

# The Welsh Hymn: Sacred or Secular?

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*Abstract.* Wales has long been stereotyped as a land of song. One of the reasons for this recurring image is its historic love for the hymn — a privileged entity within Wales’s unique choral tradition. Hymns are still sung in Wales; male voice choirs, rugby internationals, pubs, funerals, weddings, and the box-like chapels retain this ancient form like a spectral ghost dance. In light of this curious afterlife, we can ask: when does a hymn become secular and what can we learn from this process if it happens at all? This essay asks these questions by visiting three typical scenes from Welsh history. These imaginary vignettes show how the crucible of the hymn was also where they were sung as well. The first is the eighteenth-century *Seiat* or experience meeting; the second is a nineteenth-century North Walian square, where the Temperance Movement are singing one of their hymns; and the final destination is a large, early-twentieth-century *Cymanfa Ganu* (Singing Festival), where hundreds of people celebrate this kinetic form in a chapel. Arguably, Welsh hymns are no longer worship songs but cultural indicators; they are residues and echoes of a former spirituality to which only a small percentage in Wales now adhere.

In an article on contemporary poetry and belief, Michael Symmons Roberts writes that a lexical ‘impoverishment’ has affected poets and readers in recent years.<sup>1</sup> He recalls the Anglo-Welsh poet David Jones’s words when discussing dead, or dying, signs and symbols in the preface to *The Anathemata*. For Jones, a sacramentalist, this was a tragedy:<sup>2</sup>

It would mean that that particular word could no longer be used with confidence to implement, to call up or to set in motion a whole world of content belonging in a special sense to the mythus of a particular culture and of concepts and realities belonging to mankind as such.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michael Symmons Roberts, ‘Contemporary Poetry and Belief’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 694–706 (p. 696).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Sacramentalism’ is, according to the *OED*, a “high” doctrine in regard to the sacraments’. Aesthetically, to be ‘sacramental’ is a state whereby the artist is constantly identifying symbol and object in a unified sensibility. See David Jones, ‘Art and Sacrament’, in *Epoch and Artist*, ed. by Harman Grisewood (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 143–79.

<sup>3</sup> David Jones, ‘Preface’, in *The Anathemata* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), pp. 23–24.

The British languages ‘are littered with dying signs and symbols, specifically the signs and symbols associated with our Judaeo-Christian past’.<sup>4</sup> Welsh hymns were constructed from this rich quarry of religious material. How many rugby fans fully understand ‘Guide me o Thou Great Jehovah’, which they sing when one of their players scores a try?<sup>5</sup> E. Wyn James called this sonic outburst a ‘feature of Welsh life’ but, paradoxically, it appears to be a cluster of dying symbols, associated with Wales’s forgotten past.<sup>6</sup>

For Saunders Lewis — a Welsh nationalist and eminent literary figure — these hymns are one of the great highlights of historical Welsh literature.<sup>7</sup> He argues:

The greatest Welsh lyrics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are certainly hymns. Their grandeur and intellectual power make them major poetry. These are national characteristics that a literary historian, be he Christian or unbeliever, must in loyalty to objective truth maintain.<sup>8</sup>

The hymn was ‘major’ in the sense of its ability to express a collective *ethnie* but also its ability to transcend mere aesthetic value, and enter the realm of spiritual, psychological, and national value.<sup>9</sup> According to Alan Luff, the hymn became ‘the folk-song of the Welsh’; its distinct four-part harmony became an indicator of an innate ‘Welshness’.<sup>10</sup> The evidence for this is that hymns are still sung in Wales; male voice choirs, rugby internationals, pubs, funerals, weddings, and the box-like chapels retain this ancient form like a spectral ghost dance. In light of this curious afterlife, we can ask: when does a hymn become secular and what can we learn from this process?

### Defining the hymn

A hymn is, very simply, a ‘song of praise to God’.<sup>11</sup> According to Rivers and

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, ‘Contemporary Poetry and Belief’, p. 696.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Wyn James, ‘The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn’, in *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales*, ed. by Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 229–68 (p. 229). See also Emyr Humphreys, *The Taliesin Tradition* (Bridgend: Seren, 2000), p. 97: ‘To this day, a Welsh rugby football crowd can roar out a verse of Pantycelyn with impressive fervour, even though most of them have long ceased to be chapel-goers’.

<sup>6</sup> James, ‘The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn’, p. 229.

