



# Kent Academic Repository

**Smith, Valerie (2017) *Rational Dissent in England c. 1770 - c. 1800: Definitions, Identity and Legacy*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent,.**

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/60497/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

## This document version

UNSPECIFIED

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

## Additional information

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

**UNIVERSITY OF KENT**

**Submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**RATIONAL DISSENT IN ENGLAND c. 1770 - c. 1800:  
DEFINITIONS, IDENTITY AND LEGACY**

**Valerie Smith**

**October 2016**

# UNIVERSITY OF KENT

School of History

Submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Valerie Smith – October 2016

Word Count – 98, 177

Rational Dissent in England c. 1770 - c. 1800: Definitions, Identity and Legacy

## ABSTRACT

The importance of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent has been rightly recognised by many contemporaries and subsequent historians. Yet the character of Rational Dissent has been less than fully understood, partly because of the over-concentration on Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, and on the politics, rather than the all-important theological ideas which underpinned the political ideas of Rational Dissenters.

This dissertation adopts a new and prosopographical method of analysis. The Biographical Register of authors of published and unpublished material, and of prominent local figures demonstrates the highly varied range of the individuals, congregations and other groups amongst its adherents and reveals valuable insights into the wide areas of opinions within Rational Dissent, and key periods and forms of activity.

This research, through its prosopographical approach, covers new ground in demonstrating that significant differences between Rational and Orthodox Dissenting theology led to the emergence of a Rational Dissenting identity which became sharply and increasingly divergent from that of Orthodox Dissenters. Through extensive analysis of the identity of Rational Dissent as a whole, it demonstrates considerably greater nuances in belief than have previously been recognised. It establishes that it was the specific theological ideas of Rational Dissenters which underpinned and drove their political concepts and notions as to the nature of society.

Based on investigation of 19 lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting published works and organisations, this study identifies a core of 444 multiple subscribers, the overwhelming majority committed adherents of Rational Dissent. These are substantial lists totalling 6,047 subscriptions. The 444 individuals as a group provide an essential basis for analysis of the social, geographical and intellectual appeal of Rational Dissent amongst its less visible adherents, notably women, laymen and ministers who sustained it at local level. Analysis of previously largely over-looked Unitarian Library records allows identification of the social and intellectual span of their readers and their particular areas of theological interest. This range of sources enables statistical analysis of the identity and appeal of the broad base of Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century.

This dissertation argues that Rational Dissent in England between c. 1770 and c. 1800, characterised by its own distinctive doctrinal identity, merits further investigation, and constitutes a primary motivation for this study. From this research emerges a fuller understanding of the place of Rational Dissent within society, its complex and evolving nature, and finally analysis of the legacy of Rational Dissent in the early nineteenth century.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Contents	i
Abbreviations	iv
Acknowledgements	viii
Biographical Register	ix
1: Introduction	1
i: Late Eighteenth Century Rational Dissent: Stimulants to Research	8
ii: The Historiography of Rational Dissent	10
2: Scope and Methodology	18
i: The Scope of This Dissertation	20
ii: Methodology: Analysing the Primary Sources	26
iii: Establishing the Wider Identity of Rational Dissent	32
3: Contemporary Perceptions and Identity	37
i: Generalised Accusations against Rational Dissent	39
ii: Specific Attacks on the Theology of Rational Dissent	43
iii: Heightened Levels of Invective over Time	49
iv: External Contemporary Perceptions and Rational Dissenting Identity	53
4: Theology: the Collective Identity of Rational Dissent	69
i: Shared Doctrinal Ideas	71
ii: The Impact of Shared Doctrine on Practice	79
iii: The Central Place of Theology in Rational Dissenting Arguments	95
iv: Rational Dissenting Networks	98
5: Theology and Diversity in Rational Dissenting Identity	104
i: Doctrinal Debates	106
a: The Place of the Scriptures	106
b: The Role and Nature of Father, Son and Holy Ghost	108
c: Pre-existence	112
d: Miracles and the Miraculous Conception	114
e: The Significance of the Crucifixion	116
ii: Individual Diversity in Practice.	117
iii: Price, Priestley and the Adjusting of Imbalances in Interpretation	123
6: Theology, Liberty and Perceptions of Church and State	134
i: Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Sacramental Test	135

	Page
ii: Universal Toleration	150
iii: History and Rational Dissenting Concepts of Liberty and Progress	158
7: Theology, Monarchy and the Constitution	162
i: Theology, Patriotism and Revolution	165
ii: Radicalism and the Franchise	178
8: The Evolution of Rational Dissenting Identity	189
i: Trends in the Evolution of Rational Dissent	189
ii: Tensions in the 1790s	193
9: The impact and appeal of Rational Dissent	205
i: Interest amongst the Church of England in Rational Dissent	206
ii: Membership of Unitarian Societies	207
iii: Trends amongst Ministerial and Lay Subscribers	209
iv: The Committed Core of Rational Dissent	213
v: The Geographical Basis of Support for Rational Dissent	214
vi: Social Class, Education and Rational Dissent	220
vii: Case Studies: Rational Dissent in the South-West of England	225
10: The Legacy of Late Eighteenth Century Rational Dissent	230
i: The Legacy of Late Eighteenth Century Rational Dissenting Theology	231
ii: Continuity and Change in Unitarian Organisation	237
iii: Continuity and Change in Unitarian Appeal	247
iv: The Fate of Arianism	266
11: Conclusions	276
Appendix 1	293
Appendix 2	301
Bibliography	325

## FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Rational Dissenting Long Distance Networks	100
Figure 2: Distribution of Multiple Subscribers	215

## TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Publications referring to Rational Dissent in ECCO	21
Table 2: Nature of attacks against Arians, Socinians	49
Table 3: Multiple Editions by Authors in Biographical Register 1770-1800	190
Table 4: Documents featuring 'Pre-existence' in ECCO	191
Table 5: Subscribers to Late Eighteenth Century Unitarian Societies	208
Table 6: Subscribers to Rational Dissenting Works	210
Table 7: Subscribers to Rational Dissenting Colleges	211
Table 8: Multiple Subscriptions by Rational Dissenting Ministers and Laity	214
Table 9: Multiple Subscribers amongst Rational Dissenters by Place	216
Table 10: Place of Publication of Works by Authors in Biographical Register	219
Table 11: Social and Professional Status	221
Table 12: Subscriptions to Lewin's Mead Chapel 1781-1792	226
Table 13: Subscriptions to Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel 1780-1790	227
Table 14: Subscriptions to Ilminster Unitarian Sunday School	228
Table 15: Unitarian Organisations in the Early Nineteenth Century	244
Table 16: Bristol Unitarian Fund Subscriptions 1819-1821	251
Table 17: Subscribers to Early Nineteenth Century Unitarian Societies	262

## ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout this dissertation, place of publication is London unless otherwise specified.

Aspland, <i>Memoir</i>	R. B. Aspland, <i>Memoir of the life, work and correspondence of the Reverend Robert Aspland</i> (1850)
Barbault, <i>Remarks</i>	A. L. Barbault, <i>Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's 'Enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public and social worship'</i> (1792)
Barbault, <i>An Address</i>	A. L. Barbault, <i>An Address to the opposers of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts</i> (1790)
T. Belsham, <i>Memoirs</i>	T. Belsham, <i>The Memoirs of the Reverend Theophilus Lindsey</i> (1808)
W. Belsham, <i>Essays</i>	W. Belsham, <i>Essays philosophical, historical and literary</i> (Dublin, 1791)
Bogue and Bennett, <i>A history of the dissenters</i>	D. Bogue, J. Bennett, <i>A history of the dissenters from the Revolution in 1688 to the year 1808</i> (1810)
Bradley, <i>Religion</i>	J. Bradley, <i>Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in English Politics and Society</i> (Cambridge, 1990)
BRO	Bristol Record Office
BL	British Library
Burgh, <i>Crito</i>	J. Burgh, <i>Crito or essays on various subjects</i> (1767)
Cappe, <i>Memoirs</i>	C. Cappe, <i>The Memoirs of Catharine Cappe written by herself</i> (1822)
Cardale, <i>The true doctrine</i>	P. Cardale, <i>The true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered</i> (1771)
Cardale, <i>A comment</i>	P. Cardale, <i>A comment upon some remarkable passages in Christ's prayer</i> (1772)
Cardale, <i>A treatise</i>	P. Cardale, <i>A treatise on the application of certain terms and epithets to Jesus Christ</i> (1774)
Clark, <i>English Society</i>	J. C. D. Clark, <i>English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime</i> (Cambridge, 2000)
Davis, <i>Dissent in Politics</i>	R. W. Davis, <i>Dissent in Politics 1780-1830: The Political Life of William Smith, M. P.</i> (1971)
Dickinson, <i>Liberty and Property</i>	H. T. Dickinson, <i>Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth Century England</i> (1977)
DHC	Dorset History Centre
DRO	Devon Record Office

DWL	Dr Williams's Library, London
Eaton, <i>Scripture the only guide</i>	D. Eaton, <i>Scripture the only guide to religious truth</i> (1800)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>The English Historical Review</i>
<i>E &amp; D</i>	<i>Enlightenment and Dissent</i>
Flower, <i>Proceedings</i>	B. Flower, <i>The proceedings of the House of Lords in the case of Benjamin Flower for a supposed libel on the Bishop of Llandaff</i> (Cambridge, 1800)
Fownes, <i>An enquiry</i>	J. Fownes, <i>An enquiry into the principles of toleration</i> (1772)
Frend, <i>Address</i>	W. Frend, <i>An address to members of the Church of England and to Protestant Trinitarians</i> (1790)
Fuller, <i>Calvinistic and Socinian Systems</i>	A. Fuller, <i>The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems examined and compared as to their moral tendency</i> (1794)
<i>GM</i>	<i>The Gentleman's Magazine</i>
Haakonssen, ed, <i>Enlightenment and Religion</i>	K. Haakonssen, ed., <i>Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain</i> (Cambridge, 1996)
HMCO	Harris Manchester College, Oxford
Hays, <i>Cursory remarks</i>	M. Hays, <i>Cursory remarks on An enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public and social worship</i> (1792)
Hays, <i>An Appeal</i>	M. Hays, <i>An appeal to the men of Great Britain on behalf of women</i> (1798)
Heywood, <i>Right of Protestant Dissenters</i>	S. Heywood, <i>The right of Protestant Dissenters to a complete toleration asserted</i> (1787; 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. 1789)
Heywood, <i>High Church Politics</i>	S. Heywood, <i>High Church Politics: being a seasonable appeal to the Friends of the British Constitution, against the practices and principles of high churchmen</i> (1792)
<i>HJ</i>	<i>The Historical Journal</i>
Hole, <i>Pulpits</i>	R. Hole, <i>Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832</i> (Cambridge, 1989)
<i>JEH</i>	<i>The Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
Jervis, <i>Consolatory views</i>	T. Jervis, <i>Consolatory views of Christianity. A sermon preached in the chapel at Princes Street on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Kippis</i> (1796)
<i>JHI</i>	<i>The Journal of the History of Ideas</i>



Jones, A <i>preservative</i>	W. Jones, <i>A preservative against the publications dispersed by modern Socinians</i> (1787)
JRUL	John Rylands University Library, Manchester
Kenrick, A <i>discourse</i> (1793)	T. Kenrick, <i>A discourse delivered at Taunton before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the West of England for promoting Christian knowledge and the practice of virtue by the distribution of books</i> (1793)
KHC	Kent History and Library Centre
Kentish, <i>Letter to James White</i>	J. Kentish, <i>A letter to James White, Esq.. of Exeter, on the late correspondence between him and Mr. Toulmin, relative to the Society of Unitarian Christians</i> (1794)
Lindsey, <i>Apology</i>	T. Lindsey, <i>The apology of Thomas Lindsey on resigning the vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire</i> (1774)
Lindsey, <i>The catechist</i>	T. Lindsey, <i>The catechist or an enquiry into the doctrine of the Scriptures, concerning the only true God, and the object of religious worship</i> (1781)
Lindsey, <i>Letters I</i>	G. M. Ditchfield, ed., <i>The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, I. 1747-1788</i> (Woodbridge, 2007)
Lindsey, <i>Letters II</i>	G. M. Ditchfield, ed., <i>The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, II. 1789-1808</i> (Woodbridge, 2012)
LRO	Liverpool Record Office
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MR	<i>The Monthly Repository</i>
Macgowan, <i>Monitor</i>	J. Macgowan, <i>The Arians and Socinians Monitor</i> (1781)
Neville, <i>Diary</i>	B. Cozens-Hardy, ed., <i>The Diary of Syllas Neville 1767-1778</i> (Oxford, 1950)
Palmer, <i>Free thoughts</i>	J. Palmer, <i>Free thoughts on the inconsistency of conforming to any religious tests as a condition of toleration, with the true principle of Protestant dissent</i> (1779)
Porter, <i>A defence</i>	T. Porter, <i>A defence of Unitarianism, intended as an answer to Dr. Hawker's sermons on the divinity of Christ</i> (Plymouth, 1793)
Pretyman, <i>Charge</i>	G. Pretyman, <i>A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Lincoln at the triennial visitation of that diocese</i> (1794)
Priestley, <i>Corruptions</i>	J. Priestley, <i>An History of the Corruptions of Christianity</i> (1782)
Rowe, <i>A discourse</i>	J. Rowe, <i>A discourse delivered at Warminster</i> (1799)

Rutt, <i>Priestley, Life, Memoirs and Correspondence</i>	J. T. Rutt, ed., <i>Life, Memoirs and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley</i> , vol 1 of <i>The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley</i> (1817)
Rutt, <i>Priestley</i>	J. T. Rutt, ed., <i>The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley</i> (1817-1831)
Seddon, <i>Discourses</i>	J. Seddon, <i>Discourses on the person of Christ, on the Holy Spirit and on self deception</i> (Warrington, 1793)
SHC	Somerset Heritage Centre
Taylor, <i>Considerations</i>	H. Taylor, <i>Considerations on ancient and modern creeds compared</i> (1788)
Jane Toulmin, <i>A vindication</i>	Jane Toulmin, <i>A vindication of speaking openly in favour of divine truths</i> (Taunton, 1790)
Toulmin, <i>Injustice</i>	Joshua Toulmin, <i>The injustice of classing Unitarians with deists and infidels</i> (1797)
Towers, <i>A dialogue</i>	J. Towers, <i>A dialogue between two gentlemen, concerning the late Application to Parliament for Relief in the Matter of Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles</i> (1772)
Towgood, <i>A Dissent</i>	M. Towgood, <i>A Dissent from the Church of England, fully justified. Being the Dissenting Gentleman's three letters and Postscript, in answer to Mr James White's on that Subject</i> (5th ed., 1779).
TNA	The National Archives
TUHS	<i>Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society</i>
TWA	Tyne and Wear Archives
Wakefield, <i>An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham</i>	G. Wakefield, <i>An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham, occasioned by a letter sent to the mayor, and some other members of the Corporation of that town. With an appendix on the subject of the Test-Laws</i> (1789)
Wakefield, <i>A translation</i>	G. Wakefield, <i>A translation of the New Testament</i> (1791)
Wilson, <i>Dissenting Churches</i>	W. Wilson, <i>The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London</i> (1808)
Wood, <i>Reciprocal duties</i>	W. Wood, <i>The reciprocal duties of a Christian minister and his hearers. A sermon preached before the Society of Protestant Dissenters at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds</i> (1773)
Wood, <i>Sermon to Protestant Dissenters</i>	W. Wood, <i>Sermon preached to a Society of Protestant Dissenters after the interment of Rev. Newcome Cappe</i> (1800)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation marks a key stage in a course of study in the School of History at the University of Kent which began in 2000. The completion of a part-time B.A. in 2006, followed by a part-time M.A. in 2009, allowed the opportunity for the development of my interest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and particularly in the history of ideas. I should like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Edwards for her early support and the encouragement which she gave me to embark on post-graduate studies.

I have been extremely fortunate to have Professor Grayson Ditchfield as my supervisor and my debt to him is considerable. I have benefited from his expertise, support and advice, his unwavering enthusiasm and his time so generously given. I should also like to record my thanks to Dr. Andrew Foster, who on a number of occasions suggested fresh angles of approach. I am much indebted to the staff of national and local archives who have been unfailingly helpful.

Finally, I would like to express particular thanks to Fred Cole for his consistent, longstanding interest, his patience and specific advice on the layout of this dissertation and to David Hopkins for his encouragement over a number of years.

## BIOGRAPHICAL REGISTER

Rational Dissenters referred to in this dissertation.

(Authors of letters, diaries, published sermons and discourses, prominent figures in public life,  
Committee members of Unitarian Society in the West of England.)

M - minister, L - laity, A - Arian, U – Unitarian, AU – initially Arian, subsequently Unitarian.

70s, 80s, 90s- Numbers of publications 1770-79, 1780-89, 1790-1800.

				70s	80s	90s
Aikin, Lucy (1781-1864)	L	U	Biographer and historian, daughter of John Aikin.			
Aikin, Dr. John (1747-1822)	L	U	Physician, practicing in Great Yarmouth 1784, in London 1797, 1796 editor of <i>The Monthly Magazine</i> .			14
Amner, Richard (1737-1805)	M	A	Old Meeting, Coseley, Staffordshire 1777-1794.			1
Amory, Thomas (1701-1774)	M	A	Newington Green, London 1770-1774.	5		
Anstis, Matthew (1740-1823)	M	U	Bridport, Dorset from 1768.			
Ashdowne, William (1723-1810)	M	U	General Baptist Chapel, Dover 1781-1810.	1	3	5
Aspland, Robert (1782-1845)	M	U	Gravel Pitt Meeting, Hackney 1805-1845.			
Aspland, Robert Brook (1805-1869)	M	U	Lewin's Mead, Bristol 1833-1836.			
Barbauld, Anna Letitia (1743-1825)	L	U	Prolific author, sister of John Aikin, wife of Rochemont Barbauld of Newington Green.		3	14
Barbauld, Rochemont (1749 – 1808)	M	U	Schoolmaster and minister, Palgrave, Suffolk 1774-1785, Hampstead 1807.			
Barnes, Thomas (1747-1810)	M	A	Cross Street Chapel, Manchester from 1780, 1781 founded Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester.			
Bealey, Joseph (1756-1813)	M	A U	Cockey Moor Chapel, Lancashire.			2

				70s	80s	90s
Belsham, Thomas (1750-1829)	M	U	Professor of Divinity, New College, Hackney. Gravel Pit Meeting 1794-1805, Essex Street Chapel 1805.			6
Belsham, William (1752-1827)	L	U	Brother of Thomas, writer and historian.		1	20
Bourn, Samuel (1714-1796)	M	A	The Octagon Chapel, Norwich 1756-1775.			
Brand Hollis, Thomas (c. 1719-1804)	L	U	Founder member of S. C. I., inherited Thomas Hollis's estate, bequeathing it to John Disney.			
Bretland, Joseph (1742-1819)	M	U	Mint Meeting, Exeter 1770-1772, 1789-1793, George's Meeting, Exeter 1794-1797.		2	1
Broadhurst, Thomas (1768-1851)	M	U	Taunton 1795.			2
Brown, William (d. 1824)	M	U	Serge maker and merchant, Cullompton, Devon, committee member of Western Unitarian Society 1792-1803.			
Burgh, James (1714-1775)	L	A	Schoolmaster at Stoke Newington, London, author.		4	3
Butcher, Edmund (1757-1822)	M	U	Leather Lane, Holborn 1789-1797, Sidmouth 1798-1820.			2
Cappe, Catharine (1744-1821)	L	U	Wife of Newcome Cappe, editor of husband's works.			
Cappe, Newcome (1733-1800)	M	U	St Saviourgate Chapel, York from 1755-1800.	4	5	2
Cardale, Paul (1705-1775)	M	U	Oat Street Chapel, Evesham from 1737.	3		
Carpenter, Lant (1780-1840)	M	U	New Meeting, Birmingham 1802, George's Meeting, Exeter 1805-1817, Lewin's Mead, Bristol 1817- 1839.			
Clayton, Nicholas (1730-1797)	M	U	The Octagon Chapel, Liverpool until 1776, successively at Ben's Garden, Liverpool, High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham.			

				70s	80s	90s
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834)	L	U	Unitarian 1794-1800. Poet .			
Cornish, Joseph (1750-1823)	M	A	Colyton, Devon 1772-1823.	5	4	2
Crabb, Habakkuk (1750-1794)	M	A	Wattisfield, Suffolk 1789-1790, Royston 1790-1794.			1
Currie, Dr. James (1756-1805)	L	U	Physician, founder of Liverpool Literary Society, author of political letters and pamphlets.			2
Disney, John (1746-1816)	M	U	Left Church of England 1782, Essex Street Chapel, London 1793-1805.		7	16
Dodson, Michael (1732-1799)	L	U	Attorney and Biblical scholar.			2
Dyer, George (1755-1841)	M	U	Author, member of S. C. I.			8
Drummond, Thomas (1764-1832)	M	U	St. Nicholas Street, Ipswich 1805-1813.			
Eaton, David (d. 1829)	L	U	Led Society of Baptists in York towards Unitarianism.			1
Enfield, William (1741-1797)	M	U	Benn's Garden Chapel, Liverpool 1763, Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington 1770, Octagon Chapel, Norwich 1785.	14	6	5
Estlin, John Prior (1747-1817)	M	A U	Lewin's Mead Chapel, Bristol 1770-1817.			3
Evanson, Edward (1731-1805)	M	U	Resigned C. O. E. living at Tewkesbury 1778, preached to Unitarian congregation, Lympston, Devon.	7		4
Fawcett, Joseph (c.1758-1804)	M	U	Marsh Street, Walthamstow 1780-1787, Old Jewry, London from 1785-1795.		2	3
Fleming, Caleb (1698-1779)	M	A U	Pinners Hall, London 1753-1777.	4		
Flexman, Roger (1708-1795)	M	A	Jamaica Row, Rotherhythe 1747-1783.	1	1	

				70s	80s	90s
Flower, Benjamin (1755-1829)	L	U	Editor of <i>The Cambridge Intelligencer</i> from 1792.			5
Fownes, Joseph (1715-1789)	M	U	High Street Chapel, Shrewsbury.	3	1	
Fox, William Johnson (1786-1864)	M	U	Bishopsgate, London 1817			
Frend, William (1757-1841)	L	U	Left ministry in Church of England 1787, 1794 banished from Cambridge University for publications.		13	9
Fry, Richard (1759-1842)	M	U	New Meeting, Kidderminster 1813-1856.			4
Fullagar, John	M	U	Chichester 1819			
Furneaux, Philip (1726-1783)	M	A	Independent, Clapham, Surrey 1752-1777.	4		
Gentleman, Robert (1745-95)	M	A	New Meeting, Kidderminster 1784-1794.		1	1
Gould, Eliza (1770-1810)	L	U	Wife of Benjamin Flower.			
Grafton, 4 <sup>th</sup> Duke of (1760-1844)	L	U	Politician, member of Essex Street congregation.			
Hall Clarke, Richard	L	U	Landowner, Bridwell, Cullompton, Devon, committee member of Western Unitarian Society 1792-1805.			
Harrison, Ralph (1748-1810)	M	U	Cross Street Chapel, Manchester from 1771, tutor at Manchester Academy 1786-1789.		4	
Hatfield, Ann (1757-1798)	L	U	Born into Nicholson family of Liverpool and Manchester, letter writer.			
Hays, Mary (1759-1843)	L	U	Writer and pamphleteer. Friend of Mary Wollstonecraft.			3
Hazlitt, William (1737-1820)	M	U	Maidstone 1770-1780, Wem, Shropshire 1787-1813	2		1
Heywood, Samuel (1753-1828)	L	U	Attorney, Northern Circuit.		2	2

				70s	80s	90s
Holden, Lawrence (1752-1844)	M	U	Tenterden Chapel, Kent 1772-1844.			
Holland, Philip (1721-1789)	M	A	Bank Street Chapel, Bolton, Lancashire, 1755-1785.		1	2
Hood, Robert (d. 1782)	M	U	Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle.	1	2	
Houghton, Richard (d. 1815)	L	U	Exeter apothecary, committee member of Western Unitarian Society 1795-1805.			
James, David (d. 1822)	M	A	Newbury 1761-1803.	1	2	
Jardine, David (1794-1860)	M	U	Trim Street Chapel, Bath.			
Jebb, Ann (1735-1812)	L	U	Wife of John Jebb, correspondent in <i>The London Chronicle</i> and <i>The Whitehall Evening Post</i> .			4
Jebb, Dr. John (1736-1786)	L	U	London medical practice from 1777.		10	8
Jervis, Thomas (1748-1833)	M	A	St. Thomas Street, Southwark from 1779, Princes Street, Westminster from 1796.		3	2
Johnson, Joseph (1738-1809)	L	U	Publisher and bookseller, 1788 established <i>The Analytical Review</i> .			
Jones, David (1765-1816)	M	U	New Meeting Congregation, Birmingham 1792-1795.			7
Joyce, Jeremiah (1763-1816)	M	U	Writer, member of S. C. I., acquitted of treason 1794.			5
Kell, Robert	M	A	Wareham 1787. Involved in lengthy dispute with Orthodox Dissenting congregation.			
Kenrick, Timothy (1759-1804)	M	U	St. George's Meeting, Exeter from 1784.		1	2
Kentish, John (1768-1853)	M	U	Gravel Pit Meeting, Hackney 1795, Newington Green 1799-1802, St. Thomas's, Southwark 1802-1803, New Meeting, Birmingham 1803.			4
Kippis, Andrew (1725-1795)	M	U	Princes St., Westminster 1753-1795, tutor Hackney New College.	3	6	5



				70s	80s	90s
Kirkpatrick, Hezekiah (1738-1799)	M	U	Octagon Chapel, Liverpool 1763-1773, Park Lane Chapel, Lancashire 1786-1799.		1	
Lewin, Robert (1739-1825)	M	A U	Benn's Garden Chapel, Liverpool.			1
Lightbody, Hannah (1766-1828)	L	U	Diarist 1786 - 1790, married Samuel Gregg of Quarry Bank Mill, Liverpool.			
Lindsey, Theophilus (1723-1808)	M	U	Resigned living at Catterick, Yorkshire 1772, founded Unitarian Essex Street Chapel, London 1774.	8	7	5
Lindsey, Hannah (1740-1812)	L	U	Wife of Theophilus Lindsey.			
Lofft, Capel (1751-1824)	L	U	Writer on law and politics.			1
Losh, James (1763-1833)	L	U	Attorney, Northern Circuit, reformer and philanthropist.			
Manning, James (1754-1831)	M	A	George's Meeting, Exeter.			5
Martineau, Harriet (1802-1876)	L	U	Writer based in Norwich and London.			
Maty, Paul Henry (1744-1787)	L	A	1776 assistant librarian at British Museum and foreign secretary of Royal Society.		2	
Milford, Samuel (d. 1800)	L	U	Exeter banker, committee member of Western Unitarian Society 1795-1799.			
Mottershead, Joseph (1688-1771)	M	A	Cross Street Chapel, Manchester.			
Neville, Syllas (1741-1840)	L	U	Diarist. Friend of Caleb Fleming.			
Nicholson Family	L	U	Merchant family of Liverpool and Manchester, prolific letter writers.			
Palmer, John (1742-1786)	M	U	Back Street Chapel, Macclesfield, 1772-1779, Birmingham from 1779.	5	2	
Percival, Dr. Thomas (1740-1804)	L	U	Manchester physician, prominent member of Manchester Philosophical Society.	4	3	6

				70s	80s	90s
Phillips, Nathaniel (1757-1842)	M	A	Sheffield Upper Chapel.			
Pike, John Baxter (1745-1811)	L	A	Left Church of England 1777. 1791 practising doctor.		2	
Pilkington, James (c.1752-1804)	M	U	Friar Gate Chapel, Derby.			1
Pope, John (1745-1802)	M	U	Tutor Hackney New College.	1		2
Pope, Michael (1709-1788)	M	A	Leather Lane, Holborn 1760-1788.			
Porter, Thomas (1790-1835)	M	U	Plymouth.			1
Rathbone, William (1757-1809)	L	U	Liverpool merchant and philanthropist, worshipped at Ben's Garden Chapel.			
Rayner, Elizabeth (1783-1804)	L	U	Widowed, wealthy subscriber to Essex Street Chapel and support of Theophilus Lindsey, John Disney and Joseph Priestley.			
Rees, Abraham (1743-1825)	M	A	Old Jewry congregation, London, 1783-1825.	2	8	6
Rogers, Samuel (1763-1855)	L	A	Poet of Newington Green.			
Roscoe, William (1753-1831)	L	U	Liverpool attorney and M.P.		4	14
Rowe, John (1764-1832)	M	U	High Street Chapel, Shrewsbury from 1787, Lewin's Mead Chapel, Bristol 1798-1832.			1
Rutt, John Towill (1760-1841)	L	U	Druggist, founder of Monthly Repository.			2
Seddon, John (1724-1770)	M	U	Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington from 1747.			
Seddon, John (1719-1769)	M	U	Cross Street Chapel, Manchester 1742-1769.			
Scott, Russell (1760-1834)	M	U	High Street Chapel, Portsmouth from 1788, founded Unitarian Society for South of England.		1	

				70s	80s	90s
Scott, Mary (1751-1793)	L	U	Correspondent of Lindsey, poet, sister of Russell Scott.			
Sharpe, Richard (1759-1835)	L	U	Member of S. C. I.			
Shore, Samuel, senior (1738-1828)	L	U	Trustee of Essex Street Chapel, vice-president of S. C. I., president of Manchester College 1813-1815.			
Simpson, John (1746-1812)	M	A	High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham 1772-1777, Walthamstow 1777-1779.			5
Smith, William (1756-1835)	L	U	M. P. and reformer.			
Southwood Smith, Thomas (1788-1861)	M	U	Yeovil 1816-1820, physician.			
Taylor, Henry (1711-1785)	M	A	Vicar of Portsmouth 1755-1785.	4	3	
Tayleur, William (1713-1796)	L	U	Active in Shrewsbury.			
Temple, Anthony (1723-1795)	M	A	Vicar of Easby 1770.			
Titford, William (1752-1824)	L	U	Spitalfields weaver in silk manufacturing firm of Cotes, Mullis and Titford.			
Toulmin, Henry (1766-1823)	M	U	Chowbent. Emigrated to Virginia 1793.			
Toulmin, Jane (1742/3-1824)	L	U	Wife of Joshua Toulmin, Taunton bookseller.			1
Toulmin, Joshua (1740-1815)	M	U	Mary Street, Taunton 1765-1804, Birmingham 1804-1815.	10	14	15
Towers, Joseph (1737-1799)	M	A	Newington Green 1778-1799, bookseller.	19	8	9
Towers, Joseph Lomas (1770-1831)	M	U	Son of Joseph, no settled congregation.			2
Towgood, Micaiah (1700-1792)	M	A	George's Meeting, Exeter from 1760.	4	4	4

				70s	80s	90s
Trelawny, Sir Henry (1756-1834))	M	A	West Looe, Cornwall. Returned to Church of England 1780.			
Tucker, William	L	U	Merchant corn factor, Exeter, committee member of Western Unitarian Society 1793-1805.			
Turner, William (1761-1859)	M	U	Hanover Square, Newcastle upon Tyne 1782-1841.			3
Vidler, William (1758-1816)	M	U	Battle, Sussex, co-founder of Unitarian Fund 1806.			4
Wakefield, Gilbert (1756-1801)	L	U	Controversialist and classical scholar.		11	26
Walker, George (1734-1807)	M	A	High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham 1774-1796, Dob Lane, Failsworth 1803-1806.	2	3	4
Wansey, Henry (1751-1827)	L	U	Salisbury woollen manufacturer, member of Western Unitarian Society 1793-1805.			
Ward John (1713-1797)	M	A	Tancred Street Chapel, Taunton	2		
Wellbeloved, Charles (1769-1858)	M	U	St. Saviourgate Chapel, York 1800-1858.			
Wiche, John (1718-1794)	M	U	Rose Yard, Maidstone 1748-1794.			
Williams, David (1738-1816)	M	A	Southwood Lane, Highgate 1771-1773, founder of the Literary Fund.	7	9	6
Williams, Helen Maria (1759-1827)	L	U	Writer, travelled in France in 1790s, member of Kippis's congregation at Princes St, Westminster.		2	10
Wolferston, Samuel Pipe (1751-1820)	L	U	Attorney, Midland Circuit, diarist.			
Wollstonecraft, Mary (1759-1797)	L	U	Political writer. Mixed with Unitarians, Newington Green.		1	3
Wood, William (1745-1808)	M	U	Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds 1773-1808.	2	3	3

				70s	80s	90s
Worthington, Hugh (1752-1813)	M	A	Salters' Hall, London 1774-1813, tutor at Hackney New College.	3	3	2
Wright, Richard (1764-1836)	M	U	Travelling missionary 1806-1819.			7
Yates, John (1755-1826)	M	U	Kaye Street Chapel, Liverpool 1777- 1823.			
	86 M	32 A				
	52L	103 U				
Total - 139		4 AU		131	175	332

## 1: INTRODUCTION

While in the two decades before 1770 only a small number of members of the Established Church or Dissenters would have used the term Rational Dissenter, by 1800 it was widely recognised. The subject of identity has been very important to late twentieth and twenty-first century historians,<sup>1</sup> amongst them many specialists in eighteenth century history.<sup>2</sup> A great deal has been written about Rational Dissent, yet scholarly work has not adequately explored its wider identity. It is the contention of this dissertation that the last thirty years of the eighteenth century were of particular significance in its emerging nature. Much of the evidence for this statement lies in the importance attributed by friend and foe alike amongst contemporaries to this distinctive phenomenon between c. 1770 and c. 1800.

In its prosopographical approach this research is based on contextual analysis of the ideas of a group of people, many of them little explored, defined by themselves and by others at the time as Rational Dissenters. The work of Lawrence Stone usefully criticised earlier forms of prosopography on the grounds that, reliant on people whose lives were already known, it added little to knowledge and understanding.<sup>3</sup> This study seeks to avoid such a problem by widening its focus. It is understandable that most of the less well known analysed within it have not been the subject of individual biographies. However their significance lies in the fact that they debated in print issues

---

<sup>1</sup> Amongst them B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities; reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev ed. 1983); E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983); A. Smith, *National Identity* (1991).

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth Century English Society: Class struggle without class', *Journal of Social History*, 3, 2 (1978); D. M. Thompson, *Denominationalism and Dissent, 1795-1835: a question of identity* (39th annual lecture, Friends of Dr Williams's Library, 1985); K. Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995); M. O'Dea and K. Whelan, *Nations and Nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the Eighteenth Century Context* (Oxford, 1996); J. Hoppit, ed., *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland 1660-1850* (Manchester, 2003); W. Gibson and R. Ingram, eds, *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832* (Aldershot, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> L. Stone, 'Prosopography', *Daedalus*, 100, 1 (1971), 47.

of key concern to Rational Dissenters as a whole, and in so doing helped define its nature.

The group identity of Rational Dissenters went far beyond the co-existence of common ideas. They shared attendance at a variety of meetings, amongst them Unitarian Societies, debating, philosophical, and literary societies, and those of philanthropic and reforming intent. They attended lectures in the liberal Dissenting academies of Warrington, Manchester, Hackney and Exeter and sermons delivered in Nonconformist chapels adhering to Rational Dissenting concepts. As Deconinck-Brossard's useful study highlights, sermons celebrating the lives of ministers and laymen and women, helped individuals 'reaffirm their identity and sustain a sense of community.'<sup>4</sup> Naturally, authors of their sermons associated with sympathetic publishers such as Joseph Johnson and Benjamin Flower, and were often supported by subscribers whose names were listed in many of their works, and whose individual identity can thus be confirmed. Their ideas were often formalised in liturgies which shared distinctive characteristics and which distinguished them from Orthodox Dissenters.<sup>5</sup> Informal ideas were reinforced by a network of long distance connections and by interaction between congregations. All such characteristics consolidated and propagated the emerging identity of Rational Dissent.

Exact numbers of Rational Dissenters towards the end of the eighteenth century are difficult to establish,<sup>6</sup> simply because they were not a denomination and did not have the type of organisation which produced national records. Not until the

---

<sup>4</sup> F. Deconinck-Brossard, 'Eighteenth Century Sermons and the Age' in W. M. Jacob and N. Yates, ed., *Crown and Mitre; Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> A. E. Peaston 'The Unitarian Liturgical Tradition', *TUHS*, 16, 2 (1976).

<sup>6</sup> A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (1976); C. D. Field, 'Counting Religion in England and Wales: The Long Eighteenth Century, c. 1680-c. 1840', *JEH*, 63, 4 (2012); K. D. M. Snell, P. S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems; the Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2004) devote considerable attention to the difficulties of statistical analysis.

appearance of Unitarian congregations did they move away from the labels Presbyterian and General Baptist, amongst whom the overwhelming majority of adherents were to be found. By 1832 *The Unitarian Chronicle* identified approximately 200 Unitarian congregations in England. In the late eighteenth century the number was clearly considerably smaller. Always a minority compared with the vastly greater membership of Orthodox Dissent, of the Established Church, and by 1800 of Methodists, the fears inspired by Rational Dissent stemmed directly from the nature of its beliefs, rather than its numbers.

The level of invective directed against Rational Dissenters was symptomatic of the fear they inspired. The anti-Trinitarianism of Rational Dissenters appeared to high churchmen and to Calvinist Orthodox Dissenters to strike at the very foundations of Christianity and the assumptions which underpinned morality. High churchmen believed Rational Dissenters, taking their arguments further than did Orthodox Dissenters, posed a particularly significant threat to the closely interwoven relationship of Established Church and State. They feared that Rational Dissenters intended the destruction of the Established Church. Amongst Orthodox Dissenters, Particular Baptists were profoundly concerned by the theological direction of Rational Dissenting arguments.

By 1753 a recognition of Rational Dissent as a distinctive entity was beginning to emerge. Micaiah Towgood, in a publication which reached its eighth edition in 1800, asserted that

[when integrity and truth] shall prevail over falsehood and error then will the character of a rational Dissenter be had in universal honour.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Towgood, *A Dissent*.



Towgood implied that Rational Dissenters were under attack. By 1761 the layman Soame Jenyns, author of a contentious pamphlet on the nature of evil, perceived Rational Dissenters as a distinct group. In the Preface to the fourth edition, he argued that

The rational dissenters arbitrarily expunged out of their Bibles everything which appears to them to be contradictory to their own reason.<sup>8</sup>

By implication Jenyns suggested Orthodox Dissenters were not similarly guilty, and that the profile of Rational Dissent was rising.

By the 1770s this perception of Rational Dissent as an entity with distinguishing characteristics was far more widely held and more frequently advanced, both favourably and otherwise, as this dissertation demonstrates. The movement for the amendment or abolition of the system of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles required by Oxford and Cambridge Universities and of schoolmasters attracted considerable attention to the term. The Calvinist Orthodox Dissenter John Macgowan, making a clear distinction between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters, denigrated the former seven times within a single work in 1771.<sup>9</sup> From within Joseph Priestley used the term Rational Dissent in 1771, 1782 and 1792 in complimentary terms.<sup>10</sup> By 1800 the high churchman, Samuel Horsley could use the term and assume that it would be immediately understood.<sup>11</sup> The Church of England clergyman and political reformer, Christopher Wyvill openly acknowledged that he particularly appealed to Rational Dissenters for support for the extension of religious toleration in petitions drawn up

---

<sup>8</sup> S. Jenyns, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil, in Six Letters* (4th ed., 1761), p. xvi.

<sup>9</sup> J. Macgowan, *Familiar Epistles to the Reverend Dr. Priestley* (1771), pp. 10-82.

<sup>10</sup> J. Priestley, *A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters. By a Dissenter* (1771); idem, *Corruptions*, vol. 2; idem, *An appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity* (1792).

<sup>11</sup> S. Horsley, *Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's 2nd letter to the Archdeacon of St Albans, with proofs of certain facts asserted by the Archdeacon* (1800), p. 65.

between 1809 and 1812.<sup>12</sup> Both the immense consideration given by Rational Dissenters themselves to working out their own identity and the lengthy, numerous, frequent, and generally hostile responses of those outside of Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century confirms the importance attributed by this dissertation to analysis of its doctrinal and ideological makeup.

The high profile assumed by Rational Dissent encouraged its adherents to define themselves more precisely in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Their anti-Trinitarianism, founded on the close examination of the Scriptures, led to the formation of more coherent, more frequently articulated ideas which replaced those they rejected. To such ideas ‘others’ responded. A simplistic and misleading tendency amongst these ‘others’ to generalise and to assume that all Rational Dissenters had identical views forced its adherents to define their ideas more specifically. Thus the identity of Rational Dissent was constructed by Rational Dissenters,<sup>13</sup> imagined by others, and reconstructed by themselves.

For many within the Church of England, Rational Dissent was beginning to displace the Papacy as the key threat. Of the 200 Church of England sources in The Eighteenth Century Collections Online referring to the Papacy, the overwhelming majority focussed on the danger which it had posed between the Reformation and the defeat of the Jacobite rebellions. Only ten of these sources manifested concern about the contemporary power of the Papacy. Samuel Horsley pointed to the vanquishing of the Jacobite threat as one of the main reasons underpinning his support for the Catholic

---

<sup>12</sup> C. Wyvill to S. Whitbread M.P., 22 November 1809, 5 May 1811, 10 February 1812, quoted by G. M. Ditchfield, ‘Anti-Trinitarianism and Toleration in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics: the Unitarian Petition of 1792’, *JEH*, 42 (1991), 66.

<sup>13</sup> As recognised in I. McBride and T. Claydon, eds, *Protestantism and National Identity* (1998), p. 11, identity is, unsurprisingly, often initially constructed in the form of rejection of existing concepts held by ‘others’.

Relief Act of 1791.<sup>14</sup> The successful passage of this Act through Parliament was itself an indication of a mellowing within the Established Church towards Roman Catholics in general and the diminishing power of the Papacy in particular.<sup>15</sup> The overthrow of ‘Papal tyranny in France’ was welcomed by many.<sup>16</sup> The disbanding of the papal army and of papal sovereignty within the Papal territories, and the death in French captivity of Pius VI in 1799 rendered earlier concerns about papal power and its consequences no longer of key concern. The near-repetition of this sequence of events in 1809 during the pontificate of Pius VII further encouraged such views. Whilst popular fear of Roman Catholicism continued to re-surface at particular moments in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, as for example in the Gordon Riots of 1780, fear of Rational Dissent was ongoing and more immediate.

In contrast, worries about Methodism did not reach their height until after John Wesley’s death in 1791, since he fervently maintained that Methodists were a constituent part of the Church of England. In the 1780s and early 1790s Rational Dissent appeared to many as a greater threat than Methodism. Thus in *The London Chronicle* on 12 January 1790 a correspondent asserted that

The Methodists have not corresponded with the natural enemies of this country, the French, in the hopes of exciting disturbances, have never preached sedition from a Christian pulpit, nor published factious toasts from a tavern.

---

<sup>14</sup> S. Horsley, *A speech delivered by the Bishop of St. David’s in the House of Lords on the second reading of the bill for the relief of the Papists* (1791), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Many Scottish Episcopalians had supported the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. The first Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778 was restricted to England due to anti-Catholic riots in Scotland. The provisions of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791, which allowed freedom of worship to those Catholics who took an oath of allegiance, were extended to Scotland in 1793.

<sup>16</sup> R. Fleming, *Apocalyptical key: An extraordinary discourse on the rise and fall of papacy* (1793), p. 63; J. Bicheno, *The signs of the times: or the overthrow of papal tyranny in France, the prelude of the destruction of popery and despotism* (1793), p. 6; idem, *The signs of the times, to which is added an appendix, containing thoughts on the fall of papal government* (1799); Lord Chief Baron Gilbert, *The Law of Evidence* (1796), p. 611; J. Baillie, *A funeral discourse on the death of the Papacy* (1798); R. Duppa, *A brief account of the subversion of the Papal government* (1798).

The implied derogatory references can only be to the famous sermon of Richard Price celebrating the centenary of the Glorious Revolution,<sup>17</sup> and the activities of the Revolution Society. The foundation of the Methodist New Connection by Alexander Kilham was not completed until 1798. Not until then did Methodism raise significant concerns about the effects, particularly on the lower classes, of open-air preaching to large numbers by lay preachers. Not until M. A. Taylor's Bill in 1800 and Sidmouth's Bill in 1810 did such concerns prompt unsuccessful attempts in parliament to restrict licensing by magistrates of popular evangelical preaching.

Historians of ideas have always recognised the importance of the widest possible contexts<sup>18</sup>, whether they be religious, economic, social, political, existing knowledge, preoccupations or concerns. Amongst such studies feature the distinguished works of Peter Laslett, John Dunn, Mark Goldie and Quentin Skinner.<sup>19</sup> This research follows on from their methodological example. Only by placing the evolution of Rational Dissenting ideas firmly within the context of time and contemporary reactions to major events, such as the American and French Revolutions, can we hope to arrive at a full understanding of its identity. Identity, as many scholars have highlighted, is a complex concept. Dangers of over-simplification<sup>20</sup> sit alongside those of over-emphasis on the importance at the time of particular ideas to individuals.<sup>21</sup> No author of any document writes without an intention, more or less conscious, or without a specific audience in mind, public or private. Interpretations of motive, cause and effect rest on

---

<sup>17</sup> R. Price, *A discourse on the love of our country* (1789).

<sup>18</sup> I. Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (1979), p. xi.

<sup>19</sup> J. Harrison and P. Laslett, *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford, 1965); J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke* (1982); M. Goldie, *Political Studies* (1983); J. Tully, Q. Skinner, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Context* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> As highlighted by B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (1991).

<sup>21</sup> A. P. Martinich, 'A Moderate Logic of the History of Ideas', *JHI*, 73 (2012), 611.

what are sometimes scanty evidence. An awareness of such complexities underpins this research.

### **i: Late Eighteenth Century Rational Dissent: Stimulants to Research**

The research for this dissertation has been stimulated in part by a small number of key works amongst the historiography of the late eighteenth century, those of Jonathan Clark, Brian Young, Sarah Mortimer and Alan Sell. These four historians have made important contributions to the study of Dissent and Latitudinarianism. While benefiting from the insights they provide, this research does not simply add to their work but takes it in a different direction. It looks beyond the much studied Richard Price and Joseph Priestley to explore the wider identity of Rational Dissent. It highlights the distinctiveness of Rational Dissenting theology and the impact of this on the nature of commitment among its adherents to liberty and progress in the later eighteenth century. It looks beyond the parliamentary standpoint on attempts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts to the theological ideology which drove Rational Dissenters to present their case against these Acts. A reassessment of the role of theology constitutes an essential element of the original work within this dissertation.

Jonathan Clark's work *English Society 1688-1832; Ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancien regime*, published in 1985, was usefully revised and extended in 2000 as *English Society: Religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime 1660-1832*. His awareness that academic study in the 1980s and earlier was often characterised by 'secular, radical individualism',<sup>22</sup> was reflected in this change of title. Clark restored religion to its proper place in eighteenth century traditional society, linking the three themes of religion, ideology and politics. He recognised that the theology of Rational Dissent fed into political activities. This

---

<sup>22</sup> Clark, *English Society*, Preface, p. x.

dissertation explores in considerable depth the ways in which this occurred and how this contributed to the overall identity of Rational Dissent. Clark's contribution to increasing understanding of the whole span of religion in eighteenth century England was considerable, yet he relied almost exclusively on published primary sources, which led him to display a massive over-dependence on a very small number of Rational Dissenters, principally Price and Priestley.

In 1998 the work of Brian Young had much to say about the importance of theology in the formation of identity.<sup>23</sup> Young's focus rested particularly on the diverse views of Latitudinarians, such as Blackburne and Warburton. This dissertation explores Young's hypothesis that 'it was religious commitment and theological belief, and not mere political ideology, which separated the contending factions.' It applies Young's valuable insight to the Rational Dissenting hinterland, previously little explored.

In 2010 Sarah Mortimer produced an illuminating study of seventeenth century Socinianism, by far the most contentious element of Rational Dissent.<sup>24</sup> Only Herbert John McLachlan before her had devoted himself to a major examination of this set of seventeenth century theological beliefs. Mortimer shows that Socinianism was a 'challenge' even in the 1690s. This dissertation demonstrates that it was much more so in the 1790s. Mortimer's work highlights the crucial need for an analysis of Socinianism set within the context of the wider elements of Rational Dissent and in the all important period of the late eighteenth century.

---

<sup>23</sup> B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (1998); idem, 'John Jortin, Ecclesiastical History, and the Christian Republic of Letters', *HJ*, 55 (2012), drew attention to the heterodox member of the Church of England, John Jortin, whose researches were drawn on by Rational Dissenters.

<sup>24</sup> S. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, 2010).

Alan Sell's *Hinterland Theology*<sup>25</sup> has led the way in recent re-evaluations of the theology of Nonconformity as a whole. This dissertation recognises the validity of Sell's crucial argument that there is a need in academic research to look beyond the best-known individuals. Sell convincingly maintains that the responses of others beyond the best known individuals provide an extra dimension to the concept of identity and are more representative of it. In this research this crucial argument is applied to the field of Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century. A full understanding of its nature is impossible without a broadening of research far beyond Price and Priestley. The shorter period analysed in this research allows a sharper focus than Sell's period of 300 years, applying this to the specific area of what distinguished Rational Dissent. In contrast to Sell's series of individual biographical essays focussing exclusively on ministers, the approach in this dissertation is thematic, prosopographical and includes laymen and women.

## **ii: The Historiography of Rational Dissent**

This research into the identity of Rational Dissent is underpinned by three key contentions, namely the importance of a prosopographical approach, the crucial significance of theological doctrine in the formation of its identity, explored through a number of case studies, and the very different identity of Rational from Orthodox Dissent by 1800. In recent times the importance of theological doctrine in the formation of identity was recognised by Patrick Collinson writing in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* on 5 July 1996<sup>26</sup> and by A. M. C. Waterman in a useful essay 'The nexus between theology and political doctrine.'<sup>27</sup> Many studies have, however, manifested a secular focus which has distorted the picture presented of its identity. A.

---

<sup>25</sup> A. Sell, *Hinterland Theology* (Nottingham, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> This formed a key aspect in I. McBride and T. Claydon, eds, *Protestantism and National Identity* (1998).

<sup>27</sup> Haakonssen, ed., *Enlightenment and Religion*.

H. Lincoln described his work as ‘an essay on the history of certain political theories.’<sup>28</sup> Caroline Robbins’ volume *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* in 1959 drew attention to the Honest Whigs of George III’s reign, many of whom were Rational Dissenters, a subject further explored in 1966 by Verner Crane.<sup>29</sup> However, theology was not Robbins’ priority. Moreover, her seminal work spanned one hundred years. R. B. Barlow’s important contribution to the history of ideas in 1962<sup>30</sup> offered a narrative of the relationship of Dissenters as a whole with the State over a lengthy time span. He explored Rational Dissent in an almost exclusively political context, depending on wide use of mainly published, rather than manuscript, sources. A similar secular emphasis was also evident in academic works appearing from the 1970s onwards which dealt with Rational Dissenting ideas of liberty, their responses to the American Revolution and involvement in political debate.<sup>31</sup> H. T. Dickinson’s *Liberty and Property* placed them at the heart of eighteenth century radical ideology. In 1979 Albert Goodwin’s work, *The Friends of Liberty* again gave priority to politics, arguing that Rational Dissenters had an important role within radicalism generally.<sup>32</sup> Major studies by Hole<sup>33</sup> and Bradley in the 1980s adopted a similar emphasis.<sup>34</sup> This dissertation argues that political ideas for Rational Dissenters were driven by theological concepts.

Although well aware of doctrinal issues, Bradley was more interested in the wider political rather more than the theological context of Dissent. This research argues that Bradley’s work, despite its major contribution to historical research, in elevating

---

<sup>28</sup> A. H. Lincoln, *Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> V. Crane, ‘The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 23 (1966).

<sup>30</sup> R. B. Barlow, *Citizenship and Conscience: A Study in the theory and practice of Toleration in England during the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia, Pa, 1962).

<sup>31</sup> S. Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (1973); C. Bonwick, *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (1977).

<sup>32</sup> A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979).

<sup>33</sup> Hole, *Pulpits*.

<sup>34</sup> Bradley, *Religion*.



ecclesiology over doctrine underestimated the contribution of Rational Dissent to doctrinal debate. His argument that ‘the common heritage of a radically separate ecclesiastical polity was controlling for both the ‘rational’ and ‘orthodox’ alike’<sup>35</sup> presented Rational Dissent firmly as a constituent element of the whole body of Dissent and played down its distinctiveness from Orthodox Dissent. For Bradley the common element of dissent from the Established Church outweighed any differences between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters.

In the 1980s and 1990s John Seed examined the social background of Rational Dissenting politics.<sup>36</sup> Seed stressed the inclusion of ‘artisans, small scale manufacturers, merchants, doctors, solicitors, bankers and landed individuals’, as distinct from the lower classes.<sup>37</sup> While it is true that considerable economic independence among Rational Dissenters allowed them greater freedom to express their opinions, it did not necessarily follow that social status rather than their theology was the primary factor in political positions adopted by them. His important research convincingly demonstrates that a number of separate factors contributed to the emergence of Rational Dissent, but does not take full account of the widening gap between Rational and Orthodox which stemmed from theological opinions and powerfully influenced their politics.

A limiting factor within the historiography has been the treatment of Rational Dissent as a tangential element in the field of Nonconformity demonstrated, for example, by Bradley. A rare exception to this was Elliott Peaston’s work in 1940 which usefully began to address the question of seventeenth century Arian identity.<sup>38</sup> Most of

---

<sup>35</sup> Bradley, *Religion*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> J. Seed, ‘Gentlemen Dissenters: The social and political meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s’, *HJ*, 28 (1985).

<sup>37</sup> J. Seed, ‘Gentleman Dissenters’, 302-303, 313.

<sup>38</sup> A. E. Peaston, *The Prayer Book Reform Movement* (1940).

Lincoln's observations in 1938<sup>39</sup> were directed towards Dissent as a whole. In 1978 Michael Watts in his invaluable work, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, while providing considerable insight into Protestant Nonconformity in this period, did not examine Rational Dissent as a distinctive entity in its own right.<sup>40</sup>

A hugely significant problem for understanding its full identity lies in the fact that Richard Price and Joseph Priestley have formed the subject of so many individual biographies. The result has been a massive over-emphasis on Price and Priestley by many scholarly studies, a distortion which this research seeks to address. Nine books and articles on the former,<sup>41</sup> nineteen on the latter,<sup>42</sup> not including those featuring in the *Price-Priestley Newsletter* bear testimony to this trend. The longevity and importance of these two polymaths, both of them prolific writers, have been justifiably recognised but at the expense of many other Rational Dissenting authors. E. M. Wilbur in *A History of Unitarianism* in 1945 claimed that liberal Dissenters followed the leadership of Priestley without arguing the case for this. Watts's volume drew upon local studies and a considerable amount of statistical evidence. However even Watts depended heavily, in the image he presented of Rational Dissent, on the careers of Price and Priestley, who constituted the focus of an entire section. The same tendency is a characteristic of Hole's more recent study. Precision of definition of the phenomenon has been clouded by this tendency. A more accurate understanding of how

---

<sup>39</sup> A. H. Lincoln, *Some Political and Social Ideas*.

<sup>40</sup> M. Fitzpatrick, 'Toleration and Truth', *E & D*, 1 (1982) provides one exception to this tendency.

<sup>41</sup> Most notably C. B. Cone, *Torchbearer of Freedom: The influence of Richard Price on Eighteenth Century Thought* (Kentucky, 1952); D. O. Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977); H. Laboucheix, *Richard Price as moral philosopher and political theorist* (Oxford, 1982); J. Fruchtman, *The Apocalyptic politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley; A Study in late eighteenth century republican millennialism* (1983).

<sup>42</sup> M. Canovan, 'Paternalistic Liberalism: Joseph Priestley on Rank and Equality', *E & D*, 2 (1983); J. McEvoy 'Enlightenment and Dissent in science: Joseph Priestley and limits of theoretical reasoning', *E & D*, 2 (1983); H. Laboucheix and J. J. Hoecker, *Joseph Priestley and the idea of progress* (New York, 1987); R. E. Schofield, *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1733 to 1773* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1997); idem, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804* (Philadelphia, Pa., 2004).

representative of Rational Dissent Price and Priestley actually were is crucial to establishing the nature of its identity.

Biographies of Rational Dissenters other than Price and Priestley exist only in very limited numbers. Articles on Joseph Towers by Donnelly and by Page,<sup>43</sup> and studies of Mary Hays by G. L. Walker<sup>44</sup> were significant in their focus on previously lesser-known but important eighteenth century Rational Dissenting influences. Anthony Page's analysis of the ideology and career of John Jebb,<sup>45</sup> and G. M. Ditchfield's *The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, 1747-1808*, contribute much to our understanding of Jebb, Lindsey and the vitality of the Essex Street Chapel, a key centre of Rational Dissent. All of these works, however, focus on specific individuals, rather than the broader context.

Increasing interest in women's history has also included a focus in recent work on individual women Rational Dissenters, such as Anna Letitia Barbauld,<sup>46</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft,<sup>47</sup> Mary Hays,<sup>48</sup> Ann Jebb<sup>49</sup> and Hannah Lindsey.<sup>50</sup> Timothy Whelan's study of Dissenting women authors provides a valuable insight into their literary

---

<sup>43</sup> F. K. Donnelly, 'Joseph Towers and the Collapse of Rational Dissent', *E & D*, 6 (1987); A. Page, '“Probably the most indefatigable Prince that ever existed”: a Rational Dissenting perspective on Frederick the Great', *E & D*, 23 (2005).

<sup>44</sup> G. L. Walker, *Mary Hays: the growth of a woman's mind* (Burlington, 2006); eadem, 'Energetic Sympathies of Truth and Feeling; Mary Hays and Rational Dissent', *E & D*, 26 (2010).

<sup>45</sup> A. Page, 'Enlightenment and a second reformation; the religion and philosophy of John Jebb,' *E & D*, 17 (1998); idem, 'John Jebb and the Enlightenment Origins of English Radicalism', *E & D*, 22 (2003).

<sup>46</sup> B. Rodgers, *Georgian Chronicle: Mrs Barbauld and her family* (1958); W. M. McCarthy, *The celebrated academy at Palgrave: a documentary history of Anna Letitia Barbauld's school* (1997); idem, *Anna Letitia Barbauld* (2008).

<sup>47</sup> D. Jacobs, *Her Own Woman: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2001); L. Gordan, *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2005).

<sup>48</sup> G. L. Walker, 'Energetic Sympathies of Truth and Feeling: Mary Hays and Rational Dissent', *E. & D*, 26 (2010); M. L. Brooks, 'Mary Hays: finding a voice in Dissent', *E & D*, 14 (1995).

<sup>49</sup> A. Page, *John Jebb and the Enlightenment Origins of English Radicalism* (2003); idem '“A Great Politicianess”: Ann Jebb, Rational Dissent and politics in late eighteenth century Britain', *Women's History Review*, 17 (2005); idem '“No Effort can be lost”: The Unitarianism and Republicanism of Ann Jebb', *E & D*, 26 (2010).

<sup>50</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, 'Hannah Lindsey and her Circle: The Female Element in Early English Unitarianism', *E & D*, 26 (2010).

friendships.<sup>51</sup> In this dissertation women are perceived in a very different light as a constituent and significant element amongst the Rational Dissenting laity, whose somewhat different role was valued by Rational Dissenting laymen and ministers.

In addition to the biographical approach, Rational Dissent has attracted regional and local studies. Many studies have limited themselves to particular geographical areas and congregations, especially in denominational historical journals. Thorncroft in 1958 and Ruston in 1980 focussed on the ministries of Price and Priestley at Newington Green and the Gravel Pit Chapel in Hackney.<sup>52</sup> Emily Bushrod's dissertation, 'The History of Unitarians in Birmingham from the middle of the eighteenth century to 1893',<sup>53</sup> usefully concentrated on a key area outside the capital. A number of regional and local studies appeared from the 1970s onwards, including research on Kent, East Anglia, Sussex, Berkshire and Lancashire.<sup>54</sup> Seed focussed mainly on the midlands and the north. There remains still a need for a rounded analysis of the identity of Rational Dissent which takes into account Rutt's comment that 'We in the country do not see things as you [in London] do.'<sup>55</sup> An awareness of varying regional dimensions permeates this dissertation and is reflected in different regional studies from those of Seed.

A further problem in the historiography of Dissent from the eighteenth century onwards has been a strongly partisan approach. The contemporary Dissenters Bogue

---

<sup>51</sup> T. Whelan, *Other British Voices: Women, Poetry and Religion 1766-1840* (2015)

<sup>52</sup> M. Thorncroft, *Trust in Freedom: The Story of Newington Green Unitarian Church 1708-1958* (1958); A. Ruston, *Unitarianism and Early Presbyterianism in Hackney* (1980), 'Price and Priestley at the Gravel Pit, Hackney', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter* 4 (1980).

