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MAKING THEOLOGICAL SENSE OF BEING WELSH:
CELEBRATING ETHNICITY AND CULTURE AS GOD'S
GLOBAL FAMILY
FINLAYSON MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2012

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In the Oxford reader on ethnicity edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith an *ethnie*¹ is defined as a type of human community that possesses the following elements:

1. A common proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories
4. Elements of a common culture—normally religion, customs or language
5. A link with a homeland
6. A sense of solidarity²

I have no doubt that I belong to an *ethnie*. It's name is Cymru [Wales]; it's ancestral roots are the Celtic peoples that occupied the islands now called Britain between 2500-3000 years ago; its story is populated by saints, princes and revivalists; its culture has been overwhelmingly Christian and its language Cymraeg [Welsh] until supplanted by English—or Wenglish—in the last 100 years; and its sense of solidarity is sometimes strong—especially when Cymru [Wales] play Lloegr [England] at rugby!

¹ I think it unfortunate that in English there is no noun, like the French *ethnie*, to describe an 'ethnic identity'. In Welsh we happily adopt English terms that have been derived from the classical languages. Since *ethnie* is derived from the Greek 'ethnos' I am happy to adopt it into Wenglish while suggesting that it might be a good idea to adopt it into English as well!

² J. Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 7.

Biblically *ethnies* are 'nations'. The table of nations (*goyim*) in Genesis 10 is clearly a table of ethnes and not modern nation states. And this Old Testament understanding is carried over into the New Testament where the nations (*ethnoi*/Gentiles) are generally the many different peoples ruled by the Roman state. Biblically and historically, therefore, there have always been more nations than states. The standard historical pattern has been for some nations to become more powerful and dominate and even destroy less powerful nations. This is the context for any theological reflection on ethnicity in general or Welsh ethnicity in particular.

For us in Cymru we have no option but to think of the significance of our nationhood in the context of the impact on us of our dominant neighbour, England. But through my work with Tearfund I came to see, firstly, that belonging to a minority nation in states that tended to be dominated by more powerful and numerous nations was very common. Secondly, I became convinced that there is a link between being a national minority and poverty. Then, thirdly, I saw that the neglect of a biblical understanding of nationhood has a detrimental impact on the mission of the church.

The worst example of a link between poverty and identity and the ethnic blindness of churches struck me during a visit to Ghana in 2004. I was teaching an intensive course in Christian development as part of an MTh in Applied Theology at the Ghana Baptist Seminary, Kumasi. A couple of days into the course a Southern Baptist couple that had worked for many years in the North of Ghana came to see me because they had heard that I was interested in ethnic identity. By that time I had done some work on ethnic identity for Tearfund and published a book entitled *Castrating Culture: A Christian Perspective on Ethnic Identity from the Margins*.³ The missionaries told me about their work in the North and their continuing work with the same people that were migrating in significant numbers to Kumasi. Among those that were migrating were a large number of very young women. These women were very vulnerable and were being exploited dreadfully. The Americans were working hard to minister to these women but ministers and members of the evangelical Baptist churches in Kumasi were very reluctant to support them. I asked them whether they would be willing to arrange a walk for the ministers I was teaching through the slum (*zongo*) where they worked and they were delighted. On the visit I discovered that the slum was very close to the largest Baptist church in Kumasi. This church had many social programmes but was doing nothing to reach out to one of the worst slums that I have ever encountered. I walked through that horrible slum with

³ Now re-published as *Ethnic Identity from the Margins: A Christian Perspective* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2012).

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one of the leading Baptist pastors in Kumasi and was amazed when he said to me that he had no idea that people lived like this in his city! I wondered why it was that this particular slum was neglected? Why was it that the people who lived there were invisible to the good evangelical Baptists on the hill above them? The only reason I could think of—that was confirmed by the American missionaries—was that the slum dwellers belonged to a Northern *ethnie* that were considered inferior by the proud Asante people of Kumasi. They also happen to be Muslim.