<sup>7</sup> E. Wyn James, ‘Introduction’, in *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths and the Welsh Hymn. Essays and Translations by H. A. Hodges*, ed. by E. Wyn James (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2017), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Saunders Lewis, ‘Welsh Literature and Nationalism’, in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, ed. by A. R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> Humphreys, *The Taliesin Tradition*, p. 97.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Luff, *Welsh Hymns and their Tunes* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1990), p. 26. Luff also quotes Gerald of Wales who, in 1188, noted: ‘When they come together to make music, the Welsh sing their traditional songs, not in unison, as is done elsewhere, but in parts, in many modes and modulations’, p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> *OED*. Interestingly, the Greek noun *hymnos* can refer to a song, poem, or speech. St. Augustine, in his commentary on the 148th psalm, defines the hymn as ‘a song with praise to God’, and this is so far justified that many of the best-known and most popular hymns are derived, directly or indirectly, from the praising psalms. See M. Pauline Parker, ‘The Hymn as a Literary Form’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8 (1975), 392–419 (p. 399).

Wykes, the hymn is one of the most kinetic forms of poetry; it transcends one religious tradition and becomes an umbrella term for numerous types of praise.<sup>12</sup> The Greek word *hymnos* (ὑμνοῖς) originally meant a song of praise for gods, heroes and conquerors. New Testament Greek uses other nouns such as *psalmos* (ψαλμοῖς) and *ōdē* (ὠδὴν), all coming under the umbrella of *ainesis* (αἰνεῖτε) or praise.<sup>13</sup> In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, he even exhorts them to speak to one another in 'psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs'.<sup>14</sup>

Some work has already been done on the Welsh hymn. A. M. Allchin and Tony Conran have identified the ancient tradition of praise in Welsh poetics.<sup>15</sup> Even though some elements of both Brythonic (c. 6<sup>th</sup> century) and medieval praise poetry were secular, Allchin importantly notes that 'Praise, like all worship [...] is that which is due to God. All other forms of praise directly, or more often indirectly, refer back to him'.<sup>16</sup> Therefore even secular praise poetry uses that persistent religious idiom. More recently, E. Wyn James has written about the evolution of the Welsh hymn. He states:

It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of the Welsh hymn, not only to the religious life of Wales, but also to many other aspects of Welsh cultural life and as a badge of Welsh national identity.<sup>17</sup>

Its importance, James suggests, is not merely historical. The privileged position of the hymn can be traced back to the 'established' and 'dissident' hegemony of Calvinistic Nonconformist culture which intensified following the Methodist Revival of c. 1730. As a result of this dominance, the boundaries between sacred and secular became increasingly difficult to apprehend. The historian R. Tudur Jones writes that in 1890 being a member of Welsh-language culture was almost the same as being a Christian, at least in name, and it was difficult to describe Wales's national characteristics without referring to its Christianity: 'By 1890, Christianity and Welsh-language culture were joined so closely that not even a wizard could discern the seam'.<sup>18</sup> These are the words of a practicing Christian and a Welsh nationalist. However, the relationship between Welsh-language culture and Christianity did come under strain, eventually leading to what the author calls a national 'crisis of faith', with a loss of language going side-by-side

<sup>12</sup> Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, 'Introduction', in *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–12 (p. 2).

<sup>13</sup> The ancient Greek ψαλμός meant a twitching (of the strings of the harp) or the sound of the cithara or harp. In Hellenistic Greek, it denoted a song sung to the harp. A psalm in the Septuagint and New Testament (ψάλλειν) meant to twitch, twang, or play with the fingers. An ὠδὴν is a song of praise from ancient Greece.

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 5. 19.

<sup>15</sup> See A. M. Allchin, *Praise Above All: Discovering the Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991) and Tony Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Allchin, *Praise Above All*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and Crisis of a Nation: Wales 1890–1914*, ed. and trans. by Robert Pope (Cardiff: University of Wales Press: 2004), p. 3.

with the loss of Welsh religion during the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> According to Jones, the lack of Welsh-language education and institutions made the chapels ‘cultural centres’, rather than sacred spaces, ‘which people attended because they conducted their affairs in Welsh rather than through faith in Jesus Christ’.<sup>20</sup> It seems that the hymn too, like the chapel, evolved into an indicator of culture rather than a sacred act of worship.

