh Baptists, pp. 100-102.
Before evangelistic preaching became more common during the mid-eighteenth century, Baptist services were generally sober affairs based on sermons, with the singing of psalms or hymns introduced into services only by the end of the eighteenth century. The liturgical requirements of Baptists prior to this did not differ from those of the Independents, apart from the practice of adult baptism. A baptism was a dramatic and emotional event for the individuals concerned and definitively set Baptists apart from their fellow Dissenters. Sometimes baptisms were held in public, in rivers and streams, forming a spectacle that might be viewed with derision by non-Baptists, but that acted as a public witness and a trial of conviction for new converts. By the early nineteenth century, most Baptists chapels had more private facilities, either within the chapel grounds or inside the chapel building. Baptists differed more significantly from the Established Church than Independents and Presbyterians and so were viewed as a more extreme sect. They were thus subject to greater persecution and exposed to greater ridicule, though they were neither so extreme nor as maltreated as the Quakers. Baptist worship was originally close to that of the Quakers, in the rejection of any set format for meetings or any specially educated ministry, because of their reliance on ‘prophesy’ or divine inspiration for guidance, of both meetings and individuals. That is why Baptist Academies differed in their aims and programme from other dissenting academies.

Unfortunately there is no record of what the earliest Baptist chapels in Wales looked like, since all have been altered, sometimes radically. John Newman describes ‘the oldest surviving Baptist chapel in Wales’, at Govilon, Gwent, ‘constructed in 1695, but, doubled in size, re-windowed and re-roofed’ as now revealing nothing of late seventeenth-century character. There is evidence to suggest the absence of fixed seating in early Baptist churches, making them comparable to Quaker meeting-houses. The Baptist chapel with the earliest surviving fabric is at Pontypool, Glamorgan. Although this chapel may be described as being of a domestic appearance, it is that of a relatively substantial town

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283 Bassett, Welsh Baptists, p. 60.
house of the mid eighteenth century, more formal in appearance than its contemporary low status rural buildings.

In London, Baptists rented premises that were suitable for holding meetings and giving lectures, such as the halls of city guilds. The Baptist meeting sometimes took its name from the Guild, such as the ‘Salter’s Hall’ and ‘Glass House’ Baptist meetings. It was from the latter that John Myles was despatched to Swansea in the mid-seventeenth century, to take up the living of Ilston Church. Bassett describes the survival of the Welsh Baptist churches after the emigration of John Myles, as a series of meetings in private houses.\textsuperscript{284} He suggests that congregations were ambitious to obtain their own chapel, giving some practical reasons for this:

> The family which sheltered the cause might move away or even become unsympathetic. The difficulty of discussing matters of discipline in a room open to everyone is mentioned sometimes as a reason for securing a separate building as is a desire to let everyone see the communion service. The growth in numbers would have been as important a cause as any.\textsuperscript{285}

The consolidation of the congregation as a distinct entity would have been aided by the acquisition of premises. The members of a congregation who together financed and built a chapel would enhance their sense of permanence and commitment as well as adding to the convenience of their meetings.

Rhydwilym Baptist Church, Efailwen, Carmarthenshire, was founded in 1668 as an offshoot of Ilston, with thirty members. Only a year later, an increase in the number of members to one hundred and thirteen prompted the building of the first chapel, opened in 1701. This chapel was completely rebuilt in 1875, possibly to a design by Joshua Morris of Newport.\textsuperscript{286} Chapels at Llangloffan and Felinfoel followed, also first built in the early eighteenth century but subsequently altered. Bassett describes the foundations of Baptist churches in Wales:

> A meeting place is mentioned in Abergavenny in 1690 and as it was Christopher Price who gave the land to build Llanwenarth chapel, it seems likely that he

\textsuperscript{284} Bassett, *Welsh Baptists*, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{286} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, *Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire*, p. 188.
would have prepared a suitable place for his own church in the town before that. The Swansea Church bought an old Presbyterian chapel in the town in 1698. Rhôdlym was built in 1701 and there were chapels in Llangloffan (1705-6) and Felinfoel even before separate churches were founded there. Hengoed chapel was built in 1710. From then on it became the usual practice to build a chapel. Sometimes two churches would combine to build a meeting place near the boundary between them as Cilfowyr and Rhôdlym did at Newport, Pembrokeshire and the churches at Swansea and Penyfai both retained their hold on the meeting place in Llangyfelach after they divided.287

None of these early Welsh Baptist chapels retains its seventeenth- or eighteenth-century appearance, all having been radically altered in the nineteenth century (figure 5.8). Note that the Baptist Christopher Price owned enough land to donate a building plot and that the original meeting place was in the town of Abergavenny.

Figure 5.8: Llangloffan Baptist Chapel, St Nicholas, Pembrokeshire (1862). The other dates displayed on the chapel façade are 1706 (date of foundation) and 1749 and 1791 (dates of building, rebuilding or alterations).

The practice of completely rebuilding chapels was common elsewhere, but perhaps not quite so frequently as was the case in Wales, since a greater number of earlier chapels survive in other areas. The county of Bedfordshire had the greatest concentration of Particular Baptists outside of Wales, and both Bedfordshire and Welsh Baptists were initially part of the same London Association. The Particular Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire were formed from some of the oldest-established Dissenting churches in the country, for example Brook End Chapel, Keysoe, Bedfordshire (figures 5.9, 5.10, 5.11).

287 Bassett, Welsh Baptists, p. 58.
The chapel is similar in form to both the Tewkesbury Baptist Chapel and the Old Independent Chapel at Norwich, both described earlier.

Figure 5.9: Brook End Chapel, Keysoe, Bedfordshire (1741). (Source: Stell, *Inventory...Eastern England*, p. 5).

Figure 5.10: Brook End Chapel, Keysoe, Bedfordshire (1741). (Source: Stell, *Inventory...Eastern England*, p. 7).
As Stell describes:

The Independent church formed in 1652 gradually became Baptist in the late eighteenth century but maintained a mixed membership until the following century. The first known pastor was John Donne, ejected minister of Pertenhall, who suffered imprisonment from 1688 with John Bunyan and others in the county gaol at Bedford. The meeting-house built in 1741 has walls of red brick with a dentil eaves cornice and a hipped tiled roof of elaborate construction.8

Figure 5.11: Brook End Chapel, Keysoe, Bedfordshire, eighteenth-century interior (source: Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 6).

The chapel is nearly square in plan, with the pair of entry doors giving access to the gallery above them and to the interior, where the pulpit in the middle of the wall opposite the entrance.

The plan of the worship space (excluding the vestibule) at the nineteenth-century Llangloffian Baptist Chapel, Pembrokeshire, is the same format, with the pulpit also in the centre of the wall opposite the entrance doors, which give access to the aisles at either side of the central block of pews. Stairs in the vestibule give access to the gallery (sketch plan, figure 5.12). The vestibule may be seen as a refinement of the original plan, providing a useful intermediate space and weather protection for the interior. Almost all gable-ended chapels have an interior vestibule, from which access is gained to the gallery if there is one and to the aisles at each side of the central block of pews in the worship space via paired doors.

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8 C. Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, pp. 4-7.
Llangloffan is not a lateral-façade chapel, since the main façade is a single door under the gable of the roof. However, the alteration in the roofline may plausibly be accounted for as a more effective way of accommodating access to the gallery without additional height, as well as the creation of a more imposing street frontage. The similarity in plan suggests a continuity of form over a large geographical area and long time span. If there was an intermediate stage of smaller chapels, more vernacular in appearance and construction, they would seem to have had less influence on the form of nineteenth-century chapels than models already in existence by the end of the seventeenth century, such as the Old Baptist Chapel at Tewkesbury.

Quakers

The Quaker movement was begun by George Fox (1624-1691), who travelled throughout Wales in 1657 with his Welsh-speaking protégé, John ap John (1625-97). Quakers were amongst the most extreme, anarchic and disruptive of the all interregnum radicals: ‘They insisted on wearing hats in church, [and] were wont to create disturbances and uproar at the conventional services held in the churches, or ‘steeple-houses’ as they called them’.289 After the Restoration, they became the most reviled, ridiculed and severely persecuted of

289 Williams, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 55.
all Dissenters.²⁹⁰ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the theology of the quietist denomination more correctly termed ‘The Religious Society of Friends’ had been systemised in the ‘Apology’, written by Robert Barclay (1648-90).²⁹¹ Most of the Welsh Quakers emigrated with William Penn to found Pennsylvania because of the constant hostility towards them, so that in the eighteenth century: ‘Welsh Quakerism survived only in small isolated groups, insulated by their clannish marriage customs and their curious patterns of behaviour.’²⁹²

Bristol was a centre of Quakerism, as of other Dissenting groups, with Quakers constituting 5% of the population of the city in the first decade of the eighteenth century. There was a second concentration in London, where Quakers were successful in business and commerce.²⁹³ The London-based Quaker company, one of the best organised and most sophisticated charter companies in London, took out a forty-two year lease on mining rights at Diserth and Halkyn, and a smelting houses at Bagillt, in Montgomeryshire in the late seventeenth century. ‘Charles Lloyd, an enterprising Quaker, [took] a lease for twenty-one years on the forge at Mathrafal in Montgomeryshire in 1697 and built his own forge at Dolobran.’²⁹⁴ Although Charles Lloyd went bankrupt in 1727 and was disowned by his fellow Quakers, the Lloyds remained linked through marriage to the great ironmaster families of the West Midlands, whilst in south Wales, Richard Hanbury, master of the ironworks at Pontypool, also supported Quakerism.

The Religious Society of Friends was the most radical of all the Dissenting denominations in their repudiation of any established conventions or orders. They rejected all the sacraments of the Church and refused to pay tithes or take oaths. Numbers fell because of their strict enforcement of rules, such as a standardised form of dress, and because Friends who married non-Quakers were disowned, effectively turning

²⁹³ Watts, Dissenters Vol, p.257, 286.
the denomination into an inter-related clan. They had no organised ministry and their meetings were without any set pattern or structure. This was reflected in their meeting houses, which, in keeping with their philosophy, deliberately assumed a domestic external appearance and the simplest possible internal arrangement. Later, fashionable improvements were also later avoided, with the result that Quaker Meeting-Houses form the largest group of Nonconformist chapels remaining in their original condition throughout England and Wales.

The Pales Quaker Meeting-House, Llandegley, Radnorshire (1745).

The Pales Quaker Meeting House, Llandegley, Radnorshire, like Maesyronnen, is widely known and taken as representative of the rural simplicity of early chapels. Its remote location in the hills of Radnorshire, far from any settlement, originated with the donation of a plot of land for use as a burial ground. As a proscribed sect, much reviled for their rejection of social hierarchy and much of the established Christian doctrine, Quakers, like early Baptists, were denied burial in ground consecrated for other Christians, so there was a need for a dedicated place of burial.

A burial ground at Pales was given in 1673 by David Powell (TP 1872; Rees 1925, 130), upon which a simple meeting room is said to have been erected. The next meeting-house, an existing building, probably timber-framed, and its site adjoining the burial ground, were given to Friends in 1716 by John and Lydia Phillipis and John’s brother Charles, ‘subject to the approval of the magistrates’ (Rees 1925, 130). An alternative history may be understood from deeds noted, with some errors, by Stafford Allen Warner (1957, 118). These suggest that land for a meeting house was acquired in 1717 from Phillip Griffiths, with in 1719 a deed from John Phillips and Evan Hughes for more land, and the completed meeting-house. This building was replaced by the present meeting-house built in 1745 (Census 1851; Guy 1993; Haslam 1979, 246 says ‘rather later than 1716’). It is one of the few ‘traditional’ meeting-houses in Wales, and the oldest still standing. Both meeting room and women’s room are the same size, and are separated by a plastered partition with hinged shutters, possibly not original.295

It may be surmised from the above description that the history and dating of the building is problematic. The present-day appearance of The Pales is shown in the series of illustrations below (figures 5.13 to 5.16).

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295David M. Butler, The Quaker meeting houses of Britain: an account of the some 1,300 meeting houses and 900 burial grounds in England, Wales and Scotland, from the start of the movement in 1652 to the present time; and research guide to sources (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), p. 860.
Figure 5.13: The Pales Quaker meeting house. The single storey thatched building is the original meeting house; the attached two-storey minister's house was added in the nineteenth century.

Figure 5.14: The Pales Quaker meeting house: interior from entrance porch, showing the plastered wooden partition dividing the meeting room (right) from the women's room (left).
Figure 5.15: The Pales Quaker meeting house, meeting room, showing minister's stand

Figure 5.16: The Pales Quaker Meeting-house, Llandegley, Radnorshire (from Butler, *The Quaker Meeting-houses of Britain*, p. 861).
The photographs, plan and sketch elevation show the simplicity of the building, which is a single rectangular volume divided by a plastered wooden partition with a hinged centre panel, so that the two rooms may be opened to each other if necessary. The meeting room has a minister’s stand and the women’s room a fireplace, which was ‘rebuilt in 1878 when the cottage was erected adjoining it. […] There is nothing to suggest any large alterations to the building in 1828, though some of the internal fittings, and perhaps the porch, may be from that time’. Buildings were inserted in both rooms in the 1950s and the new casement windows, replacing windows that were themselves not original, date from 1979-80. The roof was re-thatched in 1987.

In *Welsh Chapels*, Jones uses both The Pales and the Quaker meeting house at Dolobran as examples of the rural simplicity of early chapels. Dolobran is illustrated below (figure 5.17).

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**Figure 5.17**: Dolobran Quaker meeting house, Montgomeryshire (built, opened 1701; renovated 1976-7, 1997), from Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, p. 853.

As with The Pales and so many Welsh chapels, the history of the building at Dolobran is problematic. It is located on land that was part of the Dolobran estate of Charles Lloyd, and remains in the ownership of the estate. Building was commenced in 1700 and the first meeting was held there in April within the unroofed walls. The caretaker’s dwelling, which also served as the women’s meeting room, adjoined under the same roof. A school, which at one time had fifty pupils, was held in the meeting house from 1701 until 1780, the schoolmaster John Kelsall living in the cottage.

Interestingly, there is some indication that a grader entrance was originally planned for Dolobran.

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A peculiarity of the building is the evidence of second thoughts at the main doorway, whose opening was partly built up to take only a single door after the brick arch for a pair of doors had been constructed. This allowed the left-hand window to be set further from the corner of the building than would otherwise have been possible. A late decision to instal a loft could account for the change.298

The Quaker meeting at Dolobran was discontinued in 1780 and the building fell into decay.

It was reported that the meeting house has ‘gradually been dismantled of its carved oak gallery and panelling’ and that about 1850 the latter was removed to Philadelphia, where it was preserved as a relic by William Penn’s descendants, because of his connection with the building (Montgomery collection 1876, 334), the benches were burnt (The Friend 1957, 703). Since 1975 the building has been again used by Friends (Williams 1983, 9). In 1976-7 it was re-roofed, and in 1997 the brickwork and windows particularly were comprehensively restored by the estate.299

Jones includes photographs of these two early Welsh Quaker meeting-houses in his book as evidence for the vernacular status and ‘reticence’ of eighteenth-century Welsh chapels (figure 5.18). This draws attention to the problem of discussing all denominations of Dissent as though they were homogeneous in both doctrine and popular support, not helped in this case by Jones wrongly attributing Dolobran, which he describes as ‘indistinguishable from domestic architecture of this period’ to the Independents.300 Dolobran might also have looked less domestic with the double doors as planned and with its original fittings, which, as the above account shows, included a carved oak gallery and panelling, suggesting furniture of some quality.

298 Butler, The Quaker meeting houses of Britain, p. 853.
299 Butler, The Quaker meeting houses of Britain, p. 854.
300 Jones, Welsh Chapels, p.29.
Thatch was replaced by stone and slate roofs, but a few examples have survived – The Pales (15) is a Quaker meeting-house near Llandegley, Rad., built in 1716. Capel y Crymwy (16), near Pontrobert, c. 1750, also retains the reticence of chapels in this era, anxious to avoid any showiness or even to declare themselves to be churches.

Figure 5.18: Caption and photographs of The Pales, Llandegley, Radnorshire and Dolobran, Pontrobert, Montgomeryshire included in the text of Welsh Chapels (source: Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 29.

Quakers were not Calvinists and their doctrine specifically eschewed set forms of worship. The domestic appearance of Quaker meeting houses could be interpreted as a deliberate rejection of any form of special distinction for the buildings in which their meetings were held, in contrast to what this thesis suggests is the conscious adoption of a particular format by Calvinists. Moreover, after some initial success, Quaker meetings virtually died out in Wales, starving the buildings of funds. The sect remained proscribed until the nineteenth century, with many Quakers emigrating to America. It was neither evangelical nor actively proselytising, and this, alongside its particular beliefs and practises, tended to further marginalise the Society of Friends in Wales from the eighteenth century onwards. The significance attached to The Pales Quaker meeting house, as one of the oldest relatively unaltered chapels in Wales, is disproportionate to the incidence of the denomination in Wales, and its domestic appearance is unrepresentative of the architectural aspirations of the majority of Dissenting denominations.
Unitarians

Unitarianism is a radical doctrine that developed from the mid eighteenth century within some Presbyterian and Independent congregations. Because of its denial of the Trinity, seen as a basic Christian belief enshrined in the Creed, the Toleration Act did not legalise Unitarian worship. Further, the Blasphemy Act of 1698 meant Unitarianism remained a crime until 1813, increasing its insularity. The following description is largely taken from the history written by D. Elwyn Davies, a leading Welsh Unitarian.301

Unitarian beliefs were proposed in the sixteenth century by Servetus (1511-53), the natural philosopher who discovered circulation of the blood. Servetus was martyred in orthodox Calvinist Geneva for advocating free religious enquiry and denying the doctrine of the Trinity. His follower Francis David (1510-79) became chancellor to the only Unitarian King, John Sigismund, Prince of Transylvania and King of Hungary, although he was imprisoned by the subsequent monarch, who was Catholic. The Italian Sozzini (1539-1604) became the leader in Transylvania and Poland of the anti-Trinitarian movement. The Unitarian doctrine, that God is One and the Holy Spirit is his power bestowed on man, became known as the Socinian heresy after him. Unitarians believe that Christ was a man, rather than a manifestation of God, and they are Arminian in doctrine, rejecting predestination.

Unitarianism was influenced by other liberal movements from within the Established Church. Amongst these were the Cambridge Platonists, who stressed the importance of tolerance and reason in religion, and Latitudinarians, an amorphous group of rationalists and moralists who attached little importance to creed, dogma, organisation or liturgy and were generally Arminian in theology. The Deism of eighteenth century literati, such as Rousseau and Voltaire, who believed in One Supreme Being who makes himself known through nature rather than divine revelation, also contributed, as did the writing in a similar vein of Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Newton spent many years working on

301 D. Elwyn Davies, They Thought for Themselves: a brief look at the history of Unitarianism in Wales and the tradition of Liberal Religion (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1982).
Biblical exegesis, which he thought equally as important as his scientific and mathematical work, whilst John Locke’s (1632-1704) *Letter Concerning Toleration* of 1689 articulated the idea of religious freedom. Unitarianism is sometimes known as ‘rational Dissent’.

As Arminianism grew in popularity throughout the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century, associated with an Enlightenment emphasis on reason, Unitarian doctrines were more openly debated. In 1719, at an assembly of what were then the three main Dissenting denominations—Presbyterians, Baptists and Independents—at Salter’s Hall in London, it was decided to vote on the necessity of subscribing to the doctrine of the Trinity. The proposal was won by a narrow margin and was not so much a doctrinal decision as one regarding the principle of religious liberty or orthodoxy. The Unitarians, along with Quakers, remained the most unorthodox of Dissenters, being both Arminian and anti-Trinitarian. Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), formerly an Anglican minister at Catterick, established the first Unitarian Church, Essex Street Chapel, in a former auction room in London in April 1774. There is no record of its appearance, but we may assume an internal arrangement in the form of an auditorium and debating chamber, since that was the nature of the meetings. Among the 200 people who attended the meeting house were Dr Joseph Priestley, Unitarian minister and scientist, and Dr Benjamin Franklin, at that time American Ambassador in London, and the congregation soon grew and attracted more famous and noble people.\(^{302}\)

That Unitarianism should have gained such a strong presence in a remote rural area of Carmarthenshire, in west Wales, is a striking phenomenon. Unitarians in Wales seem to have been a product of debates of liberal and rationalist ideas at Carmarthen Dissenting Academy during the 1730s. The first Unitarian chapel was built by a former student at the Academy, where he became a committed Arminian. Jenkin Jones (Siencin Sion), could not then find a position in any other local dissenting chapels, which remained Calvinist. His solution was to build a chapel at Wernhir on his own land in 1726 while he was still in his twenties. He built a second chapel at Llwynrhdowen in 1733, and in 1742 a further

\(^{302}\) Davies, *Unitarianism*, p. 21.
chapel was built at Alltyblaca. These chapels are in the same area of south-west Wales as Llangeitho, the parish from which Daniel Rowlands began his evangelical preaching at about the same time.\textsuperscript{303}

The Welsh congregations who accepted Unitarian (\textit{Undodiadd}) doctrines were a geographically and linguistically defined group. The area of Cardiganshire in which they were concentrated became known as the ‘Black Spot’ (\textit{y smotyn du}) by other Dissenters. Outside their own close-knit circle, the Welsh-speaking Unitarians of \textit{Ceredigion} (Cardiganshire) were regarded as the ‘people without hope’ and ‘utterly damned’. The faith of these radical people has been described as ‘a social religion of a family clan, where almost all would suffer and rejoice together’.\textsuperscript{304} As a result of continued persecution, and with few opportunities for advancement in rural west Wales, many Unitarians left for the American colonies. Jenkin Jones was to become the great uncle of Frank Lloyd Wright. We do not know what the chapel that he built in 1726 looked like, since the existing Old Chapel at Llwynrhadow was completely rebuilt in 1834 (figure 5.19). This chapel, still in existence but now disused, retains the lateral- façade format of paired entrance doors. Inside, these doors give access to the aisles between the central block of pews and those along the outer walls as well as to the three-sided gallery, as at Pan-teg, Carmarthenshire, whilst the pulpit is located in the centre of the entrance façade between the two tall windows.

\textsuperscript{303} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion}, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{304} Davies, \textit{Unitarianism}, p. 28.
The congregation of Llwynrhydowen was evicted in 1876, ‘after a notorious struggle between the landlord, John Lloyd of Alltyrodyn, and the minister, William Thomas, ‘Gwilym Marles’, over Lloyd’s eviction of Liberal-voting tenants in the 1868 election. Thus the chapel preserves an atmosphere of the mid-nineteenth century in a manner lost elsewhere’.

It is notable that the dispute was about politics rather than religion. After the eviction, funds collected all over Britain, partly through the influence of Iolo Morgannwg, also a Unitarian, enabled a new chapel to be built in 1878-9, designed by Watkin Davies of Llandysul (figure 5.20). The new chapel has a gabled entrance façade with a single, central door, giving access to a vestibule. The tall windows of this façade light the gallery stairs, whilst a pair of doors gives access to the worship space.

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Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, p. 569.
The history of the Unitarians of south west Wales is illustrative of certain trends, important to the establishment and spread of Welsh Dissent. One is the centrality of family and community networks, essential to the continuity of a chapel once built. Not to cast aspersions on his sincerity, Jenkin Jones did create a suitable career and living for himself in the place of his birth, which otherwise held few opportunities for advancement. The second Unitarian Church to be established in Wales was nearby at Pantydefaid, built on land given by Jenkins’ son. There was a strong tendency for chapel ministries to become dynastic. The majority of Unitarian chapels in Wales are rural, with fourteen in Cardiganshire, seven in Carmarthenshire, two in West Glamorgan, thirteen in North Glamorgan and only one each in Swansea and Cardiff. The lists of the ministers of these chapels show strong family and educational connections. Dissenting Academies produced Dissenting ministers, who needed to establish a viable chapel, preferably in their home community, to which they were strongly attached.

Although the location of the chapels is rural, they are the product of radical ideas discussed internationally. In addition, the form of the chapel is one by now familiar as similar to chapels built for Dissenting worship throughout England and Wales from the middle of the seventeenth century. Despite their radical doctrine, Unitarian chapels
conformed to the lateral façade model, testimony to the strength of the tradition (figure 5.21).

Figure 5.21: Altyblaca Unitarian Chapel, Llanwenog, Ceredigion, 1837; stucco and glazing of 1892.