<sup>53</sup> E. Bushrod, 'The History of Unitarians in Birmingham from the middle of the eighteenth century to 1893' (Birmingham University M.A. 1954).

<sup>54</sup> A. C. Watson, *A History of Religious Dissent and Nonconformity in Ashford, Kent* (Ashford, 1979); N. Caplin, *Sussex Dissent* (Hove, 1981); Virgoe, N. and Williamson, T., eds, *Religious Dissent in East Anglia: Historical Perspectives* (Norwich, 1993); M. Brod, *Dissent and Dissenters in Early Modern Berkshire* (Oxford, D. Phil, 2002); B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity* (6 vols, 1890-1893).

<sup>55</sup> DWL, MS. 12.58 (36), Rutt to Joseph Johnson, 26 February 1783.

and Bennett, and Walter Wilson, were explicitly hostile towards Rational Dissent.<sup>56</sup> Wilson made a particular point of differing from the anti-Trinitarianism expressed by the Unitarian Lindsey.<sup>57</sup> Skeats and Miall, emphasizing Dissenting loyalty in 1745, were heavily biased towards Orthodox Dissent. Like Bogue, Bennett and Wilson, they believed that Rational Dissent had harmed the cause of Dissent as a whole.<sup>58</sup> The work of the Congregational minister, Bernard Manning, edited and completed after Manning's death by Ormerod Greenwood, was similarly unsympathetic to Rational Dissenters.<sup>59</sup>

Others presented Rational Dissenters as the idealised champions of their faith.<sup>60</sup> This was evident in Rational Dissenting periodicals such as *The Monthly Repository* and *The Christian Reformer*. Alexander Gordon, Herbert and John McLachlan, the latter principal of the Unitarian Manchester College, Oxford, were Unitarian ministers, who saw late eighteenth century Unitarians as misunderstood, liberal prophets, in advance of their time.

Much of what has been written about Dissent has appeared in the form of denominational histories. Such studies, entirely understandably, focussed on a specific denomination to the exclusion of others. Amongst these A. C. W. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (1947), R. G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (1950), B. J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (2003), have added much to understanding of Baptist history. A. Peel, *A Brief History of Congregationalism* (1945), R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (1962) and R. W. Dale, *A History of English*

---

<sup>56</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*; Bogue and Bennett, *A history of the dissenters*, pp. 605, 616, 619.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, III, 479.

<sup>58</sup> H. S. Skeats and C. S. Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1891* (1891), pp. 268-269.

<sup>59</sup> B. L. Manning, O. Greenwood, ed., *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (1952), p. 55-57.

<sup>60</sup> J. Murch, *A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England* (1835); W. Turner, *The Lives of Eminent Unitarians* (1843); J. A. Jones, *Bunhill Memorials* (1849).

*Congregationalism* (2011) provide insights into the development of Congregationalism. Demonstrative of the ‘vertical history’ identified by Patrick Collinson,<sup>61</sup> the wider theological context was not the highest priority of such studies. This research assesses the nature of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent, many of whose adherents were Presbyterian or General Baptist in origin.

The aim of this research is not only to address the above imbalances apparent in the historiography, nor simply to add to the weight of material explored by the four scholars whose work has prompted it. Rather it takes the central point raised by Clark, Young, Mortimer and Sell that theology was of considerable significance, together with Sell’s attribution of importance to analysis of a wider base of Dissenting views. It applies these to the specific identity Rational Dissent, over a particularly crucial period of time, c. 1770 to c. 1800. In so doing it takes arguments about the relevance of Rational Dissenting theology in an entirely new direction, highlighting its distinctive differences from Orthodox Dissent, and demonstrating that for Rational Dissenters it was their precise theological beliefs which underpinned all their actions and dominated all aspects of their lives. Only by analysing in depth its distinctiveness from Orthodox Dissent can we arrive at a proper appreciation of the identity of Rational Dissent.

---

<sup>61</sup> P. Collinson, ‘Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,’ in R. C. Col and M. E. Moody, eds, *The Dissenting Tradition: Essays for Leland H. Carson* (Ohio, 1975).

## 2: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Crucial to this dissertation is a focus on a wider range of significant individuals than has previously been studied and on their contribution to the nature of Rational Dissent. Such an approach enables this research to set out a number of hypotheses. Amongst these are firstly the identification of trends in and of heightened levels of invective over time against Rational Dissenters and the increasing influence of vehemently hostile perceptions on the formation of their identity. Hypotheses include secondly the scope for individual diversity in the details of doctrine and practice, in reading and subscription tendencies, alongside its collective identity, and thirdly the all-pervading influence of distinctive doctrinal arguments on concepts of liberty, of universal toleration and of patriotism.

Under the collective term Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century were included those Protestant Dissenters who held Arian or Socinian beliefs. Arian and Socinian were old terms. The teachings attributed to Arius (c. A.D. 250-326) a Christian presbyter based in Alexandria, were condemned as heresy by the first council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. This council was transferred to Chalcedon in 451 A.D., where the Definition of Faith decreed that Christ is one in two natures. Teachings attributed to Arius were again condemned by the first council of Constantinople in 381. Arianism did not die out and resurfaced in the West following the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Paul Gilliam, paying heed to the doctrine ‘of that part of the Church which was called Arian in the fourth century,’<sup>1</sup> questioned whether William Whiston, who died in 1752, was truly an Arian. Both Arians and Socinians applied individual interpretation of the Scriptures, with the potential for moving away from the precise original views of Arius and Socinus. Neither Arian nor Socinian beliefs were static.

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Gilliam, ‘William Whiston: No longer an Arian’, *JEH*, 66, 4 (2015), 766-768.

Arianism of the late eighteenth century rested on the non-Trinitarian belief that Jesus was the Son of God, but entirely distinct from and subordinate to God the Father, and that Christ was pre-existent. While High Arians believed that Christ had a role in Creation, Low Arians stopped short of this belief. Socinianism, named after Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), developed in the Minor Reformed Church of Poland in the sixteenth century and was embraced by the Unitarian Church of Transylvania. Within the Church of England, the short-lived Canons of 1640 specified excommunication for any preacher, university student, layman or publisher who advanced these 'blasphemous errors.'<sup>2</sup> Socinian non-Trinitarian beliefs went beyond those of Arians, perceiving Christ as wholly human and denying that he was pre-existent.

Throughout this research, 'Rational Dissenters', as a loose collection of individuals who shared a common approach to understanding revelation and a fundamental rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, are distinguished by the use of capital letters from others who believed themselves to be rational, and from 'dissent' in a more general sense. In the last thirty years of the eighteenth century members of the Established Church, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Dissenters used the general term unitarian, characterised by the lower case, since all Christians believed in one God. The establishment of Societies described as Unitarian by Socinians in the 1790s and the virtual self-exclusion of Arians from them meant that Unitarianism, characterised by use of the upper case, came to mean Socinianism. Within this dissertation the terms Socinian and Unitarian are used interchangeably, and Unitarianism, unless otherwise specified, denotes Socinianism.

---

<sup>2</sup> G. Bray, ed., *The Anglican Canons 1529-1947* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 565-566.



### **i: The Scope of This Dissertation**

No study to date has focussed exclusively and in depth on the complexities of identity within Rational Dissent, nor on the identities ascribed to its adherents by others of different religious sympathies in the late eighteenth century. Without such a study, any conclusions about its theology, its importance to Rational Dissenters themselves, and their involvement in the issues of liberty and politics for which they are best known, rest on ground which has not yet been adequately examined.

This dissertation examines the identity of Rational Dissent in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. The more widely held and more frequently advanced perception of Rational Dissent as an entity with distinguishing characteristics from the 1770s, by friend and foe alike, constitutes a key reason for the focus on this particular period. The figures listed in Table 1 below from the fields of Religion, Philosophy and Law in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online, comparing the last three decades of the eighteenth century with the previous three decades, suggest a marked increase during the 1770s in public awareness of Rational Dissenting ideas, in exploration of those ideas and in growing hostility towards them. In doing so they reinforce the impression left by the content of individual manuscript sources. The Feathers Tavern Petition for relief from the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, Dissenting moves for relief from subscription in 1772-1773, and the establishment of the first Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, London, can only have been contributory factors in the increase indicated below in the 1770s, simultaneously drawing further attention to it. While the slight decline in the percentage figure for the 1780s compared with the 1770s is insufficiently large to be significant, that for the 1790s reinforces the evidence for a continuing rise in debates around Rational Dissent and the redefining of Rational Dissenting identity. During the 1790s Unitarianism became increasingly formalised, assuming an increasingly public identity.

Table 1: Publications referring to Rational Dissent in ECCO

Decade	Publications referring to Rational Dissent	% Publications referring to Rational Dissent	Total number of publications in above fields
1740s	587	10%	5,846
1750s	575	9.7%	5,905
1760s	621	8.6%	7,260
1770s	871	13.8%	6,288
1780s	831	13.1%	6,347
1790s	1,508	15.1%	10,007

In order to analyse the identity of Rational Dissent in adequate depth the focus of this research is England, although it recognises the influence of Scotland, Wales and Ireland on English Rational Dissent. Scottish Universities, particularly Glasgow, awarded many English Rational Dissenters degrees. As Martin Fitzpatrick demonstrates, responses in England to accusations of heterodox doctrine drawn up by the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr against William M’Gill, minister in Ayr, are indicative of mutual awareness of and discussion of theological ideas between moderates in the Church of Scotland and English Rational Dissenters. Following the publication in 1785 of *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, M’Gill was suspected of a denial of Christ’s divinity, reminiscent of Socinian theology. Fitzpatrick cites a comment by James Wodrow, minister of Stevenson in Ayr, in a lengthy correspondence with the English Rational Dissenting banker, Samuel Kenrick, that M’Gill’s book was ‘as inoffensive as you can imagine.’<sup>3</sup> This correspondence, together with the sympathetic support of William Turner of Newcastle for M’Gill and Theophilus Lindsey’s regret at M’Gill’s recantation,<sup>4</sup> is demonstrative of the exchange of Anglo-Scottish liberal

---

<sup>3</sup> M. Fitzpatrick, ‘Varieties of Candour: English and Scottish style’, *E & D*, 7 (1988), 41.

<sup>4</sup> Lindsey, *Letters* II, 112, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 9 April 1791; 53, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 15 May 1790.

theological ideas. Lindsey wrote to Robert Millar of Dundee between at least 1793 and 1807.

This dissertation, in seeking to establish the full nature of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent, concentrates not simply on how Rational Dissenters saw themselves but takes analysis beyond a purely internalist view. It identifies trends in perception of the phenomenon, setting heightened levels of invective within the context of time and political events. Little distinction has to date been made between how they saw themselves and how they were perceived by those others, or of the inter-relationship of the two. Chapter 3 establishes that perceptions and allegations of those who feared and attacked Rational Dissent forced its adherents to defend themselves in considerable detail, shaping its very identity.

Chapter 4 investigates in depth the central ideas which bound Rational Dissenters together and gave them a collective identity. The research which underpins this dissertation breaks new ground in demonstrating that their optimistic concept of the possibility of progress for all was argued from rejection of the doctrines of original sin, atonement and predestination and was a direct consequence of it. It further establishes the ways in which Rational Dissenting doctrine and practice diverged from Orthodox Dissent and were thus distinctive from it. Chapter 4 demonstrates the central place of theology in Rational Dissenting arguments. This was unsurprisingly the case with ministers. This chapter goes further in analysing numerous examples of a comparable trend amongst the laity. The activities of many laymen and women provide examples of the crucial place of their religious beliefs and theological speculation within their lives and reveals the considerably greater supportive role played by a very extensive series of networks than has been previously appreciated. Theology fundamentally underpinned all that Rational Dissenters did and thought, governing their view of the world.

Evidence analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 indicates that Dissenters as a whole believed that the Reformation was seriously incomplete,<sup>5</sup> but that Rational Dissenters adopted very different arguments from their Orthodox contemporaries, aspiring to take the Reformation much further and in very different directions.

Chapter 5 demonstrates the existence of a wide range of opinions amongst Rational Dissenters. Diversity in theological emphasis, interpretation and practice, and awareness of these differences among Rational Dissenters helped to shape their self-identity and reveal the rather more complex nature of its identity than is suggested purely by a study of Price and Priestley. This chapter establishes that they did not see themselves purely in the terms set out by Price or Priestley but frequently differed in approach and conclusions. This is an essential element of this research, re-addressing the role of Price and Priestley within its identity.

Chapter 6 specifically demonstrates the theological terminology and concepts apparent in Rational Dissenting arguments on liberty, illustrating the crucial argument of this thesis, the all-important influence of their theology on all spheres of their thought and activity. This chapter proceeds to explore the distinctive nature of Rational Dissent, contending that Rational Dissenters went further than Orthodox Dissenters, objecting to the Test and Corporation Acts not only on the basis of principle but also on theological grounds. It also addresses the reactions of a number of Rational Dissenters towards the anti-Catholicism of their ancestors and contemporaries, and which distinguished them from Orthodox Dissenters. Chapter 6 discusses Rational Dissenting notions of history and progress. In the light of John Seed's recognition that eighteenth century historical works are not just 'a representation of the past', but also 'a collective

---

<sup>5</sup> Amongst many others, see J. Manning, *A sermon delivered before an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers at the new meeting at Bridport* (Exeter, 1794), p. 12; J. Bretland, *A sermon preached before an assembly of Protestant dissenting ministers* (Exeter, 1786), p. 12.

memory of the present,<sup>6</sup> this chapter explores the interaction between the Rational Dissenting optimistic view of liberty, progress, and contemporary perspectives of history. In so doing, it further examines the evolving nature of Rational Dissenting identity, and the impact of time and events upon it.

Chapter 7 is a development of Chapter 6, asserting that theology likewise underpinned the political views of Rational Dissenters. It explores the ways in which they saw their place within the state, and their views on war and peace. As a whole, they lauded the Revolution of 1688-9, arguing that these events had saved the country from Popery. They also generally believed that the Glorious Revolution had not gone far enough. Yet here their agreement with members of the Established Church and Orthodox Dissenters ended.

This chapter further addresses the question of whether Socinians, more ‘extreme’ in their theology, were also necessarily more ‘extreme’ in their political views and methods than Arians. It takes further Seed’s observation that ‘It is important not to jump too quickly to an equation of rationalist theology with political radicalism.’<sup>7</sup> The connection between theological and political radicalism has been asserted rather than proved. Chapter 7 questions whether Rational Dissenters were more radical than ‘Orthodox’ Dissenters, or whether their involvement in political issues took a different form. It analyses how their exposition of the concept of human rights and in particular of the right of suffrage distinguished them from others.

In Chapter 8 the 1790s are seen as a turning point in the evolution of the identity of Rational Dissent. This research establishes the extent to which Rational Dissenting works were published outside London, casting light on the extent to which

---

<sup>6</sup> J. Seed, *Dissenting Histories, Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth-Century England* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> J. Seed, *Dissenting Histories*, p. 131.

this phenomenon was a national, albeit patchy one in England. It analyses the extent to which they were repeatedly republished, generally an indication that publishers detected a market for them. The Birmingham Riots were the best known, but by no means only, example of heightened reactions to Unitarianism in particular. Unitarianism was in turn becoming increasingly formalised. This chapter demonstrates the tensions arising within Rational Dissent itself.

Theophilus Lindsey, amongst others, expressed concern that Unitarian views should be propagated more effectively lower down the social scale. Chapter 9 addresses the question of how far this happened. Hugh Worthington's comment that 'Could I preach every Sunday to farmers, labourers and mechanicks my ambition would be gratified,'<sup>8</sup> suggests that he was not able to do so. Herein lay an inherent difficulty. Lacking an education in Greek and Hebrew, the poor could not study original versions of the Scriptures for themselves, and might also struggle with more complex theological concepts. Analysis in Chapter 9 of multiple subscribers to Rational Dissenting works and organisations, who formed a core of support for Rational Dissent, highlights the contribution of twelve women who were not published authors, redressing a further imbalance in the historiography. Examination of the precise nature of their subscriptions in Chapter 9 and in Appendix 2, and in Chapter 10 of the borrowing activities of women who belonged to Unitarian Vestry libraries similarly provides some insight into the nature of their theological interest.

The key focus in this research lies in the identity of Rational Dissent in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. No history of ideas, however, can be tied solely to events in politics, nor terminate neatly in a particular year. This research is not a study of Unitarian Rational Dissent in the mid and later nineteenth century, when the

---

<sup>8</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93 (15), H. Worthington to M. Hays, 3 September 1792.

ideas of James Martineau took it in an entirely different direction from that of the late eighteenth century. However, no valid analysis of the ideology and identity of Rational Dissent in the last thirty years of the 1700s can end abruptly in 1800. The sacramental provisions of the Test and Corporation Acts, for example, were not finally repealed until 1828. Hence Chapter 10 traces the evolution of Rational Dissent into the early years of the nineteenth century. It questions whether Rational Dissent in its late eighteenth century form still existed at that point. The foundation of Unitarian Societies and the establishment of the Unitarian Fund and *The Monthly Repository* and *The Christian Reformer*, suggest that Rational Dissent was changing, crystallising into something more concrete and organised. This study further explores the neglected area of what happened to Arians in the early nineteenth century, a question crucial to the identity of Rational Dissent. It addresses the question as to whether by then Unitarianism had become its sole repository, and how far Arianism faded away.

In its final chapter this study draws together conclusions about those ideas which gave Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century an identity which was distinctive, and which, despite the adherence to its views by a minority, could never be ignored by the Church of England or by Orthodox Dissenters. It further highlights conclusions based on trends apparent from analysis of its ideological diversity, evolution and continuity.

## **ii: Methodology: Analysing the Primary Sources**

Ease of access to a considerable number of printed sources only relatively recently available on-line allows for the evaluation of this evidence alongside that of a large number of different manuscript sources, extending the scope of analysis significantly. As Jonathan Clark observed ‘Scholarship has been democratised by

technology.’<sup>9</sup> The website Discovery holds more than 32 million descriptions of records held by the National Archives and 2,500 archives across the country, allowing online identification of sources and their whereabouts. Of these 9 million records are available for download. Although ECCO is not a complete collection of all relevant primary sources, because of its very size it may be taken as indicative of trends.<sup>10</sup> Access to relevant primary sources on this scale has allowed this dissertation to focus on consideration of a wider range of questions about the nature of Rational Dissent and more accurate and effective examination of hypotheses. It has enabled extensive statistical analysis of lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting publications and organisations. In turn, this has created the opportunity for a measure of quantification of a number of aspects of Rational Dissenting identity, including its appeal. Moreover, and very importantly, analysis of sources on ECCO reinforces those conclusions which this study draws from manuscript sources, published books, pamphlets, tracts and newspapers.

It is widely recognised that analysis of online databases presents some difficulties of which the researcher needs to be aware. Research into the methodology of Gale, responsible for the construction of the ECCO database, establishes that all texts have been re-keyed.<sup>11</sup> Search facilities do not rely on optical character recognition, which can prove unreliable where the text of sources is faint or worn. Although the reader sees a scanned image of the original text, the search facility searches the re-keyed version. Accuracy of results was further assisted by the ‘fuzzy’ search facility, which additionally allowed for identification of associated search terms.

---

<sup>9</sup> J. C. D. Clark, Review of H. Dickinson, *British Pamphlets on the American Revolution 1763-1785*, *EHR*, 124 (2009), 506.

<sup>10</sup> ECCO includes 23, 574 documents in the fields of Religion, Philosophy and Law for the period 1770-1800.

<sup>11</sup> University of Michigan Text Creation Partnership, [www.textcreationpartnership.org](http://www.textcreationpartnership.org).



In response to specialist advice from the University of Kent Stat-Desk on analysis of sources on ECCO,<sup>12</sup> this dissertation adopts two statistical lines of approach. Firstly, in order to set the perceived importance of Rational Dissent in its historical context, the percentage number of documents featuring perceptions of Arians, Socinians and Unitarians in the 1770s, 1780s and 1790s were compared with the percentage number in each of the three preceding decades. A second methodological approach rested on detailed analysis of authors who repeatedly attacked Rational Dissent between 1770 and 1800. The results of this, cast light on trends in external perceptions of Arianism and Socinianism, on the nature of arguments used against them and the level of hostility towards them, matched by an increasing response by Rational Dissenters to such attacks.

A number of newspaper archives online, amongst them the British Newspaper Archive Online, the Burney Collection, and the British Library's Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century collection, provide increased access to provincial as well as metropolitan views. The British Newspaper Archive Online provides searchable photographic images. Once more findings from on-line sources reinforce conclusions drawn from investigation of manuscript and other printed sources existing outside these databases.

From analysis of manuscript and printed sources in this research the ways in which theology underpinned and determined Rational Dissenting identity emerge clearly, along with the nuances evident in Rational Dissenting interpretation of the Scriptures, which were an essential element of it. Both private and printed manuscript sources, the latter aimed at a wider and public audience, highlight the impact of theology on the Rational dissenting view of their place in society, their relationship

---

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Dr. E. Kong and Dr. O. Lyn of Kent University Stat-Desk.

with others, manifested in their philanthropic activities, and their progressive reformism.

Printed sermons delivered by Rational Dissenters, as with the majority of published sources, were written by men. As Farooq emphasises, sermons provided one of the most important and accessible ways of communicating with the laity.<sup>13</sup> In print too, a readiness to engage in often extended public dialogue both with other Rational Dissenters, with members of the Established Church and with Orthodox Dissenters is apparent. Although this readiness was far from unique to Rational Dissenters, in the course of such dialogues their collective and distinctive identity continuously evolved. Several such sources reflect the importance attributed to defence of the value of public and social worship and to delivering their concepts to young people and to women, amongst them Towers in his *Dialogues concerning the Ladies* in 1787, and Mary Wollstonecraft in *A vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. Rational Dissenting men and women wrote in published form specifically for sons and daughters.<sup>14</sup> Contemporary newspapers, journals and periodicals present yet further evidence, aimed as they were at an audience from a wider social and educational background, interested in the broader aspects of Rational Dissenting identity. Spontaneous reactions, of course, are less evident in the more formal setting of print, where the message was carefully shaped with a clear view of the image which the author wished to present.

Examination of manuscript sources in this dissertation includes analysis of a significant number which have previously received little attention. The earlier diaries relating to the 1790s of the Unitarian Newcastle barrister, James Losh provide a much-

---

<sup>13</sup> J. Farooq, *Preaching in Eighteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> E.g. A. L. Barbauld, *Lessons for Children* (1778-9); M. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1785); J. Aikin, *Letters from a father to his son on various subjects relative to literature and the conduct of life* (1793); T. Percival, *A father's instructions adapted from different periods of life from youth to maturity* (Warrington, 1800).

underused source. Jeffery Smith's thesis<sup>15</sup> devotes particular attention to the 1820s and early 1830s at the expense of detailed analysis of the relationship between Losh's Unitarian beliefs and his philanthropic and reforming activities in the late eighteenth century. Completed on an almost nightly basis, the 33 volumes of these diaries represent Losh's personal views, displaying no evidence of editing for any external audience, and span the lengthy period 1795-1833. Diaries such as those of Losh and the Unitarian Hannah Lightbody, together with private letters, amongst them those of the Unitarian Nicholson family of merchants based in Liverpool and Manchester, and William Tayleur of Shrewsbury, allow extensive insight into the theological priorities of lay men and women, and indeed into the impact of theology on their lives and activities. Letters from the previously little studied Mary Scott, sister of Russell Scott, Unitarian minister in Portsmouth, to John Taylor highlight Mary's Unitarian beliefs. A letter from Theophilus Lindsey, minister of the Essex Street Unitarian Chapel clearly indicates her influence on her brother's theology.<sup>16</sup> Lindsey's letters<sup>17</sup> cast some light on visits to the little known Chambers sisters<sup>18</sup> and their support for his Unitarian views, and on Elizabeth Rayner's contribution of £500 to the Essex Street Chapel between 1776 and 1785.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> J. Smith, 'James Losh: His ideas in relation to his circle and his time' (University of Northumberland Ph. D., 1996); idem, 'James Losh (1763-1833): Dissenter and Reformer', *E & D*, 18 (1999). The edition of these diaries, published in 2 volumes for the Surtees Society in 1963 and 1970 by E. Hughes, omits all pre-1810 material.

<sup>16</sup> I., C. Scott, *A Family Biography 1662-1908* (1908), M. Scott to J. Taylor, 7 May 1776; Lindsey, *Letters I*, 358-9, Lindsey to Mary Scott, 2 July 1782; idem, 356-7, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 6 August 1782.

<sup>17</sup> Lindsey's letters frequently refer to obtaining a frank. This privilege, extended to peers and M.P.s allowed letters of less than 2 ozs to be sent free within the British Isles. c.f. K. Ellis, *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Administrative History* (1958).

<sup>18</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 357-8, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 24 July 1782, idem 527-8, 16 October 1787; Lindsey, *Letters II*, 518-9, Lindsey to John Rowe, 10 November 1800.

<sup>19</sup> T. Belsham, *Memoirs*, p. 99.

Too often laymen and women are glimpsed through ministerial sources. Ditchfield's references to discussion between Caleb Fleming and Syllas Neville,<sup>20</sup> and useful comments by John Spurr and Jennifer Farooq on the insights provided by lay responses to seventeenth and eighteenth century sermons<sup>21</sup> suggest a need for examination of references by late eighteenth century lay Rational Dissenters to the theological ideas of and effectiveness of delivery by Rational Dissenting ministers. Hannah Lightbody,<sup>22</sup> James Losh,<sup>23</sup> and William Tayleur<sup>24</sup> all devoted thought to the evaluation of sermons. Hannah Lightbody was present when John Yates preached his sermon against slavery in Kaye Street Chapel, Liverpool on 28 January 1788, recording his message with approval. James Losh praised William Turner's 'excellent sermon on the Parable of the Talents', and a few days later Turner's sermon stressing the value of education for the poor in order for them to progress.<sup>25</sup>

Official records, amongst them minute books such as those of the Western Unitarian Society<sup>26</sup> provide further evidence of the nature and frequency of involvement of active committee members, laymen who neither published nor left letters or diaries. Wills of the Rational Dissenting laity provide some solid evidence of theological and associated philanthropic issues of importance to them. Repeated subscriptions and benefactions were important statements of commitment to the continuity of Rational Dissenting ideas.

---

<sup>20</sup> See G. M. Ditchfield, '“All truth, all righteous things”': The correspondence of Caleb Fleming and Syllas Neville, 1769-1776', *E & D*, 18 (1999).

<sup>21</sup> J. Spurr, *The Laity and Preaching in Post-Reformation England* (Friends of DWL, 66th Lecture, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> See D. Sekers, *A Lady of Cotton: Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill* (Stroud, 2013), pp. 71-72.

<sup>23</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, unpaginated, vol. 8, 19 March 1798, vol. 9, 30 January, 4 February, 15 March 1799; vol. 10, 9 March, 8 June 1800.

<sup>24</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/21, Tayleur to Lindsey, 25 September 1781; UCC/2/34/1/23, 26 February 1784; UCC/2/34/1/50, 11 May 1790; UCC/2/34/1/52, 14 October 1790.

<sup>25</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, 1, 15 December 1799.

<sup>26</sup> SHC, D/N/Wu /2/1.

### **iii: Establishing the Wider Identity of Rational Dissent**

The Biographical Register of Rational Dissenters at the beginning of this dissertation features ministers, laymen and women whose views have been analysed in the body of this study. While a few have been fleetingly referred to in the earlier historiography, or have formed the subject of single biographies, the majority of these have received virtually no attention. Alongside the laymen and women mentioned above, feature lesser known but at the time influential ministers. The Arian minister, Joseph Cornish of Colyton, Devon contributed to debates among Rational Dissenters on the importance of the Lord's Supper and baptism, of good works, the issue of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the war with France. The Unitarian minister William Ashdowne of Mount Ephraim, Tunbridge Wells, commented on original sin, on the pre-existence of Christ, his role and nature and that of the Holy Spirit, and on the campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Cornish and Ashdowne, amongst many others, deserve consideration as a constituent element of the wider identity of Rational Dissent, although their individual contribution was far from negligible.

Analysis in the Biographical Register reveals the presence of significantly more Unitarians than Arians. This reflects the considerably greater number of surviving Unitarian publications. Unitarians with their more extreme theological arguments, including denial of the divinity of Christ, attracted far more vehement hostility than Arians, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, and consequently manifested a far greater need to justify their views. Moreover, as explored in Chapters 8 and 9, Unitarian organisations emerged from the 1790s and subscription lists enable identification of their membership. In the early nineteenth century modification of statements of beliefs in the preambles of several Unitarian organisations may have encouraged Arian membership, but this is unfortunately not measurable, and Arians continued to remain less visible.

Ministers, by virtue of their profession, tended to expatiate at greater length on their theological views than the laity. Their sermons were in the first place addressed to their own congregations. Rational Dissenting ministers, appointed by trustees and supported financially by stipends from congregational subscriptions, may be seen as generally acceptable to their congregations. Only a small proportion of Nonconformist congregations seceded, for example at Warrington in 1779, Exeter in 1795 and Sandwich in 1798, where Dissenters with more orthodox beliefs left.<sup>27</sup> Ministers could not operate in isolation from members of the laity. Nevertheless the considerable numbers of Rational Dissenting sermons which survive in print create an imbalance in the available evidence.

Only a small proportion of women published, hence they appear in the Biographical Register in considerably smaller numbers. The bookseller, Jane Toulmin wrote one work focussing on theology. Anna Letitia Barbauld and Helen Maria Williams published hymns, Mary Scott and Mary Hays published poems, Anna Letitia Barbauld wrote for children, Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft wrote on the subject of education. Hays extolled the value of public worship as a form of education for Rational Dissenting women. Barbauld and Williams expressed their own opinions on events in France and on the slave trade, and Barbauld on the Test and Corporation Acts.<sup>28</sup> Barbauld was a particularly prolific author. These were, however, significant women, whose works played a notably supportive role, valued by other Rational Dissenters, a value which clearly emerges in the letters of John Disney and of Hugh

---

<sup>27</sup> M. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 1 (Oxford, 1978), 468, n. 3 cites seventeen examples of Congregational churches formed as a result of secessions from Presbyterian meetings between 1770 and 1800.

<sup>28</sup> To avoid repetition, references for these manuscript and printed sources are cited in relevant chapters where detailed analysis occurs.

Worthington to Mary Hays, and in Lindsey's reference to 'the enlightened mind' of Hays herself.<sup>29</sup>

This study adopts a different approach from the valuable biographical work published in particular by Marilyn Brooks, Gina Luria Walker and Ruth Watts<sup>30</sup> on the activities of individual Rational Dissenting women. Unable to assume the role of students at Dissenting Academies, such women were nevertheless surrounded by books and by intellectual conversation within their family. Barbauld learnt some Latin and Greek.<sup>31</sup> Women encountered visitors in their homes and met with others outside the home sharing similar theological views. This research demonstrates that in these conversations they went beyond mere listening to participation and that several maintained active correspondence with Rational Dissenting ministers. Many, including Barbauld, Wollstonecraft, Hannah Lightbody, Eliza Gould and Catharine Cappe were involved in a teaching capacity. Wollstonecraft and Hays themselves argued strongly for the continued and increasing education of women in order that they might reach their potential within the society of the day.<sup>32</sup> Despite this, neither sought radically to alter the role of women in society by urging the *immediate* extension of the franchise to women. Rather they saw themselves in the role of active lay adherents propagating Rational Dissenting values, with the improvement of female education and longer-term reformist change in view.

This dissertation attempts to overcome imbalance in the proportion of Rational Dissenting laymen and laywomen featured through analysis of private letters and

---

<sup>29</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93, H. Worthington to M. Hays 1791-1794, J. Disney to M. Hays 1793-1795, T. Lindsey to M. Hays, 15 April 1793.

<sup>30</sup> M. L. Brooks, ed, *The Correspondence of Mary Hays (1779-1843)*, *British Novelist* (2004); G. L. Walker, *Mary Hays, the Growth of a Woman's Mind* (Burlington, 2006); eadem, 'Energetic sympathies of truth and feeling: Mary Hays and rational dissent', *E. & D*, 26 (2010), R. Watts, *Gender, power and the Unitarians in England* (1998); eadem, *Women in Science* (2007).

<sup>31</sup> W. McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2008) p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (1785); eadem, *A vindication of the rights of women* (1792); eadem, *An Appeal*.

diaries, as well as published works, their activities, their presence in subscription lists and their involvement in Unitarian libraries. Debates at the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society were discussed in the Nicholson letters by Ann Hatfield.<sup>33</sup> Debates at the Coachmakers Hall Society in Foster Lane, Cheapside<sup>34</sup> and at the Temple of Eloquence in Tottenham Court Road<sup>35</sup> encouraged ladies to attend theological discussions between Dissenters, members of the Established Church and Roman Catholics. Lindsey noted that Hackney College assembly hall was ‘full of ladies and gentlemen’ for the theological orations of June 1795.<sup>36</sup> The Toulmins, Disneys, Jebbs and Lindseys, husband and wife, provide classic cases of active Rational Dissenting partnerships. Unmarried, Ann Belsham assisted behind the scenes in the domestic arrangements of Hackney College, where her brother Thomas had a central educational role.<sup>37</sup> Others, who did not write and consequently about whom less is known, amongst them female multiple subscribers, demonstrated their support for Rational Dissent financially.

The extensive geographical range of Rational Dissenters listed in the Biographical Register, drawn from the south-west, London, East Anglia, the midlands and north, together with their varied backgrounds, gives analysis width as well as depth. John Seed’s work has illustrated the vibrancy of Rational Dissent in northern, urban and industrial contexts. This dissertation examines the importance of the south-west in the formation of its identity with new evidence. In this part of the country the first Unitarian Society outside London was established in 1792. Its lay members William Brown, Richard Hall Clarke, Richard Houghton, Samuel Milford, William

---

<sup>33</sup> LRO, 920/ NIC/9/6/6, Ann Hatfield to her brother, 10 February 1787.

<sup>34</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 15 May 1788.

<sup>35</sup> *Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 17 February 1790.

<sup>36</sup> JRUL, MSS C2.13, William Tayleur, 26 June 1795.

<sup>37</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 162-3, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 5 January 1792.



Tucker and Henry Wansey feature significantly in this research. Amongst Unitarian ministers John Prior Estlin was active in Bristol, Joshua Toulmin and Thomas Broadhurst in Taunton, Timothy Kenrick, James Manning and Joseph Bretland in Exeter, Joseph Cornish in Colyton, Devon, Matthew Anstiss in Bridport, Dorset. Steady correspondence over a long period of time between the layman, William Tayleur of Shrewsbury and the Unitarian minister, Theophilus Lindsey, including many references to Newcome Cappe in York, John Rowe in Bristol, Joshua and Jane Toulmin of Taunton and others in that part of the country<sup>38</sup> demonstrates an energetic Rational Dissenting hinterland outside of London which was, nevertheless, in steady and mutually beneficial communication with the capital. Rational Dissent was a national phenomenon, not the exclusive preserve of a tiny metropolitan elite or of a group of mainly mercantile communities in the North of England.

The majority of Unitarian individuals examined in this dissertation survived into the nineteenth century, as did a significant number of Arians. They provide a useful basis for the examination into change and continuity in Rational Dissent. Methodologically the major contribution of this dissertation lies in the hypotheses examined, the presentation of statistical evidence based on extensive analysis of a wide range of sources, and the redressing of existing imbalances in angle of approach and evaluation of evidence. In establishing the wider identity of Rational Dissent this research takes into account ministerial and lay, male and female, published and non-published adherents from a span of geographical locations within England.

---

<sup>38</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/21, Tayleur to Lindsey, 25 September 1781, UCC/2/34/1/37, 10 August 1786;, UCC/2/34/1/43, 3 September 1787, UCC/ 2/34/1/49, 27 November 1788; *Lindsey Letters II*, amongst them 24-5, Letter to Joshua Toulmin, 23 October 1789; 25, Henry Toulmin, 27 October 1789; 31-2, William Hazlitt Senior, 2 January 1790; 45-6, John Rowe, 31 March 1790; 63-4, William Friend, 26 July 1790, and to William Tayleur, 3, 29 January 1789, 53-4, 15 May 1790, 70-1, 20 September 1790, 86-7, 22 January 1791, 99-100, 1 March 1791, 118-9, 7 May 1791.

### 3: CONTEMPORARY PERCEPTIONS AND IDENTITY

Powerful responses to Rational Dissenting beliefs from ministers and laity within the Church of England and Orthodox Dissent demonstrate the strength of feeling and fears it in England in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the arguments of those who rejected and felt threatened by Rational Dissent casts light on the complex and to date little explored range of contemporary perceptions of its nature and make up. The adherents of any system of belief under attack find themselves unable to allow allegations against them to go unanswered, and thus ideas develop. Hence the approach in this chapter, which examines the impact of external perceptions of the phenomenon on Rational Dissenters themselves through their written responses to attack, and in so doing explores ways in which its identity was in part moulded by the hostile responses it aroused.

The debate for many religious thinkers in the late eighteenth century was over the relative place of reason and revelation, seen by them as mutually reinforcing, rather than over the rational as opposed to the revealed. Thus on many occasions ‘rational’ was used in terms implying its importance, by those who were not Rational Dissenters.<sup>2</sup> Many members of the Established Church, recognising the particularly high status given to reason by Rational Dissenters, did not see themselves as ‘not rational’.<sup>3</sup> The Methodist John Wesley, far from divorcing faith from reason, nevertheless held that reason must always be subject to the Scriptures. Orthodox Dissenters, like John

---

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2. As did the M’Gill case in Scotland, where suspected anti-Trinitarianism resulted in harsh disciplinary proceedings not mirrored in England in the late eighteenth century, although Francis Stone was deprived of his living of Cold Norton, Essex in 1808 for rejecting the doctrines of the Trinity and the virgin birth.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. by members of the Church of England, J. Hanway, *Virtue in humble life: containing reflections on relative duties* (1777); W. Hopkins, *An appeal to the commonsense of all Christian people, more particularly members of the Church of England, with regard to an important point of faith and practice* (1787); and by the Orthodox Dissenter, A. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (1794).

<sup>3</sup> J. Milner, *Essays on several religious subjects, chiefly tending to illustrate the Scripture-Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (1789), p. 27.

Macgowan in 1771, likewise took exception to the suggestion that those who adopted a Rational Dissenting approach were more rational than those who did not:

I would know from whom [the name Rational Dissenter] can distinguish you, except from such as are deemed irrational among the Dissenters.<sup>4</sup>

The theological concepts attributed to Rational Dissent attracted extended vehement attacks from a wide range of theological positions. High churchmen, Methodists and Evangelical Calvinists within the Church of England, together with Orthodox Dissenters, all reacted strongly against the Rational Dissenting rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, of predestination, original sin and atonement, doubts about eternal punishment and the Unitarian concept of the total humanity of Christ. So too did many Latitudinarians, although some were less orthodox on the Trinity and the person of Christ than other members of the Established Church. By virtue of their profession, clergymen argued and explored doctrine in greater numbers than the laity. Yet, although they feature in smaller numbers, laity too from different professions and levels of society attacked Rational Dissent. These included prominent members of the Church of England such as Granville Sharp (1735-1813), campaigner for the abolition of slavery, along with other less well-known individuals like Mrs Hester Ann Rogers (1756-1794), member of a Methodist congregation in Bristol.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter sets out four hypotheses. Firstly it contends that attacks on Rational Dissent included emotively worded, generalised accusations. Secondly it argues that hostility towards it tended to focus on a small number of perceived aspects of its identity, and that these, alongside generalised accusations, contributed to the image of Rational Dissenting identity propagated by its opponents and helped to

---

<sup>4</sup> J. Macgowan, *Familiar Epistles to the Reverend Dr. Priestley* (1771), p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> G. Sharp, *Remarks on the uses of the definitive article in the Greek version of the New Testament, containing many proofs of the divinity of Christ* (Durham, 1798), pp. 14, 26; H. A. Rogers, *Spiritual Letters*, 'To one lately emerged out of Arian darkness' (Bristol, 1796).

account for its unpopularity. Thirdly it maintains that these accusations were launched in increasingly hostile language and with greater frequency in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, all the more so with the growing prominence of Socinianism and development of Unitarian organisations. Fourthly it demonstrates that Rational Dissenting identity was shaped, in part, by the reactions of its adherents to the perceptions of its opponents.

### **i: Generalised Accusations against Rational Dissent**

Generalised accusations against Rational Dissenters took a number of forms. Rational Dissenters were often linked with others who actually held significantly different theological views. James Glazebrook, minister of St. James, near Warrington, referred collectively to ‘Arians, Socinians, Deists and sentimental Latitudinarians.’<sup>6</sup> The linking of Rational Dissenters with Deists, was a highly emotive attack advanced by many.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Rational Dissenters, Deists rejected revelation in the Scriptures, believing that reason alone and the observation of the natural world were sufficient to determine the existence of a single creator of the universe. Deists were often inaccurately labelled atheists. This verbal association of Rational Dissenters and Deists was particularly damaging to the former.

Sweeping observations also implied a generalised similarity between Rational Dissent and Latitudinarians. It is possible that support by a number of Anglicans for the Feathers Tavern Petition for the abolition of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-

---

<sup>6</sup> J. Glazebrook, *A defence of infant baptism in three letters to Rev Mr. Wakefield* (1793), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> J. Wesley, *A preservative against unsettled notions in religion* (Bristol, 1770), p. 2; W. Hurd, *A new universal history of religious rites, ceremonies and customs* (1780), p. 701; T. Reader, *A letter to the Rev Sir Harry Trelawny* (1780), p. 39; W. Jones, *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity* (1787), p. vi; J. Barnard, *The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated* (1789), p. x; J. Fletcher, *An appeal to matter of fact and common sense* (1792), p. 203; A. Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems*, p. 299; E. Sheppard, *A letter to Dr. Priestley* (Bath, 1793), p. 5; R. Foley, *A defence of the Church of England* (Stourbridge, 1795), p. 69; G. Berkeley, *Sermons* (1799), p. 4; G. Horne, *An apology for certain gentlemen in the University of Oxford* (1799), p. 25; J. Bradford, *The true gospel spiritually discerned* (1800), p. vii;

Nine Articles in 1772 had encouraged others within the Established Church to fear the establishing of common ground between Rational Dissenters and Latitudinarians. Thomas Collins, Rector of Compton Vallery in Dorsetshire, linked Protestant Dissenters and Latitudinarians as ‘the Enemies of all Religion and Morality.’<sup>8</sup> Recognising this danger, the Foxite Lord Chedworth, a sympathiser with Rational Dissent, deplored ‘the practice of some to represent all who entertain opinions different from their own as Latitudinarian in Religion and Republican in Politics,’ issuing a plea for reason in the face of hysteria generated by the terror in France and execution of Louis XVI.<sup>9</sup>

Rational Dissenters were on occasion seen as representative of all Dissent. Thomas Collins made no distinction between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters. This tendency was specifically refuted by an anonymous Dissenter highlighting both the concern this caused to Orthodox Dissenters and their awareness of the distinctively different emerging identity of Rational Dissent.<sup>10</sup> For other critics, Socinianism was confused with Sabellianism, despite the even more extreme position adopted by the latter. Like Rational Dissenters, Sabellians rejected the Trinity, but unlike them, they also rejected any substantial identity for Christ or the Holy Spirit, perceiving one God with three different aspects. Benjamin Carpenter, however, perceived little difference between Sabellians and Socinians.<sup>11</sup> The Unitarian Theophilus Lindsey, for example, was accused of reviving the doctrine of Sabellius.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> T. Collins, *An assize sermon preached in the Minster at York* (York, 1794), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Lord Chedworth, *A Charge delivered to the grand jury at the general quarter sessions for the peace* (Ipswich, 1793), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Woodfall's Register*, 24 February 1791.

<sup>11</sup> B. Carpenter, *Difference of sentiment no objection to the exercise of mutual love. A Sermon preached at the annual meeting of ministers at Dudley* (1780), p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> R. Thomas, *A Letter to the remarker on the layman's scriptural confutation. Wherein the divinity of the Son of God is farther vindicated against the remarker's exceptions* (Oxford, 1771), p. 92.

Many critics of Rational Dissent, including John Wesley, failed to explore its nuances, making no distinction between the views of Arians and Socinians. While the central concept of rejection of the Trinity featured throughout attacks on Rational Dissent, many individual sources paid no attention to the range of Rational Dissenting views on the nature and relationship of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. John Macgowan, for example, inaccurately described both Arianism and Socinianism as including more Gods than one,<sup>13</sup> the very charge Socinians made against Trinitarians.

Harsh criticism of Rational Dissent featured in, but was by no means limited to, those contemporary London newspapers in receipt of Government subsidies.<sup>14</sup> The pseudonyms which many correspondents sheltered behind renders their identity, clerical or lay, difficult to establish but it is likely that laymen in particular would have seen newspapers as an appropriate and accessible medium for expression of their views. Here too Arians and Socinians were often presented as a uniform group.<sup>15</sup> Generalised accusations assumed in many cases a highly emotive tone, heavy with irony, as with a correspondent in *The World* on 7 January 1793 who presented Rational Dissenters as untrustworthy:

The Friends of Reform are public men, better known than trusted, Arians, Socinians, Dissenters, Atheists, Infidels, Greeks, Swindlers and Stock-jobbing Gamesters. A very proper groupe to purify or renovate any government.

The same article also featured in the *Evening Mail* of 31 December – 2 January 1793, in the *St. James's Chronicle*, on 3-5 January and again on 14-17 September 1793. The

---

<sup>13</sup> Macgowan, *Monitor*.

<sup>14</sup> A. Aspinall, *Politics and the Press 1780-1850* (1949), p. 68, cites *The Diary*, *London Evening Post*, *St. James's Chronicle*, *Public Ledger*, *Whitehall Evening Post*, *Morning Herald*, *The World*, *The Oracle* and *The Times* in receipt of such subsidies.

<sup>15</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 14 August 1770; *The World*, 7 January 1793.

latter newspaper received a Government subsidy of £200 p.a.<sup>16</sup> Amongst newspaper correspondents and contributors to *The Gentleman's Magazine* a tendency to link the theological aspects of Rational Dissent with charges of stirring up unrest is unsurprisingly particularly evident.<sup>17</sup> One anonymous author wrote collectively of all Dissenters that

The notions of ecclesiastical liberty in those who differ [from the Established Church] are equally and totally destructive of those ties and obligations by which all society is kept together.<sup>18</sup>

Aimed as such comments were at a wide audience, Rational Dissenting theology was unsurprisingly not examined in minute detail.

Clerical and lay opponents frequently defined, attacked and dismissed Rational Dissent as if it were a denomination whose members held a far greater unity of view and were more organised than was actually the case. A letter from the Orthodox Dissenting minister, Thomas Reader of Taunton to Mr Jonathan Budden and Mrs Lamb, vehemently protesting about the appointment of Robert Kell, an Arian, as assistant minister to Reader's brother at Wareham, referred to 'Arians and Socinians undermining religion.'<sup>19</sup> It would, however, be easy to overestimate a tendency to group Arians and Socinians indistinguishably together. This occurred in just over a third of all documents referring to Rational Dissent between 1770 and 1800 appearing in ECCO.<sup>20</sup> The remainder singled out Arians and Socinians for individual attention, recognising differences in their identity. Educated opponents of Rational Dissent were

---

<sup>16</sup> Aspinall, *Politics*, p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 17 September 1778; *Public Advertiser*, 9 March 1790; *St. James's Chronicle*, 27-29 September 1791; *GM*, 49 (January 1779) 19; idem, 61 (July 1791), 598, 621.

<sup>18</sup> Anon, *The civil and ecclesiastical systems of England defended and fortified* (1791).

<sup>19</sup> DWL, MS 12.116, Thomas Reader to the congregation at Wareham, 12 March 1789.

<sup>20</sup> 36% of documents featuring the terms Arian\* or Socinian\* group both together.

rather more anxious to explore the precise details of Rational Dissenting theological identity with a view to refuting it, than to dismiss it out of hand.

## **ii: Specific Attacks on the Theology of Rational Dissent**

Examination of a wide range of sources establishes that hostile perceptions of the identity of Rational Dissent took the form of a small number of repeatedly-urged accusations in sermons, published theological works and metropolitan newspapers. This research demonstrates that Rational Dissenters were presented by both members of the Established Church and Orthodox Dissenters as unchristian, as unscriptural and, attacking the term ‘Rational’ Dissent, as not rational in their arguments. The high church loyalism voiced in the 1780s and 1790s by William Jones of Nayland, against the background of the American and French Revolutions, pulled together these definitions. In a publication aimed specifically against Socinians, Jones condemned a ‘torrent of heresy and impiety’, asserting that ‘Reason is the gift of God and so is scripture, and they cannot be contrary to one another.’<sup>21</sup> In newspaper and journal articles correspondents argued that Rational Dissenters were uniformly unchristian, heretics, atheists and idolaters.<sup>22</sup> Even in the more secular setting of the newspaper press Rational Dissenters were attacked repeatedly on theological grounds, despite the fact that the *details* of Rational Dissenting theology were not minutely examined. Newspapers also advertised works opposing Rational Dissenting theology, amongst them those of George Horne and Samuel Horsley. This research demonstrates the extent to which the theological nature of Rational Dissent fervently asserted by

---

<sup>21</sup> Jones, *A preservative*, pp. 4, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *London Evening Post*, 26-28 November 1771, 19-21 May, 1772; *General Evening Post*, 26-28 May, 1772; *St. James’s Chronicle* 13–15 August 1777; *General Advertiser* 24 August 1778; *London Chronicle*, 8 August 1786; *Public Advertiser*, 23 February 1790; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 27 May, 1790; *GM*, 50 (October 1780), 465, 467.



Rational Dissenters themselves was a key source of concern to those who stood outside its values and beliefs, and who felt threatened by it.

The accusation that Rational Dissenters were unchristian was a generalised allegation which took a multitude of forms, most consistently the charge of infidelity. Amongst such critics the evangelical Church of England layman Ambrose Serle, for example, alluded to the ‘blasphemous system of all Arians and Socinians,’<sup>23</sup> while the Methodist James Kershaw asserted in 1780 that ‘The Arian and such like heresies, paved the way for the delusions of Mohammed.’<sup>24</sup> This accusation of a link with the ideas of Mohammed was not unusual.<sup>25</sup> It was repeated by Samuel Rowles, the Particular Baptist minister of Chard, Somerset.<sup>26</sup> The particularly damning nature of such accusations was demonstrated by the Independent minister George Townsend who identified Rational Dissenting denial of the doctrine of the Trinity and of Christ’s divinity as common ground with Muslims.<sup>27</sup> Orthodox Dissenters such as Richard Hutchins, John Baillie, and the Particular Baptists John Macgowan and Andrew Fuller, the Calvinist John Barker, George Townsend and the Independent minister Timothy Priestley, younger brother of Joseph, described Rational Dissenters as unchristian.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Reader twice referred to the appointment of the Arian Robert Kell as assistant

---

<sup>23</sup> A. Serle, *An Address to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity* (1773), p. 349.

<sup>24</sup> J. Kershaw, *An essay on the principle points of the Book of Revelations; in a series of dialogues between Didascalos and Phylotheos* (2 vols, Stockton, 1780), II, 34.

<sup>25</sup> T. S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam* (2009), pp 13-14 cites examples of such accusations in the American colonies.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. S. Rowles, *Revealed religion asserted* (Taunton, 1786), p. 163.

<sup>27</sup> G. Townsend, *The Replication; or A Familiar Address to Mr. William Frennd* (Canterbury, 1789), pp. 30-33.

<sup>28</sup> J. Macgowan, *Infernal Conference; or Dialogues of Devils* (2 vols, 1772), I, 217; R. Hutchins, *Gospel truths displayed, and gospel ministers duty proved in a sermon preached before the Society of Protestant Dissenters* (1773), p. 56; J. Barker, *The Harmony of the Truth* (1776), p. 92; A. Fuller, *A defence of a treaty entitled the gospel of Christ worthy of all acceptation* (1785), p. 63; J. Baillie, *A vindication of the divinity of Jesus Christ with impartial observations on the Unitarian scheme* (Newcastle, 1789); G. Townsend, *The brief rejoinder, in a letter to Mr. W. Frennd of Jesus College, Cambridge* (1789), p. 17; T. Priestley, *The new and complete evangelical history of the life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour* (1793), p. 495.

minister at Wareham as an ‘act of treason against Christ.’<sup>29</sup> Even the Latitudinarian, Francis Blackburne wrote in a letter to John Wiche on 7 October 1783 ‘If I believed as Messrs Lindsey and Disney say they believe, I should certainly think I had no right to profess my Self a Christian.’<sup>30</sup>

A useful article by Alan Sell explores the condemnation by Andrew Fuller of the moral tendencies of Socinians, often associated with allegations of being unchristian.<sup>31</sup> However, Fuller’s accusation was far from untypical. John Macgowan had referred to Rational Dissenters in 1771 as ‘loose and irreligious.’<sup>32</sup> William Jones in 1787 condemned their ‘affected good lives’,<sup>33</sup> and in 1798 David Simpson of Macclesfield wrote of the ‘great want of serious godliness’<sup>34</sup> amongst Arian and Socinian congregations. In newspapers too their morality was questioned.<sup>35</sup>

While the first accusation against Rational Dissenters of being unchristian was extremely high-profile, the second charge of being unscriptural revealed a seriously specific refutation of their arguments. It was thus aimed, in sermons and discourses, at Arians and Socinians separately and struck at the heart of Rational Dissent’s sole dependence on the Scriptures. High churchmen, amongst them Samuel Horsley, Archdeacon of St Albans, George Horne, Dean of Canterbury, George Berkeley, Prebendary of Canterbury Cathedral, and William Jones of Nayland let loose their full eloquence on this theme.<sup>36</sup> The very different theological ideas of Rational from

---

<sup>29</sup> DWL, MS 12.116, R. Kell to J. Budden, 21 February 1788, 15 September 1788.

<sup>30</sup> DWL, MS 12.45, fols 111-112.

<sup>31</sup> A. Sell, ‘Andrew Fuller and the Socinians’, *E & D*, 19 (2000).

<sup>32</sup> J. Macgowan, *Familiar Epistles*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *A preservative*, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> D. Simpson, *An apology for the doctrine of the Trinity* (1798), p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. *London Chronicle*, 25-27 October 1774; *Public Advertiser*, 21 August 1790; *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 February 1772, 11 June 1774.

<sup>36</sup> S. Horsley, *Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley upon the historic question of the belief of the first ages in our Lord’s divinity* (1783); G. Horne, *Two Sermons on Trinitarianism* (1786); idem, *Discourses on Several Subjects and Occasions* (1787); W. Jones, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*

Orthodox Dissenters are made abundantly clear in the attacks of the latter on the scriptural interpretations of the former. John Macgowan, citing John xiii, 16, argued, in keeping with the doctrine of Christ's atonement, that 'Here the love of God is represented as the sole cause of the gift of Christ.'<sup>37</sup> George Townsend attacked Socinian belief in the elevated position of the man Jesus Christ due to the favour of God, citing 20 scriptural quotations to prove the divinity of Christ and his role as creator of the world.<sup>38</sup> The Particular Baptists John Knott, minister in Chatham, and John Reynolds, minister in Cripplegate, London made the same scriptural point, based on John i, 1 and Romans ix, 5.<sup>39</sup> Townsend further argued against Rational Dissenters that miracles did indeed prove the divinity of Christ, citing Matthew, viii, 26, and Luke vi, 19. He urged the scriptural basis of atonement, validation for the worship of Christ as God, and for the designation of Son of God as an indication of Christ's equality with God the Father, ideas which he noted were rejected by Rational Dissenters.<sup>40</sup> The Independent Samuel Palmer attacked their belief in the humanity of Christ and rejection of the doctrines of his pre-existence and atonement for original sin,<sup>41</sup> while David Bogue stressed of Orthodox Dissenters that, contrary to Rational Dissenting theology:

---

(1787); G. Berkeley, *A Caution against Socinianism given in a discourse preached at the cathedral and metropolitical church of Christ, Canterbury* (1787).

<sup>37</sup> John Macgowan, *Familiar Epistles*, p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> G. Townsend, *The Replication*, pp 6-7. Amongst Scriptures cited were Genesis ii, 4, Isaiah ix, 6, John i, 3, John, i, 14, Matthew i, 23.

<sup>39</sup> J. Knott, *A vindication of the doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus Christ* (Rochester, 1794), p. 5, J. Reynolds, *The divinity of Christ defended, and his equality with God the Father fully proved from Scripture* (1790), p.2.

<sup>40</sup> G. Townsend, *The Replication*, p.8, p. 9, citing Acts xx, 28, Matthew ix, 2, Revelation v, 11, Isaiah iv, 5, Matthew xxvi, 64.

<sup>41</sup> S. Palmer, *The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted* (1786), p. 2.

In baptism we are devoted to the Son equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost; the Lord's Supper is a religious ordinance instituted that his disciples may worship him.<sup>42</sup>

In the London<sup>43</sup> and provincial newspaper press<sup>44</sup> too the theology of Rational Dissenters was attacked as unscriptural.

The third charge, the attribution of unsound reasoning, included repeated references to Socinian 'cant.' Rational Dissenters were being attacked on their own, rational, ground. George Pretyman, canon of Westminster in 1784, condemned 'the deceitful light of unassisted reason.'<sup>45</sup> William Jones argued that Rational Dissent had elevated the reason of man over the revelation of God, taking it into the realms of unlimited freedom, adding that '[the Socinian's] notions are borrowed from Socinus. He cannot justly pretend to the notion of having used his own reason.' Jones attributed to Socinians a failure to realise that 'Reason has two meanings: the intuitive power of reason in the human brain and truth of argument.' He singled out misinterpretation of conscience by Socinians:

Conscience is agreement of the judgement of man with the judgement of God. When conscience condemns what God approves or approves what God condemns, it is delusion.<sup>46</sup>

Amongst Orthodox Dissenters Macgowan condemned 'the blind and perverted reason' of Rational Dissenters, maintaining that 'in denying one of the divine subsistences, strictly speaking you deny all three.'<sup>47</sup> Townsend attacked their logic declaring of

---

<sup>42</sup> D. Bogue, *The great importance of having right sentiments in religion* (1788), p. 15

<sup>43</sup> *General Evening Post*, 3–6 March 1770; *London Chronicle*, 16–18 March 1775; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 21 October 1780; *Gazeteer*, 17 August 1790; *Public Advertiser*, 12 April 1790.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. *Kentish Gazette*, 8 February 1772, 11 June 1774; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 May 1789.

<sup>45</sup> G. Pretyman, *A Sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons* (1784), p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, *A preservative*, pp. 11, 13, 18.

<sup>47</sup> J. Macgowan, *Infernal conference*, 1, 31–32.

Christ that ‘unless he had been God, his merit would not have been efficacious.’<sup>48</sup> On a similar theme Knott urged that

The dignity of Immanuel’s person is inseparably connected with the scriptural act of redeeming love; take away the one and you destroy the other.<sup>49</sup>

In 1790 John Ryland, founder of the Baptist Missionary Association, described Socinians as ‘in the worst sense of the term *irrational Christians*.’<sup>50</sup> In the press the reasoning of Rational Dissenters was described as absurd or abstruse.<sup>51</sup> *The London Evening Post* of 28-30 April 1772 accused Socinians of being worse in this respect than Arians, while *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in April 1794 specifically criticized the reasoning of Timothy Kenrick of Exeter.

Appendix 1 lists 41 authors featured in ECCO who attacked Arianism, Socinianism or both on two or more occasions between 1770 and 1800 and details of the basis of their attacks. Analysis of these attacks in Table 2 below suggests that the charges most often directed against Arians and Socinians were those of being unchristian, unscriptural and displaying faulty reasoning. These charges outweighed more generalised expressions of abhorrence, references to Arians and Socinians as dangerous, and disparaging references to them in a historical context. The charge of ‘unchristian’ included allegations of infidelity, heresy, blasphemy and idolatry. References to doctrines perceived to be present in the Scriptures but rejected by Arians and Socinians cast both of the latter in an unscriptural light. Attacks on Arian and

---

<sup>48</sup> G. Townsend, *The Replication*, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> J. Knott, *A vindication*, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> J. Barker, *The harmony of the truth* (1776), p. 65; W. Huntington, *A key to the hieroglyphical print of the Church of God* (1791), p. 35; J. Ryland, *The character of the Rev James Harvey considered* (1790), p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> *London Evening Post*, 28-30 April 1772; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 October 1787; *General Evening Post*, 25-27 January 1791, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 May 1789.

Socinian reasoning included allusions to errors in reasoning, weakness of argument, and sophistry.

The charge of ‘unchristian’ was certainly a serious one. However, the considerably more specific and detailed nature of ‘unscriptural’ allegations is indicative of the perception of Socinianism, with its more extreme theological views than Arianism, as more threatening to a Biblically conscious society and an attempt to refute such views from the *evidence* of scripture. The balance of attacks against Arians and Socinians varied. Arians were more often attacked as unchristian and secondly as unscriptural, Socinians were more often attacked as unscriptural and secondly as guilty of faulty reasoning.