The secularization of the ‘hymn’ cannot be wholly blamed on outside secularizing influences. Dominic Erdozain’s work on ‘the secularisation of sin’ shows how the Church — in his particular case Evangelicalism — created its own ‘mechanism[s] of secularisation’.<sup>21</sup> He demonstrates how much of the so-called success of Victorian religion was achieved at the cost of the soteriology that fired the religious boom. Erdozain’s theory argues that the shift from the internal concept of sin to an external notion of vice meant that Evangelicalism caused this mechanism to exist. Taking a cue from Erdozain, we can see how theological changes also manifested themselves in the Welsh hymn, especially in the shifting emphasis from the ‘personal’ to the ‘collective’. M. Wynn Thomas suggests that this preoccupation engulfed Welsh Nonconformity as a whole:

As the nineteenth century progressed, emphasis within Welsh Nonconformity shifted from a preoccupation with the spiritual state of *the individual* to a concern for the welfare of *the collective*.<sup>22</sup>

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the watering down of key evangelical doctrines, such as the Atonement (a doctrine concerning the reconciliation between man and God through the redemptive blood of Christ) and personal repentance, would inevitably result in the secularization of the hymn.

For the purposes of this essay, we will now visit three scenes in Welsh history. They are imaginary but useful when looking at the gradual secularization of the hymn.

### The *Seiat* hymns

Firstly, imagine a scene in the late eighteenth century. We are walking into a Methodist house. A group of about twenty people cluster around a large kitchen table. They are commencing a society meeting or a *Seiat*.<sup>23</sup> A *Seiat* was a Methodist experience meeting where Christians gathered and shared their spiritual experiences under the careful eye of a *Seiat* leader who would have been a more experienced Christian.<sup>24</sup> After the prayer and some conversation,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Pope, ‘Editor’s Preface’, in Tudur Jones, *Faith and Crisis*, p. x.

<sup>21</sup> Dominic Erdozain, ‘The Secularisation of Sin in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62.1 (2011), 59–88 (p. 59).

<sup>22</sup> M. Wynn Thomas, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit: Literature and Nonconformist Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), p. 32. My emphases.

<sup>23</sup> See Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996), Chapter 7.

<sup>24</sup> Eryn Mant White, *Praidd Bach y Bugail Mawr: Seia dau Methodistiaidd De-Orllewin Cymru* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1995) and Martyn Lloyd Jones, ‘Introduction’, in *William Williams Pantycelyn’s*

one of the attendees sings a hymn:

Tros bechadur buost farw,  
Tros bechadur, ar y pren,  
Y dyoddefaist hoelion llymion  
Nes it' orfod crymu 'th ben;  
Dwed i mi, ai fi oedd hwnw  
Gofiodd cariad rhad mor fawr?  
Marw tros un bron a suddo  
Yn Gehenna boeth i lawr!<sup>25</sup>

[For a sinner Thou didst suffer  
For a sinner on that tree,  
Suffering nails and cruel fear  
Bowed Thy head for all to see.  
Tell me now! Was I that sinner?  
Tell me if, for me, he died?  
Thou didst stoop so low to pluck me  
From Gehenna's fiery tide!]

The first thing to notice about the hymn is how personal it is: 'Tell me was I that Sinner?' This intimate, experiential dialogue with God seems to be the fruit of intense religious experience. Parker, in her discussion of English hymns, is too general when she states that '[t]he I of the hymn is I-Humanity, not I-Individual, the voice of the hymn is the voice of oneness, not the voice of one'.<sup>26</sup> In Calvinistic Methodism, the experiential spirituality of the hymn-writer was the crucible of the hymn.<sup>27</sup> The speaker/hymn-writer wants Christ to assure *them*:

Dwed i mi, a wyt yn maddeu  
Cwympo gan'waith i'r un bai?  
Dwed a ddeui fyth i galon  
Nas gall gynyg 'difarhau?  
Beth yw pwysau'r beiau mwyaf  
Wyt yn faddeu, o bwy ri'?  
Pa un drymach yw fy mhechod  
Ai gruddfanau Calfari?<sup>28</sup>

[Tell me, Lord, is there forgiveness  
For the hundredth time I fell?  
Tell me, Lord, wilt Thou now enter  
Hearts of darkness, set for hell?