Numbers and Distribution of Dissenters in Early Eighteenth Century Wales

The difficulties inherent in quantitative analysis of Dissent in Wales have been discussed in chapter two. Nevertheless, historians have made use of figures obtained from both the Compton Census of 1676 and the enumeration of all the Dissenting congregations throughout England and Wales made by Dr. Evans in the early eighteenth century. Geraint H. Jenkins, for example, attributes the deficiencies of the Compton Census of 1676 to the Anglican authorities, whom he accuses of manipulating the figures in order to underestimate the strength of the Dissent in Wales. Describing the period from 1660 to 1689 as ‘the heroic age of Welsh Dissent’, and the numbers of Dissenters as ‘steadily increasing’, he says:

Ministers had evidently preserved the fellowship of their churches and old Puritanism was still very much alive, notably in the counties of Brecon, Glamorgan, and Monmouth. It was particularly strong in parts of the diocese of St Davids, especially in the archdeaconries of Brecon and Carmarthen, and at its most slender in north-west Wales.\(^{106}\)

Jones, in *Welsh Chapels*, gives a figure for the numbers of chapels built, though without saying where this information is from, stating that:

‘some 38 known Nonconformist chapels were created in Wales’ and that ‘in the period between 1689 and the 1730s, 3 new chapels built in Monmouthshire, 7 in Glamorganshire, 9 in Carmarthenshire, 4 in Pembrokeshire, 4 in Cardiganshire, 3 in Breconshire, 2 in Radnorshire and 6 sprinkled over north Wales. However, it is likely that there were others that escaped recording and documentation.’

Michael Watts makes a more thorough analysis of the available statistics, giving full details of his methodology in an eleven-page appendix. To make a more accurate assessment of the numbers and distribution of Dissenters in England and Wales in the early eighteenth century, Watts compares the numbers of Dissenters obtained from four different sources. These include Dr Evans’s List, denominational accounts, Anglican Church membership figures and Episcopal visitation returns. Using these methods, Watts gives an estimate of the numbers of Dissenting congregations in England and Wales (figure 5.22). Note that Monmouthshire is included with the English counties.

### Dissenting congregations, 1715–1718

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<th>England (including Monmouthshire)</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterians</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular Baptists</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Baptists</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-day Baptists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quakers</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,845</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1,934</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.22: Numbers of Dissenting Congregations in England and Wales (source: Watts, *Dissenters*, Vol. I, p. 269).**

The total number of Dissenting congregations in Wales is given as eighty nine. The table illustrated in figure 5.23 gives a county-by-county breakdown of the numbers of Dissenting congregations in England, from which it can be ascertained that there are a further twenty Dissenting congregations in Monmouthshire, made up from nine Independent, seven Particular Baptist and four Quaker congregations; there were no Presbyterians or General Baptists in that county. Thus Watts estimates that the total
number of Dissenting congregations in Wales, including Monmouthshire, was one hundred and nine, far exceeding the estimate of thirty-eight given above by Jones.

Watts then compares the numbers of Dissenting congregations and the numbers of Dissenters, maximised as the number of hearers as opposed to full members, with the total populations for each county, to show the distribution of Dissent in Wales by county (figure 5.24). The total population of England and Wales is estimated at 5,751,420, whilst that of Wales, including Monmouthshire, was 338,950. The total number of Dissenting congregations in England and Wales is given as 1,934, of which 109 are in Wales, including Monmouthshire. This means that Wales as a whole, with roughly 17% of the total population and 18% of the Dissenting congregations, was not particularly striking for the incidence of Old Dissent. However, this view must be modified when the distribution of Dissent in Wales is considered on a county by county basis (figure 5.24).
The virtual absence of Dissent in the northern counties of Wales is notable: the total number of Dissenting congregations for Anglesey and Caernarvonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merioneth and Montgomery combined is only eleven, whilst the county of Carmarthenshire alone had twenty-six congregations. The number of Presbyterians in the county of Carmarthenshire is also significant. Carmarthenshire Presbyterians, at 13.8% of the total population of the county, represent the greatest concentration of any denomination of Dissent in any county in England and Wales. There are also significant concentrations of Independents in the counties of Breconshire, Cardiganshire and Radnorshire. These distributions are more readily appreciated when presented in graphically as distribution maps (figures 5.25 and 5.26).
Figure 5.25: The distribution of Presbyterians and Independents as a percentage of total population, county by county (source: Watts, Dissenters, Vol. I, p. 272-273).

Figure 5.26: The distribution of Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists as a percentage of total population, county by county (source: Watts, Dissenters, Vol. I, p. 274).
The distribution maps show that the southern counties of Wales were indeed significant for their incidence of Old Dissent, especially those denominations that were Calvinistic in doctrine and were more closely defined by the orthodox Calvinist Westminster Confession. These are the same areas that were identified in the discussion in chapter two above as being those which were both the most prosperous and the most open to outside influence at a crucial time for the development of Dissent, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is also significant that Carmarthen became the centre of the Welsh publishing industry and the location of a significant educational establishment.

Watts gives a useful diagram of the relationships between the different denominations of Old Dissent (figure 5.27).

Figure 5.27: The relationships between the denominations of Old Dissent (source: Watts, Dissenters, Vol. 1, p. 6).

Presbyterians and Non-separatist Congregationalists or Independents are shown as being the closest to the seventeenth-century Puritans. This has already been established, above, through a consideration of the confessions of faith and attitudes to worship of these two denominations and, for Wales, the type of devotional literature available.
Carmarthenshire had an extremely high incidence of Presbyterianism, and so the Dissenting congregations in that county were the most similar to the national church, defined by the Westminster Confession, that Cromwell had wished to establish. Presbyterians were also most likely to be occasional conformists, taking communion in their parish churches. The High Church non-jurors were also Presbyterians. Yet despite the high incidence of Presbyterianism in south Wales in the decades following the Restoration, it had entirely disappeared by the mid nineteenth century. As has already been suggested, many Presbyterian congregations simply became Independent. This transfer is a further mechanism for the preservation of the Calvinist architectural models of the seventeenth century and their adoption by nineteenth-century chapel builders.

The transfer of Presbyterian congregations to the Independent denomination is supported by the evidence that seven Carmarthenshire chapels are described in the Buildings of Wales guide to the county as having a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century foundation, but are also said to have been of the Independent denomination by the time the existing chapels were built. The chapels are: Pant-teg, Abergwili; Heol Awst, Carmarthen; Capel Isaac, Manordeilo; Y Graig, Trelech; Henllan, Amgoed; Cefnarthen, Llanfair-ar-y-Bryn and Yr Hen Gapel, Pencader. Watts puts the number of Independent congregations at two and the number of Presbyterians at seventeen, so there are still a dozen Presbyterian congregations to be accounted for. It should also be noted that Watts is giving the numbers of congregations, rather than the numbers of chapels. Perhaps some congregations did not have chapels, meeting instead in rented premises or private houses. However, the existence of a recognisable model for a chapel both before and after this date suggests that this experience did not substantially contribute to the form of chapel buildings.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided further confirmation of the closeness of Welsh Dissent and the Established Church, in the continuity of Calvinist doctrine in both. Further, it has established that Welsh Dissent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was
neither entirely rural nor entirely local in origin and character. On the contrary, evidence suggests that Dissent was supported by a property-owning intellectual elite that, whilst maintaining strong contacts with the Established Church, was able to promote Welsh literacy and support Welsh Dissent. The social, intellectual and religious aspirations of Dissenters are evidenced by the interest shown in education. It seems unlikely, given these connections and aspirations, that rural domestic architecture would have exerted any strong influence on the design of chapels, even though some early Dissenting meetings may have taken place in a domestic setting.

The domestic appearance of eighteenth-century Quaker meeting-houses has been explained in terms of a denominational preference for undifferentiated buildings, reflecting a rejection of social hierarchy, and in the lack of support for the denomination after the middle of the eighteenth century, which meant that there was little subsequent investment in the meeting houses of Quakers in Wales. The emphasis given to The Pales Quaker meeting house, Llandegley, Radnorshire as representative of the domestic character and rural location of early Welsh chapels is disproportionate to the influence of the sect in Wales.

The numbers and distributions of the denominations of Dissent in Wales confirm that Dissent was likely to be associated with more advanced urban development. Except in Nonconformist hagiographies, there were no great numbers of persecuted Dissenters worshipping in barns. The number of Dissenters who did not have their own chapel is insufficient to support the theory that most Dissenters worshipped in barns and domestic buildings and that this experience influenced the form of chapels.

The existence of similar models for Dissenting chapels at the end of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century suggests continuity in the intervening period, as is confirmed by evidence from locations outside Wales. Both statistical and literary evidence indicates considerable continuity between Dissenting congregations, especially Presbyterians and Independents, and the Anglican Church in Wales at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.
During the eighteenth century, the reform movement that became known as Methodism originated from within the Anglican Church. The following chapter, therefore, following from the analysis by Guillery and others examined in the previous chapter, continues the analysis of the expression of Calvinism in the Established Church throughout the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth centuries.
Chapter 6: The Established Church in the Early Eighteenth Century
and the Advent of Methodism

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to emphasise the close connections between Methodism and the Established Church and to demonstrate the continuing commitment of both to the creation of a distinctly Protestant architecture. The previous two chapters have shown how Calvinist attitudes to worship were expressed in the architecture of both the Anglican Church and Dissenting meeting-houses in the seventeenth century. The latter have been proposed as the model for both the seventeenth-century Maesyronnen Independent Chapel and the eighteenth-century Pen-rhiw Unitarian chapel, as an alternative to the rural vernacular suggested by Jones.

However, it was not until the early decades of the nineteenth century that large numbers of Nonconformist chapels were built in Wales, many for the new Calvinistic Methodist denomination. Others were the result of the rebuilding of chapels of Old Dissent for congregations that had been in existence for more than a century, Pant-teg Independent Chapel, Carmarthenshire, for example, which is said to have been founded by the Rev. Stephen Hughes in 1660, but was completely rebuilt in 1856. Although there is no conclusive documentary or built evidence of its seventeenth-century appearance, the objective of this chapter is to provide evidence to support the continuity of the lateral-façade model that links the seventeenth-century with the nineteenth-century chapels.

The evangelical revitalisation of religion in the eighteenth century connects the chapels of Old Dissent with those built in the nineteenth century. The most important agency for the spread of evangelical religion in Wales was Methodism, which began as a reform movement within the Established Church in the middle of the eighteenth century. The aim of this chapter is to explore the influence of the Anglican Church on Methodism.
The chapter begins with an account of London churches, and the influence of architects of national stature such as Wren and Hawksmoor, particularly in the development of the 'auditory model' for Anglican churches.

The innovations made at a more parochial level in the suburbs of the thriving cosmopolitan city are also acknowledged, since they illustrate what could be achieved by parishioners through local initiative. The continuity of the expression of Calvinist worship remains a significant theme and evidence for this will be sought in Welsh parish churches. The character of the eighteenth century church in Wales forms the background to an exploration of the reform movements that existed within it, leading to a discussion of early Methodism, under the leadership in Wales of Howell Harris (1714-73), Daniel Rowland (1713-90) and William Williams of Pantycelyn (1717-91). The chapter ends with an account of the first buildings adapted or erected for Methodist meetings in England, with concluding remarks on their significance as models for subsequent Methodist buildings.

The Continuity of Calvinism in the Established Church: Metropolitan Architecture

Guillery, whose detailed research was cited in the previous chapter, describes the design choices relating to Anglican churches in London at the end of the seventeenth century as being:

motivated by what ecclesiastical historians have called Calvinist churchmanship. This moderate or conformed Reformed position, between the Laudian and the Puritan, was committed to maintaining the sixteenth-century Reformation’s clean break with medieval traditions, but had little interest in further radical reform.108

Wren’s designs for the post-Fire City churches have long been understood as a critical part of the establishment of post-Reformation norms for Anglican church interiors. The

circumstances of Wren’s commission to design new parish churches for the City of London are well known, as are his design precepts.309

Eighty-seven of the City of London’s parish churches were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, but it was decided that some parishes could conveniently be amalgamated and only fifty-two churches needed to be rebuilt. Wren provided the designs, with the fabric financed from public funds, whilst the fittings were the responsibility of the parishioners. Wren adopted a practical and pragmatic approach, using existing medieval foundations and minimising cost and most of the work was completed in the 1670s and 1680s. He cited his design for St James’s, Picadilly, London in the suburb of Westminster, as an ideal (figure 6.1):

In this church I mention, though very broad, and the middle nave arched up, yet as there are no walls of a second order, nor lanterns, nor buttresses, but the whole roof rests upon the pillars, as do also the galleries; I think it may be found beautiful and convenient, and as such, the cheapest of any form I could invent.310

Figure 6.1: St James’s, Piccadilly, London (1684), Wren; A: early eighteenth-century plan with three-decker pulpit; B: arrangement after 1825 (source: Addleshaw and Etchells, Liturgy, p. 55). Note two doors at the west end, giving access to the gallery.

Wren’s description of a simple, unified interior, the seating maximised by galleries, would apply to many Nonconformist chapels. Guillery further points out that:

while Wren subsequently advocated the single-axis layout of St James Piccadilly (1676-84) as a model for larger parish churches, the main entrances to that church were originally located at the centres of the long sides, and the pulpit was in the middle aisle.31

Thus, Wren’s original design, as with the rebuilding of St Pauls, was a more centralised plan, with two equal axes, north-south and east-west.

Wren’s City churches are almost all a single, open rooms, with the altar or communion table placed against the eastern wall and no screens dividing the space into nave and chancel. The flat or slightly domed ceilings and the sounding boards above the prominently-sited pulpits were designed to improve acoustics. Wren’s guidelines for the design of parish churches were articulated in a letter to the ‘Commission for Building Fifty New Churches’ established by an Act of Parliament by Queen Anne in 1711. The Act was passed by Tories, who had a majority in parliament for the first time in twenty-two years and wished to create a metropolitan statement of High Church principles. The committee was comprised of government officials and architects as well as churchmen, since architecture was regarded as a tool for improving morals and correcting social ills, as had been articulated by Lord Shaftesbury.

Wren gave advice on the evaluation and selection of designs, including a practical consideration of the site. This should preferably be fronting a main street, not necessarily east-west in orientation, and in a highly populated area. This was both more convenient for the inhabitants and likely to provide a greater income, from pew rents, for the future upkeep of the church. Pew rents were an important source of revenue for parish vestries and a well-attended church might therefore be better maintained. The exterior should be plain but with porticoes and spires designed to enhance visibility from primary viewpoints, with the aim of creating a church ‘as an ornament to the town’.312

31 Guillery, Calvinism and Continuity, p. 92.
Wren also commented on the intent of the design of the parish church, stating that churches should be as large as practicable, but:

still, in our Reformed religion, it should seem vain to make a Parish church larger, than that all who are present can both hear and see. The Romanists, indeed, may build larger Churches, it is enough if they hear the murmur of the Mass, and see the Elevation of the Host, but ours are to be fitted for Auditories. I can hardly think it practicable to make a single Room so capacious, with Pews and Galleries, as to hold above 2000 Persons, and all to hear the Service, and both to hear distinctly, and see the Preacher.³¹³

High Church as we assume him to be, since he was favoured by the Restoration court and his uncle was the Laudian archbishop Matthew Wren, Wren still designed churches for which the sermon is a central feature of the service. His High Church emphasis comes from the treatment of the altar, prominently and permanently fixed in the centre of the east wall, separated from the congregation in a railed enclosure, as Archbishop Laud had recommended. The ‘auditory’ model remained the ideal for Anglican parish churches until the Ecclesiologial Society reforms of the nineteenth century.

The Calvinist sympathies of the City of London and the suburbs to the south and east had been expressed in its parish churches, as chapter five has illustrated. Drawing attention to the existence of these precedents, Guillery points out:

Little attention has been given to the fact that Wren - the son and nephew of Laudian churchmen who worked so closely with neo-Laudian prelates - was able to gain acceptance for new churches with fixed east-end altars in the previously doctrinally unsympathetic City. Perhaps part of success lay in the adoption, in some measure through Hooke, of an architectural language that encompassed earlier seventeenth-century precedents with primitivist, Dutch and Calvinist roots.³¹⁴

For the post-Restoration Anglican Church, as for other Protestant churches, representations of the ‘Primitive’ were part of a theoretical underpinning aimed at legitimising the independence of the Protestant churches from Rome, investing them with

³¹³ Whinney, Wren, p. 48; De La Ruffiniere Du Prey, Hawksmoor’s London Churches, pp. 133-134.
³¹⁴ Guillery, Calvinism and Continuity, p. 93.
an alternative authority derived directly from the Early Christian church. There was much research into historical and Biblical precedent and much of this took the form of attempts to interpret the design of the Temple of Solomon from Biblical references. Hawksmoor fulfilled the call for Anglican churches to be renewed through emulation of Early Christian models in his ‘Basilica after the Primitive Christians’ of 1711, a design for an ideal type of church intended to serve as a model for the entire Anglican community. Classical detailing similarly evoked Early Christian prototypes.

With respect to plan, Wren recommended three types: a basilica with nave, side aisles and galleries (as at St Bride, Fleet Street); an aisleless hall (which Wren had designed at St Lawrence, Jewry); and a centralised design (such as the cruciform St Martin, Ludgate, the octagonal St Antholin, Watling Street, and the circle-in-square of St Stephen, Walbrook). These three generic plan types could all be justified as interpretations of the form of Early Christian churches and between them they could provide a range of interior arrangements that could be interpreted as nuanced expressions of High Church through to Calvinist attitudes to worship. The centralised plan with the pulpit as the liturgical focus was, in effect, the most Calvinist, as evidenced by its adoption at Lyon and La Rochelle in France and at Willemstad and the Marekerk, Leiden in the Calvinist Netherlands as described in chapter four. As was also described in that chapter, the axial, processional arrangements of medieval churches could be adapted to Calvinist worship by the removal of internal partitions and the insertion of fixed pews, effectively turning church interiors into aisleless halls. Where the altar remained at the east end, the basilica with nave and aisles retained the most axial arrangement, although this could be mitigated by giving the pulpit greater prominence, by placing it in front of, or towering above, the altar.

As Guillery summarises:

A primitivist cacophony gave rise to learned treatises, but this was not a new phenomenon. The earlier and less scholarly writings of Bishop Williams and the

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anonymous Puritans, together with a tradition of church building stretching back to Denbigh, through the widespread use of the ‘Tuscan’ order, to Jones’s more studied primitivism, indicate a widely based search for early Christian architectural precedent from the late sixteenth century onwards. Through this search, the Anglican church interior was gradually, progressively and conflictingly reconceived. Different perspectives on the primitive could be used to different ends.\textsuperscript{318}

He goes on to describe two London churches, St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey, of 1675-79, and St Nicholas, Deptford, of 1696-97, both of which were designed by a Southwark carpenter, Charley Staunton, as having cross-in-rectangle elliptically vaulted ‘Tuscan’ interiors, similar to those of the Broadway and Poplar chapels described in chapter five. Southwark, Bermondsey and Deptford, like Poplar, Shadwell and Whitechapel, were parishes with a tradition of Dissent, leading to an ambivalence of religious identity, so that these churches with centralised plans may be interpreted as Calvinist.

In order to make this point, Guillery contrasts them with the:

\begin{quote}
contemporary dominance of single-axis churches in western suburbs, from Wren’s St James, Piccadilly to St Anne, Soho (1677-85) and St Mary Abbots, Kensington (1683-96). This sample is small, but the apparent divergence between east and west London may be telling, particularly in the light of social and religious differences between the two ends of the metropolis. Re-Laudianisation took hold with relatively little impediment in the 1680s and 1690s, but resistance was arguably stronger in London’s southern and eastern suburbs.\textsuperscript{319}
\end{quote}

Hawksmoor’s unexecuted ‘Basilica after the Primitive Christians’ was essentially a square plan with cross vaults. The plan of St Anne’s, Limehouse (1714-29) implies a cross-in-rectangle, while Christ Church Spitalfields (1714-29) and St Alphege, Greenwich (1712-14) originally had north and south entrances, creating subtle cross axes.

Guillery interprets these Hawksmoor churches, and the contemporary buildings with similar cross-in-rectangle plans that were erected by artisan craftsmen, as the reconciliation of centralised planning with axiality ‘to create an interior that was neither Laudian nor Puritan, but somewhere in between, and which was capable of serving both

\textsuperscript{318} Guillery, \textit{Calvinism and Continuity}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{319} Guillery, \textit{Calvinism and Continuity}, pp. 93-95.
auditory and ceremonial priorities'. This compromise enabled the same design to be acceptable to both Calvinists and High Anglicans.

The Anglican Church in Wales in the Eighteenth Century

Victorian critics condemned the eighteenth-century Church of England as corrupt and spiritually moribund, its churches dilapidated and unsightly. However, it is always in the interests of a reforming movement to draw attention to the shortcomings of the previous regime. In a similar way to Laud's justification of his 'improvements' by emphasising Puritan neglect, the nineteenth-century Ecclesiologists denigrated the Church of England of the previous century in order to justify their reforms. The eighteenth-century Church was described as inadequate and failing in its pastoral duties, dragged down by an administrative apparatus that left it open to corruption and abuses such as pluralism and absenteeism. Parish churches, starved of funds, had become dilapidated, whilst the church was spiritually moribund, overtaken by materialism and latitudinarianism.

Few new parishes were formed or new parish churches built during the eighteenth century, most new buildings being either proprietary chapels or chapels-of-ease. Eighteenth-century interiors were frequently the result of the renovation of earlier built fabric, financed through 'church briefs'. Royal Letters Patent addressed to the churchwardens of the whole country, appealing for contributions for some particular purpose:

Eighteenth-century briefs make it clear that many medieval churches were in a shocking state of disrepair. But the prospect of sudden death for the inhabitants of another parish was not so alarming as to cause the congregations of that phlegmatic age to empty their purses.

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120 Guillery, Calvinism and Continuity, p. 97.
The condemnation of the condition of churches in the diocese of St David’s, written by Erasmus Saunders in the early eighteenth-century, has been influential in forming the view of the Established Church in Wales at this date:

The state of religion here is so very deplorable...of the conditions that our churches, chapels, and habitations of the clergy are in. Such is the melancholy and ruinous view that presents itself upon this head, that I know not where to begin, for did you see the ruins of all things dedicated to pious and sacred uses throughout this country; did you see the pitiful condition of our once so celebrated and noble cathedral, and how a great part of it is demolish’d to prevent the charge of reparations...and the desolate remains of the old collegiate church of Llandhewyfrefi in Cardiganshire; a church once endow’d with a handsome provision for a dean and twelve prebendaries; but the endowment is now alienated to that degree that the poor incumbent there, tho’ the tithes of his parish are said to be worth four hundred pounds per annum is oblig’d to content himself with about eight pounds salary....did you see the very sorry and mean cottages (if any) that are left for parsonage and vicarage houses; but in most parishes are no provisions of any kind for that use, not glebe, nor ground to build upon; but as was said, where there are any, they are commonly so mean and inconvenient, as that the clergy, poor as they are, cannot think them habitable for themselves.324

Geraint H. Jenkins summarises accounts of this sort in his description of the Established Church in Wales as ‘paralysed by crippling administrative and financial problems’, its defects the result of poverty, caused by ‘expropriation of tithes and endowments by lay impropriators’. He continues:

The penury of the church, especially in south Wales, hampered efforts to restore or refurbish parish churches. Throughout this period, many parish churches, notably in remote rural areas, were in a deplorable condition. Clergymen constantly complained to unheeding ears of leaking roofs, mouldering walls, unpaved floors and encroaching ivy.325

Although the northern dioceses of Bangor and St Asaph were described as slightly better off, poverty was blamed for the weaknesses of the Established Church, including non-residence, pluralism, and neglect. These were exacerbated, in Wales, by poor communications, with many parish churches in remote locations far from new centres of

population, but most of all, by the neglect of the Welsh language by the Anglican Church.  

The spiritual as well as the material condition of the Established Church was criticised as inadequate and these criticisms became an integral part of the foundation myths of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. The hymn-writer, William Williams of Pantycelyn, was the first historian of the movement and it is largely his formulation of the early history of Methodism in Wales that has survived unchallenged to inform the commentary of *Welsh Chapels*. Williams emphasised the spiritual torpor of both the Established Church and Old Dissent before the advent of Methodism:

> Ignorance covered the face of Wales; hardly any Gospel privilege could stand against the corruptions of the day, until about 1738 light broke forth as the dawn in many parts of the word...and O wonderful morning! The sun shone on Wales.  

As Welsh Calvinistic Methodism reached its apogee in the nineteenth century, under the influence of Welsh nationalism and as a result of denominational rivalry, both the international connections of the early revival and the contributions of the Anglican Church and Dissent were played down.

However, recent research has indicated that the ‘evidence from Episcopal and archdiocesan visitation records, in particular, suggests that the Church of England in the eighteenth century was a generally efficient organisation. [and] abuses were a cause of concern’. Obviously, this generalisation must be qualified to take account of the great regional variation in the quality and quantity of church buildings. In the Church of England, church maintenance and improvement was the responsibility of the parish

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vestry, whose income derived largely from the church rate levied in the parish and from pew rents. If the parish church was in a remote and sparsely populated area, it might be ill-attended by relatively poor parishioners, exacerbating in the eighteenth century the contrasts that already existed in the medieval church, between poor upland areas and those parishes that were prosperous through agriculture or trade.