This experience—and many others—confirmed my conviction that the evangelical missions and development community is in dire need of a theology of ethnic identity or nationhood. My interest in this issue eventually led to a request to facilitate discussion of it as one of the key issues facing the church at the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in October 2010. A significant number of delegates did engage but my overall impression was, and is, that there is still a reluctance to be serious about this issue. One possible reason for this is the fact that most evangelical leaders belong to big and powerful *ethnies* or to intellectual and political elites heavily influenced by them. The reaction of English evangelical leaders to my insistence on making it very clear that I'm Welsh illustrates this point. The reaction ranges from amusement—leading to mockery—through puzzlement to frustration and even hostility. I can understand why an elephant finds it very difficult to hear a mouse in its path shouting as loudly as it can that he is about to be trampled to death! But I have found that even elephants can hear the voice of a mouse, and when they do they understand that the victims of ethnic oppression have a point. They can see that ethnicity raises many issues of righteousness/justice that evangelical Christians need to take on board if they are to express the reconciling love of God in our broken world.

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Living as we do in Cymru [Wales] under the dominant and often dominating shadow of our more powerful neighbour, Lloegr [England] and also under the dominant influence of the Christian faith it is not surprising that some of our church leaders have thought theologically about ethnic identity and nationhood. We will consider the way in which three church leaders have justified biblically and theologically their efforts to preserve the distinctive identity of the Cymry [the Welsh].⁴ These three

⁴ And to confirm the stereotypical view of the Welsh each theologian is a 'Jones'!

theologians, whose work spans three centuries, will be placed in their historical context because like all theology, theirs is contextual.

In Cymru the issue of language has driven thinking about nationhood. It is the historical strength and survival of the language that has preserved for us, more than any other factor, a strong sense of separate identity from our more powerful and numerous English neighbours.

1. GRIFFITH JONES, LLANDDOWROR (1683-1761)⁵

Griffith Jones, who was an Anglican cleric, made an enormous contribution to making Wales a literate people—in Welsh. When he became responsible for the local SPCK⁶ school on becoming vicar of Lacharn in 1709, he soon realized that the English medium education on offer in the school was not very effective for his monoglot Welsh pupils. Putting the gospel imperative first, he realized that a lot more Welsh people could be taught to read the Bible much more quickly if teaching was done through the medium of Welsh. So, he decided to train teachers at Llanddowror, where he had become rector in 1719, and send them out to open short term ‘schools’. These schools were held for three months between September and May, which was a quieter time in the farming year, and both adults and children were able to attend. The aims of these ‘circulating’ schools were limited: to teach the pupils to read the Bible and to say the Creed. Jones kept meticulous records of his schools, so we know from his last report of the work published just before he died in 1761 that his Circulating Welsh Schools movement had been responsible for running 3,495 schools in which around 158,000 pupils had had the opportunity to learn to read the Welsh Bible.

It is not surprising that his mother-tongue educational policy was questioned by some of his supporters. After all since the 1530s the English parliament had made English the official language of Wales, so it seemed to make no sense to these supporters to educate people in it. In October 1739, Griffith Jones published a letter defending his policy in which he made clear that his motivation was biblical and theological. The two biblical passages to which he turned to make his theological case were the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11 and the account of the Gift of Tongues in Acts 2. He argued that the first passage proved that it is God’s will that there should be many languages in the world. He also argued that God’s purpose in bringing about a multi-lingual world was to thwart the tyr-

⁵ For a brief biography see the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* online article: <<http://j.mp/DWB1683>> [last accessed 18 May 2013].

⁶ Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

any of a one-world government that is far more conceivable in a world in which only one language is spoken. Turning to Acts 2, he argued that the gift of tongues is not a reversal of God's action in Babel because the gift was given to the apostles and not to the people that heard their teaching. Thus, the diversity of languages was affirmed alongside the universality of the gospel message. There is no mention of 'nation' in Griffith Jones' letter but a strong affirmation that the difference between peoples that is highlighted by difference in language in different parts of the earth is God's will. To question his policy of teaching Welsh-speaking people in Welsh was, therefore, to question God's wisdom!⁷

Griffith Jones was certainly not a 'nationalist' in the modern sense. He was quite content that Wales was being governed from London and that a king or queen of England was head of state. But in his mind that was not incompatible with the Welsh preserving and enhancing their own cultural identity within the territory that they had traditionally occupied.