Table 2: Nature of attacks against Arians, Socinians

Nature of allegation	Attacks on Arians	Attacks on Socinians
Number of documents	61	115
Unchristian	34%	20%
Unscriptural	25%	38%
Faulty Reasoning	16%	26%
Abhorrent	5%	7%
Dangerous	10%	8.5%
Historical Comment	10%	0.5%

### iii: Heightened Levels of Invective over Time

Analysis of individual authors featured in ECCO who between 1770 and 1800 repeatedly returned to the attack of Arianism and Socinianism also suggests that more of these documents were printed during the 1780s and 1790s, than the 1770s. This is in keeping with the third contention in this chapter that a tendency towards a heightened level of invective from an increasingly wide range of authors is evident in the late 1780s and particularly in the 1790s. The increasingly vitriolic comments on Rational

Dissent help to explain a number of conspicuous physical attacks on Rational Dissenters and their property in the 1790s.<sup>52</sup>

Attacking Rational Dissenters, the Orthodox Dissenter John Baillie in 1772 referred merely to ‘contempt of the Scriptures.’ In 1780, using stronger language, he asserted that these scriptures were ‘infallible, living oracles’, and by 1789 he launched an extended defence of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>53</sup> His sermon of 1792, clearly an extended development of the 1789 version, devoted several pages to proving ‘the scripture doctrine of the divinity of Christ’, condemned ‘every appearance of tritheism with which the Arians were chargeable’, and alleged that ‘Arianism is only another name for idolatry and the Unitarian scheme none other than paganism refined.’<sup>54</sup> The Particular Baptist Andrew Fuller merely asserted in 1785 that his own arguments were ‘sufficient, I think, to refute the Socinian hypothesis.’<sup>55</sup> In 1794 in a second edition ‘with corrections and additions’, he developed a more highly structured argument devoted to the demolition of Socinian beliefs. This was presented in the course of 15 letters, each attacking a different aspect of Socinianism, culminating in 30 pages devoted to ‘the resemblance between Socinianism and Infidelity and the tendency of the one to the other.’<sup>56</sup> The Calvinist John Ryland senior in 1774 referred to ‘Socinians, Atheists, Rebels and Deists.’<sup>57</sup> By 1790, using stronger language, he condemned ‘the spittle of Faustus Socinus’, asserted ‘I scorn, I disdain, I abhor the scheme’ and alleged

---

<sup>52</sup> M. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 (Oxford, 1995), 353.

<sup>53</sup> J. Baillie, *The influence of a crucified saviour* (1772), p. 8; idem, *The nature and fatal influence of popery on civil society* (1780), p. 8; idem, *A vindication of the divinity of Jesus Christ* (1789), pp 15-17.

<sup>54</sup> J. Baillie, *Two sermons; the first on the divinity of Jesus Christ* (1792), pp. 2, 27-30.

<sup>55</sup> A. Fuller, *The gospel of Christ worthy of all acceptance* (Northampton, 1785), p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems*, pp. 307-338.

<sup>57</sup> J. Ryland, *A contemplation on the existence and perfections of God* (1774), p. 24.

that Socinians were guilty of errors and lies.<sup>58</sup> His sermon of 1790 was an eloquent, far more extended attempt at demolishing Socinian values.

William Huntington, Nonconformist Minister at Providence Chapel and Monkwell Street, London, was one of the most fervent opponents of Rational Dissent, publishing 14 separate works between 1783 and 1800, in each of which he attacked it. Within this time frame this significant number of attacks followed each other in relatively quick succession. Huntington, who wrote relatively mildly in 1788 of ‘Socinians, Arians and so many heedless souls led by them’,<sup>59</sup> argued by 1798 that

We hear of little else now but confederacies and coalitions, Arians and Socinians are all now collecting materials which will ere long be used to complete the tower of Babylon.<sup>60</sup>

The strength of his reaction in 1798 was in marked contrast to that of ten years earlier. Such examples demonstrate an awareness of the increasing divergence between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters in doctrine and practice in the late 1780s and the 1790s.

Repeated reprinting of works attacking Rational Dissent in the 1780s and 1790s also contributed towards increasing levels of invective against them. John Macgowan, author of *The Arian and Socinian Monitor*, first published in 1761, devised a debate within this work between a Socinian tutor and a Trinitarian. The title of this work suggested that Macgowan saw both Arians and Socinians as a threat to Christianity. However, despite its reference to Arianism in the title, the real target of this work was likewise Socinianism. To the Socinian, witnessing a vision of his afterlife in Hell, is attributed the comment that, as a result of his beliefs, he was ‘plunged into the

---

<sup>58</sup> J. Ryland, *A body of divinity in miniature* (1790), pp. 83-84.

<sup>59</sup> W. Huntington, *The music and odour of Saints* (1788), p.30.

<sup>60</sup> W. Huntington, *Discoveries and cautions from the streets of Zion* (1798), p. 11.



unfathomable abys of divine torment, from whence alas there is no redemption.’<sup>61</sup>

Macgowan went to considerable lengths to describe these torments. Later editions of his work appeared in 1781 and 1795, the message brought to the attention of new audiences.

In the late 1780s and the 1790s the charge of stirring up unrest was most frequently levelled against Rational Dissenters by high churchmen, who, against the background of the American and French Revolutions, saw loyalty to established church and state as inseparable.<sup>62</sup> Thus George Horne condemned ‘unlimited free enquiry’ as ‘full permission to attack the church in every possible way’<sup>63</sup> and asserted that ‘the Church of England is a part of the Constitution. Every Dissenter must be an enemy to it.’<sup>64</sup> George Pretyman, confidant of Pitt and opponent of all things revolutionary, argued in an extended attack that

Such is the connection between licentious opinions upon Religion and upon Government that those who have been most eager to rob Christianity of all its valuable sanctions, have been the most active in their endeavours to destroy those distinctions which are the basis of civil authority.

Implying that Socinians were sympathisers with revolutionary France, he alleged that ‘We have seen the Disciples of Socinus amongst the most zealous abettors of Republican principles.’<sup>65</sup>

Similar accusations of stirring up unrest directed against Rational Dissenters appeared in newspapers in the 1790s. Arians and Socinians were compared unfavourably with Scottish Presbyterians who ‘have neither bowed the knee to the

---

<sup>61</sup> Macgowan, *Monitor*, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Jones, *A preservative*; S. Horsley, *A Review of the Case of the Protestant Dissenters; with reference to the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790).

<sup>63</sup> G. Horne, *The Duty of contending for the faith* (Oxford, 1786), p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> G. Horne, *Observations on the Case of the Protestant Dissenters with reference to the Test and Corporation Acts* (Oxford, 1790), p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Pretyman, *A Charge*, p. 14.

republican Baal, nor kissed the image of rebellion.’<sup>66</sup> One article in the *St. James’s Chronicle* on 21 January 1790 included the assertion that ‘Liberty as defined by [Rational Dissenters] is downright licentious.’ A correspondent writing in *Lloyd’s Evening Post* on 10 December 1792 claimed that ‘Arianism and Socinianism, with their companion REPUBLICANISM, are making rapid strides.’ Similar views appeared in the provincial press.<sup>67</sup>

There is a parallel between heightened levels of invective and physical abuse directed towards Rational Dissenters in the 1790s and verbal and physical attacks on Methodism in the 1740s,<sup>68</sup> when Methodists, in a period when the state was under threat, were suspected of being Jacobites. Rack points to written attacks on the Methodist *process* of achieving salvation, and on their hostility towards Church of England clergy. Rational Dissenters, despite very different views of salvation examined later in this dissertation, were attacked on similar grounds.

The powerful attacks on Rational Dissent were crucial to the way in which Rational Dissenters defined themselves. Publications in which they refuted allegations against them are indicative of a response to external contemporary perceptions, and of the resulting perceived and increasing need amongst them to defend and refine their identity, clarifying and formalising the ideology which distinguished it.

#### **iv: External Contemporary Perceptions and Rational Dissenting Identity**

Recent work by Alan Sell provides a detailed exploration of the controversy from 1791-1798 between Andrew Fuller and the Unitarian John Kentish.<sup>69</sup> Analysis indicates that publications by Rational Dissenters which formed part of a debate with

---

<sup>66</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 17 September 1778.

<sup>67</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 2 March 1790; *Maidstone Journal*, 16 March 1790.

<sup>68</sup> See J. Walsh, ‘Methodism and the Mob’, *Studies in Church History*, 8 (1972); H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1992), pp. 270-275.

<sup>69</sup> A. Sell, ‘Andrew Fuller and the Socinians’, *E & D*, 19 (2000).

their opponents are in fact numerous.<sup>70</sup> The controversy cited by Sell constitutes one example of a widespread tendency. Amongst the many examples, that of Joshua Toulmin, author of *The injustice of classing Unitarians with deists and infidels* in 1797 is rendered conspicuous by his lengthy list of individuals, including Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol from 1761 to 1782, Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, Samuel Horsley, Bishop of Rochester, Dr Joseph White, William Wilberforce, members of the Established Church, and the Orthodox Dissenter Andrew Fuller, all of whose comments on the identity of Rational Dissent he sought to refute. Joshua Toulmin subsequently responded to Dr. Sturges, Prebendary of Winchester, William Wilberforce and Andrew Fuller.<sup>71</sup> John Disney reported a dialogue, which he maintained that he had overheard, between a lay gentleman and a Church of England clergyman. The former revealed some sympathy towards the cause of Dissent, arguing that ‘a religion that is not voluntary can never be acceptable to God.’<sup>72</sup> Joseph Towers also adopted the technique of creating a fictitious dialogue within a single work in order to vindicate Rational Dissenting identity.<sup>73</sup> Dialogues such as those cited, fictitious or otherwise, provided Rational Dissenters with another opportunity of defining and defending their theological beliefs and raised the profile of Rational Dissent even further.

Nigel Aston demonstrates the effectiveness of Horne’s attacks on Priestley in particular and Socinians in general,<sup>74</sup> who could not afford to allow the label of infidelity to stick. Highly attuned and sensitive to the nature of accusations levied

---

<sup>70</sup> J. Cornish, *A Letter to the Right Reverend Bishop of Carlisle* (1777); G. Wakefield, *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham* (1789); idem, *A Letter to William Wilberforce* (1789); J. Disney, *An address to the bishops* (1790); idem, *A Letter to the most Reverend Archbishop of Canterbury* (1792); M. Dodson, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Sturges* (1791).

<sup>71</sup> J. Toulmin, *Letter to Rev J. Sturges in answer to his considerations on the present state of the Church establishment* (1782); idem, *Injustice*; idem, *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine considered: in a series of letters to Rev A. Fuller* (1796).

<sup>72</sup> J. Disney, *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay gentleman* (1792)

<sup>73</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*.

<sup>74</sup> N. Aston, ‘Horne and Heterodoxy: The Defence of Anglican Beliefs in the Late Enlightenment’, *EHR*, 108 (1993).

against them, they sought to tie their individual and collective identity inseparably with Christianity. The research in this dissertation demonstrates, through its prosopographical approach, the extent to which this was so. Andrew Kippis, keenly aware of criticism, took the opportunity in his *Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers with regard to their late application to Parliament* in 1772, to stress in general terms that ‘Some of the best vindications of the Christian revelation have come from men who would have sacrificed their lives rather than subscribe the Thirty-Nine Articles.’ Micaiah Towgood described himself as possessing ‘the sincerity of a Christian’,<sup>75</sup> repeatedly returning to the theme of Christian identity.<sup>76</sup> Lindsey frequently used the expression ‘Unitarian Christian.’<sup>77</sup> Caleb Fleming,<sup>78</sup> Kippis,<sup>79</sup> John Kentish<sup>80</sup> and Thomas Jervis<sup>81</sup> constitute examples of many whose expressed doctrinal views rested firmly on allusion to themselves as constituent members of Christianity. John Rowe in an address to the Society of Unitarian Christians in the West of England, a title carefully chosen, summarised the Rational Dissenting response to attack in 1799:

If the Scriptures give us reason to hope that our claim to the character of a Christian is well established, let us not be dismayed though many around us, should endeavour to deprive us of this right.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, it was not enough for Rational Dissenters merely to refute allegations that they were guilty of infidelity and heresy. They sought to advance clear, explicit statements of what defined being a Christian and why they fitted into this definition. For William Wood, Rational Dissenters were Christian because they

---

<sup>75</sup> M. Towgood, *A Calm and plain answer to the enquiry, why are you a Dissenter from the Church of England?* (1772), p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> M. Towgood, *The grounds of faith in Jesus Christ briefly stated* (1784), p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Lindsey, *Letters 1*, for example, Lindsey to William Turner, 163-4, 12 November 1773; Lindsey to William Tayleur, 298-9, 13 July 1779, 475-6, 20 October 1785.

<sup>78</sup> C. Fleming, *The Open Address of New Testament Evidence* (1771).

<sup>79</sup> A. Kippis, *Sermon preached at the Old Jewry* (1788), p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Jervis, *Consolatory Views*, pp. 18, 29.

<sup>82</sup> Rowe, *A discourse*, p. 9.

followed Christ as a 'guide'.<sup>83</sup> For Mary Hays, belief in original sin was not necessary to faith as a Christian.<sup>84</sup> Hays was establishing a crucial point here, given that the rejection of original sin, as demonstrated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, had a massive impact on the nature of Rational Dissenting identity. What was central was acceptance of Christ's crucial role in instruction and salvation as the representative of God. It was in the 1790s, the decade which witnessed the most strenuous attacks on them, that Rational Dissenters were compelled to establish their Christianity with particular persistence. John Seddon of Warrington, published posthumously, was quite clear that 'Persons may affirm or deny, believe or disbelieve our Saviour's pre-existence, without affecting their Christianity at all.'<sup>85</sup> For Rowe, varying shades of opinion on the nature of Christ, on his pre-existence and on the doctrine of atonement had no relevance to the Rational Dissenting claim to be Christian:

The faith requisite to constitute a person a Christian is an assent to this one truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the person whom God hath appointed to reveal his will and to guide us all in the way to everlasting salvation. That is all that is necessary.<sup>86</sup>

Joshua Toulmin in 1798 and William Wood two years later stressed the same point.<sup>87</sup>

Joseph Cornish used history in two separate publications to emphasise the right of Rational Dissenters to be called Christians, commenting that

There are some, it is hoped who by the conduct of their brave forefathers may be stirred up to a steady resolution of opposing everything contrary or prejudicial to pure genuine Christianity.<sup>88</sup>

Twenty-five years later, he returned to the same theme, observing that

---

<sup>83</sup> Wood, *Reciprocal duties*, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Hays, *An Appeal*, p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> Seddon, *Discourses* (1793), p. 45.

<sup>86</sup> Rowe, *A Discourse*, p. 13.

<sup>87</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 16.

<sup>88</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief and impartial history of the Puritans* (1772), p. 1.

Whatever doctrines or practices are unauthorised by the New Testament, though they may indeed form a part of religion as established in national or adopted by particular churches, they are not part of Christianity.<sup>89</sup>

Here he established a very clear link between reasoned examination of the New Testament and what he saw as the content of true Christian doctrine.

The notion of returning to the purity of primitive Christianity uncorrupted by post-apostolic additions to doctrine and practice was advocated by Rational Dissenters time and time again in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. This approach had been argued by Protestants since the Reformation, and was thus not unique to Rational Dissent. It was, however, heavily emphasized by Rational Dissenters. It formed a key dimension of their sole dependence on the Scriptures as the word of God. It also constituted part of their argument that the Reformation had not gone far enough.

Joseph Priestley's *An History of The Corruptions of Christianity*, published in 1782, did much to argue for the purity of primitive Christianity. However this idea was not in origin Priestley's. It owed as much to arguments voiced amongst Rational Dissenters before 1782, as to Priestley's work. Almost thirty years before Micaiah Towgood wrote of wishing to see the Church of England established upon 'The scriptural foundations of the apostles and prophets and not upon the articles and canons, the institutions and inventions.'<sup>90</sup> The same idea was expressed by Paul Cardale in 1772,<sup>91</sup> by William Wood in 1773,<sup>92</sup> by Cardale and Lindsey in 1774,<sup>93</sup> by Evanson,<sup>94</sup> by Joseph Cornish and William Enfield in 1777,<sup>95</sup> and in the sermons of

---

<sup>89</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief history of Nonconformity* (1797), p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Towgood, *A Dissent*, p. 79.

<sup>91</sup> P. Cardale, *A comment upon some remarkable passages in Christ's prayer* (1772), p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Wood, *Reciprocal duties*, p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> Cardale, *A treatise*, p. 67; Lindsey, *Apology*, p. 162.

<sup>94</sup> E. Evanson, *A letter to the Rt. Rev the Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry* (1777), p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> J. Cornish, *A letter to the Rt. Rev the Lord Bishop of Carlisle* (1777), p. 68; W. Enfield, *An apology for the clergy, and particularly for Protestant Dissenting ministers* (1777).

Benjamin Thomas of Malmesbury, published posthumously in 1782.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore Rational Dissenters continued to return to this theme for the remainder of the eighteenth century. Explored by Lindsey in 1783,<sup>97</sup> Thomas Barnes in 1786,<sup>98</sup> by Jane Toulmin in 1790,<sup>99</sup> by Lindsey again in the same year,<sup>100</sup> Kentish in 1794<sup>101</sup> and Thomas Belsham in 1800,<sup>102</sup> it became a central facet of their Christian identity. Priestley's 1782 publication explored the idea of the corruptions of Christianity in greater length but his arguments were an elaboration of a theme presented with vigour on a wide scale amongst less prominent adherents of Rational Dissent. Throughout the period 1770-1800 Rational Dissenters continued to project this distinction as an aspect setting them apart from the Established Church and from Orthodox Dissenters.

Rational Dissenters were equally keen to dismiss charges of being unscriptural. Once more, they went to great lengths to establish positively their scriptural adherence, particularly in the 1790s. Many, amongst them Thomas Amory and George Clark, and in the 1790s William and Thomas Belsham, David Jones and, in Scotland, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, turning also to history to validate their theological views and scriptural interpretation, argued that the early church was Unitarian.<sup>103</sup> This was an ongoing

---

<sup>96</sup> B. Thomas, *Sermons on various subjects* (1782), p.

<sup>97</sup> T. Lindsey, *An historical view of the Unitarian doctrine and worship, from the Reformation to our own times* (1783), p. 488.

<sup>98</sup> T. Barnes, *A discourse delivered at the public commencement of the Manchester Academy* (1786), p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> T. Lindsey, *A second address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge, relating to Jesus Christ and the great errors concerning him* (1790).

<sup>101</sup> Kentish, *Letter to J. White*, p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> T. Belsham, *Freedom of enquiry and zeal in the diffusion of Christian truth* (1800), p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> T. Amory, *The Life of John Bunce* (1770), p. 280; W. Belsham, *Essays*, III, 206; G. Clark, *A defence of the unity of God* (1789), p. 94; D. Jones, *Reasons for Unitarianism: or the primitive Christian doctrine* (1792); T. F. Palmer, *An attempt to refute a sermon by H. D. Ingliss, on the Godhead of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1792), p. 39; T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr Wilberforce's treatise* (1798), p. 261. Lindsey recorded his support for Thomas Fyshe Palmer and Thomas Muir, sentenced to transportation to Botany Bay, Lindsey, *Letters II*, 257, Lindsey to Joshua Toulmin, 20 February 1794.

dialogue with Orthodox Dissenters<sup>104</sup> and Church of England ministers<sup>105</sup> who rejected this argument. Arguments presenting the scriptural nature of the theology of Rational Dissenters were tied especially to their rejection of the Trinity. This is unsurprising, since it was that which distinguished them from all other Christians. Thus William Frend wrote in 1790 ‘The Scriptures contain the clearest declarations that there is but one God, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a trinity.’<sup>106</sup> In 1799 John Rowe made a similar point.<sup>107</sup> Kenrick and Wood maintained that the Trinity was not a concept held by the followers of the apostles.<sup>108</sup> Thomas Porter and Joshua argued that their belief in divine revelation was not diminished but rather confirmed by rejection of the Trinity.<sup>109</sup> The London Unitarian Society sent a subsidy to Thomas Evans in Wales to support the printing of Unitarian tracts in Welsh.<sup>110</sup>

Unitarians, faced with particularly vehement attacks which singled them out amongst Rational Dissenters in the 1790s, were especially anxious in this decade to stress their scriptural fidelity. For John Kentish in 1794 this distinguished Unitarians from Arians as well as members of the Church of England:

We cannot but regard every practice as idolatrous which attributes any of the prerogatives of the Deity to another, a conclusion in which we think ourselves warranted by the language of scripture.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> S. Palmer, *The Calvinism of Protestant Dissenters asserted* (1786), p. 3; S. Knowles, *Revealed religion asserted* (Taunton, 1786), p. 166; J. Barnard, *The divinity of Jesus Christ demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures and the Primitive Church* (1789); J. Reynolds, *The divinity of Christ defended* (1790), p. 2; J. Baillie, *Two sermons*, p. 21; J. Knott, *A vindication* (1794), p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> S. Horsley, *A charge delivered to the Archdeaconry of St Albans* (1783), p. 10; T. Knowles, *Primitive Christianity: or testimonies from writers of the first four centuries* (1789); *Sermons preached before the University of Oxford* (1789).

<sup>106</sup> Frend, *An address*, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Rowe, *A discourse*, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> Kenrick, *A Discourse*; p. 17, W. Wood; *A Serious Address to Christians of Trinitarian and Calvinistic sentiments* (1800), p. 15.

<sup>109</sup> Porter, *A defence*, pp. 185-6; Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 193-194, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 6 June 1792.

<sup>111</sup> Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 8.



Joshua Toulmin<sup>112</sup> and William Wood<sup>113</sup> cited Theophilus Lindsey and Newcome Cappe respectively as examples of strong adherents of the Gospels. Both Timothy Kenrick in 1793 and John Kentish in 1794 argued that Rational Dissenters had applied their learning to the preparation of more accurate translations of scripture.<sup>114</sup> Gilbert Wakefield in his translation of the New Testament in 1791 had stressed his ‘competent knowledge of the original language’ and his motive to produce an authentic version.<sup>115</sup> Kenrick added analysis of contextual meaning to assertion of their scriptural nature.<sup>116</sup> William Belsham, John Kentish and Joshua Toulmin went to considerable lengths to assert that the Deist belief that the Scriptures were neither divine, nor the word of God, formed no part of the Rational Dissenting identity.<sup>117</sup>

Attempts to establish more clearly the true nature of Rational Dissenting identity included dismissal of the charge of unsound reasoning. Rational Dissenters picked up on the idea advanced by Locke that the purpose of reason was to reinforce revelation and not to contradict it.<sup>118</sup> The precise nature of their arguments demonstrates that Rational Dissenters took reason further than members of the Church of England or Orthodox Dissenters. William Hazlitt in 1774 elevated reason to ‘a Divine Law’, presenting it as compatible with God’s design and purpose.<sup>119</sup> Micaiah Towgood saw reason and scripture as bound together.<sup>120</sup> This idea was taken up in the 1790s by Toulmin, Kenrick and Kentish.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. xiv.

<sup>113</sup> Wood, *Sermon to Protestant Dissenters*, p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Kenrick, *A Discourse* (1793), p. 16; Kentish, *Strictures*, p. 22.

<sup>115</sup> Wakefield, *A translation*, 1, iv.

<sup>116</sup> Kenrick, *A Discourse* (1793), p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> W. Belsham, *Essays*; J. Kentish, *The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine* (1796); Toulmin, *Injustice*.

<sup>118</sup> J. Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695).

<sup>119</sup> W. Hazlitt, *Human authority, in matters of faith, repugnant to Christianity* (1774), p. 9.

<sup>120</sup> Towgood, *A Dissent*, p. 94.

<sup>121</sup> J. Toulmin, *The promise of God’s presence with his disciples explained* (1792), p. 7; Kenrick, *A discourse* (1794), p. 18; Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 48.

Indeed, the increase in the number of arguments printed in the 1790s by Rational Dissenters stressing their rational nature is conspicuous. Many were accompanied by comments making a positive virtue of the reasoned approach. Jane Toulmin's statement in 1790 that 'enquiry must always prove, upon the whole, favourable to the truth'<sup>122</sup> bore remarkable resemblance to Benjamin Flower's reference in 1796 to 'what I think of the greatest consequence, the disposition necessary for the proper examination of the truth.'<sup>123</sup> Joshua Toulmin's assertion in 1797 that 'whatever renders religion more rational, renders it more credible',<sup>124</sup> attempted to show that Rational Dissent rested on a firm basis, compatible with the age of the Enlightenment and its reasoned exploration of the physical world manifested in science and philosophy. Through historical studies Toulmin, Lindsey and Lofft reinforced the crucial importance of individual enquiry which formed the cornerstone of their doctrinal beliefs.<sup>125</sup> Toulmin cited the life of John Biddle, imprisoned for his beliefs under Cromwell and Charles II, as an indication that 'the progress of truth is ever slow. Many arguments must be repeatedly renewed before conviction is produced.'<sup>126</sup> He used his historical study of Faustus Socinus to stress that the life of Socinus illustrated that Rational Dissenters far from blindly following Socinus as a leader for example, as had been asserted by the high Churchman, William Jones,<sup>127</sup> had applied reason to individual consideration of the views originally expressed by Socinus.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> B. Flower, *National Sins considered* (Cambridge, 1796), p. xii.

<sup>124</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 22.

<sup>125</sup> J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of the life, character, sentiments and writings of Faustus Socinus* (1771), pp. viii, 255-258; idem, *A Review of the life, character and writings of the Rev John Biddle* (1791), pp. 138-140; T. Lindsey, *An Historical view of the Unitarian doctrine and worship* (1783), pp. iv-v, 474; C. Lofft, *An history of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), pp. 5-6.

<sup>126</sup> J. Toulmin, *John Biddle*, p. 140.

<sup>127</sup> Jones, *A preservative*, p. 11.

<sup>128</sup> J. Toulmin, *Faustus Socinus*, p. 255.

Rational Dissenters were equally concerned to establish the *soundness* of their reasoning, a marked increase in this evident in the 1790s. Dialogues written by Rational Dissenters were aimed towards this end. William Frend in 1793 asserted that Rational Dissenting interpretations of scripture were better informed and more accurate than those of members of the Established Church and Orthodox Dissenters.<sup>129</sup> Both Seddon's republished work and Rowe emphasized the distinctive consistency of Rational Dissenting reasoning.<sup>130</sup> Thomas Porter highlighted Unitarianism as 'a system perfectly rational, lacking absurdities or contradictions.'<sup>131</sup> Thomas Belsham went to great lengths to demonstrate that his concept of a benevolent God was based on sound reasoning.<sup>132</sup>

The individual right to exploration and independent interpretation of the Scriptures based on reason formed a central part of the campaign for relief from subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, addressed in Chapter 6. Unsurprisingly expressed with greatest frequency and strongest force when the campaign was at its height,<sup>133</sup> such arguments form part of a crucial dialogue between Rational Dissenters and their contemporary critics. Joseph Towers' comment that

It is true, I have no right to impose my sense of scripture upon any other man; but neither has any other man a right to impose his sense of scripture upon me<sup>134</sup>

highlights his assertion of the place of Rational Dissent within the wider Christian religion. This view was formulated, at least in part, in response to what he saw as the exclusiveness of the theology of the Established Church and Orthodox Dissent. Towers

---

<sup>129</sup> Frend, *Address*, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Seddon, *Discourses*, p. 79, Rowe, *A discourse*, p. 16, J. Toulmin, *The promise of Christ's presence with his disciples* (Taunton, 1792), p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Porter, *A defence of Unitarianism* (1793), p. 193.

<sup>132</sup> T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr. Wilberforce's treatise* (1798), p. 20.

<sup>133</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>134</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*, p. 19.

argued for a crucially non-dogmatic, non-subscribing tradition. Unitarians sought to stress that their concept of the truth did not imply an attachment to a specific thinker, pointing out that they did not follow Socinus uncritically.<sup>135</sup>

Rational Dissenting attacks on Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* pulled together assertions that they were Christian, scriptural and rational. Particularly disturbed by the publication of volume 1 in 1776, with its highly controversial Chapters xv and xvi, they sought to distance themselves from his views. William Tayleur of Shrewsbury praised Ben Mordecai's answer to Gibbon.<sup>136</sup> Gilbert Wakefield, like Priestley, developed lengthy arguments against Gibbon. Wakefield, in common with many in the Church of England, was uneasy with Gibbon's apparent disrespect for the character of the sacred Christian doctrine. Like Lindsey,<sup>137</sup> he accused Gibbon of judging Christianity by its later corrupted, not by its original apostolic purity. Gibbon failed to live up to Wakefield's perception of the scrupulous examination of the Scriptures by Rational Dissenters. Criticizing his lack of a rational approach, Wakefield described him as 'utterly disqualified for a dispassionate consideration of religious subjects.'<sup>138</sup>

In the same spirit Rational Dissenters sought to address issues of conscience. In the face of attacks like that launched by William Jones,<sup>139</sup> they presented themselves as 'men of conscience.' Andrew Kippis in 1788 argued for the importance of putting 'every man on the fair footing of being answerable to God only for his conscience.'<sup>140</sup> Like Kippis, Towers saw conscience as important, but neither made the claim that

---

<sup>135</sup> Wood, *Reciprocal duties* (1773), p. 10; idem, *A Serious Address to Christians of Trinitarian and Calvinistic sentiments* (1800), p. 11; Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 30; T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr Wilberforce's Treatise* (1800), p. 168.

<sup>136</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/20, Tayleur to Lindsey, 31 July 1781.

<sup>137</sup> Lindsey, *The Catechist*, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>138</sup> Wakefield, *A translation*, pp. xvi - xviii.

<sup>139</sup> See above, Chapter 2, Part 1.

<sup>140</sup> A Kippis, *Sermon preached at the Old Jewry* (1788), p. 39.

following it was particular to Rational Dissenters.<sup>141</sup> However for them it meant individual conscience, although it did not of course rule out a collective response. Rational Dissenters were more willing to indulge in rational theological debate than Calvinists or Arminians in the belief that stimulation of discussion would lead closer to the truth.

Both Arians and Unitarians, emphasised Cornish, cited historical evidence of persecution of Protestant Nonconformity, illustrating its importance in the search for truth:

Next to understanding the principles of our dissent, the consideration of what our ancestors suffered in this cause must afford the most animating motives to persist in them.<sup>142</sup>

For Cornish history validated the Rational Dissenting determination to perpetuate their theological ideas. Toulmin's argument was that a willingness to endure persecution demonstrated the importance of the pursuit of conscience to Rational Dissenters. Toulmin emphasised Unitarian sacrifice of preferment within the Church of England as did Wood on Newcome Cappe's behalf.<sup>143</sup> Lindsey's establishment of the first formally constituted Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street was a practical manifestation of such beliefs. Socinians came to see themselves as part of a persecuted minority in the 1790s. The key to Toulmin's views lay in his assertion in 1797 that 'if suffering reproach for conscience and in the cause of Christ, be any mark of belonging to Christ, we will assert, that are others Christians, we are, on this ground, more especially so.'<sup>144</sup> Toulmin himself suffered physical intimidation,<sup>145</sup> as had Priestley and others such as

---

<sup>141</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*, p. 10.

<sup>142</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief and impartial history of the Puritans* (1772), p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 32; Wood, *Sermon to Protestant Dissenters*, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 34.

<sup>145</sup> DWL, MS 12.45 (162), J. Toulmin to Rev Murch, 25 November 1791.

Lawrence Holden.<sup>146</sup> Benjamin Flower, proprietor of a newspaper sympathetic to Rational Dissent, *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, was imprisoned in Newgate for libel against Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff.

In Unitarian minds, the following of conscience in theological matters necessarily involved the requirement to make one's views known. While this was not peculiar to Rational Dissenters, there was a recognition amongst them that only thus could the true nature of their identity be understood. Rational Dissenters repeatedly emphasized this argument.<sup>147</sup> Lindsey, writing to Tayleur on 23 June 1782, noted Richard Price's observation that Rational Dissenting congregations would be larger 'if Unitarian ministers had informed their people properly.'<sup>148</sup> Price was making the point that Unitarian ministers needed to make their theological views more widely known. Toulmin in 1792 urged Unitarians that they should 'openly avow [the truth].'<sup>149</sup> John Kentish concluded that

our public association, as Unitarian Christians, is peculiarly desirable. More can be done by a society than by the unassisted efforts of single persons.<sup>150</sup>

Benjamin Flower lent his support to the campaign to speak out.<sup>151</sup> Although he advertised a wide range of religious works from high church to nonconformist, *The Cambridge Intelligencer* proved a forum for numerous advertisements of Rational Dissenting publications, including those of Theophilus Lindsey, William Frend, Anna

---

<sup>146</sup> L. Holden, *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), p. 6.

<sup>147</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/9, William Tayleur to Lindsey, 2 April 1780; UCC/2/34/1/18, 14 March 1781; UCC/ 2/34/1/24, 26 March 1784.

<sup>148</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 355, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 23 June 1782.

<sup>149</sup> J. Toulmin, *The character of Christ as the witness to the truth* (Birmingham, 1792), p. 24.

<sup>150</sup> Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 20.

<sup>151</sup> C.f. T. Whelan, ed., *Politics, Religion and Romance: the letters of Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould 1794-1808* (Aberystwyth, 2008)

Letitia Barbauld and Mary Wollstonecraft.<sup>152</sup> Several were printed and sold as separate works by Flower himself.

Equally important for Rational Dissenters was the emphasis on their morality, which they maintained was unaffected by their rejection of the concept of Christ's atonement for inherited sin. Indeed, the rejection of original sin which led to an optimism about man's capacity for improvement, and belief in the humanity of Christ, meant that Rational Dissenters arrived at their concept of morality by a different theological route to that taken by members of the Church of England, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Dissenters. For Rational Dissenters the following of conscience and a willingness to publicise their theological views were themselves synonymous with the desire to be morally upright. Benjamin Thomas of Malmesbury argued that without right behaviour 'the rectitude of our opinions' and the 'enlargement of our understanding' were worthless,<sup>153</sup> a response which demonstrated how closely interwoven Rational Dissenters saw their Christianity and their morality. Such a response was unsurprising. No Christian would have argued otherwise. This emphasis on morality constituted part of a Latitudinarian tradition dating back to Archbishop Tillotson and earlier. More significant than the response itself, however, was the frequency with which similar and related assertions were made by Rational Dissenters to establish their moral code as an inherent part of their identity. Andrew Kippis, for example, through his study of Captain James Cook, explored the notion of progress, established a beneficial link between the advancement of knowledge and moral conduct:

---

<sup>152</sup> *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 3, 16, 17, 31 August, 7, 14 September, 4, 25 October, 9 November 1793.

<sup>153</sup> B. Thomas of Malmesbury, *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of Llandaff* (1774), p. 47.

Knowledge and virtue constitute the chief happiness of a nation and cannot fail of contributing to the more extensive prevalence of that moral conduct on which the welfare of society so greatly depends.<sup>154</sup>

The Arian Hugh Worthington saw Rational Dissent as a moral system.<sup>155</sup> Thomas Jervis placed morality above understanding.<sup>156</sup> Porter, Toulmin and Rowe emphasized that non-acceptance of the doctrine of atonement actually rendered it essential for Rational Dissenters to have a highly developed moral code.<sup>157</sup> Combined with assertions of their Christian, scriptural nature, this addressed Evangelical arguments that mere morality was worth little without faith. These assertions were made necessary by external contemporary perceptions of Rational Dissent.

Finally Rational Dissenters were unwavering in asserting their loyalty to the constitution, an aspect of their identity explored in detail in Chapter 7. The frequency with which they specifically made such statements is indicative of their perceived need to establish their patriotism in the face of accusations to the contrary.

This chapter has shown that although many attacks on Rational Dissenters were generalised in nature, many more were specific and serious attacks on the theology of Rational Dissent, a recognition of its significance. Increasing attempts amongst Rational Dissenters to justify, publicise and formalise their theological identity were indicative of the crucial importance of theology in underpinning the identity of Rational Dissent. By responding to such charges their profile was heightened further.

During the 1770s and 1780s Rational Dissenters were asserting their Christian, scriptural and rational identity in response to attack by their opponents. However, by the 1790s, in the face of increasingly vehement attacks, Rational Dissenting

---

<sup>154</sup> A. Kippis, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1788), vol. 1, p. v.

<sup>155</sup> H. Worthington, *Christianity, an easy and liberal system; that of popery, absurd and burdensome.* (1778), p. 8.

<sup>156</sup> Jervis, *Consolatory Views*, p. 14.

<sup>157</sup> Porter, *A defence*, pp. 189, 190; Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. x.; Rowe, *A discourse*, p. 21.



formalisation of these three aspects of their identity was increasingly urged and took a sharper, more precisely defined form. Rational Dissenters defined what being a Christian meant. They went beyond merely stating their scriptural adherence, seeking to demonstrate it in increasing detail. They made a positive virtue of the rational approach, illustrating, as they saw it, the soundness of their reasoning. Addresses to the Society of Unitarian Christians in the West of England provided frequent opportunities to urge these sharper, more precisely defined statements of the nature of their identity.

Of course Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Church of England likewise saw themselves as Christian, Scriptural and logical in their arguments, and moral in their behaviour and values. However, accepting the Trinity, original sin and atonement meant that they did not feel the same need to justify themselves on these foundations. It was the considerable lengths which Rational Dissenters went to in order to defend themselves against accusations which distinguished and simultaneously united them. Rational Dissenters argued that the characteristics of being Christian, scriptural and that of sound reasoning demonstrated in their published views were part of their collective identity, identified and analysed in Chapter 4.

#### 4: THEOLOGY: THE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF RATIONAL DISSENT

Rational Dissent in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century had a clear and increasingly sharp sense of collective identity. This chapter identifies the theological views which united Rational Dissenters, while simultaneously distinguishing them from Orthodox Dissenters. Section i explores those points of common agreement between Arians and Socinians through analysis of sermons, discourses and letters. Section ii progresses to the examination of the impact of shared doctrine on practice through analysis of published hymn books, lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting works and organisations, memoirs, and newspapers, as well as unpublished diaries and letters. In sections iii and iv this chapter argues respectively that theology had a major impact on all aspects of their lives and activities, and that initially informal networks, crystallising in the 1790s into more formal organisations, played a greater role in supporting and publicising Rational Dissent than has been acknowledged.

In methodological terms Rational Dissent assumed a collective identity stemming from general agreement on the fundamental and heightened importance of the rational approach resting on the sole foundation of the Scriptures. When the Unitarian John Disney wrote in 1774 to Frederick Cornwallis, Archbishop of Canterbury that

The Protestant Reformation rested on the all sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and the right of private judgement which each individual claims in the interpretation of them,<sup>1</sup>

he made the point that, even in the immediate aftermath of the Reformation, the Church of England had departed from these two key principles, principles which underpinned and were fundamental to Rational and Orthodox Dissent. For Rational Dissenters the

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Disney, *A letter to the Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on the present opposition to any further reform* (1774).

concept of *Sola Scriptura* rendered the rational approach crucially important.<sup>2</sup> The rule of faith contained in the Scriptures was not simply to be observed, but, as far as possible, to be understood. Yet Michael Watts' observation that 'rational Arminianism was inclined to treat Christianity as a philosophy to be debated rather than a faith to be shared'<sup>3</sup> takes the concept of rationality, as far as Rational Dissenters were concerned, too far and does not take adequate account of the rational piety analysed by R. K. Webb.<sup>4</sup> Reason did not replace the sharing of faith amongst them; rather it crucially gave rise to it, explained and supported it.

In their concept of reason as the key to revelation, Rational Dissenters differed from Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Church of England. While far from dismissing the place of reason, Orthodox Dissenters, of whom John Ryland and John Macgowan were important late eighteenth century examples, saw it as running the risk of leading to pride.<sup>5</sup> For them revelation was central, and reason a secondary aid, which if taken too far could lead to scepticism and atheism. While progressive revelation was accepted by Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Church of England, including Methodists, Rational Dissenters took this concept much further. The crucial emphasis placed on progressive revelation by Rational Dissenters underpinned their argument for the central place of reason in understanding revelation. The Rational Dissenting idea of progress, set in the context of the Enlightenment, identified the potential in late eighteenth century humanity for a far greater ability to understand than had existed in earlier times, hence their interest in new Bible translations.

---

<sup>2</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93 (1), T. Lindsey to M. Hays, 15 April 1793.

<sup>3</sup> M. Watts, *Dissenters*, 1 (Oxford, 1978) 438.

<sup>4</sup> R. K. Webb, 'Rational Piety' in Haakonssen, ed., *Enlightenment and Religion*.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ryland, *A contemplation of the insufficiency of reason* (1775), p. 44; Macgowan, *Monitor*, p. 5.

## **i: Shared Doctrinal Ideas**

Both Arians and Socinians started from the same basis of *Sola Scriptura* and reasoned interpretation of the Scriptures, which led to a shared core of doctrinal beliefs amongst them. It was reasoned interpretation of the Scriptures which led Arians such as Samuel Bourn, Joseph Cornish, Philip Holland,<sup>6</sup> Unitarians such as George Clark and Lawrence Holden to reject the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>7</sup> Richard Fry, Edmund Butcher and David Eaton, amongst many other Unitarians, went to great lengths to prove the scriptural validity of their rejection of the Trinity, and their dismissal of it as the gateway to Heaven.<sup>8</sup> This rejection reinforced amongst Rational Dissenters a common desire to take the Reformation much further, explored in Chapter 5, in ways that were very different from those of Orthodox Dissenters.<sup>9</sup>

For all other Christians the Trinity was central.<sup>10</sup> Even Swedenborgians, highly eccentric, had some notion of the Trinity. John Macgowan highlighted Rational Dissenting ‘implacable enmity’ to this doctrine and arguments which developed from it as a major difference from Orthodox Dissenting beliefs.<sup>11</sup> So too did the Independent minister, George Townsend and the Particular Baptist, Andrew Fuller.<sup>12</sup> For members of the Established Church, the doctrine of the Trinity underpinned the Apostles Creed,

---

<sup>6</sup> S. Bourn, *The true Christian way of striving for the faith of the Gospel* (Carmarthen, 1771), p. 21; J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address to Protestant Dissenters of all denominations* (1773), p. 8; P. Holland, *Sermons on practical subjects*, vol. 1 (1792), p. v.

<sup>7</sup> G. Clark, *A defence of the unity of God* (1789), p. 14; L. Holden, *Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden, Kent* (1822), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> R. Fry, *No shame in suffering for truth. A Sermon delivered to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Billericay* (1798), p. 38; E. Butcher, *Sermons* (1798), p. 221; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. vi.

<sup>9</sup> J. Gill, *A collection of sermons and tracts* (1773); J. Ryland, *The certain increase of the glory and kingdom of Jesus* (1794).

<sup>10</sup> S. Addington, *The Christian Minister's reasons for baptizing infants* (1771), p. 149; *The Doctrine of the Trinity stated in a circular letter from the Baptist Ministers and Messengers assembled at Olney, Buckinghamshire* (1776), p. 2; J. Ryland, *The character of the Reverend James Hervey* (1790); *An address from the ministers of the Western Calvinistical Association* (1795), p. 4; J. Baillie, *A vindication of the divinity of Jesus Christ* (1789), p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> J. Macgowan, *Socinianism brought to the test* (1773), p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> G. Townsend, *The replication; or A Familiar Address to Mr. William Frend* (Canterbury, 1789), pp.3-6; Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems*, pp. 4, 37, 198.

the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. The Latitudinarian Richard Watson, from a position of sympathy, nevertheless recognised the distinctiveness of Rational Dissent, commenting that ‘whatever uniformity there may be of outward profession [of Christianity], there can be none of inward belief [with Rational Dissenters].’<sup>13</sup>

It was the rejection of the concept of three co-equal, co-divine and co-existent beings that led Rational Dissenters towards a belief in the supremacy of God the Father and the role of Christ as human exemplar. Seeing the resurrection as the greatest miracle of all, they recognised that God the Father had enabled Christ to perform miracles in his name. As illustrated by the Arian Thomas Amory,<sup>14</sup> and by Unitarians Paul Cardale<sup>15</sup> and William Ashdowne,<sup>16</sup> amongst others, miracles were performed by the Apostles after the crucifixion. Acceptance of miracles was a source of general agreement amongst Rational Dissenters with High Churchmen, Latitudinarians, Methodists and Orthodox Dissenters. It was only sceptics such as the philosopher David Hume who questioned whether the account of miracles accurately reflected what had actually happened.<sup>17</sup> Rational Dissenters were particularly eager, in view of their reasoned questioning of the meaning of the Scriptures, not to be perceived as sceptics. Thus Hugh Worthington wrote of ‘the certainty and credibility of miracles,’ while Newcome Cappe attributed to miracles ‘ample proof of the truth of Christianity.’<sup>18</sup>

What united and simultaneously distinguished Rational Dissenters was their interpretation of the significance of miracles. For Rational Dissenters, in contrast to

---

<sup>13</sup> R. Watson, *A letter to the members of the honourable House of Commons; respecting the petition for relief in the matter of subscription* (1772), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> T. Amory, *Daily devotion assisted and recommended in four sermons* (1770), p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> Cardale, *A comment*, p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> W. Ashdowne, *A key to the scriptural character of Jesus Christ* (1784), p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> D. Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects, II*, (1793).

<sup>18</sup> H. Worthington, *The growth and influence of Christianity in the world* (1783), p. 23; N. Cappe, *Discourses on providence and the government of God* (1795), p. x.

Anglicans and Orthodox Dissenters,<sup>19</sup> miracles did not prove the divinity of Christ or of the Holy Ghost. Hence Amory's perception of miracles<sup>20</sup> as confirmation of Christ's power from God the Father and of his mission to instruct as God the Father's messenger was shared amongst Rational Dissenters. Cardale was one of several authors,<sup>21</sup> who argued that Christ 'wrought miracles by the power and favour of God, not by his own inherent power.'<sup>22</sup> In contrast the Church of England vicars Thomas Auckland and David Simpson, for example, saw miracles as evidence that the divine Christ was the 'Son of God.'<sup>23</sup>

Agreement over the rejection of the doctrine of original sin, inherited by mankind from Adam, was fundamental to Rational Dissent. The significance of this is highlighted by Weinbrot's useful assessment of the widely accepted and long standing belief in this doctrine amongst both High and Low Churchmen from the early years of the century.<sup>24</sup> The Arian John Taylor of Norwich had rejected this doctrine in 1740, while John Wesley asserted his belief in it.<sup>25</sup> To Rational Dissenters in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, the issue had become crucial because of the theological and philanthropic ideas they developed as a result of their rejection of this doctrine. Thus William Wood argued that sin was not transferable from Adam to man.<sup>26</sup> Cardale pointed to the non-transferability of merit from Christ to man.<sup>27</sup> Henry Taylor, an Arian

---

<sup>19</sup> J. Baillie, *A vindication*, p. 11; J. Ryland, *The wonderful extremes united in the person of Christ* (1772), p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> T. Amory, *Daily devotion assisted and recommended in four sermons* (1770), p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief treatise on the divine manifestations* (1787), p. 9; P. Holland, *Sermons*, vol 2 (1792), p.72; J. Burgh, *The dignity of human nature* (1795), p. 483.

<sup>22</sup> Cardale, *A comment*, p. 176.

<sup>23</sup> T. Ackland, *Religion and loyalty recommended* (1798), p. 13, D. Simpson, *An apology for the doctrine of the Trinity* (1798), p. 230.

<sup>24</sup> H. W. Weinbrot, *Literature, Religion and the Evolution of Culture 1660-1780* (Baltimore, 2013), pp. 25-27.

<sup>25</sup> J. Taylor, *The scripture - doctrine of original sin proposed to free and candid examination* (1740); J. Wesley, *The principles of a Methodist* (Bristol, 1742), p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Wood, *Reciprocal duties*, p.17.

<sup>27</sup> Cardale, *A comment*, p. 10.

who remained within the Church of England, advanced a two-fold argument. Firstly he maintained that the notion of original sin was contrary to God's original plan and would suggest that 'the original scheme was interrupted by Adam's sin. But this is not true.'<sup>28</sup> Secondly he argued that the idea of original sin did not fit with God's justice. Rational Dissenters arrived at the conclusion that man was not fundamentally degenerate<sup>29</sup> and accepted the belief in a tendency towards sin without collective guilt. Catharine Cappe observed that she could not 'accede to the opinion of those who represent human nature as altogether corrupt and depraved.'<sup>30</sup> This was a very different perspective from that of the Orthodox Dissenter Christopher Murston, minister of the Independent Meeting at Milton in Kent who, for example, referred to 'the darkness of understanding,'<sup>31</sup> which prevented humanity from rising above depravity. Indeed Orthodox Dissenting ministers stressed the depravity of man.<sup>32</sup> In the last thirty years of the eighteenth century Orthodox Dissenting defences of the notion of original sin and of Christ's atonement for it, when they justifiably thought it was under attack, were published repeatedly and regularly.<sup>33</sup>

Salvation was the fundamental hope of all Christians and therefore central to theological debate. Their belief in the total humanity of Christ and rejection of the

---

<sup>28</sup> H. Taylor, *The apology of Benjamin Ben Mordecai* (1774), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Hays, *An Appeal*, pp. 10-11; W. Frend, *Animadversions on the elements of Christian theology by Rev G. Pretyman, Lord Bishop of Lincoln* (1800), p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> C. Murston, *A funeral sermon on the death of Miss March* (1792), p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> D. Bocking, *The blessedness of the righteous at death* (1771), p. 4; J. Jenkins, *The Christian's strength* (1775), pp. 7-10, 31-33; T. Priestley, *The Christian's Looking Glass* (1790), pp. 13-14; J. Lamb, *An account of the ordination of the Reverend Joseph Lamb, to the co-pastoral care of the Independent church at Weymouth, Dorset* (1797), p. 20; G. Burder, *The broad and narrow way* (1797), pp. 4-5.

<sup>33</sup> T. Reader, *A letter to a lover of the Gospel* (1772), p. 6; idem, *The Incurable Abomination; or Popery always the same* (1779), pp. 14-19; C. Murston, *A Funeral Sermon on the Death of Miss March* (1792), pp. 10-16; T. Williams, *A vindication of the Calvinist doctrines of human depravity, the atonement, and divine influences in a series of letters to the Reverend T. Belsham* (1799); *A circular Letter for Baptist Ministers* (Midland Association, 1771, 1779, 1789, 1798, 1799), (Worcester, 1771, 1773), (Leominster, 1775), (Buckingham, 1776, 1777), (Warwick, 1778, 1786), (Northampton, 1780, 1792, 1796, 1797), (Kent and Sussex Association, 1784, 1785), (Kettering, 1788, 1795), (Bristol, 1800).

concept of original sin led Unitarians naturally to reject the doctrine of atonement for inherited sin by Christ through crucifixion,<sup>34</sup> a view which horrified Orthodox Dissenters. Lindsey repeatedly used the word ‘Saviour’ in connection with Christ,<sup>35</sup> arguing in common with other Unitarians that it was Christ’s teaching which offered man a means of salvation, rather than the crucifixion itself.<sup>36</sup> Lindsey referred, in general terms, to the four Gospels, to Acts, and to the Letters of St Paul to justify this view.<sup>37</sup> The Arian position was more complex. Seemingly less willing to address the question of original sin than Unitarians, they made far fewer references to it. Samuel Bourn the younger who referred to original sin as ‘an absurdity and impossibility’ was a rare exception.<sup>38</sup> Yet those references which survive amongst Arians suggest that they were uncomfortable with the doctrine of atonement for original sin. In terms reminiscent of Lindsey above, Abraham Rees, and James Manning expressed a belief in atonement through the Gospel, not through Christ’s death or resurrection.<sup>39</sup> Habakkuk Crabbe maintained that it was the gospel which ‘provides a free pardon’.<sup>40</sup> Manning pointed to Micaiah Towgood’s concept of reconciliation between God and Man as a result of the crucifixion, emphasizing that ‘He did not conceive of it as having any connection with the doctrine of original sin.’<sup>41</sup> Richard Amner, referring to *St. Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians*, 1 Cor. xv, 1., believed that the idea of ‘Christ dying

---

<sup>34</sup> E. g. DWL. MS 12.58 (12), J. P. Estlin to T. Belsham, 27 February 1791; J. Hampson, *To the worthy trustees of the Dissenting Chapel at Tunbridge Wells: A blow at the root of pretended Calvinism* (1788), pp. 77, 90; D. Jardine, *The Unpurchased Love of God in the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ* (Bath, 1792), p. 129; L. Holden, reflecting on 50 years of ministry in *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Lindsey, *Letters 1*, 163, Lindsey to William Turner of Wakefield, 12 November 1773; 168, Lindsey to John Jebb, 5 December 1773; Lindsey to William Tayleur, 309, 30 January 1780, 341, 19 October 1781, Lindsey to Newcome Cappe, 485, 8 December 1785.

<sup>36</sup> Lindsey, *Letters 1*, 223-4, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 14 May 1776.

<sup>37</sup> Lindsey, *The Catechist*, pp. 32, 39, 56, 66.

<sup>38</sup> S. Bourn, *The true Christian way*; Lindsey, *The catechist*, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> A. Rees, *The doctrine of Christ* (1790), p. 15; J. Manning, *A sermon preached at George’s Meeting House* (Exeter, 1793), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> H. Crabbe, *Sermons on practical subjects* (Cambridge, 1796), p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> J. Manning, *A sketch of the Life and Writings of the Reverend Micaiah Towgood* (1792), p. 144.



for our sins' was 'casually mentioned and makes me doubt whether St. Paul did intend quite so much by it as some may chose to imagine.'<sup>42</sup>

Considerations of the issues of sin and atonement amongst Rational Dissenters were accompanied by exploratory thinking amongst them around the concept of Hell. The conclusions which they reached distinguished them from Orthodox Dissenters, for whom fear of Hell was both vivid and ever-present. Amongst Orthodox Dissenters, John Baillie dwelt on 'the pains of Hell',<sup>43</sup> pains which William Huntington and Joseph Lambert suggested that Arians and Socinians were doomed to experience,<sup>44</sup> while John Macgowan made 22 references in a single work to the sad fate experienced by many in Hell.<sup>45</sup> The Calvinistic belief that God had predetermined the destiny of all human beings either to eternal life or to everlasting punishment was reasserted amongst Orthodox Dissenters such as Fuller.<sup>46</sup> The rejection of Calvinism was an essential precondition of Rational Dissent. At the same time, of common concern to Rational Dissenters was that Article 17 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England supported the idea of predestination.

The Unitarian Kentish dismissed predestination on the grounds that 'Few are the poisons with which the goodness of Providence furnish us not with antidotes.'<sup>47</sup> This view conformed to the notion of single predestination, that God wanted to save all men, but that many exercising free will chose sin, thus condemning themselves. It was effectively expressed by the Arian Samuel Bourn the elder who wrote that 'None will

---

<sup>42</sup> R. Amner, *Considerations on the doctrine of a future state* (1797), p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> J. Baillie, *The Influence of a Crucified Saviour* (1772), p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> W. Huntington, *The Epistles of Faith* (1792), p. 27; Anonymous, *Account of the ordination of the Reverend J. Lambert to the co-pastoral care of the Independent Church at Weymouth* (1797), p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> J. Macgowan, *Infernal Conference or Dialogue of Devils* (2 vols, 1772).

<sup>46</sup> Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems*, pp. 16, 111-112.

<sup>47</sup> J. Kentish, *Strictures upon the reply of Mr A. Fuller, to Mr. Kentish's Discourse, entitled, The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine* (1798), p. 48.

be excluded but they who by wilful wickedness disqualify themselves.’<sup>48</sup> This view brought Rational Dissenters closer to the Wesleyan Arminian idea of attributing to man the free will to choose or reject salvation.

Both Arians and Unitarians dismissed the Orthodox Dissenting view of hell. Amongst Arians Abraham Rees and John Ward pointed to the notion of Heaven and Hell as simplistic.<sup>49</sup> Joseph Cornish maintained that ‘Hell is nothing more than an ecclesiastical scarecrow fit to terrify the weak,’ James Manning stressed its repugnance ‘to ideas of wisdom, justice and goodness,’ and Richard Amner dismissed it as a concept founded on misunderstanding.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Towers in a sermon dealing with the imminence of death, made no reference to hell.<sup>51</sup> Amongst Unitarians, Lindsey, arguing that hell was not mentioned in any sources before the fifth century, entertained doubts about eternal punishment,<sup>52</sup> as did George Clark and John Prior Estlin.<sup>53</sup> This view was endorsed amongst the laity by Syllas Neville<sup>54</sup> and by Mary Wollstonecraft.<sup>55</sup> Gilbert Wakefield used the argument of the eternal nature of God’s mercy.<sup>56</sup> David Eaton observed that the natural tendencies of Calvinist principles of predestination were to produce a fatal despair, which had led Eaton and fellow laymen of the same congregation in York to turn from Calvinism to Unitarianism.<sup>57</sup> Eaton shared this view with John Wesley, but for very different reasons. The distinction made by Geoffrey

---

<sup>48</sup> S. Bourn, *A sermon on the resurrection* (1793), p. 6,

<sup>49</sup> A. Rees, *Acceptable religion illustrated and recommended* (1770), p. 21, J. Ward, *The view and conduct of a minister of the Gospel* (Bristol, 1776), p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address to Protestant Dissenters of all kinds* (1773), p. 53; J. Manning, *The Reverend Micaiah Towgood*, p.146; R. Amner, *Considerations on the doctrine of a future state* (1797), p. 28.

<sup>51</sup> DWL, MS 28.14 (2), *Six sermons in the hand of Dr. Towers*, Sermon 2, 1 January 1797.

<sup>52</sup> T. Lindsey, *Vindici? Preistleian? An address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge* (1788), pp. 22, 26.

<sup>53</sup> G. Clark, *A vindication of the honour of God and of the rights of men* (1789), p. 13; J. P. Estlin, *Sermons* (1802), p. 208.

<sup>54</sup> Neville, *Diary*, p.5, 8 March 1767.

<sup>55</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of women* (1794).

<sup>56</sup> Wakefield, *A new translation*, p. 359.

<sup>57</sup> Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, pp. 16-21.

Nuttall between Rational Dissenters, described as ‘Arminians of the head’ and Methodist members of the Church of England, described as ‘Arminians of the heart,’<sup>58</sup> was an important distinctive feature of Rational Dissent. The arguments presented above by Rational Dissenters were indeed rational, rather than evangelistic.

In keeping with their rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, Rational Dissenters recognised the Holy Ghost as an effusion of extraordinary gifts and powers, hence their use of the term ‘Holy Spirit.’ Samuel Bourn the younger argued that ‘God is ready by his Spirit to comfort and perfect those who seek his aid,’<sup>59</sup> a belief echoed by Joseph Cornish and Habakkuk Crabb.<sup>60</sup> Philip Holland wrote that the Apostles received

an effusion of the Holy Spirit of God by which their understandings were enlightened with the knowledge of the truths they were commissioned to deliver.<sup>61</sup>

In the acceptance of the doctrinal idea of Pentecost, amongst Arians such as the layman Thomas Amory,<sup>62</sup> and Unitarians,<sup>63</sup> Rational Dissenters shared common ground with Orthodox Dissenters, but their reasoning was entirely different. For the latter the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was an additional dimension of the Trinity,<sup>64</sup> a belief firmly rejected by Rational Dissenters.

Rational Dissenters agreed on the rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, atonement and original sin, condemning the ideas of predestination and the eternity of hell. For them God the Father alone was divine. Rational Dissenters saw Christ as a

---

<sup>58</sup> G. Nuttall, *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (1967), p. 78.

<sup>59</sup> S. Bourn, *The true Christian way of striving for the faith of the Gospel* (Carmarthen, 1771), p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief treatise of the divine manifestations* (Taunton, 1787), p. 15; H. Crabb, *Sermons on practical subjects* (Cambridge, 1796), p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> P. Holland, *Sermons* (2 vols, Warrington, 1792), II, 3.

<sup>62</sup> T. Amory, *The Life of John Bunclie* (1770), p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> Seddon, *Discourses*, p. 92; J. Palmer, *A summary view of the grounds of Christian baptism* (1788), p. 60; G. Dyer, *Inquiry into the nature of subscription* (1790), p.351, W. Enfield, *Biographical Sermons* (1794), p. 169.

<sup>64</sup> J. Macgowan, *Dialogues of Devils* (1772), p. 313; D. Bogue, *The great importance of having right sentiments in religion* (1788), p. 29; W. Huntington, *Living Testimonies* (1795), p. 123; J. Ryland, *The duty of ministers to be nursing fathers to the Church* (1797), p. 2.

teacher, performing miracles by the favour of and in the name of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit as an effusion of gifts and powers sent by God the Father.

## **ii: The Impact of Shared Doctrine on Practice**

Taking further the key argument of this dissertation that theology dominated the Rational Dissenting sense of its own collective identity, this chapter now proceeds to a consideration of the impact of shared doctrine on practice. References to the deep-seated connection between their specific theological views and all other aspects of human life abound amongst Rational Dissenters and formed part of their collective identity. While it is unsurprising that this was the case with ministers, this chapter demonstrates the extent to which it was also true of the Rational Dissenting laity.