Much of Wales fell into the former category, but nevertheless there are examples of church rebuilding and improvements that were carried out in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some issues concerning the internal arrangement of churches that had been contentious in the early seventeenth century still remained to be resolved. There was scope for the interpretation of the liturgical requirements of the Book of Common Prayer, especially as to the status and frequency of the Lord’s Supper, which determined the location of the altar and its prominence relative to the pulpit. Innovations accommodating Low Church or Calvinist worship continued in the Established Church throughout the eighteenth century and, in Wales, well into the nineteenth century. In particular, eighteenth-century congregations across a very broad spectrum agreed on the centrality of preaching and the towering, centrally-located pulpit became common: ‘The major Anglican contribution to post-Reformation church furnishing was the so-called three-decker pulpit’ (figure 6.2).330

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Three-decker pulpits were, in effect, platforms in ascending order, for the clerk, the reader and preaching respectively, with the pulpit being elevated to a considerable height and often further emphasised by a sounding board above. The sounding board amplified the words of the preacher, whilst the aesthetic effect could be that of an aedicule or tabernacle within the church, framing the leaders of the service:

A characteristic piece of church furniture in the Georgian period was the three-decker pulpit. The clerk sat at his desk at the lowest level, with the parson's reading desk above him and there the two men would read the service, in the customary duet. For the sermon, the parson would retire to the vestry, exchange his surplice for a black 'Geneva gown' while the psalm was singing and return to mount the steps to the pulpit itself, on the highest level. Only on the infrequent sacrament Sundays (once a quarter in many country churches) would he approach the altar.331

The significance of this form of pulpit was political as well as religious, the separate sections elevating the status of both clerk and reader, who were both laymen, since it placed them at a focal point within the church. The prominence of the parish clerk demonstrated the connection between the Established Church and the mechanisms of

state, whilst that of both reader and clerk showed the importance of lay participation. The pulpit and ‘big seat’ (set mawr) of Welsh Nonconformist chapels reflects the same arrangement, in that the preacher is central but is surrounded by the elders and deacons of the church, who have a significant role in both the worship and the organisation and administration of the chapel. The deacons are frequently the Trustees - effectively the owners - of the building.

Both Luther and Calvin had recommended fixed seating as a necessary consideration for congregations who had to listen carefully to long sermons and readings, and this had been one of the most marked changes of the Reformation. As shown in chapter four, the provision of fixed seating within a church was an effective and relatively inexpensive means of transforming a medieval church into a Reformed Protestant one. The internal fittings and running repairs to parish churches, and the raising of the money for these, were the responsibility of the parish vestry, and pew rents provided an important source of revenue supporting these repairs and improvements. The arrangement and moreover the occupation of the fixed seating in a parish church demonstrated the social status, resources and responsibilities of local inhabitants and emphasised the role of the church in local government. *The History of Myddle*, a parish in Shropshire near to the Welsh border, was written by the parish clerk, Richard Gough in the late seventeenth century. It effectively describes the entire district through the seat plan of the parish church and this was possible because: ‘Where churches were rebuilt, or new churches erected, it was common practice for seats to be assigned to those who contributed to the rebuilding in rough proportion to their donation’. Nonconformist chapels were similarly financed through subscription and pew rents.

Throughout England, much of the evidence for the alterations and improvements made to churches during the eighteenth century was obliterated by the energetic activities of the Ecclesiological Society in the nineteenth century. In particular, any fittings or arrangement that might be interpreted as Low Church or Calvinist were replaced by those

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emphasising the ritualistic nature of Anglican worship, the better to connect the
Established Church to a medieval, catholic past. Some pre-Ecclesiological interiors
survive, as does evidence in the form of the former seating plans in church records, as
Nigel Yates has identified. Considering all the evidence, Yates concludes that a
longitudinal arrangement, with the pulpit as the liturgical focus on one of the long sides
of a rectangular plan, either on the wall or the middle of a side aisle, was a common in
the eighteenth century, and there were also T- or L-shaped interiors.\textsuperscript{134}

These arrangements, in their preferential emphasis on the pulpit and lack of concern to
create a ceremonial or ritualistic interior, demonstrate the architectural continuity of
moderate Calvinism in the Established Church at parochial level. Yates describes four
types of possible north-south rectangular arrangements, which are described as forming a
‘reasonably high proportion’ of surviving plan evidence:

The most numerous, judging from surviving plans, was the single cell or simple
nave-and-chancel church, with the pulpit and reading desk in the middle of either
the north or south side; the second was the double-aisled church, where the pulpit
was placed in the middle of one of the outer walls and most of the seating
arranged to face towards them. The third was an adaptation of the first and
second types, with a gallery around the three walls on which the pulpit was not
placed, exactly comparable to the arrangement of most dissenting chapels in the
eighteenth century. A fourth type was an arrangement whereby the pulpit and
reading-desk were placed in the middle of one side of the nave in churches with
aisles and transepts. This arrangement was common in a number of large town
churches until the second half of the nineteenth century, but has now largely
disappeared.\textsuperscript{135}

At St Cewydd, Disserth, Radnorshire, a single volume nave and chancel of mid fifteenth-
century date is attached to an earlier tower.\textsuperscript{136} The walls are whitewashed outside and
most of the windows are wood-framed rectangles (figure 6.3).

\textsuperscript{134} Yates, \textit{Buildings, Faith and Worship}, pp. 77-103.
\textsuperscript{135} Yates, \textit{Buildings, Faith and Worship}, pp. 78-79.
The interior is an example of the first category identified by Yates, having a north-south arrangement. The pulpit, dated 1687, is prominent in the middle of the south wall, with fixed seating on the north wall facing it. All that remains of the fifteenth-century rood screen is one doorpost and part of a beam, and the church remains much as it was when fitted with tightly-packed box pews in the mid-seventeenth century (figure 6.4).
The altar is on the east wall, but hemmed in, on either side, by box pews (figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: St Cewydd, Disserth. The east wall with the altar in railed enclosure with box pew either side.

The pews, dated between 1666 and 1722, still bear the names or initials of their owners. (figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: St Cewydd, Disserth, box pew to the right of altar enclosure, showing date and initials.

One pew has the initials of James Watt, the engineer, who came to live in the area in 1805 (figure 6.7).
The interior of St Cewydd is similar to that at Maesyronnen, except for the treatment of the altar, highlighting both the difference in the form of worship practiced in each but also the similarity in the lack of concern for any ritualistic or processional arrangement and the liturgical focus on the pulpit. The form of construction and detailing of the church are in many ways more ‘vernacular’ than those of Maesyronnen, with no formality or regularity in the placement of windows and doors. Other examples in Wales of the north-south longitudinal arrangement, with the pulpit as the liturgical focus and located in the centre of long wall of a rectangular plan, include Llangar, Clwyd, (1716-32) and the former chapel-of-ease at Llanfihangel Heligen, Powys, (1812), illustrated in chapter six. Of the other surviving examples of this arrangement, one is in Northern Ireland, at Ballinderry, County Antrim (1664-8) and another is in New England, at Little Fork, Virginia (1773-6), areas where Calvinism remained strong.

St Cynhaern, Ynyscynhaern, Caernarvonshire (1830), effectively has a T-shaped interior, with a towering three-decker pulpit and the door to the vestry in the south transept, with a tiered block of pews facing it in the north transept (figure 6.8, plan: figure 6.9). The altar is placed on the east wall and as at St Cewydd, Disserth, there are box pews on either side.
of it (figure 6.8). The stained glass window is twentieth century. The nave has a central aisle with two rows of box pews and a shallow gallery over the west entrance door (figure 6.10). According to Yates, 'The T-plan church had a much wider distribution than has been realized. It was popular with Anglicans as well as with Calvinists and a few Lutherans, and especially in Wales'.

Figure 6.8: St Cynhaearn, Ynyscynhaearn, Treflys, Caernarvonshire (1830), view from nave looking east, showing the pulpit in the south transept and blocks of pews in the northern transept, facing the pulpit but with no view of the altar.

Figure 6.9: St Cynhaearn, Ynyscynhaearn, Treflys, Caernarvonshire (1830), plan (source: Royal Commission Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, Report on Gwynedd, p. 247).

Altogether some thirty examples of this type of T-plan either survive or are known to have existed in England and Wales. Examples of medieval churches to which post-reformation transepts were added still exist at three churches in Gwynedd. Dolwyddelan, where the transept was added 1711, has lost its three-decker pulpit, with the reading desk and clerk’s desk now separated and placed on either side of the chancel. An arrangement of this type, dating from 1770, survives unaltered at St Baglan, Llanfaglan, Caernarvonshire, whilst there is evidence that there was formerly such an arrangement at Betws-y-Coed dating from an alteration of 1843. An L-shaped plan, formed by adding a transept against the east end of a single-celled church, survives at Didmarton, Gloucestershire and at Llangelynnin, Caernarvonshire, where the fittings also survive, and at Llanfair Dyffryn, Clwyd, which was founded as a chapel-of-ease in 1619 and rebuilt in 1787.

At Llanddoged, a double-aisled hall church, an almost square plan interior was provided with seating in the form of enclosed box pews facing a three-decker pulpit on the north wall, whilst the altar is at the north end of the east wall. A row of columns and an aisle
runs east-west through the middle of the church with blocks of pews to the north and south of it (figure 6.11). On the west wall, raked box pews are divided into two blocks, marked ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ (figure 6.12).

Figure 6.11: St Doged, Llanddoged, Denbighshire (interior remodelled 1838-9).

Figure 6.12: St Doged, Llanddoged, Denbighshire, showing the clerk’s desk and the raked pews on the west wall.

The addition of galleries to the interiors of churches was another common eighteenth or early nineteenth-century alteration. Galleries increased the seating capacity of the interior and gave further scope for the hierarchical segregation of the congregation. Gallery seats were usually free and, especially in country districts, occupied by children and servants and labourers, the lower status members of the parish.
Two churches that are examples of Yates’s third category, a rectangular interior with a north-south axis emphasised by the addition of galleries, are located just over the Welsh border in Shropshire, St Mary Magdalene Bridgnorth (1792) and St John the Baptist, Whittington (1802). In these churches, the reading desks are placed on the middle of the south wall, with galleries facing them around the other sides, giving an internal appearance very much like Pen-rhiw Chapel.\footnote{Yates, \textit{Buildings, Faith and Worship}, p. 90, citing Shropshire RO4030/Ch/41 and 3818/Ch/90.} This was perhaps the interior arrangement at St Myllin, where a red brick nave and chancel was built sometime after 1706 (figure 6.13). The two triangular-pedimented doorways still give access under a gallery to a plain hall-church with coved ceiling. On the gallery front are benefaction boards giving details of the amounts raised to build the new church and to provide local education in 1720.\footnote{Richard Haslam, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Powys}, p. 132.} The church was refurbished c.1863, when the windows were given their ‘Romanesque’ round heads.

![Figure 6.13: St Myllin, Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire (early eighteenth century). (Source: Haslam, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Powys}, illustration 69, unpaginated).](image)

Some eighteenth-century Anglican parish churches, oriented east-west towards both pulpit and altar, were fitted with a central block of pews. This was a common arrangement in contemporary Lutheran churches as at the Lutheran St George, Alie Street, Whitechapel, London (1762) illustrated in chapter four. Anglican examples...
include Silsden, West Yorkshire (1712), where a contemporary sketch plan shows a virtually square building with an entrance portico on the middle of the south wall. There were pews around the north, south, and west walls and a central block of pews in the middle. The pulpit was originally on the north side of the altar, but a manuscript alteration to the plan shows it moved to the east end of the central pew block, perhaps part of further alterations made to the church in 1816. Hay-on-Wye, the home ground of Howell Harris, similarly still has its eighteenth-century galleries, on the north and west sides of the nave. A centralised interior was formed by removing the divisions between nave and aisle in Llanarthney and Llanon, both Cardiganshire, in 1826 and 1841 respectively.

The disadvantage of the north-south rectangular interior for Anglican worship was that the chancel or altar-space was differently orientated from the nave or preaching space, although this might not have mattered very much in practical terms when Holy Communion was celebrated only very rarely. This problem did not arise with an east-west rectangular arrangement, but the relationship of pulpit and reading desk to altar still needed to be resolved. The pulpit was usually placed at the east end of the nave at the entrance to the chancel, usually in front of the altar space but occasionally at the east end behind the altar, as it is in many Lutheran churches and most dissenting chapels. This was also the arrangement in the Methodist New Room at Bristol (1739), built whilst Methodism was within the Church of England. An arrangement with the clerk’s desk, reading desk and pulpit to the fore and the altar behind them, all at the east end, still survives St John’s, Chichester (1812-13). After reviewing the evidence of surviving plans and contemporary illustrations, Yates is of the opinion that this arrangement was relatively common in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

An arrangement almost as common as that with the pulpit at the east end of the central aisle was one in which, in churches with three blocks of pews and no central aisle, the

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pulpit was placed at the eastern end of the central pew block. There was a growing
tendency from about 1800 to build or reorder churches without a central aisle since this
usually had the effect of increasing the available seating accommodation. Churches of
this type were much disliked as improper by Tractarian reformers, and such arrangements
were usually altered in the later nineteenth century. An arrangement of this type was,
however, introduced as late as the 1850s, despite Ecclesiological criticism, at Leighton,
Powys and earlier arrangements of this sort have partially survived at Talylychau
(Carmarthenshire), Edenfield (Lancashire), Carrington (Greater Manchester), and St
James's, Ryde, Isle of Wight.343

As will be appreciated from the foregoing lists of examples, an unusual number of pre-
Ecclesiological interior arrangements survive in Anglican churches in Wales. This means
that, during the first major building phase in the early nineteenth century, Calvinistic
Methodist chapels showed a greater resemblance to, rather than difference from, the
parish churches they seceded from. In fact, there was a strong sense in which the chapels
were able to more thoroughly realise the ideals of Reformed worship that the legacy of
medieval fabric and lack of adequate funds had prevented the Established church from
achieving.

**Moral Improvement and Spiritual Renewal: Religious Societies**

In the eighteenth century, the adaptation and improvement of Anglican church interiors
was accompanied by a continued concern for moral and spiritual improvement, as
evidenced by early evidence of evangelicalism and renewed efforts in education. Earlier
seventeenth-century religious radicalism began to be replaced by alternative efforts
towards moral renewal. Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693)
and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), which were encouraging to Deists and
Latitudinarians, especially in the view of a church as 'a voluntary society of men, joining
themselves together of their own accord, in order to undertake the public worshipping of
God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of

their souls'. Locke’s pupil, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, later reacted against the theory that ideas were only derived from experience, believing instead that a moral order was implicit in human nature and was expressed not only in actions and moral judgements but also in aesthetic taste. Shaftesbury published his views in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners and Times* in 1711, which promoted the beauty and order inherent in classical architecture as beneficial to morality. Largely under his instigation, the ‘Society for the Reformation of Manners’ was established in 1691. Its objective was to raise the moral tone of society, largely as a means to resist the threat of popery and establish a stable and quiescent society.

Religious societies were founded on the initiative of parishioners, whose aim was the revitalisation of the Church of England. The first of these were established in London, but they became popular throughout England and Wales in the eighteenth century following the publication in 1697 of Josiah Woodward’s *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London and their endeavours for the Reformation of Manners*. The book described in detail the setting up of such societies and a set procedure for meetings. It was recommended that these included most of the Anglican morning service from the Book of Common Prayer, omitting only the absolution and other functions exclusive to ordained priests, so that a lay steward could lead the devotions. This was to be followed by a psalm and an informal discussion and the meeting concluded with a second psalm. The members of such societies were then expected to use their experience to support and enhance the worship in their parish church, particularly in giving sermons and taking the lead in singing psalms. Howell Harris is said to have owned a copy of this book and the Methodist preacher George Whitefield praised the religious societies for their contribution to religion. Bishop Humphrey Humphreys of Bangor ‘issued his own directives, divided his diocese into three deaneries and formed monthly societies in each, and outlined the respective duties of clergymen, churchwardens and parishioners’.

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It was understood that literacy was key to the improvement of religious observance and the propagation of Christian knowledge. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was founded in 1699, to provide parochial libraries with Bibles and catechisms in order to promote Christian instruction. The efforts of the SPCK were buttressed and extended in 1701 by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) which also raised and distributed funds for practical evangelism such as missionary work and education, bringing together philanthropists from different denominations. After the turn of the century, these groups were additionally inspired by an evangelicalism that had begun to revitalise Protestant religion, affecting Lutheranism in the German states and Anglican and Dissenting churches in Britain and North America.

German Pietism was an evangelical movement centred on the University of Halle in Prussia, where August Hermann Francke had also established a printing press, Bible Institute, schools and an orphanage. Francke publicised his work in a periodical entitled *Pietas Hallensis* that was circulated amongst the Protestant churches of the world. Internationally, the leaders of evangelical movements were in frequent contact with each other and exchanged letters and publications. Sermons and collections of hymns were published and news of revival meetings and individual conversions were quickly spread via popular accounts in newspapers and journals. Recent research has revealed the extent to which the revivals were linked together by a highly effective communications system such that, in the mid eighteenth century, Protestantism was given a renewed sense of collective solidarity:

> From the Pietist centre of Halle, a clearinghouse for Protestant intelligence, A. H. Francke, prophet of Protestant renewal, engaged some 5,000 correspondents, and maintained regular communication with some three or four hundred.347

This ensured that the influence of German Pietism on the all the leaders of early Methodism in England and Wales was profound.

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Griffith Jones was already an ordained Anglican clergyman in Carmarthenshire when, in June 1713, he became a corresponding member of the SPCK. Initially this was in connection with his potential interest in missionary work in India:

In October 1712 the SPCK learned from a letter from Sir John Phillips of Picton Castle, Pembrokeshire, ‘That ther’s a very worthy Clergyman in Carmarthensh whose name is JONES that has lately discovered an inclination to go to Tranquebar.’ In due course Jones came up to town, where he lodged with a minister who ‘was sometime at Hall in Saxony’ and was accepted by the Society as a missionary; but soon after withdrew, ‘upon the prospect he has’, as he put it, ‘of doing more service to religion in his Native Country than he can propose to do abroad’. Henceforth he drew on the Society’s readiness to supply him with Bibles in Welsh rather than with the dictionary and grammar in Portuguese for which he had first asked.\(^{348}\)

Sir John Phillips later presented Jones with the living of Llandowror and also gave him his own sister in marriage, enabling Jones to become an active evangelical. Sir John was in constant touch with Francke, and an influential member of the SPCK until his death in 1737, also introducing George Whitefield as a corresponding member. Thomas Wilson (1703-84), rector of St Stephen’s, Walbrook, one of Wren’s city churches, was part of the circle of early Methodists. On 30 September 1732 he records in his diary having breakfast with: ‘Mr Wesley of our house. [he was at Christ Church, Oxford, with Charles Wesley] His brother of Lincoln there. Had some discourse about their Religious Society.’\(^{349}\) Wilson was a member of the SPCK and a close friend of Sir John Phillips, at whose London house he met Griffith Jones; he was also a friend and neighbour of Isaac Watts. We can imagine that all of them at some time may have worshipped in St Stephen’s. All the leaders of the Evangelical Revival knew one another, read one another’s books, and wrote to and visited one another in the 1730’s, and all were ‘indebted to Francke and the inspiration which came directly from Halle. The influence of Zinzendorf and the Moravian Brethren was also felt by them all.’\(^{350}\) The concern for spiritual renewal was shared by Anglicans and Dissenters alike and all were part of the international network of evangelicalism and revival.

\(^{350}\) Nuttall, Continental Pietism, p. 209.
The Welsh Circulating Schools

The SPCK was involved in missionary activities abroad but also sought to increase the literacy important to Protestantism at home:

Wales posed a particular problem to the SPCK. Although the Society had ninety-five schools in the Principality between 1699 and 1737, thirty-one of these were in Pembrokeshire and there appears to have been some reluctance to provide Welsh-speaking schools for Welsh-speaking areas.\(^{351}\)

In 1737, Griffith Jones sought to remedy this by a campaign to promote literacy in Welsh. He founded the Circulating Schools, with the aim of teaching reading based on the Bible and catechism, since the concern was to save souls rather than education for any social or political aims. Mass literacy was deemed valuable only as means of fixing the truths communicated by catechising firmly in the mind. The age of students was irrelevant to this purpose, and adults and children attended the same classes, whenever the demands of work would allow. Teachers were often former pupils, and given a minimal salary, which left the schools open to the accusation that they consisted of people of the lowest sort. The schools were housed in whatever premises were made available or could be rented cheaply; enabling literacy to be taught for a very low cost per head, and through Jones's constant fund-raising, instruction remained free. At the time of Griffith Jones's death in 1761 it was claimed that 3,498 circulating schools had existed at some time in the previous twenty-four years, and that 158,237 pupils had been instructed.\(^ {352}\)

Jones kept a continuous diary of his activities, published at the time as The Welch Piety. Nuttall says of this: 'The reference back to Pietas Hallensis in the titles of the annual reports of his schools, Welch Piety, cannot be missed. The consolidated account of the schools in the 1753 issue of Welch Piety includes, in fact, an overt comparison with

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\(^{351}\) Watts, Dissenters: Volume I, p. 424.

\(^{352}\) Watts, Dissenters: Volume I, p. 425.
Francke’s work. Charity schools were a feature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as were catechetical lectures. In Wales:

a former vicar, John Robinson, had bequeathed in his will in 1703 the sum of £12 per annum to finance a catechetical lecture ‘to the capacity of the meanest’ every Sunday from March to the end of October. There are grounds for thinking, too, that the growing number of charity schools and small reading-schools were beginning to usurp the traditional catechetical duties of the clergy and certainly to compensate for ministerial deficiencies. The very presence of these schools improved enormously the social opportunities offered in backward rural areas and market towns.

Jones was also an important influence on the early Methodist leaders. His preaching was responsible for the evangelical conversion of Daniel Rowland in 1735 and he acted as a guide and mentor to Howell Harris. After meeting Jones in 1736, Harris read *Pietas Halliensis* and thereafter read the issues of Jones’s *Welch Piety* as they were published. Howel Davies, who was later to found many Methodist societies and chapels in Pembrokeshire, was his curate at Llandowror for a short time. Jones was on friendly terms with all the leading evangelicals, corresponding with John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon, but he always denied that he was a Methodist and ultimately distanced himself from Howell Harris over the issue of itinerant preaching.

**Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, 1735-1755**

Welsh Calvinistic Methodism was set in motion in 1736 at Trevecca in Breconshire, the home of Howell Harris. Following his evangelical conversion in 1735, Harris began his mission by ‘exhorting’, as he termed his preaching. He was immediately criticised for this by the vicar of his parish church of Talgarth, who advised him that preaching and leading others in prayer had its place within the home, but that it was inappropriate for a layman beyond the confines of his own domestic circle. Evangelical preaching, intended to invoke an emotional rather than an intellectual response, was the characteristic that

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Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society*, p. 80

Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Evangelical Movement in Britain*, p. 218, quoting Beynon, ii. 192, transcript of Howel Harris’s journal for 8 June 1738.

Griffith Jones, NL.WDWB.
distinguished Methodism from the earlier religious societies and the Established Church. The practice of preaching in public caused conflict with the Established Church and it was the persistence of Harris in itinerant preaching after his reprimands that was the reason he was later refused ordination as a priest of the Established Church. Following a similar conversion experience, also in 1735, Daniel Rowland was inspired to preach evangelical sermons in the parish of Llangeitho, Cardiganshire, where he was an ordained Anglican clergyman. His sermons were sufficiently powerful and convincing to draw large numbers of hearers and when these could no longer be accommodated within the church, Rowland began preaching outdoors to the crowds gathered in the churchyard and surrounding fields.358

Howell Harris began to organise his followers into religious societies, after the manner described in Josiah Woodward’s *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies*, founding the first society at Y Wemos, Llandyfalle, Breconshire, in 1737. By 1742, through the agency of Griffith Jones, Harris had been in touch with Rowland and together with the ordained deacon William Williams, Pantycelyn, and Howel Davies, a former schoolmaster at Talgarth and by then Griffith Jones’s curate, a Methodist Association was formed which began corresponding with similar movements in England. Neither Harris nor Rowland ever wished to form a new denomination:

Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland saw themselves leading a renewal movement within the Established Church; spiritually renewing it rather than constitutionally reforming it; and supplementing it in large parishes where the church was geographically remote, or where the parish priest was thought to have lost, or never established, his grip.359

When Harris began to put in place the organisational framework for his societies he chose clergy as leaders wherever possible. At the quarterly meeting at Llangeitho in 1783, Thomas Charles noted about twenty clergymen, along with between sixty and eighty exhorters.360 Welsh Calvinistic Methodism was to remain within the Established Church for more than seventy years, only separating as an independent denomination in 1811.