By 1739 the Spirit of God was blowing strongly in Wales and continued to do so for the next 150 years. This was one of the main reasons for the success of Griffith Jones' movement, because the Methodist Revival created an ever-increasing number of converts that wanted to read the Bible. By the end of the 18th century, Griffith Jones' mantle had fallen on Thomas Charles (1755-1814) of Bala best known outside Wales for his key contribution to founding the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. One of the first acts of the Bible Society was to publish 20,000 Welsh Bibles and by 1855 it had published 933,222 Bibles and New Testaments in Welsh. It was a fair claim that in 1850 there was no nation on earth as well supplied with the Holy Scriptures as Wales and the Welsh-speaking identity of the Welsh seemed rock solid.

But dark clouds were gathering. The close proximity of coal and iron ore meant that the South Wales valleys became one of the centres of the industrial revolution. This meant immigration from England and beyond and the increasing need for people educated in something more than the Bible. At the same time the English Empire continued to expand. More and more educated people were needed to sustain it. When these developments were coupled with the growth of ideological English nationalism forces were set in train that almost proved fatal for the Welsh language.

⁷ Jones also used the moral argument, that it was advantageous for Welsh people to remain monoglot Welsh because of the many immoral books that would be available to them if they learnt to read English, and the intellectual argument, that it was the common opinion of the great scholars of his age that Welsh was worth preserving.

One manifestation of the emerging English nationalism was the onslaught on Welsh medium education. I will focus on two key events.

1. *The Treason of the Blue Books.* This is what I wrote about this in *Castrating Culture*.⁸

In 1846 the Education Committee of the British government... commissioned a report on the state of education in Wales. Three young English barristers were appointed to do the work and after three month or so in Wales staying with local gentry, who were thoroughly Anglicized, and with Anglican clergy, many of whom were very antagonistic towards Nonconformists, they presented their massive report of over 1200 pages in three folio volumes bound in blue boards. The commissioners were undoubtedly very able men and their work does present a very thorough review of the state of education in Wales in 1846, albeit from the perspective of English imperialists who delighted in expressing their contempt of Welsh. The following extract from the report by commissioner J. C. Symons is a good example of its general approach:

‘The Welsh language is a vast drawback to Wales, and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people. It is not easy to over-estimate its evil effects.... It dissevers the people from intercourse which would greatly advance their civilization, and bars the access of improving knowledge to their minds. As a proof of this, there is no Welsh literature worthy of the name.’⁹

Here is the authentic voice of ideological nationalism in all its glory! We English are far superior to you Welsh in every way and the sooner you realize it and become English the better it will be for you—after all you have nothing in your language that is worth preserving. Of course that we have nothing worth preserving is an ignorant assumption because neither Symons nor his fellow commissioners could read a word of Welsh!

2. *Foster’s Education Act 1870.* The report of 1846 was the first significant move on the part of the English government to make education in Wales serve the purpose of ideological nationalism. In Foster’s Education Act of 1870 the English state took a firm grip of primary education and by 1880 primary education in English only became compulsory in schools in Wales. This was the era of the infamous ‘Welsh Not’ when pupils heard speaking Welsh had a piece of wood engraved with WN hung around

⁸ Dewi Hughes, *Castrating Culture: A Christian Perspective on Ethnic Identity from the Margins* (Carlisle: Paternoster), pp. 99-100.

⁹ *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, (London:HMSO, 1848), pp. 309-10.

their necks. They then had to look out for any other pupil caught speaking Welsh so that they could pass the ‘Welsh Not’ on to them because the pupil wearing it at the end of the day was severely beaten.