*The Experience Meeting*, trans. by Bethan Lloyd Jones (London: Evangelical Press and Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> William Williams Pantycelyn, 'Hymn CCCCLXXXIII', in *Gweithiau Williams Pantycelyn, Vol. II* (Newport, Monmouthshire: W. Jones, 1891), p. 225. My translation. All subsequent translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

<sup>26</sup> Parker, 'The Hymn as a Literary Form', p. 415.

<sup>27</sup> See Nathan Llywelyn Munday, '“Ann heard Him speak, and Pantycelyn”: The Unexpected Relationship between R. S. Thomas and the Calvinistic Methodists', *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, 5.1 (2018).

<sup>28</sup> Williams Pantycelyn, 'Hymn CCCCLXXXIII', p. 225.

What's the weight of all my failure  
 Thou forgivest? Of what count?  
 Which is heaviest, my transgressions  
 Or the groans from Calvary's mount?]

The author of this hymn was the father figure of Welsh hymnody, William Williams Pantycelyn (1717–91), and these stanzas, although Christ-centred, depict his own personal interlocution with Christ.

Eryn White has shown how women played a major role in these experience meetings.<sup>29</sup> A generation after Pantycelyn, the equally great Ann Griffiths (1776–1805) wrote these lines:

Gwna fi fel pren planedig, O! fy Nuw,  
 Yn ir ar lan afonydd dyfroedd byw,  
 Yn gwreiddio ar led, a'i ddail heb wywo mwy  
 Ond ffrwytho dan gawodydd dwyfol glwy.<sup>30</sup>

[God, make me like a tree well-planted grow  
 In fertile ground where living waters flow,  
 Wide-rooting, ever green, and fruitful free  
 'Neath showers from that dire wound on Calvary.]

These words were written by a Christian as a result of her own intense religious experiences. In this hymn, she performs the role of a female 'New Testament' Psalmist. David's poetry is re-uttered through the lips of a Christian woman post-Calvary:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.<sup>31</sup>

The difference between the first psalm and her hymn is evident in the last line which includes blood, water, and wounds. This tree is bursting with both sap and fruit because of Calvary (that is if David could delight in the law, how much more should Ann delight in the gospel). What results is spiritual confidence: 'Gwna fi' ('Make me'), Griffiths says to God, not only a living tree, but a tree bursting with life and love. The use of the imperative form of the verb portrays a confident interlocutor. Griffiths may do this because her theology allows it; she may come 'boldly to the throne of grace' because she has a 'great High Priest' who has given her this access.<sup>32</sup> This is her plea: that she will be filled with grace and that the Holy Spirit will give her such growth that she will keep on growing until she reaches heaven. The tree is watered in a twofold way — by the rivers of grace and by the atoning blood of Jesus.

<sup>29</sup> See White, *Praidd Bach y Bugail Mawr*.

<sup>30</sup> Ann Griffiths, 'Hymn XXIV', in *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths and the Welsh Hymn*, ed. by E. Wyn James (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2017), p. 206. Translated by H. A. Hodges in *Flame in the Mountains*, p. 207.

<sup>31</sup> Psalm 1. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Hebrews 4. 16.

These are two examples of early Calvinistic Methodist hymns. They are personal, bibline, experiential, and ‘major poetry’.<sup>33</sup>

### Temperance hymns

We leave the farmhouse and the *Seiat* meeting. Fifty years or so later, you are following me to a scene in a typical North Walian town. In the main square, we hear more hymns being sung by members of the Temperance Movement.

As a concern for over-indulgence, the Temperance or ‘Teetotal’ Movement rapidly gained traction in Wales from the 1830s onwards.<sup>34</sup> At first, the emphasis was on moderation, but it soon led to total abstinence with the first teetotal society being founded in Wales in 1835.<sup>35</sup> Temperance hymns reveal how alcohol became *the sin*. What resulted was an ethicized religion where conversion — which had been the primary focus of earlier and more orthodox evangelicalism — had subliminally been replaced by ‘signing the pledge’.<sup>36</sup> The drunkards, and even those who were not teetotal, were now the unregenerate ones; they needed salvation. Ieuan Gwynedd’s (1820–52) hymn is an example of this subliminal theological shift:

Byddin Dirwest sydd yn awr  
Yn wynebu’r frwydr fawr;  
Boed ei milwyr oll yn un  
Am ddyrchafu Mab y Dyn!<sup>37</sup>

[See how the Army of Temperance  
Faces the great battle,  
May their soldiers all be one  
In glorifying the Son of Man!]