358 Daniel Rowland, NLWDWB.
359 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, *Welsh Church*, p. 168.
Itinerant and outdoor preaching and the formation of local societies for mutual encouragement and the exchange of religious experiences were the characteristics that distinguished early Methodism from the Established Church. The intention was to revive the spiritual warmth and spontaneity thought to have existed within the Early Christian Church. There was an emphasis on personal conversion, for Methodists often attained through a dramatic revelatory experience, and the subsequent maintenance of this initial conviction by careful moderation of everyday life and thought. With the additional meetings and acts of worship that supplemented Church services, Methodism effectively dominated all the leisure and social life of its adherents. Onlookers accused the Methodists of licentiousness and this is understandable, given that many members of the Societies were young single women, whilst exhorters tended to be young articulate and persuasive men; and meeting sometimes consisted of all night vigils:

In 1745, the steward of the Societies at Llwynafydd and Blaenhownik excitedly reported to Howell Harris that “our work is to pray God, many times, singing Hallelujah’s from night to morning in an ecstasy of joy in the Holy Ghost.”

Local societies formed the nuclei of early Methodism, with typically ten to thirty members, mostly young people, and meetings were held at least once a week in private houses and scattered farms, until meeting-houses were built. Anticipating the reluctance of parish churches to allow evangelical preaching and because of the desirability of a dedicated location in which to hold Society meetings, from very early on Harris supported the idea of obtaining and even building premises. These were financed through the weekly contributions of members, who also frequently participated in building the meeting-house. Harris refused to license Methodist meeting-houses as dissenting places of worship, calling them ‘society houses’ or ‘new rooms’, as Wesley also did, to avoid the suggestion of secession from the Anglican church. This means that it is not possible to accurately quantify eighteenth-century Methodist chapels.

In the early days of the revival, there was some co-operation between Harris and Dissenters, but he quarrelled with the Baptists over the ‘dryness’ of their preaching and

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161 Geraint H. Jenkins, Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History, p. 465.
suspicions that they were trying to proselytise among the members of his societies.\textsuperscript{364} Similarly, Harris was initially welcomed as a preacher at Independent meeting houses. After initial co-operation, it became clear to Harris that to join with the Dissenters would be to ally his societies with a marginal group in Welsh society, and thus isolate them from the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{365} At the first Methodist Association meeting in 1742, it was resolved that members were at liberty to communicate either in their parish churches or with the Dissenters; whereas in 1745, an exhorter was told to stop his activities until he had made up his mind whether he was a Methodist or a Dissenter.\textsuperscript{366} There was potential for secession from the Methodist societies to Dissent. The first Methodist chapel was built at Groes-wen, Caerphilly, Glamorgan in 1742, but having acquired a building, the congregation requested the ordination of their exhorters and insisted on having a communion service in their society house. When these were not forthcoming, they formed their own Independent chapel in 1745.

Each Methodist society was led by an ‘exhorter’, a layman chosen for his preaching skills. The role offered an opportunity for individuals without any advanced education to use talents that would otherwise go unnoticed. The exhorters were assisted by catechisers and stewards and the society as a whole controlled admission and monitored the spiritual progress of the membership. Individual societies sent representatives to a monthly meeting, which in turn forwarded delegates to the quarterly meeting and thence to the Association, which was the main policy-making body, approving the exhorters and taking all the decisions that affected the movement as a whole.

The first Welsh Methodist Association meeting was held in Duguedydd, near Llandover, Breconshire in 1742 and thereafter the meetings were held in different locations in south Wales. Methodism did not gain any following in north Wales until the end of the eighteenth century. The presbyterian form of government must have been familiar, especially in Carmarthenshire, where there were a significant number of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[364] Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, \textit{Welsh Church}, p. 167.
\item[365] Geraint Tudor, \textit{Howel Harris, from Conversion to Separation}, pp. 96-118.
\end{footnotes}
Presbyterian congregations at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Howell Harris had a talent for organisation, so that:

There were 433 Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Societies in existence by 1750. The first Methodist Society groups to be established were those at Trevecca, Dugoedydd and Llwyn-y-berllan in Breconshire; Llandingad in Carmarthenshire and at Y Wernos, Watford, near Caerphilly in Glamorgan.\(^{67}\)

The structured organisation of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism ensured its continuity.

There was a significant correspondence in the locations of the Circulating Schools and Methodist Societies, especially in Carmarthenshire, the county of Griffith Jones's parish of Llandowror. About one-third of the farmhouses in Carmarthenshire where circulating schools were held between 1738 and 1777 later became meeting places for Methodist societies.\(^{368}\) A comparison of the geographic distribution of the Circulating Schools and Methodist Societies in Wales in 1740 shows that they were flourishing in the same counties: Breconshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.\(^{369}\) Although Griffith Jones was in contact with all the early Methodist leaders, both Welsh and English, and had been an evangelical and sometimes itinerant preacher earlier in his career, he remained a conservative Anglican clergyman and later denounced both the excessive 'enthusiasm' and itinerant preaching of the Methodists. However, there is no doubt that both the network of the Circulating Schools, and the education received in them, were very influential in encouraging Methodism. The domestic setting and rural location of the early Society meetings also continued the tradition of the Circulating Schools, lending some support to the view of Methodist meeting-houses as developing gradually from within a local vernacular.

The characterisation by Welsh Methodist historians of the Evangelical Revival as a spontaneous movement generated from within Wales and uniquely Welsh in character also encourages the interpretation that chapels developed from a local vernacular. However, as various authors have now shown, the Welsh revival was part of an

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\(^{67}\) Watts, Dissenters: Volume I, p. 400.

\(^{368}\) Evans, A History of Wales, 1660-1815, p. 77.

\(^{369}\) Watts, Dissenters: Volume I, p. 425.
international movement and, especially between 1735 and 1750, the national and international connections of early Methodists were profoundly important to the character and momentum of the movement as it developed. The religious fervour that erupted in various locations was communicated by a network of publishing and correspondence. Evangelical magazines, published during the 1740s, brought news of international revivals, and published letters recounting personal conversion experiences, and sermons and tracts written by leading evangelicals.

George Whitefield was an energetic correspondent and instrumental in the publication of the evangelical magazine, *The Weekly History*. By appropriating the new marketing techniques of eighteenth-century commerce, Whitefield, above all others, brought together the scattered groups of evangelicals, promoting international, transatlantic revivalism. This communications network brought Howell Harris into contact with George Whitefield and the two first met in Cardiff in 1739. Whitefield subsequently invited Harris to London, to the preaching-house that was being set up there, and:

Through his friendship with Whitefield, Harris became an integral part of the London evangelical scene. During his many visits to the London Methodists he found himself at the hub of the international community as news and information about the revival from throughout the British Atlantic world flooded in, was repackaged by Whitefield’s trusted lieutenants, and then fanned out to revival communities the length and breadth of the British Isles and beyond.

**Methodism in England**

George Whitefield (1714-1770) was born and brought up in an inn, The Bell, in Gloucester, a substantial business premises with a large hall where plays and other entertainments were staged. Whitefield had shown early academic promise but was unable to continue his studies after his father’s death, since his help was needed to run the family business. His involvement in theatrical productions meant that he developed an

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understanding of dramatic effects that he was later to use to good effect in preaching.

When he was seventeen years old, Whitefield managed to get a place at Oxford University as a ‘servitor’, a student who paid his way by acting as butler to more highly placed students, enabling him be ordained deacon in 1736 and priest in 1737. It was at Oxford that he first encountered John Wesley and his religious society, nicknamed the ‘Holy Club’ by fellow students. Whitefield did not join the club, but he emulated their ascetism and religious devotion. It was only after he had repudiated such practices, having fasted almost to death, that Whitefield experienced in 1735 the personal evangelical conversion that convinced him of the necessity of evangelical preaching.

After his ordination, Whitefield had arranged to take up an appointment as parish minister of Savannah, Georgia in the British American colonies. Awaiting his departure, he spent much of 1737 in fulfilling preaching engagements and was soon attracting large and excited congregations to churches in Bristol, Gloucester, and London. Watts describes Whitefield’s reputation:

> Passionate, eloquent, theatrical, Whitefield was the greatest popular preacher of the Evangelical revival. He brought something of the bar-room manner to religion...Samuel Johnson dismissed him as a mob orator who compared unfavourably with a mountebank. But other men of culture thought differently. Bolingbroke declared him to possess ‘the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person’ while David Hume thought it ‘worth going twenty miles to hear him.’

The early initiatives in religious revival seem to have found a ready constituency, so that by the time John and Charles Wesley underwent their own conversion experiences in 1738, both Whitefield and Rowland were already filling churches to overflowing by their evangelical preaching. The bishop of Gloucester wrote to Whitefield to rebuke him for preaching outside his own parish. Such was the audacity and self-confidence of the twenty-four year old Whitefield that he replied:

> Your Lordship equally offends when you preach out of your diocese...I hope your Lordship will inspect into the lives of your other clergy, & censor them for being Over-remiss, as much as you censure me for being Over-righteous. It is their

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falling from the Articles, & not preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, that has excited the present zeal of (what they in derision call) the Methodist preachers.375

His reference to ‘the Articles’ is significant. In referring to the ‘Thirty-nine Articles’ of the Church of England, Whitefield confirms his Calvinism.

Returning from America in 1739, Whitefield was reunited with Charles and John Wesley, by then also evangelical converts, in Bristol. The city was an established centre for religious radicalism, but the miners at Kingswood, at its outskirts, were thought of as a heathen community without access to religious instruction. Whitefield first preached to them on outdoors on 17 Feb 1739, and because he was soon to return to Georgia, he persuaded John Wesley to follow suit. Field preaching was unacceptable to Anglicans except as a missionary practice, where churches had yet to be built and, theoretically, Kingswood was already under the care of an Anglican parish church. It is evidence of John Wesley’s conservatism that at first he could ‘scarce reconcile’ himself to Whitefield’s ‘strange way of preaching in the fields’, but on 2 April 1739 he ‘submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city’.376 This was the turning point in Wesley’s career. Following his success in persuading the miners at Kingswood, Wesley became convinced of necessity of itinerant preaching, in order to reach those who did not go to church.

Despite the closeness they felt due to their shared experience and common cause, differences in the two men quickly became apparent. John Wesley possessed something of Whitefield’s oratorical gifts, yet held these gifts in conjunction with an appreciation of the importance of the more humdrum tasks of pastoral care and organisation which Whitefield so conspicuously lacked. He shared Harris’s passion for itinerant evangelism and for the formation of religious societies, while at the same time, as an ordained clergyman, he had an authority over such societies which Harris, as a layman, did not

enjoy. Wesley had a lifelong detestation of Calvinism, which he had expressed in a letter to his mother as early as 1727. He rejected the proposition that the ‘vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it’, since this ‘was not consistent with either divine justice or mercy’. But George Whitefield had embraced Calvinist views shortly after his conversion in 1735. By 1741, his disagreement with Wesley over the question of predestination was threatening ‘to make an open (and probably irreparable) breach’ between them. Wesley published a sermon on ‘Free Grace’ in 1739, whilst Whitefield was en route to America. Whitefield’s reply was published later that year and declared that ‘You dishonour God by denying election. You plainly make salvation depend not on God’s free-grace, but on man’s free-will.’ The rift was decisive and permanent.

The Calvinism of both Old Dissent and the Established Church in Wales meant that the Welsh evangelicals were already more inclined towards Calvinism. William Williams of Pantycelyn was the son of Dissenters, though he himself became an ordained deacon of the Established Church, acting as curate for Theophilus Evans. George Whitefield acted as mentor to Howell Harris, inviting him first to preach and then to assume the leadership of the London preaching house. The Tabernacle, whilst Whitefield undertook preaching tours in Britain and abroad. Both Harris and Wesley realised the importance of consolidating initial emotional experiences by organising converts into societies, and societies into associations, and whilst Whitefield lacked any interest or ability in day-to-day organisation, Wesley could not speak Welsh. All three men were autocratic and attempts at co-operation quickly foundered. Essentially, English Methodism became predominantly Wesleyan and Arminian and Welsh Methodism became Calvinistic, and Whitefield was to have his most permanent successes in America.

The rise of Methodism contributed to, and was itself facilitated by, the burgeoning eighteenth-century marketplace. Whitefield constantly conceived of his mission in

178 Watts, Dissenters, Vol I, p. 430, quoting Wesley’s Letters, i.22 and Wesley’s Journal, II. 441.
180 William Williams, NLWDWB.
commercial terms, applying commercial vocabulary and techniques to his preaching enterprises, in both England and America. He began his first American mission by hawking a shipload of manufactured goods he had brought with him from England and he himself was deliberately and carefully marketed. He wrote: 'the devotion and business of a Methodist go hand in hand'. Whitefield offered rich returns for printers because of the popularity of his sermons; his preaching events too were profitable. This placed further distance between him and the Wesley brothers, who repudiated these techniques.

The idea for a Christian and evangelistic magazine originated with the printer John Lewis, a Welshman who had moved to London and set up a printshop. He attended the Whitefield Methodist Tabernacle and the Society at Fetter Lane, aligning himself with the Calvinist tendency and against the Arminian and Moravian groupings in the English revival community. As a printer, bookseller, and publisher as well as a committed evangelical, Lewis brought his professional expertise to bear on the religious publishing scene and he became enthusiastic about the possibility of a Christian magazine. In September 1740 he launched *The Christian’s Amusement*, a four-page penny paper, published weekly. Its title reflects Lewis’s intention to provide a new kind of reading matter for ‘the children of God’, his second aim being to follow ‘the progress of the gospel both at home and abroad’ by means of printing letters and accounts preachers, including correspondence from Whitefield.

The journal was printed for six months, then suspended and re-launched by Whitefield on his return from America under the new title of *Weekly History; or, An Account of the Most Remarkable Particulars Relating to the Present Progress of the Gospel By the Encouragement of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*. The paper carried reports of conversions from the circuit preachers in England and Wales and, with Whitefield’s name in the title, was conceived as the mouthpiece of the Calvinistic Methodist Movement. The Wesleys were similarly active in publishing, with the Wesleyan Methodist magazine being pointedly entitled *The Arminian*. Their output was prodigious, consisting of literature in

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every form, from pamphlets and sermons to lengthy academic theological works, and with publications meant for the use of societies such as instruction books and collections of hymns.

The First Methodist Meeting-Houses

Mainly through the efforts of Whitefield, Methodist religious societies were established in central Bristol and in 1739 a meeting-house was built to accommodate them. When Whitefield went to America for the second time later that year, John Wesley took over responsibility for the meetings. The ‘New Room’, as he named it, became a centre for Wesleyan Methodism and was greatly enlarged and much rebuilt in 1748, to provide a preaching hall, meeting rooms, school rooms and accommodation for an itinerant preacher (figure 6.14). Subsequently, the society at the New Room was weakened in 1792 by the opening of Portland Chapel, where Wesley’s rigid policy over ministerial qualifications was not accepted, and in 1794 a major division occurred over this resulting in the erection of Old King Street Chapel. In 1808 the New Room was sold to Welsh Calvinistic Methodists who retained possession until 1929.181 Since both Wesley and Whitefield remained adamant that Methodism should remain within the Established Church, to revitalise it from within, the early Methodist buildings were called meeting or lecture rooms, rather than churches or chapels. Their external appearance remained undemonstrative, and at the New Room, the: ‘external walls make little attempt at architectural pretension.’184 That is, there was nothing to distinguish these early lecture rooms externally from surrounding vernacular buildings of a similar size, the warehouses and small manufactories then appearing in cities.

181 Christopher Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 68.
The plan of the New Room accords with the fourth category of Yates’s list of the types of adaptations of eighteenth-century church interiors, that of an east-west axial arrangement but with the dominance given to the pulpit as a liturgical focus. The pulpit is in the form of a raised platform, dwarfing the altar placed at ground level in front of it. A central block of benches faces pulpit and galleries with seating run along the two long walls. The complex is more like a seminary, with a library, meeting rooms and lodging rooms, than a church.

A combined school and chapel were also built in 1739 for the colliers at Kingswood, where both Whitefield and Wesley had preached. John Cennick was appointed as one of the teachers, but in February 1741, after he had embraced Calvinistic sentiments, he left with about fifty supporters and organised a separate society. In June of that year, George Whitefield wrote to Cennick from London with instructions to commence the building of
a new Society Room at Kingswood, but to ‘take care not to make it too large or too handsome.’ There were further disputes over its occupancy after Cennick’s transfer of allegiance to the Moravians, with the Calvinistic Methodists having difficulty in asserting their rights until Whitefield again returned to London from America in 1748. Such disputes over use and ownership of chapel buildings were to become commonplace in the history of Nonconformist chapels.

The building pictured below (plan, figures 6.15; exterior view, figure 6.16; interior view, figure 6.17), dates mainly from the mid eighteenth century and perhaps incorporates parts of the Tabernacle of 1741. ‘In the prototype, the front was of five bays with a wide central doorway, wheel window above, flanking round-arched windows and minor entrances in the end bays with smaller windows over.’ The original building, then, may have had a less undistinguished or vernacular appearance than is apparent in the photograph (figure 6.16).

![Plan of Whitefield's Tabernacle, Kingswood, Bristol (c. 1741)](image)

**Figure 6.15: Whitefield's Tabernacle, Kingswood, Bristol (c. 1741), plan. (Source: Stell, Gloucestershire Extract, p. 86).**

385 Christopher Stell, Gloucestershire... Extract, p. 86.
386 Christopher Stell, Gloucestershire... Extract, p. 86.
The interior was large and open, approximately 30ft. by 60 ft., with a flat plaster ceiling. The two principal valley beams of the roof were supported by pairs of tall stone columns having attic bases on high square plinths and simple bell capitals with a single acanthus leaf ornament and a shallow gallery ran around three sides.

It will be seen that these buildings follow the auditory principle, providing an unencumbered an interior space and good visibility of the preacher. Whitefield’s Tabernacle was formerly filled with seats.
The Bristol Tabernacle was:

built for a Methodist society formed in 1739 which continued to support George Whitefield after his break with the Wesleys. The society met until 1753 in Smith's Hall, latterly 'Cutler's Hall'; on 13 July in that year Whitefield laid the foundation stone of the Tabernacle which was opened on 25 November. The Tabernacle appears to have been of five bays in length divided into nave and aisles by tall Tuscan columns of stone, with a coved ceiling to the nave, central octagonal lantern, and galleries around three sides. The roof was gabled to front and back, hipped down to the lantern, and with separate roofs above three side galleries. The West front of three bays with a pediment had two tiers of segmental-arched windows.\textsuperscript{387}

No trace of this building now remains, but the interior, just before demolition, is illustrated below (figure 6.18). As at the New Room, this interior combines the Calvinist emphasis on the pulpit with High Church Anglican axiality. The square plan gives an open and spacious interior and perhaps refers to the Temple of Solomon, as does the classicism.

![Figure 6.18: The Tabernacle, Penn Street, Bristol (1753). The pulpit is original but the interior was partly refitted in the nineteenth century; demolished 1958; (Source: Stell, Gloucestershire Extract, p. 63).](image)

In London, the first Methodist preaching house at Moorfields, Islington, was converted from the ruins of a derelict foundry and opened in 1739. 'The Foundery' stood on the east side of Windmill Street, now Tabernacle Street, but by 1775 it was dilapidated and

\textsuperscript{387} Christopher Stell, Gloucestershire: Extract, p. 63.
inadequate for the needs of the much expanded Wesleyan Methodist Society and so the
site opposite Bunhill Fields burial ground was acquired and Wesley’s Chapel, City Road,
London was built in 1777-8.\textsuperscript{388} The Foundery was opened before the division of the
Methodists into Wesley’s Arminians and Whitefield’s Calvinists, but by 1741, Whitefield
had erected a temporary wooden preaching-house, 220 yards north of The Foundery. ‘In
1752-3 this gave way to a large, square, galleried Calvinistic Methodist Tabernacle with
Pyramid roof and square central lantern.’\textsuperscript{389} This was the Calvinistic Methodist
preaching house that Whitefield intermittently left under the custodianship of Howell
Harris.\textsuperscript{390}

\textbf{Howell Harris}

After Harris’s initial introduction to Whitefield’s circle in 1739, he spent at least a part of
each year and sometimes up to six months at a time in London, to the irritation of Daniel
Rowland and Griffith Jones who felt that he neglected his home country in doing so. In
August 1743, Whitefield introduced Howell Harris to the Countess of Huntingdon, an
aristocratic patron of Methodism who by then had embraced Calvinist doctrine. The
rustic Welsh manners and robust and ardent preaching style of Harris appealed to the
Countess, as a contrast to the urbanity to which she was accustomed. Her encounter with
Harris came at a time when the Countess was contemplating retiring from public life, but
he encouraged a confrontational attitude towards Arminianism and drew her back into a
more active role, centred on Calvinist commitment. ‘Having himself swung behind
Whitefield’s Calvinist doctrine, by the spring of 1744 Harris was visiting her frequently
in London and preaching to small groups of elite friends she gathered for the
occasion.’\textsuperscript{391} The Countess began to arrange meetings in her London house, at which
Whitefield and Harris were the star performers on a stage of her own setting.\textsuperscript{392}

At first, Harris had been overawed by the circle into which Lady Huntingdon had
introduced him and flattered by the attention, money and clothes she had lavished upon

\textsuperscript{388} Christopher Stell, \textit{Inventory...Eastern England}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{389} Christopher Stell, \textit{Inventory...Eastern England}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{390} Watts, \textit{Dissenters, Vol I}, p. 400.
\textsuperscript{391} Boyd Stanley Schlenther, \textit{Queen of the Methodists}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{392} Boyd Stanley Schlenther, \textit{Queen of the Methodists}, p. 128.
him, but later he rejected their patronage. He felt that Whitefield did not ‘honour’ him, indeed treated him as a gentleman treated a servant, as did the Countess. Harris was so stung by this that he fancied it was his ‘place to oversee Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley’ since they were so self-important. He reflected in his diaries that ‘I have been the means of beginning all this work in Wales’ and called himself ‘Father to Wales’; he also claimed that he was the first to be converted and that the revival had begun through him; not out of egoism but in the belief that he had been guided by God and was a ‘chosen vessel’; ‘God has placed me as a father among you and speaks now through me’. Amongst other disagreements, the claims Harris made to have been the very first to have begun field-preaching caused a rift between himself and Whitefield that was never healed. This resulted in the separation of Welsh from English Calvinistic Methodism.

Although Harris was a gifted preacher and understood the importance of a network of communication and an organisational structure, he was, by all accounts, a humourless and difficult man, with an irascible temper, especially when crossed. He was ambitious and autocratic and was accused by Evan Davies, Dissenting minister at Haverfordwest of being selfish and proud, and worse was to come. On a preaching tour in mid and north Wales in 1748, Harris formed a strong attachment to an attractive married woman, Mrs. Sydney Griffiths. According to Jenkins:

Methodist historians have always strenuously denied allegations of impropriety on Harris’s part and some efforts have been made to bowdlerise indelicate passages in Harris’s literary remains. But the evidence in his journal leaves no doubt that his relationship with Madam Griffiths was adulterous.

Certainly his very public relationship with Mrs Sydney Griffiths was not the action of a circumspect and careful man. After Daniel Rowland published condemnation of him because of it in 1751, Howell Harris withdrew from participation in the Welsh Methodist societies and Association meetings and Welsh Methodism became divided into ‘Rowland’s people’ and ‘Harris’s people’, but was, in effect, left leaderless and its initial rapid expansion slowed.

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3⁹³ Boyd Stanley Schlenther, Queen of the Methodists, p. 42.
3⁹⁴ Geraint Tudor, Howell Harris, Conversion to Separation, p. 62, quoting Diary 132: 14 September 1748.
3⁹⁵ Geraint Jenkins, Foundations of Modern Wales, p. 364.
Harris retired to found a religious community at Trevecca in Breconshire, near to the parish of his birth at Talgarth. Mrs. Griffiths died in 1751, but Harris remained at Talgarth until his death in 1773, never again undertaking strenuous preaching tours. The many followers who joined him at Talgarth, amongst them farmers and craftsmen and their families, were made welcome on condition that they forfeited all their earthly goods and were prepared to mix freely on equal terms. Harris acted as head of the 'Family' and each member was obliged to address him as 'Father'. Some comparisons could be drawn with the settlement of the Moravian Brethren at Fulneck in Yorkshire, which Harris visited in 1756. Harris deeply admired the Moravians for their piety and the warmth of their religious language and worship. Unlike the rustic simplicity of Fulneck, however, the ethos at Trevecca was one of modernisation and improvement. Buildings at Trevecca were erected on an extensive scale and various trades and occupations were planned to support the community, including the establishment of a printing press there in 1759.