Added to this children were subjected to intense nationalistic propaganda in the textbooks that were used. Tudur Jones summarizes the propaganda of a book entitled *The Citizen Reader* that was used in the schools of Blaenau Ffestiniog in the 1890s. Children were encouraged to look at a world map and note the extent of the British Empire. In every part of the world they were encouraged to realize ‘there are countrymen...who read the same English Bible that we read...’. The children were told to rejoice at their good fortune because ‘England was an island’ easily defended against foreign invaders—no mention of Scotland and Wales here or anywhere else in the book! A lot is said about parliament, the Crown, the importance of keeping the law and the imperial heroes of places like Lucknow and Khartoum and ends with Nelson’s signal that ‘England expects every man will do his duty’. The preface to what Tudur Jones calls ‘an arrogant and virulent piece of English nationalistic propaganda’ was provided by W.E Foster after whom the Education Act of 1870 was named.¹⁰

2. R. AMBROSE JONES/EMRYS AP IWAN (1851-1906)

This is the context in which a number of Welsh church leaders tried to describe a more biblical and theological view of nationhood in the second half of the 19th century. The Calvinistic Methodist minister R. Ambrose Jones (known as Emrys ap Iwan)¹¹ is now seen as a significant figure in the development of a view of nationhood that laid the intellectual foundations for the formation of a Welsh ‘nationalist’ movement in Wales that led to the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1925. His ministerial career was somewhat unusual. Like many others he left school early, and in his case worked as a messenger for a clothes shop in Liverpool and as a gardener in his home area of Abergele before going on to the theological seminary in Bala. He spent a short time after seminary as a teacher but in 1874 he went to Lausanne for 18 months to teach English and to learn French and German. Then in 1877 he spent some months in Heidelberg, Bonn, and Giessen to perfect his German. He became a Francophile who admired the work of Pascal and Paul-Louis Courier in particular. As an

¹⁰ R. Tudur Jones, *The Desire of Nations*, (Llandybie: Christopher Davies, 1974), pp. 154-155

¹¹ As a protest against anglicization some were adopting a Welsh form of their names by the end of the 19th century. Emrys is the Welsh form of Ambrose and the ‘ap Iwan’ meaning ‘the son of Iwan’ reflects a traditional Welsh practice of naming.

author he deliberately modelled himself on Courier so that his literary output is entirely made up of short pieces. He was ordained a Calvinistic Methodist minister in 1883 and was faithful to the evangelical tradition of his denomination that was enriched by his knowledge of European Protestantism and Catholicism.¹² So, Emrys ap Iwan did not write a systematic theological treatise on nationhood but he did deal with the issue at some length in his published sermons and in particular in a sermon on Paul's address to the Areopagus.¹³

The section on nationhood comes in his observations on Acts 17:26-27. He begins his discussion with an obvious point: 'Remember that the God who made men also ordained nations.' He does not expound precisely what he means by 'ordain', which is a pity because the concept of divine ordination or destiny was so crucial to the English nationalism that he was seeking to challenge. In coming to apply what he has drawn from the text later in the sermon he uses the word 'make' rather than 'ordain'. But here again there is no indication as to how God 'makes' or 'ordains' nations. The conclusion that ap Iwan draws from Paul's statement is that 'to annihilate a nation is next to the tragedy of annihilating humankind. And that annihilating a nation's language is next to the tragedy of annihilating the nation, because a nation ceases to be a nation...when it loses its language.' He compares a nation that does not foster its language to an individual committing suicide. Both suffer from 'weakness of mind' because self-preservation, he argues, is of the essence of a healthy mind.

He then focuses on the unity of the human race from which a diversity of nations has emerged. 'It is fitting,' he writes, 'that God has revealed to us that every nation of men has been made of one blood, in order to show that it is rational for men to sympathize with each other, and to love each other as close relatives, without making any distinction in this matter between Jew and Greek, black and white or those that are far or near.' Then he adds: 'But it is fitting that God has revealed to us at the same time that he made men nations as well.'