This first stanza echoes Charles Wesley’s famous hymn on Christian warfare:

Soldiers of Christ, arise,  
And put your Armour on,  
Strong in the Strength which God supplies  
Thro’ his Eternal Son;  
Strong in the Lord of Hosts,  
And in his mighty Power,  
Who in the Strength of JESUS trusts  
Is more than Conqueror.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, ‘Welsh Literature and Nationalism’, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 363.

<sup>35</sup> The first temperance society established in Wales was a branch of the British Foreign and Temperance Society, which formed in Holywell in North Wales in 1832. The first total abstinence society was formed at Llanerch-y-Medd on Anglesey in 1835.

<sup>36</sup> People were encouraged to pledge an oath stating that they would abstain from alcohol.

<sup>37</sup> Ieuan Gwynedd, ‘Hymn 914’, in *Llyfr Emynau a Thonau y Wesleyaid* (1904), p. 432.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Wesley, ‘The Whole Armour of GOD’, first appeared in John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1742), p. 21.

They are not called ‘Soldiers of Christ’ in Gwynedd’s hymn, as they are in II Timothy 2. 3, but ‘Soldiers of Temperance’ who worshipped Christ. These subtle changes reflect a shifting theology. Gwynedd’s hymn continues:

Pechod creulon golla’r dydd,  
Caethion medd’ dod ddônt yn rhydd:<sup>39</sup>

[Cruel sin will lose the day,  
Drunkard slaves will be set free:]

The enemy is named: ‘sin’ is synonymous with drunkenness. The speaker then echoes one of Wesley’s most famous conversion hymns ‘And can it be’ with the imprisoned sinner:

Long my imprison’d spirit lay  
Fast bound in Sin and Nature’s Night;  
Thine Eye diffus’d a quick’ning Ray,  
I woke; the Dungeon flamed with Light;  
My Chains fell off, my Heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and follow’d Thee.<sup>40</sup>

In Gwynedd’s hymn, Wesley’s ‘imprisoned spirit’ is transformed into a drunken convict. He presents us with an image taken from Genesis:

Nac edrychwn byth yn ol —  
O! na fydded neb mor ffol!  
Awn yn mlaen yn fyddin gref,  
Awn yn mlaen yn nerth y nef. Amen.<sup>41</sup>

[May we never turn and look back  
O! that no one would be so foolish  
Let’s go forward, one strong army,  
Let’s go forward in heaven’s strength. Amen.]

The speaker refers to Lot’s wife who foolishly looked back at Sodom after God had sent angels to rescue them. She was judged by being turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>42</sup> The message is clear: if you return to alcohol, you too will be judged. Unity with Christ is conditional on being sober. This is a long way from the scriptural emphasis of an individual sinner coming to Christ in his sinful state like we saw in the *Seiat* meeting.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Gwynedd, ‘Hymn 914’, p. 432.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Wesley, ‘Free Grace’, in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: William Strahan, 1739), p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> Gwynedd, ‘Hymn 914’, p. 432.

<sup>42</sup> See Genesis 19.

<sup>43</sup> For example, see Luke 5. 32.

*Cymanfa Ganu (Singing Festival)*

Let us leave the singing of the Temperance Movement and proceed into the twentieth century. We are entering through the door of a large chapel. Somebody hands you a hymn-book and the number of people is overwhelming. The organ accompanies the singing and everybody starts singing in four parts.

The second half of the nineteenth century had seen significant theological changes which went hand-in-hand with the growth of Nonconformity in Wales.<sup>44</sup> Increasing industrialization also resulted in denominationalism and the erection of grander chapel buildings. Subsequently, great singing festivals called *Cymanfa Ganu* were formed which meant that the hymns too became more poetic, more cerebral, and musically superior to their earlier counterparts.<sup>45</sup>

Theologically, the popularity of the Social Gospel and the advancement of Socialism resulted in a general shift from the emphasis on the individual soul to the collective mass. One hymn-writer wrote that ‘a hymn is not a solo of the soul [any more], but part of the chorus of a choir which no-one can number or see together — except God’.<sup>46</sup> This is a long way away from the ‘passionate rejoicing or deep conviction of sin in the first person singular’ observable in the hymns of Ann Griffiths or Pantycelyn.<sup>47</sup>