Harris was interested in agricultural improvement and was one of the founders of the Breconshire Agricultural Society when it was formed in 1755, the first of its kind in Wales. He also joined the Breconshire militia as an officer in 1759 and with a body of men from Trevecca was stationed for a time at Great Yarmouth. Like John Wesley, Howell Harris was a High Church Tory and a Georgian patriot. He was from a middle class background with ambitions for social betterment. The historian E. D. Evans 'suspects an inclination towards social climbing' that is supported by his initial enthusiastic involvement with the Countess of Huntingdon. The buildings at Trevecca showed no attachment to a rural vernacular and it seems highly unlikely that Harris, at least, would have looked for this in Methodist chapels. Like the Methodist meeting rooms in England, the Welsh chapels, being supplementary to the Established Church, would have sought to emulate or improve on it, as was their aim with religious practice.

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397 Howell Harris, NLWDWB.
398 Evans, *History of Wales 1660-1815*, p. 82.
Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Established Church in the eighteenth century continued to be innovative in its approach to adapting existing buildings to the then current ideas of worship practice. The approach aimed at a synthesis of Calvinist and High Church attitudes, expressed in the combination of centralised forms with axiality. In Wales, there is evidence for a Calvinist interpretation of worship, in the mitigation of the east-west axis of longitudinal church interiors and the greater emphasis placed on the pulpit as the liturgical focus of the interior. In this respect, there was continuity between the architecture of the Established Church and that of Old Dissent, and there was a sense in which Dissenting chapels were able to put in place more effectively the reforms that, in the Established Church, were hampered by existing buildings and lack of funds.

Beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, a concern to affect the spiritual renewal of the Anglican Church resulted in the establishment of religious societies and charities promoting Christian education, including the SPCK, the SPG and, in Wales, the Welsh Trust and the Circulating Schools. The desire for spiritual renewal was informed by evangelicalism which was an international movement, initially co-ordinated through the University of Halle in Prussia. The Welsh Methodists of the mid eighteenth century were part of an international correspondence network and Griffith Jones and Howell Harris, who made decisive contributions to the development of early Methodism in Wales, were well-travelled, spending significant periods of time in London, as had Stephen Hughes in the previous century. This weakens the argument that Welsh Nonconformity was an entirely spontaneous development, indigenous to Wales.

Methodism did not originate in either a folk movement or the agitation of radical groups seeking the overthrow of the establishment, but was initially the product of the desire of conservative, High Church Anglicans for spiritual renewal of the Established Church. The early Methodist leaders were inspired to undertake public evangelical preaching, subsequently supporting converts by a network of local societies. The first Methodist meeting rooms, built in England, were conceived as preaching halls, the meetings and
society activities taking place within them thought of as supplementary to worship in the Anglican Church. No particular external architectural expression was sought, whilst the interiors were similar to those of their contemporary Anglican Churches.

There is evidence to suggest that Methodist chapels were built in Wales in the eighteenth-century, but their location and numbers are difficult to assess with certainty. Since any Methodist chapels that were first built in the eighteenth century were subsequently altered or rebuilt in the nineteenth century, and their original appearance was undocumented, there is no direct evidence of the form they took. These early Welsh Methodist chapel buildings are further discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 7: The Establishment of Nonconformity

Introduction

The evangelical revival of religion in Wales was set in motion in the mid eighteenth century, stimulating attendance at religious meetings and the building of chapels. By the end of the eighteenth century, there were seventy chapel buildings in Cardiganshire alone. However, the rapid rate of increase in building activity in the early nineteenth century, both the construction of new chapels and the rebuilding or remodelling of those already in existence, has obscured the results of the earlier phase of building. Few seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Welsh chapels remain unaltered and this lacuna in the built evidence for the architectural history of Welsh Nonconformity has been filled by the suggestion that these intervening chapels were vernacular in appearance. The chapels built or rebuilt in south Wales in the lateral-façade format in the early nineteenth century have been interpreted as the retention of a Welsh vernacular form until it was overturned by new architectural ideas associated with industrialisation and immigration. The aim of this chapter is to establish an alternative interpretation, through closer consideration of the build evidence, supported by social and religious history.

In 1781, the Calvinistic Methodists separated from the Established Church, having remained within it for half a century. The establishment of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism as an independent denomination provided a significant impetus for chapel building in Wales. Chapels were also built by the older denominations of Dissent, as the numbers and size of congregations increased through active evangelical proselytising of the generally increasing population. An objective of this chapter is to continue the narrative begun in the previous chapter of the emergence of Methodism and its separation from Established Church as a number of different independent denominations. The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists were the first three denominations to assert their independence.

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and each is considered in turn, paying particular attention to the type of worship spaces used or constructed and the relationship of these buildings to those of the Established Church. The mechanisms for the separation of Welsh Methodist congregations are explored and examples given of the earliest Methodist chapels as well as those that were designed to accommodate larger congregations and preaching as a dramatic performance.

**The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion**

Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791), became part of the London circle of Methodists from the 1740s.\(^{400}\) The Countess was the major aristocratic patron of the eighteenth-century evangelical revival and sought to extend Methodism to her own class. Her wealth and connections enabled her to assume an important role in the defence of the Methodist reputation and of Methodists facing persecution and she may have been influential in securing a verdict of innocence for Howell Harris after his indictment in 1744 at Pontypool under the Riot Act for his itinerant preaching.\(^{401}\) She was also able to support the training of ministers and extend her patronage towards charities ministering to the poor.\(^{402}\) She attended Methodist meetings, became involved in the Methodist correspondence network by writing frequent letters to all the Methodist leaders, and organised preaching events at her homes, to which her aristocratic friends were invited. Following the division of Methodism into Wesleyan Arminianism and Whitefield’s Calvinism, the Countess became a committed Calvinist and thereafter patronised only Calvinistic preachers.

The few remaining chapels of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion are unrepresentative of the denomination in its heyday. The Connexion holds the distinction of being the first of the Methodist denominations to become independent of the Church of England, seceding in 1782. Because of the autocratic control of the Countess over the

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\(^{401}\) Boyd Stanley Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 27.

\(^{402}\) Harding, *Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion*, pp. 39-41.
Connexion in her lifetime, and her failure to put into place a sound organisational structure for its maintenance, its strength quickly waned; but at the time of her death there were chapels in sixty-three towns, including Swansea and Brecon, theoretically organised in twenty-three preaching circuits. The Connexion remained firmly Calvinist in doctrine, with a confession of faith drawn up as ‘The XV Articles’ in emulation of the Westminster Confession.

Although dedicated to Methodism, the Countess remained a devout Anglican with a detestation of Dissent. As a peer of the realm she had the privilege of installing a chapel at her residence, theoretically for her own use. Thus she could avoid having to license premises for preaching in the manner of a Dissenting chapel. In 1765, George Whitefield was the star attraction at a preaching festival attended by large numbers of the nobility specially invited by the Countess to dedicate her new chapel at Bath.

Figure 7.1: The Countess of Huntingdon’s House and Chapel, Bath (1765); the bay-fronted building facing the street is the private residence of the Countess, with direct access to the chapel behind it.

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403 E. D. Evans, History of Wales, p. 92.
405 Harding, Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, p. 51.
Fronted by her double-bayed residence, the castellated Gothic chapel at Bath has ogee-headed windows and battlemented parapets that run counter to the classicism all around it (figures 7.1 and 7.2). The presence of Methodism in a fashionable resort presented a challenge to the socialites gathered there, but Horace Walpole indicated his approval of the Gothic styling and suggested that attendance at Lady Huntingdon’s Chapel was one of the events of a fashionable season.406

The Countess of Huntingdon found her ideal of Primitivism in the rural simplicity and lack of sophistication of the Welsh. This informed her patronage of the Welsh evangelical preacher Howell Harris and the location in Wales of the dissenting academy that she founded. In 1764, the Countess wrote to Charles Wesley to inform him that she had decided to build a college to train preachers for her Methodist chapels ‘in the true and full primitive spirit’.407 The location was also to be ‘Primitive’, in the Welsh countryside at Trevecca, Breconshire, South Wales, close to the home of her protégé, Howell Harris, whose unaffected manners and direct preaching style she likewise admired. Primitive, for the urbane and wealthy Countess, consisted of a Romantic aesthetic of rugged and

remote landscape, gothic architecture and a rural, unsophisticated society, in support of
the Reformed church ideal of returning to the uncorrupted purity of early Christianity.
The Countess professed herself charmed by the simple Welsh women she saw in
Trevecca and found 'unaffected simplicity...the very soul of the Primitive Church' where
'the most pure gospel is preached'. Ideas of the Primitive, already established in this
discussion as a major trope of the Protestant Reformation, continued to inform
Methodism.

It would not be surprising to find churchmen amongst the membership of the Connexion,
since initially the Countess of Huntingdon professed her Anglican theological orthodoxy,
scrupulously using the Book of Common Prayer and insisting on clerical dress for her
ministers, stating her position as one who wished to reform the church from within. However, unlike Wesley, she did not urge her members to also attend their parish
churches, and the architectural ambition of the chapels themselves seemed to demonstrate
their separateness. The claim that her chapels were extensions to her private residences
could hardly be upheld for the new buildings erected throughout the Kingdom in the
following decade, in places she had never been and was never likely to go, such as Hull,
Brecon, Maidstone, Wigan and Guernsey. Having established chapels in the provinces,
she also wished to gain a presence for Calvinistic Methodism in London, where
Wesleyan Methodism was already well established, especially after the death of
Whitefield in America in 1770 and the retreat of Harris to his Welsh farm.

The first Lady Huntingdon’s Connexion chapel in London was built at Mulberry
Gardens, Wapping in 1777, next door to a dissenting chapel, but her eye had already
fallen on a building in Clerkenwell known as the Pantheon, a rotunda built as a pleasure
gardens, but whose promoter had gone bankrupt in 1776. Two evangelical Anglican
clerics bought the lease and refurbished the interior of the building as a dissenting chapel,
opening to the public in 1777, but they were brought before the Consistorial Court of the
Bishop of London for preaching there. Two days after this decision, the Countess of

408 Schlenther, Queen of the Methodists, p. 124.
409 Harding, Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, pp. 137-140.
Huntingdon leapt at the opportunity to take over the building. The circular plan brick structure of three storeys, with a large tiled dome, was quickly altered and re-fitted according to her taste. The interior contained two complete circular galleries and incorporated an organ, box pews and an elevated pulpit fronted by a huge black eagle. Next to the building stood a three-storey private dwelling, where she immediately took up residence, having a door knocked into the wall between house and chapel (figure 7.3). \(^{410}\)

![Image of Spa Fields Chapel and private residence, London.]

**Figure 7.3: The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, Spa Fields Chapel, Clerkenwell, London**

She made attempts to reinstate, under her protection, the two clergymen who had originally made the conversion, but the matter was again raised with the Consistorial Court. Lady Huntingdon persisted in the claim that Spa Fields Chapel, as she named it, in spite of being able to seat 2,000 people, was her private chapel as a peeress and admittance was by ticket invitation only. The case dragged on for over a year until finally the minister that the Countess had appointed was found guilty, fined and ordered to pay costs. Seeing that the only alternative to either breaking ecclesiastical law or giving up Spa Fields was to register as a dissenting chapel, she chose the latter.

When Spa Fields was registered on 12 January 1782, the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion became the first independent Methodist denomination. Whitefield’s London

\(^{410}\) Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 151.
chapels, including the Tabernacle, had been registered as dissenting places of worship when he had left London, as independent Calvinistic Methodist chapels. The Countess had hopes that the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists would join her in seceding and that together with the remnants of Whitefield’s followers they would form a substantial church, but these were dashed when the Welsh Methodist Association reported that it would be as possible ‘to persuade the pope to become Lutheran’ as to get them to secede from the Church of England.\(^{411}\) Lady Huntingdon found it difficult to secure new ministers of sufficient calibre. With the help of further Anglican ministers now impossible, she took the step of ordaining her own.

The first Connexional ordination took place at Spa Fields in March 1783, when the candidates signed the Connexional confession of faith. After the secession of the Connexion, Lady Huntingdon could no longer pretend to be an Anglican and, when she took up residence at Spa Fields, her absolute authority over the organisation she had set up began to be challenged by individual chapels, especially Bath. By 1785, the Countess had become convinced that Whitefield’s former chapels were stealing her people and broke off all contact with them. In 1790, the Countess attempted to put in place a plan for continuation of The Connexion after her death, proposing the division of the sixty-four chapels into twenty-three districts, each with a committee of ministers and laymen who would all report to the General Connexional Association. The plan was not put into action effectively, and when the Countess died in 1791, just three months after John Wesley, the six chapels she owned outright were left to four trustees, three of whom were the Anglican clergymen who had remained loyal to her to the end.\(^{412}\)

\(^{411}\) Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 153.
\(^{412}\) Harding, *Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion*, p. 78.

No consistent records of numbers had been kept, but the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion at its height has been estimated to have had around two thousand members.\(^{413}\) Chapels continued to be built or rebuilt in the nineteenth century. The congregation at Birdport Connexional Chapel, Worcester, was sufficiently vigorous to rebuild on a grand scale, finally achieving a preaching theatre capable of seating 2,000 people (figures 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7).

Figure 7.5: The Countess of Huntingdon’s Chapel, Birdport, Worcester, plan (source: Stell, Inventory...Central England, p. 257).

\(^{413}\) Harding, Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, p.56.
Figure 7.6: The Countess of Huntingdon’s Chapel, Birdport, Worcester, interior looking towards the pulpit. ‘A congregation of nearly 200 persons existed by 1769 and in 1773 the first chapel was built on part of the present site; this was rebuilt to a larger size in 1804 and again enlarged in 1815 to seat two thousand.’ (Source: Stell, Inventory...Central England, pp. 257-58).

Figure 7.7: Eagle lectern, The Countess of Huntingdon’s Chapel, Birdport, Worcester. (Source: Stell, Inventory...Central England, p. 260).

During the nineteenth century, ecclesiastical disruptions and civil law suits drained The Connexion of spirit and finance and, whilst some chapels remained independent and self-supporting, many of her followers joined the congregations of Old Dissent, just as she had always feared.
The story of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion has been narrated in some detail because it illustrates several characteristics of early Methodism, some of which seem alien to a contemporary understanding of religion. The first is the commercial basis of the provision of places of worship. In the unbridled capitalism of the eighteenth century, even the Established Church relied, to a large extent, on individual financial initiatives for funds. The sale of pews or revenue from pew rents had become established as an important means of finance for churches: ‘often it not only provided a fund for the minister’s stipend but also for other church expenses. Particularly in the cities…it had become general, and was also the rule in Anglican proprietary chapels and Dissenting meeting-houses alike.’

Schlenther suggests that:

Theatrical and marketplace religion came together in the countess’s insistence that seating at her main chapels be by ticket only. This means of reserving seats was a marketing technique designed to provide a constant source of local finance. The use of chapel tickets was hardly unique, but whereas Wesley’s societies issued them as badges for those deemed worthy of continued membership, for the Countess their use was purely a money-raising device, or on special occasions to induce notables to attend by supplying them gratis. Lady Huntingdon took personal responsibility for preparing the copper plates used to print these tickets, either for individual chapels or, alternatively, as a special season ticket whereby those subscribing money to purchase a seat in any one chapel could gain admission to all. These tickets were engraved with the initials ‘S.H.’, together with the Countess’s coronet, and those for her main London Chapel were sold publicly from her adjoining residence.

The Countess of Huntingdon contributed to the commercialisation of Christianity by her constant insistence on itinerant and field-preaching and its necessary ‘selling’ of religion; by her direct involvement in the booming market for the building, buying, selling and renting of chapels and the land connected with such enterprises; and by generally making those who attended her chapels pay for entrance.

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415 Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 128.
416 Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 126.
The Countess also purchased or leased defunct theatres generally at bargain prices, which gave her the additional satisfaction of triumph over the playwrights who had satirised Methodism. At least five were obtained by her in the early 1770s and her taste in interior design did not lessen their theatrical appearance. The Countess sought to beautify her chapels, decking them out internally in lavish style, with red cushions for preacher and clerk, elaborate sounding boards and canopies above the pulpits and eagle lecterns, three of which birds with outstretched wings formed a trio of reading desks in the Bristol chapel. Both Wesley, as was to be expected, and Howell Harris complained of her vanity, but her avowed aim was to attract ‘quality’. John Wesley commented sarcastically in 1789, after the secession of the Connexion, on the ‘marvellous condescension of God in providing Lady Huntingdon’s chapels, for those delicate hearers, who could not bear sound doctrine if it were not set off with pretty trifles.’

The absence of any necessary link between Calvinism and austerity or simplicity has already been demonstrated by the descriptions of the Old Meeting in Norwich and the Oostkerk in Middleburg made earlier in this thesis. The care taken with the fashionable appearance and comfort of Lady Huntingdon’s chapels, John Wesley’s criticism notwithstanding, also decisively negates such a connection. The theatrical setting and the dramatic staging of preaching were deliberate strategies to enhance the experience of worship in the cause of evangelicalism. Fashionable and comfortable chapels became more common as the nineteenth century progressed, a result of the growing self-confidence of the new denominations and the increased levels of affluence and commitment of the members, but the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion shows that this tendency was already present in the eighteenth century. Contrary to the idea of the preservation of a rural heritage as proposed by Jones, the continual refurbishment of chapels in Wales suggests that aspiration and ambition informed the architecture of Nonconformity there too.

\[417\] Harding, Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, p. 78.
Finally, the progress of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion illustrates the mechanism of secession that was essentially to be later followed by both Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism. The existence of a Chapel building, and the members’ investment in it, encouraged their commitment to worship at that premises. The visibility of the chapel and its committed membership threatened the existing provision by the Established Church, which was then less likely to either allow evangelicals to preach in its churches, or to allow ordained ministers to officiate in Methodist chapels, exacerbating the separation between the two. Antipathetic bishops unwilling to ordain evangelical candidates resulted in a scarcity of ordained priests to administer the sacrament in Methodist chapels. There arose a corresponding unwillingness of Society members, especially for the second generation of Methodists with less commitment to Established Church, to leave their own chapel for a potentially unwelcoming parish church in order to take Holy Communion with, in their eyes, an inferior minister. As parish churches were increasingly closed to evangelical preachers, secession became inevitable. This was the mechanism that also led to the secession of both Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism as independent denominations.

**Wesleyan Methodism**

From the beginning of his evangelical preaching mission, John Wesley realised the importance of continuing encouragement and support in order to transmute what might otherwise be a transitory emotional experience into lasting conviction. His father, Samuel Wesley, although himself brought up as a Dissenter, had been one of the High Church clergymen who were involved in the societies for moral improvement set up to reinforce Anglican worship. Similarly, John and Charles Wesley envisioned a method for the improvement not only of religion but of personal conduct and society. An international organisation was put in place, with Charles and John Wesley as the ultimate source of authority. Wesleyan Methodism was strictly organised, beginning with the local societies, which themselves might be divided into bands and classes. A number of societies combined to form a congregation and it was the congregations that built chapels. Groups of congregations formed a preaching circuit and these in turn were joined
together in districts. Following the deaths of John and Charles Wesley, the highest Wesleyan Methodist authority was the Conference, comprised of ministers seconded by the districts. Lay members had no representation. Strict control was kept over the admission of new members and the behaviour of old ones by issuing and renewing membership tickets four times a year.418

Both John and Charles Wesley insisted that Methodism was merely supplementary to attending the services and participating in Holy Communion in the Established Church:

Wesley remained in the Church of England, of which he was an ordained priest, even when he was rejected and forbidden to preach in most dioceses. He timed his open-air or meeting-house services so as not to conflict with those in the parish churches, which he exhorted his followers to attend; for if they should leave the church, he told them, Christ would leave them. Near the end of his life in 1788, he made a new avowal: 'I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England; and that none who regard my judgement will ever separate from it'.419

Nevertheless, like the Countess of Huntingdon, Wesley proceeded with ambitious plans for new Methodist buildings, invariably consisting of an auditory worship space with meeting rooms attached. Since itinerant preaching was an integral part of Wesleyan Methodism, Methodist Society Rooms incorporated accommodation for a preacher where possible. The first buildings were the Foundery in London and the New Room, Bristol, described above and, in addition, the Orphan House, Newcastle of 1743, which was modelled on Francke’s complex at Halle and consisted of an auditory, school, orphanage, hospital and theological institution.

Wesleyan Methodism had a significant presence in London from the beginning of the movement, where ecclesiastical buildings were rented or purchased from other church organisations. The old Huguenot church at Spitalfields was rented by Wesley from 1750; Snowfields Chapel was taken over from Unitarians; and the old French church in Great Hermitage Street, Wapping, was used by the Wesleyans from 1741. The Old West Street Chapel at Seven Dials, where the Countess of Huntingdon had a seat in the 1740s, was

originally erected for Huguenots on the site of a former Presbyterian Meeting House (the premises now adjoins the Ambassador Theatre, near Leicester Square). In 1886, it was described as a ‘dingy brick building, destitute of architectural grace, bearing upon it the stamp of Seven Dials’ poverty and dreariness’.  

As the movement gained momentum, a central headquarters became necessary. Land was acquired opposite Bunhill Fields burial ground in 1775 and the City Road Chapel was built in 1777-8. The design ‘can be ascribed to no single architect, although the names of George Dance, James Peacock, and others who may have had some involvement have been suggested’. Funds were raised by subscription, the appeal organised by a committee of twenty-five trustees who included amongst their number a banker, a ‘gentleman’, and three merchants. The chapel, which Stell describes as ‘designed in accordance with the plan of contemporary Georgian parish churches’, had a rectangular plan, 83 ft. by 58 ft, with a semi-elliptical communion apse at the east end, enclosed by a balustraded rail, with the pulpit placed centrally in front of it. Facing it was a gallery around three walls, supported by seven wooden columns, ‘originally the masts of George III’s warships, plastered and painted to look like marble’.  

Like the New Room in Bristol, the City Road Chapel internally follows a common pattern for Georgian parish churches, as described in the previous chapter, which combines a centralised plan with axially, in that the pulpit and altar are placed on the long axis as the liturgical focus of a preaching hall. The pulpit is given prevalence over the altar since, as at the New Room, it towers over it (figure 7.8). Indeed, the pulpit at City Road distinctively stands in front of the communion table, unlike that at the earlier New Room.

422 Dolbey, Architecture of Methodism, p. 48.
Figure 7.8: Wesley’s Chapel, City Road, Islington, London, interior, renewed after a fire in 1879; the pulpit is centrally located in front of the communion apse. The wall monuments are late nineteenth-century (Source: Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 101).

Figure 7.9: Wesley’s Chapel, City Road, Islington, London (Source: Stell, Inventory...Eastern England, p. 101).

The chapel was originally intended to lie behind a continuous terrace of housing, including Wesley’s house, fronting City Road, but this was never completed, so the
chapel fronts the road. It is brick built, with a hipped slate roof, and originally the central doorway was framed by pilasters supporting a segmental pediment, but this was replaced in 1891 by the present portico with paired Greek Doric columns and entablature (figure 7.9). Other alterations at that time included the rebuilding of the brick parapet, a continuation in stone of the frieze of the central pediment, replacement of the window frames and the imposition on the façade of brick quoin and other rustication.

Wesley had previously said that Methodist preaching-houses should be ‘plain and decent and not more expensive than is absolutely necessary’. However, it was perhaps disingenuous of Wesley to make such a statement, since, following a visit in 1757 to the Presbyterian, later Unitarian, Octagon Chapel in Norwich, with which he was clearly impressed, he was to urge his followers to ‘build their preaching houses, where the ground will permit, in the octagon form, since it is the best for the voice’. Between 1761 and 1776, eleven Methodist octagons were built in England and another three in Scotland. The great disadvantage of this plan form was that it could not easily be expanded to accommodate increased numbers of worshippers, as Wesley found when crowds had to be turned away from Nottingham Octagon in 1766. The Nottingham Methodists moved to a new, almost square chapel in Hockley in 1783 and the Octagon was sold to the Baptists for £250. The Methodist congregation made a significant profit on their original investment of £128.2s.6d, used to defray the costs of the second chapel. Another reason, then, for building chapels to as high a standard as possible was that it made the best economic sense, whether the chapel continued in use by the denomination or was sold on.

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Wesleyan chapels were built in both the lateral-façade format, with two entrances on the longer side of a rectangular plan (figure 7.10) and also with a single central door, as at Little Walsingham, Norfolk, which has a square plan and a hipped roof (figure 7.11).