Why then, he asks, did God divide men into nations? Like many contemporary thinkers on nationhood he argues, firstly, that national diversity is good because it adds to the cumulative wisdom of the human race. Secondly, he focuses on Paul's more religious reason—'so that they would seek [the Lord]...' (Acts 17:27). This leads ap Iwan to discuss the most advantageous conditions under which nations can seek God. 'It is easier,'

¹² See the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* online article: <<http://j.mp/DWB-1848Jones>> [last accessed 18 May 2013].

¹³ Emrys ap Iwan, 'Y ddysc newydd a hen', from *Homiliau*, 3rd edn (Dinbych: Gee a'i Fab), pp. 41-56.

he claims, ‘for a free and independent nation dwelling peacefully in its own land to find God than either a subject or conquering nation.’ The barrier to a subject nation seeking God is that it ‘tends to become servile, imitative [and] indifferent intellectually, too cowardly to think for itself, and too cowardly to speak the truth; and when such a nation seeks God it seeks him in order to be indulged and fussed by him and not in order to exalt his name through good works.’ Since Wales/Cymru was a subject nation this is clearly ap Iwan’s assessment of the Welsh nation at the end of the 19th century!

He then turns to the conquering nation: ‘The dangers of a conquering nation are different. When a kingdom becomes a conquering empire it becomes proud, its morals deteriorate, it forgets God its Maker, it stirs up the anger of other nations, and it does something or other to ensure its own fall.’ The conquering nation at the forefront of his mind he calls ‘Britain’ and not ‘England’ because as a subject nation Wales he believed was meekly serving the interests of the British Empire. What he says about the British Empire in 1900 was brave and prophetic even if it was a voice crying in the wilderness.

[I]t is not with money spent on missionaries and Bibles that it can atone for the injury done to other nations. If [Britain] wants to see the nation’s seeking the Christian’s God it will need to restore every country that it stole to its rightful owners, and repent in dust and ashes for the rivers of innocent blood spilt to feed it’s lust. Is it not the injustice of this country, more than any other country, that is the reason that Christianity has hardly made any progress in the last 100 years in India and China? And is this not the reason why the name of Christianity has become a swearword and a curse in many other countries? Before the word of the Lord can spread rapidly and be honored (1 Thes. 3:1) killing and stealing in the name of Jesus must stop; the enslaving of nations must end, and become as objectionable in our eyes as enslaving individuals. It is true that God allows a strong nation to lord it over a weak nation; but God does not approve of everything that he allows; and neither should we approve of it. God’s purpose and will is for every nation to be sovereign in its own land; and for its laws to be administered and the gospel preached in its own language.¹⁴

The idea that a nation should be sovereign in its own land does seem to imply at least a measure of political independence but Emrys ap Iwan does not spell this out. There were many in the Liberal and emerging Labour

¹⁴ Emrys ap Iwan, *Homiliau*, op. cit. pp. 50-53. He returns to many of the themes of this sermon in a number of other sermons. See Emrys ap Iwan, *Homiliau, ail gyfres* [second series], (Dinbych: Gee a’i Fab, 1909), pp. 11-14, 52, 59-63, 156-157.

Party in Wales at the beginning of the 20th century that did. There was a strong nationalist group of Welsh Liberals at this time that included David Lloyd George but the lure of position and wealth that they were offered as servants of English ideological nationalism overcame them. Lloyd George may have been the only Welsh speaker to occupy Number 10 Downing Street but he did so not as an advocate of the nation that nurtured him but as a faithful servant of the British Empire. The Labour Party likewise soon betrayed its 'nationalist' Welsh members and became an English nationalist movement. It was left to a small group of Nonconformist ministers and academics to form Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru [The Nationalist Party of Wales] in 1925.

3. R TUDUR JONES (1921-1998)¹⁵

Given the number of ministers that have supported it from the beginning it is not surprising that the Nationalist Party of Wales¹⁶ has had some able theological advocates. The ablest without a doubt was R Tudur Jones (1921-1998). From 1950 to 1988 he was based as tutor and then, from 1965, as Principal at the Congregational College linked to the Faculty of Theology at the University College of North Wales, Bangor.