The lives of lay Rational Dissenters demonstrate that theology was clearly seen by them as a fundamental and all pervading aspect of their identity and underpinned their actions. It is clear from the layman William Tayleur's letters to the Unitarian minister Theophilus Lindsey, for example, that his distinctive theological beliefs were central to his life and his active commitment to the spread of Unitarian views.<sup>65</sup>

Following Lindsey's resignation as vicar of Catterick, Tayleur wrote to him

I immediately began to consider whether it might not be possible to form a Unitarian congregation in this place [Shrewsbury]. I bought £350 stock in the public funds that I might make a beginning towards a salary for an officiating minister.<sup>66</sup>

In the same letter he promised Lindsey £10 annually to support his hopes of founding a Unitarian chapel, while in 1786 he donated £200 towards the foundation of Hackney academy.<sup>67</sup> Wills provided the opportunity for laymen and women to make bequests for

---

<sup>65</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/9, Tayleur to Lindsey, 2 April 1780.

<sup>66</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/1, Tayleur to Lindsey, 5 August 1775.

<sup>67</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/2, Tayleur to Lindsey, 29 April 1786.

the financial support of Unitarian ministers.<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Rayner's will specified Lindsey and John Disney as the beneficiaries of £1000 worth of stock each.<sup>69</sup> The activities of Dr. Matthew Dobson on the committee which had established the Octagon Chapel in Liverpool in 1763, and of David Eaton in leading fellow-laymen of formerly Calvinist persuasions towards the formation of a Unitarian congregation reveal similar commitment.<sup>70</sup> Susanna Dobson, wife of Matthew and author of *The Life of Petrarch* in 1775, was a subscriber to the Essex Street Chapel.<sup>71</sup> In Kendal, in Cumbria, 19 female members of the Unitarian chapel congregation subscribed towards the fabric of the chapel in 1786.<sup>72</sup> Evidence of financial contributions provides a particularly useful insight into the active commitment to their theological beliefs of lay Rational Dissenters who were not published authors. The devotion of time and effort by individuals such as the Spitalfields weaver William Titford, trading in the firm of Cotes, Mullis and Titford, treasurer of the General Baptist Church in Worship Street, Bishopsgate and deacon for 30 years likewise demonstrates an active commitment to theological beliefs. In 1794 he contributed towards reducing the chapel's debt.<sup>73</sup>

The spreadsheet in Appendix 2 of late eighteenth century multiple subscribers to Rational Dissenting published works and to the London and Western Unitarian Societies, Hackney and Manchester Academies, reveals thirteen laymen who formed part of a hard core of committed supporters of Rational Dissent. More than five subscriptions each were made by Richard Hall Clarke of Bridewell, the London attorney Michael Dodson, Edward Jefferies, Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital,

---

<sup>68</sup> E.g. TNA. PROB 11/ 1696; Will of Mary Hughes, spinster of Bristol, leaving legacy to John Rowe, minister of Lewin's Mead, Bristol

<sup>69</sup> TNA. PROB 11/1345, Will of Elizabeth Rayner, Tichfield Street, 29 July 1800..

<sup>70</sup> Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*.

<sup>71</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 239, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 20 May 1777.

<sup>72</sup> F. Nicholson and E. Axon, *The Older Nonconformity in Kendal* (1915), pp. 351, 354, 378.

<sup>73</sup> A. R. Titford, *A Family of Dissenters; The Titfords of Somerset, Kent and London*, p. 55.

Samuel Kenrick of Bewdley, Robert Newton of Norton House, Derbyshire, William Russell of Birmingham, Samuel Shore of Norton Hall, Derbyshire, William Tayleur of Shrewsbury, the London merchant Isaac Thompson, John Tingcombe, Plymouth banker, Matthew Towgood, London banker, Peter Valentine, manufacturer in Chowbent and of William Vaughan of London. Analysis of the spreadsheet in Appendix 2 further reveals 72 laymen and women who made single benefactions and 94 annual subscribers to Manchester Academy amongst lay Rational Dissenters in 1786. The Honourable Mrs Maria Semphill and Thomas Percival of Manchester were benefactors, Mrs Elizabeth Lightbody, mother of Hannah,<sup>74</sup> and Dr. James Currie were subscribers. The Manchester manufacturing and merchant families of John and Ashworth Clegg, Thomas and Jonathan Hatfield, Samuel, Titus and William Hibbert, Henry and Samuel Mather, Benjamin, James, John and Richard Potter, of Samuel and Thomas Taylor, Isaac and John Wilkinson of Chesterfield were variously benefactors or subscribers.

In the south-west, *The Minute Book of the Unitarian Society in the West of England* recorded the extremely active role played by a number of laymen on the committee in decision making at the quarterly meetings held between 1792 and 1805. William Tucker, merchant corn factor of Exeter and owner of Alphington Mill,<sup>75</sup> Devon, attended such meetings on 21 occasions. Tucker's attendance was exceeded only by that of Timothy Kenrick, Unitarian minister of St. George's Meeting, Exeter. Richard Houghton, apothecary and pharmacist of Exeter,<sup>76</sup> attended on 14 occasions,

---

<sup>74</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Directory* (Liverpool, 1781).

<sup>75</sup> DRO, *Exeter Freeman 1266-1967*, 22 August 1777; LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS 11936/381/590636, 27 April 1793.

<sup>76</sup> DRO, *Exeter Freeman 1266-1967*, 2 November 1789.

William Brown,<sup>77</sup> serge maker and merchant of Cullompton, Devon on 11 occasions, and Samuel Milford, Exeter banker, campaigner against slavery, president of Kenrick's Academy in Exeter between 1799 and 1802,<sup>78</sup> and close acquaintance of Richard Hall Clarke of Bridwell, Cullompton, attended on 7 occasions. Hall Clarke, who established a private Unitarian chapel on his estate, acted as treasurer at a number of meetings between 1793 and 1799. This Society, like the London Unitarian Society, was set up specifically for 'Promoting Christian knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, by the distribution of books'. Such activities amongst Unitarians extended beyond Unitarian Societies. William Tayleur of Shrewsbury disseminated Rational Dissenting theological literature locally,<sup>79</sup> as did the Nicholson family in Manchester and Liverpool.<sup>80</sup>

Commitment to scriptural analysis led to extensive reading and discussion of theological ideas amongst the Rational Dissenting laity. The impact of theology on Rational Dissenting lives is further illustrated through the discussion amongst educated laymen and women of theological concepts important to them. Anna Letitia Barbauld's letter to the Unitarian minister Nicholas Clayton contained a lengthy analysis of devotional feelings, a subject which she raised, and which impacted on her daily life.<sup>81</sup> Barbauld did not ask for Clayton's opinion, nor refer to her husband's, but confidently expressed her own thoughts on the subject. Moreover, Mary Hays' correspondence with her brother-in-law John Dunkin displayed a mutual enjoyment of discussion of the theological ideas of Rational Dissent.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> DRO, 240A/PO 129/5 1783, 240A/PO 148/21 1803; LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS 11936/390/607976.

<sup>78</sup> DRO, 48/8/4 18 June 1798; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* 23 January 1800.

<sup>79</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/21/3/1, Tayleur to Lindsey, 25 September 1781.

<sup>80</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/22/1, R. Nicholson to Mrs E. Orred, 23 September 1775.

<sup>81</sup> LRO, 920 NIC/9/8/1, A. L. Barbauld to N. Clayton, 21 February 1776.

<sup>82</sup> M. L. Brooks, ed., *The Correspondence of Mary Hays* (2004).

The *Diary of Hannah Lightbody* records not only her reading of religious works, but also her involvement too in theological discussion, as on 5 July 1787 when she ‘conversed till 2 o’clock in the morning on the Trinity.’<sup>83</sup> The Unitarian barrister James Losh repeatedly referred in his diaries to his desire to improve his understanding of the Scriptures,<sup>84</sup> noting at the end of each month the considerable number of hours he had devoted to reading and writing.<sup>85</sup> On 28 February 1799, for example, he observed that ‘during the last month, I only read and wrote 103 hours.’<sup>86</sup> His record of this reading demonstrates its prolific theological nature. Between 1796 and 1799 he read Rational Dissenting works and sermons by John Prior Estlin, Thomas Belsham, Gilbert Wakefield, David Jardine, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, Catharine Cappe, Price and Priestley. On many occasions Losh recorded his own assessment of such works. Thus on 4 February 1799 he wrote of Wakefield’s *Commentary on St Matthew’s Gospel* ‘a very able work [displaying] considerable acuteness and knowledge, well worth the attention of every Christian scholar.’ Between 1798 and 1801 he devoted himself repeatedly to a consideration of works on miracles, the soul and universal restoration.<sup>87</sup> The highly educated Losh studied Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers in August 1799, and the Greek Testament in March 1801. He regularly recorded reading aloud a chapter of the New Testament to his family,<sup>88</sup> commenting on the sermons he had heard.

For Mary Scott, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Jane Toulmin and Catharine Cappe adherence to Unitarian theological ideas led them to propagate such ideas through literature. By the 1770s, Mary Scott had written 29 hymns, although mostly

---

<sup>83</sup> D. Sekers, ed., ‘The Diary of Hannah Lightbody’, 25 February 1787, 1 June 1788, *E & D*, 26 (2008).

<sup>84</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, 1 December 1799; vol. 10, end of March 1800 and of October 1801.

<sup>85</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, e.g. vol. 12, December 1808.

<sup>86</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, 28 February, May 1799.

<sup>87</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, e.g. vol. 8, November 1798; vol. 9, May 1799; vol. 11, November 1801.

<sup>88</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, e.g. vol. 9, 28 April, 11, 30 June, 11, 25 August 1799.



unpublished, and in 1788 published her lengthy poem *The Messiah*. Barbauld wrote extensively for ‘the child of reason.’<sup>89</sup> Outlining her purpose, and highlighting the importance of faith and practical piety, she commented

The peculiar design of this publication is to impress devotional feelings on the infant’s mind, to impress him with all that he hears, all that he sees, to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life.<sup>90</sup>

In 1790 at the age of 48, after 26 years of marriage, Jane Toulmin produced a work published in her own name. Jane wrote not fiction, nor about the evils of slavery, moral conduct, education, or, despite the birth of twelve of her own, about children, traditionally acceptable subjects for female authors, but deliberately selected theology. Jane too clearly read Rational Dissenting sermons and tracts, citing that preached at the ordination of Caleb Rotheram, and the preface by John Seddon of Manchester to a tract by Thomas Dixon of Bolton on *The Sovereignty of the Divine Administration*.<sup>91</sup> Details of seven of Joshua Toulmin’s works between 1788 and 1792 show his wife Jane listed as a bookseller, active in the dissemination of his theological views. Her key involvement suggests that it is almost certain that they discussed such views. Catharine Cappe’s role in supporting her husband in the dissemination of his theological ideas was also an extremely active one. During Newcome Cappe’s incapacity through illness in 1792 she found a ministerial assistant for him in Charles Wellbeloved.<sup>92</sup> She was described, unusually for a woman, as much involved in ‘the affairs of the York academy.’<sup>93</sup> In 1796 she edited her husband’s *Sermons on Providence* for publication, exercising her own judgement of their ‘comparative excellence.’ By 1800, Catharine was ‘preparing some of Mr Cappe’s *Critical Dissertations* from his short-hand papers

---

<sup>89</sup> A. L. Barbauld, *Hymns in prose for children* (1781), Hymn 6.

<sup>90</sup> A. L. Barbauld, *Hymns in prose*, Preface.

<sup>91</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, pp. 56, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, p. 255.

<sup>93</sup> BL, Add MS 36527, f. 51.

for the press.’<sup>94</sup> Indeed her long widowhood was devoted to involvement in the propagation of Unitarian ideas, in particular, although by no means exclusively, those of her late husband.

In the field of religious practice Rational Dissenting hymn books provided a vehicle for the rejection of specifically Calvinist theology. Collections by William Enfield in 1772, William Wood in 1785, Newcome Cappe in 1786, by George Walker in 1788, by William Hawkes in association with Priestley in 1790, and by Kippis in collaboration with Rees, Jervis and Morgan in 1795 are indicative of the strength of Rational Dissenting desire to produce a hymn book suitable for their own use. Thomas Jervis, George Dyer, Russell Scott, Henry Grove, Roger Flexman, John Aikin, Joseph Fawcett, Andrew Kippis himself, and the laywomen Mary Scott and Anna Letitia Barbauld were all contributors to the Kippis volume, which reached its fourth edition by 1807. Rational Dissenters did not simply edit hymn books, they wrote hymns for the propagation of Rational Dissenting collective theological beliefs. Wide usage suggested by frequent publications and new editions reinforced their contribution to Rational Dissenting collective identity.

Close examination of the Kippis collection further reveals that the fundamental importance to Rational Dissenters of the application of reason to the Scriptures was emphasized in such hymns. Thus Dyer referred to ‘Men whom reason lifts to God,’ while Kippis himself wrote of God the Father, ‘Lord, thy kindness deigns to show, enough for mortal minds to know.’<sup>95</sup> The volumes abound with references to God the Father, his supremacy, eternity and role in creation, and to Christ as teacher, by Mrs Barbauld, amongst others.<sup>96</sup> The Liverpool collection, included within the Kippis

---

<sup>94</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, pp. 261, 315.

<sup>95</sup> Book I, p. 166.

<sup>96</sup> Book 1, p. 167, Book II, p. 212, Book III, p. 431, Book IV, p. 484.

volumes, specifically emphasised ‘the power of God [the Father]. The Exeter collection stressed his alone ‘eternal mind.’<sup>97</sup> The Kippis collection was characterised by a complete absence of any reference to the Trinity, to prayer or praise to Christ, or to the doctrine of atonement. Rational Dissenting collections of hymns from Birmingham, Bristol and Salisbury were also included.<sup>98</sup> The Kippis collection included 100 hymns by the hymn writer, Anne Steele, daughter of the Particular Baptist minister, William Steele of Boughton in Hampshire. These were, as with *Almighty Father! Gracious Lord*,<sup>99</sup> carefully selected, lacking any theological ideas unacceptable to Rational Dissenters.

The rejection of the doctrines of original sin, of atonement and of predestination had an enormous impact on Rational Dissenting practice. While Arian and Unitarian alike shared a rejection of predestination with some members of the Established Church, it was the conclusions they reached as a result of this rejection which distinguished them. These conclusions were apparent in the spirit of optimism which characterised the Rational Dissenting view of the possibility of progress for all mankind and impacted on Rational Dissenting practice. Stephen Burley’s illuminating study of William Hazlitt<sup>100</sup> assumes a connection between the rejection of the doctrines of original sin and of atonement and this spirit of optimism. The research which underpins this dissertation breaks new ground in demonstrating that this optimistic concept did not simply co-exist with the rejection of these doctrines amongst Rational Dissenters, but was a direct consequence of that rejection. William Hazlitt himself, for example, dismissing the idea of original sin, pointed to the possibility of progress in

---

<sup>97</sup> Book I, p. 160.

<sup>98</sup> So too was the Edinburgh Collection, symptomatic of continuing links between Rational Dissenters in England and Scotland.

<sup>99</sup> Book 1, p. 127.

<sup>100</sup> S. Burley, *Hazlitt the Dissenter; Religion, Philosophy and Politics, 1766-1816* (Basingstoke, 2014)

reason and understanding, concluding that ‘Our Lord addresses himself to the understandings of men’ and that ‘What Christ taught will illuminate and perfect our reason in the highest degree.’<sup>101</sup> James Manning dismissing the sin of Adam as ‘no proof of any original corruption’, observed that ‘Adam had strong appetites planted by the hand of God, for the improvement of his virtue, as they are in ours.’ From this he concluded that

The lives of good men loudly declare that every Christian is enabled by the grace of God to attain an equal degree of virtuous improvement.<sup>102</sup>

Joshua Toulmin argued against the inherited depravity of man,<sup>103</sup> and perceived the possibility of improvement through man’s character:

These plain truths of Christianity are of themselves sufficient to form the minds of those who embrace them to that true dignity and excellence of character to which the gospel was intended to elevate them.<sup>104</sup>

Mary Hays was particularly specific in her argument, condemning the doctrine of original sin as

ever a stumbling block to those who look upon it as totally inconsistent with the justice, goodness and mercy of the Almighty,<sup>105</sup>

and continuing by pointing out that all can ‘ascend to the fountain head for instruction, the wise and the simple, the rich and the poor.’<sup>106</sup> William Frend’s optimism emerges clearly in his reference to ‘the blessing of God on the increase of the human race’ and his observation that

---

<sup>101</sup> W. Hazlitt, *Human authority in matters of faith repugnant to Christianity* (1774), pp. 10, 25, 34.

<sup>102</sup> J. Manning, *The Reverend Micaiah Towgood*, pp. 3, 150.

<sup>103</sup> J. Toulmin, *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine considered, in a series of letters to the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (1796), p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> J. Toulmin, *The practical efficacy*, p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Hays, *An Appeal*, p. 10.

<sup>106</sup> Hays, *An Appeal*, p. 16.

If this blessing had been confined to Adam and Eve, their children might after the fall have been at their very birth vessels of God's wrath and damnation.<sup>107</sup>

Frend, dismissing inherited sin, noted progress in 'a greater improvement in the study of the Scriptures.' David Eaton strongly suggested the same connections, arguing that when the doctrine of original sin is accepted 'there is no chance of any improvement.'<sup>108</sup>

Optimism permeated the comments of Thomas Jervis who stressed the possibility of training man 'up to wisdom, to holiness and to immortal happiness.'<sup>109</sup> Joseph Cornish,<sup>110</sup> Hugh Worthington and Mary Hays,<sup>111</sup> James Burgh, Joseph Towers and David Eaton shared his sentiments.<sup>112</sup> An emphasis on sermons and the development of Sunday schools amongst Rational Dissenting ministers, as well as involvement in all of the above activities, reinforced the collective identity of Rational Dissenters. Rejection of atonement, a particular emphasis on moral behaviour, and an optimistic belief in the possibility of human improvement highlighted the importance of sermons and education. Rational Dissenters like Ralph Harrison,<sup>113</sup> John Disney<sup>114</sup> and Anna Letitia Barbauld agreed that human improvement could best be achieved through the acquisition of knowledge, 'especially religious knowledge, its tendencies favourable to the morals of mankind.'<sup>115</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft wanted to enhance the capacities of every human being, believing differences between male and female

---

<sup>107</sup> W. Frend, *Animadversions on the elements of Christian theology by the Reverend George Pretyman, Lord Bishop of Lincoln* (1800), pp. 24,138, 150.

<sup>108</sup> D. Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p.2.

<sup>109</sup> T. Jervis, *Sermon preached at the ordination of the Reverend Timothy Kenrick* (1785), pp. 13-14.

<sup>110</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief treatise on the divine manifestations* (1787), p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93 (11), H. Worthington to M. Hays, 15 November 1791.

<sup>112</sup> J. Burgh, *Dignity of human nature* (1795), p. 247; J. Towers, *Political Tracts* (1796), p. 397; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. 26.

<sup>113</sup> R. Harrison, *A Sermon preached at the dissenting chapel in Cross Street, Manchester on the occasion of the establishment of an academy in Manchester* (1786), p. 11.

<sup>114</sup> J. Disney, *A defence of public and social worship* (1792).

<sup>115</sup> J. Aikin, *Miscellaneous pieces, in prose, by John Aikin, M. D. and Anna Letitia Barbauld* (1792), p. 248.

intellectual achievements to be due to differences in educational opportunity.<sup>116</sup> William Enfield, like many others, was encouraging of the female possibility for progression, demonstrated in his *Review of Letters on the Female Mind, its Powers and Pursuits, addressed to Miss H. M. Williams* in 1793. Catharine Cappe stressed the importance of ‘practical and instructive’ sermons.<sup>117</sup> Rational Dissenters emphasized the dissemination of their own interpretation of the Scriptures from the pulpit, as did Orthodox, as opposed to high church emphasis within the Church of England on the altar and its associations with the cross and chalice.

Ditchfield, in an illuminating article on Rational Dissenting Sunday schools, stresses the evidence of awareness amongst Rational Dissenters of the value of their own Sunday schools.<sup>118</sup> A conspicuous dimension of Rational Dissenting optimism developed through their commitment to the very idea of Sunday schools, although it was not in origin a Rational Dissenting idea. Lindsey, for example, had initiated catechism classes at Catterick before leaving the Church of England. They were, however, conspicuously supported across the hinterland of Rational Dissent by James Pilkington in Friar Gate Chapel, Derby in 1786,<sup>119</sup> William Turner of Newcastle in the Hanover Street Chapel in 1786,<sup>120</sup> Timothy Kenrick in 1788,<sup>121</sup> Anna Letitia Barbauld in 1792,<sup>122</sup> Joshua Toulmin in 1789,<sup>123</sup> David Jardine in 1791.<sup>124</sup> Sunday schools supported by Unitarians appeared at Coseley in 1781, at Warwick, Derby, Stourbridge

---

<sup>116</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (1787).

<sup>117</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, p. 118.

<sup>118</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, ‘English Rational Dissent and Sunday Schools’, in S. Orchard and J. H. Briggs, eds, *The Sunday School Movement* (2007), p. 20.

<sup>119</sup> *MR*, 9, 179.

<sup>120</sup> W. Turner, *Sunday Schools recommended* (1786).

<sup>121</sup> T. Kenrick, *An enquiry into the best method of communicating religious knowledge to young men* (Exeter, 1788).

<sup>122</sup> Barbauld, *Remarks*.

<sup>123</sup> J. Toulmin, *The Rise, progress and effects of Sunday Schools* (Taunton, 1789).

<sup>124</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 3 February 1791.

and nearby Lye.<sup>125</sup> Both Catharine Cappe<sup>126</sup> and Eliza Gould established Sunday schools before their marriages,<sup>127</sup> an indication of the strength of their individual and personal commitment to the possibility of progress.

For Rational Dissenters, as for Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Established Church, Sunday schools were ‘a useful branch of instruction for the lower classes.’<sup>128</sup> Orthodox Dissenters like David Bogue held that the ‘sole object’ of religious tracts supporting Sunday schools was ‘to alarm the profane.’ The Unitarian Thomas Percival lamented the prevalence amongst Orthodox Dissenters and within the Church of England of

the strong expressions of contrition and remorse almost constantly introduced in prayers for Sunday school children [which] imply a sense of habitual guilt.<sup>129</sup>

Amongst Orthodox Dissenters Samuel Pearce commented that ‘here the child learns to obey his parents in all things,’<sup>130</sup> while Samuel Palmer encouraged ‘humility, sobriety and industry’ amongst Sunday school pupils. In the Church of England parish of St. Stephen’s in Norwich, Sunday school pupils were taught to ‘repeat their catechism and declare the substance of the sermon,’<sup>131</sup> not to debate. Rational Dissenters did not confine themselves to such hopes.

For Rational Dissenters the purpose of Sunday schools was much more than this. Rational Dissenting Sunday schools were distinguished by their development

---

<sup>125</sup> R. D. Woodall, *Midland Unitarianism and Its Story* (Sutton Coldfield, 1962), p. 20-21.

<sup>126</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, p. 120.

<sup>127</sup> T. Whelan, ed., *Politics, Religion and Romance: the letters of Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould 1794-1808* (Aberystwyth, 2008), p. 34.

<sup>128</sup> Barbauld, *Remarks*, p. 62.

<sup>129</sup> T. Percival, *A father’s instructions; adapted to different periods of life from youth to maturity* (Warrington, 1800), p. 51.

<sup>130</sup> S. Palmer, *The Protestant Dissenter’s Catechism*, p. 34; D. Bogue, *The diffusion of divine truth* (1800); S. Pearce, *An early acquaintance with Holy Scriptures* (Clipstone, 1800), p. 19.

<sup>131</sup> L. Adkin, *Proceedings for Sunday schools and a plan for that in St. Stephen’s, Norwich* (Norwich, 1786), p. 80.

amongst children of ‘their capacities and obligations as rational creatures’.<sup>132</sup> Estlin was explicit on this theme, urging parents to

Let your child understand that all which you require of them, when they are arrived at a maturity of understanding, is not implicitly to adhere to your opinions, but to weigh the arguments upon which they are founded, to judge for themselves.<sup>133</sup>

Joshua Toulmin commended the absence in Rational Dissenting Sunday schools of children ‘encumbered with abstruse notions.’<sup>134</sup> Wellbeloved commented on William Wood’s Sunday school at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds that ‘His pupils learnt to place no implicit reliance on any author, but to examine and judge for themselves.’<sup>135</sup> Girls and women were included in this, both as learners and teachers. This emphasis, encouraging independent thought, a key aspect of Rational Dissenting identity, distinguished it from Church of England and Orthodox Dissenting views. Sunday Schools for Rational Dissenters were a means to an end, preparing the lower classes for the ultimate extension of the franchise.

A highly significant aspect of the impact of Rational Dissenting theology on the lives of lay Rational Dissenters is apparent in their active involvement in philanthropy. Ditchfield has pointed to the very limited attention which has been devoted to Rational Dissenting involvement here, arguing the distinctiveness of the Unitarian approach to it, ‘a charitable fund raising infused with an anti-state mentality.’<sup>136</sup> The research in this chapter demonstrates the extent and nature across a broad span of Rational Dissent of ‘the distinctiveness’ to which Ditchfield refers.

---

<sup>132</sup> W. Turner, *Sermons on various subjects, published at the request of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Wakefield* (1793), p. 267.

<sup>133</sup> J. P. Estlin, *Sermon Preached to recommend the Girls’ Charity School, belonging to the Society of Lewin’s Mead* (1798) p. 301.

<sup>134</sup> J. Toulmin, *The rise, progress and effects of Sunday schools* (Taunton, 1789), p. 21.

<sup>135</sup> C. Wellbeloved, *Memoirs of the late William Wood* (1809), p. 71.

<sup>136</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, ‘English Rational Dissent and Philanthropy, c. 1760 – c. 1810’ in H. Cunningham and J. Innes, eds, *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform From the 1690s to 1850*, p. 196. See also E. Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church and Nation, 1712-181* (Oxford, 2012), p. 174, n.39.



Losh's rejection of atonement and an involvement with practical piety was an ongoing concern which he explored in detail in 1801.<sup>137</sup> Both of these fed into the philanthropy and reforming zeal which permeated Losh's life. His frequent donations to the poor in 1796 and 1797 were subsequently replaced by a more specifically focussed form of support, directed particularly towards the education of the poor and the provision of an infirmary.<sup>138</sup> From 1796 several entries for each year point to Losh's subscriptions towards the purchase of books and the payment of schoolmistresses, the establishment of charity schools and schools of industry, and his involvement in committee meetings concerning the details of their organisation and that of the Sunday School newly established. His concept of the possibility of progress for all humanity fed into a belief in the power of education to equip the poor for the right to vote at some point in the future,<sup>139</sup> which he shared with a number of other Rational Dissenters, and which are further explored in Chapter 7.

Indeed a concern to assist and enable the poor to reach their full potential, driven by concepts which derived from their theology, was more widespread among Rational Dissenters than has been generally recognised. Hannah Lightbody's belief in the possibility of human progress led to her involvement, after her marriage to Samuel Greg, in the education of male and female apprentices at Quarry Bank Mill, and to her *Observations; A Collection of Maxims* and *The Moralist*, published respectively in 1799 and 1800. Anna Letitia Barbauld and Mary Hays, replying to Gilbert Wakefield, saw one of the chief benefits of public and social worship in its contribution towards assisting the poor to improve through education, along with those who could not attend

---

<sup>137</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, End of October, 29 November 1801.

<sup>138</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, September 1799, vol. 10, April, May 1800.

<sup>139</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 11, 7 December 1802, c.f. Chapter 7.

dissenting academies.<sup>140</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Aikin<sup>141</sup> reiterated similar ideas. Judith Bull of New Palace Yard, Westminster, widow of Alderman Bull, demonstrated such a concern through subscriptions to the Society for the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>142</sup> Ditchfield records the significant support of members of Manchester College for the campaign against the slave trade.<sup>143</sup>

A significant difference in the reasoning behind philanthropy is repeatedly apparent between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters. Nowhere was this difference in reasoning more evident than in the arguments Rational and Orthodox Dissenters presented in their involvement in the campaign against the slave trade. For Rational Dissenters such arguments were tied to a spirit of optimism in their perceptions of man's future, a close association which led them to apply themselves actively to reform. For Losh such beliefs fed into his support for the campaign.<sup>144</sup> The Liverpool attorney, M.P. and banker, William Roscoe, member of the congregation at Ben's Garden Chapel, repeatedly returned to the belief that 'all men have an equal right to the enjoyment of personal liberty and security... as ordained by God,'<sup>145</sup> of which 'No man can be deprived.' His arguments were

derived from the authority of the sacred writings only, not thinking it necessary to resort to those more general arguments which are derived from the nature of man and the universal principles of truth and justice.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Barbauld, *Remarks*, pp. 38-39, 45-46; Hays, *Cursory remarks*, p. 15.

<sup>141</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *The Watchman* (Bristol, 1796), p. 3; J. Aikin, *Letters from a father to his son* (1793).

<sup>142</sup> *List of Members of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1787).

<sup>143</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, 'Manchester College and Anti-Slavery', *Truth, Liberty, Religion, Essays celebrating two hundred years of Manchester College*.

<sup>144</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol 9, October 1799.

<sup>145</sup> W. Roscoe, *A general view of the African slave trade*, p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> W. Roscoe, *A spiritual refutation of a pamphlet by the Reverend Raymund Harris, intitled 'Scriptural researches on the licitness of the Slave Trade'* (1788), p. 4.

The account by Hannah Lightbody of the sermon, unfortunately unpublished, delivered by John Yates on 28 January 1788 at Kaye Street Chapel, Liverpool, reveals the same line of argument against slavery:

He began by observations on the equality of Mankind being all equally children of God, though distinguished by difference of lot.<sup>147</sup>

Entries in Hannah's *Diary* provide evidence of her participation in discussion on slavery, Hannah noting that Dr. James Currie contributed to Roscoe's poem, *The African*. In Manchester, Thomas Percival observing that

We are taught [in the Scriptures] that all mankind are equally the children of one common Father and joint heirs of immortality,

took the same line of argument.<sup>148</sup> William Belsham shared such views,<sup>149</sup> as did Robert Hood, Unitarian minister of the Chapel in Hanover Square, Newcastle.<sup>150</sup>

For Orthodox Dissenters arguments against slavery, as in other areas of philanthropy, rested far more often on a spirit of charity which led them to urge the lifting of an inhuman yoke.<sup>151</sup> Thus George Townsend appealed to benevolence,<sup>152</sup> John Beatson to the 'principles of humanity,'<sup>153</sup> Abraham Booth, Particular Baptist minister in Little Prescott Street, London to compassion,<sup>154</sup> John Baillie to a 'noble

---

<sup>147</sup> Cited in D. Sekers, *A Lady of Cotton: Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill* (Stroud, 2013), pp. 69-70

<sup>148</sup> T. Percival, *An appendix to the inquiry concerning the principles of taxation* (1790), pp. 22-23.

<sup>149</sup> W. Belsham, *An Essay on the African Slave Trade* (1790), p. 6.

<sup>150</sup> R. Hood, *Fourteen sermons on various subjects* (1782), p. 7.

<sup>151</sup> W. Graham, *Repentance the only condition of final acceptance* (1772), p. 34; D. Turner, *Charity the bond of perfection* (Oxford, 1780), p. 1; D. Bocking, *Spiritual hymns* (Chelmsford, 1782), p. 221; S. Badcock, *A sermon preached at the Octagon Chapel* (Bath, 1788), p. 7-9; T. Green, *The absolute necessity of preparation for death* (Banbury, 1790), p. 36; T. Beasley, *A brief vindication of the dissenters* (1792), p. 4; W. Carey, *The catechism of man* (1794), p. 31; T. Best, *A true state of the case: or a vindication of the Orthodox Dissenters from the misrepresentations of the Reverend Robert Foley of Oriel College* (1795), p. 44.

<sup>152</sup> G. Townsend, *The King's recovery, a national mercy* (1789), p.11.

<sup>153</sup> J. Beatson, *Compassion the dignity and duty of man* (1789), p. 44.

<sup>154</sup> A. Booth, *Commerce in the human species and the enslaving of innocent persons* (1792), p. 1.

plan' for abolition.<sup>155</sup> The Particular Baptists of Yorkshire and Lancashire<sup>156</sup> adopted similar arguments. These were based on opinions which Rational Dissenters shared, but unlike Rational Dissenters, Orthodox Dissenters did not make a clear link with details of their theology. It was a very different line of reasoning from that advanced by Rational Dissenters. The concept of God-given rights was not unique to Rational Dissenters, as demonstrated by the Methodist Samuel Bradburn.<sup>157</sup> However such arguments were dominant amongst Rational Dissenters, far more so than amongst any other group. This constituted a key difference between Rational Dissenters and other Protestants.

### **iii: The Central Place of Theology in Rational Dissenting Arguments**

Most of the debates which Rational Dissenters had amongst themselves were about theology. Rational Dissenters had a widely perceived need to articulate frequently, often at considerable length, that it was theology, both in terms of doctrine and practice, which underpinned their cohesive identity. Thus Thomas Belsham wrote that

The utility of philosophical and political truth are of great importance to men as members of civil society. But to men as individuals, right apprehensions of moral and religious truth are of much greater importance than either.<sup>158</sup>

John Kentish also drew the important distinction between individual activities defining individual identity, and the contribution of collective belief towards collective identity:

---

<sup>155</sup> J. Baillie, *Two sermons, the first on the divinity of Christ* (1792), p. 70.

<sup>156</sup> Yorkshire and Lancashire Association of the Particular Baptist Church, *Christian benevolence* (1791), p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> S. Bradburn, *An address to the people called the Methodists; concerning the evil of encouraging the slave trade* (Manchester, 1792), p.10.

<sup>158</sup> T. Belsham, *The importance of truth, and the duty of making an open profession of it* (1790), p. 22.

Upon political measures and political events we cannot fail to reflect much as individuals. As a body, however, we have no other bond of union than our religious profession.<sup>159</sup>

His conclusion was the same as Belsham's. Even allowing for conventional disclaimers of political involvement, this was still a telling point. Kentish was typical of Rational Dissenters in rejecting any suggestion that the state should have supremacy over the Church in ecclesiastical matters. Religion was not to be subjected to politics, a fundamental concept which Rational Dissenters believed distinguished them from members of the Established Church. Kentish's concluding observation emphasised the fundamental importance of the values which bound them together:

It would be wonderful if the spirit of free enquiry which we recommend in examining theology should carry us further in our speculations upon other points, than those of our fellow citizens to whom this spirit is unknown.<sup>160</sup>

This was a strong claim to distinctiveness. Rational Dissenters took this spirit of enquiry even further than Orthodox Dissenters.

While the pulpit and publication remained two of the most influential forums for dissemination of ministerial Rational Dissenting ideas on liberty, such Rational Dissenting sermons need to be placed in context. It is demonstrably true that by far the majority of published sermons were overtly and primarily theological in content. James Manning, for example, asserted in 1793,

Do not think I shall take this occasion to enter into a political discussion of the questions which have agitated the kingdom. [The pulpit] would not be the proper place.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup> J. Kentish, *A Vindication*, p. 37.

<sup>160</sup> J. Kentish, *A Vindication*, p. 37-38.

<sup>161</sup> J. Manning, *A sermon preached at George's Meeting House* (Exeter, 1793), p. 18.

While Lindsey's letters contain many references to political events, his published works were all theological in nature. The letters of the layman William Tayleur contain specific comments about his public, although not private, silence on public affairs.<sup>162</sup>

When Timothy Kenrick, Unitarian minister of St George's Meeting, Exeter was accused in 1791 by the trustees of touching on subjects of a political nature in recent sermons, 116 female members of his congregation signed a statement strongly refuting this allegation and emphasising the importance of his theological teaching to them. This demonstrated both their strength of feeling on the matter and their willingness to organise themselves in support of Kenrick. While several amongst the 116 were members of 22 families, the inclusion of 42 women bearing different surnames, highlights the level of individual conviction. In the face of such commitment, the trustees retracted their accusation.<sup>163</sup>

The arguments of Unitarians Jane Toulmin and her husband, Joshua, and the Arian Abraham Rees presented a similar picture. For Jane Toulmin 'truth, liberty, rational religion and genuine Christianity' in 1790 were inseparably linked.<sup>164</sup> It is clear from the title of her work that the truth to which she alluded was religious truth, of which the central feature was the 'divine unity.' Benjamin Thomas of Malmesbury,<sup>165</sup> Hugh Worthington,<sup>166</sup> Thomas Barnes,<sup>167</sup> John Pope,<sup>168</sup> Thomas Jervis,<sup>169</sup> and Mary

---

<sup>162</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/9, Tayleur to Lindsey, 2 April 1780, 16 May 1780; UCC/2/34/1/25, Tayleur to Lindsey, 1 May 1784.

<sup>163</sup> DWL, MS 38. 7-10, History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations from 1772.

<sup>164</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 17.

<sup>165</sup> B. Thomas, *A Letter to the Rt. Rev Father in God, Shute, lord Bishop of Llandaff, from a petitioner* (1774), p. 47.

<sup>166</sup> H. Worthington, *Christianity, an easy and liberal system*; idem, *Popery absurd and burdensome* (1778), p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> T. Barnes, *A discourse delivered at the commencement of the Manchester Academy* (1786).

<sup>168</sup> J. Pope, *Two Sermons preached to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Blackley, Lancashire* (1792).

<sup>169</sup> Jervis, *Consolatory views*, p. 14.

Hays<sup>170</sup> argued the crucial importance of Rational Dissenting theological beliefs and their inter-connectedness with all other issues. This was a view widely shared by Rational Dissenters.

#### **iv: Rational Dissenting Networks**

The exploration of Rational Dissenting networks constitutes a significant aspect of the methodological approach adopted in this dissertation. Timothy Whelan's publication in 2015, *Other British Voices; Women, Poetry and Religion 1766-1840*, reinforces the importance of dissenting networks and relatively neglected west country connections. Whelan's case studies, with the exception of Mary Scott, were evangelical Calvinists. The research in this dissertation takes the examination of Rational Dissenting networks much further than previous studies, recognising that the congregational, rather than denominational organisation, which prevailed amongst them at least until the 1790s, rendered the role of such networks in reinforcing its collective identity as crucial.

These networks existed to promote distinctive theological ideas. Members extended informal support through visits, letters, reading of each other's sermons and publications, and exchange of opinion. It is clear that metropolitan and provincial Rational Dissenters, like their Orthodox Dissenting counterparts, were interacting repeatedly at the end of the eighteenth century. The ideas of individuals explored within this dissertation were neither isolated, nor untypical elements of its identity, despite the nuances apparent amongst them explored in Chapter 5. These connections demonstrate the considerable vitality of communication and exchange of ideas amongst a wide span of Rational Dissenters.

---

<sup>170</sup> Hays, *An Appeal*.

It is unsurprising that some of the most enduring contacts between Rational Dissenters, lay and ministerial, were maintained over short distances. John Disney and Hugh Worthington met Mary Hays at frequent intervals in London.<sup>171</sup> Anna Letitia Barbauld, second cousin of the Belshams, knew Kippis, Mary Wollstonecraft, the publisher Joseph Johnson, and the poet Samuel Rogers in London.<sup>172</sup> Here too the Attorney Michael Dodson and John Disney were friends, while Thomas Brand Hollis knew John Jebb and Capel Lofft. All five were amongst the multiple subscribers analysed in Appendix 2. Lawrence Holden, minister of Tenterden Unitarian Chapel, communicated with Caleb Fleming, Kippis and Rees in the capital. In Liverpool and Manchester visits were exchanged between the Lightbodys and the Nicholsons,<sup>173</sup> and between the Nicholsons and the family of the Unitarian Manchester physician, Dr. Thomas Percival.<sup>174</sup> Hannah Lightbody knew the Unitarian Liverpool physician, Dr Currie.<sup>175</sup> The Roscoe circle included Currie, John Yates and William Shepherd.<sup>176</sup> Dr Matthew Dobson of Liverpool met regularly with Nicholas Clayton of Liverpool and Thomas Percival. Appendix 2 further illustrates local contacts in Derbyshire, where Samuel Shore senior and Joseph Paice, two multiple subscribers, were executors for Robert Newton of Norton House, another multiple subscriber. Catharine Cappe, familiar with the activities of the layman David Eaton in York,<sup>177</sup> knew Charles Wellbeloved in York, William Wood of Leeds and William Turner of Newcastle. Far more significant, however, as illustrated in Figure 1 which follows, is the fact that many of these support networks were maintained over considerable distances.

---

<sup>171</sup> DWL, MSS. 24.93 (5-8), J. Disney to M. Hays, 1 May 1793 to 26 March 1795, MSS. 24.93 (9-15), H. Worthington to M. Hays 16 June 1791-3 September 1792.

<sup>172</sup> W. McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2008).

<sup>173</sup> LRO, 920 NIC/9/2/15, M. Nicholson to N. Clayton, 2 January 1785.

<sup>174</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/22/22, F. Nicholson to N. Clayton, 13 February 1787.

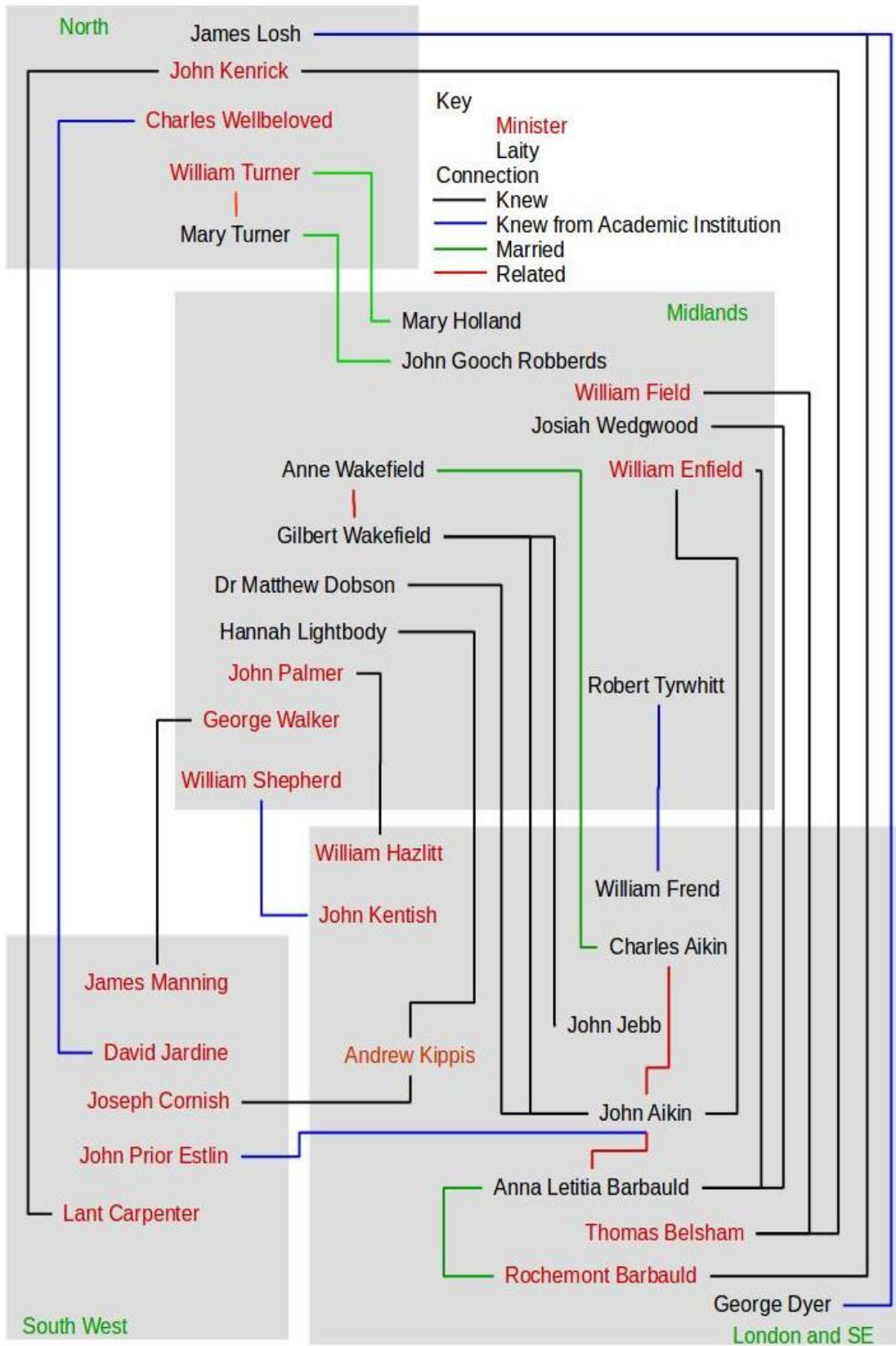
<sup>175</sup> D. Sekers, ed., *The Diary of Hannah Lightbody*, 24, 31 December 1787.

<sup>176</sup> I. Sutton, 'Unitarianism and the Construction of History and Biography', *EHR*, CXXXV, 315.

<sup>177</sup> DWL, MS 12.71 (14), C. Cappe to C. Wellbeloved, 1 May 1801.



Figure 1: Rational Dissenting Long Distance Networks



Many of those who, having moved within England, lived in very different parts of the country maintained contact with each other.<sup>178</sup> Thomas Jervis, for example, moved from Exeter to London and thence to Leeds, Edmund Butcher from Holborn to Sidmouth, John Kentish from Hackney to Birmingham. Grayson Ditchfield in editing *The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey* demonstrates the wide geographical range of Rational Dissenters to whom Lindsey wrote or of whose activities and theological beliefs he was keenly aware.<sup>179</sup> This dissertation takes his work even further in illustrating the extent of long distance networks across Rational Dissent. Manuscript sources provide details of such connections. Anna Letitia Barbauld in Newington Green communicated with Nicholas Clayton, minister of the Octagon Chapel, Liverpool and husband of Dorothy Nicholson.<sup>180</sup> Elizabeth Nicholson sent news of Rochemont Barbauld in London to her father.<sup>181</sup> Catharine Cappe's connections extended over a long period to the Lindseys in London.<sup>182</sup> Freeman Flower's daughter, Lydia married Samuel Shore of Norton Hall, Derbyshire. William Russell of Birmingham knew Samuel Heywood of Holborn. Such connections highlight the extent of the informal support network.

Figure 1 provides key examples of these long distance networks among late eighteenth century Rational Dissenters. Many were friendships, some originating in

---

<sup>178</sup> Such networks also connected English and Welsh Unitarians. Edward Williams, known by his bardic name of Iolo Morganwg, one of the founders of the Unitarian Society of South Wales in 1802, communicated with Thomas Belsham, Theophilus Lindsey, Andrew Kippis, John Disney, Joshua Toulmin, John Prior Estlin, John Rowe, Rochemont and Anna Letitia Barbauld, Joseph Johnson, John Aikin, Gilbert Wakefield, George Dyer. G. H. Jenkins, F. M. Jones, D. C. Jones, eds, *The Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg 1*, e.g. 614, John Aikin to Morganwg, November 1793; 631, George Dyer to Morganwg, 1794; 657, Gilbert Wakefield to Morganwg, 13 February 1794; 771, David Williams to Morganwg, 28 July 1795; 772, Morganwg to Joseph Johnson, September 1795.

<sup>179</sup> In London and the South East these included Andrew Kippis, William Hazlitt Senior, Abraham Rees, in the North and Midlands William Turner of Wakefield, Newcome Cappe of York, William Wood of Leeds, William Friend of Cambridge, William Tayleur of Shrewsbury, in the South West Mary and Russell Scott, John Rowe and Sir Henry Trelawny.

<sup>180</sup> LRO, 920 NIC/9/8/1, A. L. Barbauld to N. Clayton, 21 February 1776.

<sup>181</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/22/4, E. Nicholson to T. Nicholson, 5 March 1808.

<sup>182</sup> DWL, MS 12.57 (33), H. Lindsey to T. Belsham, 20 August 1808.

shared academic experience. Intermarriage, many instances occurring, for example, between the Turner and Holland families.<sup>183</sup> When organisations like the Unitarian Societies of London and in the West of England in the 1790s appointed committees with treasurers and secretaries, and collected subscriptions from those who took the very public course of joining, they helped to formalise those individual connections into something more durable.

The geographical spread of Rational Dissent was indeed patchy, as explored in Chapters 9 and 10, but these informal networks lent it a measure of cohesion. The ability amongst a wide spread of Rational Dissenters to agree on both approach and on the central theological concepts highlighted in this chapter, reinforced by active contact amongst them, raised the profile of Rational Dissenting theology. The deep-seated connection between their theological views and all other aspects of life drove lay Rational Dissenters in their philanthropic endeavours and their attempts to encourage and enable the possibility of improvement for all humanity. Crucial to this argument is the establishment in this chapter that these activities were not co-incidental to, but the direct consequence of their rejection of original sin. Indeed agreement on central theological concepts was all that Rational Dissenters perceived to be crucial. Richard Amner, like Samuel Bourn the younger, saw these concepts, together with faith as ‘the only essential things in Christianity.’<sup>184</sup> The absence of insistence on acceptance of particular lines of thought, further enhanced this profile and became an essential element in the identity of Rational Dissent during the 1770s and 1780s. The ensuing chapter of this research assesses the contribution of individual interpretation of the

---

<sup>183</sup> W. Fergusson Irvine, ed., *A History of the Family of Holland* (Edinburgh, 1902)

<sup>184</sup> S. Bourn, *The true Christian way*, p. 16; R. Amner, *Considerations*, p. 142.

Scriptures to diversity in the details of theology amongst the broad span of its adherents.

## 5: THEOLOGY AND DIVERSITY IN RATIONAL DISSENTING IDENTITY

Chapter 4 identified the common core of theological beliefs shared by Rational Dissenters and the methods by which those beliefs were arrived at. However, from analysis of their sermons and discourses, published and unpublished, of published memoirs and histories, and of unpublished letters and diaries, an apparent paradox emerges. The pursuit of reason and the individual exploration of the Scriptures which underpinned Rational Dissent, by their very nature simultaneously encouraged a substantive measure of diversity. This chapter explores the extent to which doctrinal debates and diversity in practice contributed to the identity of Rational Dissent, forming an inherent and essential part of it. Only through the prosopographical approach of this dissertation can this diversity be fully revealed and imbalances in interpretation arising from an over-concentration on the doctrine and practice of Price and Priestley be overcome.

While most Rational Dissenters belonged to a congregation, they did not in the 1770s and 1780s, prior to the foundation of Unitarian Societies, belong to a denomination and consequently did not feel themselves governed by rules or by any kind of overriding church hierarchy, a characteristic which constituted an extremely important aspect of their identity in this period. One of the key ways in which Rational Dissent was distinctive lay in its firm rejection of the imposition of dogma and opposition to human formularies. While the non-subscribing tradition was not peculiar to Rational Dissenters,<sup>1</sup> it was held much more firmly by them than by any other group.

---

<sup>1</sup> Other examples, well known to Rational Dissenters, included the Latitudinarian objections to subscription to articles of religion exemplified in Francis Blackburne's *Confessional* (1766), and the non-subscribing Presbyterian congregations of Ireland.

Hugh Worthington noted that in one respect he resembled Dr. Priestley ‘in being free from the rage of proselytism, I wish all to think for themselves.’<sup>2</sup> Rational Dissenters encouraged significant differences in the substance of ideas. Thus William Tayleur wrote to Lindsey that ‘I should condemn myself if I ever purposely offered an argument to bring off anyone from his Arian opinion.’<sup>3</sup> For Tayleur, as for others, there was respect for and a natural acceptance of diversity between Arian and Unitarian beliefs. William Wood’s description of Newcome Cappe as ‘not surprised to discover that those whose talents he respected did not concur with him in all his sentiments’<sup>4</sup> signified a similar ease with varying shades of belief. Jane Toulmin in 1790 encouraged what others saw as the unsettling effect on belief of free enquiry as a natural and stimulating function of the rational approach.<sup>5</sup> Like the Arian Abraham Rees,<sup>6</sup> Jane saw it as a fundamentally essential consequence of the Rational Dissenting approach. She drew particular attention to the laity, urging them to ‘consider a spirit of free enquiry both amongst themselves and their ministers as their greatest glory and privilege.’<sup>7</sup> The level of diversity amongst them heightened the importance of theology and of theological debate. There could be differences of opinion, candidly and honestly debated within Rational Dissent, without diminishing the perception of diversity as a virtue.

This chapter argues that certain key areas of doctrinal debate more deeply nuanced than others. In particular it explores differences in emphasis and interpretation between Arians and Unitarians, and the extent to which the latter were more radical in their theology than the former. It focuses in section (i) on the place of the Scriptures

---

<sup>2</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93 (11), H. Worthington to M. Hays, 15 November 1791.

<sup>3</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 223-4, William Tayleur to Lindsey, 14 May 1776.

<sup>4</sup> Wood, *Sermon to Protestant Dissenters*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> A. Rees, *The Doctrine of Christ, the only effectual remedy against the fear of death* (1790), p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 13.

within Rational Dissenting methodology and the diverse questions which this raised amongst them, together with consideration of those doctrinal issues which Rational Dissenters themselves saw as crucial and which they debated at length. It progresses in section (ii) to analyse diversity within religious observance, and finally, and in section (iii) establishes that in many important areas of doctrine and practice Price and Priestley were not in fact typical of Rational Dissent as a whole.

## **i: Doctrinal Debates**

### **a: The Place of the Scriptures**

For many Rational Dissenters debate ranged around how far Biblical writings represented the Word of God, how far that of man. The maverick Edward Evanson, who represented the furthest position to which Rational Dissenting ideas were taken, had by 1792 rejected the authenticity of the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John,<sup>8</sup> pointing to their dissonance and describing them as the work of ‘erring men’ with ‘no authority from heaven.’<sup>9</sup> Priestley in his *Observations on the Harmony of the Evangelists* in 1776, had insisted on the credibility of the Gospels based on comparison of the different accounts of the same events, while in 1778 the Unitarian layman William Tayleur wrote of Evanson that

I wish he had not declared so roundly against the authenticity of Matthew’s Gospel. Perhaps he indulges his imagination too much.<sup>10</sup>

Both Lindsey<sup>11</sup> and Edmund Butcher<sup>12</sup> condemned Evanson’s views. Yet diverse opinions existed over those parts of the Scriptures which were an accurate record of the precise words dictated by the Spirit of God. The Arian Thomas Amory denied that ‘the

---

<sup>8</sup> E. Evanson, *The Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists and their Authenticity Examined* (1792).

<sup>9</sup> E. Evanson, *The Dissonance*, p. v.

<sup>10</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/1, Summer 1778, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey.

<sup>11</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 413, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 30 March 1794.

<sup>12</sup> E. Butcher, *Sermons* (1798), p. 216.

sacred writers had in writing equal degrees of revelation.’<sup>13</sup> Such assertions stood in marked contrast to those by Orthodox Dissenters such as John Macgowan, for example, who maintained that ‘the Bible is so very full of orthodoxy and testifies very solemnly against the leading sentiments of the Rational Dissenters.’<sup>14</sup>

Other Rational Dissenters, amongst them William Frend<sup>15</sup> and Paul Cardale,<sup>16</sup> debated not the authenticity of the Gospels but maintained that it was interpretation of the Scriptures which was faulty. The attorney and Biblical scholar, Michael Dodson in 1791, in his letter to Dr. Sturges, Dean of Winchester, pointed to a mixture of misreading and misunderstanding on the part of Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Established Church.<sup>17</sup> Referring to the work of Bishop Lowth, Bishop of London from 1777, Dodson wrote that he had not

bestowed much attention on the difference subsisting between the Old and New Testament in respect to passages cited from the former in the latter.

Inaccuracies in translation inevitably impacted on interpretation. For a number of Rational Dissenters, expressing a desire for a more accurate version of the Bible,<sup>18</sup> the issue was one of correct translation of the original Gospels. Yet even here a variety of perceptions existed amongst them on the best approach, as the work of Neil Hitchin has highlighted.<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Wakefield confined himself to *A Translation of the New Testament* in 1791. Priestley who preferred a partial revision of the Bible, correcting

---

<sup>13</sup> T. Amory, *Sermons*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Macgowan, *Monitor*, p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> Frend, *Address*, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Cardale, *A comment*, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> M. Dodson, *A letter to Rev Dr. Sturges, author of short remarks on a new translation of Isaiah* (1791), pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. W. Hazlitt, *Discourses for the Use of families, on the advantage of free enquiry, and on the Study of the Scriptures* (1790), p. 203; Lindsey, *The catechist*, p. 76; G. Dyer, *An inquiry into the nature of subscription to the thirty-nine articles* (1792), p. xii.

<sup>19</sup> N. Hitchin, ‘The Politics of English Bible Translation in Georgian Britain’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5, 9 (1999); M. Brooks, ‘Priestley’s Plan for a ‘Continually Improving’ translation of the Bible, *E & D*, 15 (1996), pp. 89-90.



errors he identified in the Old and New Testaments, differed from Thomas Belsham, Frend and Lindsey who desired a completely new translation of both Testaments. In contrast amongst Orthodox Dissenting writers there was an absence of any call for a new translation, a strong indication that they feared that new translations might encourage heterodoxy. Indeed a number of Orthodox Dissenters, amongst them John Macgowan and Andrew Fuller, specifically devoted their efforts to a defence of both the authenticity and translation of the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

The Arian James Burgh moved away from issues of authenticity and accuracy of translation. His argument, like that of the Unitarian John Pope,<sup>21</sup> was a very different one. Burgh and Pope stressed the varying importance of doctrines contained within the Scriptures, not all of which constituted necessary points of faith.<sup>22</sup>

### **b: The Role and Nature of Father, Son and Holy Ghost**

Contemplation of the nature of God the Father led naturally to contemplation of the nature of God the Son. Rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity led Rational Dissenters to define their views, positively as well as negatively. Conclusions amongst them around the nature of Christ were more deeply nuanced than any other theological issue. Greater variations in debate on this issue emerged than in almost any other, with the exception of Christ's role in salvation. Arians conceived of Christ as possessing some degree and form of divinity, although not equal to God the Father. Burgh observed in 1767 that

Our glorious Deliverer considered as being of an incomparably superior order to us, it may be supposed that his knowledge of our lowly nature might be less perfect than his conceptions of those of higher ranks.

---

<sup>20</sup> Macgowan, *Monitor*, p. 17; A. Fuller, *The Gospel its own witness* (1799), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> J. Pope, *Observations on the miraculous conception* (1792), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Burgh, *Crito*, p. 425.

This led him to conclude that ‘It might be useful for this illustrious Deliverer from death to pass through death,’<sup>23</sup> a striking and important observation. Burgh recognised the possible usefulness of the crucifixion to Christ, rather than placing the sole emphasis on its benefit to Man.

This was a very different observation from that of George Walker who picked up on a concept more widely held amongst Arians that ‘Our sense of interest which we have with God does and must rise in proportion to the dignity of the messenger.’<sup>24</sup> No Unitarian could accept Walker’s argument since Unitarians went considerably further than Arians in their assertion of Christ’s wholly human nature. Unitarians were often defensive about such views, unsurprisingly so in the light of the hostility which these arguments provoked amongst Orthodox Dissenters and Anglicans. In marked contrast to Arians, this attitude of defensiveness led Unitarians to devote more time to commenting on what Christ was *not* rather than what he *was*. In arguments reiterated by David Eaton, Joshua Toulmin in 1791 used logic to deny the divinity of Christ:

Could the eternal, unchangeable Jehovah be born, circumcised, baptised, tempted? Could the immortal one die and be buried?<sup>25</sup>

The Arian concept of the Logos focussed on the possession by Christ of a divine soul within a human body. Anthony Temple, Arian vicar of Easby, defined the Logos in Christ as ‘a person, who was in a limited sense God,’ maintaining that ‘[His] divine wisdom is not derived from the supreme God. It is his essential attribute.’<sup>26</sup> Although the concept of the Logos was argued extensively by Nathaniel Lardner, who

---

<sup>23</sup> Burgh, *Crito*, p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> G. Walker, *Sermons on various subjects*, (2 vols, 1790), I, 223.

<sup>25</sup> J. Toulmin, *Six Tracts, in vindication of the worship of one God* (1791), p. 1; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> A. Temple, *Objections to Mr. Lindsey’s interpretations of the first fourteen verses of St. John’s Gospel* (1776), pp. 18-20.

saw it as ‘the soul of our Saviour,’<sup>27</sup> it was firmly rejected by later Unitarians. Amongst them William Ashdowne argued in 1784 that ‘The powers of Christ’s soul be far superior to the most exalted man or angel, yet this does not hinder it from being properly a human soul.’<sup>28</sup> Cardale referring to ‘the man Christ Jesus’, concluded that ‘Our Saviour was conscious of the Divine Presence within him; but this did not constitute any part of his proper personality.’<sup>29</sup> John Seddon of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester understood the Word, in the complex first verse of St. John’s Gospel, to refer to ‘the divinity of the Gospel’, not of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Such views distinguished Unitarians, not only from Arians, but also from Orthodox Dissenters, amongst them John Macgowan and William Huntington, who accepted the existence of the Logos.<sup>31</sup>

Rejection of notions of the divine status of the Son was necessarily qualified amongst Unitarians by statements about the significance of this rejection. Thomas Porter<sup>32</sup>, Joshua Toulmin, Michael Dodson,<sup>33</sup> John Rowe,<sup>34</sup> William Wood<sup>35</sup> and Lawrence Holden<sup>36</sup> went to great lengths to emphasise that what mattered was Christ’s message from God. For Unitarians, amongst them Joseph Fownes, Joseph Fawcett, Edmund Butcher, Richard Fry, David Eaton and Michael Dodson,<sup>37</sup> what Christ *was* could be summed up quite simply in the words ‘teacher’ and ‘messenger.’ The message

---

<sup>27</sup> N. Lardner, *A letter written in the year 1730* (1793), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> W. Ashdowne, *A key to the Scripture character of Jesus Christ* (1784), p. 71.