One of the chief supports of Methodist efforts to make the liturgy itself a living word instead of an empty form was the enhancement of congregational singing. There is no
doubt that congregational singing was a vital ingredient in Methodism that, taken up by other denominations and subsequently returned to the Established Church, was to transform the experience of Christian worship in the nineteenth century. Charles Wesley, with Isaac Watts the greatest English Hymn-writer of the eighteenth century, must be regarded as an Evangelical quite as much as a Methodist: he was to the end of his life a strict high churchman, disapproving of even the slightest departures from church order that his brother permitted himself. In his hymns, it is not too much to say, Christianity was first brought home to the minds and hearts of millions of uneducated people, who had previously known it only as a mysterious rite to which they were expected to conform. Many hymns of lasting value were contributed by other evangelicals...They were first made popular at the informal religious meetings of the Methodists, many of them out-of-doors; by degrees they were introduced in charities and proprietary chapels, and eventually in parish churches and even cathedrals.428

Methodists introduced the idea of singing as a heartfelt and spontaneous act of worship by the people, using that was personal, emotional and immediate in its imagery. They insisted that all who could sing, men, women and children, should do so, introducing simple and attractive tunes so that everybody could enjoy singing. Following Isaac Watts, they also demanded that everyone should sing standing up. From the point of view of comfort and convenience, hymn-singing allowed a more tightly-packed interior, since the confinement of pews was negated by the movement of rising to sing and the singing itself.

Despite the commitment of both Charles and John Wesley to the Established Church, the Methodist movement gradually drifted away from it even within their lifetimes. As with the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, the provision for Holy Communion in Methodist chapels was one of the key elements, since Wesleyan Methodists became less willing to take Communion in a parish church where they might feel unwelcome or have a low regard for the minister. Also, some of the innovations in religious practice that were popularised by evangelical Methodism were alien to the Established Church. The outdoor preaching and class meetings took their form from the dissenting traditions, whilst the love-feasts and watch nights were Moravian in origin.429  The second

428 Temperley, Music of the English Parish Church, p. 208.
429 Temperley, Music of the English Parish Church, p. 205.
generation of Methodists, after the 1760s, had no ties with the Established Church and no longer regarded it as their spiritual mother. In the end Wesley himself was compelled to make a decisive breach with the Church when he ordained ministers to carry on his work in America. In church law, only a bishop could perform a valid ordination and only ministers so ordained could administer Communion or solemnise a marriage. In 1795, four years after John Wesley’s death, the Wesleyan Methodists became openly Nonconformist, seceding from the Established Church. Within a few years, they had splintered into a number of rival sects.

**Welsh Calvinistic Methodism 1760 to 1810**

Rather than a tidal wave of evangelical conversion, the advancement of Methodism in Wales was ‘molecular, slow and uneven’. The scandal attached to Howell Harris, and the defection of some of the Methodist Societies, especially those that had built their own chapels, to Dissent, had set back the Methodist cause. Methodism had maintained a strong presence in Cardiganshire, with the formation of thirteen Methodist Societies, a membership of perhaps 200 people, meeting in farmhouses and chapels-of-ease, between 1738 and 1745. From the 1760s onwards, its momentum was regained, through the preaching of Rowland at his parish of Llangeitho and the hymn-writing of William Williams (1717-1791) of Pantycelyn. Whilst Daniel Rowland’s energies were always directed more towards preaching, Williams was as assiduous as Wesley in consolidating the gains of revival meetings by organising converts into Societies:

Permanent pastoral oversight was afforded to ‘newly born’ or penitent converts in order to perpetuate the revival. There was no automatic entry into the ranks; new members were accepted only after prolonged and vigorous scrutiny and persistent backsliders were expelled.

The abbreviated forms of Anglican worship conducted in both religious societies and in chapels-of-ease without an ordained minister, with the addition of both emotional

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431 Geraint H. Jenkins, *Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History*, pp. 462, 464.
432 Geraint H. Jenkins, *Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History*, p. 464.
preaching and congregational singing, in essence produced the Methodist form of worship. The hymns composed in the Welsh language by William Williams were the catalyst to the popularity of hymn-singing and perhaps of Methodism in Wales. His father was a ruling elder at Cefnarthen Independent Chapel and Williams was educated at Llwyn-llwyd Dissenting Academy, intending to become a doctor. Instead, converted to Methodism by the preaching of Howell Harris at Talgarth, he became an ordained deacon of the Church of England but because of his Methodist activities he was later refused ordination as a priest.433

His Dissenting background meant that Williams had less prior loyalty to the Established Church, enabling him to be both more radical and more innovative in his approach. He became an energetic leader of Methodism, organising and supervising societies, preaching, writing and composing hymns. Some of his hymns were printed as early as 1744, but the first collection, *Aleluia*, was published in 1749. There followed *Hosanna I Fab Dafydd*, parts one and two in 1751 and 1754, published in English as *Hosanna to the Son of David* in 1759, and *Rhain Hymnau a Chaniadu Duwiol* in 1759. However, it was the publication of the poetically-named *Caniadau...y Mor o Wydr* (Songs for Voyagers on a Sea of Glass) in 1762 that fuelled the outpouring of evangelical fervour in a series of outdoor meetings at Llangeitho from that date.

In 1762, to accommodate the crowds that came to hear Daniel Rowland preach, a meeting house was built at Gwynfil, in the parish of Llangeitho, almost within sight of the parish church, where by then Rowland's son was vicar. A chapel-of-ease may have already existed there in which Daniel Rowland had previously held services and it may be presumed that Gwnfil Chapel replaced this, since there is no further mention of a chapel-of-ease and no trace of it remains. No application was made to license Gwnfil Chapel as a meeting house, since it was considered an adjunct of the church but, perhaps because of his preaching activities and the disruption they caused, Rowland was deprived of his curacy in 1763. In 1764, with the attendance of ever-increasing numbers, a more

433 William Williams, NLWDBW.
substantial preaching house, double-roofed with a row of stone pillars between the two halves, replaced the earlier building.434

Rowland continued to preach in the surrounding districts for four more years, but after 1767 he chose to remain with his congregation at the ‘new church’ at Llangeitho.435 This became known as Gwynfil Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Llangeitho following the secession of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists from the Established Church in 1811. It was rebuilt in 1813-15 and further remodelled in 1861-3, when the original entry on the three-bay north façade was changed to the short two-bay west end, facing the road, as it now is (figure 7.12). The Calvinistic Methodists of Llangeitho, then, showed no attachment to the historic preaching house of one of the founders of the movement, happily replacing it with a larger, more modern building.

Figure 7.12: Gwynfil Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Llangeitho, Ceredigion, built 1813-15, altered 1861-3. Inside, there is a gallery with canted angles and a pulpit platform raised high on serpentine balustrading. In the chapel forecourt stands a marble statue of Daniel Rowland of 1833 by Edward Griffiths of Chester.

Some of the Methodist Societies in Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire met in chapels-of-ease, for example at Ystrad-ffin, Capel Ifan and Capel Llandyfan.436 Llanlluan, Carmarthenshire was an Anglican chapel of ease, one of the five churches where Daniel

434 Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, p. 519.
435 Daniel Rowlands, NLWDWB.
436 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 169.
Rowland had preached monthly. The chapel is described as having been raised by the Established Church long before the arrival of Methodism, but seldom used, until it was used by the Calvinistic Methodists, Phillip Lloyd, Esq., financing extensive repairs in 1745. Only ordained priests had been allowed to hold services in the chapel at first as it was still connected to the Established Church:

This rule was first broken when no ordained priest turned up; after this, to maintain a right in the chapel, the parish priest came there occasionally to read the service, but this happened less and less. Finally, around 1839, the Methodists decided to raise a new chapel a short distance from the old, and the old chapel was left to fall into decay. 437

The establishment of a new parish and the state-funded provision of a new parish church was a cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive process. One of the most significant new parishes established in the eighteenth century was that of St Philip’s, Birmingham, with other new Anglican churches of this period mostly being either proprietary chapels, or chapels-of-ease.438 Chapels-of-ease were subordinate to their parish church and were founded and financed by parishioners to allow more convenient access to services. Parishioners might feel the need to worship closer to home, either because the parish church was too remote or access to it difficult, as was frequently the case in Wales, or because of new development and a growing sense of identification with a particular district, as frequently happened in cities. St. Paul’s, Covent Garden and the Poplar Chapel, examples of London churches discussed previously, were both originally built as chapels-of-ease.

Funds for a new chapel might be raised by a number of different strategies, including borrowing, the levying of a parish rate, by brief (essentially, a begging letter), by public subscription or by the sale of pews in the new building. They might also be built at the expense of a local philanthropic individual or organisation such as a guild, or using funds raised by a body of trustees, usually prominent parishioners. Usually any combination of strategies was used to reach the desired sum.439 John Wood’s chapel in his new

437 J. Morris, translated by Ivor Griffiths, 1994, Hanes Methodistaeth Sir Gaerfyrddin, 1911, unpublished manuscript in Carmarthen County Library. 438 Whiffen, Stuart and Georgian Churches, p. 4. 439 Whiffen, Stuart and Georgian Churches, pp. 4-5.
residential development at Bath was financed by public subscription, with shares in the chapel offered on the basis of putative profits to be gained subsequently from pew rents, with Wood later selling his own shares at a profit.440

Chapels-of-ease were sometimes built to replace or supplement church buildings that were inconvenient, perhaps because of their plan form or because they had become dilapidated. It may well have been cheaper and in many ways more satisfactory for a congregation to build a modern chapel-of-ease rather than to try to repair a medieval church. The type of services provided in the chapel would depend on the qualifications of the curate who ministered to it. An ordained minister might administer Holy Communion there, but some chapels-of-ease were simple, single-celled buildings, without an altar, where worship consisted of listening to a reading of the service in the Book of Common Prayer, singing the psalms and hearing a sermon only. Many chapels-of-ease later acquired parochial status, and could then be used for the administration of the sacraments and for burials.441

Chapels-of-ease may once have been relatively common in Wales, but once abandoned for church or chapel they would have quickly disappeared. Buildings made of rammed earth and thatch, the most common vernacular building method in west Wales, are notoriously subject to rapid decay and complete disappearance when no longer maintained. Even a more substantially built chapel of rubble stone might be either quarried for materials or revert to an unidentifiable pile of rubble after falling from use. It is possible that more archival research might reveal the existence of the chapels-of-ease that were the intermediaries between church and chapel. One example is Yr Hen Gapel, Llanybri, Cardiganshire:

This was the medieval church, a chapel-of-ease to Llansteffan. In the late seventeenth-century it was repaired for use by a Nonconformist congregation, a remarkable change for the date, but fell into disrepair after they had left and was

unroofed in 1974. … Old photographs show a charming whitewashed building, with sash windows.  

Cardiganshire was central to the early Methodist revival in Wales and its chapels provide useful evidence of the progress of Nonconformity. Societies were more numerous in the south of the county, since in north Cardiganshire were resident landowners, the Pryses of Gogerddan and the Powells of Nanteos, who were ‘implacable foes to revivalist preachers’. Nine Methodist meeting-houses were built between 1759 and 1762, at Llanbadarn Odwyn, Llandysul, Cardigan, Lledrod, Llanbadarn Trefignwys, Henfynyw, and Llansanffrafiad, with the remaining two chapels both at Llandewibrefi. Llansanffrafiad was the ancient village, nearer the coast, that was overtaken by a new settlement, Llanon, on the road between the developing towns of Aberystwyth and Cardigan. The Calvinistic Methodist chapel there (pictured in figure 7.13) had a four-bay lateral façade when it was built in 1844, but this was altered to a gable front in 1865 when the walls were raised to accommodate a gallery.

Figure 7.13: Capel Mawr, Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Stryd y Capel, Llanon, Cardiganshire, (built 1844, altered 1865).

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443 Geraint H. Jenkins, *Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History*, p. 466.
Although none of the Methodist chapels originally built in the eighteenth century remain unaltered, there is evidence, as in the example of Llanon above, of the existence of a lateral-façade chapel at most of these locations before later alteration. Remaining as lateral-façade chapels are Llandysul, built in 1832 and now disused, and one of the Llandewi Brefi chapels, Soar-y-Mynydd of 1828 (figure 7.14).

![Soar-y-Mynydd Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Cardiganshire (1828).](image)

The chapel of Soar-y-Mynydd is well-known for its remote and romantic location in the mountains above Tregaron, Cardiganshire. It epitomises the self-sufficiency of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists in having the minister’s house under the same roof as the chapel, and the chapel for many years also acted as the local school. The chapel may be distinguished from the house by the familiar symmetry of the lateral façade, with two central windows and paired outer doors and the architectural treatment given to the windows.

At Llansanffraid, the Anglican Church was altered before the chapel was built. Although it has a medieval west tower, the rest of the church was rebuilt in 1839-41 ‘in plain preaching-house style, a three-bay box ... A pleasant chapel-like interior with box pews, west gallery and flat plaster ceiling’.\(^{446}\) Yates’s view that there were many similar examples of the rebuilding or refitting of Anglican churches was detailed in the previous

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Referring to what he terms ‘liturgical conservatism’, he cites examples of the refurbishment of churches where, besides a general improvement of the fabric of the building, such as repairs to roofs and windows, damp-proofing and the introduction of paving, interiors were arranged with the pulpit as the unequivocal liturgical focus. Churches that were paved and re-seated with pews orientated towards a three-decker pulpit either on one of the long walls or in a shallow transept would have been very similar to the lateral-façade chapels (figures 7.15 and 7.16).

Figure 7.15: St Andrew’s, Bayvil, Pembrokeshire (said to have been built c. 1812, but probably of the 1830s), David Evans; the ceiling was boarded in 1905 and further restoration work carried out c. 1980 by Clive Powell. 448 The single-cell interior of the church has slate floors, painted box pews, whitewashed walls and a three-decker pulpit. The altar is set against the east wall, separated from the rest of the interior only by a simple, low wooden railing.

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447 Yates, ‘Church Building and Restoration’ in: The Welsh Church: from Reformation to Disestablishment, 1603-1920, pp. 278-292. Important contemporary sources for the condition of Welsh churches in the early nineteenth century are: R. Fenton, Tours in Wales (1804-1813) and E. H. Hall, A Description of Caernarvonshire (1809-1811).

In Cardiganshire, between 1760 and 1780, the numbers attending the ‘circulating schools’ of Griffith Jones reached a peak and at the same time increasing numbers of Methodist Societies were founded. The ‘circulating schools’ brought together those who wished to learn to read, using the Bible and catechism, in a voluntary society with the express aim of furthering religious knowledge and understanding. It seems obvious that those with newly-acquired skills in literacy and new-found companionship in religion would wish to continue to meet when the school moved on. It may not have been the intent of Griffith Jones to found a new denomination, no more than it was that of John and Charles Wesley, but the outcome was the same. Moreover, in Wales, because of the tenor and range of books written or translated into Welsh, Methodist Societies in Wales were imbued with Calvinism.

Jones was already known to the people of Cardiganshire from his regular and much-publicised field preaching tours during the 1730s and 1740s. He was also a regular correspondent with the group of educated Welsh clergy, sympathetic to evangelicalism, located in the lower Teifi valley, including Samuel and Moses Williams, Alban Thomas, the historian Theophilus Evans and the grammarian William Gambold. The first official Welsh printing press was set up at Trerhedyn in the Vale of Teifi in 1718 but moved to Carmarthen soon after, in 1721. Carmarthen became the centre for the publication of
Welsh books.\textsuperscript{449} This was especially significant when the circulation of Methodist sermons and hymns printed in Welsh became popular: ‘Some of the printed sermons of Daniel Rowland sold like hot cakes: over 3,000 subscribers promised to take more than a dozen copies each of his \textit{Pum Pregeth} [Five Sermons](1772).\textsuperscript{450} The schools ceased to operate for a time, but they were revived in north Wales by Thomas Charles of Bala in the 1790s and, in combination with his evangelistic preaching, resulted in the setting up of the first Methodist societies there.

As elsewhere, Methodists were not from the lowest stratum of society, but drawn from those with some social standing and higher aspirations:

Their members were generally pious, literate farmers, craftsmen and artisans, rather than poor smallholders, landless labourers and squatters. Over half the members of Cilgwyn church in the early eighteenth century were freeholders.\textsuperscript{451}

There is every indication that the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, particularly in Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire, remained within the Established Church:

Relations were generally good, and needed to be so, because members of the societies depended on the goodwill of clergymen to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion. They were required to marry, baptise and bury their parishioners, and for decades after the Methodists had formed their own denomination, there were societies which behaved almost as if nothing had happened to break the age-old understanding. Only in 1849 did members of Tabor, Llangwryfon, one of the earliest Calvinistic Methodist chapels in the county, cease to attend the Anglican Church after their morning service.\textsuperscript{452}

Few Anglican clergymen classified Methodists as Dissenters, so they do not appear as such on the diocesan returns. Nor did eighteenth-century Cardiganshire Methodists consider it necessary to apply for separate registration for meeting-houses or for licences to preach. As late as 1811, only seven Calvinistic Methodist churches had been registered in the county, although thirty-eight had been built by then, mostly in the two decades following Rowland’s death in 1790.\textsuperscript{453}

\textsuperscript{449} Geraint H. Jenkins, \textit{Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History}, p. 460.
\textsuperscript{450} Geraint H. Jenkins, \textit{Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History}, p. 459.
\textsuperscript{451} Geraint H. Jenkins, \textit{Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History}, p. 475.
\textsuperscript{452} Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, \textit{Church and Chapel, Cardiganshire County History}, p. 486.
\textsuperscript{453} Geraint H. Jenkins, \textit{Established Church and Dissent, Cardiganshire County History}, p. 476.
Evidence that the Methodists were still very much an active part of the Church of England is provided by the simple building erected in 1799 near to the parish church in Newport, Pembrokeshire, funded by the Bowen family of Llwyngwair. It was used by Methodists for their Society meetings until the Calvinistic Methodism seceded from the established church in 1811. After that the building was used as the church hall and meeting room for the parish congregation (figures 7.17 and 7.18).

Figure 7.17: Church Chapel, Newport Pembrokeshire, 1802. The original doors at each end of the façade have been blocked.

Figure 7.18: Newport Church Chapel, showing proximity to the parish church

The building is described as having been:

Built by members of the church congregation, as a ‘meeting-house...for hearing Divine Worship according to the doctrines and homilies of the now established Church of England’ – a form of words that sufficed to allow co-existence with the
Methodists at least until the 1811 split over the ordination of Methodist ministers. Similar ‘church chapels’ were built at Nevern, Eglwyswrw, and St. Dogmaels.\textsuperscript{454} The street in which the chapel at Newport was built also saw residential development in the early nineteenth century, of stone-built and slate-roofed one- and two-storey houses. This might well have been the result of money brought back to the town by successful mariners, as Newport developed its port facilities in the nineteenth century. In Parrog Road, there is ‘a mid nineteenth-century stone warehouse, probably built for the grain trade. Beyond, [there are] some substantial later nineteenth-century houses, supposedly built by returning mariners.’\textsuperscript{455} The Tabernacle Calvinistic Methodist chapel that replaced the church chapel is dated 1815, although it was built in 1837 and thoroughly remodelled in 1904, when the left-hand door of the original lateral façade was obscured by the addition of a schoolroom (figure 7.19).

![Figure 7.19: Tabernacle Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Newport, Pembrokeshire (1837, remodelled 1904).](image)

Eglwyswrw, now remote and rural, was once a more important centre, as evidenced by the substantial coaching inn located there, to which a court house was added in the nineteenth century to house the magistrate’s sessions. Behind the inn is an early nineteenth-century building, with one Gothick central window and a hipped roof. This may also have been a church chapel (figure 7.20).

\textsuperscript{454} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire}, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{455} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire}, p. 323.
Figure 7.20: The nineteenth-century building at Eglwyswrw said to be a 'church chapel', photographed in 2005.

It has now been renovated and in 2006 was being used for meetings of the local Young Farmer's Club.456

Similarly, the church chapel at Nevem is described as

one of the earliest chapel buildings of the region, built in 1799 by George Bowen of Llwyngwair as a 'church chapel' like the one in Newport, for reformed services still within the Anglican Church. A Methodist chapel after 1811, it became the board school in 1876. Hipped rectangular structure in banded stone with large Gothic pointed windows, the façade obscured by an added wing of 1894.457

Llwyngwair, the Bowen's family seat, also at Nevem, dates from the mid sixteenth century, with eighteenth and nineteenth-century alterations. The fourth Pembrokeshire 'church chapel' associated with George Bowen was built at St. Dogmaels, near to the Cardigan boundary and may now be concealed within the former school behind the vicarage, described as 'an early nineteenth-century chapel converted into a schoolroom in the late nineteenth century'.458

New Methodist Societies were also founded by exhorters or preachers of existing societies, if they had been successful in increasing membership.459 Some Societies were

459 Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 169.
able to raise enough finance, mostly by subscription, to build ‘society houses’ very early in the history of Methodism, such as that at Groes-wen, Caerphilly, Glamorgan in 1747 and Llansawel, Carmarthenshire in 1749. The sense of stability and permanence given to a Methodist Society by the acquisition of premises sometimes encouraged a move to the Independent denomination, as at Groes-wen, Caerphilly, referred to earlier and as happened at Aberthin, Glamorgan, and New Inn, Monmouthshire also, both of which seceded in 1745 and 1751 respectively as Independent congregations. For the Independent and Baptist denominations, the establishment of new congregations and new chapels as offshoots of existing meetings was a familiar process and the establishment of new congregations in these denominations was also accelerated at the beginning of the nineteenth century through their adoption of evangelical preaching. Membership of the Baptist denomination, especially, was increased as a result of the famous preaching of the Baptist convert, Christmas Evans (1766-1838).

Howel Davies was a leading Pembrokeshire Methodist who is said to have founded at least fifty-four societies in Pembrokeshire between 1740 and 1750. Woodstock Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Pembrokeshire (figures 7.21 and 7.22) was first built in 1754-5 to house a society founded by him, as was Capel Newydd, Boncath, Pembrokeshire in 1763. Davies had been converted whilst he was a schoolmaster at Talgarth by the preaching of Harris in 1737. He subsequently went to Llandowror to study under Griffith Jones, and was ordained deacon in 1739 and priest in 1740, when he was made curate, first of Griffith Jones and then at Llys-y-fran, Pembrokeshire. Crucially it was Davies’ marriage to an heiress that financed his evangelical activities. Widowed, he later remarried. The daughter of his second marriage later became the wife of Daniel Rowland’s son, Nathaniel, illustrating the tendency of the Nonconformist leadership to become dynastic.460

The significance of Woodstock is that it is said to have been the first Methodist chapel in Wales in which Holy Communion was celebrated, a significant step towards independence from the Established Church. The chapel was substantially rebuilt in 1808.

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460 Howel Davies, NLWDWB.
and renovated in 1890, but it probably retains the form of the 1808 rebuilding. Lateral-fronted, it is a double pile with the valley carried on two iron columns, giving a square interior, similar to Whitefield's Tabernacle and to Daniel Rowland's second chapel of 1764.

Figure 7.21: Woodstock Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Pembrokeshire (founded 1744-5, present building of 1808, renovated 1890), entrance façade.

Figure 7.22: Woodstock Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Pembrokeshire, side façade showing double pile roof and attached minister's house.

The secession of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists from the Established Church followed the same pattern to that both of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and of Wesleyan Methodism, largely through the agency of Thomas Charles of Bala and the spread of Methodism to north Wales. Following the deaths of Daniel Rowland in 1790 and William Williams in 1791, Thomas Charles assumed leadership of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales. He was an ordained minister of the Church of England, described
as Calvinist and strictly orthodox, but his overt Methodism prevented his obtaining a
curch living anywhere near to his wife’s property in north Wales. As was the case with
Howel Davis in Pembrokeshire, it was his wife’s property that enabled Thomas Charles
to continue his evangelical activities. His wife inherited a substantial retail business in
Bala, the income from which enabled Charles to take an active part in education, the
publication of Welsh religious books and preaching.

After long opposition to secession, the lack of sufficient ordained ministers with
Methodist sympathies made denominational ordination inevitable. There is an apocryphal
story of the confrontation between the Methodist leader in favour of the Methodist
ordination of ministers, Ebenezer Morris (1769-1825) of Cardiganshire, and Thomas
Charles, a conservative Anglican who continued to preach and to administer the
sacrament in Anglican churches, opposed the move. Morris is said to have asked Charles
bluntly:

‘Which is the more important, preaching the Gospel or administering the
sacraments?’ ‘The most important work is preaching the Gospel’, replied Thomas
Charles. ‘Then,’ said Morris, ‘we are one.’

Thomas Charles was commissioned by the Association to draw up the form of ordination
of ministers, which is still in use to this day. The ordination of the first Calvinistic
Methodist ministers at Bala in 1811 marked the official separation of the denomination
from the Church of England. Wales was divided into two presbyteries and from then
on, each ordained their own ministers, empowering them to administer the sacraments,
rather than having to rely upon sympathetic Anglican clergymen. The first ministers to
be ordained were Ebenezer Morris and Ebenezer Richard (1781-1837) of Tregaron,
secretary of the monthly meeting and later of the South Wales Association.

There is some uncertainty as to the form the very first chapels might have taken. Many
sources refer to early society meetings taking place in hired rooms, cottages and barns.
Many of these assertions are drawn from the experience of Methodists in the towns and

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461 Watts, Dissenters, Volume I, p. 450.
462 Thomas Charles, NLWDWB.
463 Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, Church and Chapel, Cardiganshire County History, p. 481.
cities of England and from accounts that wished to emphasise the persecution of
Methodists by an Established Church inimical to reform. Also the discussion of meetings
in private houses and rented premises prior to the independence of Methodism is, in some
ways, beside the point. Those meetings did not have an independent architectural
expression: what is under scrutiny, and what this chapter seeks to summarise, is the form
of buildings that they chose when they did.

