In the year when the House of Commons legislated to assimilate Wales to England, the Reformation Parliament was in the last stages of establishing the king’s authority on a new foundation. Two years earlier, in the Act of Supremacy, he was proclaimed to be ‘Supreme Head’ of the Church and state, and papal power in England was destroyed. Religious houses – and later friaries – were dissolved and, sanctioned by Parliament, the supreme legal and jurisdictional authority in the Church was vested in Henry VIII. However, that did not imply that the Church had abandoned its medieval structure. Much of it survived, but it was now formally controlled by the monarchy. Despite the revolutionary nature of those changes, the Church as an institution continued to be conservative. The Crown’s sovereignty was defined in the preamble to the Act of Appeals, which referred to the ‘empire’ over which Henry governed in England and Wales. This imperium sprang from divine authority, as had the Pope’s jurisdiction, and was exercised through Parliament and the privy council. In an ecclesiastical context the potestas jurisdictionis of the Pope was transferred to the Crown. Henry did not claim the potestas ordinis, but rather sought to exercise a new authority that gave him episcopal power to administer canon law within the realm. Since royal supremacy was divinely ordained, he claimed powers as the ‘Vicar of Christ’ in the kingdom. Under his authority, the Church in England and Wales became the
Ecclesia Anglicana; it also acquired a new role, with the Crown assuming full authority in religious and secular affairs.\textsuperscript{1}

The four dioceses in Wales were in the province of Canterbury and there was no need for any formal legislation to legalise the king’s authority over an institution that had already, over the centuries, formed a part of the Church in England. Although the condition of the Welsh Church was unsatisfactory, it cannot be said that the quality of religious life was worse than in other poor dioceses – particularly in the north of England. The value of Welsh bishoprics was well below the average in England. According to the \textit{Valor Ecclesiasticus} (1535), they were assessed as follows: Bangor (£131), Llandaff (£144), St Asaph (£187) and St David’s (£457).\textsuperscript{2} St David’s income, however, was just above that of Rochester, the poorest English diocese. Temporal and spiritual incomes were low and were leased out to lay families. Clerical standards were poor, only 6 per cent of parish clergy were valued at more than £20 a year, and the average stipend of unbeneficed clergy was £4 a year. Pre-Reformation bishops were non-Welsh and often non-resident. It was an impoverished Church, remote and conservative, with large parishes and parishioners who were illiterate and superstitious. Old Catholic customs were still being practised, and in the early stages of the Reformation government agents referred to the persistence of ancient practices in all parts of the country. Dr Ellis Price of Plas Iolyn, who was responsible for destroying the image of Derfel Gadarn in Llandderfel, Merioneth, clearly informed Cromwell that he had taken orders ‘for the expulsing and taking away of certain abusions, superstitions and hypocracies’ within the diocese of St Asaph. He marvelled at the fact that pilgrims had been ‘sore allured and enticed to worship the said image insomuch that there is common saying as yet amongst them that whosoever will offer anything to the said image...he hath power to fetch him or them that so offers out of hell when they are damned’.\textsuperscript{3} Remarkable powers indeed, and in other parts of Wales commissioners investigating the condition of religious houses in 1535 commented adversely on most of them; this indicated that they were not