<sup>29</sup> Cardale, *The true doctrine*, pp. 111, 283.

<sup>30</sup> Seddon, *Discourse*, p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> J. Macgowan, *Discourses on the Book of Ruth* (1788), p. 161; W. Huntington, *The Barber, or Timothy Priestley shaved* (1791), p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Porter, *A defence*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>33</sup> M. Dodson, *A letter to Rev Dr. Sturges*, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Rowe, *A Discourse*, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Wood, *Reciprocal duties*, p. 12; J. Disney, *A short memoir of Michael Dodson* (1800), p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> L. Holden, *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), pp. 8-10.

<sup>37</sup> J. Fownes, *The Glory of the Gospel* (1783), p. 25; J. Fawcett, *Sermons delivered at the Old Jewry* (1795), p. 150; R. Fry, *No shame in suffering for truth. A Sermon delivered to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Billericay* (1789), pp. 41-48; E. Butcher, *Sermons* (1798), p. 432; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. 32.

was more important than the messenger. Thus Toulmin specifically argued that the evidence of the divine revelation was not affected by the humanity of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Consideration of the nature of Christ led inevitably to examination of the essence and role of the Holy Ghost or Spirit. Many Arians interpreted the Holy Spirit as a gift, available to those who asked God the Father for his help.<sup>39</sup> A few, for example the Arian minister Roger Flexman, conceived of it as a separate entity with a separate existence. Abraham Rees noted that Flexman ‘was a strong advocate for the personality of the Holy Ghost.’<sup>40</sup> Even for Flexman, the Holy Spirit was not co-equal or co-divine with God the Father. Arians and Unitarians, again aware of their common agreement on the rejection of the Trinity, were at ease with differences of opinion on the nature of the Holy Ghost or Spirit. Unitarians, as with their perceptions of Christ, again devoted much time to describing what the Holy Ghost was *not*. Frennd stressed that the Spirit was not God, while William Tayleur denied that it was ‘an intelligent agent.’<sup>41</sup> Thomas Belsham maintained that ‘There is no foundation for the expectation of any supernatural operations upon the mind.’<sup>42</sup> Joseph Bretland and David Eaton expressed a similar view.<sup>43</sup> This dismissal of the supernatural in the context of the Holy Ghost was a natural corollary of the concept amongst Unitarians of the total humanity of Christ and singled them out from Arians.

---

<sup>38</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice*, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> S. Bourn, *The Christian family prayer book* (1770), p. 99; J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address to Protestant dissenters of all denominations* (1772), p. 12; H. Worthington, *Discourses on various subjects* (1785), p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> A. Rees, *Sermon preached at the meeting-house at Old Jewry* (1795), p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/29, Tayleur to Lindsey, 3 October 1784; Frennd, *Animadversions on The Elements of Christian Theology by Rt. Rev George Pretyman* (1800), p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> T. Belsham, ‘A Review of Mr Wilberforce’s Treatise, entitled A Practical View of Prevailing Religious systems of professed Christians’, *Unitarian Tracts*, vol.12 (1794), p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> J. Bretland, *A sermon preached before an assembly of protestant dissenting ministers* (Exeter, 1786), p. 13; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. 112.

### c: Pre-existence

For Rational Dissenters, rejection of the Trinity opened up a range of further areas for debate. Members of the Established Church argued that Scripture provided numerous proofs of the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ.<sup>44</sup> The Orthodox Dissenting belief in pre-existence and the concept of Christ as ‘with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the one efficient cause of creation’<sup>45</sup> although accepted by High Arians,<sup>46</sup> was problematical for many Unitarians.

The lengthy account of Arian views presented by the editor of Volume 7 of *Unitarian Tracts* rested on the earlier commentaries of James Peirce (1674-1726), Presbyterian minister of James’s Meeting, Exeter, heavily involved in the Salters’ Hall debate of 1719. Peirce presented the Father as first cause and Christ as the first being. By definition this idea entailed the pre-existence of Christ before he was created man. Peirce also perceived Christ as having had a role in the creation of the rest of mankind. Thus he reconciled Christ’s subordinate position in relation to the Father with his simultaneously elevated position in relation to God’s purpose. These ideas were still being circulated. Amongst Arians, Roger Flexman subsequently endorsed many of the ideas of Peirce, describing Christ as one who ‘came down from heaven to revele.’<sup>47</sup> Micaiah Towgood’s biographer, James Manning, cited a ‘letter written about the year 1799’ in which Towgood stated that in his acceptance of pre-existence ‘I totally differ

---

<sup>44</sup> E. Apthorpe, *Discourses on prophecy* (1786), p. 326; G. Horne, *The Duty of Contending for the Faith* (1786), p. 13; W. Burgh, *A scriptural confutation of the arguments against the one Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, produced by Rev Mr Lindsey in his Late Apology* (1775); S. Jenyns, *The Works of Soame Jenyns* (1790), p. 203.

<sup>45</sup> Baptist Church Northamptonshire Association, *Advertisement* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1794), p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> A. Temple, *Addenda to remarks on Mr Burgh’s ‘Scriptural confutation’* (York, 1775), p. 75; R. Gentleman, *A discourse on the nature and design of the Lord’s Supper* (1786), p. 10; D. James, *A short view of the tenets of Trinitarians, Arians and Socinians* (1778), p. 31

<sup>47</sup> R. Flexman, *A sermon preached at the Old Jewry* (1774), p. 3.

from Priestley.<sup>48</sup> Low Arians however, amongst them John Baxter Pike, while accepting Christ's pre-existence, did not see him as creator of the universe.<sup>49</sup>

As had their insistence on the total humanity of Christ, rejection by most Unitarians of Christ's pre-existence set them aside from Arians, Orthodox Dissenters and members of the Established Church. It led to rejection of the High Arian view of Christ's role in the creation of the rest of mankind.<sup>50</sup> William Tayleur wrote to Theophilus Lindsey that the doctrine of the pre-existence stood 'upon a sandy foundation' and 'How it comes to pass that such a man as Dr. Price should differ from you is a matter of astonishment to me,'<sup>51</sup> although Price was, of course, an Arian. The majority of Unitarians,<sup>52</sup> amongst them Lawrence Holden and Thomas Porter,<sup>53</sup> were united in their view that neither the Scriptures, nor reason supported the doctrine. John Disney indicating that this rejection was rooted in Jewish history, dismissed the doctrine.<sup>54</sup> William Ashdowne added that Mary, mother of Christ, and the disciples failed to refer to it.<sup>55</sup> Pre-existence, maintained Cardale, would weaken the influence of Christ's example. John Seddon of Warrington Academy declared the Scriptures silent on the pre-existence of Christ and, recognising diversity of views amongst Rational Dissenters, argued that it was not 'of any great moment that we should form any judgement concerning it.'<sup>56</sup> His views stood in marked contrast to those who formulated the preamble to the London and Western Unitarian Societies in 1791 and

---

<sup>48</sup> Manning, J., *A Sketch of the Life and Writings of The Rev Micaiah Towgood* (Exeter, 1792), p. 128.

<sup>49</sup> J. Baxter Pike, *Fourteen Sermons* (1786), p. 53

<sup>50</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/1, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, 17 January 1778.

<sup>51</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/1, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, 14 May 1776, 30 June 1779.

<sup>52</sup> P. Christos, *The Pre-existence of Jesus Christ Unscriptural* (1772), p. 7; G. Wakefield, *An enquiry into the opinions of the Christian writers of the first three centuries concerning the person of Jesus Christ* (1784), p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> L. Holden, *Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), p. 4; Porter, *A Defence*, p. 182.

<sup>54</sup> J. Disney, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of John Jortin* (1792), p. 147.

<sup>55</sup> W. Ashdowne, *The Unitarian, Arian and Trinitarian opinion respecting Christ, examined and tried by scriptural evidence alone* (Canterbury, 1789), p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Seddon, *Discourses*, pp. 13, 14, 37.

1792 respectively, explicitly excluding acceptance of pre-existence among their members.<sup>57</sup> Priestley endorsed these preambles. The debate over the preamble, explored in Chapter 8, demonstrated the significance to many Unitarians of, as well as differences of opinion amongst them over, the doctrine of pre-existence.

#### **d: Miracles and the Miraculous Conception**

Acceptance of miracles performed by Christ and the Apostles was agreed amongst Rational Dissenters, but views became varied once they addressed the question of whether miracles could still occur at the end of the eighteenth century. Newcome Cappe referred to ‘the miracles that God is working in us and around us everyday’<sup>58</sup> and Wakefield held a similar concept.<sup>59</sup> Others believed that humanity’s progress in understanding rendered miracles no longer necessary. Thomas Belsham asserted emphatically that ‘The age of miracles is past.’<sup>60</sup> So too did John Disney, William Hazlitt and Theophilus Lindsey.<sup>61</sup> In doing so they shared common ground with high churchmen like Martin Benson, Vicar of the Church of King Charles the Martyr in Tunbridge Wells, and George Berkeley, Prebendary of Canterbury Cathedral,<sup>62</sup> the Methodists John Wesley<sup>63</sup> and George Whitefield,<sup>64</sup> and the Orthodox Dissenter, John Barker.<sup>65</sup>

The doctrine of the miraculous conception referred to the miraculous exemption of the Virgin Mary from original sin. For Orthodox Dissenters like John Dawson,

---

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Chapter 9.

<sup>58</sup> N. Cappe, *Discourses on providence and the government of God* (1795), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> G. Wakefield, *Evidences of Christianity* (1793), p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr Wilberforce’s treatise*, p. 173.

<sup>61</sup> J. Disney, *The Birth and Resurrection of Christ* (1771), p. 80; W. Hazlitt, *Human Authority in Matters of Faith Repugnant* (1774), p.17; T. Lindsey, *Two Dissertations* (1779), p. 117.

<sup>62</sup> M. Benson, *Sermons on Various Subjects* (1794), p. 118; G. Berkeley, *Sermons by the Late Reverend George Berkeley* (1799), p. 263.

<sup>63</sup> J. Wesley, *A further appeal to men of reason and religion* (1781), p. 125; H. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989).

<sup>64</sup> G. Whitefield, *Twelve sermons on various important subjects* (1792), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> J. Barker, *The harmony of the truth* (1776), p. 65.

minister in Evesham, Andrew Fuller and William Huntingdon the concept of the miraculous conception was crucial since it rendered Christ free from sin, although man still existed in a state of depravity.<sup>66</sup> Acceptance of the miraculous conception was at least possible within Rational Dissent but on very different theological grounds, a belief in miracles, rather than in original sin which they firmly rejected. Arians experienced no difficulty accepting the doctrine of the miraculous conception, and feeling little need to defend their views on the subject had less to say about it. Amongst Unitarians, however, opinions varied. Thomas Porter referred to it as ‘a doctrine which many Unitarians allow,’<sup>67</sup> implying varying opinions on this point. Jebb, Porter and Frend accepted it.<sup>68</sup> The correspondence between Tayleur and Lindsey highlights the importance attributed to the debate amongst Unitarians over the validity or otherwise of the miraculous conception. Tayleur disagreed with Newcome Cappe’s inclination to accept this doctrine,<sup>69</sup> and Evanson and Belsham found the idea unacceptable.<sup>70</sup> Lindsey experienced some doubts about the doctrine but did not reject it in print. Priestley openly did so. Lindsey’s concern about Priestley’s reaction was less to do with their difference of opinion, than with an anxiety about the possible adverse effect of Priestley’s views on the perception of the identity of Rational Dissent by others who did not subscribe to its beliefs and values,<sup>71</sup> and a worry that Priestley’s standpoint might attract further attacks on the Christianity of Rational Dissenters.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> J. Dawson, *James our elder brother; or the harmony of the Scriptures* (1790); Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian systems*, pp. 51, 197; W. Huntingdon, *The broken system and the springing well* (1800), p. iv.

<sup>67</sup> Porter, *A defence of Unitarianism*, p. 18.

<sup>68</sup> John Jebb, *A short account of theological lectures now reading at Cambridge. To which is added, a new harmony of the Gospels* (1772), p. 11; Porter, *A defence*, p. 17; Frend, *Address*, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> JRUL, UCC21/3/2, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, 28 February 1786.

<sup>70</sup> E. Evanson, *The dissonance*, p. 49; T. Belsham, *Dishonest shame the primary source of the corruptions of the Christian doctrine* (1794), p. 17.

<sup>71</sup> T. Belsham, *Memoirs*, p. 222.

<sup>72</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 381, 8 August 1783; 283, 30 December 1783.



## e: The Significance of the Crucifixion

Examination of responses to the idea of the crucifixion as a sacrifice designed to ensure God's forgiveness for man's sin highlights diversity of opinion amongst Rational Dissenters. William Frend commented on this diversity in a letter to Mary Hays.<sup>73</sup> Many approached the subject of salvation from different angles. George Dyer argued that 'having no right to a future existence after death, we receive it as a free gift of God, through Christ.'<sup>74</sup> This was achieved through the *example* of Christ rising from the dead. The Arian George Walker wrote of a sacrifice *permitted*, but by implication not required, by a benevolent God.<sup>75</sup> In contrast Joshua Toulmin presented the crucifixion as an indication of unshakeable fortitude and *obedience* to God.<sup>76</sup> What was significant about the views of Walker and Toulmin was that, unlike those of Dyer, they had more to do with Christ's relationship with God the Father than his relationship with man.

Amory stressed the role of the Scriptures and Christ's teaching in securing salvation.<sup>77</sup> Toulmin's observation that 'Faith depends on evidence and not on the will' linked doctrine with the realm of practice. Ashdowne, citing Paul's Epistle to Titus, ii. 14, emphasized the crucial value of good works, although he did not, of course, dismiss the importance of faith.<sup>78</sup> Given the significance of philanthropy to Rational Dissenters, and their theological arguments for it, together with their insistence, in the face of accusations to the contrary, that they were moral beings, Ashdowne's position was

---

<sup>73</sup> DWL, MS. 24.93(2), W. Frend to M. Hays, 16 April 1792.

<sup>74</sup> G. Dyer, *An enquiry into the nature of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1790), p. 294.

<sup>75</sup> G. Walker, *Sermons on various subjects* (2 vols, 1790), 1, 210.

<sup>76</sup> J. Toulmin, *The promise of Christ's presence with his disciples* (1792), p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> T. Amory, *Sermons*, pp. 83, 116.

<sup>78</sup> W. Ashdowne, *New and decisive proofs, from scripture and reason, that adults only are included in the Gospel dispensation* (1792), p. 31.

neither surprising, nor unusual amongst Rational Dissenters.<sup>79</sup> Even here, however there was diversity. Porter and Rowe held that acceptance by God rests on His mercy, not on our own merit,<sup>80</sup> a view widely held among Christians. Rowe saw the indispensability of good works urged by the Apostle James<sup>81</sup> as a later addition in the Scriptures. Yet the arguments of Toulmin and Ashdowne constitute yet another strand of thinking amongst Rational Dissenters on the subject of salvation and the significance of the crucifixion within their debates around it. Moreover, they stood in contrast to Calvinist views leading to antinomianism, the belief that faith alone, from which the elected cannot withdraw, is necessary to salvation.

## **ii: Individual Diversity in Practice.**

This research proceeds to illustrate amongst Rational Dissenters individual diversity in practice, as well as in doctrinal theory. This section focuses on details of practice in baptism, the Lord's Supper, social worship, prayer and good works, a natural consequence of conclusions arrived at in the course of theological debate.

The importance in principle of baptism as a form of admission into the body of Christianity was recognised by Orthodox Dissenters, such as the Particular Baptist John Rippon,<sup>82</sup> and by members of the Church of England. The distinctiveness of Rational Dissenters derived from their varying interpretations of the inherent significance of baptism. Priestley viewed it as 'nothing more than a solemn declaration of a man's being a Christian.'<sup>83</sup> Ashdowne as a Unitarian General Baptist perceived adult baptism as 'an indispensable condition to enter the Kingdom of God.'<sup>84</sup> Eaton likewise urged baptism but on different grounds from Ashdowne, that 'we shall feel an equal interest

---

<sup>79</sup> E.g. E. Butcher, *Sermons*, p. 95; J. Towers, *Political Tracts* (1796), p. 364.

<sup>80</sup> Porter, *A defence*, p. 192; Rowe, *A Discourse*, p. 15.

<sup>81</sup> James, ii, 17.

<sup>82</sup> J. Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register* (1793), p. 221.

<sup>83</sup> J. Priestley, *Corruptions*, vol. 2, p. 68.

<sup>84</sup> W. Ashdowne, *A Dissertation on St. John* (1768), p. 5.

and enjoyment in the advantages of the extraordinary gifts of the spirit with the first Christians.<sup>85</sup> Friend, like George Dyer and Thomas Belsham,<sup>86</sup> but in contrast to Eaton, argued that

the precept for baptising was given to the Apostles without any charge for the perpetual observation of the rite. Not in the outward washing of the body but in the inward purity of the heart consist the essentials of Christianity.<sup>87</sup>

Rational Dissenters made many references to being ‘born again’, but unlike Ashdowne, neither Worthington nor even Eaton saw baptism as essential to this process.<sup>88</sup>

The Arian Micaiah Towgood, Presbyterian minister of George’s Meeting, Exeter, in 1791 wrote a discourse entitled *The baptism of infants, a reasonable service, founded upon Scripture and undoubted apostolic tradition*. His fellow Arian and Joseph Cornish, was unconvinced by Towgood’s arguments.<sup>89</sup> General Baptist adherents of Rational Dissent, such as Joshua Toulmin and William Ashdowne, dismissed the validity of infant baptism on the grounds of infant inability to sin or to confirm their own faith. Differing positions amongst Rational Dissenters on infant or adult baptism reveal them as genuinely eclectic.

In contrast to members of the Church of England and Orthodox Dissenters, Theophilus Lindsey rejected baptism in the name of Christ.<sup>90</sup> This was a significant argument since it was directly related to the Unitarian rejection of the divinity of Christ. Tayleur, however, saw little wrong with such a practice.<sup>91</sup> Toulmin’s observation in 1781 that ‘The act of being baptised in the name of Christ is not an act of religious

---

<sup>85</sup> Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> G. Dyer, *An enquiry*, p. 337; T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr. Wilberforce’s treatise* (1798), p. 115

<sup>87</sup> W. Friend, *Animadversions*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>88</sup> H. Worthington, *Discourses*, p. 200; Eaton, *Scripture the only guide*.

<sup>89</sup> J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address*, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> Lindsey, *Apology*, p. 105.

<sup>91</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/34/1/27, Tayleur to Lindsey, 28 July 1784.

worship, but only an acknowledgement of his divine authority' was a recognition of different views on practice amongst Unitarians.

Theological reflections on the nature of Christ impacted on Rational Dissenting interpretations of the nature of communion. The general agreement amongst Arians and Unitarians on its memorial nature, in which they adopted the views of Zwingli, still allowed for variations in emphasis over the significance of details of the rite. While Micaiah Towgood recognised actions of both sitting and kneeling during what Rational Dissenters termed the Lord's Supper,<sup>92</sup> many other Arians, for example Cornish and Gentleman, rejected the practice of kneeling.<sup>93</sup> As such, like many Latitudinarians, they placed less emphasis on the central importance of this service than did high churchmen. The Arian David Williams believed it to be 'ridiculous to expect the forgiveness of sins as a result of partaking in the Lord's Supper.'<sup>94</sup> Gilbert Wakefield in 1789 described it as having no more significance than the 'conscientious performance of any religious duty.'<sup>95</sup> Caleb Fleming<sup>96</sup> and Andrew Kippis placed the bread and wine of communion significantly lower in the very human context of eating and drinking, 'a token of reciprocal friendship.'<sup>97</sup> Differing views existed too on the importance of attending the Lord's Supper.<sup>98</sup> James Losh despite recording his regular attendance at Unitarian chapels, made only seven references in the five years between 1796 and 1800 to attendance at 'the sacrament.'<sup>99</sup> This suggests that he did not attribute particular

---

<sup>92</sup> Towgood, *A Dissent*.

<sup>93</sup> J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address*, p. 22; R. Gentleman, *A discourse upon the nature and design of the Lord's Supper* (Shrewsbury, 1786), p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> D. Williams, *Sermons* (1772), p. 145.

<sup>95</sup> Wakefield, *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham*, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> C. Fleming, *The open address of New Testament evidence* (1771), p. 54.

<sup>97</sup> A. Kippis, *Sermons on practical subjects, Sermon xvii* (1791).

<sup>98</sup> In the eighteenth century weekly communion was not yet the norm. Monthly attendance was regarded as laudable amongst Orthodox Dissenters and some members of the Church of England. W. M. Jacob, *The clerical profession in the long eighteenth century, 1680-1840* (Oxford, 2007), p. 184.

<sup>99</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 6, 15 May, 3 July 1796; vol. 7, 2 February, 1 March 1797; vol. 8, 7 October, 4 November 1798; vol. 10, 2 February 1800.

importance to it. Mary Hays believed that ‘undue stress has been laid on the rite.’<sup>100</sup> In contrast, Hezekiah Kirkpatrick perceived it as ‘productive of improvement to ourselves’<sup>101</sup> and Thomas Broadhurst, while still seeing it as a commemorative event, urged ‘Let us be particularly attentive to the observance of the Lord’s Supper.’<sup>102</sup>

The adoption of different practices in prayer amongst Rational Dissenters is further demonstrative of diversity. For Arians, according to Lindsey, the different position they adopted on the nature of Christ did not prove an obstacle to prayers in common with Unitarians, although this may have been an optimistic view.<sup>103</sup> According to Rutt, Towgood believed Christ to be a proper object for worship.<sup>104</sup> However, it was Unitarians, defending their position, rather than Arians, who tended to publish comments on this issue. Unitarian assertions of Christ’s humanity led logically to their rejection of prayers addressed to Christ, and in this they went further than Samuel Clarke and even Faustus Socinus. Agreement on this by Lindsey, Tayleur and Thomas Belsham,<sup>105</sup> was shared in particularly uncompromising terms by Frend in 1788, who declared that ‘They who offer up prayers to Jesus Christ are highly criminal.’<sup>106</sup> This very evidently singled out Unitarians from Orthodox Dissenters, whose acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily included that of the divinity of Christ and hence of prayers addressed directly to him. The same diversity was evident amongst Rational Dissenters around the issue of to whom hymns should be addressed. For Lindsey and William Tayleur the essential point was ‘giving thanks to

---

<sup>100</sup> Hays, *Cursory remarks*, p. 12

<sup>101</sup> H. Kirkpatrick, *Sermons on various subjects* (Warrington, 1785), p. 331.

<sup>102</sup> T. Broadhurst, *The importance of just sentiments of God* (Taunton, 1795), p. 21.

<sup>103</sup> Lindsey, *Apology*, p. 34.

<sup>104</sup> DWL, MS 12.79, J. Priestley to T. Hollis, 1 November 1768.

<sup>105</sup> Lindsey, *Apology*, p. 186; JRUL, 21/3/1, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, March 1778; T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr Wilberforce’s treatise*.

<sup>106</sup> W. Frend, *An address to the inhabitants of Cambridge and its neighbourhood, exhorting them to turn from the false worship of three persons* (1788).

God the Father' even when 'all things be done in the name of Jesus Christ.'<sup>107</sup> Paul Cardale expressed the Unitarian position clearly in 1771 that 'sole worship to the Lamb' offered 'a profane insult upon the one God and Father of all.'<sup>108</sup>

The principal dissenting method of prayer was based on extemporary forms. At other times it derived from prayer books produced for their usage.<sup>109</sup> Liturgies tended to be produced by Unitarians rather than Arians, perhaps a reflection of the greater presence in print and greater tendency to organise amongst many Unitarians which became more apparent towards the end of the eighteenth century. Liturgies allowed the dissemination of Rational Dissenting theology, emphasizing differences from the theology of Orthodox Dissenters and the Established Church, as with the volume published in 1789, in Manchester, which distanced itself from earlier corruptions in the Christian religion.<sup>110</sup> Four years later *Forms of prayer for the use of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Bradford* contained the clear statement that these prayers had been taken from those adopted at the Mosley Street Chapel in Manchester. At Shrewsbury a reformed liturgy was printed and adopted at the behest of William Tayleur,<sup>111</sup> while Lindsey's Reformed Prayer Book sold 700 copies in the first six weeks of publication,<sup>112</sup> some possibly to sympathisers in the Church of England, who were among his key targets. *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* on 3 May 1792 recorded the use of a liturgy at St. George's Meeting, Exeter. The use of liturgies, however, was by no means enthusiastically endorsed by all Rational Dissenters since it could be argued that they were a human formulary. The liturgy of the Octagon Chapel,

---

<sup>107</sup> T. Lindsey, *A sequel to the apology of Theophilus Lindsey in resigning the vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire* (1774), p. 32; JRUL, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, UCC21/3/1, March 1778, UCC/2/34/1/21, 25 September 1781.

<sup>108</sup> Cardale, *The true doctrine*, p. 101.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. J. Toulmin, *Prayers for a young person determining on a religious life*.

<sup>110</sup> *Forms of Prayer for the use of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Manchester* (Warrington, 1789).

<sup>111</sup> JRUL, 21/3/1, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, 22 November 1780.

<sup>112</sup> T. Belsham, *Memoirs*, p. 102.

Liverpool, published in 1763 and edited by John Seddon, had been hotly disputed by John Taylor, tutor at the nearby Warrington Academy on the grounds that ‘creeds and articles of faith of human invention should have no place in a public liturgy.’<sup>113</sup> The Unitarian Edmund Butcher remained open about the value of ‘pre-composed’ and ‘free prayer’.<sup>114</sup>

Wakefield’s attack on the value of social worship represented an extreme position amongst Rational Dissenters which attracted strong and hostile reactions from Arians, notably John Simpson, Philip Holland and Thomas Jervis<sup>115</sup> and from Unitarians, including Anna Letitia Barbauld, John Disney, Mary Hays, William Frend, Thomas Belsham, and Lawrence Holden.<sup>116</sup> The concern caused by publication of Wakefield’s views was reflected in the number of Rational Dissenters who repudiated them. Mary Hays saw the importance of public worship in the *opportunity* for theological education, particularly for women who were excluded from Dissenting Academies.<sup>117</sup> Simpson saw public worship as a *duty* enjoined by Christ and cited examples of it from the Scriptures,<sup>118</sup> a view endorsed by William Tayleur and Edmund Butcher.<sup>119</sup> Hays and Simpson advanced very different endorsements of public worship. The Particular Baptist Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich expressed a very different view from both. For him public worship was

---

<sup>113</sup> J. Taylor, *The Scripture account of prayer* (1762), p. 5.

<sup>114</sup> E. Butcher, *Sermons* (1798), p. 287.

<sup>115</sup> J. Simpson, *Christian arguments for social and public worship* (Bath, 1792); P. Holland, *Sermons on practical subjects* (Warrington, 1792), vol. 2, p. 25; *The Analytical Review*, 24, p. 62 on T. Jervis.

<sup>116</sup> KHC, K230, Letter from L. Holden to J. E. Mace, 15 November, 1815, p.1; DWL, MS. 24.93, W. Frend to M. Hays, 16 April 1792.

<sup>117</sup> Hays, *Cursory remarks*, p. 15.

<sup>118</sup> J. Simpson, *A sermon preached before an annual assembly of Protestant dissenting ministers at the chapel in Lewin’s Mead, Bristol* (Bath, 1792), p. 15.

<sup>119</sup> E. Butcher, *Sermons* (1798), pp. 282-284; JRUL, UCC21/3/3, W. Tayleur to T. Lindsey, 26 April 1792.

one of God's appointed ways of receiving the homage of his creatures. Every part of it suggests that we are full of sin and imperfection.<sup>120</sup>

Variations in practice sat alongside differences apparent in interpretation of the Scriptures, although as the starting point of debate it was the latter which attracted the greatest, continuing focus amongst Rational Dissenting authors. This chapter has demonstrated that two key related areas of doctrinal debate were more deeply nuanced amongst Rational Dissenters than any others, namely the nature of Christ and salvation. Unitarians went further than Arians in their rejection of the interpretation of the logos, the description of Christ as wholly human, and dismissal of the notion of personality attached to the Holy Ghost. Unitarians more openly and persistently presented arguments for the rejection of atonement. Arians rarely confronted the issue head on, although their comments made it clear that they could not accept an unqualified version of this doctrine. It was Unitarians who called for a new translation of the Bible, and in particular of the New Testament. In the field of practice, it was Unitarians who had a key role in the production of Rational Dissenting liturgies. Here diversity was reflected in arguments around baptism, the Lord's Supper, the focus of prayer, and the purpose of social worship.

### **iii: Price, Priestley and the Adjusting of Imbalances in Interpretation**

Foremost amongst the priorities of this study is an endeavour to adjust current imbalances in interpretation through the exploration of a wide range of Rational Dissenting views. Understanding of Rational Dissent is enhanced by such an approach rather than a primary, and in some cases almost exclusive, focus on Price and Priestley.

The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ caused great debate amongst Rational Dissenters. Price's validation of this concept went to the unusual lengths of

---

<sup>120</sup> J. Kinghorn, *Public worship considered and enforced* (Norwich, 1800), pp. 5, 8.



stating that ‘the materials of which [man] is made had a pre-existence, and, consequently, did those of the man Jesus.’<sup>121</sup> This argument was not replicated amongst Arians analysed. Priestley’s arguments took the logic for the rejection of pre-existence one step further than many Unitarians. Hence, unlike Estlin,<sup>122</sup> he was not prepared to include those who accepted the pre-existence as members of the London Unitarian Society in 1791. As demonstrated in Chapter 9, these views later became modified in a number of Unitarian Associations.

Rational Dissenters, like all Christians, took as their accepted starting point the concept of an ‘intelligent uncaused being as author of the visible universe’, explored at great length by Priestley.<sup>123</sup> Price accepted the role of Christ in creation, while devoting much attention to the difficulties inherent in such a concept. High Arians saw no reason to disagree with him, although Low Arians, as well as Unitarians, Priestley amongst them, did. The significance of Christ as the Son of God loomed large for Price, yet his extensive exploration of this concept and its definition was not widely mirrored amongst the Arian hinterland, despite their frequent use of the phrase.<sup>124</sup> The unease caused amongst Unitarians by Priestley’s rejection of the miraculous conception has been highlighted earlier in this chapter. Priestley’s emphasis on man’s improved ability to avoid sin, which led him to reject the occurrence of miracles in the late eighteenth

---

<sup>121</sup> R. Price, *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism and philosophical necessity, in a correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley* (1778), p. 119.

<sup>122</sup> DWL, MS 12.58 (12), J. P. Estlin to T. Belsham, 27 February 1791.

<sup>123</sup> J. Priestley, *Additional Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever in answer to Mr. William Harmon* (1782), p. 34.

<sup>124</sup> R. Price, *Sermons on the Christian doctrine as received by the different denominations of Christians* (1787), pp. 116-119, pp. 144-5; S. Bourn, *The true Christian way of striving for the faith of the Gospel* (Carmarthen, 1771), p. 30; R. Flexman, *The Christian life supported* (1781), p. 30; H. Worthington, *The growth and influence of Christianity in the world* (1783), p. 8; M. Towgood, *The grounds of faith in Jesus Christ briefly stated* (1784), p. 34; J. Cornish, *A brief treatise on the divine manifestation* (Taunton, 1787), p. 23; P. Holland, *Sermons* (1792), p. 85; R. Amner, *Considerations on the doctrine of a future state* (1797), p. 63; J. Simpson, *Thoughts on the novelty, the excellence and the evidence of the Christian religion* (Bath, 1798), p. 5.

century,<sup>125</sup> was shared by several Rational Dissenters, but Cappe and Wakefield were not convinced. Many Rational Dissenters placed their primary focus on Father and Son, though still referring to the role and nature of the Holy Spirit. They did not, however, take this focus to the same lengths as Priestley, who neglected and almost denied the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

Indeed a number of Priestley's ideas raised concerns with many Arians and Unitarians. Priestley's materialism, based on the idea that matter was the fundamental substance in nature, led to his rejection of 'an immaterial soul in man, altogether independent of the body'<sup>127</sup> and to his crucial argument that 'Man's power of thinking, which is the only province of a soul, will be restored to him at the resurrection.'<sup>128</sup> Priestley argued that the mind was uncomprehending during the time between bodily death and resurrection. Amongst Latitudinarians Francis Blackburne, Edmund Law and Peter Peckard supported this idea, for which the latter was soundly rebuked by Archbishop Thomas Secker.<sup>129</sup> Both Priestley and Blackburne maintained that Popish divines had used the concept of the soul's immortality to propagate the doctrine of purgatory and the idolatrous invocation of saints. Priestley's view, however, raised more questions amongst Rational Dissenters than it answered. Samuel Kenrick commented

---

<sup>125</sup> J. Priestley, *Additional Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, p. 34.

<sup>126</sup> J. Priestley, *Additions to the address to Protestant Dissenters on the subject of the Lord's Supper* (1770), p. 35.

<sup>127</sup> J. Priestley, *A general view of arguments for the unity of God, and against the divinity and pre-existence of Christ, from reason, from the Scriptures and from history* (1783), p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> J. Priestley, *Defences of Unitarianism for the year 1786: On Materialism and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity* (Birmingham, 1788), p. 72.

<sup>129</sup> E. Law, *Considerations on the theory of religion* (1755), p. 342; P. Peckard, *Further Observations on an Intermediate State* (1757), p. 15.

I would wish to know about Dr. Priestley's sentiments about the General Resurrection and the end of the world, which he does not seem to connect with the Resurrection.<sup>130</sup>

Priestley the scientist presented an idea which was too materialist for many of the adherents of Rational Dissent. James Manning, William Tayleur, Hannah Lightbody and James Losh remained unconvinced,<sup>131</sup> while William Belsham argued that 'A substance [the soul] which has no properties in common with matter cannot be eliminated by death.'<sup>132</sup>

Moreover Priestley's views on philosophical necessity, which interpreted the will as subject to pre-existing laws of causation created by a benevolent God, raised the issue of free will. While John Aikin and William Belsham argued that free will and philosophical necessity were not necessarily incompatible,<sup>133</sup> many Arians and Unitarians could not accept this idea.<sup>134</sup> Lindsey wrote to Mary Hays of 'The scarecrow doctrine of Necessity you have known how to strip of its horrid form.'<sup>135</sup> John Palmer worried that if, as Priestley suggested, man's mind was subject to laws of causation, it followed that men were not moral agents with freedom of choice over their actions and that consequently they would have nothing to fear as a result of immoral behaviour.<sup>136</sup> Given the sensitivity amongst Rational Dissenters towards accusations by their opponents of a lack of moral thinking, Palmer's position is unsurprising.

---

<sup>130</sup> J. Aikin, *General Biography*, p. 267; W. Belsham, *Essays*, p. 38; DWL, MS 24.1(57), Wodrow-Kenrick Papers, Bewdley, 18 October 1794.

<sup>131</sup> J. Manning, *A Sermon, occasioned by the death of the Rev Rice Harris* (1795), p. 21; JRUL, UCC/ 2/34/1/9, Tayleur to Lindsey, 2 April 1780; D. Sekers, ed., *The Diary of Hannah Lightbody*, 25 February 1787, 1 June 1788; J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 8, November 1798; vol. 9, May 1799; vol. 10, November 1801.

<sup>132</sup> W. W. Belsham, *Essays*, p. 365.

<sup>133</sup> M. Hays, *Letters and essays, moral and philosophical* (1793), p. 178.

<sup>134</sup> JRUL, UCC/ 2/34/1/24, Tayleur to Lindsey, 26 March 1784.

<sup>135</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 221, Lindsey to Mary Hays, 15 April 1793.

<sup>136</sup> J. Palmer, *Observations in defence of the liberty of man, as a moral agent, in answer to Dr. Priestley's illustrations of philosophical necessity* (1779), pp. i, iii.

The debates around the soul, and associated debates about the nature of matter and philosophical necessity were highly significant given their crucial place in arguments about salvation. Fundamental to Christian belief was the immortality of the soul. Arians and Unitarians as a whole cannot have been unaware of the Orthodox Dissenter Andrew Fuller's argument that 'as to election, Dr. Priestley cannot consistently maintain his scheme of Necessity without admitting it.'<sup>137</sup> Thus, on the whole, they preferred to leave the subject of philosophical necessity well alone since Calvinist views of predestination were completely alien to them.

This chapter establishes that the millenarian views held by Price and Priestley were not shared by Rational Dissenters as a whole. The work of Fruchtman was Price and Priestley specific.<sup>138</sup> In this respect too, the excessive concentration on Price and Priestley has distorted the overall perception of Rational Dissent. Millenarianism rested on the belief that at the end of time Christ would return in splendour to gather together the just, founding a glorious kingdom on earth over which he would rule as king. At the close of this kingdom, its duration frequently given by earlier Christian writers as a thousand years, the just would enter heaven with Christ. The roots of this belief were found in Jewish hopes for a temporal Messiah who would free them from their oppressors and restore the former splendour of Israel, after which would follow the renovation of the world and universal resurrection. Such beliefs were manifested in Jewish Apocalyptic books, amongst them the Book of Henoah and the fourth Book of Esdras. Early Christian millenarian authors validated their views through appeal to parts of the Letters of St. Paul and to Revelations 20-21.

---

<sup>137</sup> Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems*, p. 93.

<sup>138</sup> J. Fruchtman, *The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley* (1983).

Price interpreted the Scriptures as placing the downfall of Anti-Christ before the commencement of the universal, earthly kingdom of the Messiah, linking this period of improvement with the struggle for liberty in America and in France.<sup>139</sup> Priestley referred to the end of the empire of Anti-Christ defined as the rise of the Pope, and to the revolution in France, while also anticipating the return of the Jews to their own country, as preceding Christ's earthly kingdom.<sup>140</sup>

This research argues that a focus on the views of Price and Priestley does not allow for differences in the theological content and emphasis in Rational Dissenting views on the predicted second coming of Christ. Joseph Lomas Towers, while recognising the significance of the French Revolution, did not see it as preceding the millennium, observing that

If any events deserve to be foretold in the prophetic Scriptures, the French Revolution appears to be an event of that kind. The certainty of its being predicted in the Apocalypse I do not, however, undertake to prove.<sup>141</sup>

Both Thomas Belsham and Jeremiah Joyce had distinct reservations about the millennium, Belsham alluding rather sceptically to the interpretation of St. Paul's Letters and the Book of Revelations by 'ingenious critics,' while Joyce stressed divisions of opinion over the concept of the millennium.<sup>142</sup> A number of Rational Dissenters, amongst them Thomas Amory, Samuel Bourn, Paul Cardale, Theophilus Lindsey,<sup>143</sup> Mary Hays<sup>144</sup> and David Jardine, all referred to the second coming, while making no reference to an earthly kingdom over which Christ would rule for a

---

<sup>139</sup> R. Price, *The evidence for a future period of improvement in the state of mankind* (1787), p. 19, pp. 22-25.

<sup>140</sup> J. Priestley, *The present state of Europe compared with ancient prophecies* (1794), pp. 22-25; idem, *Discourses related to the evidence of Revealed religion* (Philadelphia, 1797), pp. 237,464-465.

<sup>141</sup> J. L. Towers, *Illustrations of prophecy* (1796), p. xxi.

<sup>142</sup> T. Belsham, *The importance of truth and the duty of making an open profession of it* (1790), p. 15; J. Joyce, *An analysis of Paley's views of the evidences of Christianity* (Cambridge, 1797), p. 35.

<sup>143</sup> T. Lindsey, *Vindici? Priestleian?: an address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge* (1788), p. 203.

<sup>144</sup> Hays, *Cursory remarks*, p. 12.

thousand years, let alone with its imminent arrival, nor linking it with current political events, the decline of the Papacy or the restoration of the Jews to their homeland. Amory, Bourn and Cardale emphasised their optimism about the second coming which they perceived as being followed immediately by the final judgement. Amory stressed his belief that at this stage ‘we may be found acceptable in his sight’,<sup>145</sup> Bourn emphasised ‘the hope given us of his second coming’,<sup>146</sup> while Cardale commented that ‘we justly celebrate in the love of Jesus Christ and look for the final redemption of the soul and body at his second coming.’<sup>147</sup> David Jardine emulated the same spirit of optimism in looking forward to this event, commenting of Rational Dissenters that ‘they rejoice in the belief of [Christ’s] second coming with joy unspeakable.’<sup>148</sup> He did not explore the idea of the millennium or the nature of the ‘Redeemer’s kingdom.’ Furthermore *The Critical Review* which featured a ‘Review of Priestley’s Observations on the Increase of Infidelity’,<sup>149</sup> included a telling comment about its republication by Joseph Johnson:

It has been intimated to us that some liberties have been taken by the publishers of this edition, who conceiving that the sentiments of our author on the miracles to be expected before the second coming of Christ would give a sanction to the opinion which they think ill-founded, have suppressed this part of the doctor’s publication.<sup>150</sup>

Both Orthodox Dissenters<sup>151</sup> and members of the Established Church had reservations about millenarianism.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>145</sup> T. Amory, *The Life of John Buncl* (1770), p. 32.

<sup>146</sup> S. Bourn, *The Christian family prayer book* (1770), p. 37.

<sup>147</sup> P. Cardale, *The true doctrine*, p. 197.

<sup>148</sup> D. Jardine, *The unpurchased love of God in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ* (Bath, 1792), p. 200.

<sup>149</sup> J. Priestley, *Observations on the Increase of Infidelity* (Northumberland, America, 1796).

<sup>150</sup> *Critical Review*, 16 March 1796, xxx, 307.

<sup>151</sup> D. Bogue, *A Sermon preached at Salter’s Hall* (1792), p. 46.

<sup>152</sup> P. Beilby, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of London, at the visitation of that diocese* (1794), p. 29; J. Beaumont, *The nature of the work of God considered in a sermon* (Nottingham, 1796), p. 22.

Rational Dissenters also sought to distance themselves from the millenarian views of Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcote, presented in popularist terms. Brothers, a supporter of the French Revolution, delivered predictions of an imminent Apocalypse during a time of war against France, poor harvests and increasing taxation. Southcott, a self-described religious prophetess saw herself as the female figure who would bring about millennial change through giving birth to the new Messiah.

In the sphere of religious practice, Rational Dissenters broadly shared the views of Price and Priestley on the subject of prayer to Christ, Arians accepting, as had Price, and Unitarians rejecting it, as had Priestley. Unitarians such as William Tayleur, John Disney, Anna Letitia Barbauld and Mary Hays, like Priestley, argued the importance of social worship.<sup>153</sup> Within it, Unitarians laid less emphasis on the value of the Lord's Supper than Priestley,<sup>154</sup> though they shared the concept of its purely commemorative nature. Ashdowne and Priestley failed to agree over the significance of baptism.

It is clear that views amongst the hinterland of Rational Dissent were far more varied than any study confined to Price and Priestley would suggest. In a letter to William Tayleur, Lindsey alluded to a comment made to him by an unnamed individual who argued that 'it might be better not at first to adopt any of Dr. Priestley's writings for fear of discouraging some persons from uniting with us [in the London Unitarian Society].'<sup>155</sup> Moreover the primary focus on Price and Priestley in much of the earlier historiography stands in contrast to the representation of Price and Priestley in many Rational Dissenting contemporary works. Three quarters of the 13 volumes of Unitarian Tracts included views other than those of Priestley, despite his contribution to volumes 1, 3, 9 and 10. The writings of Price appeared in only one volume, volume 3.

---

<sup>153</sup> J. Priestley, *Letters to a young man occasioned by Mr. Wakefield's Essay on Public Worship* (1792).

<sup>154</sup> J. Priestley, *Forms of prayer and other offices, for the use of Unitarian Societies* (1783), pp. 39, 48.

<sup>155</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 87, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 22 January 1791.

The editors recognised the importance of works of other less prominent Rational Dissenters. Price died in 1791 and by 1794 Priestley had emigrated and was no longer physically present in England, although he continued to publish in London as well as publishing prolifically in America. Comparative analysis of views across Rational Dissent with those of these two individuals not only demonstrates a greater diversity than previously recognised, but also indicates greater divergence amongst Unitarians from Priestley than amongst Arians from Price. This is unsurprising since Priestley's views were generally more forcibly expressed, took lines of argument in a number of different directions from those of other Unitarians and were more controversial.<sup>156</sup>

Notwithstanding a common core of beliefs which gave Rational Dissent its collective identity, in view of the diversity in the details of belief amongst Rational Dissenters, Price and Priestley cannot be taken as typical of Rational Dissent as a whole. Diversity was part of the ethos of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century. Internal debate was characterised by candour without hostility. Arians and Unitarians preached at each others' funerals. In 1795 Abraham Rees in the address he delivered at the interment of Andrew Kippis, observed of him that

Towards the close of his life the inclination of his mind was to the distinguishing opinion of modern Unitarians, though he was far from embracing all the tenets that have now been adopted by some persons who are thus denominated.<sup>157</sup>

On this occasion an Arian minister was invited to preach at the funeral of a minister generally accepted by his contemporaries in his later years as Unitarian. Rees may very well have preferred to see Kippis as not wholly Unitarian in theology, but the key point he makes is nevertheless valid. Any variations in belief between these two individuals

---

<sup>156</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 86-7, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 22 January 1791.

<sup>157</sup> A. Rees, *Sermon preached at the meeting-house in Prince's Street, Westminster* (1795), p. 50.



did not undermine the central concepts on which they agreed, and which very clearly distinguished them from Orthodox Dissenters.

Moreover the experience of John Seddon, Unitarian minister of Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington, illustrates the fluidity of Rational Dissent, its ability to accommodate and adapt within a sense of collective identity. Ralph Harrison's account relates how Seddon introduced his belief in the proper humanity of Christ to a congregation 'in general attached to a different system of belief.' The significance of this event lies in the response of the congregation, where 'few comparatively were offended with the freedom of his address.' Seddon's co-pastor, Joseph Mottershead 'for a while remained a convert to the arguments of Mr Seddon, but afterwards reverted to his former opinions.'<sup>158</sup> This did not create a problem, once more because variations in belief did not undermine the central concepts on which congregation and ministers agreed.

Published Rational Dissenting arguments on doctrine and practice, as this chapter has illustrated, were frequently accompanied by observations that, alongside the collective concepts underpinning Rational Dissent, agreement on detail was not essential and diversity was inherent in individual study and interpretation of the Scriptures. It was a diversity which extended to include differences in emphasis, arguments and conclusions from Priestley in particular, but also from Price. This was reflected in the number of other Rational Dissenting authors included in the volumes of *Unitarian Tracts*. Priestley's more forcible approach and on occasion more extreme arguments raised concerns amongst Rational Dissenters, expressed on several occasions. William Tayleur, William Wood, Newcome Cappe, Jane Toulmin and

---

<sup>158</sup> Seddon, *Discourses*, pp. xii-xv.

Abraham Rees, as demonstrated, were amongst many Rational Dissenters, ministerial and lay, who made a virtue of such diversity.

## 6: THEOLOGY, LIBERTY AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHURCH AND STATE

While Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the affinities underpinning Rational Dissenting theology and the nuances inherent within such affinities, Chapters 6 and 7 analyse the ways in which the distinctive differences which separated Rational and Orthodox theology led to differences in approach and argument on issues of liberty. These chapters contend that the Rational Dissenting concepts of liberty were the direct outcome of their precise theological identity.

The theological basis of Rational Dissenting ideas on liberty has received relatively little attention from scholars. Hole touches on religious arguments relating to liberty and politics, yet his primary focus rests on the application of them by the establishment to support the traditional social order.<sup>1</sup> Dickinson's main emphasis, as his title suggests,<sup>2</sup> rests on 'Liberty and Property' viewed in essentially secular terms. Bradley sees the 'radical' direction of religious nonconformity as inspired by a separatist church polity. Clark's challenge to this perspective provides an important insight. His observation that

We must recall the degree of suspicion and conflict between different denominations of Nonconformists over ecclesiastical polity which made common action on the basis of shared beliefs about a right of private judgement or practical grievances highly problematic,<sup>3</sup>

highlights the need for a detailed exploration of the composition of Rational Dissenting concepts of liberty across the entirety of its hinterland. Rational Dissenters other than Price and Priestley receive little detailed treatment from any of these authors. Bradley's assertion that 'provincial Dissenting ministers are especially important because they linked local to national political issues',<sup>4</sup> is based on detailed analysis of three

---

<sup>1</sup> Hole, *Pulpits*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*.

<sup>3</sup> Clark, *English Society*, p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> Bradley, *Religion*, p. 167.

Orthodox and only two Rational Dissenting ministers. Although Martin Fitzpatrick devotes attention to other Rational Dissenters,<sup>5</sup> his key analysis of Priestley's commitment to universal toleration again represents an emphasis largely on a single figure. This dissertation analyses a much wider and more numerous provincial and metropolitan range of Rational Dissenting views, ministerial and lay, male and female, in order to establish its identity as a whole.

Dickinson's overview that 'arguments used to defend the claim for liberty of conscience developed into demands for the inalienable rights of man'<sup>6</sup> is something of an over-simplification in relation to Rational Dissent. While this observation remains true, it does not take account of the importance of theology in the presentation of this case. Central to this dissertation is the contention that the Rational Dissenting conception of secular rights was derived from their theology. For Rational Dissenters, rejecting original sin, humanity had already increased in knowledge and understanding since the days of the early Church and, in a gradually on-going process, would continue to do so.<sup>7</sup> As a direct result, the Rational Dissenting view of rights was more actively progressive and had the potential to become more inclusive than the Orthodox view. This rendered it distinctive.

### **i: Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Sacramental Test**

It was around the issue of liberty that Rational Dissenters and Latitudinarians came closest to agreement, yet this was based purely on objections to the principle of subscription. This was in keeping with a general desire amongst Latitudinarians to widen the theological boundaries of the Church of England to include as many English

---

<sup>5</sup> M. Fitzpatrick, 'Heretical Religion and Radical Political Ideas in Late Eighteenth Century England to the French Revolution', E. Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (1978).

<sup>6</sup> Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> DWL, MS 28.14 (1), Six Sermons in the hand of Dr. Towers, Sermon 1, 6 August 1775.

Protestants as possible.<sup>8</sup> Difficulties experienced by Rational and Orthodox Dissenters in obtaining admission to civic office and the ever present and very real fear of prosecution amongst those who managed to do so largely excluded them from participation in the closely woven relationship of Established Church and State. Rational and Orthodox views on this relationship bore many similarities. The latter argued, like Rational Dissenters, that ‘a church is a society of members voluntarily uniting’<sup>9</sup> and questioned ‘the unnatural alliance between the Church and the State.’<sup>10</sup>

Unitarians, in their assertion of the total humanity of Christ and their rejection of atonement, were perceived by members of the Established Church as a far greater threat than Orthodox Dissenters. In consequence, Unitarians attracted more frequent and more vehement allegations of launching an attack on the Established Church than Orthodox Dissenters. As a result Rational Dissenting arguments relating to the Established Church were expressed with far greater frequency and were more defensive than those of Orthodox Dissenters.<sup>11</sup> Dr. John Aikin, maintained, as did Orthodox Dissenters, that the Church was not under threat from Dissenters. However, he went further in arguing that

---

<sup>8</sup> F. Blackburne, *The Confessional* (3rd ed., 1770), pp. xviii, 420; R. Watson, *A letter to the Honourable House of Commons* (1772), pp. 16, 26; B. Dawson, *A letter to the clergy of the archdeaconry of Winchester* (1773), p. 31; E. Law, *Considerations on the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith* (1774), pp. 25, 29; W. Paley, *A defence of the consideration of the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith* (1777), pp. 41-42; P. Peckard, *The nature and extent of civil and religious liberty. A Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge* (1783), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> T. Best, *A true state of the case; or a vindication of the Orthodox Dissenters from the misrepresentations of Rev Robert Foley of Oriel College* (1795).

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, *Christian liberty: A sermon on the history and principles of the Nonconformists. Preached at the monthly meeting of the Independents in London* (1800).

<sup>11</sup> Amongst them J. Fownes, *An enquiry*; Wakefield, *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham*, p. 20, p. 29; J. Aikin, *The spirit of the constitution and that of the Church of England compared* (1789), p. 40; Barbauld, *An Address*, pp 26, 28; W. Belsham, *Observations on the Test Laws, in reply to ‘A Review of the case of the Protestant Dissenters’* (1791), pp 21, 24.

This is not a contest between the Dissenters and the Church of England, but between the Dissenters and the moderate churchmen on the one side, and those who are called high churchmen on the other.<sup>12</sup>

Subscription to the Articles, necessary for the attainment of a university degree, affected aspiring clergymen and the laity. Dissenting ministers and schoolmasters were required to state acceptance of thirty-six out of the Thirty-Nine Articles, those relating to doctrine rather than church structure. The sacramental test imposed by the Test and Corporation Acts on those assuming civil and military office, however, affected laymen alone. Despite this difference Rational Dissenters, ministerial and lay, were united in their objection to both. The Arian minister, Joseph Cornish argued this point clearly in his observation that

The laity are as much interested in the truths of the gospel, as much obliged to defend them, and as much intitled to the rewards therein promised, as the greatest prelate in the land.<sup>13</sup>

Aikin argued conspicuously that the laity were as much a part of the Christian Church as the clergy.<sup>14</sup> The prosperous woollen manufacturer and member of the Unitarian Society in the West of England, Henry Wansey of Salisbury, clearly held the same view.<sup>15</sup> Jane Toulmin encouraged the spirit of enquiry as much amongst the laity as amongst ministers.<sup>16</sup> Although Joseph Towers published his views in 1772 and John Disney in 1792 on the application to Parliament for relief from subscription through the literary device of a dialogue between two laymen, publication rendered their arguments accessible to clergymen and laymen alike.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> J. Aikin, *The spirit of the constitution*, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> J. Cornish, *A serious address to Protestant dissenters of all denominations* (1773), p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> J. Aikin, *The spirit of the constitution*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> H. Wansey, *A letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, on his late charge to the clergy of his diocese* (Salisbury, 1798), p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*; J. Disney, *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay gentleman; occasioned by the late application to Parliament for the repeal of certain penal laws* (1792).

The arguments of Toulmin and Wakefield for repeal were almost wholly religious, the latter recalling that ‘the Gospel itself emphatically styled the perfect Law of Liberty.’<sup>18</sup> Disney elevated religion above law and political expediency, stressing its ‘proper dignity and importance’, emphasizing the responsibilities of ‘Christian, Protestant and Man’, significantly in that order.<sup>19</sup> The layman William Belsham distinguished between Rational Dissenters ‘exercising their moral and religious rights’ and their opponents within the Church of England acting ‘contrary to every principle of policy and justice.’<sup>20</sup> For Mary Wollstonecraft the debate on liberty was related to the concept of a rational God.<sup>21</sup> The language of Mrs Barbauld’s arguments make it clear that for her too theology lay at the heart of the struggle for the repeal of these Acts.<sup>22</sup> ‘We do not conceive it to be toleration, first to strip a man of all his dearest rights, and then to give him back a part,’ she held. It was the exercise of religious freedom to which she referred, from which all other forms of freedom sprang.

Rational and Orthodox Dissenters adopted a number of common positions in their stand both against the requirement to subscribe and against the Test and Corporation Acts.<sup>23</sup> Both Rational and Orthodox agreed in principle over the rejection of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Both rejected those of the Articles relating to organisation of the Church, amongst them the 19<sup>th</sup> which declared the Church of England to be the assembly of the faithful,<sup>24</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> which stated that only those lawfully called should preach or administer the sacraments. In their campaign for repeal

---

<sup>18</sup> J. Toulmin, *A Letter to the Bishops, on the application of the Protestant Dissenters, to Parliament, for a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1789), p. 5; Wakefield, *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> J. Disney, *Sermons* (2 vols, 1793), II, 301.

<sup>20</sup> W. Belsham, *Observations on the test laws* (1791), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of women, with strictures on political and moral subjects* (1794), p. 314.

<sup>22</sup> Barbauld, *An Address*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>23</sup> G. Townsend, *A testimony for truth* (1788); S. Palmer, *The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted* (1786).

<sup>24</sup> Voiced as an objection in an article in *The London Chronicle*, 25 October 1774.

of the Acts, both Rational and Orthodox unsurprisingly adopted the public position that since neither Established Church nor State were in danger from them, repeal would make little difference.<sup>25</sup> Both stressed that the origins of the Test Act of 1673, unlike the Corporation Act, lay in an attempt to establish safeguards against Popery,<sup>26</sup> rather than against Protestant Dissenters. The Birmingham Committee of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters presented restrictions on the Dissenting ability to hold civil office as a form of stigma imposed on men for their nonconformity.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless significant differences became increasingly apparent in the precise nature of the theological arguments advanced by Rational and Orthodox Dissenters. What distinguished Rational from Trinitarian Orthodox Dissenters in the context of the subscription debates of 1772-1773 was the addition of difficulties with doctrinal beliefs specified within the Articles to that of objection to the fundamental principle of subscription. Towers, like Cornish, described the Articles as ‘Calvinistical’.<sup>28</sup> As Kippis pointed out ‘ Calvinists had scarce any difficulties with regard to the doctrinal articles.’<sup>29</sup> Orthodox Dissenters focussed purely on this issue of principle, since, unlike Rational Dissenters, they did not experience problems with doctrine expressed within the Articles. The campaigns against subscription and the Test Act, and reactions to the concept of universal toleration highlight the wide and growing divergence of arguments

---

<sup>25</sup> Heywood, *Right of Protestant Dissenters*, p. 163; R. Sharp, *A letter to the public meeting of the friends to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, at the London Tavern* (1790), p. 5; amongst Orthodox Dissenters, The Committee of the Seven Congregations of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham, *Extracts from books and other small pieces; in favour of religious liberty, and the rights of dissenters* (1790), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Heywood, *Right of Protestant Dissenters*, pp. 9, 95; J. Bealey, *Observations on the Reverend Mr. Owen’s Sermon* (1790), p. 20; Committee of the Seven Congregations of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham, *Extracts from books*, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Committee of the Seven Congregations, *Extracts from books*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*, p. 17; J. Cornish, *A letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle, containing a few remarks on his Lordship’s pamphlet intitled Considerations on the Propriety of requiring a Subscription to the Articles of Faith* (1777), p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> A. Kippis, *A vindication of the Protestant Dissenting ministers with regard to their late application to Parliament* (1772), p. 24.



presented by Rational and Orthodox. Rational Dissenting reactions to the principle of subscription and the Sacramental Test were specifically driven by their rejection of Calvinism and of Trinitarianism. In this context their sense of identity was clearly defined by a keen awareness of what they were not, of theological ideas which they could not accept.

Rational Dissenters pointed specifically to those of the Articles which required adherence to points of doctrine which they denied were present in the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> Henry Wansey attacked the articles not just as a human composition, but one which was contrary to the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup> While Dissenters as a whole were excused from subscribing to those of the Articles directly concerned with Church government, and Baptists were excused from the requirement in the Articles for infant baptism, no concession was made to Rational Dissenters in their rejection of the Trinity. Indeed the Trinity was explicitly reaffirmed. The Blasphemy Act of 1689 punished its denial with fines and imprisonment.

Hence to Rational Dissenters alone the first five Articles, containing a profession of faith in the Trinity, were unacceptable, a position which singled them out from all other Christians, including Orthodox Dissenters. George Dyer devoted almost 500 pages to his exhaustive examination of subscription, pointing like Jebb, Lindsey, Disney, Friend, Capel Lofft and the Duke of Grafton to the absence of any specific reference to the Trinity in the Scriptures.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> W. Friend, *Address to the inhabitants of Cambridge* (1788), p. 1; J. Cornish, *A brief history of nonconformity from the Reformation to the Revolution* (1797), p. 145.