It would appear from the above account, both in terms of the numbers involved and the
relationship with the Established Church, that in rural south Wales at least, early
Methodist society meetings could have been accommodated in the same way that
meetings of other religious societies had been accommodated, that is, in the church
premises themselves, especially a chapel-of-ease built by the congregation that was to use
it for their own convenience. The more or less complete disappearance of any evidence
of an intermediate step, in the erection and use of vernacular buildings by Methodists,
might be accounted for by the argument that any society that prospered would
subsequently rebuild, whilst the premises of those that fell by the wayside would either
be re-used or fall into decay. However, this argument does not support the theory that
later chapels were derived from the vernacular, since these makeshift buildings were
invariably upgraded to the status of more formal architecture as soon as possible. More
detailed case studies relating the demography and settlement of particular areas to church
and chapel attendance might enlighten this area of uncertainty.

However, what is certain is that in the majority of cases where a permanent building for
Calvinistic Methodist use was erected in south Wales before about 1840, the chapel had a
lateral façade. This is confirmed by the observations of the compilers of the Buildings of
Wales gazetteers: ‘The long-wall façade remained the principle type from the late
eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century, the two-door and two-window model enhanced
by two outer windows at an upper level to light the gallery’.4²⁴ The volume on
Pembrokeshire, after saying that ‘architecturally, nothing survives of the eighteenth
century’ repeats the above statement, finding that the earliest chapels were of the long-

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wall variety, whilst those built after 1820 might be half-hipped and were likely to include galleries\textsuperscript{465} (for an example, see Caerau Independent Chapel, figure 3, appendix 3). John Newman describes the early purpose-built chapels of Glamorgan as being built ‘cottage-wise, with a long wall, not a gable end, facing the road’ citing as an example the Calvinistic Methodist chapels at Llantrisant of 1826, where ‘two doorways in the long wall, flanking the centre pair of windows, give access to the interior of the chapel between the pulpit and the ends of the galleries’.\textsuperscript{466}

An analysis of the dates given in the inventory of chapels in Cardiganshire for an initial building, as opposed to the foundation of a cause or any subsequent rebuilding, suggests that by the end of the eighteenth century there were ten Baptist, twenty-two Independent and five Unitarian chapels, thirty-seven chapels of Old Dissent in total.\textsuperscript{467} According to the inventory, thirty-three Calvinistic Methodist chapels had also been built by that date, giving a total of seventy buildings. The rate of building increased dramatically in the first decades of the nineteenth century and at the same time all the existing chapels were either rebuilt or altered. Although it is sometimes difficult ascertain how drastically buildings were altered, it is frequently possible to infer an original lateral façade (figure 7.23).

Figure 7.23: Nantgaredig Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Nantgaredig, Carmarthenshire (1817, altered 1893 by George Morgan and Son). The first chapel on this site was built in 1760. The pulpit remains in the centre of the interior elevation opposite the entrance.

\textsuperscript{465} Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{466} John Newman, \textit{Buildings of Wales: Glamorgan}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{467} David Percival, \textit{Inventory of Chapels and Sunday Schools, Cardiganshire County History}, pp. 508-536.
The few eighteenth-century chapel buildings remaining unaltered- Maesyronnen Independent chapel, Radnorshire (1696), Pen-rhiw Unitarian chapel, formerly Cardiganshire (1777) and the Friends’ Meeting-houses at the Pales, Llandegley, Radnorshire (1716), and Capel y Crynwyr, Pontrobert, (c.1750)- have already been discussed. Following the interpretation of chapels as having developed from vernacular buildings, it has been suggested that the remaining eighteenth-century chapels, no longer extant but that were effectively the majority, were cottage-like in appearance: ‘there must have been a smaller cottage type, thatched and simple, all since rebuilt’. Rhodiad y Brenin Independent chapel is given as an example (figure 7.24).

Figure 7.24: Rhodiad y Brenin, former Independent Chapel, St David’s, Pembrokeshire.

Similarly, Anthony Jones, in a chapter in Welsh Chapels entitled, ‘little granaries of god’, cites two chapels that now exist only as photographs, the thatched Capel y Bryngwyn, Abergale, Denbighshire (c.1720) and the Baptist Bwlch-y-rhw, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, of a similar date (figures 7.25 and 7.26).

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468 Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, Buildings of Wales, Pembrokeshire, p. 68.
Figure 7.25: Thatched Capel y Bryngwyn, Abergele, Denbighshire (c. 1720), photographed in the nineteenth century (source: Anthony Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 28).

Figure 7.26: Bwlch-y-rhiw, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, also photographed in the nineteenth century (source: Anthony Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 28).

About these he says, poetically:

Some chapels survived long enough to be captured by the camera, and their ghosts show us quite how small and humble these meeting-houses were, while emphasising how reluctant the Nonconformists were to abandon the grass-roots vernacular traditions of their buildings.  

However, this assertion is not supported by the built evidence, which shows overwhelmingly that such humble beginnings were left behind as quickly as possible.

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469 Jones, Welsh Chapels, pp. 27-29.
An example is the rebuilding of the Calvinistic Methodist chapel at Caerfarchell, one of several small villages scattered in the countryside near to St David’s in Pembrokeshire and one of the earliest Calvinistic Methodist chapels in the county, the first building on the site erected in 1763. Nothing survives of this original chapel, but a plan of it was discovered sketched in a family bible and this is reproduced in a book of local history:

On a page of the Bible of Elizabeth Evans of Solva had been drawn a plan of the ground floor of the original chapel which was erected in 1763 and pulled down in 1827. Here it is. It took only thirteen days to build; but then it was only forty five feet by fifteen\textsuperscript{470} (figure 7.27).

![Figure 7.27: plan of the old chapel at Caerfarchell, Pembrokeshire (source: James, Twice to St David’s, p. 54).](image)

Elizabeth Evans is described as one of the ‘\textit{plant yr eglwys}’ [children of the church], one of the children who attended classes given by Thomas Charles of Bala on one of his preaching tours of Pembrokeshire. There are no other records or descriptions of this early Methodist meeting place, but Elizabeth’s plan shows a small scale building with a pulpit framed by two windows and a single entrance door to one side of it. The plan shows a small vernacular building without any symmetry or regularity in the spacing of the openings or internal arrangement. However, this building was replaced in 1827 by a more formal and architecturally ambitious chapel, which has remained relatively unaltered from that date. The new chapel has an imposing two-storey lateral façade, with a hipped, low-pitched slate roof and is set back from the road in its own forecourt bounded by rubble stone walls. On the entrance façade, panelled doors flank a central pair of round-arched, small-paned windows (figure 7.28).

\textsuperscript{470} David W. James, \textit{Twice to St. Davids} (Llandysul, Gomer, 1995), p. 54.
A central finely-lettered plaque reads: ‘Adeiladwyd gyntaf yn y flwyddyn 1763. Ail adeiladwyd yn y flwyddyn 1827’ [Original building of the year 1763. The second building of the year 1827]. Inside, the pulpit is in the centre of the entrance façade between the windows, facing a block of bench pews with scrolled armrests. Stairs beside each door lead up to the five-sided panel-fronted gallery, with panelled benches, which rests on four slim wooden columns. The inside of the chapel is therefore a single volume, quite tightly packed with seating, with the pulpit as the single focus. The impression is of disciplined order and formality rather than of cosy domesticity. The new chapel is of the by now familiar lateral-façade format, and shows no similarity to the building whose plan was sketched by Elizabeth Evans.

Indeed, there was no reason for it to do so. By 1827, the Calvinistic Methodists were an independent denomination with their own established system of church government and worship. There was absolutely no need for reticence, but rather the opposite was true, in that the Methodists would wish to assert their identity as a denomination quite separate from the Established Church and to attract new members to an architecturally-distinguished building. Methodism originated as a reform movement from within the Established Church. It seems reasonable that, given the reputed inadequacy of provision or upkeep of Anglican church buildings, the Methodists would also wish to assert their
attitude of reform and improvement in providing a superior worship space to that of the parish church. The social stratum from which the early Methodists of south Wales were drawn also militates against an interpretation of these lateral façade chapels as vernacular in origin.

As this thesis has indicated, the congregations of Old Dissent and the new Methodist societies in the eighteenth century were unlikely to be landless labourers, drawn from the lowest stratum of society, but rather to belong to an upwardly mobile class. Their interest in self-improvement is evidenced by their commitment to literacy and the principles of restraint and self-respect inherent in Calvinist doctrine. Howell Harris was himself the youngest of three brothers, whose father was the owner of his smallholding with ambition for the social advancement of his sons. Harris's brothers both managed to improve their social position, the eldest becoming an assay master at the Royal mint and the other a well-off tailor in London. Since Howell was religious as a child, his family wished him to be ordained, so he was schooled first at Talgarth and in 1728 at the grammar school at Llwyn-llwyd, Llanigon, Breconshire. The grammar school was maintained by David Price, the minister of Maesyronnen, in the tradition of the Dissenting Academies and Howell Harris learned some Latin and Greek there. The death of his father in 1731 left Harris's family without the means to continue to support his education, precipitating the period of uncertainty and introspection in Harris's life that ended with his evangelical conversion in 1735.

Howel Harris's circumstances were typical of those to whom Methodism appealed. Many researchers have noted that Methodism in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries appealed much more strongly to the artisan class than the poorest sections of society. As McLeod describes:

In a hierarchical and privilege-ridden society, where much of the population lived under the thumb of the squire and the parson, Nonconformity expressed and legitimated the independence of the craftsmen and domestic workers. It provided opportunities for status and responsibility as preachers, class leaders or Sunday school teachers; the puritanism of the Nonconformists, and their encouragement of hard work, self-discipline, literacy and a generally methodical approach to life.

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471 Howell Harris, NL WDWB.
provided a formula for family survival and even modest prosperity, as well as a basis for pride in the face of social ‘superiors’.\footnote{Hugh McLeod, \textit{Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-century Britain} (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984, reprinted 1993), p. 24.}

It would be surprising indeed, if people with this attitude and outlook were to invest a considerable amount of their resources in buildings that referred back to a lower social status, rather than forwards towards urbanity and improvement.

Echoing Iorwerth Peate’s interest in ‘the oldest chapel in Cardiganshire’, Jones says of the ruined chapel at Gwernogle (figure 7.29): ‘many congregations worshipped in equally austere chapels until the great revivals of the nineteenth century overtook them and they built anew’.\footnote{Jones, \textit{Welsh Chapels}, p. 24.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{ruins_of_chapel.png}
\caption{Ruins of a chapel in the Brechfa forest at Gwernogle, Carmarthenshire (source: Anthony Jones, \textit{Welsh Chapels}, p. 24).}
\end{figure}

However, the detailed inventory of Cardiganshire chapels confirms at a local level what the religious census of 1851 indicates at the national level, that is, many chapels had already been built before the second great wave of evangelicalism in the mid nineteenth century. The Cardigan inventory shows that, in addition to the seventy chapels already built in the county by the beginning of the nineteenth century, around a further eighty-two had been built by 1840. We have a better understanding of what these chapels looked like, because although the majority were subsequently either rebuilt or altered, sometimes substantially, some remain in their original form. The evidence suggests that
the majority of these early chapels were of the lateral façade type. This seems to hold good for a substantial proportion of early chapels in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Glamorgan, Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire.

Anthony Jones supports his vernacular developmental model using the example of Capel Cildwrn, Llangefni, Anglesey, which he describes as a progression from:

cottage-worship to growing chapel. The genesis of Capel Cildwrn, Llangefni, Ang., from a tiny house where the congregation met to the first modest chapel which was eventually extended to create a two-storey chapel with a large gallery to accommodate the capacity congregations who came to hear the Revd Christmas Evans preach. He lived in the small minister's house attached to the chapel, complaining about the low ceilings—understandable for a preacher who was nearly 7 ft. tall.475 (figures 7.30 and 7.31).

Figure 7.30: The first Chapel Cildwrn (source: Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 18; no original source given).

Figure 7.31: the first and second alterations at Capel Cildwrn (source: Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 19).

475 Jones, Welsh Chapels, p. 18.
Christmas Evans (1766-1838), a native of Llandysul, Carmarthenshire, educated at the Cardiganshire Dissenting Academy at Castellhywel and ordained Baptist minister in 1789, was one of the most famous of the early nineteenth century preachers:

His huge, ungainly, but Episcopal frame; his strong feelings and fiery temperament; his formidable memory; and, above all, his imagination – these were his natural gifts. But his ability as a preacher was not due to chance, for he had studied and mastered the theory of the art. He had a genius for observing people and places and characteristics, and presenting them to his congregations in dramatic form... He was, in fact, the master allegorist of the pulpit of his day.476

Jones describes the earlier buildings as 'cottage like', but the first alteration definitively distinguishes the chapel from the house, as at Soar-y-Mynydd, since the chapel is recognisable as the lateral-façade format. That this form was retained in the subsequent enlargement shows that, rather than attachment to a domestic vernacular appearance, there was an early preference for the formal symmetry of the lateral façade form.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the emergence of the first three Methodist denominations to assert their independence from the Established Church, the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, the Wesleyan Methodist connexion and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. The mechanism for secession was similar in each case following from the wish of Methodists to become as self-sufficient for sacramental services as they were for other aspects of church management and services. The mechanism of separation emphasises the release of the new Methodist denominations from any need of sanctification or endorsement by the Established Church. Methodist chapels took on the status of fully autonomous and independent churches, supported by the overall organisation of Methodism. Their membership was drawn from an entrepreneurial middle class with aspirations for social advancement, as evidenced by their commitment to education, and it is unlikely, given these two circumstances, that low-status vernacular buildings would have been acceptable as models for the new churches.

476 Christmas Evans, NLWDWB.
Some of the chapels of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, though Calvinist, were built in fashionable architectural styles and with an emphasis on the theatricality of evangelical preaching. The internal arrangement of the Wesleyan Methodist meeting-houses remained closely related to those of the contemporary Anglican Church in their prioritising of preaching, whilst their exteriors reproduced the classicism that was common to both Anglican churches and Dissenting meeting-houses, informed by Primitivism. Whilst Methodism was still a part of the Established Church, there was no need for the exterior of the building to look like a church. However, with independence came the opportunity to build places of worship that demonstrated the new status of the chapel as an independent church and its importance to the community, and to create interiors more suitable for evangelical religion.

The built and documentary evidence for the appearance of eighteenth-century Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapels is less conclusive. There is some indication that there may have been an intermediate stage of small vernacular buildings at a time when Methodist Societies remained relatively ad hoc meetings, held in whatever premises might be available, such as farmhouses and chapels-of-ease. However, given the evidence for the scarcity of any substantial, well-constructed farm buildings and the poor quality of the low-status domestic buildings in Wales in the eighteenth century, it seems unlikely that these made any significant architectural contribution.

Finally, the lateral-façade model has been shown to be an architectural type of long standing. The occurrence of this model, with its proportion, symmetry and architectural detailing, may be more convincingly interpreted as the conscious adoption of an architectural form that would confirm their new status as an independent church. For the conservative Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, the long-term association of the lateral-façade form with the Calvinistic reform of the Established Church would have enhanced its suitability.
Chapter 8: The Vernacular Status of Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

Introduction

The aim of the thesis is to question the characterisation of lateral-façade Welsh chapels as vernacular, firstly by comparing them to their contemporary domestic vernacular buildings and to chapels built elsewhere and secondly through the presentation of an alternative interpretation that takes into account a wider context of religious change. This chapter summarises the objectives achieved in pursuit of this aim.

In this concluding chapter, the findings of the thesis are first summarised and then supported by further discussion of reasons why an interpretation of Welsh chapels as vernacular has been so compelling. The chapter and the thesis conclude with a short discussion of the vernacular status of Welsh Nonconformist chapels.

Lateral-façade chapels and the Welsh Vernacular

Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Glasbury, Radnorshire, is significant as the only remaining seventeenth-century Dissenting meeting house in Wales. Structural analysis shows that parts of the building substantially pre-date the registration of the chapel as a meeting-house in 1697 and it seems likely that the chapel and attached dwelling house were converted from a sixteenth-century longhouse or hall-house of hearth-passage type. Jones and others interpret this as indicating that Maesyronnen, and the lateral façade chapels assumed to be modelled upon it, are Welsh vernacular buildings. However, more rigorous formal analysis including specific comparison with Cilewent, the Welsh longhouse now reconstructed at St Fagans, suggests a greater affinity with contemporary lateral-façade chapels constructed elsewhere.

The social status of the patron of Maesyronnen, and the formality and expense of the building and its fittings, are commensurate with architectural and social ambition, whilst

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477 Suggett, Houses and History in the March of Wales, p. 213.
the internal fittings, indicated on the exterior by the arrangement of doors and windows, reflect Calvinist ideas of worship. Maesyronnen is paralleled by the similar contemporary conversion of a substantial farmhouse into an Independent Chapel at Walpole in Suffolk, recounted in chapter four, showing that whilst the original buildings and some aspects of their conversion may be thought of as representing a local vernacular in terms of materials and techniques, the resulting chapels suggest internationally-established models for Calvinist worship.

The domestic appearance of the early eighteenth-century Quaker meeting house known as The Pales at Llandegley, Radnorshire has also been taken as evidence for the vernacular origins of Welsh chapels. However, this thesis has suggested that this appearance is attributable to the religious practice and ideals of Quakers rather than any affinity with a Welsh vernacular. In any case, Quakers were a tiny minority and the sect almost disappeared in Wales in the eighteenth century, so they can hardly be expected to have had any great influence on the form of chapel building.

The assumption that lateral-façade chapels are derived from vernacular buildings was addressed in chapter two through a comparison of lateral-façade chapels with their contemporary agricultural and low-status domestic buildings. The comparison showed that Welsh domestic and agricultural buildings were generally unlikely to be of a suitable calibre for conversion into a chapel. In addition, there is little evidence of any difference attributable to regional variations in the availability of materials or the application of local techniques that are associated with vernacular buildings. Rather, the consistency of the format both within and outside Wales suggests more a more widely-disseminated model.

Chapter two also showed that there is a well-established Protestant literary tradition linking chapels to barns through the apocryphal story attached to St Paul’s, Covent Garden, designed by Inigo Jones. In some accounts, the metaphorical allusion to the church as a barn is transmuted into a literal description, and it is easy to see, given the requirement of Protestantism for unified space in a church interior, how derogatory...
references to 'preaching barns' might be taken literally. However, the details of the conversion of buildings into chapels given in chapter four showed that conversion to a suitable chapel interior required an original building of substantial size and construction. Where Welsh barns were of sufficient stature, as may have been the case at Maesyronnen, it would indicate that the owner was likely to be of significant local social standing.

At Tewkesbury, also described in chapter four, the direction of conversion of the Old Baptist Chapel was from chapel to a row of cottages rather than the other way round. Structurally, to achieve an unimpeded interior space starting from a row of cottages is quite difficult, whilst conversion in the opposite direction is merely a matter of partitioning. A congruence of form, in a shared rectangular plan with the entrance on the long wall, is not compelling evidence of equivalent origins where other similarities are lacking.

Contrary to the emphasis placed on the persecution and suffering of Dissenters in Nonconformist hagiographies and histories of Welsh Dissent, which supposedly forced them to worship in barns, there were strong connections in Wales between Dissent and the Established Church. These included a shared commitment both to Calvinist doctrine and to moral and social progress, especially an increase in literacy. Reference was made to dissenting academies and the career of the Rev. Stephen Hughes in chapter five and to the circulating schools of Griffith Jones in chapter six. Calvinist doctrine, with its view of a predestined elect who are visible by their conduct and prosperity, encouraged ambition for self-betterment. This renders an attachment to the forms of low-status vernacular buildings unlikely, especially in Wales where vernacular buildings were generally of poor quality.

Lateral-façade chapels retained a consistency of form over a wide geographical area for more than a century. That chapels were built to the same design in different regions proves conclusively that it was neither a development indigenous to Wales nor an evolution from a local Welsh vernacular. The retention of a consistent form over a long
period of time suggests either compelling utility or that the form became accepted as in itself symbolic or traditional. This interpretation is further elaborated in the discussion of the architectural history of Nonconformist chapels summarised below.

The Architectural History of Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

A further objective achieved by this thesis has been to offer an alternative interpretation of the lateral-façade form of Welsh chapels to that of a vernacular origin. Avoiding both the parochialism of limiting the field of enquiry to Wales and the confrontational stance between church and chapel that informs many existing accounts of Welsh Nonconformity, the thesis has approached the architectural history of chapels as a part of the international development of Protestant architecture.

The regularity and symmetry in the composition of main façade of lateral-façade chapels may have originated with the design of churches in the Calvinist Netherlands, as evidenced by the details of Norwich Old Meeting given in chapter four. By the end of the seventeenth century, this formal design had been adopted for meeting houses by Dissenters throughout England and Wales, as indicated by a comparison of Maesyronnen Independent Chapel, Radnorshire with contemporary chapels in England. Chapter six showed how this arrangement subsequently became representative of non-ritualistic, sermon-centred worship and as such became acceptable to both High Church and Calvinist evangelical Protestants, whilst the contemporary discourse on Primitivism promoted the use of Classicism.

The late development of mass literacy in Wales meant that Protestantism remained conservatively Calvinist, with the result that, when Calvinistic Methodist chapels were built, they retained the lateral-façade format that had first been adopted more than a century before. Contrary to an interpretation of lateral-façade chapels as vernacular, this thesis has shown that this arrangement is a formal and theorised design. Moreover, Welsh Nonconformist chapels were built by congregations with aspirations for social advancement. Welsh chapels were designed to be of a higher standard of design and
construction than both the domestic vernacular and, in many cases, the local parish church. The change to the gable-ended design was not a break with tradition, but further improvement along the same trajectory.

**Capel Newydd, Nanhoron, Caernarvonshire**

Capel Newydd, Nanhoron, near the southern coast of the remote Llyn peninsula in Caernarvonshire, is featured in *Wales’s Best One Hundred Churches* to illustrate the vernacular qualities of Welsh Nonconformist chapels (figure 8.1).\(^{478}\) It is described in that text as showing its origins as a barn by having ‘an irregular placing and dimensions of windows’; the text goes on to say that ‘only the omission of altar and bell, and the inclusion of a second door, suggest a chapel rather than a church’.\(^{479}\)

![Figure 8.1: Capel Newydd, Nanhoron, Caernarvonshire (1769), entrance façade (source: Hughes, *Wales’s Best Churches*, p. 37).](image)

\(^{479}\) Hughes, *Wales’s Best Churches*, p. 84.
Indeed, it is exactly the lack of an altar, the central location of the pulpit and the presence of a second door, functionally unnecessary in such an intimate building, that together identify the building as a chapel. Like Pen-Rhiw chapel, Capel Newydd may or may not have originally been a barn, but it is the model of a Dissenting chapel that most influences its present appearance, as would have been more apparent to eighteenth-century congregations.

That the arrangement of the façade readily identifies a building as a chapel, even in so abbreviated an expression as Nanhoron, suggests that chapels should be interpreted as local, perhaps vernacular, expressions of a formal design, rather than as vernacular architecture pressed into service as formal buildings. One effect of this interpretation is to remove any discontinuity between lateral-fronted and gable-ended chapels. At all times, the builders of Welsh chapels aspired to the creation of a formal and demonstrative architecture that could be readily identified as a church that accommodated a particular type of worship, as in the example of Cana Chapel given below.
Cana, Felindre Farchog, Newport, Pembrokeshire: the change to gable-ended form

The Independent congregation at Felindre Farchog built its first chapel of rubble stone, rectangular in plan with the long side parallel to the road, in 1810 (figure 8.3). An old photograph shows that it was formerly whitewashed with three centre sash windows, the outer two with twelve panes and the central window having twenty-four panes, flanked by identical doors with straight lintels in each outer bay. One doorway has now been blocked. The building had been constructed very simply with no other windows or doors.480

Figure 8.3: Yr Hen Capel, Felindre Farchog (1810), Pembrokeshire, later used as a schoolroom and now the church hall.

This original old chapel has been preserved because it was used as a Sunday school and it remains in use as the vestry and church hall. Although this building has a modest, domestic appearance and has now been altered, the lateral-façade form is readily discernable.

A new, larger chapel was built for the same congregation a few metres away on the opposite side of the road some forty-six years later, altogether grander and more obviously formal in appearance, with a railed forecourt to the road and a gabled front façade. The gable was originally bracketed but this was cut back during recent roof repairs, leaving eaves brackets on the side wall only (figure 8.4).