Tudur Jones was a political activist as well as an academic theologian. He served as president of Plaid Cymru and stood as a parliamentary candidate for Anglesey on two occasions. He was also a prolific journalist editing the Welsh and then the English weekly papers of Plaid Cymru for 21 years and contributing articles for the weekly Welsh newspaper *Y Cymro* for many years. This social activity was not strange fire for a theologian in the Reformed tradition. As a theologian who was familiar with Kuyper from early in his career, and became familiar with the Dutch school inspired by Dooyeweerd in the 60s, his social activism—and his nationalism—was inspired by his Reformed view of culture and the victory of Christ.

The ethnienation in his Reformed view of culture. It is a part of the dignity of human beings created in the image of God that they 'subdue the earth'. We were created to tame the ground, animals, sounds—and social relationships. It is in the context of man's creation of social relationships

¹⁵ For this section on R Tudur Jones I have made extensive use of a recent study of his nationalism by Sion Rhys Llwyd, 'Cenedlaetholdeb R Tudur Jones yn ei gyd-destun hanesyddol a diwinyddol' ['The Nationalism of R Tudur Jones in its historical and theological context'] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Bangor University, 2011).

¹⁶ Now known as Plaid Cymru/The Party of Wales.

that Tudur Jones clarifies what is meant by nations being ordained or made by God. Thinking about nationhood after ideological nationalism had been seen in all its hateful glory in Nazi Germany he was eager to block any route to claiming that any nation was divinely ordained or created. 'God did not create nations,' he states unequivocally, 'God created man and man formed nations.'¹⁷ Nations are human constructs.

Tudur Jones was also convinced that within the overarching purpose of God, even in a world deeply impacted by sin, nations are good human constructs. The problem of the nations is not their existence but the fact that some nations succumb to the sin first manifested in Babel. Babel is the archetypal attempt to create a centre of quasi-divine power on earth that demands the subjugation of its citizens and other nations to its lust for self-aggrandizement. Tudur Jones calls this sinful tendency ideological or monocentric nationalism.

I believe that he makes an unanswerable case that England has been deeply stricken by the Babel syndrome and that he was right to focus so much of his thinking on nationalism on English ideological nationalism and its destructive impact on the Welsh and other nations in the UK and beyond. The key issue for nations/ethnes is how to be just in their relationships.

The nations and the victory of Christ? Firstly, it justifies Christian action with regard to the nations. The exaltation of our risen Lord to the position of the highest authority over all of creation means that we must claim every square inch of the created order, including the destiny of nations, for him.¹⁸ Since nations figure prominently as the focus of blessing in the history of redemption from the call of Abraham to the vision of the new creation, acting to ensure the blessing of nations in the kingdom of the exalted Christ is hardly optional.

Secondly, the victory of Christ determines the nature of our Christian action with regard to the nations. Fundamental in this context is the need to make disciples of Jesus from all nations. Throughout his career Tudur Jones saw gospel proclamation as his prime calling that was fulfilled by a very active preaching ministry throughout Wales. In the political context his Christian action was focused above all else on exposing the destructive effects of English ideological nationalism on the Welsh nation. He never tires of showing how English nationalism has set up all sorts of

¹⁷ Sion Rhys Llwyd, 'Cenedlaetholdeb R Tudur Jones, p. 104 quoting R. Tudur Jones, 'Christian Nationalism', in *This Land and People*, ed. by P.H. Ballard and D.H. Jones (Caerdydd: Collegiate Centre of Theology, 1979), p. 76.

¹⁸ See R. Tudur Jones: 'Christian Nationalism', in *This Land and People*, p. 95.

mechanisms to annihilate the Welsh nation and assimilate the Welsh into the English nation. Now if God in Christ is in the business of blessing nations there is no way in which annihilation can be seen as a blessing! The forces of destruction must be resisted and the development of democratic government gives Christians an opportunity to do this in the political sphere, so that the bottom line of Christian resistance now comes long before the choice between Christ or Caesar. However, Christians resist injustice in the spirit and strength of their exalted Lord:

[Jesus] does not console His followers with the thought that they will be able to love one another in some distant world where there will be no thieves, wars, slanderers or hypocrites. On the contrary, He speaks of this present world with all its evils and sin, and asks His followers to love their enemies, to forgive their persecutors, to abstain even from just retribution, and to abstain from resisting evil. Nor are the children of light to lord it over one another, but rather are they by their eagerness to serve to invert the world's normal method of deciding precedence.¹⁹

For Tudur Jones 'resisting evil' meant answering the unjust violence of the state with violence. He believed that pacifist resistance was the only option for those who wanted to resist an unjust state in the way of Christ. This explains the strong support he gave to the pacifist direct action of the Welsh Language Society from 1962 on. It also explains why the Society opted for pacifist resistance because many of its leaders from the beginning until the present have been influenced by Tudur Jones.

The significance of the nations in God's purpose also led Tudur Jones to reject the modern concept that the state has precedence over the nation. It is not the state that should define the nation but the nation the state. So, from what he would consider his biblical perspective there is a British state but there is no such thing as a British nation. Britain is made up of at least four nations and the British state should exist to serve the well being of all four nations, and not as a means to absorb three of the nations into an English state as has been the case in the history of the British Isles. His study of modern history also led him to the conclusion that a modern state was incapable of serving the interests of more than one nation. This is why he became a strong advocate of political independence for Wales and as such a very active member of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru.

¹⁹ R. Tudur Jones, 'The Christian Doctrine of the State', *Congregational Quarterly*, 31/4 (1953), 316.

CONCLUSION

As Scotland considers independence and the church continues to think about its global mission the following points from our attempts to make theological sense of being Welsh may be worthy of further consideration:

1. It is a part of God's plan for human beings that they should form themselves into *ethnies/nations*—this special type of human community bigger than family, clan or tribe that is characterized by a common name, ancestors, history, culture, territory and a sense of solidarity. Nations may be human constructs but they are so within God's overall plan for the good of humanity.
2. The appearance, place and destiny of these nations are ultimately in God's hands but his desire is to bless them. Therefore, we should not do anything that will lead to the destruction of nations but to their blessing.
3. The concept of the nation-state that developed in the 19th century and that in its ideological nationalist manifestation led to the oppression of many nations is contrary to the biblical view of nationhood.
4. The story of the way in which the English state deliberately tried to annihilate the Welsh nation in the 19th century is a powerful illustration of the injustice perpetrated by ideological nationalism in control of a modern nation-state.
5. A strong biblical case can be made that the state should exist to serve the nation rather than vice versa. If state policy is having a destructive effect on any nation then the action of that state can justifiably be claimed to be unjust and, as such, contrary to God's will.
6. Work needs to be done urgently on whether it is possible for a modern nation-state to serve more than one nation. The record in the UK has not been good, to say the least, while the attempt to establish modern nation-states in multi-national post-colonial countries has been disastrous. In Africa in particular the legacy of ideological nationalism remains in states that are torn apart continually by national/ethnic rivalry.
7. In the context of missions we must value language as a crucial element of a people's ethnic identity. Evangelical Protestant missions have been good at doing this but have been slow to appreciate that by valuing a people's mother tongue, especially through Bible translation, we strengthen a people's sense of identity. Without a different philosophy of the state to the one that still prevails in post-colonial nations this is likely to exasperate the conflicts in such states.

In the mid 90s Tearfund supported the Association of Quechua Evangelical Churches of the Jungle of Peru, led by Pastor Artidoro Tuanama, to train leaders in encouraging native liturgy and helping the community

to rediscover its culture. In the weighing scales of the nations this little nation would struggle to move the dial, but to the God who has committed himself to bless the nations they are precious. Artidoro's words in a Tearfund report are a powerful plea that they, and many nations like them, should be precious to us as well:

We simply want to take our place as indigenous and native Quechua people, understanding and living out the gospel. We assume our identity without shame, retaliation or indignation against those who have caused harm to our past and castrated our culture.²⁰

²⁰ *Update File Peru*, No. 24, (London: Tearfund, June 1996), p. 1.