<sup>31</sup> H. Wansey, *A letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, on his late charge to the clergy of his diocese* (Salisbury, 1798), p. 14; SHC, D/N/WU/1/1, Minute Book of the Unitarian Society in the West of England (1792-1805)

<sup>32</sup> J. Jebb, *Letters on the subject of subscription to the Liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1772); Lindsey, *Apology*, p. 1; J. Disney, *Reasons for resigning the rectory of Panton and vicarage of Swinderby in Lincolnshire and quitting the Church of England* (1783), p. 8; idem, *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay gentleman: occasioned by the late application of Parliament for the repeal of certain penal laws against Anti-Trinitarians* (1792), p. 16;

The subsequent statement in Article 8 that all three creeds, the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian, 'ought thoroughly to be received and observed' caused insuperable difficulties for Rational Dissenters. Ralph Harrison condemned the imposition 'of creeds and confessions drawn up by fallible men',<sup>33</sup> as did Jane Toulmin who specifically referred to the Athanasian and Nicene creeds.<sup>34</sup> Dyer also singled out the inconsistencies inherent in the Apostles Creed, which 'the apostles never thought of,' and the Nicene Creed, 'the great part of which was framed at Constantinople.'<sup>35</sup> Since the Apostles Creed made no reference to the divinity of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, it was acceptable to many Arians and Unitarians, even if they believed it to have been based on post-Apostolic Christian understanding of the Gospels and Epistles. The Nicene Creed, written down at the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in A.D. 325, and the Athanasian Creed, named after Athanasius (A.D. 293-373) and used from the sixth century onwards, were a different matter. Both of these creeds referred to the pre-existent nature of Christ, a concept which Arians could accept but Unitarians could not, and to Christ's eternal, divine personality, acceptable to neither. The Athanasian Creed explored these doctrines at particular length, specifically stating that 'Our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and human, equally.' It moved beyond the Nicene Creed in its negative references to the fate of sinners in Hell. Hence while the Nicene Creed as a whole was anathema to both Unitarians and Arians, the Athanasian Creed was even

---

W. Frend, *Thoughts on subscription to religious tests* (1789), p. x; C. Lofft, *A history of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), p. 8; G. Dyer, *An inquiry into the nature of subscription to the thirty-nine articles* (1792); A. H. Fitzroy, 3rd Duke of Grafton, *The serious reflections of a rational Christian* (1797), p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> R. Harrison, *A Sermon preached at the dissenting chapel in Cross Street* (1786), p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> G. Dyer, *An inquiry*, p. 319.

more so.<sup>36</sup> For Orthodox Dissenters neither of these creeds posed any doctrinal difficulties.

The focus on the doctrine of original sin in the 9th and following Articles caused further problems for Rational Dissenters. Lindsey, Fownes, Jebb, Cornish and Dyer dismissed original sin and the eternal torments of hell,<sup>37</sup> all concepts firmly embedded in Calvinistic and Arminian Orthodox Dissent. So too did many other Rational Dissenters.<sup>38</sup> Noting that the adjectives ‘everlasting’ and ‘eternal’ in the Hebrew and Greek languages only ‘usually intend a long duration’, Dyer affirmed his belief that there were ‘no expressions in the Scriptures from whence we can fairly infer that punishment will not have an end.’<sup>39</sup> Cornish disputed the doctrine of ‘justification by faith only through Jesus Christ’ in Article 11 and the idea that ‘works spring not of faith in Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace’ in Article 13. He took exception to the concept of predestination expressed in Article 17, observing in the course of a lengthy comment that

Great pains have been taken to prove that this Article does not include the horrid doctrine of Reprobation; but if it be not expressly mentioned, it is most clearly implied.

Developing this idea even further, Cornish asserted that

It would hardly satisfy an upright man to be told that a latitude was intended which the words will not possibly admit of, and of which those who lived nearest to the times of the compilers had no idea.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Amongst them J. Disney, W. Frend and the Duke of Grafton, as demonstrated in the works listed above. Caleb Fleming rejected it, Neville, *Diary*, 2 May 1768, p. 32, 11 February 1772, p. 120; J. Cornish, *A letter to the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Carlisle* (1777), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Lindsey, *Letters 1*, 49-50, Lindsey to Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, 28 July 1755; Fownes, *An enquiry*, p. 16; J. Jebb, *Letters on the subject of subscription to the Liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1772), p. 21; J. Cornish, *A letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle*, pp. 12-22; G. Dyer, *An inquiry*, pp. 356-360.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. David Eaton, John Kentish, Abraham Rees, Joshua Toulmin, Gilbert Wakefield, cf. p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> G. Dyer, *An inquiry*, p.295.

<sup>40</sup> J. Cornish, *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle*, pp. 14-19.

Linked with the rejection of original sin and of the eternal torments of hell, was the Rational Dissenting rejection of atonement, a doctrine expressed in Article 31.

In marked contrast the Orthodox Dissenter, Joseph Jenkins, in his request for relief in the matter of subscription, itemised his Calvinist beliefs:

I am firmly persuaded of the utter ruin of man by the fall, of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Godhead, of the necessity of Justification wholly by the imputed-righteousness of Christ, of the necessity of being born again of the Holy Spirit of God, and of the doctrine of unconditional election.<sup>41</sup>

Such views left Jenkins with no concerns about the doctrine contained within the Articles. There could, however, be no clearer indication of his objection to the *principle* of subscription than his observation that ‘supposing me to have no objection to the Articles themselves, yet I dare not subscribe them.’<sup>42</sup> The same view was expressed by an anonymous Orthodox Dissenter, by John Fell, Independent minister in Thaxted, Essex, by another anonymous Dissenting Minister, by Samuel Palmer, pastor of the Independent congregation at Hackney, and by Thomas Beasley, Master of an Academy at Uxbridge.<sup>43</sup>

Orthodox Dissenters, like many within the Church of England, feared that any alteration in the doctrinal Articles would open the way to legalising Socinian preaching.<sup>44</sup> Sir Roger Newdigate, M.P. for Oxford University since 1751, argued that

---

<sup>41</sup> J. Jenkins, *The orthodox dissenting minister's reasons, for a farther application to Parliament, for relief in the matter of subscription to the articles of the Church of England* (1775), p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> J. Jenkins, *The orthodox dissenting minister's reasons*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>43</sup> Orthodox Dissenter, *Candid thoughts on the late application of some Protestant Dissenting Ministers to Parliament* (1772), pp. 5, 7; J. Fell, *Genuine Protestantism: or the inalienable rights of conscience defended; in opposition to the late and new mode of subscription proposed by some dissenting ministers* (1773), p. 5; A Dissenting Minister, *An apology and a shield for protestant dissenters. In these times of instability and misrepresentation* (1784), p. 199; S. Palmer, *The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted* (1786), pp. 1,2, 12; T. Beasley, *A brief vindication of the dissenters* (1792), p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> *Society of Protestant Dissenting Ministers meeting at the New-York Coffee House, Sweeting's Alley, Cornhill, London* (1773), p. 13.

such fears were widely shared.<sup>45</sup> An anonymous Orthodox Dissenter even suggested that Rational Dissenters, objecting to the requirement to subscribe on doctrinal grounds, might have made an application for relief purely on their own behalf.<sup>46</sup> John Fell launched a particularly vehement attack in 1775<sup>47</sup> on Joshua Toulmin's *Defence of the Dissenters' new mode of subscription*, a suggested substitute for the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Citing the wording of the proposed declaration Fell raised a number of objections to this Rational Dissenting approach. By 1790 this increasing divergence between Rational and Orthodox led the Orthodox Dissenter Bogue to observe that 'in the love of liberty we all agree', 'however much we may differ as to theological opinions.'<sup>48</sup> Over the issue of subscription the divergence between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters was becoming increasingly apparent to both. The same divergence became equally and increasingly clear in the struggle for the repeal of the Acts which insisted on the sacramental test for the holding of civil office.

As with the issue of subscription, Rational Dissenters devoted themselves repeatedly to arguing the importance of theology in their stand on the Test and Corporation Acts. The influential Unitarian barrister James Losh recorded in his diary a close examination of Barbauld's work and shared the same theological foundation for all arguments against the sacramental test.<sup>49</sup> The strongly religious tone of the thoughts which Losh recorded throughout this private record make it clear that his disappointment at being unable to obtain the Recordship of Berwick,<sup>50</sup> due to his refusal to take the sacramental test, originated primarily in the strong desire to serve

---

<sup>45</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, 'The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics, 1772-1779', *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988), 50.

<sup>46</sup> Orthodox Dissenter, *Candid thoughts* (1772), p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> J. Fell, *A fourth letter to the Rev Mr. Pickard, on genuine Protestantism; being a full reply to the Rev Mr. Toulmin's Defence of the dissenters new mode of subscription* (1775).

<sup>48</sup> D. Bogue, *Reasons for seeking a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, October 1799.

<sup>50</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 27 March 1800.

God and his fellow men which stemmed directly and overtly from his Unitarianism.<sup>51</sup> Nor did the lawyer Samuel Heywood invoke solely legal arguments, but kept the religious basis of his published arguments firmly in view, concluding that ‘the which code of penal laws was made up of violations of the most sacred rights.’<sup>52</sup>

During the repeal campaign of the 1780s the Unitarian M. P. William Smith became increasingly vocal in its support. The influential study by R.W. Davis points to the role of the laymen Smith, Capel Lofft and Samuel Shore in encouraging a network of local associations and the promotion of county meetings to support the cause of repeal. While Davis referred to ‘the restlessness and frustration of men like William Smith, and of their desire to reform a social and political system which perpetuated their exclusion [from civil office]’,<sup>53</sup> it is clear from Smith’s comments on the Dissenting position in the parliamentary debates of 1789 that, as for Orthodox Dissenters, theology was at the centre of his motivation:

They held it to be highly improper that religious opinions should be made the Test of fitness for the discharge of civil offices or of admission to them.<sup>54</sup>

Among Rational Dissenting ministers too there was clear opposition to the Acts on theological grounds. In language overwhelmingly religious, William Ashdowne repeatedly referred to the concept of the ‘prostitution of the Lord’s Supper’. While both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters held this view,<sup>55</sup> Rational Dissenters focussed

---

<sup>51</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 25 September 1800.

<sup>52</sup> Heywood, *Right of Protestant Dissenters*, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> Davis, *Dissent in Politics*, pp. 38, 50.

<sup>54</sup> *The Debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Beaufoy’s Motion for the Repeal of Such Parts of the Test and Corporation Acts as Affect the Protestant Dissenters* (1789), p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> J. Toulmin, *A letter to the Bishops, on the application of the Protestant Dissenters to Parliament for a Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1789); ‘Fidelia’, *A Consolatory Letter to the Reverend John Clayton* (1791), p. 11; D. Bogue, *Reasons for seeking a repeal*, p. 39.

particular attention on it.<sup>56</sup> Ashdowne took this argument to a new heightened level, making use of the words prostitution, profanation, violation, perverting and corruption on eleven occasions within the space of fourteen pages.<sup>57</sup> Indeed Rational Dissenters, lay and ministerial, applied this argument repeatedly, in the context not only of the Acts, but also extending it to that of toleration.<sup>58</sup> John Palmer wrote of *The Inconsistency of Conforming to Any Religious Tests*, refuting any justification for the sacramental test which was based on ‘a disagreement on points of doctrine.’<sup>59</sup>

As on the issue of subscription, there were significant differences in approach and argument between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters. Working together for the repeal of the Acts only served to highlight such differences. Clark’s reference to ‘the indebtedness of reformist doctrines to the actual content of heterodox theology’<sup>60</sup> is vital and cannot be disputed; yet Clark does not take this nearly far enough. While Orthodox Dissenters objected to the sacramental test, as to subscription, *in principle*, Rational Dissenters added to this further objections based on their theological beliefs, and in so doing took religious arguments against the Acts further than Orthodox Dissenters.

An examination of the Communion Service in the Book of Common Prayer reveals the precise theological objections of Rational Dissenters to the sacramental test. A number of collects for use in Communion on particular Sundays were prescribed. A standard prayer in the Communion Service repeated on a weekly basis, specified that

---

<sup>56</sup> Toulmin, *A Letter to the Bishops*, pp. 8-10; Wakefield, *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham*, pp. 9, 20; W. Belsham, *Observations on the test laws*, p. 29; J. Disney, *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay gentleman*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> W. Ashdowne, *A Letter to the author of a letter to the bishops, on the application of the dissenters for a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790).

<sup>58</sup> R. Sharp, *A letter to the public meeting of the friends to the repeal*, p. 5; G. Walker, *The dissenters’ plea: or the appeal to the justice, the honour and the religion of the kingdom against the Test Laws* (1790) p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Palmer, *Free thoughts*, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, *English Society*, p. 322.

Above all things ye must give most humble thanks to God the Father, God the Son and Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and Man.<sup>61</sup>

This reaffirmed the Trinity, the Deity of Christ and his role in atonement for original sin, all doctrines unacceptable to Rational Dissenters. Repeated references to the Trinity occur throughout the collects for the year.<sup>62</sup> The co-divinity, eternity and equality of the Trinity were constantly expressed. Unsurprisingly, an even more emphatic and lengthy exploration of the doctrine of the Trinity occurred in the Collect for Trinity Sunday. The notion of such an occasion was in itself unacceptable to Rational Dissenters. An insuperable obstacle lay within the Church of England's calendar where subsequent Sundays were counted after Trinity Sunday, the final Sunday of the year being the 25<sup>th</sup> after Trinity. Over half the Sundays in the Church year were thus given a title associated with the Trinity. In the Book of Common Prayer repeated emphasis was placed on the doctrine of the atonement, with Christ presented as mediator, rather than as saviour through his teachings as Rational Dissenters held.<sup>63</sup>

The argument of the Arian minister Joseph Cornish is characteristic of his objections to the sacramental test. Cornish argued against theological concepts included in the Book of Common Prayer, maintaining that 'If in the Book of Common Prayer, how could it be in practice from the beginning?'<sup>64</sup> Jane Toulmin posed the question

---

<sup>61</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, Communion Service*, p. 250.

<sup>62</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, Communion Service*, e.g. *Collects for the First, Third and Fourth Sundays in Advent, for Christmas Day, for St. Stephen's Day, for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, the Third Sunday before Lent, the First Sunday in Lent, for Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Sunday, Trinity Sunday, for St. Thomas the Apostle, for St. Matthew the Apostle.*

<sup>63</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, Communion Service*, e.g. pp. 244-245, 246, 253, 255, 257, 259, and in *Collects for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, for St. Stephen's Day, for Ash Wednesday, Easter Day, for the twelfth, and twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.*

<sup>64</sup> J. Cornish, *A letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle, containing a few remarks on his Lordship's pamphlet intitled 'Considerations on the Propriety of requiring a Subscription to the Articles of Faith'* (1777), pp. 12-22.



‘Do you think that the offices of the Book of Common Prayer are agreeable to the Scripture models?’<sup>65</sup>

A study of the Liturgies devised and introduced by Rational Dissenters, also highlights the unacceptability to them of the doctrines outlined above. Rational Dissenting liturgies were developed as a direct response to the doctrinal elements of the Thirty-Nine Articles, as well as to the sacramental test. The Liturgy of the Church of England referred to the Trinity, explored the doctrine of atonement, included prayers to Christ, and a plea to God to illuminate Bishops with knowledge and understanding. Drawing on Samuel Clarke, Rational Dissenting liturgies specifically omitted all of these. Lindsey’s Liturgy in 1774 included a prayer before the sermon stressing the supremacy and divinity of God the Father alone.<sup>66</sup> A subsequent prayer, also addressed to God the Father, denied the atonement as the means of man’s salvation.<sup>67</sup> The general spirit of the sermon preached at the opening of the Essex Street Chapel was against creeds. The Liturgy of David Williams<sup>68</sup> and the Salisbury Liturgy, based on the Liverpool Octagon Liturgy, contained prayers to God the Father alone, and stressed Christ’s role as saviour through his teaching,<sup>69</sup> emphases reiterated in the Manchester Liturgy of 1789. This Liturgy omitted all three creeds, the use of which they declared ‘unfavourable to the free exercise of the right of private judgement.’<sup>70</sup>

Samuel Fletcher, delegate of the Independent Congregation in Bolton, withdrew from meetings with Rational Dissenters due to a divergence of opinion over methods. Fletcher and a number of other Orthodox Dissenters wished to obtain repeal ‘by

---

<sup>65</sup> Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> T. Lindsey, *A Summary Account of the Reformed Liturgy, made use of in the Chapel in Essex Street* (1774), p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> T. Lindsey, *A Summary Account*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> D. Williams, *A liturgy on the principles of the Christian religion* (1774).

<sup>69</sup> *The Salisbury Liturgy* (1770), p. 75.

<sup>70</sup> *Forms of prayer for the use of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Manchester* (1789), p. vi.

supplication, and not by claiming it as a right', in marked contrast to Rational Dissenters.<sup>71</sup> While the Orthodox Dissenter David Bogue and the 3 Denominations of the Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham did allude to 'rights', these were the civil rights from which they were precluded by virtue of dissent, rather than a right to repeal of the Acts based on precise theological beliefs.<sup>72</sup> A more actively progressive, theologically driven approach, stemming from the optimism which emerged amongst Rational Dissenters as a result of their denial of original sin, characterised individual Rational Dissenting opposition to the Acts and became part of its public self-disseminated image. Joseph Fownes in 1773 devoted considerable attention to arguments in favour of toleration as a right, not a favour,<sup>73</sup> as did George Walker, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and Helen Maria Williams.<sup>74</sup> Joseph Bealey of Cockey Moor Chapel in Lancashire, who moved from Arianism to Unitarianism, asked

Has not every individual subject in Great Britain, a constitutional right to petition the legislature for the redress of grievances not as a matter of favour, but upon the ground of equitable claim?<sup>75</sup>

The idea of 'right, not indulgence' runs throughout this work, as it does through that of the Unitarian layman, Richard Sharpe, member of the S. C. I., London's Dissenting Deputies and of the Society of the Friends of the People,<sup>76</sup> vociferous in favour of repeal of the Acts. William Smith also urged that

---

<sup>71</sup> S. Fletcher, *To Thomas Plumbe, Esq., Chairman of the Bolton Committee* (Manchester, 1790).

<sup>72</sup> D. Bogue, *Reasons for seeking a repeal*, p. 19; Committee of the Seven Congregations of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham, *Extracts from books*, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> J. Fownes, *An enquiry*, pp. xi, 3, 31.

<sup>74</sup> G. Walker, *The dissenters' plea*, p. 19; Barbauld, *An address*, p. 10; H. M. Williams, *A tour of Switzerland* (1798), p. 106.

<sup>75</sup> J. Bealey, *Observations on the Rev Mr. Owen's sermon* (1790), pp. 35-36.

<sup>76</sup> R. Sharp, *A Letter to the public meeting of the friends to the repeal*, pp. 4, 7, 9.

To incapacitate a whole body of such subjects was to inflict on them an injury, of which they had a right to seek redress as a matter not of Favour, but of Justice.<sup>77</sup>

Differences between Rational and Orthodox Dissenting approach in the struggle for freedom from the requirement to take the Church of England communion rendered that of the former distinctive. Rational Dissenting opposition on the grounds of doctrine supports the contention of this dissertation that theology underpinned their struggles for civil liberty. Doctrinal arguments not only provided the starting point for the Rational Dissenting campaign against the requirement to subscribe to the Articles and for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts but throughout they remained central to it. This emphasis helped to distinguish them from Orthodox Dissenters.

## **ii: Universal Toleration**

For Rational Dissenters toleration meant toleration of all Christians, a prime aspect of which was civil equality. Few Rational Dissenters wrote about freeing the Jews from the constraints of the Test and Corporation Acts. Priestley's *Letters to the Jews in 1786* recognised that both religions worshipped the same God, while hoping that the Jews would convert to Christianity. Helen Maria Williams was unusual amongst Rational Dissenters in welcoming the toleration of Jews in France.<sup>78</sup> In arguing the right of all Christians, including Roman Catholics, to freedom of worship Rational Dissenters went beyond Locke, who excluded Roman Catholics as well as Jews from this right. For Orthodox Dissenters the concept was considerably narrower. For the overwhelming majority of them it extended to Protestant Dissenters alone and not to Roman Catholics.

---

<sup>77</sup> *The Debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Beaufoy's Motion for the Repeal of Such Parts of the Test and Corporation Acts as Affect the Protestant Dissenters* (1789), p. 53.

<sup>78</sup> H. M. Williams, *A Tour of Switzerland* (1798), p. 106.

Amongst the most complex of issues for Rational Dissenters was that of determining their relationship with Roman Catholicism and its adherents, an issue brought to the forefront by the Act for Catholic Relief in 1778 and the second Catholic Relief Act of 1791. Haydon's work reinforced the idea that most of the victims of the Gordon Riots of 1780 were either Roman Catholics or supporters of the Relief Act,<sup>79</sup> while Seed effectively demonstrates that support for the Protestant Association came from 'the Calvinist margins of both Church and Dissent.'<sup>80</sup> The incidence of the Riots further highlighted the complexities of attitudes towards Roman Catholics. Any potential fellow feeling amongst Rational and Orthodox Dissenters for another religious minority excluded by virtue of their religion from positions of influence, was complicated by mistrust rooted in the historical events of the persecution of Protestants under Mary Tudor, the attempted destruction of monarch and parliament by the Catholic Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators, the attempts of Jacobites to restore the exiled James II and his descendants, and reports of persecution of Protestants in Catholic Europe.

Swayed by Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, originally published in 1563 and reprinted in 1776, 1784, 1795 and 1800, and influenced by the evangelical revival, Orthodox Dissenters maintained a strong antipathy to Roman Catholicism which proved enduring throughout the last thirty years of the century and beyond. Seed recognises that some Orthodox Dissenters supported petitions against the 1778 Catholic Relief Act, although he highlights the difficulties of establishing the extent of this.<sup>81</sup> The vehemence of Orthodox Dissenting hostility towards Roman Catholicism rested not only on

---

<sup>79</sup> C. Haydon, *Anti - Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England: A Political and Social Study* (1993).

<sup>80</sup> I. Haywood and J. Seed, eds, *The Gordon Riots: politics, culture and insurrection in eighteenth century Britain*, 'The Fall of Romish Babylon anticipated': Plebian Dissenters and anti-popery in the Gordon riots' (Cambridge, 2012), p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> *The Gordon Riots*, pp. 70-76.

divergence in religious belief,<sup>82</sup> but also on fear of Popery<sup>83</sup> and a concern that Roman Catholics continued to favour persecution of those who did not share their beliefs. Popery was clearly defined by Caleb Evans as Papal supremacy. According to Evans, the Papist conscience was submitted via the priest to a Pope who demanded implicit obedience. Any oath of obedience made to the King by a Catholic, he maintained, could at any time be superseded by his loyalty to the Pope. Thus Evans concluded ‘Let Popery flourish, it will in twenty years time be the religion of England.’<sup>84</sup> William Button looked forward at some point in the future to ‘an utter extirpation of the papacy from the earth.’<sup>85</sup> Thomas Reader of Taunton<sup>86</sup> and George Townsend, Independent Minister in Ramsgate likewise devoted their attention to a prolonged argument against Popery. Townsend concluded that its destruction would lead to the destruction of catholic doctrine.<sup>87</sup> Orthodox Dissenters condemned Popery even more strongly in the early nineteenth century. The works of the Particular Baptist Joseph Ivimey provide an example of the survival of such vehement attitudes.<sup>88</sup>

The clear distinction which Rational Dissenters drew between Roman Catholicism and Popery set them apart from Orthodox Dissenters. It was Popery which was perceived by some Rational Dissenters in the 1770s to be a continuing threat.

---

<sup>82</sup> J. Macgowan, *Infernal Conference or Dialogue of Devils* (2 vols, 1772), I, 107, 206; W. Huntington, *The Epistles of Faith* (1785); J. Orton, *Letters to the Rev Thomas Stedman* (Shrewsbury, 1800).

<sup>83</sup> J. Macgowan, *Infernal Conference*, I, 107; T. Reader, *The Incurable Abomination; or Popery always the same, in a sermon preached at Taunton* (1779); W. Huntington, *Living Testimonies; or Spiritual Letters on Divine Subjects* (1795), p. 11; J. Baillie, *The nature and fatal influence of Popery on civil society* (1780).

<sup>84</sup> C. Evans, *The remembrance of former days* (1778), pp. 15-16.

<sup>85</sup> W. Button, *National calamities the tokens of divine displeasure: a sermon preached at the meeting-house in Dean street, Southwark* (1794), p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> T. Reader, *An inquiry into whether Popery is a proper subject of toleration in Protestant states* (1780).

<sup>87</sup> G. Townsend, *The Privilege of Christians thankfully to acknowledge divine deliverances. A Sermon preached in Ramsgate* (1792), pp. 13-18.

<sup>88</sup> J. Ivimey, *An address to the Protestant Dissenters on the present state of the Roman Catholics* (1819); idem, *Dr. Williams's Library and the debate on the Roman Catholic Claims, A letter addressed to the Trinitarian Members of the General Body of Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations on the above subject* (1829).

Towers in 1772 noted that ‘the petitioners are willing to make the most solemn renunciation of Popery that can be required of them.’<sup>89</sup> Towers objected to the Quebec Act of 1774, which gave concessions in favour of Roman Catholicism to French Canadians, on the grounds that it gave Popery a legal establishment there.<sup>90</sup> Many Orthodox Dissenters adopted the same view. However, by the end of that decade Rational Dissenting views had undergone a change. Martin Fitzpatrick’s article on Priestley’s perspective of toleration<sup>91</sup> importantly explored such a change in attitude in favour of Roman Catholic toleration by Priestley and Lindsey. Grayson Ditchfield further demonstrated the changing views of Lindsey. His continuing suspicion of the theology of Roman Catholicism is evident in a letter of 1772.<sup>92</sup> Alluding to the ‘feeling of humanity and justice’ displayed by Sir George Savile<sup>93</sup> who introduced the motion for Relief in Parliament in 1778, his changed attitude and sympathy for the cause of Catholic toleration is evident. He warmly, and not just for tactical reasons, supported the 1791 Act.<sup>94</sup>

Fitzpatrick and Ditchfield each concentrated on one individual. Analysis in this dissertation of the views of a wider, much more extensive range of Rational Dissenters establishes that this change in attitude towards the dangers of Popery may be found throughout the hinterland in a way which further serves to distinguish Rational Dissent from Orthodox Dissent. Amongst Rational Dissenters, John Palmer, minister of New Broad Street Chapel, Birmingham, referring to William Blackstone’s *The*

---

<sup>89</sup> Towers, *A dialogue*, p. 13; also DWL, MS 28.14 (3), ‘A Lecture at the Old Jewry, 8 November 1778’.

<sup>90</sup> J. Towers, *Tracts on Political and Other Subjects* (1796), p. 179.

<sup>91</sup> M. Fitzpatrick, ‘Joseph Priestley and the cause of Universal Toleration’, *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no. 1 (1977).

<sup>92</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 124-5, William Turner of Wakefield to Lindsey, 7 February 1772.

<sup>93</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 257-8, William Turner of Wakefield to Lindsey, 14 May 1778.

<sup>94</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 97-8, Lindsey to William Turner, 23 February 1791.

*Commentaries on the Laws and Constitution of England*, highlighted this changed attitude:

As to the Papists what has been said of the Protestant Dissenters holds equally strong for a general toleration of them, provided their separation was founded only upon differences in opinion in religion, and their principles did not also extend to a subversion of civil government.<sup>95</sup>

Palmer expressed his approval of the oath of loyalty to the reigning sovereign and abjuration of the doctrine of Papal temporal jurisdiction in Britain imposed upon Catholics by the 1778 Relief Act, despite his disagreement in principle with the idea of subscription to an oath. He favoured the substitution of a declaration against Popery ‘which should include such principles of that system as are politically evil and dangerous’ in the place of the Test Act.<sup>96</sup> William Belsham asserted that ‘in the course of more than a century, all rational apprehensions of danger from Popery have totally ceased,’ a view shared by Charles Wellbeloved, Cappe’s successor at York.<sup>97</sup> Both John Disney and Capel Lofft pointed to the loyalty of Roman Catholics,<sup>98</sup> thereby undermining one of the main objections to Popery. Timothy Kenrick added to the argument that ‘Depriving them of any of their civil liberties would be to return evil for evil, which the precepts of the Christian Religion prohibit.’<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> J. Palmer, *Free thoughts on the inconsistency of conforming to any religious tests as a condition of toleration* (1779), p. 34.

<sup>96</sup> J. Palmer, *Free thoughts*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>97</sup> C. Wellbeloved, *The Principles of Roman Catholics and Unitarians contrasted* (1800).

<sup>98</sup> J. Disney, *An arranged catalogue of the several publications which have appeared, relating to the enlargement of the toleration of Protestant Dissenting ministers, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), p. 20; C. Lofft, *An history of the corporation and test acts* (1790), p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> T. Kenrick, *The spirit of persecutors exemplified, and the conduct to be observed towards their descendants* (1791), p. 24.

Some, mainly Cisalpine, Roman Catholics in England had begun to describe themselves as English Catholics.<sup>100</sup> Despite disapproval by the Catholic clerical hierarchy, Alexander Geddes maintained that

The time will come when English Catholics will not allow themselves to be imperiously dictated to by a Pope and when English Catholics will form a small but national church independent of Rome.<sup>101</sup>

By 1789 a committee of English Catholics, mainly lay aristocracy and gentry, was in existence, referring to themselves as Protestant Catholic Dissenters and distancing themselves from Popery.<sup>102</sup> Geddes maintained contact with a number of Rational Dissenters and it seems likely that, although he was far from typical of Roman Catholics as a whole in England, his view helped to contribute to the change in the Rational Dissenting perception of Catholicism.<sup>103</sup> Wellbeloved appears to have been convinced by arguments like those of Geddes, viewing English Catholics as more tolerable than Roman Catholics and more likely to be assimilated.

Rational Dissenters detected Popery in the Church of England as well as the Catholic Church. Both Lindsey and Disney argued that one did not need to be a Catholic to be a papist.<sup>104</sup> Andrew Thompson's point that 'fear of Protestant Popery was part of a more general fear about priestcraft'<sup>105</sup> is borne out by the perception that high churchmen were in some respects close to Catholic doctrine. George Horne, Dean

---

<sup>100</sup> J. Berington, *The State and Behaviour of English Catholics from the Reformation to the Year 1780* (1780); idem, *The Rights of Dissent from the established Church, in relation, principally to English Catholics* (1790).

<sup>101</sup> A. Geddes, *A Letter from Reverend A. Geddes to the Right Reverend J. Douglas* (1794), p. 38.

<sup>102</sup> Committee of English Catholics, *A short account of the principle circumstances attending our attempt to procure for the Catholics of England an exemption from the laws enacted against persons professing the Popish religion* (1789).

<sup>103</sup> c.f. M. Goldie, 'Alexander Geddes at the limits of Catholic enlightenment', *HJ*, 53, 1 (2010).

<sup>104</sup> Lindsey, *Letters I*, 100-1, Lindsey to W. Harris, 27 May 1766; T. Lindsey, *An historical view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine and worship from the Reformation to our own times* (1783), p. 9; J. Disney, *Tracts* (1794), p.2.

<sup>105</sup> A. C. Thompson, 'Popery, Politics and Private Judgement in Early Hanoverian Britain', *HJ*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2002), p. 343.



of Canterbury, established a Sunday School for Protestants and Catholics.<sup>106</sup> William Jones of Nayland stressed the universal catholic doctrine of the Trinity, to the concern of Lindsey.<sup>107</sup>

While attitudes towards the dangers of Popery had softened and changed amongst Rational Dissenters, however, distrust of Catholic theology among them remained. This was strengthened by a concept of the corruptions of Christianity which were perceived to have their origins in the fourth-century Church and its connection with the state under the Emperor Constantine. Rational Dissenting concern that Catholics were still tied to their belief in the doctrines and practices prescribed by Roman Catholic clergy meant that in consequence they saw Catholics as unable to adopt the application of individual reason and conscience, a foundation stone of Rational Dissent. Lindsey urged that those who prayed to the Virgin Mary, like those who prayed to Christ, ignored the direction of prayer to God the Father.<sup>108</sup> Fears about Catholic interpretation of the Scriptures led to further concerns about the inclusion of Catholics in any Dissenting declaration of faith based on the Bible rather than the Thirty-Nine Articles. Toulmin made the important distinction between his disapproval of anti-Catholic intolerance and legislation, and his contempt for Catholic theology, which he described as ‘idolatrous,’<sup>109</sup> a distinction which set Rational apart from Orthodox Dissenters.

By the last thirty years of the eighteenth century Rational Dissenters, as Rutt commented, were embarrassed by the anti-Catholicism of their predecessors.<sup>110</sup> James Losh, familiar with the Catholic connections of his sister-in-law, Isabella, argued for

---

<sup>106</sup> G. Horne, *Sunday Schools recommended* (1786).

<sup>107</sup> T. Lindsey, *An historical view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine* (1783), p. 9; W. Jones, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* (1787), p. 91.

<sup>108</sup> T. Lindsey, *An historical view of the state of Unitarian doctrine* (1783), p. 209.

<sup>109</sup> J. Toulmin, *An exhortation to all Christian people to refrain from Trinitarian worship* (1789), p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> Rutt, *Priestley, Life, Memoirs and Correspondence* I, 99.

freedom of religious opinion for all men and, taking tea with three Roman Catholic priests, described them as ‘sensible.’<sup>111</sup> The very different doctrinal views of Roman Catholics were self-evidently not acceptable to Rational Dissenters, any more than they were to Orthodox Dissenters. Rational Dissenters, however, recognised the Roman Catholic right to reach and preach their own theological conclusions. Orthodox Dissenting vehement hatred of Roman Catholic theology precluded them from wanting to extend religious toleration to Catholics. For them the struggle was to extend toleration to Protestant Nonconformists only. Rational Dissenting attitudes towards Catholic Dissenters generally mellowed against the background of their own struggle for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Alongside their own protests of loyalty to the State, Rational Dissenters on the whole believed that Popery no longer presented the threat which it had done in earlier times following the Reformation and during the Jacobite rebellions. Not even the Rational Dissenting concept of the corruptions of Christianity and their origins in the pre-Reformation Church, or worries about Roman Catholics discouraging individual reading of the Scriptures and holding services in Latin, affected their view of the right of Roman Catholics to practise their religion. This right was expressed by Ralph Harrison and Thomas Barnes in 1786,<sup>112</sup> and by William Smith in his speech to the Committee on Catholic Grievances in 1811.<sup>113</sup> The distinction which Rational Dissenters made between Roman Catholicism and Popery set them aside from Orthodox Dissenters. Did it, however, render them unique?

---

<sup>111</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 21 March 1802; vol. 11, 2 June 1803.

<sup>112</sup> R. Harrison, *A Sermon preached at the dissenting chapel in Cross Street, Manchester on the occasion of the establishment of an academy in Manchester* (1786), p. 26; T. Barnes, *A Discourse delivered at the commencement of the Manchester Academy* (1786), p.8.

<sup>113</sup> T. C. Hansard, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, xx, 418.

Many members of the Established Church equated Catholicism with superstition, persecution of Protestants and divided loyalties. The Latitudinarian Francis Blackburne saw no distinction between adherence to the notion of Papal power and Roman Catholic doctrine, nor between English Catholics and those on the continent.<sup>114</sup> His perception was shared by Benjamin Dawson, Rector of Burgh in Suffolk, James Smith, Vicar of Alkham in Kent and John Bennett, Curate of St Mary's, Manchester.<sup>115</sup> Others in the Church of England contested such views.<sup>116</sup> What distinguished the Rational Dissenting view on Roman Catholic toleration was their *agreement* on the point that, despite their rejection of Roman Catholic theology, Roman Catholic Dissenters had the same right as Protestant Dissenters to argue their theological views.

### **iii: History and Rational Dissenting Concepts of Liberty and Progress**

John Seed's recognition that eighteenth century historical works are not just 'a representation of the past', but also 'a collective memory of the present,'<sup>117</sup> highlights the importance to Dissenters of their place in history and the relevance of this to them in the late eighteenth century. Seed asks how history is reflected in the identity of Dissent. This dissertation adopts a different approach in analysing the ways in which the crucial place of theology is illustrated through a sense of history amongst Rational Dissenters. Theology, rather than purely principle, remained at the heart of the Rational Dissenting struggle for the removal of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine

---

<sup>114</sup> F. Blackburne, *Considerations on the present state of the controversy between the Protestants and the Papists of Great Britain* (1768).

<sup>115</sup> B. Dawson, *A Letter to the clergy of the archdeaconry of Winchester* (1773), p. 21; J. Smith, *The Errors of the Church of Rome Detected* (1778); J. Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady* (1795), p. 53.

<sup>116</sup> L. Thomas, *An essay on the toleration of Papists* (1779), pp. 17-18, 25, 31; A Kentish Curate, *A Letter to the Reverend Archdeacon Law* (1780), pp. 2, 4, 10; A Minister of the Church of England, *An Essay towards a Religious Union between Protestants and Catholics* (1782).

<sup>117</sup> J. Seed, *Dissenting Histories, Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth-Century England* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. 1.

Articles and for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. History validated the Rational Dissenting determination to perpetuate their theological ideas.

A number of Rational Dissenters in particular wrote prolifically on history, including their own.<sup>118</sup> Cornish linked understanding the reasons behind Dissenting separation from the Church of England with a study of history, noting that

Next to understanding the principles of our dissent, the consideration of what our ancestors suffered in this cause must afford the most animating motives to persist in them.<sup>119</sup>

Joshua Toulmin made a similar point.<sup>120</sup> History was used by both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters to argue that they were being punished in the civil arena for their separation from the established church, and cited to illustrate the lack of logic in such a situation. Both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters unsurprisingly argued against the concept of an exclusively based Established Church,<sup>121</sup> and maintained that the Test Act had been aimed specifically against Roman Catholics and their questionable loyalty.<sup>122</sup> Capel Lofft maintained that events had moved on and that it did not follow ‘that what remains of [the Corporation Act] is either necessary or expedient.’<sup>123</sup> Both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters pointed to Protestant Dissenting loyalty during the Jacobite rebellions.

---

<sup>118</sup> Amongst them A. Kippis, *Biographica Britannia; or an accurate and impartial account of the lives and writings of eminent persons in Great Britain and Ireland* (1766); idem, *The Life of Nathaniel Lardner* (1788); idem, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1788); T. Lindsey, *A historical view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine and worship, from the Reformation to our own times* (1783); J. Toulmin, *A history of Taunton* (1791); J. Towers, *Memoirs of the life and reign of Frederick the Third, King of Prussia* (1788), cf. A. Page, ‘“Probably the most indefatigable Prince that ever existed”’: A Rational Dissenting Perspective on Frederick the Great’, *E & D*, 23 (2005).

<sup>119</sup> J. Cornish, *A brief and impartial history of the Puritans* (1772), p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> N. Neal, *A history of the Puritans, or Protestant Nonconformists from the Reformation to the death of Queen Elizabeth, Revised and enlarged by Joshua Toulmin* (Bath, 1793), p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> S. Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1778); C. Lofft, *An history of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), p. 1; J. Cornish, *A brief history of Nonconformity* (1797), p. 159.

<sup>122</sup> W. Belsham, *The History of Great Britain from the Revolution to the accession of the House of Hanover* (1798), p. 12; idem, *Observations on the test laws* (1791), p. 6; J. Bealey, *Observations upon the Reverend Mr. Owen's Sermon* (1790), p. 10; Heywood, *Right of Protestant Dissenters*, p. 95.

<sup>123</sup> C. Lofft, *An history of the Test and Corporation Acts*, p. 11.

Rational Dissenters differed from Orthodox in their use of more recent history. John Disney, Capel Lofft, William Belsham and Charles Wellbeloved drew attention to the more recent loyalty of Roman Catholics and perceived danger from Popery to be no longer evident.<sup>124</sup> As one would expect, Rational Dissenters used the example of history to reinforce their own theological views. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the move away from the purity of primitive Christianity which many Rational Dissenters, even before Priestley, argued led to the corruption of Christianity, was manifested in doctrines of the Trinity, original sin and atonement. This was for them a historical argument.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that Rational Dissenting perceptions of liberty stemmed directly from their theology. Several cited examples from their own history to validate their determination to perpetuate their theological ideas, justifying their separation from the Church of England and stressing their loyalty during the Jacobite rebellions despite this separation. It is unsurprising that Rational Dissenting ministers were conspicuously involved in the struggle for removal of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and lay adherents to the removal of the sacramental test. As was Orthodox Dissent, Rational Dissent was based on the voluntary principle. Ministers were elected by lay trustees, and they were supported financially by the congregation. This chapter illustrates the importance of the laity within the phenomenon. Ministers and laity became involved in both struggles. Based, as has been shown, not just on principle, but also on theological objections, this distinguished their arguments from those of Trinitarian Orthodox Dissenters. Rational Dissenting sympathy towards the end of the

---

<sup>124</sup> J. Disney, *An arranged catalogue of the several publications which have appeared, relating to the enlargement of the toleration of Protestant Dissenting ministers, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790), p. 20; C. Lofft, *An history of the corporation and test acts* (1790), p. 22; W. Belsham, *Observations on the test laws, in reply to 'A Review of the case of the Protestant Dissenters'*, (1791), p. 6; C. Wellbeloved, *The Principles of Roman Catholics and Unitarians contrasted* (1800)

eighteenth century for toleration of Roman Catholics was entirely in keeping with their arguments from principle for toleration. In this, going beyond Locke, they likewise differed from Orthodox Dissenters who were unable to extend their principle for toleration to include Roman Catholics. Such differences, already apparent in the 1770s, became increasingly evident in the following two decades.

## 7: THEOLOGY, MONARCHY AND THE CONSTITUTION

Many contemporary critics saw Rational Dissenters, and especially Socinians, as guilty of republicanism. This perception rested on a belief that, more extreme in their theology than Orthodox Dissenters, they were also more extreme in their view of the constitution. Eighteenth century definitions of republicanism focussed on its anti-monarchical trends,<sup>1</sup> hence the term ‘republican’, discredited by the 1649 and 1793 regicides, became unsurprisingly increasingly used in the 1790s against a background of turbulence in France. Linda Colley, along with many other scholars, convincingly points to a royalist resurgence in Britain after 1780, ‘part of the conservative reaction to the American, and still more the French Revolution.’<sup>2</sup>

Rational Dissenters unsurprisingly presented a united front in protesting their loyalty to King and Parliament, and their constitutional methods. Fownes in 1772 defined the legal, constitutional methods adopted by Rational Dissenters in their struggle for the removal of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, appealing to ‘the judgement of the legislature; to which their petition is again submitted.’<sup>3</sup> Rational Dissenters were keen to establish their patriotism more fully than ever before. The accusation directed against Dissenters as a whole, and Rational Dissenters in particular, of sympathy for revolutionary causes in America and France, made this a crucial issue for the adherents of Rational Dissent. Rational Dissenters were singled out, even by Orthodox Dissenters,<sup>4</sup> as well as by George Pretyman,<sup>5</sup> and

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Jones, *Reasons for peace, stated in a discourse delivered at the Union Chapel, Birmingham* (1795), p. 31; B. Flower, *National Sins Considered* (1796), p. ix; S. T. Coleridge, *The plot discovered; or an address to the people against ministerial treason* (1795), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> L. Colley, ‘The apotheosis of George 111: loyalty, royalty and the British nation 1760-1820,’ *Past and Present*, 102 (1984), 111.

<sup>3</sup> Fownes, *An enquiry*, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> J. Ryland, *A contemplation on the existence and perfections of God* (1774), p. 24; W. Huntington, *The music and odour of Saints* (1788), p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Pretyman, *A Charge*, p. 14.

by correspondents in the newspaper press,<sup>6</sup> as guilty of republicanism, a charge which they refuted. Even Towers, who made the important distinction that ‘it is no crime for any man to entertain [a belief in republicanism], if he be guilty of no illegal act to support it’, was no republican. Towers refuted the idea that republicanism existed on any significant scale, either within Rational Dissent or outside of it.<sup>7</sup> In what was clearly a defensive statement, he made the further point that a desire for improvement in the constitution did not necessarily entail republicanism.<sup>8</sup> Samuel Heywood perceived Unitarians as ‘uniformly and ardently devoted to the frame of our government’, citing as evidence ‘the whole of our conduct for more than a century past’,<sup>9</sup> sentiments reiterated by Kentish<sup>10</sup> and Thomas Belsham.<sup>11</sup>

It is unsurprising that Rational and Orthodox Dissenters, in common with other contemporaries, re-explored at its centenary the significance of the Glorious Revolution. Both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters lauded this event and displayed widespread respect for the existing constitution. Kippis, chairing the meeting of the Revolution Society on 30 June 1788 referred to ‘the blessings obtained by the Revolution.’<sup>12</sup> The Orthodox Dissenter Thomas Best, minister of Cradley Chapel, echoed these sentiments in his allusion to

---

<sup>6</sup> *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 17 September 1778; *St. James’s Chronicle*, 21 January 1790; *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 10 December 1792; *The Kentish Gazette*, 2 March 1790, *The Maidstone Journal*, 16 March 1790.

<sup>7</sup> J. Towers, *A dialogue between an associator and a well-informed Englishman* (1793), p. 12; idem, *Remarks on the conduct, principles, and publications, of the Association at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, for preserving liberty and property against republicans and levellers* (1793), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> J. Towers, *A vindication of the political principles of Mr. Locke: in answer to the objections of the Rev Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloster* (1782), p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Heywood, *High Church Politics*, p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> T. Belsham, *Mr Belsham’s Review of Mr Wilberforce’s Treatise* (1800), p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> BL Add. MS 64814, f. 4, Revolution Society Minute Book.



Thousands of Dissenters in this kingdom who exult in the British Constitution as settled at the Glorious Revolution, and who, from religious principle, are peaceable and loyal.<sup>13</sup>

Benjamin Flower's comment that 'the Crown cannot begin of itself any alterations of the present established law; but it may approve or disapprove of the alterations suggested and consented to by the two houses,'<sup>14</sup> recognised the relationship between monarchy and parliament within a trust and presented the monarchy as a safeguard against disorder.<sup>15</sup> In similar vein the Orthodox Dissenters Caleb Evans and Henry Blaine, minister of the Gospel at Tring in Hertfordshire, praised the role of monarchy and aristocracy within a democracy.<sup>16</sup>

Both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters argued that the Glorious Revolution had not gone far enough. The distinctiveness of Rational Dissent, however, rested on the fact that it took the idea of a constitutional monarchy further than did Orthodox. Thus Towers argued that

If the parliament of England justly claimed a right of dethroning a king for tyranny, there can be no doubt, but they have an equal right to make such alterations in their administration, or mode of government, as they shall judge to be most advantageous to the community.<sup>17</sup>

Flower, like Burgh<sup>18</sup> and Losh,<sup>19</sup> questioned not the arrangement of king, lords and commons but the details of practice, concluding that one dimension of such a

---

<sup>13</sup> T. Best, *A true state of the case; or a vindication of the Orthodox Dissenters from the misrepresentations of the Reverend Robert Foley of Oriel College* (1795), p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> B. Flower, *The principles of the British Constitution explained; and the right, necessity and expediency of reform, asserted. By A Friend to the Constitution* (1793), p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> So too did Fownes, *An enquiry*, p. 44; W. Wood, *At a meeting of Protestant dissenters and other gentlemen of the West Riding of the county of York, held at Wakefield* (1789), p. 1; S. T. Coleridge, *A moral and political lecture delivered at Bristol* (1795), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> C. Evans, *British constitutional liberty. A sermon preached in Broad Mead, Bristol* (1775), pp. 10, 22; H. Blaine, *A voyage to Ramsgate for health, interspersed with reflections natural, moral and divine* (1788), p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> J. Towers, *Thoughts on the commencement of a new parliament* (1790), p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> J. Burgh, *Political Disquisitions* (1774).

<sup>19</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 13, 2 October 1809.

constitutional arrangement was the right to investigate its working.<sup>20</sup> Flower specifically described himself as ‘A Friend to the Constitution.’ Mary Wollstonecraft questioned, not the institution of the monarchy, but the unchangeability of hereditary right.<sup>21</sup> Rational Dissenters did not directly attack the institution of monarchy, any more than Orthodox Dissenters did.

What distinguished Rational Dissent was the desire, not for republicanism, but as demonstrated below, for republican values within a constitutional monarchy. James Manning, referring to ‘a government which has the advantages of a Republic, and a Monarchy, nicely blended together,’ recognised that such a process had already begun, although had not proceeded far enough.<sup>22</sup> This chapter establishes the argument that, while some contemporary attacks argued otherwise, particularly at the time of the French Revolution, Rational Dissenters utilized traditional, conventional and legal methods in presenting their point of view. They were disaffected but constitutional. Prosperous Rational Dissenters, like others involved in trade and commerce, had much to lose. Rational Dissenters, particularly after the Birmingham Riots, relied on laws in the existing constitution to protect their property.<sup>23</sup>

### **i: Theology, Patriotism and Revolution**

In the late eighteenth century patriotism was widely esteemed and much debated. The question at issue was that of who constituted ‘true patriots’ as opposed to those who had distorted the term. The 1755 edition of Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* defined the label as ‘one whose ruling passion is the love of his country,’ although by 1773 Johnson in the fourth edition, writing at the time of the Wilkite agitation, had

---

<sup>20</sup> B. Flower, *The principles of the British Constitution explained* (1793), p. 112; W. Belsham, *Observations on the test laws* (1791), p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of women; with strictures on political and moral subjects* (Dublin, 1793), p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> J. Manning, *A Sermon preached at George’s Meeting House* (Exeter, 1793), p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> A. Jebb, *Two penny-worth of truth for a penny* (1793), p. 13.

added that in more recent times it had come to mean ‘a factious disturber of government.’ Johnson devoted lengthy and specific attention to the subject in his pamphlet, *The Patriot*, published in 1774. The printing of a second edition in the same year, and further editions in 1775 and 1776 is suggestive of extensive circulation. By 1775 Johnson was reported as describing patriotism as ‘the last refuge of the scoundrel.’<sup>24</sup> Cunningham rightly saw this as an indication that the concept of patriotism became more heavily contested as the century progressed.<sup>25</sup> The question not addressed in existing studies of the period is that of whether there was anything specifically distinctive about the Rational Dissenting perception of patriotism.

Both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters pointed to their loyalty during the Jacobite rebellions as a key demonstration of their patriotism. Rational Dissenters, however, and Unitarians in particular who came under greater attack as ‘stirrers up of unrest,’ went beyond such assertions of earlier loyalty to repeated explorations of the concept of ‘love of country.’ In marked contrast to Orthodox Dissenters, Rational Dissenters advanced arguments for ‘love of country’ on a frequent and regular basis. Thomas Amory explored the idea in 1770,<sup>26</sup> Capel Lofft and George Walker in 1779,<sup>27</sup> Newcome Cappe in 1780,<sup>28</sup> William Enfield in 1780 and 1784,<sup>29</sup> and William Hazlitt in 1786.<sup>30</sup> Kippis’s sermon at the Old Jewry in 1788 predated Richard Price’s famous discourse in its use of this phrase.<sup>31</sup> Rational Dissenters continued to express these opinions throughout the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. During the 1790s

---

<sup>24</sup> J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), p. 114.

<sup>25</sup> H. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism 1750- 1914’, *History Workshop*, 17, (1981), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> T. Amory, *Daily devotion assisted and recommended, in four sermons; representing the principal instances of the providence and goodness of God* (1770), p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> G. Walker, *The duty and character of a national soldier* (1779).

<sup>28</sup> N. Cappe, *A sermon preached on 4 February 1780, the late day of national humiliation, to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters* (York, 1780).

<sup>29</sup> W. Enfield, *Three discourses on the progress of Christian knowledge* (Warrington, 1780).

<sup>30</sup> W. Hazlitt, *A Thanksgiving Discourse* (Boston, 1786), p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> A. Kippis, *Sermon preached at the Old Jewry* (1788), p. 43.

similar sentiments were voiced more earnestly by Thomas Percival in 1790,<sup>32</sup> Anna Letitia Barbauld<sup>33</sup> and Philip Holland in 1792,<sup>34</sup> James Burgh and Mary Wollstonecraft in 1794,<sup>35</sup> Joseph Fawcett and William Turner in 1795,<sup>36</sup> and Abraham Rees in 1800.<sup>37</sup> Wollstonecraft made the specific point that rational affection for one's country was as important for women as for men.<sup>38</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Rational Dissenters sought in the 1790s to argue their patriotism not only through the medium of sermons, but also through newspapers such as *St. James's Chronicle* and *The Public Advertiser*<sup>39</sup> and even through the loyalist *Gentleman's Magazine* where they presented themselves as 'Friends to order and good government.'<sup>40</sup> They repeated this message through the sympathetic *Cambridge Intelligencer* where Flower sought to clear himself of a charge of sedition<sup>41</sup> and, as one would expect, much coverage during the treason trials of 1794 was devoted to presenting Rational Dissenters as loyal subjects.<sup>42</sup>

Both the Rational and Orthodox Dissenting definition of patriotism rejected the idea that true patriotism necessarily involved membership of a national state Church. The Rational Dissenting perception of patriotism extended beyond national frontiers to an inclusive concept of God-given rights to *all* men. In contrast the Calvinistic Orthodox Dissenting view of the depravity of man was markedly less inclusive. Rational Dissenters were quite clear that 'love of country' should not take the form of a

---

<sup>32</sup> T. Percival, *An appendix to the inquiry concerning the principles of taxation* (1790), p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> A. L. Barbauld, *Civic Sermons to the People* (1792), p. 15; c.f. E. Major, *Women, Church and Nation 1712-1812* (2010), who cites Barbauld pp. 216, 217, 295.

<sup>34</sup> P. Holland, *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (2 vols, 1792).

<sup>35</sup> J. Burgh, *The dignity of human nature* (1794), pp 311-348.

<sup>36</sup> J. Fawcett, *Sermons delivered at the Old Jewry*, (1795), p. 162; W. Turner, *Fast Sermon*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>37</sup> A. Rees, *Economy illustrated and recommended: and a caution against modern infidelity* (1800), p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of women* (1790), p. 330.

<sup>39</sup> *St. James's Chronicle*, 21-23 January 1790; *Public Advertiser*, 17 May 1792.

<sup>40</sup> *G M*, 63 (September 1793), 809.

<sup>41</sup> *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 10 August 1793.

<sup>42</sup> *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 8, 16, 29 November, 6 December 1794.

solely national ‘narrow benevolence.’ Unitarians voiced their opinions on the subject more often than Arians. Walker, James Burgh, Joseph Fawcett and William Turner specifically stressed that Christ had demonstrated this wider concept of ‘love of country’ in his teaching role.<sup>43</sup> Capel Lofft maintained that ‘The country of a good man is first heaven, next mankind, and lastly that of which he lives a citizen.’<sup>44</sup> For many others too such as Enfield, Hazlitt, Newcome Cappe and Thomas Percival,<sup>45</sup> ‘love of country’ went beyond, while in no way minimising the importance of national patriotism, to love of all mankind, a sentiment reiterated by Philip Holland and William Hazlitt.<sup>46</sup> While no Orthodox Dissenter would dispute this view, Rational Dissenters made a particular point of repeatedly emphasising it. Rational Dissenters were more likely to see the issue of rights as international, since for them French Catholics had the same right to their doctrinal beliefs as English Catholics.

The oft-repeated statements cited above reflect the importance attached by Rational Dissenters to arguments designed to illustrate their lawful, patriotic behaviour as a key aspect of their identity. Although Richard Price made one fleeting allusion to the concept of ‘love of country’ in 1779, his much-publicised address to the London Revolution Society in 1789 summed up and gave prominence to an argument already prevalent amongst the hinterland of Rational Dissent. What distinguished Price’s view from those of the hinterland of Rational Dissent in general was the specific link he established between ‘love of country’ and the occasion on which he delivered his discourse ‘commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain.’ His statement that

---

<sup>43</sup> G. Walker, *The duty and character of a national soldier* (1779), p. 18; J. Burgh, *The Dignity of Human Nature* (1794), p. 164; J. Fawcett, *Sermons delivered at the Old Jewry*, (1795), p. 162; W. Turner, *Fast Sermon*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> C. Lofft, *Elements of Universal Law and particularly the law of England*, vol.1 (1779), p. 265.

<sup>45</sup> T. Percival, *An appendix to the inquiry concerning the principles of taxation* (1790), p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> W. Hazlitt, *A thanksgiving discourse* (Bristol, 1786), p. 16.

It has oftener happened that men have been too passive than too unruly; and the rebellion of kings against their people has been more common and done more mischief, than the rebellion of people against their kings,

set firmly and conspicuously in this context, attracted considerable concern and hostility from outside Rational Dissent. This statement delivered a day before 5 November, with all its associations of an attack on king and parliament, focussed attention on a view which could be readily interpreted as seditious, and which was not representative of the identity of Rational Dissent as a whole. Price's allusion to 'the rebellion of kings against their people' was a clear reference to the raising of his standard at Nottingham in a declaration of war on Parliament by Charles I.

Although many Rational Dissenters doubtless had worked out their views on the struggle for liberty in America and in France, the basis of the surviving evidence suggests that relatively few of them published specifically on America. This absence of published political views, of course, did not mean that they had not given these issues thought. It is however indicative of the supreme importance attributed by them to theology. Amongst Rational Dissenting ministers, the prolific writer, Joshua Toulmin produced only three key works specifically focussed on the subject of liberty,<sup>47</sup> Kippis only two,<sup>48</sup> Thomas Belsham two.<sup>49</sup> Liberty in its widest sense pervades virtually all of their work but it was inseparably intertwined with theology. That theology concerned Rational Dissenters more than politics is apparent, for example, in the title of a lengthy sermon of seventy-nine pages by Joseph Cornish in which he commented on America

---

<sup>47</sup> J. Toulmin, *Two letters on the late application to Parliament by Protestant dissenting ministers* (1774); idem, *An appeal to the Bishops on the late application of the Protestant dissenters to Parliament, for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1789); idem, *An historical view of the state of the Protestant dissenters in England: and of the progress of free enquiry and religious liberty, from the Revolution to the accession of Queen Anne* (1814).

<sup>48</sup> A. Kippis, *A vindication of the Protestant Dissenting ministers, with regard to their late application to Parliament* (1772); idem, *Considerations on the Provisional Treaty with America, and the Preliminary Articles of Peace with France and Spain* (1783).

<sup>49</sup> T. Belsham, *A Review of Mr Wilberforce's treatise, entitled A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians. In letters to a lady* (1798); idem, *Freedom of enquiry and zeal in the diffusion of Christian truth* (1800).

in only four pages.<sup>50</sup> In a printed sermon of thirty-one pages Cappe briefly mentioned America twice. Joshua Toulmin lamented that his sermon of 1776 regretting the American War ‘was considered by some merely as a political sermon,’ for his aim had been to ‘awaken religious reflections.’<sup>51</sup> Kippis refused to comment on ‘the late political conduct of Great Britain and the effects which have resulted from it.’<sup>52</sup> Ralph Harrison specifically observed that Rational Dissenters did not ‘have any political tenets peculiar to us as a distinct body of Christians.’<sup>53</sup> On 12 March 1800, James Losh noted his approval of a sermon delivered by William Turner, in which Turner, referring to the French Revolution, commented that whether

This great attempt to get free of despotism [was] caused by the fault of the people themselves or those who interfered with them, the pulpit was not the proper place to confirm.<sup>54</sup>

Losh himself argued that it was not politics itself which interested him, an argument which he repeated on five occasions over a considerable period of time.<sup>55</sup> For him politics was purely the vehicle for the progressive and more inclusive advancement of the rights of all men stemming from his theological beliefs.

This contrasted strongly with the political image of Rational Dissent presented by its critics. William Stevens blamed Dissenters for the loss of America.<sup>56</sup> His fellow high churchman Jonathan Boucher believed that resistance to the establishment of an

---

<sup>50</sup> J. Cornish, *A blow at the root of all priestly claims: proving from Scripture that every layman has a right not only to pray and preach in public, but also to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (1775), pp. 10, 43-45; N. Cappe, *A sermon preached on, the late day of national humiliation*, pp. 6, 31.

<sup>51</sup> J. Toulmin, *The American War lamented* (Taunton, 1776), p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> A. Kippis, *Considerations on the provisional treaty with America*, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> R. Harrison, *A Sermon preached at the dissenting chapel in Cross Street, Manchester* (1786), p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 12 March 1800.

<sup>55</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 6, 10 March 1796; vol. 10, 25 September 1800; vol. 11, 4 November 1803; vol. 13, 2 May 1809; vol. 18, March 1820.

<sup>56</sup> W. Stevens, *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of the Reverend William Jones* (1807), p. 67.

episcopate in America led to opposition on civil grounds.<sup>57</sup> Episcopalian exiles from America such as Boucher, rector of St. Anne's Church, Maryland and Henry Caner, minister of King's Chapel, Boston, had the effect of hardening opinion against Dissenters. Allegations of actual disloyalty against Dissenters in general, but as explored in Chapter 3 against Rational Dissenters in particular, were spurred on by fear of the spread of revolution to Britain and manifested in Pitt's repressive measures of the 1790s.

These allegations were not supported by the Rational Dissenting contribution to the debate on America. William Belsham maintained that Horsley's perception of Rational Dissenting attitudes towards the American Revolution was based on views expressed by Price and Priestley:

Thus doth Bishop Horsley conclude that the Dissenters, whenever they hear Dr. Price & Dr. Priestley 'pipe upon the hills' will rise up to a man, REBELS ARMED; because the former has spoken of the emancipation of America in terms of generous complacency, and the latter has predicted that great reforms will probably be preceded by great commotions.<sup>58</sup>

Belsham cast doubt on the implied suggestion that all Rational Dissenters shared the views of Price and Priestley, and that this would lead them to rebellious action, arguing at some length that the Rational Dissenting view on the struggle with America was one which emphasized peace. John Palmer in 1772 praised the level of religious toleration amongst the American colonists,<sup>59</sup> a point reiterated by Samuel Heywood, and Mary Wollstonecraft.<sup>60</sup> In 1773 Andrew Kippis commented that

---

<sup>57</sup> J. Boucher, *A view of the causes and consequences of the American Revolution* (1797), p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> W. Belsham, *Observations on the Test Laws in reply to 'A Review of the case of the Protestant dissenters'* (1791), p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> J. Palmer, *Free remarks on a sermon entitled 'The requisition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England not inconsistent with Christian liberty'* (1772), p. 39.