This shift is evident in the structure of the hymn-books. For example, the section on ‘Heaven’ in the Calvinistic Methodist hymn-book of 1896 is replaced by a section on ‘Social and National Hymns’ in the 1927 hymnal.<sup>48</sup> Liberal Theology ‘was increasingly horizontal in orientation, speaking much of “brotherhood” with both God and mankind’ — the spirit of the *Cymanfa*.<sup>49</sup> This ‘horizontal’ shift — the vertical orientation being a hymn focussed purely on the supernatural relationship with God — is visible in the 1927 hymnal. The first hymn in the collection’s section on society is ‘Achub ein Gwlad’ (‘Save our Land’) written by Howell ‘Elfed’ Lewis (1860–1953). Elfed longed for a Christian Wales; this is depicted as a heaven on earth rather than a supernatural realm:

Rhag colli gras Sabbathau’r nef,  
Rhag sathru deddfau’n Tad,  
Gwna rymus waith mewn gwlad a thref,  
Ac achub Di ein gwlad.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> John Morgan Jones and William Morgan, *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales, Volume I*, trans. by John Aaron (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008 [1890]), p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Ieuan Gwyllt organised the first *Cymanfa Ganu* in Aberdare in 1859. The *Cymanfa Ganu* still occurs today and one is even broadcast every Sunday night on S4C’s *Dechrau Canu, Dechrau Canmol*.

<sup>46</sup> In an address on the Welsh hymn to the Union of Welsh Independents in 1923, quoted (in the original Welsh) in Branwen Jarvis, ‘Elfed: Emynydd yn ei Oes’, *Bwletin Cymdeithas Emynuau Cymru*, 3.3 (1990–91), 94–107 (p. 96).

<sup>47</sup> See Erdozain, ‘The Secularisation of Sin’, p. 61.

<sup>48</sup> See *Llyfr Hymnuau y Methodistaidd Calфинаidd* (Caernarfon: Llyfrfa y Cyfuneb, 1896) and *Llyfr Emynuau y Methodistaidd Calфинаidd a Wesleiaidd* (Caernarfon: Llyfrfa’r Methodistaidd Calфинаidd, 1927).

<sup>49</sup> Robert Pope, ‘Emynuau Newid Cymdeithas’, *Y Traethodydd* (April 2009), 101–20.

<sup>50</sup> Elfed, ‘Hymn 705’, *Llyfr Emynuau* (1927), p. 469.

[Lest we lose the grace of heavenly Sabbaths  
Lest we trample our Father's laws,  
Do a mighty work in town and village,  
And save our land, my Lord.]

It is not 'save me' or 'save my soul' but 'save *our* land'. These sentiments culminate in Elfed's most famous hymn 'Gweddi dros ein Wlad' ('Prayer for our Nation'):

Gwna'n Sabbathau'n ddyddiau'r nefoedd,  
Yng ngoleuni d'eiriau glân;  
Dyro'r gwllith i'n cymanfaoedd —  
Gwna ein crefydd fel ein cân:  
Nefol Dad, boed mawrhad  
Ar d'efengyl yn ein gwlad.<sup>51</sup>

[Make our Sabbaths heavenly days,  
In light of thy holy words;  
Water our congregations with dew  
And make our religion like our song:  
Heavenly father, magnify  
Thy gospel in our land.]

Through *the nation*, people could contribute uniquely on the world's stage for the sake of all humanity. Christ is no longer central; the hymn expresses a longing that the nation's religion would be like its singing: communal, loud, and ultimately more a social than a spiritual exercise, horizontal in orientation rather than vertical. The speaker mentions 'efengyl' ('gospel') but he never explains it with the evangelical fervour of his ancestors.

In conclusion, these temperance and nationalist hymns subtly reveal how the old evangelical theology was adjusted — the vertical emphasis rapidly became horizontal, with a noticeable shift from the individual sinner to the collective mass.<sup>52</sup> What resulted was a dying lexicon and songbook which became a relic from Wales's past. Hymns are still sung in the Millennium Stadium but, in a way, they have become secular. Welsh hymns are no longer worship songs but cultural indicators; they are residues and echoes of a former spirituality to which only a small percentage in the crowd now adhere.

<sup>51</sup> Elfed, 'Hymn 718', *Llyfr Emynau* (1927), p. 479.

<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that other types of hymn developed alongside nationalist and temperance ones such as Missionary hymns, Arminian Revival hymns, and gospel hymns, which were heavily influenced by the American hymnal. See James, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Hymn', pp. 258–64.