480 Lloyd, Orbach, Scourfield, Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire, p. 185.
The high gable end gives the building a much greater presence on this street and shows that the congregation of Cana Independent Chapel, like the overwhelming majority of other Welsh chapel congregations, showed no attachment to the more humble and domestic appearance of their former chapel. The gabled entrance façade also allows more effective access to the internal gallery which substantially increases seating capacity. Three other similar gable-ended chapels were built within four years of each other in the same locality in the mid-nineteenth century, all displaying similar workmanship to Cana. This suggests both the local availability of skills and materials and an unwillingness to be outdone by rival denominations as contributory reasons for the building of the new Cana Chapel.

Behind the single central entrance door of the gable-entry façade is a vestibule from which stairs at each end give access to the three-sided gallery and beside them doors give entrance to the aisles flanking a central block of pews in the worship space. The pulpit is in the middle of the wall opposite the entrance façade, a configuration that has already been noted as having similarities in plan to the lateral façade chapels where the pulpit is located on the side opposite the entrance (see, for example, Moylegrove Chapel, appendix 1). As elsewhere, the vestibule adds the refinement of an intermediate space for greeting worshippers and directing them to the correct seats as well as screening the
worship space from the weather and allowing access to the gallery. It may therefore be seen as both a functional and aesthetic addition to an existing format. The improvement was so compelling that within decades most chapels adapted this form, 'with the architectural possibilities of the temple-front in mind'.

The Vernacular Status of Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

Given the demonstrable similarities of lateral-façade Welsh chapels to Dissenting chapels elsewhere, it seems puzzling that the idea that the form was an indigenous Welsh development should have had such a wide currency. Chapter two drew attention to the nationalist rationale that underpinned both the establishment of the outdoor museum at St Fagans and later Anthony Jones’s description of Welsh chapels as 'the national architecture of Wales.' A nationalistic interpretation of Welsh Nonconformity had been manifested much earlier than these examples, for example in the agitation for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales. An oppositional stance between church and chapel, between English and Welsh and between the materialism and corruption of industrial towns and the honesty and sincerity of rural society is discernable in the first pan-denominational history of Welsh Nonconformity to be published. This was Thomas Rees’ *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, which remained the standard reference for the history of Welsh Nonconformity until the late twentieth century.

In Rees’ narrative, the heroism and suffering of the early Welsh Dissenters and their faithfulness to their beliefs are emphasised. This follows the tradition of religious martyrologies and hagiographies established by John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, which sought to replace the Roman Catholic panoply of saints for Protestants, giving them

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483 Thomas Rees, *Protestant Nonconformity in Wales: from its rise in 1633 to the present time* (London: John Snow and Co, 1861, 2nd edition 1883). Rees was also co-author, with J. Thomas, of *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynol Cymru*, [The History of the Independent Churches of Wales], Volumes I–V (Liverpool, 1871) which has never been translated into English.
contemporary saints and martyrs of their own. The persecution of Early Christians is recounted in the same text as the sufferings of Protestants at the hands of the Catholic Inquisition, all luridly pictured in woodcut illustrations. The Book of Martyrs legitimized Protestantism by connecting it with the uncorrupted Early Church through the sufferings of those under persecution from profane authority and was influential in establishing a Protestant national identity and legitimizing the Church of England under Elizabeth I.

The ejection of Puritan ministers and congregations from the livings in the Established Church following the Act of Uniformity in the seventeenth century fuelled many similar accounts of persecution. Dissenters identified with the French Huguenots, many of whom were martyred during the infamous massacre on St Bartholomew's Day, 24th August 1572 and who later suffered persecution and exile following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685. In truth, there was no comparison, since there was no mass murder of English or Welsh Dissenters. The greatest physical hardship to them was the loss of the status and guaranteed income of a living in the Established Church. Their suffering was exaggerated as a great injustice, for example in the early eighteenth-century publication by Edmund Calamy. The identification of the Welsh with Puritan suffering is epitomized by the much-quoted comment by the seventeenth-century Welsh Dissenter William Erbury: 'Wales is a poor oppressed people, and despised also.' Accounts of congregations meeting in cottages, barns or even caves, such as those given in Rees' history, contribute to both nationalistic and Nonconformist mythology.

Geraint H. Jenkins also follows this format when, after claiming that the Anglican authorities 'massaged the figures' of the Compton Census of 1676 in order to 'play down the growth and influence of Dissent', he writes:

The period from 1660 to 1689 was, truly, the heroic age of Welsh Dissent. In spite of being subjected to severe physical and psychological strains, Dissenters

484 John Foxe, The Book of Martyrs: Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days touching matters of the Church (London: John Day, 1563), in continuous publication since then.
485 Edmund Calamy, An account of the ministers, lectures, masters and fellows of colleges and schoolmasters, who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration in 1660, by: or before, the act for Uniformity. (London: J. Lawrence, 1713).
486 Quoted, for example, in Geraint H. Jenkins, Protestant Dissenters in Wales, p. 10, and Williams, Jacob, Yates, Knight, Welsh Church, p. 27.
were determined to maintain the distinctiveness of their faith and to prosper. Only men endowed with great resilience and faith could have borne such burdens for so long. But, as James Owen insisted, ‘if the gospel was not worth suffering for, it was not worth preaching’. Even the most implacable enemies of Dissenters grudgingly admired their fidelity to truth.\textsuperscript{487} Similarly, Anthony Jones includes a paragraph from Rees in *Welsh Chapels*:

The sabbath meeting for worship at the chapel, but great numbers of people gathered together in a riotous manner and exceeding disturbed that meeting with clamour and noise, and by throwing in a vast number of stones of several pound weight, to the defacing of the house, the breaking of the windows, and the terror of those within. When peacefully departing they were set upon in the street, abused, beaten, stoned and pursued through the streets of the town. The cwnstabs [constabulary] were absent, being withdrawn to a small alehouse outside the town.\textsuperscript{488}

In this story, not only are the faithful Dissenters attacked by a common mob, but the authorities are complicit in the persecution since they fail to protect them. Jones continues:

In spite of such harassment the Nonconformists set about creating meeting-house chapels in which to gather for worship and preaching. Most of these chapels were conversions of existing buildings, mostly farm-barns and the like, but a few were newly built. [...] Among the conversions of barns and erections of new chapels in this period are the adaptations of an old Anglican church in 1690 at Llan-y-bri, and a town hall in Flintshire in 1701, while the congregation in Llanbryn-mair continued to meet from 1675 to 1739 in a farmhouse with a lean-to chapel from the conventicle days.\textsuperscript{489}

Jones refers to the example of the conventicle at Llanbryn-mair, since a nineteenth-century photograph of it exists. It was formerly kept in the Independent chapel at Llanbryn-mair, which Iorwerth Peate attended in his youth, but is now located at St Fagan’s. The photograph was used as the basis for the illustration on the dust jacket of the hardback edition of Geraint H. Jenkins’ *Foundations of Modern Wales*. The blurb describes the picture of the ramshackle wood and stone building as ‘based on an illustration, reproduced from a nineteenth-century photograph by permission of the

\textsuperscript{487} Geraint H. Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, p. 194; the quote from James Owen is referenced to Thomas Rees, *Protestant Nonconformity*, p. 167.  
\textsuperscript{488} Jones, *Welsh Chapels*, p. 4.  
\textsuperscript{489} Jones, *Welsh Chapels*, pp. 4-5.
National Library of Wales, showing the Lean-to Old Conventicle at Ty Mawr, Llanbrynmair, where Dissenters worshipped between 1675 and 1739 (figure 8.5).

No further information is given about this building, such as how long the building had been disused or derelict—from the dates, it may have been two centuries, in which case it is not surprising it looks so decrepit—or what its original appearance might have been. Instead, we are again prompted to sympathise with the downtrodden and poverty-stricken Welsh Dissenters, this time by interpreting its dilapidated condition as evidence of the hardships and persecution they had to endure. The current Independent chapel at Llanbrynmair was extensively refurbished in the early twentieth century, when its lateral-façade format was emphasised by a new rusticated front facade (figure 8.6).

The narrative format of an emphasis on suffering and hardship was commonly used in
nineteenth century accounts. In the following example, an introduction added to a work
of local history by the then chairman of the Congregational Union, it is a prelude to a
eulogy of contemporary achievements and an exhortation to follow early examples:

[the book contains] many interesting particulars of the Early Fathers and Founders
of the Free Churches of the Principality. Beginning with the record of a sturdy
Protestant fisherman of Cardiff, in Queen Mary’s time, who sealed his testimony
with his blood, we pass on to the story of both Congregationalists and Quakers
during a time of witness-bearing and consequent suffering...God gave them
special work to do, and they did it. The work they had to do could not very well
have been done by men whose hands were genteelly encased in kid gloves and
who abounded in simpering sentimentalities.491

The portrayal of Welsh chapels as a folk movement puts it in opposition to the Church of
England, which plays the role in this narrative of a foreign imposition aligned with
landowners, oppressing and neglecting the Welsh people. For observers and for the
Welsh themselves, Welsh identity is construed as rural and unsophisticated, oppressed
and exploited by a foreign power, the English.

491 B. A. Jenkins, The History of the Early Nonconformists of Cardiff, (Cardiff: William Jones of Duke St,
1891), introduction by Rev. John Brown BA DD.
Welsh Nationalism

The single most important difference distinguishing Nonconformity in Wales, from that elsewhere in Britain (with the possible exception of Northern Ireland), is the role that it is perceived to play in Welsh cultural or national identity. The concept of Wales as a nation has been problematic ever since the Acts of Union between England and Wales in 1536 and 1542, and even perhaps before that time, since there never has been a unified sovereign Welsh state, with its own independent legal and territorial structures. The establishment of the National Assembly for Wales after a referendum in 1997 is the nearest Wales has ever come to a 'single code of rights and duties' for all its citizens, one of the parameters of nationhood as expressed in a recent definition of national identity.\(^{492}\)

For Kenneth O. Morgan, the lack of any mechanism of state or legalistic definitions of nationhood is of far less significance than an ancient sense of identity based on language and culture, which he claims was already well-established by the sixth century:

A sense of nationality is as old as the Welsh themselves. Bede commented on the sense of difference between the Welsh and the Anglo-Saxons at the time of the coming of Augustine in 597. It provided a constant theme for Welsh poetry and prose throughout the Middle Ages. Giraldus Cambrensis, in his efforts to ward off the encroachment of Norman centralization upon the Welsh church in the twelfth century, gave it eloquent expression, and there were echoes of it at times in the Glyn Dwr rising in the early fifteenth century. But this awareness of an identity of language, culture, and race lacked any institutional focus.\(^{493}\)

Morgan believes that the claims to nationhood of the Welsh achieved less recognition from the English than those of the Scots or Irish, and that the Welsh themselves did not have enough self-confidence in their own nationhood until the nineteenth century:

Despite the vigorous survival of the Welsh language, despite the perpetuation of a distinct Welsh society based mainly on small farms of the peasant type, the official mind still saw Wales and England as inseparable. Then in the early nineteenth century the position was dramatically transformed. Two new forces arose which were to permeate every aspect of Welsh society and to form the basis for a new national movement. The first was the growth of industry ... The other


great change that revolutionized Welsh life in the early nineteenth century was the explosive rise of nonconformity. Sparked off by the Methodist revival, finding new buoyancy in the ‘older dissent’ of the Baptists and the Independents, nonconformity gave a new unity to Wales. Migrants from the countryside brought the institutions and the ethos of the chapels with them into the new industrial communities, and shaped their character in fundamental respects.494

Morgan identifies the Welsh with the Romano-British Celts, a race (no less) of Christians who pre-dated both the Saxons and the Normans in Britain and who had, it is implied, their own traditions of worship. With this claim, Morgan extends the Protestant theme of Primitive Christianity even further, to portray the Welsh as the indigenous inhabitants and original Christians of Britain. This is not new interpretation of history, but dates at least from the seventeenth century and particularly from the assertions of eighteenth-century lexicographers.495 Nonconformity is portrayed as rooted in the peasant culture of this indigenous race, through language and culture, and because of this it becomes the medium for the continuation of Welsh national identity when it moves into the new industrial towns. The idea that the form of chapels was derived from a rural vernacular accords with a nationalist interpretation of Nonconformity.

The government Commission Enquiring into the State of Education in Wales of 1847, which became known in Wales as Brad y Llyfrau Gleision [the treachery of the blue books] is a turning point in history for Morgan:

Welsh nationalism and Welsh Nonconformity were now united in a crusade for national self-respect....For the rest of the century, the Welsh national causes were to be promoted by a Nonconformist intelligentsia. The national movement in Wales was to be cradled in the chapels, while the Anglican church was to appear isolated from it, and even to be its enemy. ...This was the position of the established church, the ‘alien church’ so-called, the church of an exclusive minority which symbolized more clearly than any other institution the domination of an anglicized squirearchy over Welsh society, rural and urban.496

Morgan’s view is that from this time until the rise of socialism in the twentieth century, Nonconformity is allied to political radicalism in the form of Liberal politics. The nineteenth-century campaign by Nonconformists for the disestablishment of the Anglican

494 Morgan, Welsh Nationalism, pp. 155-156.
495 Thomas Jones (16482-1713), finished by Richard Morris, The British Language in Its Lustre, or a copious dictionary of Welsh and English... (Shrewsbury: Stafford Pryse, 1777).
496 Morgan, Welsh Nationalism, p. 157.
Church in Wales is seen as the common cause that united Welsh activists in a way similar to that of the twentieth-century struggle for national recognition. A twentieth-century interpretation of Nonconformist chapels as both an indigenous vernacular and a national architecture supports this interpretation.

Other writers on Welsh nationality have been more sceptical towards both the benefits of Nonconformity, though not its significance, and the idea of a single unified Welsh identity. R. Merfyn Jones refers to Robert Graves’ shorthand description of the Welsh in *Goodbye to All That* (chapels, liberalism, the dairy and drapery business, slate mines and the tourist trade) as ‘a series of traditional identities of and for the Welsh’ that have now ‘suddenly been rendered as redundant as a coal miner’. Rather than any unitary Welsh identity, Mervyn Philips identifies three cultural groups, defined by language and a rather less tangible ‘sense of belonging’, that have evolved since the early nineteenth century under the influences of Nonconformity and industrialisation. These three groups, he proposes, now co-exist together as different aspects of Welsh identity. The three are firstly, *Y Fro Gymraeg*, the Welsh-speaking Wales of the north and west; secondly, the English-speaking working class communities of the Valleys and other industrial communities; and thirdly, a largely English-speaking upper class or cultural elite. The three groups have different defining characteristics and although religion is not particularly cited, Nonconformity is less readily associated with the third group, leaving it as the prerogative of both native Welsh speakers and the middle class.

Other historians have identified the eighteenth century as a time of divergence, the period when the collapse of the lineages of the Welsh gentry meant the demise of a traditional way of life and allowed an increase in the significance of the Anglican nexus of squire and parson. The right wing revisionist historian J. C. D. Clark has issued the strongest

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indictment of what he evidently sees as a romantic and unfounded view of Welsh nationalism. In his opinion, the main problem is to explain why, despite the purported previous vigour of Welsh culture and language, so many Welsh learnt English as a means of access to metropolitan and, increasingly, imperial opportunity. In his view:

A British imperial consciousness, as much as a metropolitan ethic of consumerism, steadily undermined parochial patrician commitments: ‘Celtic’ nationalism was left for the nineteenth century to devise as a proletarian and linguistic phenomenon, the last resort of the defeated, the consolation of those who remained in their homelands, spurning the appeal of empire, nursing atavistic grievances. 500

Clark’s is an unflattering and less heroic interpretation of Welsh nationalism, in which the proletarian origin of chapels was ‘devised’ by those who have deliberately restricted their horizons by a manufactured, introspective and somewhat destructive nationalism. Clark’s view is purposely extreme and provocative, but the interpretation of lateral-façade chapels as a Welsh phenomenon when they are obviously found throughout Britain is polemic of equal bias.

Definitions of Vernacular

The above discussion illustrates the some of the difficulties inherent in the use of the term ‘vernacular’ in order to demonstrate the existence of a regional identity. A recent study framed as a discussion of the relationship between globalisation and Modernism draws attention to the danger of an oppositional stance in interpretation:

searching for places of identity that may have survived the destructive power of rationalization is an epistemological trap. It entails a nostalgic idealization of a place that never actually existed. 501

For Wales, it is not the rationalisation of Modernist architecture that is being resisted, but modernity associated with industrialisation, as indicated by Iorwerth Peate’s definition of an authentic Welsh identity as unequivocally rural and agricultural. Peate blames

industrialisation for the dilution of Welsh identity in the loss of the Welsh language and the corruption of Welsh domestic architecture by outside influences.

The serious study of vernacular architecture only began in the nineteenth century, contemporaneous with the writing of Rees’s *History of Welsh Nonconformity* and the new sense of Welsh identity promoted by Iolo Morganwg and others. Nezar AlSayyad refers to the very idea of vernacular architecture as ‘a nineteenth-century invention’. Like the ‘traditional’ Welsh Eisteddfod, he goes on to give a definition of vernacular:

Etymologically, for anything to be considered vernacular, it has always been assumed that it must be native or unique to a specific place, produced without the need for imported components and processes, and possibly built by the individuals who occupy it.

Thus authenticity is predicated on an internalisation of the building or design process, shutting down the possibility of outside influence on design or technique. The discourse on Western vernacular architecture has been largely concerned with the documentation and classification of historical types. Applied *a priori* to Welsh chapels, this classificatory approach has resulted in a distortion of the history of Welsh Nonconformity that in turn has had repercussions on the narrative of Welsh identity.

The alternative to this static interpretation of vernacular architecture is a more processual and critical approach that can accommodate imported change within a regional continuity. Simon Brenner identifies vernacular buildings as ‘social representations’ linked to ‘coherent cultural systems of values and beliefs’. But within this system:

In making decisions about building, tradition is a constant social reference, and in vernacular building, implies a certain force of authority. It is not equal to ‘rule’, and in fact, implies unwritten or even unconscious codes of doing things that foster variation, since a single tradition as it has been interpreted (especially in religion) can spawn many versions.

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Most discussions of vernacular architecture concern the construction of buildings that accommodate functions whose necessity pre-dates the society that builds them, archetypal functions such as dwelling, storage of food or local religious practice. In contrast, Welsh Nonconformist chapels were built to accommodate a new type of religious practice. Protestant Nonconformity had its origins outside Wales and it was through participation in an international movement for change that Welsh religion was transformed. The unique social, cultural and linguistic attributes of Wales subsequently ensured a particular regional interpretation.

Welsh chapels fulfil some of the requirements of vernacular architecture, in that they were built by their users who, in adopting a particular design model and retaining it long after its original significance had been lost, created a new tradition. This tradition, the lateral-façade chapel, was then further adapted by the addition of a vestibule whilst the interior configuration was retained, so that both lateral-façade and gable-ended chapels may be seen as part of the same authoritative tradition. Their ubiquity throughout Wales, the continuity of the form though subject to local variation in expression, but more especially their controlling and organising influence on Welsh society give Welsh Nonconformist chapels at least some claim to represent an aspect of Welsh vernacular. Rather than the classification of static forms, further research into diffusion and adaptation as a dynamic process would mean that vernacular studies could offer greater insight into the role that the buildings play in stabilising and imparting a sense of identity and coherence to inhabitation during periods of social upheaval.

**Conclusion**

The dissertation has strongly indicated that Welsh Nonconformist chapels did not develop from indigenous vernacular architecture. Neither Welsh Dissent nor Welsh Methodism was a spontaneous, internal development but part of an international network of the exchange of religious ideas. The form of lateral-façade Welsh chapels was
developed through connections and interchanges with the Established Church and Dissent outside Wales.

The lateral-façade form of Welsh chapels is a formal composition, which, although sometimes expressed in a vernacular idiom, was nevertheless in origin a theorised, conscious design, whose effect was to identify from the exterior the type of worship housed within. It is the ubiquity of chapels and their importance in Welsh social history, that makes the building type in some sense characteristic of Wales and it is in this sense that Welsh Nonconformist chapels have some claim to vernacular status.
Appendix I: Lateral-façade Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

Figure I.1: Brynhenllan Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Brynhenllan, Dinas, Pembrokeshire (1842), entrance façade. The attached building to the right was the schoolroom. The chapel is now disused.

Figure I.2: Brynhenllan, interior, showing pulpit between central pair of windows and, to the right, one of the pair of entrance doors beneath the gallery.
Figure 1.3: Brynhenllan Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, interior showing box pews following the line of the five-sided gallery.

Figure 1.4: Brynhenllan Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, view from gallery showing gallery lights. The chapel has a square plan.
Figure I.5: Bethel Independent Chapel, Moylgrove, Pembrokeshire, early nineteenth century, refurbished and stuccoed c. 1900

Figure I.6: Bethel, Moylgrove. The pulpit is in the centre of the wall opposite the entrance between the two long windows. Facing it is a gallery on three walls supported by painted wooden columns. The interior walls are painted to represent ashlar stone.
Figure I.7: Bryamorrah Independent Chapel, Brynhoffnant, Ceredigion (1882-4), a late example of a lateral-façade chapel, in rock-faced stone with thick timber mullions in the windows. The attached building on the left was the minister's house.

Figure I.8: Y Garn Calvinistic Methodist Chapel (1833). The slate-hung sides and rear are original but the stucco front with its classical details dates from 1900.
Figure 1.9: Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Perrots Road, Haverfordwest (1818, enlarged 1835 and embellished with classical detail when D. E. Thomas refitted the interior in 1880). The congregation was founded in 1763 and the first chapel, built in 1772, was opened by John Wesley. The stone schoolroom to the left was built in 1874.

Figure 1.10: Heol Dwr Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Water Street, Carmarthen (1831, the fourth rebuilding since 1760). The congregation was founded by the Rev. Peter Williams in 1743. The stucco detailing and glazing is of 1891-2 and the inelegant canted projection was built on to house a new organ in 1922. Inside, one of the iron Corinthian columns that support the five-sided gallery is dated 1813.
Appendix II: Gable-Ended Welsh Nonconformist Chapels

Figure II.1: Tabor Baptist Chapel, Bwlchmawr, Dinas, Pembrokeshire (1842), possibly by Daniel Evans of Cardigan, congregation founded in 1792, refurbished in the early twentieth century.

Figure II.2: Tabor Baptist Chapel, interior showing box pews and curved gallery, canted towards the pulpit dated 1882, which is in the middle of the wall opposite the entrance.
Figure 11.3: Tabor Baptist Chapel, Dinas, interior looking towards the entrance, showing the two doors and central block of pews.

Figure 11.4: Tabor Baptist Chapel, vestibule showing central entrance door, stairs up to the gallery and doors into the worship space.
Figure II.5: Tyrhos Independent Chapel, Rhos Hill, Cilgerran, Pembrokeshire (1859). The façade was formerly all stuccoed. The nearby Blaenffos (1856) and Penybryn (1869) Baptist chapels are similar, suggesting the same builder.

Figure II.6: Tyrhos Chapel, interior showing the gallery on marbled timber columns and the two entrance doors on either side of the central block of box pews.
Figure II.7: Nolton Independent Chapel, Nolton Haven, Pembrokeshire (1858). The minister's house is attached to the rear of the chapel.

Figure II.8: Nolton Chapel, interior, from pulpit looking towards entrance, showing the gallery on painted wooden columns.
Appendix III: Welsh Nonconformist Chapels: other types of chapel façade

Figure III.1: Saron Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Chapel Street, Llanbadarn Fawr (1842). Probably originally a lateral-façade chapel, given a plain gable when the rest was rebuilt in 1879, though there are no galleries.

Figure III.2: Jerusalem Independent Chapel, Treuddyn, Flintshire (1820, altered 1867). Jerusalem Chapel was built as a lateral-façade chapel in 1820 but was given a gable front when a gallery was
inserted in 1867, although the pulpit remains on the centre of the entrance wall, between the two doors.

Figure III.3: Caerau Independent Chapel, Rhosycaerau, St Nicholas, Pembrokeshire (1826). Half-hipped grouted roof; the two widely spaced doors open into an interior vestibule.

Figure III.4: Caerau Independent Chapel, interior, showing panelled three-sided gallery supported on slender iron columns, and the pulpit on the opposite wall to the entrance.
Figure III.5: Bethesda Baptist Chapel, Barn Street, Haverfordwest (1878), George Morgan. Romanesque in limestone with Bath stone details, the double doors leading into the usual vestibule with two doors into the worship space and two sets of stairs into the gallery.
Figure III.6: Bethesda Baptist Chapel, interior showing three-sided gallery supported on slender iron columns and with a bow-fronted iron balustrade. The large wheel window is obstructed by the organ.

Figure III.7: Bethesda Baptist Chapel, pulpit platform (decorated for Christmas) with the covered baptismal tank in the railed enclosure in front of it.

Figure III.8: Tabernacle Congregational Chapel, City Road, Haverfordwest (1874). The chapel is the bow-fronted building to the left, the five-bayed building with two pedimented gables to the right is the schoolroom of 1864.
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