<sup>60</sup> S. Heywood, *The right of Protestant dissenters asserted* (1789), p. 63; M. Wollstonecraft, *A Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794), p. 12.



Provided that Episcopalians are upon an equal footing with other sects in matters of religion, such an institution ought not to be opposed and will not, I am persuaded, be opposed by the Dissenters in England.<sup>61</sup>

This stood in contrast to Price's belief that

The Church [in Britain] cannot have a right to impose Bishops on the Church in another country; and while churchmen in America are averse to Bishops, it must be persecution to send Bishops among them.<sup>62</sup>

It differed too from the question posed by Priestley, 'Do you imagine that we can be the idle spectators of the chains which are forging for our brethren in America?'<sup>63</sup>

Rational and Orthodox Dissenters shared many views on America. Amongst Orthodox Dissenters, Samuel Palmer also commented on religious toleration in the American colonies, as did Thomas Ebenezer Beasley,<sup>64</sup> and similar expressions of regret over the conflict which followed were recorded.<sup>65</sup> Joseph Jenkins lamented the cost of war against America,<sup>66</sup> William Scott, Particular Baptist minister at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire regretted 'the effusion of blood.'<sup>67</sup> Rational Dissenters did not on the whole adopt a more extreme position than Orthodox on events in America. David Williams, founder of the Literary Fund and sympathetic towards the aspirations of Rational Dissenters, was untypical in his explicit attribution of blame for conflict with the American colonies, asserting that

---

<sup>61</sup> A. Kippis, *A vindication of the Protestant Dissenting ministers, with regard to their late application to Parliament* (1773), p. 101.

<sup>62</sup> R. Price, *The general introduction and supplement to two tracts on civil liberty, the war with America, and the finances of the kingdom* (1778), p. xii.

<sup>63</sup> J. Priestley, *An address to Protestant Dissenters of all denominations, on the approaching election of Members of Parliament, with respect to the state of public liberty in general and of American affairs in particular* (1774), p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> S. Palmer, *The Protestant Dissenter's Catechism* (1777), p. 1; T. E. Beasley, *A brief vindication of the Dissenters* (1792), p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> The Baptist Church, Midland Association, *The Circular Letter of the several Baptist Churches meeting at Aulcester, Bengeworth, Bewdley, Birmingham and, Bridgnorth* (Leominster, 1775), p. 7; *The elders and messengers of several Baptist Churches meeting at Cheltenham, Bristol, Frome and Wellington* (Bristol, 1776), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> J. Jenkins, *The national debt considered in a sermon, Being the day appointed for a General Fast* (Shrewsbury, 1781), pp. 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> W. Scott, *O Tempora! O mores!* (1775), p. xi.

The Revolution in America was completely managed in England; and its principle authors were Lord North, Lord Sackville and Mr. Jenkinson. The American Governments, separately considered, are improvements on the Government of England.<sup>68</sup>

Williams was not representative of Rational Dissenting views. It was the Particular Baptist minister Caleb Evans who stood out amongst Dissenters as a whole in the explicit nature of his support for the colonies:

The Commons of America have ever been in possession of this their constitutional right, of giving and granting their own money. I do not defend the measures taken with regard to America. If the people of America are taxed and not represented, their rights as subjects under the English constitution are as clearly invaded as they were in the case of ship-money.<sup>69</sup>

The Rational Dissenting contribution to the debate on the struggle in the American colonies suggests that its importance as a whole has been distorted. Joseph Cornish stressed the horrors of war in a message which was intensely theological.<sup>70</sup> Explaining his sense of regret over the war with America, Cappe described the colonies as connected to Britain by 'all the sacred ties of Christian communion.'<sup>71</sup> Although Lofft wrote at length about the practicalities of sixteen possible solutions to the situation in America, his was an examination of the practicalities of these solutions.<sup>72</sup> Lofft described the war as 'imprudent',<sup>73</sup> Jebb as 'impolitic',<sup>74</sup> but neither took the opportunity to advocate directly the republicanism of the American colonists. Jebb and Kippis wrote about the conduct and consequences of the war with America, not about

---

<sup>68</sup> D. Williams, *Lessons to a young prince, on the present disposition in Europe to a general Revolution* (1790), pp. 66, 68.

<sup>69</sup> C. Evans, *A letter to the Reverend Mr. J. Wesley, occasioned by his calm address to the American colonies* (1775), pp. 15, 20.

<sup>70</sup> J. Cornish, *The miseries of war, and the hope of final and universal peace, set forth in a thanksgiving sermon* (1784).

<sup>71</sup> N. Cappe, *A sermon preached on 13 December, the late day of national humiliation* (York, 1776), p.27.

<sup>72</sup> C. Lofft, *A view of the several schemes with respect to America; and their comparative merit in promoting the dignity and interest of Great Britain* (1776)

<sup>73</sup> C. Lofft, *An observation on Mr. Wesley's second calm address, and incidentally on other writings upon the American question* (1777), p. 44.

<sup>74</sup> J. Jebb, *Works theological, medical, political and miscellaneous* (1787), p. 329.

the revolution itself. In 1783 Kippis focussed on peace, not on the rightness or otherwise of the treatment of the colonies by Britain. Kippis wrote of England's need to recover its strength, and the accumulated public debt.<sup>75</sup> George Walker, in similar vein, worried about the possibility of impending national bankruptcy, declining commerce, and increasing weight of taxes.<sup>76</sup> Walker did not address the rightness of the cause of the American colonies. The Unitarian layman Dr. James Currie, writing later at the time of the French Revolution, played down the significance of the American Revolution.<sup>77</sup>

In the context of the French Revolution, Ann Jebb, eighteen years later, pointed to further distorted perceptions of Rational Dissenters:

Because people meet quietly in different parties, rejoice at the French Revolution, wish for a reform of parliament, [this] is frightening people out of their senses, and persuading them to associate against harmless clubs as if they were enemies to all order and good government.<sup>78</sup>

Correspondence between the Revolution Society and the Archbishop of Aix, President of the French National Assembly, with M. L'Abbe Volfius, Chairman of the Patriotic Society of Dijon and with the Patriotic Union of Lisle attracted notice. Allegations that Revolution Societies and Rational Dissenters were 'enemies to all order and good government' were not supported by the Rational Dissenting contribution to the debate on France. Ann Jebb's observations are a recognition of the importance of perception by 'others' in the formation of identity. Awareness of hostile perceptions of their reactions to the French Revolution led Rational Dissenters to explore their ideas

---

<sup>75</sup> A. Kippis, *Considerations of the provisional treaty with America* (1783), pp. 6, 12-17.

<sup>76</sup> G. Walker, *The Doctrine of Providence in a Sermon* (1784), p. 31.

<sup>76</sup> S. Palmer, *The Protestant Dissenter's Catechism* (1777), p. 1; J. Jenkins, *The National Debt considered in a sermon, being the day appointed for a general fast* (Shrewsbury, 1781), p. 1; W. Scott, *O tempora! O mores!* (1775), p. xi.

<sup>77</sup> J. Currie, *A letter, commercial and political, addressed to the Right Honourable William Pitt* (1793), p.51.

<sup>78</sup> A. Jebb, *Two penny-worth of truth for a penny* (1793), p. 1.

further. Samuel Heywood pointed out that critics of Nonconformity had drawn sweeping conclusions based only on the works of Price. He concluded ‘there is no evidence before the public that [the positions imputed to Dr. Price in his ‘Reflections on the late Revolution in France’] make part of the general creed of the Dissenters.’<sup>79</sup> Thomas Percival stressed that ‘Revolutions are usually attended with much suffering and evil,’<sup>80</sup> an opinion he shared with Dr. James Currie.<sup>81</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, while praising the early stages of the Revolution, echoed such views, highlighting a common attitude of caution:

Anarchy is a fearful state, and all men of sense have been anxiously attentive to observe what use Frenchmen would make of their liberty, when the confusion incident to the acquisition should subside.<sup>82</sup>

Placing Burke’s observations about ‘continual talk of resistance and revolution’ firmly in context, William Belsham noted that

It is certain resistance and revolution have been continually talked about in England, for more than a hundred years past, and as yet no harm has resulted from it.<sup>83</sup>

Belsham’s key argument lay in the crucial difference between the Glorious Revolution, ‘not a revolution made, but prevented’ and the French Revolution. Benjamin Flower’s *Preface* to Robert Aspland’s *Divine Judgements on Guilty Nations*, printed by Flower himself in 1804, described revolution as ‘that last awful remedy.’ The ministers, David Jones, Timothy Kenrick, John Kentish and Joseph Cornish, and amongst the laity, Benjamin Flower, Helen Maria Williams and Henry Wansey all drew a distinction between the principles behind the French Revolution, with which they sympathised,

---

<sup>79</sup> Heywood, *High Church Politics*, pp. 170, 188.

<sup>80</sup> T. Percival, *An appendix to the inquiry*, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> J. Currie, *A letter, commercial and political, addressed to the Rt. Hon. William Pitt* (1793), p. 62.

<sup>82</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *An historical and moral view of the French Revolution* (1794), p. 73.

<sup>83</sup> W. Belsham, *A historic memoir of the French Revolution* (1791), p. 71.

and the abuses subsequently characterising it, which they condemned.<sup>84</sup> No other publication by Wansey survives from the 1790s. He clearly saw it as important to stress this distinction. William Frend went further, arguing that ‘The present situation of France forbids us to consider its constitution as worthy of imitation.’<sup>85</sup> Flower presented Rational Dissenters as neither revolutionary nor extreme, firmly refuting the idea that the French would receive any support should they invade.<sup>86</sup> Refusing to observe the general fast on 1 February 1793, the day on which England went to war, Kenrick resisted enlarging in print on the reasons behind his reluctance to endorse war.

The central contention of this dissertation that theology was at the heart of Rational Dissenting identity and provided, in all spheres of thought, its primary motivating force, is further born out by the religious language used by many Rational Dissenters in presenting their reactions to the events unfolding in France. Benjamin Flower wrote of ‘the sacred principles of civil and religious liberty which, during an early period of the French Revolution, shone so splendidly.’<sup>87</sup> Many Rational Dissenting comments on the French Revolution contained references to religious concepts and ideas. For William Belsham obedience to ‘the public power of every society’ was only to be abandoned in the last resort if ‘the law of reason and of God doth enjoin the contrary.’<sup>88</sup> Frend echoed these sentiments, arguing that

---

<sup>84</sup> Flower, *Proceedings*, p 15; D. Jones, *The welsh freeholder’s farewell epistles to the Right Rev Samuel, Lord Bishop of Rochester* (1794); Kentish, *Letter to James White*, p. 43; J. Cornish, *A brief history of nonconformity from the Reformation to the Revolution* (1797); H. M. Williams, *Letters containing a sketch of the politics of France* (1795), p. 174; H. Wansey, *A Letter to the Bishop of Salisbury on his late charge to the clergy of his diocese* (1798), p. 24.

<sup>85</sup> W. Frend, *Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Body of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St Ives, 1792), p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> B. Flower, *National Sins Considered* (1796), p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Flower, *Proceedings*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>88</sup> W. Belsham, *A historic memoir of the French Revolution* (1791), p. 86.

Your religion nowhere teaches you to disobey your civil governors, except when they presume to interfere in matters of conscience.<sup>89</sup>

The stand adopted on the French Revolution amongst Rational Dissenters was, on theological grounds, different from that manifested by Orthodox Dissenters. Flower held that it was not the French Catholic Church itself against which the revolutionaries took a stand, but its corruptions.<sup>90</sup> This stood out in contrast to the view expressed by the Orthodox Dissenter, George Townsend, who noted that ‘the French Revolution is, I think, one of the great events in Providence which tends to the total downfall of Rome.’<sup>91</sup> The Orthodox Dissenting Baptist ministers William Winterbotham of How’s Lane Chapel, Plymouth, James Bicheno of Newbury and Thomas Best, minister of Cradley Chapel, Stourbridge expressed similar sentiments.<sup>92</sup> Their views on the revolution were inextricably tied to the continuing vehemence of Orthodox Dissenters against the power of the Roman Catholic Church and its theological ideas. Rational Dissenters by the time of the French Revolution, as illustrated in Chapter 6, had abandoned or at least mitigated their hostility to Popery, and despite their considerable reservations about Catholic theology, maintained Catholic right to freedom of belief.

The Rational Dissenting concept of patriotism was inextricably tied to Rational Dissenting theological and religious ideas. Arguing their loyalty, they were at pains to stress that they were neither revolutionary nor republican in intention. Alongside assertions of patriotism and in the context of their view of the relationship of King,

---

<sup>89</sup> W. Frend, *Peace and Union recommended to the associated bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St. Ives, 1793), p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> Flower, *Proceedings*, p. 57.

<sup>91</sup> G. Townsend, *The privilege of Christians, thankfully to acknowledge divine deliverances*. (1792), p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> W. Winterbotham, *The Commemoration of national deliverances* (1794), p. 7; J. Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times or the overthrow of the Papal tyranny in France, the Prelude of destruction to Papal tyranny in France* (1795); T. Best, *A true state of the case; or a vindication of the Orthodox Dissenters from the misrepresentations of the Reverend Robert Foley of Oriel College* (1795), p. 44.

Parliament and people, Rational Dissenters turned their thoughts to ways in which the operation of this contract could be improved.

## **ii: Radicalism and the Franchise**

This study contends that involvement amongst Rational Dissenters in the campaign to extend the franchise bore many of the same characteristics as their struggle for the removal of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and their positive endorsement of toleration for Roman Catholics. Once more it was linked strongly with the theological ideas which provided their prime motivation. Entirely in keeping with the Rational Dissenting belief in man's unlimited potential for improvement, a manifestation of positive philanthropy stemming from rejection of original sin and atonement, extension of the suffrage was urged by many amongst the adherents of Rational Dissent.

Their concept of what extension of the franchise might mean and how it could best be achieved, however, varied. Only a few adhered to the notion of immediate universal suffrage. Universal suffrage, with few exceptions, meant universal manhood suffrage. George Dyer noted female suffrage amongst ancient Athenians, without commenting on it. Mary Hays believed that 'Did women receive equal advantages of education, there is every reason to suppose they would equal men in the science of politics.' The implication is that neither saw objection to extension of such rights to females, but in purely theoretical rather than practical terms.<sup>93</sup> Wollstonecraft made no direct reference to female suffrage, although she too emphasized the importance of improvements in the education of women, commenting that 'considering the civil

---

<sup>93</sup> G. Dyer, *The complaints of the poor people of England* (1793), p. 78; Hays, *An Appeal*, p. 38.

interest of mankind, the education of women, at present shuts her out from such investigations.<sup>94</sup>

This study explores the question of whether, in the light of support for extension of the suffrage, the description ‘radical’ may justly be attributed to Rational Dissenters. This term has been applied to them by Gunter Lottes, in a volume edited by Mark Philp, and by H. T. Dickinson, Eugene C. Black, and Richard Davis.<sup>95</sup> Only Lottes and Clark note that the word ‘radical’ had begun to come into more frequent use in the 1820s and was only established more firmly in the English language in the 1830s.<sup>96</sup> Despite its appearance in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* of 1755, the term was not widely used in the latter years of that century. Thus any reference to those who earlier sought parliamentary reform or the extension of the suffrage as ‘radical’ is in a sense anachronistic.

Many previous studies have used the description retrospectively in a manner which is both loose and inadequately defined. Davis contrasts ‘moderate and radical reformers’, implying that the latter were more extreme.<sup>97</sup> This went beyond Johnson’s definition of ‘radical’ in 1755 as reverting to the root or origin of a practice. E. C. Black repeatedly used the description ‘radical’ in his references to the message delivered by and the activities of the Society for Constitutional Information, a number of whose members were Rational Dissenters. Yet by his own admission

---

<sup>94</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of women: with strictures on political and moral subjects* (1792), p. viii.

<sup>95</sup> G. Lottes, ‘Radicalism, Revolution and political culture: an Anglo- French comparison’, in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed Mark Philp (Cambridge, 1991), p. 79; J. C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1986); H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1985); E. C. Black, *The Association: English Extraparliamentary Political Organisation 1769-1793* (Cambridge, Mass. 1963); Davis, *Dissent in Politics*.

<sup>96</sup> G. Lottes, ‘Radicalism, Revolution and political culture’, p. 79; J. C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 100.

<sup>97</sup> Davis, *Dissent in Politics*, pp. 71, 134-135.



All of the members sympathised with an extensive reform of Parliament, but some of them would have balked at the reality of universal manhood suffrage.<sup>98</sup>

Dickinson stresses that Price claimed ‘inalienable rights to life, property and liberty,’ while noting that propagandists such as John Cartwright claimed that these reforms ‘would simply restore the democratic system of representation that had existed in the distant Anglo-Saxon.’<sup>99</sup>

To describe all Rational Dissenters as ‘radical’ is not only anachronistic but also simplistic. Varying shades of opinion existed amongst them. James Burgh’s *Disquisitions*, first published in 1769 and reprinted in 1774, argued the spiritual equality of men, a theological idea applied to a political situation. Parliamentary seats were to be apportioned to each county on the basis of taxes paid by the inhabitants. Burgh maintained that Parliaments were originally annual,<sup>100</sup> believing himself to be referring back to a state of affairs which had existed in an earlier period. The lower classes were only to have votes in nominating certain magistrates. The unemployed were specifically excluded. Burgh urged only partial extension of the right to vote. As C. Hay points out,<sup>101</sup> his concept of reorganisation of Parliamentary representation left the real influence with men of property. It was from this direction that Burgh believed change would come. He still looked to an elite leadership to effect changes. It is possible that, given his experience as a schoolmaster in Newington Green, he felt that the poor were not yet ready for the right to vote for M.P.s, but he made no reference in his *Disquisitions* to the place of education in preparing them for the right to suffrage,

---

<sup>98</sup> E. C. Black, *The Association*, p. 196.

<sup>99</sup> H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>100</sup> J. Burgh, *Political Disquisitions* (3 vols, 1774), III, 359.

<sup>101</sup> C. Hay, ‘The Making of a Radical: The Case of James Burgh’, *Journal of British Studies*, no. 18 (1979)

unlike Priestley.<sup>102</sup> Burgh's views represent a modest advance and were reforming rather than extreme.

The real significance of Burgh's work for Rational Dissenters was the impact it had later and in very different circumstances on the Unitarians John Jebb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, both of whom referred to it several times and both of whom took Burgh's ideas considerably further forward.<sup>103</sup> Jebb's argument too was fundamentally theological, urging that the Scriptures recommend 'the principle of unlimited benevolence.' His *Letter addressed to the voters of Ireland* written in 1774 provides an insight into his early lines of thought on universal suffrage. Jebb's recommendation that a plan devised by a committee should be submitted to the House of Commons was law abiding and orthodox.<sup>104</sup> In the 1780s Jebb was to express similar views about method in relation to extension of the suffrage in England. As early as 1779 he was urging that 'it is the proper end and aim of representation that the interests of all classes of men should be effectively consulted in the public ordinances of the nation,' and 'the proper expedient is an equal and adequate representation.'<sup>105</sup> In referring back to the status quo in earlier times, Jebb saw himself as operating within the rules and assumptions of existing constitutional practice.

Jebb, with other members of the sub-committee of the Westminster Association,<sup>106</sup> amongst them Brand Hollis, was to move further than Burgh in advocating universal manhood suffrage, equal constituencies, the abolition of the property qualification for Parliamentary candidates and the payment of M.P.s 'Memoirs

---

<sup>102</sup> J. Priestley, *An essay on the first principles of government, and on the nature of political, civil and religious liberty* (1771), p. 109.

<sup>103</sup> J. Jebb, *An address to the freeholders of Middlesex* (1779), p. 6; J. Disney, *The Works Theological of John Jebb* (1787), p. 285; S. T. Coleridge, *A moral and political lecture delivered at Bristol* (1795); idem, *The plot discovered; or an address to the people* (1795).

<sup>104</sup> J. Disney, ed., *The Works Theological of John Jebb*, pp. 11, 525-6.

<sup>105</sup> J. Jebb, *An address to the freeholders of Middlesex* (1779), p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> B. L., Add. MSS 38593, f. 2, *Westminster Committee Minutes*.

of Ann Jebb' in *The Monthly Repository* note her support for the extension of the franchise.<sup>107</sup> Dyer, in language which was once more religious in its phraseology, commented 'I consider every man's right to make laws as his most *sacred* property.'<sup>108</sup> Towers observed that 'it is manifest that the possession of great wealth in a representation of the people is no certain security against corruption.'<sup>109</sup> Pointing to the exclusion of the lower classes, he subsequently set out the key aim of the S. C. I., 'the communication of sound political knowledge to the people at large.'<sup>110</sup> Dyer and Towers went beyond the respect for the influential role of the aristocracy mentioned by Orthodox Dissenters.<sup>111</sup>

The S. C. I. attempted to recruit from the members of the London Revolution Society. The Minutes of the L. R. S. for 1 April 1790 noted the receipt of an invitation from the S. C. I. to a meeting for the 'purpose of recommending the measures proper to be taken for restoring to the public their undoubted right of a fair representation in Parliament.' While Lofft, Towers and Disney were members of both the L. R. S. and the S. C. I., the membership of Rational Dissenters in the L. R. S. contained an impressive list of those who did not belong to the S. C. I. – Andrew Kippis, Abraham Rees, Thomas Morgan, Theophilus Lindsey, Michael Dodson, Thomas Jervis and Joseph Fawcett. These were individuals for whom it would have been accessible but who chose not to join.

As Black observes, by mid-May 1780 the London based S. C. I. had thirty members. This fell far short of a universal endorsement of its aims by metropolitan Rational Dissenters. The failure of many London Unitarians to join the S. C. I.

---

<sup>107</sup> G. W. Meadley, 'Memoirs of Ann Jebb', *MR*, 7 (1812), p. 660.

<sup>108</sup> G. Dyer, *The complaints of the poor people of England* (1793), pp 28-30.

<sup>109</sup> J. Towers, *A Vindication of the Political Principles of Mr. Locke* (1782), p. 81.

<sup>110</sup> J. Towers, *Constitutional Tracts*, vol. 2 (1783), p. i.

<sup>111</sup> e.g. C. Evans, *British Constitutional Liberty* (1775), p. 10.

indicates that it cannot be taken as representative of Rational Dissent as a whole. Moreover, membership of the S. C. I., set at one guinea per year, and that of the London Revolution Society, set at half a guinea, precluded the lower classes who could not afford it. If steps had been taken to ensure the admission of the poor to these two organisations, this might have constituted a more extreme approach. No such positive step was taken. Although the S. C. I. was noted for the inclusion of a number of Rational Dissenters, the London Corresponding Society, which included many of the lower classes, was not. Works printed by the S. C. I. were intended in principle to be freely and widely distributed but the system of distribution militated against this. Members were entitled to copies for distribution as they saw fit and in proportion to the scale of their subscriptions. Not until March 1783, according to the Minute Book, were identified members given the task of circulating tracts in provincial districts. Neither the social nor the geographical scale of communication of the message of universal suffrage, or the involvement of Rational Dissenters in this can justly merit a collective description of them as extreme.

Taken collectively, the number of Unitarians who belonged to the C. S. I. or the L. R. S., or both, was twice the number of Arians. Amongst its members the S. C. I. incorporated both Arians and Unitarians, although rather more of the latter than the former. Towers and Walker were Arians, while Jebb, Frennd, Disney, Lofft, Wedgewood and Smith were Unitarians. The surviving evidence points to the tentative conclusion that Unitarians were more ready to express their views in public on the issue of suffrage than were Arians. The particular Unitarian view on the humanity of Christ, exposing them to harsher, wider and more extended criticism than Arians and which put Unitarians more firmly on the defensive, also encouraged them to argue more actively the Rational Dissenting view of the infinite capacity of all humanity to

improve, an argument based on theological grounds. It did not, on the whole, lead them to greater political extremism.

The speech delivered by the Arian George Walker in 1780 at the General Meeting of the County of Nottingham, printed and distributed free by the Society, made no mention of the franchise. Whether the Arian, Joseph Towers continued to support the demand of the S. C. I. for universal suffrage is questionable. By 1796, when the activities of the Society had faded from prominence, Towers was urging his readers to instruct others that ‘the people of this country have a right to expect a *more* just and equal representation.’<sup>112</sup> He did not use the word universal. Whether all Unitarians who belonged to the S.C.I. actively embraced the concept of immediate universal manhood suffrage, or simply went along with the publicly expressed position of the Society is more difficult to establish. Friend, a member of the S. C. I. by 1795, strenuously argued that perfect representation was not to be obtained at present and that further education was necessary before the poor were ready for universal suffrage. He produced an argument for a sequence of elections involving different people at different stages. His plan aimed at restoring ‘the peace which is said to have prevailed in the days of King Arthur.’<sup>113</sup> William Smith did not perceive a need for immediate extension of the vote to all men. Indeed few Unitarians, inside or outside of the Society, did. It remains unlikely, however, that Unitarians would have joined the S. C. I. if universal suffrage was totally unacceptable to them at any point in the future. At least the public position of Unitarians on extension of the franchise suggests that they were more ready to endorse the notion than Arians, or Orthodox Dissenters.

---

<sup>112</sup> J. Towers, *Tracts on political and other subjects* (1796), 3, 29.

<sup>113</sup> W. Friend, *Peace and Union recommended* (1793), pp.15, 21-22.

Outside of the S. C. I., the layman William Belsham took specific care to disassociate himself from the system of representation which was the product of the revolution in France. Belsham sought significant change without advocating an immediate move towards its furthest extremity, that of universal suffrage. On this point Belsham,<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Flower<sup>115</sup> and Losh agreed.<sup>116</sup> Losh joined the Friends of the People for Parliamentary Reform, helping to draw up the petition calling for inquiry into the current state of the franchise in 1792. His commitment to the issue was long term and continued into the second decade of the nineteenth century. Reflecting on his delivery in Newcastle in January 1820 of an hour long speech on the subject to approximately 1000 people, he noted that he had *always* believed the issue to be one in which ‘the safety of the nation was implicated’.<sup>117</sup> His views on religion and civil liberty became entwined with his notion of patriotism. He perceived Parliamentary reform as a means to the end of securing greater religious equality.<sup>118</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge introducing *The Watchman*, a proposed new publication in 1796, stressed that amongst its chief objects would be co-operation ‘with the Patriotic Societies for obtaining a Right of Suffrage, general and frequent.’ The comment ‘general and frequent’ was somewhat unspecific. His reference to ‘the Patriotic Societies’ avoided any use of the title ‘Revolution Society’, a title open to misinterpretation and the target of many contemporary attacks, while at the same time stressing the law-abiding nature of his methods. James Pilkington, Unitarian minister of Friar Gate Chapel, Derby, whose work *The doctrine of equality of rank and condition examined and supported on the authority of the New Testament, and on the principle of reason and benevolence*

---

<sup>114</sup> W. Belsham, *Remarks on the nature and necessity of a parliamentary reform* (1793), p. 34.

<sup>115</sup> B. Flower, *The French Constitution with remarks on some of its principle articles, and the necessity of a reform in Church and State in Great Britain* (1792), pp 111-119.

<sup>116</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, 14 May 1799.

<sup>117</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 18, 26 January 1820.

<sup>118</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 9, 14 May 1799.

was published in 1795, produced an extended argument delivered in no uncertain terms in favour of the abolition of inequality of rank. At no stage, however, did he advocate universal manhood suffrage. His publication caused considerable offence amongst his own congregation, with whose views it did not conform, leading Pilkington to tender his resignation, although it was not accepted.

Rational Dissenters were distinguished by the disproportionate percentage of them, compared with Orthodox Dissenters, arguing for extension of the franchise. Rational Dissenters like Theophilus Lindsey, and Christopher Wyvill, sympathetic to Rational Dissent, believed that extension of the franchise would improve the likelihood of repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.<sup>119</sup> It has been demonstrated in this chapter that Rational Dissenting views on how far this extension should be taken in the immediate future varied. Those who argued that the poor needed to be educated further before being given the right to vote, nevertheless recognised the possibility of universal manhood suffrage at some undefined stage, a concept of rights with the potential to become far more inclusive than that of Orthodox Dissent. It would not be possible to call for extension of the suffrage without questioning the property basis on which it rested, and implying that this was given too much weight in an overwhelmingly landed House of Commons.<sup>120</sup> Rational Dissenters retained a respect for property, although for many of them their own derived from trade or the professions. Percival's comment that 'Property results from the exertion of those powers and facilities which the Deity has bestowed,' reflects this,<sup>121</sup> as does Losh's diary. Pilkington's views on equality were not typical of Rational Dissent. Such considerations reinforce the contention of

---

<sup>119</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 356-357, Lindsey to Christopher Wyvill, 7 December 1795; G. M. Ditchfield, 'The Parliamentary Struggle over the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790', *EHR*, 89 (1974) 558.

<sup>120</sup> E.g. D. Williams, *Letters on political liberty, and the principles of the English and Irish reform* (1789), pp. 57, 61.

<sup>121</sup> T. Percival, *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* (1785), p. 3.

this dissertation that to collectively describe Rational Dissenters on the issue of the franchise as ‘radical’ in the sense of extreme is simplistic. Rather they were united by an optimistic view of mankind, stemming from their theology, which led them to endorse reform and modification of a constitution to which they repeatedly expressed loyalty.

Neither Price nor Priestley advocated immediate universal suffrage. Both referred to the greater ease with which it could be achieved in the smaller political units, for example the Swiss cantons.<sup>122</sup> Price recognised universal suffrage in principle, observing that

I do not think that anything is more our duty as men who love their country, than to unite our zeal in endeavouring to get [the inadequacy of our representation] redressed,<sup>123</sup>

He did not, however, urge its introduction in practice in his own country. Priestley wrote in favour of staggered influence, ‘the lowest classes of people to have votes in the nomination of the lowest offices.’ Frennd’s rather more complicated suggestion was reminiscent of this. Priestley’s recognition that ‘all people live in society for their mutual advantage’, led to the crucial question ‘What is it that the good of the community requires?’<sup>124</sup> Those amongst the hinterland of Rational Dissent who urged some extension of the suffrage, shared Priestley’s belief but the arguments they employed did not mirror Priestley’s and indeed varied amongst themselves. The demand for universal suffrage presented by John Jebb and those belonging to the

---

<sup>122</sup> R. Price, *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* (1776), p. 7; J. Priestley, *An essay on the first principles of government* (1771), p. 15.

<sup>123</sup> R. Price, *Discourse on the Love of our Country* (1789), p. 41.

<sup>124</sup> J. Priestley, *An essay on the first principles of government* (1771), pp. 13-14, 17.



London based S.C.I. and similar local constitutional societies who took the same stand went beyond the concept of either Price or Priestley.

While Chapter 6 established the theological basis of Rational Dissenting arguments against subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the sacramental test, Chapter 7 takes the crucial influence of their theology on their views of liberty even further. The Rational and Orthodox Dissenting definition of patriotism rejected the idea that true patriotism necessarily involved membership of a national state Church. Rational Dissenting perception of patriotism extended beyond national frontiers to an inclusive concept of God-given rights to *all* men. This chapter establishes that for Rational Dissenters extension of the franchise was argued on the basis of belief in the possibility of improvement for all men which in turn stemmed from the rejection of the doctrine of original sin. Extension of the franchise might well improve the likelihood of repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Theology was inseparably interwoven with concepts of liberty. Each of the subsections of this chapter provides a case study of the differences between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters, underpinned by differences in theology. Rational Dissenting arguments on their interpretation of the Rational Dissenting relationship with the Established Church, State and Monarchy were nuanced, as were their theological ideas. Unitarians expressed their views more often than Arians. Rational Dissenting methods, Unitarian as well as Arian, were lawful, constitutional and on the whole conventional. Rather than being more extreme in method, as this chapter also demonstrates, their distinctiveness from Orthodox Dissenters lay in differences in approach and the details of Rational Dissenting theological ideas applied to politics.

## **8: THE EVOLUTION OF RATIONAL DISSENTING IDENTITY**

Chapter 1 established the crucial significance of the last thirty years of the eighteenth century in the evolution of the identity of Rational Dissent. No valid analysis of the evolution of Rational Dissent can precede analysis of the common and diverse strands of theological ideas within it, or of contemporary external perceptions of such ideas. Hence Chapter 8 builds on Chapters 3–7 which analyse the ideas inherent within Rational Dissent, and the ways in which these directed and determined their concepts of liberty and of the nature of life generally. Chapter 8 firstly identifies a number of trends in its evolution and changes in the character of its identity within the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Secondly it examines the significance of tensions which appeared both between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters and within Rational Dissent itself during the 1790s and the impact they had on its nature by 1800.

### **i: Trends in the Evolution of Rational Dissent**

The considerable size of ECCO as a database of printed sermons, discourses and letters, and the ability to conduct searches on documents identifying exploration by their authors of particular theological ideas make it a useful indicator of percentage trends in the developing nature of Rational Dissent. In the analysis which follows works published in multiple volumes are counted as separate works, since this is how they came to the attention of their potential audience. Subsequent editions of works are counted in the same way, since they were often more extended versions, frequently replying to criticism, and provided additional opportunities for access to Rational Dissenting ideas.

Analysis of the number of works published by Rational Dissenters represented in the Biographical Register reveals a rise from 129 during the 1770s, to 175 in the 1780s, and 332 between 1790 and 1800. Table 3 lists works of a number of Rational Dissenters featured in the Biographical Register which ran to more than two editions. In

1792 alone three editions of Barbauld's *Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry* were printed, in response to the second and third editions of Wakefield's own *Enquiry* in the same year, and in 1793 three editions of Ann Jebb's *Two pennyworth more of truth* were printed. Five editions of Helen Maria Williams' *Letters containing a sketch of the politics of France* appeared between 1791 and 1796.<sup>1</sup> All are symptomatic of a particular rise in profile of Rational Dissenting identity during the 1790s.

Table 3: Multiple Editions by Authors in Biographical Register 1770-1800

Author	Title	Editions
Anna Letitia Barbauld	<i>An Address</i>	4
	<i>Hymns in Prose for Children</i>	7
	<i>Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry</i>	3
	<i>Sins of Government</i>	4
William Belsham	<i>Memoirs of the Kings of Great Britain</i>	3
William Enfield	<i>Prayers for the Use of Families</i>	3
	<i>Sermons for the Use of Families</i>	5
Benjamin Flower	<i>Observations on the duty and power of juries</i>	3
William Frend	<i>A Second Address</i>	3
	<i>Thoughts on Subscription to Religious Tests</i>	3
Ann Jebb	<i>Two pennyworth more of truth</i>	3
John Jebb	<i>An Address to the Freeholders of Middlesex.</i>	4
	<i>A short statement of the reasons for a late resignation</i>	3
Theophilus Lindsey	<i>Apology</i>	4
	<i>Sermon preached at the Opening of the Chapel in Essex House</i>	3
Thomas Percival	<i>A Father's Instructions</i>	8
William Roscoe	<i>The Life of Lorenzo de Medici</i>	4
	<i>Thoughts on the causes of the present failure</i>	4
Micaiah Towgood	<i>Baptism of infants a reasonable service</i>	3
	<i>A dissent</i>	8
Gilbert Wakefield	<i>An enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public worship</i>	3
	<i>The spirit of Christianity</i>	3
David Williams	<i>An apology for professing the religion of nature</i>	4
	<i>Lessons to a young prince</i>	7
Helen Maria Williams	<i>Letters containing a sketch of the politics of France</i>	5

<sup>1</sup> Separate editions of works by Belsham, Enfield, Lindsey, Percival and H. M. Williams were published in Ireland.

Works characterised by multiple editions addressed a number of issues. Towgood’s explanation of the reasons for his dissent provided a crucial justification for many Rational Dissenters, as did the explanations of Lindsey and Jebb. Works relating to Church and State, the Test and Corporation Acts and the requirement to subscribe unsurprisingly also assumed paramount importance for Rational Dissenters. Publications about practical piety, amongst them Thomas Percival’s *A father’s instructions; adapted to different periods of life from youth to maturity*, publications about social worship and baptism, hymns, prayers and sermons feature significantly.

Figures in Table 4 demonstrate that the debate over Christ’s pre-existence, a concept on the whole accepted by Arians, but rejected by Socinians, attracted considerably more attention in the 1780s than in the 1770s.

Table 4: Documents featuring ‘Pre-existence’ in ECCO

Religion and Philosophy Fields	1770s	1780s	1790s
Pre-existence - all authors	84	109	168
Pre-existence - Rational Dissenting authors	11	30	48
Rational Dissenting %	13%	27.5%	28.6%

Analysis is based on the number of publications featuring in ECCO in the fields of Religion and Philosophy. New editions have been included in these figures, while multiple copies of the same edition and publications in America have been subtracted from the total. These figures show that in the 1780s there was a very marked rise in the number of comments on Rational Dissenting positions on the issue, both by adherents to and by opponents of Rational Dissent. A legitimate conclusion from these figures would be that this development was becoming an increasingly important dimension of Rational Dissenting identity. A very substantial and even greater rise occurred in the 1790s. These trends are reinforced by increasingly lengthy treatment of the theological concept

of pre-existence, expressed in increasingly hostile language in attacks on Rational Dissent within individual manuscript and printed sources. The particular rise in the number of references in the 1790s is unsurprising when the debate over pre-existence between Arians and Socinians became a very public issue in the controversy over wording of preambles to the London and Western Unitarian Societies in 1791 and 1792 respectively, explored later in this chapter. These debates were the direct outcome of the particular concern with the theological concept of pre-existence in the previous decade. Simultaneously the Priestley Riots shocked Socinians into an ever more public defence of their theological views, rather than intimidating them into silence.

Rational Dissenters were prepared to commit themselves financially to ensuring the publication of their theological views through subscribing to Rational Dissenting works, convincing printers of their potential for sale. Rational Dissenters also had the opportunity to make financial donations to Manchester and Hackney colleges and to the Unitarian organisations. These subscriptions are examined in detail in Chapter 9. While one must be cautious about over-generalising from the ten Orthodox Dissenting subscription lists featuring on ECCO,<sup>2</sup> they provide a rare glimpse of the activities of Orthodox Dissenting women. As for Rational Dissenters, it is important not to overlook unrecorded and unquantifiable access amongst such women to books dealing with complex theological issues ordered by the male head of the household. However the ten Orthodox Dissenting subscription lists indicate the presence of a very small number of women who subscribed on more than one occasion. In contrast to the 14 Rational Dissenting women who subscribed on two or more occasions, amongst them six

---

<sup>2</sup> J. Gill, *A body of practical divinity* (1770); idem, *A collection of sermons and tracts* (1773); J. Reynolds, *A sermon before the Education Society in Bristol* (1782); W. Huntington, *The justification of a sinner* (1787); D. Bogue, *A sermon preached at Salters-Hall* (1793); J. Wilson, *A sermon delivered at Trinity Chapel, Finsbury Square* (1794); W. Huntington, *Light shining in darkness* (1796); J. Fell, *Lectures on the evidences of Christianity* (1798); J. Townsend, *Nine discourses on prayer* (1799); R. Simpson, *Seven practical and experimental discourses* (1800).

subscriptions made by Judith Bull, five by Elizabeth Rayner and five by the Chambers sisters,<sup>3</sup> only three Orthodox Dissenting women subscribed to more than one work. Sarah Dowse, Ann Jackson and Margaret Rutherford ordered one copy each of two works by Huntington, *The justification of a sinner* and *Light shining in darkness*. Rational Dissenting authors such as Anna Letitia Barbauld, Hannah Lightbody, Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams adopted an assertive approach to the dissemination of their theology, demonstrated by their published works. Timothy Whelan's study of Orthodox Dissenting female authors<sup>4</sup> suggests a less assertive approach amongst them in disseminating views which stemmed from their theology than amongst such Rational Dissenting authors. The opportunity to vote in 1798 for the removal of Richard Fry as minister following his expression of Unitarian views allowed 14 women amongst the congregation of Billericay Congregational Chapel an opportunity to proclaim their orthodoxy within a very familiar, less public, setting.<sup>5</sup>

## **ii: Tensions in the 1790s**

Regional Assemblies of Protestant Dissenting Ministers had existed since the late seventeenth century and provided occasions for the delivery of sermons. In the 1770s and 1780s Rational Dissenters occasionally addressed sermons to Protestant Dissenters as a whole when they tended, unsurprisingly, to focus on dissent and issues underpinning Christianity as a whole, such as benevolence and the duty of ministers.<sup>6</sup> However, aware of the increasing numbers of published works setting out

---

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> T. Whelan, *Other British Voices: Women, Poetry and Religion 1766-1840* (2015)

<sup>5</sup> ERO, DNC 25/1: Church Book of Billericay Congregational Meeting.

<sup>6</sup> Amongst them J. Cornish, *A serious and earnest address to Protestant dissenters of all denominations; representing the many and important principles, on which their dissent is grounded* (1772); J. Ward, *The view and conduct of a minister of the Gospel, represented in a sermon preached at Lewin's Mead in an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of different denominations* (Bristol, 1776); J. Walder, *The Perfection of the Christian's character, represented in a sermon preached before the assembly of Protestant dissenters of the General Baptist denomination* (1779); R. Hood, *On the Nature of Christ's kingdom, preached before the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of*

the identity of Rational Dissent and in particular of Unitarianism, Orthodox Dissenters re-iterated their own very different doctrinal identity in denominational publications from the late 1780s.<sup>7</sup> Particular Baptists, among them, for example, those of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, emphasized the difference in the theological basis which underpinned their concept of benevolence from that of Rational Dissenters. Citing Paul's *Epistle to the Corinthians* 1, 11, they defined benevolence as 'charity to all men', 'to be exercised in the circumstances of the situation in which God has placed us.'<sup>8</sup> This was a recognition of status, reinforcing existing hierarchies in society. It differed significantly from the Rational Dissenting concept of the God-given possibility of improvement for all mankind.

Particular Baptist organisations helped to re-assert Calvinism in contrast to General Baptist beliefs. The Particular Baptist Fund in London, was originally established in 1717 by six London churches. By 1784 publication of *The Rules and Orders of the Particular Baptist Fund in London* drew attention to the need for practical support for the propagation of their theological ideas. It specified that this should take the form of financial support for education for the ministry, the relief of Particular Baptist ministers and chapels, donation of books to Particular Baptist ministers and students.<sup>9</sup> By 1790, they had even published for the first time what was intended to be a

---

*Cumberland* (Newcastle, 1781); S. Andrews, *Obedience to divine rule. Delivered at Chelmsford, at a meeting of the Associated Protestant Dissenting Ministers in Essex* (1785); T. Kenrick, *An inquiry into the best method of communicating religious knowledge to young men, A sermon preached at Exeter before the Assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers* (Exeter, 1788); *ibid*, *A numerous and respectable meeting of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, convened for the purpose of expressing our concurrence with our brethren in the country on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1789); J. R. Mead, *Christian liberty, or the right of private judgement asserted in a sermon before the deputies from the several Protestant dissenting congregations in the county of Suffolk* (1789).

<sup>7</sup> Congregational Churches of Warwickshire, *A circular letter from the Independent Ministers assembled at Nuneaton* (Birmingham, 1793); Congregational Churches of Yorkshire, *At the Annual Meeting, A plan for a General Union in Extraordinary Prayer* (Huddersfield, 1795).

<sup>8</sup> Yorkshire and Lancashire Association of Particular Baptists, *Circular Letter* (Leeds, 1791).

<sup>9</sup> Particular Baptists, *The Rules and Orders of the Particular Baptist Fund in London* (1784).

comprehensive *List of Particular Baptist Churches in England*, drawing attention to their own distinctive identity. In 1800 the Particular Baptists of the Western Association, in what bore remarkable resemblance to a Preamble, stressed their belief in

three equal Persons in the Godhead, eternal and personal election, original sin, particular redemption and the everlasting misery of the impenitent.<sup>10</sup>

Denominational organisations such as the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathen and the Baptist Home Mission, established in 1792 and 1797 respectively, recognised and emphasized doctrinal differences from Rational Dissenting identity, so severe as to make regular assemblies amongst Protestant Dissenters as a whole harder to organise and co-operation between Rational and Orthodox Dissenters very difficult. Just as Rational Dissenters were more clearly defining their identity in response to attacks by their opponents, so too Particular Baptists were defining themselves at least in part in response to Rational Dissent.. Independents, on the other hand, militated against central organisation. Not until 1832 did a national Congregational Union emerge.

In the 1780s and 1790s ever more virulent printed attacks impacted on Rational Dissenting re-definition. The destruction of Priestley's Meeting House and property in the Birmingham Riots of 1791 represented a physical attack on Rational Dissenters, which attracted much publicity. In Birmingham the house of William Russell<sup>11</sup> was also attacked, and when Russell took refuge first with a neighbouring tenant and

---

<sup>10</sup> Yorkshire and Lancashire Association of Particular Baptists, *The ministers of the denomination of Particular Baptists met in association at Cloughfold in Lancashire* (Leeds, 1789); 'The Rules and Orders of the Particular Baptist Fund in London' (1784); Baptist Churches, *A Circular Letter to the General Baptist Churches* (1794).

<sup>11</sup> One of the committed core of Rational Dissent identified in Appendix 2.



subsequently at the home of an old servant, both of these dwellings were destroyed by the rioters.<sup>12</sup>

Jonathan Atherton usefully highlights the reduced levels of compensation received by victims of the Priestley Riots, Priestley receiving 50% of his losses, Russell 55%.<sup>13</sup> Newspaper articles demonstrate that already existing hostility towards Dissenters as a whole was inflamed by the events of the Riots. In the London press, John Faulkener, vicar of Deddington in the diocese of Worcester, in a clear reference to Dissenters, asked ‘What but the ambition of discontented sectarists kindled those unhallowed flames?’<sup>14</sup> *The Public Advertiser* on 26 July attacked Dissenters as uniformly republican. Similar views were put forward in a number of other metropolitan and provincial newspapers.<sup>15</sup> A supplement to *The Maidstone Journal* on 19 July 1791 included a number of extracts from the Birmingham press and references in highly emotive language to the ‘seditious and inflammatory views’ of Dissenters. Numerous reports of loyal addresses feature in the newspaper press, marking a reaction amongst members of the Church of England to accusations of republicanism amongst Protestant Dissenters.<sup>16</sup>

This inflammation of hostility towards Protestant Dissent as a whole provoked a response from both Rational and Orthodox Dissenters which indicated an awareness on both sides of the growing divergence between them over theological concepts, and simultaneously in the methods adopted in the struggle to remove the requirement to

---

<sup>12</sup> HO 47/14/32, 5 June 1792, ‘The Conviction of George Payne for offences against the house of William Russell.’

<sup>13</sup> J. Atherton, ‘Obstinate juries, impudent barristers and scandalous verdicts? Compensating the victims of the Gordon Riots in 1780 and the Priestley Riots of 1791,’ *Historical Research*, 88 (2015), 658.

<sup>14</sup> *Evening Mail*, 18 July 1791.

<sup>15</sup> In the London press, *The World*, 19, 21 July 1791; *Evening Mail*, 27 July 1791; *Woodfall’s Register*, 30 July 1791; in the local press, *Maidstone Journal*, 19 July 1791; *Kentish Chronicle and Canterbury Journal*, 22 July 1791; *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 20 February 1792.

<sup>16</sup> In London, *The Oracle*, 22 June 1792; *The Sun*, 10 January 1793; *Woodfall’s Register*, 1 April 1793; *True Briton*, 10 April 1793; and outside London, *Kentish Gazette*, 21, 24 January 1793.

subscribe and for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. *The Whitehall Evening Post* on 17 September 1791 reported the cautious reaction of Orthodox Dissenters amongst the Three Denominations for the West Riding of Yorkshire who condemned ‘the indiscreet expressions of a resolution of a single society,’ a clear reference to the dinner held by the Revolution Society to celebrate the second anniversary of the French Revolution, which they felt had provoked the Riots. The assertion by John Clayton that

We greatly disapprove of the theology and political sentiments of those who style themselves rational Dissenters. The disaffection to Government must not be imputed to the Dissenters as a Body, but to those of them that have been corrupted<sup>17</sup>

was symptomatic of an increasing nervousness amongst Orthodox Dissenters about being associated with Rational Dissenters. Following the Riots the anxiety felt by the former that all Protestant Dissenters would be subject to similar treatment, despite the very different theological views of Rational and Orthodox, intensified. Thus in February 1792 the Deputies of the London Protestant Dissenters wrote to Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham that

Although in this instance the storm has fallen on you, we feel ourselves to have been equally within the aim of the spirit which directed it.<sup>18</sup>

This anxiety can only have been behind repeated declarations of loyalty, made by Orthodox Dissenting opponents of Rational Dissent.<sup>19</sup> *A Loyal Address to the People of England* written by the Particular Baptist minister, John Parker of York clearly demonstrates that he was already sensitive in 1790 to accusations of disloyalty against all Dissenters. His sermon was re-published in three London newspapers in 1793.<sup>20</sup> After the Riots the Particular Baptist minister Daniel Turner of Abingdon specifically

---

<sup>17</sup> J. Clayton, *A Sermon occasioned by the late Riots at Birmingham* (1791), p. vi.

<sup>18</sup> *GM*, 62 (1792), 566.

<sup>19</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 29 August 1791; *GM* 62 (1792), 1070.

<sup>20</sup> *The Star*, 8 January 1793; *The Sun*, 10 January 1793; *St. James Chronicle*, 17 January 1793.

exhorted Protestant Dissenters to loyalty to the government. The Particular Baptist minister John Lidden of Hempstead, Hertfordshire encouraged them to maintain such loyalty.<sup>21</sup>

Amongst Rational Dissenters, a number of members of the congregation of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, led by the ministers Thomas Barnes and Ralph Harrison also issued a declaration of loyalty.<sup>22</sup> Two of the signatories were ministers and seven were trustees of the Chapel.<sup>23</sup> On the whole, however, the Riots strengthened the theologically driven stand amongst Rational Dissenters against the requirement to subscribe and against the Test and Corporation Acts. Priestley, despite nervousness about remaining in Birmingham and attacks on his person when he attended Warwick Assizes, was, at least in public, unintimidated, an attitude expressed in *A letter to the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham* on 19 July.<sup>24</sup> The students of New College, Hackney recorded their support for Priestley.<sup>25</sup> A Unitarian Dissenter of Bristol replied defiantly to John Clayton that Rational Dissenters in Birmingham were law abiding.<sup>26</sup> Lindsey, Samuel Heywood and John Pope all reiterated the point that the Riots had strengthened the theological views of Rational Dissenters.<sup>27</sup> The London Unitarian Society, which counted Price amongst its members before his death in April 1791, was already in existence immediately prior to the Riots. The Society of Unitarian Christians

---

<sup>21</sup> D. Turner, *An exhortation to peace, loyalty, and the support of government. Addressed to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Abingdon* (Henley, 1793); J. Liddon, *The genuine principles of a religious dissent, and especially of the Protestant Dissenters in England* (1793), p. v.

<sup>22</sup> *Manchester Mercury*, 1 January 1793.

<sup>23</sup> T. Baker, *Memorials of a Dissenting Chapel: Cross Street Chapel*, Manchester (1884) lists the trustees. The nine trustees who added their names to the Declaration of Loyalty were Thomas Barnes, Ralph Harrison, James Bailey, Thomas Bayley, Ashworth Clegg, Henry Norris, Thomas Percival, William Rigby and James Touchet.

<sup>24</sup> *Manchester Mercury*, 3 April 1792.

<sup>25</sup> M. O. N., *An address to the students at the New College, Hackney, occasioned by Dr. Priestley's answer to their address* (1791).

<sup>26</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 4 November 1791.

<sup>27</sup> T. Lindsey, *Conversations on Christian idolatry* (1792), p.2; Samuel Heywood, *High Church Politics* (1792), pp. 20-22; J. Pope, *Two Sermons, preached at Blackley* (1792), p. 41.

in the West of England for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue by the Distribution of Books followed in 1792 after the Birmingham Riots.<sup>28</sup> Its formation was a further indication of Unitarian refusal to be deterred by hostility, physical and verbal, towards them. They were far from being intimidated by physical violence in Birmingham and surrounding areas, or threats of it encountered, for example, by Joshua Toulmin in the west-country. The existence of both Societies indicates that Unitarians were prepared to append their names to lists of subscribers to two organisations devoted to spreading their theological ideas.

The foundation of these two Unitarian Societies, however, highlighted tensions within Rational Dissent itself between those who believed that it should stay above organisation and those who did not. It marked the real beginnings of a movement away from a totally non-dogmatic approach within Rational Dissent. The earlier Unitarian Society at Attercliffe, near Sheffield, established by 1784, expressed the same theological concepts and the same divergence from Arian beliefs as the later London and Western Societies. This was a purely local organisation, based on meetings in Attercliffe.<sup>29</sup> The very different London and Western Unitarian Societies of the 1790s were intended to expound specifically Unitarian beliefs in a more public manner and over much larger areas.

The Preamble to the Rules of the London Unitarian Society, adopted verbatim by the Western Society, recorded

The fundamental principles of the Society, in which we all agree, that there is but one God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe, without an equal or a viceregent, the only proper object of religious worship, and that Jesus

---

<sup>28</sup> Subsequently referred to as the Western Unitarian Society.

<sup>29</sup> Society of Unitarian Christians, Attercliffe, *An answer to a brief defence of the first article of the Church of England* (Sheffield, 1784), p. iii.

Christ was the most eminent of those messengers employed to reveal his will to mankind.<sup>30</sup>

This wording, drawn up in London by Belsham and Disney, with Lindsey and Dodson as ‘revisers’,<sup>31</sup> and mirrored by Kenrick in the west-country, effectively excluded Arians from its membership. It clearly caused Lindsey some soul searching since he commented ‘I have considered again and again the language objected to, the creature and messenger of God, and I do not see how we can relinquish it.’<sup>32</sup> Belsham, too, was aware that the allegation of idolatry ‘gave very great offence to many of the friends of the infant institution.’<sup>33</sup> Unitarian ministers Belsham and Lindsey, and the layman William Tayleur of Shrewsbury strongly supported its retention. Lindsey argued that the Unitarian Society was not intended to be comprehensive.<sup>34</sup> The humanity of Christ became an issue on which Disney and Dodson were not prepared to compromise. The wording, however, proved unacceptable to Tyrwhitt and Frend,<sup>35</sup> and clearly caused difficulties for others, since Lindsey referred to ‘some members who also mentioned objections being made.’<sup>36</sup> These were general objections to human formularies as opposed to the individually interpreted word of God as revealed in the Bible. To this general objection, John Prior Estlin added a specific objection. Estlin, noting a difference of theological opinion from Priestley, recalled that

In a conversation I once had with [him], I took the liberty of telling him that his definition of Unitarianism, in excluding those who hold the pre-existence of Christ, appeared to my mind an illogical definition. I thought that justice was not done to those who hold the pre-existence of Christ but

---

<sup>30</sup> ‘The Rules of the London Unitarian Society’ (1791); *The Society of Unitarian Christians, established in the West of England* (Exeter, 1792).

<sup>31</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 83-4, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 24 December 1790.

<sup>32</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 108, Lindsey to Thomas Belsham, 26 March 1791.

<sup>33</sup> T. Belsham, *Memoirs*, p. 299.

<sup>34</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 101-2, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 22 March 1791.

<sup>35</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 101-3, Lindsey to William Frend, Lindsey to William Tayleur, both letters 12 March 1791.

<sup>36</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 102-3, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 12 March 1791.

do not worship him; and that their exclusion was dividing and weakening a party, the union of which could not be too strenuously promoted.<sup>37</sup>

Estlin withdrew from the London Unitarian Society in 1791<sup>38</sup> and did not join the Unitarian Society in the West of England on its inception, although he had become a member by 1797.<sup>39</sup>

The preambles of the two regional Unitarian Societies singled Unitarians out as different from Arians. Price's membership on the foundation of the London Society cannot be taken as significant, since he died five days after joining and before the outbreak of the bitter disputes over the preamble to the society's rules. These preambles simultaneously exposed and widened differences even amongst Unitarians. Little evidence survives of Frennd's Unitarian Society in Cambridge, but given his opposition to the Preamble of the London Unitarian Society it is unlikely that the Cambridge Society expressed the doctrinal position to which Frennd had objected. Kentish, perhaps aware of the difficulties which the wording caused for Arians and some Unitarians, referring to 'our public association as Unitarian Christians', commented that 'Others can use similar means to disseminate their views.'<sup>40</sup>

Further evidence of the heightened visibility of Unitarianism and the formalisation of beliefs in the preambles lies in the reference by a number of members of the Church of England and Orthodox Dissenters to the 'Unitarian creed.'<sup>41</sup> A creed is generally understood to be a statement of beliefs to which others are expected to

---

<sup>37</sup> J. P. Estlin, *A Unitarian Christian's Statement and Defence* (1815), p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> DWL, MS 12.48 (12), Estlin to Belsham, 27 February 1791.

<sup>39</sup> Toulmin, *Injustice. List of members of the Unitarian Society in the West of England*.

<sup>40</sup> J. Kentish, *A vindication of the principles upon which several Unitarian Christians have formed themselves into societies, for the purpose of avowing and recommending their views of religious doctrine* (1799), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> F. Randolph, *Scriptural Revision of Socinian arguments* (Bath, 1792), p. 36; W. Hales, *The Inspector or Select Literary Intelligence for A.D.* (1798), p. 80; R. Hawker, *Sermons on the divinity of Christ* (Bath, 1793), p. 49; T. Dutton, *A vindication of The Age of Reason by Thomas Paine: being an answer to the strictures of Mr. Gilbert Wakefield and Dr. Priestley* (1795), p. 52; W. Cobbett, *Observations on the emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (1798), p. 65.

subscribe, as opposed to doctrine generally held to be more theoretical. Some Unitarians, however, used the term ‘creed’ in a much more general sense. In 1790, just prior to the formulation of the preambles, Joseph Bealey wrote that ‘We have no common creed but the Scriptures.’ Jane Toulmin was similarly unspecific.<sup>42</sup> Such generalised references continued to be made after the formation of the London Unitarian Society. John Kentish, for example, wrote loosely of ‘the creed of the Unitarian [laying] a foundation for love.’<sup>43</sup> Mary Hays personalised the term, using it in the sense of her own set of beliefs in 1793, as did Robert Fry in 1798.<sup>44</sup> This was entirely in keeping with the emphasis on the importance of individual interpretation of the Scriptures.

For other Unitarians the term ‘creed’ did take the form of a specific, detailed statement of beliefs. Joshua Toulmin, endorsing the wording of the preambles, clearly dismissed the Arian belief in pre-existence in 1796, claiming that in the Scriptures ‘a degradation from a glorious pre-existent state is never even hinted at when [Christ’s] death is spoken of.’<sup>45</sup> John Rowe, addressing the Western Unitarian Society, asserted that Unitarians ‘shall at the great day be saved by our creed.’<sup>46</sup> As one would expect, membership numbers for Unitarian Societies were always a small proportion of those who defined themselves as, at the very least, sympathetic to Unitarian beliefs through attendance at services held by Unitarian ministers. What was significant about the precise statement of Unitarian beliefs in the repeatedly re-published preambles of the London and Western Unitarian Societies was their very public nature. On the whole Unitarians agreed with the rejection of the pre-existence of Christ included in the

---

<sup>42</sup> J. Bealey, *Observations on the Reverend Mr. Owen’s Sermon* (Warrington, 1790), p. 2; Jane Toulmin, *A vindication*, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> J. Kentish, *Strictures on the reply of Mr. Fuller to Mr. Kentish’s discourse* (1798), p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> M. Hays, *Letters and essays, moral and miscellaneous* (1793), p. 169; R. Fry, *No shame in suffering for truth* (Sudbury, 1798), p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> J. Toulmin, *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine considered* (1796), pp. 61, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Rowe, *A discourse*, p. 19.

preambles, while Arians did not. Since the Unitarians Frend and Estlin did not accept it themselves, they differed from Lindsey, Belsham and Tayleur in their desire to make the basis of Unitarian Societies as broad as possible. The wording of these preambles overlooked objections amongst Unitarians like Frend and Estlin and increasingly singled Unitarianism out from less extreme Arian beliefs.

Amongst the 13 volumes of *Unitarian Tracts* published between 1791 and 1802, Volumes 1 and 7 included earlier works which were specifically anti-Arian, the latter describing Arianism as ‘not reasonable.’<sup>47</sup> This, as with preambles to the London and Western Unitarian Societies, is suggestive of a move amongst Unitarians to present Unitarianism as more representative of Rational Dissent.

This chapter highlights the importance of the 1780s and in particular the 1790s in the evolution of Rational Dissent, manifested in works which were published in several editions, raising its profile. It traces the paramount importance of Rational Dissenting works relating to Church and State, reasons for dissent, Rational Dissenting views on the Test and Corporation Acts and the requirement to subscribe, and points to the significance of Rational Dissenting publications about practical piety. It further traces the increased attention devoted by Rational Dissenters in these decades to the theological issues of pre-existence of and atonement by Christ. Chapter 3 established that Rational Dissenters were more clearly defining their identity in response to attacks from their opponents. This chapter demonstrates that Particular Baptists were defining themselves at least in part in response to Rational Dissent, a further indication of the perceived importance of Rational Dissent by them. It concludes that the Birmingham Riots strengthened the theologically driven stand amongst Rational Dissenters against

---

<sup>47</sup> The Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, *Tracts*, 1 (1791), 7 (1793), 21-26.



the requirement to subscribe and against the Test and Corporation Acts and a general refusal amongst them to be intimidated by physical or threats. This chapter further demonstrates an increasing level of denominational formalisation amongst Unitarians, which led to tensions within Rational Dissent itself.

## 9: THE IMPACT AND APPEAL OF RATIONAL DISSENT

Following on from Chapter 8, which addresses the evolution of Rational Dissenting identity, this chapter establishes the nature of Rational Dissenting appeal in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Limited surviving evidence precludes establishing with any accuracy the number of people across England who actually read or borrowed books written by Rational Dissenters. However, published lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting works, to the Manchester and Hackney Academies, and to the London and Western Unitarian Societies offer considerable evidence of the impact and nature of the appeal of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century. The contribution of money by these subscribers is a major indication of commitment. While those who made donations towards the support of the suffering exiled French clergy or argued for the abolition of the slave trade may have been encouraged by the thought of favourable publicity, subscribers to Unitarian literature and organisations were more likely to attract hostility. They can only have been motivated, on the whole, by theological interest.

Analysis by R. K. Webb of subscribers to the works of Jebb and Lardner<sup>1</sup> and by David Wykes into benefactors of and subscribers to Manchester Academy<sup>2</sup> provide valuable insights. This dissertation takes their work further in analysing eleven subscription lists to published works, two to Academies and six to regional Unitarian Societies between 1770 and 1800. The total number of subscriptions which appear in these sources amount to 6,047. They ranged from 1,235 subscribers to the posthumously published works of Paul Henry Maty and 511 to those of Nathaniel Lardner. The Unitarians John Jebb and Edmund Butcher attracted 602 and 627 subscriptions

---

<sup>1</sup> R. K. Webb, 'The emergence of Rational Dissent', pp, 38-40, Haakonssen, ed, *Enlightenment and Religion*.

<sup>2</sup> D. L. Wykes, 'Sons and Subscribers: Lay Support and the College' in B. Smith, ed., *Truth, Liberty, Religion: Essays celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986).

respectively, the newly formed Western Unitarian Society in 1792 a considerably smaller 31 subscriptions.

Subscriptions to the works of Robert Robinson are not included. Although Priestley claimed him on his death as a Unitarian, Robinson himself never admitted to this title, despite his apparent non-Trinitarianism in later life. Toulmin's *History of Taunton* is also omitted since this volume was not of a theological nature and it is difficult to distinguish between subscribers giving their support to Toulmin rather than to his theological views.

### **i: Interest amongst the Church of England in Rational Dissent**

Of course, not all the subscribers to the Rational Dissenting works analysed were necessarily adherents of Rational Dissent. Prominent members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church of England featured amongst them. Not all subscribers from outside Rational Dissent were hostile. The Advertisement to the Arian Maty's *Sermons* specifically pointed out that they were inoffensive to members of the Established Church. The list of subscribers to *The Sermons preached in 1774, 1775 and 1776 by Paul Henry Maty* included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, sixteen bishops, three archdeacons, amongst them the high church Andrew Burnaby, and five cathedral deans. *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner* (1788) attracted subscriptions from eight Church of England bishops, the precentor of York Minster, the Dean and Chapters of Windsor and York, and the high church Dean of Rochester cathedral, Thomas Dampier. From an earlier generation, Lardner's posthumous *Works* and theological scholarship attracted Anglican admirers and widespread attention. Maty was an Arian and Church of England seceder, Lardner was an Arian non-subscriber at Salters' Hall in 1719.

Latitudinarians subscribed to several of the eleven works analysed. Amongst these were Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, Peter Peckard, Master of Magdalene

College, Cambridge and from 1792 Dean of Peterborough, Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle, and Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland.<sup>3</sup> Watson, Peckard and Law were all Socinian in sympathy, while Blackburne, although tolerant of heterodoxy, was not.

The parish clergy of the Church of England who subscribed to the eleven works examined and who are not recorded as condemning Rational Dissent in print, did not feel sufficiently strongly motivated against it to do so. They may be perceived as at best sympathetic to and at least curious about Rational Dissenting views, a further indication of the impact of the phenomenon.

It is reasonable to suppose that other Anglican subscribers sought to become familiar with Rational Dissenting and especially Unitarian arguments in order that they could themselves argue more effectively against them. Unsurprisingly they tended to subscribe to works which were more densely theological and more controversial, rather than those which focussed on the practical implications of Rational Dissenting beliefs. That they did so constitutes yet another indication of the perceived significance of Rational Dissenting theology. Nine such individuals subscribed to John Jebb's *Works*, while Gilbert Wakefield's *Translation of the New Testament* even attracted a subscription from Jonathan Boucher, embittered exiled Episcopalian from America who became high church vicar of Epsom.

## **ii: Membership of Unitarian Societies**

A study of membership of Unitarian Societies alone casts some light on the appeal of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century. Lindsey described William Frend's Cambridge Unitarian Society as 'little'.<sup>4</sup> It clearly met regularly once a

---

<sup>3</sup> R. Watson subscribed to the *Works* of Lardner, Jebb, Maty, Wakefield, Towers; P. Peckard to those of Lardner, Jebb, Wakefield; E. Law to those of Maty, Jebb; F. Blackburne to those of Jebb.

<sup>4</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 79-81, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 10 November 1790.

week, presumably for discussion since it was not a worshipping society.<sup>5</sup> Its existence, together with that of the earlier Unitarian Society at Attercliffe, indicates that such organisations were very different in purpose and targeted a different membership from the later regional societies. In the case of one such regional society, the Western Unitarian Society the considerable area from which it drew its membership determined its nature. This was a society established principally for the distribution of books, not for sharing ideas at meetings. Such meetings as did occur were quarterly committee meetings and Annual General Meetings accompanied by a sermon.<sup>6</sup>

Table 5 demonstrates a slight increase in membership of the London Society between 1791 and 1794. Figures for the considerably smaller membership of the Western Unitarian Society showed the same tendency to increase. Initially there was overlapping membership between the London and Western Societies. During the 1790s London membership of the London Society grew significantly, while western membership of the Western Society was high but variable.

Table 5: Subscribers to Late Eighteenth Century Unitarian Societies

Date	Number of Subscribers	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Location
London Unitarian Society					
1791	155	28.4%	71.6%	7.2%	London 13.5% Other Areas 86.5%
1794	170	25%	75%	8.6%	London 36% Other Areas 64%
Western Unitarian Society					
1792	31	38.7%	61.3%	0%	West 87.1% London 12.9%
1797	42	31%	69%	6.9%	West 76.2 % London 9.5% Other Areas 14.3%

<sup>5</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 56-7, Lindsey to William Frend, 31 May 1790.

<sup>6</sup> SHC, D/N/WU/1/1, Minute Book of the Unitarian Society in the West of England (1792-1805).

Date	Number of Subscribers	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Location
1798	45	31%	69%	6.4%	West 75.5 % London 11% Other Areas 13%
1799	67	27%	73%	6%	West 85.2 % London 10.4% Other Areas 4.4%

In the case of both the London and Western Unitarian Societies, while ministers provided the driving force for their foundation, the main body of the membership derived from the laity. Table 5 shows that approximately three quarters of the membership came from the laity. In both of these Societies the percentage of ministers subscribing declined, while that of laymen increased. Numbers of women members at the end of the eighteenth century never reached double figures. Although this may have been due to the public nature of adding one's name to a subscription list, it may also reflect access by women to books ordered by male heads of household. No husbands for any of these women featured amongst subscribers in Table 5, suggesting a degree of independence in their decision to join and their financial circumstances.

### **iii: Trends amongst Ministerial and Lay Subscribers**

Overall analysis of these trends is based on Table 6 focussing on eleven Rational Dissenting works and on Table 7 summarising subscription to Manchester and Hackney Colleges.

Table 6 below demonstrates that the highest percentage of ministerial subscribers to Rational Dissenting publications analysed, appeared in Lardner's collected works, characterised by complex theological debate, where they amounted to over half of the list of subscribers. Ministers also constituted a significant proportion of subscribers to the works of Toulmin, Jebb and Wakefield. A larger percentage of support and interest from the laity was evident in subscription lists to the works of

Robert Hood, Hezekiah Kirkpatrick, Paul Henry Maty, George Walker, William Hazlitt, Joseph Towers and Edmund Butcher. These authors addressed the practical impact of Rational Dissenting theology, including the impact of theology on concepts of liberty. Table 7 demonstrates that the Academies of Hackney and Manchester also received considerable support from the laity, without which they could not have operated.

Table 6: Subscribers to Rational Dissenting Works

\* Indicates place of publication

Author	Title of Work	Date	Number	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Location
Joshua Toulmin	Memoirs of the Life, Character, Sentiments and Writings of Faustus Socinus	1777	342	30.7%	69.3%	6.3%	London * 18.7% South-West 31% South 6.5%
Robert Hood	Fourteen Sermons on Various Subjects	1782	298	8.7%	91.3%	24.6%	Newcastle * 43% Manchester 10.4% London 1.7%
Hezekiah Kirkpatrick	Sermons on Various Subjects	1785	380	17.6%	82.4%	10.5%	Warrington, * Manchester, Liverpool 51% London 0.5%
John Jebb	The Works Theological, Medical, Political	1787	602	30%	70%	7.8%	London * 25% Cambridge 11.6%
Nathaniel Lardner	The Works of	1788	511	52%	48%	4.5%	London * 23% Country Wide 77%
Paul Henry Maty	Sermons preached in 1774 -1776	1788	1235	19.2%	80.8%	28%	London * Country Wide Few geographical locations listed..

Author	Title of Work	Date	Number	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Location
George Walker	Sermons on Various Subjects	1790	473	16.7%	83.3%	15.5%	London * 8.5% Nottingham 11.2% Birmingham 5.9% Liverpool 5.3% Manchester 4.2%
William Hazlitt	Discourse for the Use of Families	1790	160	22.5%	87.5%	29%	London * 7.5% Maidstone 5.6%
Gilbert Wakefield	A Translation of the New Testament	1791	282	26.5%	73.5%	4.8%	London * 19% Cambridge 17.3%
Joseph Towers	Tracts on Political and Other Subjects	1796	210	18.6%	81.4%	11.6%	London * 53% Country Wide 47%
Edmund Butcher	Sermons	1798	627	13.6%	84.6%	24.3%	London * 36% Country Wide 64%

Table 7: Subscribers to Rational Dissenting Colleges

Subscribers to	Date	Total Number	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Geographical Location
Manchester College	1786	99 Subscribers	6%	94%	5.4%	Midlands, North 95%
Hackney College	1788	216 Subscribers	17.6%	82.4%	6%	London 37.5% South-West 7% Other Areas 55.5%

Overall analysis in Tables 6 and 7 shows that the laity outnumbered ministers in subscriptions. The only exception to this was in subscriptions to the theologically complex *Works* of Lardner. The majority of subscriptions to multiple copies of single works also came from the laity, often, although not exclusively, from the geographical



location of the author or place of publication. Thus of the 261 subscriptions to multiple copies of single works, 186 were made by laymen, a further 20 by laywomen, and 55 by ministers. These trends confirm, as one would expect, that while a relatively small number of ministers provided committed support for Rational Dissenting ideas, laymen in larger numbers provided a broader base of support.

Grayson Ditchfield pointed to male dominance in subscription lists to Unitarian publications and Societies.<sup>7</sup> Statistics in Tables 6 and 7 reveal the extent to which this trend was widely evident in the Rational Dissenting published works analysed and in the Dissenting Academies of Manchester and Hackney. Seven women subscribed to Manchester Academy, three to Hackney. None of these women subscribed to both. Amongst the 436 women subscribers who featured in the 19 subscription lists only 20 appeared in the same list as their husbands. This suggests that the overwhelming majority were women of independent minds and means. Most women subscribed to a single work or organisation, the majority ordering single copies. A small number, 20, ordered multiple copies of single works, while 14 subscribed on multiple occasions.

The statistics in Table 6 suggest that women were most likely to subscribe to works focussing on practical Christianity, especially those involving the family. Hood's consideration of good and evil, piety and the duties of parents and children evidently appealed to them, as did Kirkpatrick's focus on morality. Maty's focus on keeping the commandments and good will to all, Walker's on piety and virtue, and Butcher's on the influence of example, moderation, patience and public worship were also appealing to them. In subscribing to such works they were at least outwardly conforming to some of the social expectations of their sex. Women, especially those with children, were more

---

<sup>7</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, 'Hannah Lindsey and Her Circle: The Female Element in Early British Unitarianism', *E & D*, 26 (2010), 58.

likely to have the opportunity for the application of practical piety. Men had far wider opportunities for learning classical and Biblical languages. Anna Letitia Barbauld's home background, access to books and a very great deal of determination allowed her, very unusually, to do so. Fewer women subscribed to Toulmin, Lardner and Wakefield, more densely theological works. One exception was Sarah Shore, who subscribed to Lardner. While this could indicate a greater immediate interest in practical piety amongst Rational Dissenting women, it is important not to overlook the possibility of unrecorded access amongst other Rational Dissenting women to books dealing with complex theological issues ordered by the male head of the household, which would render subscriptions unnecessary.

#### **iv: The Committed Core of Rational Dissent**

Cross checking of individuals listed in the subscription lists analysed revealed 444 who subscribed on multiple occasions, identified in Appendix 2. This figure represents a minimum total, since in a significant number of cases crucial details of Christian name and address were omitted by compilers of the lists. The precise identity of these particular individuals could not be established with any certainty and they could not therefore be reliably included in the count of multiple subscribers. Even subtracting prominent interested Anglicans amongst the multiple subscribers, it is highly probable that the committed core of subscribers reflected in these lists is in consequence in excess of this number. Some multiple subscribers subscribed to the Western Unitarian Society in successive years. These have been counted as separate subscriptions since they could have been cancelled at any time and were symptomatic of continuing support.

The 444 identified between them committed themselves to 1,391 subscriptions out of a total of 6,047. Ministers account for 125 individuals amongst this core, laymen and women for 319. The highest number of multiple subscriptions were made by

Rational Dissenting clergy, as shown in Table 8. Theophilus Lindsey subscribed 14 times, John Prior Estlin and Joshua Toulmin 13, John Disney and John Rowe 10 times. These ministers, three of whom came from the west country, were highly active in this form of support, far more so than Price and Priestley, although this was due in part to their greater longevity.

Table 8: Multiple Subscriptions by Rational Dissenting Ministers and Laity

Subscriptions	Number by Ministers	Number by the Laity
14	1	0
13	2	0
10	2	0
9	4	2
8	2	3
7	4	3
6	5	5
5	11	18
4	9	41
3	27	92
2	56	157

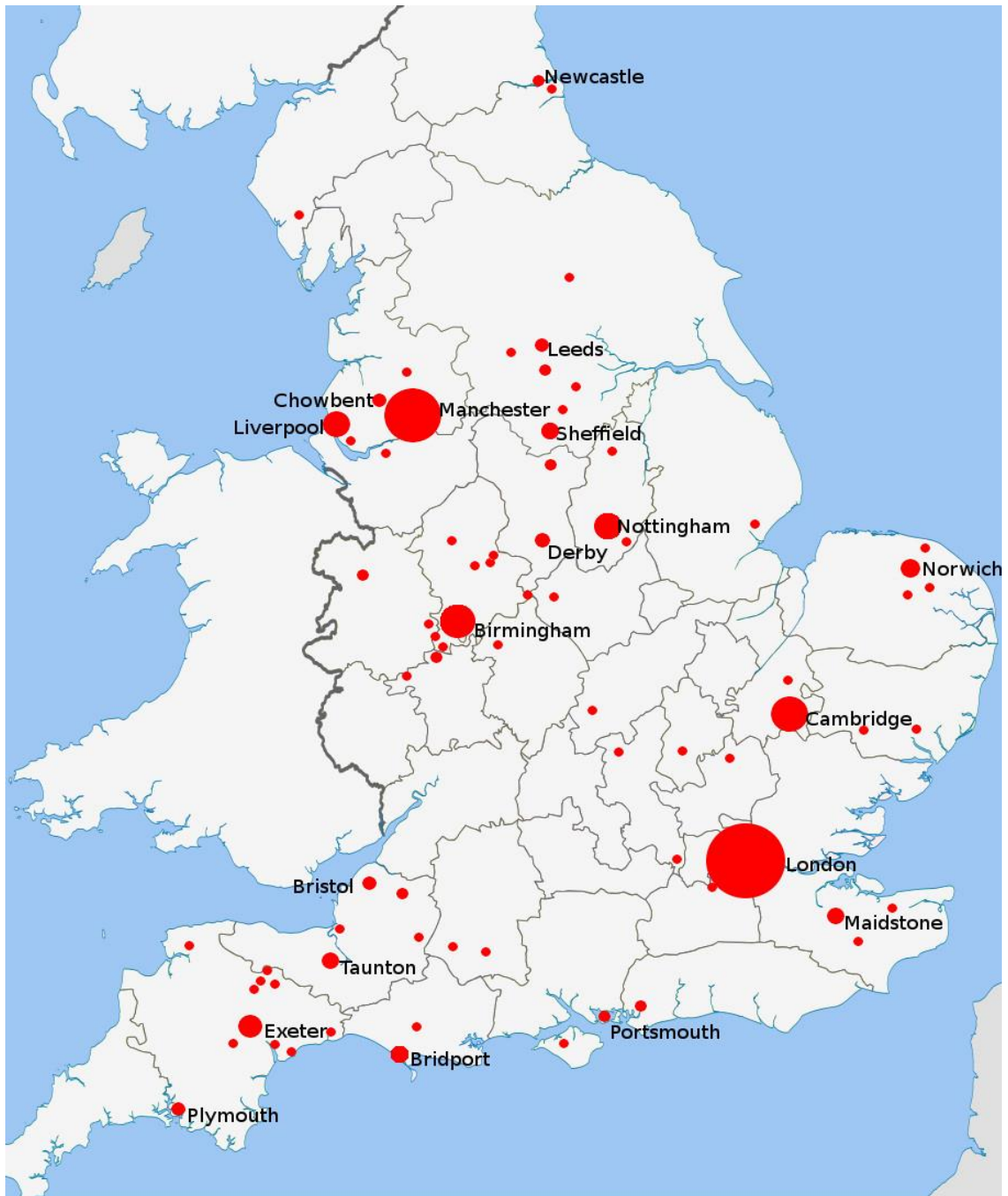
### **v: The Geographical Basis of Support for Rational Dissent**

Figure 2 indicates the location of these multiple subscribers, and in so doing cast further light on the geographical basis of support for Rational Dissent. It demonstrates the areas of greatest concentration of these subscribers, confirming, unsurprisingly, that Rational Dissent was strongest in urban locations. It has been estimated that while 15% of the English population lived in towns in 1751, this had reached 25% by 1800.

The diameter of the dots shown on Figure 2 is related to the number of subscribers in each location. The smallest dots marked had three, two or one multiple subscribers. There is nothing surprising either about the large number of subscribers in the capital, with a population approaching one million in 1800, and in the growing

industrial cities of Manchester and Birmingham. Manchester's population of 24,386 in 1774, increased enormously to 70,000 by 1801.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2: Distribution of Multiple Subscribers



As defined on the map, London includes areas such as Newington Green on the fringes of London but so close that communication and interaction was frequent and the

---

<sup>8</sup> P. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns* (Oxford, 1982), p. 215.

two areas could not be separated. Manchester and Birmingham have been treated in the same way. Subscription figures represented in Figure 2 are summarised in Table 9.

Henry Rack, drawing on Corfield, lists Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds and Sheffield as cities in descending order of size by 1800.<sup>9</sup> Although there was a thriving network of Rational Dissenters in Liverpool, this was a smaller commercial city than Manchester. Many of its leading figures made their fortunes from overseas trade, in particular the slave trade, rather than manufacturing. Here Rational Dissenters, such as William Rathbone, William Roscoe, Hannah Lightbody, Dr. James Currie and the Unitarian Minister, John Yates took a theologically driven stand against slavery.

Table 9: Multiple Subscribers amongst Rational Dissenters by Place

Numbers of Subscribers	Location
125	London
66	Manchester
27	Birmingham
22	Cambridge
17	Nottingham
14	Liverpool
12	Exeter
9	Bridport
8	Norwich
6	Sheffield
6	Maidstone
6	Taunton
5	Derby
4	Chowbent
4	Leeds
4	Plymouth
4	Bristol

---

<sup>9</sup> H. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1992), p. 314.

Figure 2 clearly shows that overall these subscribers were concentrated in particular areas, those of London and the south-east, the south-west, the midlands, and parts of the north. Sixty-one subscribers were located in the counties of Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, with the greatest numbers of 29 in Devon and 18 in Somerset. This was the heartland of the Western Unitarian Society. The absence of subscribers in Cornwall could be attributed to its distance from the rest of the south-west and indeed from all other areas containing Rational Dissenting subscribers, together with the growth of Methodism there aided by the practice of travelling outdoor preachers in areas where parishes were large and settlements scattered.

Table 6 further reveals that none of the eleven works received ministerial or lay support solely from the area in which the author lived nor from the place of publication. Lardner's *Works* attracted country-wide interest, as did Maty's, though for the different reasons indicated above. Toulmin, Hood, Kirkpatrick and Towers attracted significant local interest from subscribers, many of whom probably heard them preach. Subscription lists to Jebb and Wakefield reflect their London and Cambridge connections. The overall percentage figures listed in Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate both local and national support for and interest in published Rational Dissenting theology and for the two academies. While subscribers to Manchester Academy were predominantly but not exclusively local, those to the Academy at Hackney were more widely dispersed. The percentage of women who subscribed to the works of local ministers or which were published locally, high in some cases, was nevertheless very variable. While those who subscribed to Toulmin's work were overwhelmingly from Taunton or the south-west, 42% of those who subscribed to Hezekiah Kirkpatrick, 59% of those to John Jebb, and 75% of those to Joseph Towers were not local. These women

had an awareness which went far beyond publications of purely local interest and were making a commitment to Rational Dissent nationally.

In addition to analysis in this dissertation of subscription lists, details of place of publication of Rational Dissenting works provide a further useful source. The latter illustrate both the national identity of Rational Dissent and its geographically patchy nature, focussed on a number of towns where a significant number of sales could reasonably be expected. As Isobel Rivers and James Raven have demonstrated, publishers could rarely afford to be exclusive in publication of religious beliefs which they shared, and publication by subscription was still the most common form of testing the market.<sup>10</sup> However, catalogues of publications by the Unitarian Joseph Johnson in London reflect his very active support for Unitarian ideas, in particular those of Nathaniel Lardner, Thomas Percival, Joshua Toulmin and Joseph Towers.<sup>11</sup> The same was true outside of London. Just as 38 works by Priestley were published in Birmingham where he ministered between 1780 and 1791, a wide range of Rational Dissenting authors were published in Warrington, site of a Dissenting Academy.<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Flower, editor of *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, published a number of works by Rational Dissenting authors.<sup>13</sup> Printers and booksellers in Taunton provided particular support for the dissemination of Rational Dissenting ideas. Thomas Norris

---

<sup>10</sup> I. Rivers, ed., *Books and their readers in the eighteenth century* (2003); J. Raven, *The publishing business in eighteenth century England* (2014), p. 210.

<sup>11</sup> J. Johnson, *A catalogue of books and pamphlets on religious subjects* (1777); idem, *A catalogue of books generally used in the principal schools and academies in England* (1784, 1790).

<sup>12</sup> W. Enfield, *Hymns for public worship* (1772); idem, *An apology for the clergy and particularly for Protestant Dissenting ministers* (1777); idem, *A funeral discourse at the interment of Mr. John Gallway, a student at the academy of Warrington* (1777); idem, *Three discourses on the progress of religion and Christian knowledge* (1780); G. Wakefield, *A new translation of the first Epistle of St. Paul* (1781), idem, *An essay on inspiration* (1781); idem, *A new translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew* (1782) idem ; *A collection of psalms for public worship* (1789); H. Kirkpatrick, *Sermons* (1785); T. Barnes, *Sermons* (1788); G. Walker, *Sermons* (1788); P. Holland, *Sermons* (1792).

<sup>13</sup> Amongst them J. Jebb, *The excellency of the spirit of benevolence* (1772); idem, *A short account of the theological lectures now reading at Cambridge* (1772); R. Tyrwhitt, *Two discourses on the creation of all things by Jesus Christ, and on the resurrection of the dead through the man Jesus Christ* (1787); S. T. Coleridge, *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794); J. Joyce, *An analysis of Paley's views of the evidences of Christianity* (1797); M. Towgood, *A dissent* (1800).

published Jane Toulmin’s work in 1790, nine works by Joshua Toulmin between 1791 and 1799, and two by Thomas Broadhurst in 1795. Jane Toulmin sold at least three discourses written by the Arian Joseph Cornish.<sup>14</sup> Three discourses by John Prior Estlin were sold in Bristol and Bath.<sup>15</sup> Given the activities of a number of Rational Dissenters from the west listed in the Biographical Register and the establishment of the Western Unitarian Society in 1792, this level of activity is unsurprising. Many of these works did not contain lists of subscribers, an indication of confidence among printers and booksellers that there was a viable market for them.

Table 10 analyses works published by Rational Dissenting authors listed in the Biographical Register.

Table 10: Place of Publication of Works by Authors in Biographical Register

Place	Totals Published	Totals Sold
London	393	313
Cambridge	14	16
Exeter	10	20
Taunton	19	13
Warrington	23	0

Totals include multiple volumes of the same work and multiple editions. Analysis reveals that London was overwhelmingly the place of publication and sale. This is unsurprising, in view of the large numbers of publishers and booksellers based in the capital. Nor is it surprising that Frennd’s works were published by Benjamin Flower, Ashdowne and Frennd’s works by Simmons and Kirkby and by W. Bristow in Canterbury, Bretland and Cornish’s works by R. Trewman, E. Grigg and J. Brice,

---

<sup>14</sup> J. Cornish, *The miseries of war* (1784); idem, *A brief treatise on the divine manifestations* (1787), idem, *Evangelical motives to holiness* (1790).

<sup>15</sup> J. P. Estlin, *The causes of the inefficiency of public instruction considered* (Bath, 1790); idem, *Evidences of Revealed religion stated, with reference to a pamphlet called The Age of Reason* (Bristol, 1796); idem, *The nature and causes of atheism* (Bristol, 1797).



publishers in Exeter, Joseph Fownes works by J. Eddowes in Shrewsbury, since all of these authors were associated with the places mentioned.

Outside London, only Cambridge, Exeter, Taunton and Warrington reached double figures. Totals for publication and sale listed for Bath, Bristol, Cullompton, Exeter, St. Ives and Taunton in the south-west reached 84. However, one must guard against reading too much into the figures available, and in particular to the precise scale of the disparity. Listings of booksellers on front covers of works do not give any indication of how many copies were sold, although it suggests perceived potential for sale. It is equally likely that many booksellers were not listed. Nevertheless it is reasonable to conclude that they endorse the suggestion that London was overwhelmingly the place of publication and sale.

#### **vi: Social Class, Education and Rational Dissent**

It is difficult to determine precisely the balance of social class amongst those prepared to subscribe, since profession was not consistently listed in the subscription lists analysed. However cross-reference with several other contemporary sources casts further light on the social background of the individuals who feature. A number of merchants, traders and shopkeepers featuring in the lists of subscribers and benefactors to Hackney and Manchester Academies appear in London and Manchester trade directories for the relevant years.<sup>16</sup> Merchants, manufacturers and shopkeepers took out insurance for their businesses and premises. Sun Fire Insurance records at London Metropolitan Archives revealed 95 who belonged to this category amongst the committed core of 444 multiple subscribers. This represents 29.6% of the 321 lay multiple subscribers shown in Table 8, a significant proportion. Since 129 could not be

---

<sup>16</sup> R. Wakefield, *Wakefield's merchant and tradesmen's general directory for London, Westminster, the borough of Southwark and 22 miles circular from St Paul's* (1798); E. Holme, *A Directory for the towns of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester, 1788).

identified in terms of professional and social class, this is likely to be an underestimate. The results of this process suggest that subscription lists do not accurately reflect the balance of social classes amongst subscribers, and in particular that a larger number of merchants subscribed than is apparent solely from the details recorded in these lists.

Table 11: Social and Professional Status

Total Lay Subscribers to	Aristocracy	M. P.s	Esquire	Professions	Merchants, Traders, Shopkeepers
Jebb 421	1.6%	2.4%	48.7%	5.5%	3.8%
Maty 997	11.4%	0.6%	38.4%	0.7%	0.7%
Towers 171	1.2%	0%	38.6%	0.7%	7%
Hackney Academy 360	0.3%	0.3%	13.3%	1.1%	5%
Hackney Academy Benefactors 192	0.5%	2.1%	54.7%	1%	16%
Manchester Academy 93	0%	0%	24.3%	7.1%	40.8%
Manchester Academy Benefactors 70	1.4%	0%	12.9%	7.1%	52.8%

Maty's work attracted the largest percentage of aristocratic subscribers. Contemporary dictionaries suggest that the title 'Esquire' although traditionally applied somewhat flexibly, was indicative of gentlemanly status below the rank of knight.<sup>17</sup> Cross-reference with probate records and deeds recording land transactions allowed identification of a number of individuals described as 'gentlemen'. The figures appearing in Table 11 suggest that while the percentage of those listed under this title was variable, it was nevertheless often of significant size. This was particularly so

---

<sup>17</sup> J. Kersey, *A new English dictionary* (1772); J. Giles, *A new law dictionary* (Dublin, 1773); N. Bailey, *The new universal etymological English dictionary* (1775).

amongst Hackney Academy benefactors. By contrast a smaller percentage of Manchester Academy benefactors bore the title ‘Esquire’, but a considerably larger percentage of merchants, traders and shopkeepers featured in the Manchester lists than in those of Hackney. This is unsurprising given the manufacturing nature of Manchester.

John Seed’s valuable work on the social status of Rational Dissenters, based on the north of England, made particular reference to the trustees of Rational Dissenting chapels. Analysis in this chapter is based on a wide range of sources providing a more national perspective within England. In so doing it takes Seed’s work further. The wills of a number of merchants, shopkeepers and manufacturers operating outside the large cities, who feature as Rational Dissenting multiple subscribers in Appendix 2, are suggestive of widely ranging incomes at death. Amongst the more affluent, the clothier George Wansey of Warminster left £4,000 to his sister,<sup>18</sup> while the merchant Joseph Gundry of Bridport bequeathed £13,200 to be divided equally between his four daughters.<sup>19</sup> In marked contrast, the bequests of William Brown, clothier of Cullompton, Devon amounted to just under £2,000,<sup>20</sup> the merchant George Dunsford of Tiverton left his son and daughter £200 each,<sup>21</sup> and the Bridport ironmonger John Hounsell bequeathed an annuity of £25 each to his two daughters.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Rayner’s will specified Lindsey and John Disney as the beneficiaries of £1,000 worth of stock each.<sup>23</sup> The will of Elizabeth Moore, spinster of Taunton, a woman of considerable independent means and mind, included a series of bequests amounting to £5,000,<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1460: Will of George Wansey of Warminster, 4 April 1822.

<sup>19</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1678: Will of Joseph Gundry of Bridport, 31 December 1823.

<sup>20</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1690: Will of William Brown of Cullompton, 10 September 1824.

<sup>21</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1655: Will of George Dunsford of Tiverton, 4 April 1822.

<sup>22</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1214: Will of John Hounsell of Bridport, 29 February 1792.

<sup>23</sup> TNA. PROB 11/1345, Will of Elizabeth Rayner of Tichfield Street, 29 July 1800.

<sup>24</sup> TNA. PROB 11/ 1437: Will of Elizabeth Moore of Taunton, 22 January 1806.

while Judith Bull, widow of Alderman Bull, although well endowed with property, made bequests amounting to the lesser sum of £1,000.<sup>25</sup> The poorer classes are, unsurprisingly, conspicuous by their absence from these lists. The above figures, even though they present an incomplete picture of the appeal of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century, reinforce the idea that its message reached out to the educated classes. This is in part explained by the level of annual subscriptions set by the London and Western Unitarian Societies, and by Manchester and Hackney Academies. A minimum of one guinea was expected. In the case of the two academies the actual sums contributed varied from one to ten guineas.

Adding together the percentage of ministers, university tutors, booksellers, book clubs, libraries, those of noble and gentlemanly status, the medical and legal professions and Members of Parliament amongst subscribers to the eleven works analysed is illuminating. Totals suggest that these publications were of particular appeal to an educated audience, committed enough to make a financial contribution to their success. The presence of publishers, booksellers, book clubs, Cambridge and Oxford University fellows, and tutors at the academies of Manchester and Hackney suggests that the likelihood of dissemination of Rational Dissenting ideas to a more numerous audience was most evident in the case of Lardner,<sup>26</sup> Jebb<sup>27</sup> and Wakefield.<sup>28</sup> These publications, addressing at greater length and complexity the theological issues of Rational Dissent, were either available for reference in libraries<sup>29</sup> or their message potentially discussed in

---

<sup>25</sup> TNA. PROB 11/ 1317: Will of Judith Bull of Westminster, 10 January 1799.

<sup>26</sup> One publisher, 17 booksellers, 22 libraries, 14 Cambridge fellows, tutors of three Dissenting academies.

<sup>27</sup> Two publishers, two booksellers, five book clubs, eight libraries, 35 Cambridge fellows, tutors of two Dissenting academies.

<sup>28</sup> Two booksellers, one book club, one library, 23 Cambridge fellows, tutors of five Dissenting academies.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Subscribers to Jebb's *Works* included Book Societies in Yarmouth, in Bungay, Suffolk, Whitham, Essex, Newark and Nottingham, Booksellers Downes and March, Yarmouth, Faulkner, Manchester, Libraries of St Peter's College, Queens' College, Cambridge, The London Library, Ludgate Hill,

an academic setting. Neither setting was conducive to the spread of the Rational Dissenting message except among the educated. There is, unsurprisingly, evidence of significant interest amongst fellows of Cambridge, in general a more liberal and Latitudinarian environment than Oxford which was more supportive of high church interests.<sup>30</sup>

Turning from subscription lists, analysis of the 13 volumes of *Unitarian Tracts* published between 1791 and 1802, casts light on the intended Unitarian educated readership. Volumes 1 and 7 included earlier works which were specifically anti-Arian, the latter describing Arianism as ‘not reasonable.’<sup>31</sup> This, as with preambles to the London and Western Unitarian Societies, is suggestive of a move amongst Unitarians to present Unitarianism as more representative of Rational Dissent. The majority of the tracts were characterized by complex language and theological concepts. Reference to ‘plain Scripture facts adapted to all capacities’ was, nevertheless, followed by an extended theological debate written by Disney.<sup>32</sup> Volume 5 displayed similar characteristics.<sup>33</sup> The re-published ‘Dr. Lardner’s Letter Concerning the Logos’

---

Lincoln Subscription Library. Subscribers to Lardner’s *Collected Works* included booksellers in London, Bristol, Winchester, Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich, Derby, York and Newark, Libraries of Trinity College, Sidney Sussex College, St John’s College, Cambridge, Library of the chapel in High Street, Shrewsbury, Ludgate Hill and Norwich Public Libraries, Subscription Libraries in Hull and Stamford, Reading Societies at Chowbent, Cottingham, Nottingham and Newark. Subscribers to Walker’s *Sermons* included five Book Societies, one Reading Society, The Circulating Library, Sheffield and The Vestry library, Hanover Square, Newcastle. The latter also subscribed to Wakefield’s *Translation of the New Testament*.

<sup>30</sup> Subscription lists to Orthodox Dissenting works published in Scotland present a different picture. The list of 1168 subscribers to J. Brown, *A mirror or looking glass for saint and sinner* (Glasgow, 1793) included 87 farmers, 83 weavers, 36 shoemakers, 32 spinners, 30 printers, 28 wrights, 16 labourers, 13 servants and six workmen. A list of 55 subscribers to M. Boston, *Discourses on important subjects of the Gospel* (Edinburgh, 1787) included 11 farmers, 14 weavers, three shoe makers, three wheelwrights, three smiths. In many cases occupation was not specified. These works were aimed lower down the social scale.

<sup>31</sup> The Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, *Tracts*, 1 (1791), 7 (1793), 21-26.

<sup>32</sup> J. Disney, ‘A friendly Dialogue between a common Unitarian Christian and an Athanasian,’ *Tracts* 2.

<sup>33</sup> ‘A dialogue between Eusebes and Artemon.’

contained 24 quotations in Greek and 34 in Latin.<sup>34</sup> Volumes 11 and 12 included extensive paragraphs in Latin and numerous lengthy English quotations.<sup>35</sup> These were clearly aimed at the highly educated. ‘Farmer Truman’s Advice to his daughter, Mary, upon her going into service’ by contrast was untypical in its simplicity. Although deemed suitable for inclusion, it was written by Jonas Hanway, who significantly was not himself a Dissenter, Rational or Orthodox.

The majority of Rational Dissenting sermons cited throughout this dissertation were lengthy and complex. Those of Thomas Amory for example, were described by Kippis as ‘too close, and philosophical for the common run of congregations.’<sup>36</sup> Of Lawrence Holden senior, who died in 1778, Robert Burls, commenting on his lack of clarity, wrote ‘He was possessed of learning but his style was remarkably diffuse, not a popular preacher.’<sup>37</sup> Despite some awareness amongst late eighteenth century Rational Dissenters of the need to reach out to the less well educated, they rarely moderated either theological concepts or the language in which they were expressed. This characteristic is also suggested by the response amongst subscribers to Rational Dissenting works, large numbers of whom came from the more educated elements of society.

### **vii: Case Studies: Rational Dissent in the South-West of England**

Little research on the strength and nature of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century, despite the useful work of Gibson on the history of Taunton,<sup>38</sup> has been directed towards the south-west of England. Given the establishment of the second regional Unitarian Society in the West of England in 1792, this is a significant

---

<sup>34</sup> Volume 7.

<sup>35</sup> Volume 12, ‘Mr Belsham’s Review of Mr Wilberforce’s Treatise.’

<sup>36</sup> A. Kippis, *Biographica Britannica*, vol. 1, p. 176.

<sup>37</sup> R. Burls, *A discourse on early nonconformity in Maldon* (1840), p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> W. Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton* (Bern, 2007).

omission. This dissertation addresses this imbalance through examination of records of Unitarianism at Lewin’s Mead Chapel, Bristol and at Bridgwater, Crewkerne and Ilminster Unitarian Chapels in Somerset in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, and, in Chapter 9, during the early nineteenth century. Bristol was a significant port engaged in the transatlantic trade and particularly the slave trade. Bridgwater, 100 miles north of Ilminster, was a port on the tidal River Parrett. The town of Crewkerne, in south Somerset on the road from London to Exeter, was characterised by a textile industry based on locally produced wool and flax, the first factories appearing in the late eighteenth century. Ilminster, 50 miles to the north, was a prosperous market centre, centre of the cloth industry, rope and glove making.

In all four Unitarian Chapels analysed subscriptions varied widely. Subscriptions at Lewin’s Mead ranged from half a guinea to 10 guineas.<sup>39</sup> Over half of annual subscribers contributed between half a guinea and 2 guineas. A small number of donations came from the more prosperous levels of society. As a point of comparison the minimum subscription to Manchester and Hackney Academies was set at a guinea.

Table 12: Subscriptions to Lewin’s Mead Chapel 1781-1792

½ Guinea	18%
1 Guinea	33%
£1 6s - £1 11s 6d	3.7%
2 Guineas	23%
3 Guineas	9.8%
4 Guineas	6.1%
5 Guineas	6.7%
10 Guineas	0.6%

---

<sup>39</sup> BRO, 3961/F/4(a), Register of Lewin’s Mead Subscribers 1781-1792.

At Crewkerne the number of annual subscribers was 19 in 1795.<sup>40</sup> As Table 13 shows between 1780 and 1790 the lower end of subscriptions ranged from 2s 6d to 8s. These variations were often a matter of pence, in 1785 between one subscription of 12s and one of 12s 6d, in 1790 between one subscription of 2s 6d and two of 3s. This suggests the financial significance of pence to such individuals. Subscriptions to Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel reflected the varying financial fortunes of the subscribing congregation. Smaller sums indicate that here the Unitarian message was reaching lower down the social scale, albeit to a relatively small proportion. Even so, given wage levels and rising food prices, these cannot have been not unskilled labourers, but rather skilled tradesmen.<sup>41</sup>

Table 13: Subscriptions to Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel 1780-1790

2s 6d - 8s	16.2%
10s - 15s	17.3%
£1 - £1 5s	13.3%
£2 - £2 12s 6d	34.6%
£3 - 3 guineas	8%
£4 - £4 14s 6d	9.3%
6 guineas	1.3%

The will of Elizabeth Moore of Taunton, included a series of bequests to ‘the poor people belonging to the congregation of the Baptist Meeting in Taunton.’<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth perceived significant differences in the incomes of Rational Dissenters who had attended Joshua Toulmin’s services at Mary Street, although it is hard to be certain of her exact definition of the term ‘poor’.

<sup>40</sup> SHC, D/N/crew/4/3/1, Crewkerne Subscription Lists 1755-1809.

<sup>41</sup> *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1750-1850*, ed. G. E. Mingay (Cambridge, 1989), p. 865 gives the wages of a farm labourer towards the end of the eighteenth century as 1s per day.

<sup>42</sup> TNA.PRO 11/ 1437: Will of Elizabeth Moore of Taunton, 22 January 1806.



Figures available for Ilminster and Bridgwater suggest that the financial stability of Unitarian Chapels was by no means assured. The receipts of Bridgwater Chapel were generally stable, showing signs of increase in the 1780s. Between 1770 and 1776 they amounted to around £60, with minor variations of shillings and pence. They rose steadily to £75 19s 3d in 1779. Between 1779 and 1790 they ranged from £70 to £75.<sup>43</sup> These figures do suggest general financial stability, although those for Ilminster Unitarian Chapel present a somewhat different story. Subscriptions to the Sunday School fell, as demonstrated in Table 14.<sup>44</sup>

Table 14: Subscriptions to Ilminster Unitarian Sunday School

1790	£20 1s 0d
1791	£13 5s 6d
1792	£11 11s 6d
1793	£9 9s 6d
1794	£8 8s 6d
1795	£8 5s 6d
1796	£8 3s 0d
1797	£6 11s 6d
1798	£7 2s 0d
1799	£6 19s 0d

Analysis in this chapter of the impact and appeal of Rational Dissent has focussed on a number of sources. Subscription lists to Rational Dissenting works, to the Manchester and Hackney Academies, and to the London and Western Unitarian Societies indicate that laymen and women increasingly played a significant role in support for Rational Dissent. Their very subscription indicates that Rational Dissenting laymen and women were no less interested in theology than ministers, and were equally ready individually to study the Scriptures. The results of cross referencing subscribers

<sup>43</sup> SHC, D/N/bw.ch ch/4/2/1, Bridgwater Unitarian Chapel Financial Records.

<sup>44</sup> SHC, D/N/ilm/5/2/1, Ilminster Unitarian Sunday School Records.

with contemporary trade directories suggest that subscription lists do not accurately reflect the balance of social classes amongst subscribers, and in particular that a larger number of merchants subscribed than is apparent solely from the details recorded in these lists. Case studies in the south-west reaffirm extension of the Unitarian message lower down the social scale to skilled workers. The fact that the fundamental basis of Rational Dissent lay in individual interpretation of the Scriptures rendered extension of the Rational Dissenting message to the poor a difficult and somewhat incompatible aim, despite the support for it expressed by Lindsey, Worthington and Tayleur. Identification of a committed core of multiple subscribers allows for further insights into the geographical basis of Rational Dissent.

## **10: THE LEGACY OF LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY RATIONAL DISSENT**

While the central focus of this dissertation lies in the identity of Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century, no valid analysis of any historical phenomenon can be isolated from the preceding or subsequent decades. The increasing significance of Rational Dissent, the growth of hostility towards it and its gradual evolution between 1770 and 1800 stand in marked contrast to the previous thirty years. This contrast, examined in Chapter 8, raises further important questions about its legacy. Attacks on Unitarians, legal constraints on the activities of Rational Dissenters, and their attempts to overcome them, did not disappear in 1800. The Trinity Act, which made rejection of the Trinity no longer a legal offence, was not passed until 1813,<sup>1</sup> while the sacramental provisions of the Test and Corporation Acts remained in force until 1828. Not until 1836 was the legal requirement for dissenters' marriages to be celebrated by clergy of the Church of England removed.

This chapter is characterised by an awareness of the dangers posed by Whig historians searching for 'origins'. It explores firstly the extent to which the theological beliefs underpinning Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century survived into the early nineteenth, and how far they mutated. Secondly, following on from the first theme, it analyses the formalisation of Unitarianism, the nature of its appeal and audience in the early nineteenth century, and the extent to which these characteristics were rooted in those of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent. Hence one of the purposes of this research is to explore the ways in which Unitarianism became much more clearly a denomination with a defined and openly declared creed, and how far this separated it from Arianism. In view of the increased activity amongst and publicity

---

<sup>1</sup> The Trinity Act was not extended to Ireland until 1817.

attracted by Unitarians in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, it examines the fate of Arianism as a detectable, distinctive element of Rational Dissent.

### **i: The Legacy of Late Eighteenth Century Rational Dissenting Theology**

Allegations against those described disparagingly as Socinians continued to appear in the metropolitan and provincial press. Amongst 10 newspapers publishing such attacks between 1804 and 1820,<sup>2</sup> the majority featured in *The London Morning Chronicle* and *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*. These attacks did not, however, appear with the same intensity or frequency as in the 1790s. The correspondent writing under the pseudonym of Amicus Patriae who submitted nine articles in *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* in the seven months between 8 November 1814 and 25 May 1815 was an unusual example of virulent aggression. In *The Morning Chronicle* 11 attacks appeared between 1814 and 1820, in *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* 10 between 1804 and 1820. Newspapers did, however, make the same allegations against Socinians as in the late eighteenth century, in particular of being unchristian and unscriptural. Infidelity, heresy, unchristian practice and association with Deism were targeted on 12 occasions, unscriptural beliefs and mistranslation of the Bible on 13 occasions, a lack of reason twice and immorality once within the same period of 1804 to 1820. Unitarians were referred to as 'insidious and restless.'<sup>3</sup> Attacks on Socinianism were also apparent throughout exchanges in published letter-form involving opponents of Rational Dissent amongst ministers in the Church of England<sup>4</sup> and Orthodox Dissenting ministers.

The theological concerns of Rational Dissenters in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century continued to exercise the minds of its adherents in the new century.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Bury and Norfolk Post, Royal Cornwall Gazette, Derby Mercury, Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, Hampshire Telegraph, Hull Packet, Lancashire Gazette, London Gazette, Morning Chronicle, Jackson's Oxford Journal.*

<sup>3</sup> *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 1 July 1821.

<sup>4</sup> ESRO, FRE/689, Letter from Rev John Durham, Beckley to John Plomley 11 June 1810.

Rejection of the Trinity remained a crucial aspect of the legacy of Rational Dissent. Annual sermons preached before the newly-formed regional Unitarian Societies provided a good forum for stressing the rejection of this doctrine.<sup>5</sup> These, together with meetings, were advertised in local newspapers.<sup>6</sup> The same theme was widely explored in other Unitarian sermons.<sup>7</sup> In letters, diaries, newspapers and periodicals arguments against this doctrine were repeated.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Nicholson's comment in a letter to her father Thomas in 1811, for example, in which she referred in derogatory terms to the 'incomprehensible doctrine of the Trinity,'<sup>9</sup> demonstrates that anti-Trinitarianism lay firmly at the heart of her theological beliefs. The same theological basis was argued by James Losh,<sup>10</sup> by Benjamin Flower in his assertion that 'The common popular notion of a Trinity is a relick of the old Popish idolatry,'<sup>11</sup> by John Towill Rutt,<sup>12</sup> and by two anonymous Unitarian laymen.<sup>13</sup> Lindsey sent copies of Frennd's *Animadversions on the Elements of Christian theology* and Eaton's *Scripture the Only Guide* to Robert Millar in Dundee.<sup>14</sup> Rational Dissenters continued to reject the notion of scriptural mysteries

- 
- <sup>5</sup> DRO, 3693D/LMI, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*; CCA, H/O-2-25, J. Marsom, *A Sermon delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1804), p. 13; T. Rees, *A Discourse delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1811); idem, *Objections to the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1821); A. Bennett, *Sermon delivered to the Southern Unitarian Book Society* (1817); W. Turner, *Sermon to the Association of Scottish Unitarian Christians in Glasgow* (1818).
- <sup>6</sup> E. g. *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Society* advertised meetings in *The Monthly Repository*, 7 July 1819; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 1 July 1820 advertised meetings of the Dorset and Somerset Unitarian Association; *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 2 July 1823, advertised sermon before Western Unitarian Society by John Kentish.
- <sup>7</sup> CCA, H/V-2-2 (5), J. Marsom, *The Impersonality of the Holy Ghost* (1812); J. P. Estlin, *A Unitarian Christian's Statement and Defence* (1815)
- <sup>8</sup> KHC, K280, *Letter of L. Holden to J. E. Mace*, 15 November 1815; *Morning Post*, 28 August 1813; *The Times*, Letter to the Editor by 'An Unitarian', 17 January 1815; *Bury and Norfolk Post*, Report of the Sermon delivered to the Eastern Unitarian Society by Robert Aspland, 19 July 1815; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 2, 9 December 1819.
- <sup>9</sup> JRUL, UCC/2/22/4, E. Nicholson to T. Nicholson, 14 October 1811.
- <sup>10</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 29 November 1801.
- <sup>11</sup> B. Flower, 'On Mr. Belsham's Account of Robert Robinson,' *MR.*, 8 (1813), 260.
- <sup>12</sup> J. T. Rutt, 'Milton's Treatise of Christian Doctrine,' *Christian Reformer*, 12 (1826), 74.
- <sup>13</sup> A Lay Seceder, *A Letter to the Bishop of St. David's*, *MR.*, 10 (1815), 80; A London Merchant, *MR.*, 12 (1817), 102.
- <sup>14</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 489-490, Lindsey to Robert Millar, 24 April 1800; idem, 500-501, Lindsey to Robert Millar, 30 July 1800.

which could not be understood. Denial of the divinity of Christ, of the doctrines of original sin, election, reprobation and atonement were likewise still argued at length in Unitarian sermons and letters.<sup>15</sup> Unitarians also continued to condemn the whole concept of prayers to Christ, as had Tayleur and Lindsey in the late eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Paul Cardale's interpretation of the meaning of the phrase 'Son of God' in 1774<sup>17</sup> was reiterated by Benjamin Treleaven, minister of Salem Chapel, King's Lynn, by John Kenrick and Robert Aspland.<sup>18</sup> William Vidler restated the Rational Dissenting perception of the Holy Ghost as 'nothing more than a manifestation of Jehovah's assistance.'<sup>19</sup> The significance of the Lord's Supper continued to be debated.<sup>20</sup>

The Hackney Conferences, established by Robert Aspland in 1807, also focussed on discussion of doctrinal issues which had concerned Rational Dissenters at the end of the eighteenth century. Robert Brook Aspland's list of the subjects debated between 23 December 1812 and 10 February 1813, which included a particular focus on the corruptions of Christianity, election and reprobation, and the Apostles and Athanasian Creeds, is demonstrative of this characteristic.<sup>21</sup> References to the corruptions of Christianity, a theme so dear to late eighteenth century Rational

---

<sup>15</sup> L. Holden, *Sermon delivered at Northiam* (1812); W. Hughes, *The titles and attributes of God* (Newport, 1812); J. Gilchrist, *Jesus of Nazareth: A man approved of God* (1812); B. Treleaven, *The spiritual distinction between God and Jesus Christ* (Salisbury, 1815); A. Bennett, *Sermon delivered to the Southern Unitarian Book Society* (1817); KHC, K280, *Letter of L. Holden to J. E. Mace*, 15 November 1815; idem, *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> L. Holden, *Sermon delivered at Northiam* (1812); *Rules of the Unitarian Tract Society* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1813); J. Fullager, *The worship of Christ unauthorized by Scripture* (1818).

<sup>17</sup> Cardale, *A Treatise*, p.9.

<sup>18</sup> B. Treleaven, *The spiritual distinction*, p. 15; J. Kenrick, *A discourse delivered to the Warwickshire Unitarian Society* (Birmingham, 1818), p. 17; R. Aspland, *An attempt to ascertain the importance of the title 'Son of God'* (1821); DRO, 3639D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, J. Kenrick, *The Scriptural Meaning of the Son of God*, ordered 28 October 1819.

<sup>19</sup> ESRO, NU4/3/1, *Extract from a Memoir of Vidler* (1817).

<sup>20</sup> DRO, 3693D/LM1, List of tracts in *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes* includes the anonymous *Excuses for neglect of the Communion considered*.

<sup>21</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 199.

Dissenters, continued to appear in early nineteenth century sermons.<sup>22</sup> While all Protestants believed that Christianity had been corrupted by the Roman Catholic Church, Rational Dissenters continued to argue that it had been further corrupted by the Established Church. The theological publications of late eighteenth century Rational Dissenters were still an issue for obsessive concern with its adherents in the early nineteenth century. Robert Aspland noted in his diary on 22 January 1807

Messrs Vidler and Marsom stayed to dinner. Talk all the morning of baptism and the first chapter of John. I read to them Cappe's *Dissertation on Baptism*.<sup>23</sup>

According to Cappe, the term baptism could be used in a general sense to refer to instruction even where the rite itself had not taken place.<sup>24</sup> The importance and significance of the rite continued to be debated amongst Rational Dissenters. In 1810 Catharine Cappe ensured that her husband's theological ideas were perpetuated. Preparing a series of notes from the studies of her late husband on the Gospels, she observed

I conceived that their circulation would best be promoted by endeavouring to interweave the narrative of the four Evangelists into one connected history in their own words, placing the Notes at the bottom of the page, adding such reflections as might arise in my own mind.<sup>25</sup>

Diversity in belief and practice, such a strong characteristic of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent, did not, however, disappear in the early nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Views on the value of liturgies which formalised prayer and practice continued to vary. Wellbeloved expressed the opinion that printed forms of prayer 'cannot be expected

---

<sup>22</sup> CCA, H/O-2-25, J. Marsom, *A Sermon delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1804); T. Rees, *A Discourse delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1811); KHC, K289, L. Holden, *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Aspland's *Diary* is quoted in Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 201.

<sup>24</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> Cappe, *Memoirs*, p. 365.

<sup>26</sup> *MR*, 11 (1812), 460-647.

soon or widely to prevail amongst [Rational Dissenters],<sup>27</sup> and Lawrence Holden remained open-minded about their value.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless examples of them may be found, amongst them the liturgy compiled in 1801 from elements of the Church of England service, from the Liverpool and Shrewsbury Dissenting liturgies, and adopted at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds. Commenting on Belsham's 'Unitarian' New Testament,<sup>29</sup> a correspondent to *The Times* on 17 January 1815, described merely as 'An Unitarian' noted that 'To make it a Unitarian version, it must be adopted by the majority of Unitarians; and so far a very small number of congregations only will be found to have adopted it.' With some vigour, the author defended the assertion that not all Unitarians rejected the atonement by pointing out that

It is unfair to impute to a whole body, what belongs to only a part. The essential point of Unitarian opinion is the belief of one God in one Person. As to other opinions, a very great latitude of sentiment takes place.<sup>30</sup>

The sense of optimism, manifested in the Rational Dissenting notion of humanity's capacity for progress, the natural consequence of arguments rejecting the concept of atonement, remained an on-going thread in early nineteenth century Unitarian thought.<sup>31</sup> A commemorative stone in the Old Meeting House at Tenterden refers to the unfailing support for education, liberty and progress of Edward Talbot, co-pastor with Lawrence Holden in his later years. The campaign against slavery transcended denomination yet the difference in emphasis amongst arguments advanced in the campaign remained. James Losh, an opponent of slavery since the 1790s,

---

<sup>27</sup> C. Wellbeloved, *Memoirs of the late William Wood* (1809), p. 89.

<sup>28</sup> KHC, K280, *Letter of L. Holden to J. E. Mace*, June 1816.

<sup>29</sup> Lindsey, *Letters II*, 634-635, Lindsey to Robert Millar, 10 August 1807, notes Robert Millar of Dundee's subscription.

<sup>30</sup> An Unitarian, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 17 January 1815.

<sup>31</sup> HMCO, R. Aspland Sermons, *The Properties of Charity* (1807); idem, *The tendency of the human condition to improvement and its ultimate perfection in Heaven* (1816), p. 10; T. Southwood Smith, *The wisdom and benevolence of the Deity* (1820); DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, Tracts available for loan 1830 included W. J. Fox, *The Connection between Divine and Human Philanthropy*.



maintained his earlier belief that ‘Negroes are reasonable beings’,<sup>32</sup> referring to the ‘nobler faculties they possess in common with their fellow men.’<sup>33</sup> Rational Dissenters continued to lay particular emphasis upon an argument which stemmed directly from their distinctive and crucial theological emphasis on the possibility of improvement for all men and on God-given rights. Losh’s *Diaries* for these years demonstrate his theologically driven and continuing philanthropic involvement, his involvement in setting up an Infirmary and Fever House, the appointment of staff and time devoted to monitoring its success form a continuing theme, as do the published comments of Catharine Cappe.<sup>34</sup>

In the face of attack, the oft-repeated late eighteenth-century defence of Rational Dissent, that it was Christian, scriptural and rational, was reiterated,<sup>35</sup> while its adherents continued to maintain the right and duty of private judgement.<sup>36</sup> The theological issues at the heart of Rational Dissent between 1770 and 1800 remained a key concern in the early nineteenth century. Unitarians continued to argue and defend them, while still demonstrating diversity of opinion in the detail of belief and practice. Both the Southern Unitarian Book Society and the Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association ordered a wide range of works by Unitarians. The former recorded that Priestley’s *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion* were not adopted, since the London Unitarian Society did not intend printing them at that time, while Priestley’s

---

<sup>32</sup> J. Losh, *A meeting for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the improvement and gradual emancipation of the slave population of the British Colonies* (Newcastle, 1824).

<sup>33</sup> J. Losh, *Speech on the immediate abolition of British Colonial Slavery* (Newcastle, 1833).

<sup>34</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 10, 25 June, 2, 10 July 1801, 29 March 1802; vol. 11, 7 April 1803; C. Cappe, *Thoughts on various charitable and other important institutions* (1814), advertised in *MR*, 9 (1814), 424.

<sup>35</sup> B. Treleaven, *The spiritual distinction*, pp. 7-9; J. G. Robberds, *On the prevailing charges against Unitarians, Sermon preached in the Octagon Chapel, Norwich before the Eastern Unitarian Society* (Yarmouth, 1820), pp. 7-13.

<sup>36</sup> W. Blake, *The right and duty of private judgement and free enquiry on religious subjects* (Taunton, 1810), pp. 7-10; KHC, K280, *Letter of L. Holden to J. E. Mace*, 15 November 1815; W. J. Fox, *Letters to the Reverend J. Pye Smith* (1813).

*Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* were out of print.<sup>37</sup> The list of 257 Tracts available for loan from the Devon and Cornwall Association in 1830 included only four by Priestley and one by Price.<sup>38</sup>

## **ii: Continuity and Change in Unitarian Organisation**

Even before the 1813 Trinity Act Unitarian philanthropic activities, however, began to assume a more openly denominational character with its practitioners publicly attaching to them the label Unitarian. Many of these philanthropic endeavours took the form of schools, amongst them the Unitarian Charity School established by Thomas Drummond in Norwich,<sup>39</sup> the Unitarian Sunday Schools set up by Lawrence Holden in Tenterden,<sup>40</sup> and in Gloucester Unitarian Sunday Schools operating under the minister, Theophilus Browne by 1818.<sup>41</sup> By 1825 a Unitarian School was established at Todmorden in West Yorkshire,<sup>42</sup> while by 1826 at Lewin's Mead Chapel, Bristol, a Unitarian infant school and auxiliary fund provided structured support for Unitarianism within a single congregation.<sup>43</sup> Also amongst Unitarian philanthropic endeavours were the Unitarian Benefit Society for the aid of the poor set up in 1809,<sup>44</sup> and the Unitarian Friendly Society established in Norwich in 1824, which in return for a subscription of a penny a week, provided allowances during sickness and in the event of death.<sup>45</sup> The Society for the Relief of Necessitous Widows and Fatherless Children of Protestant Dissenting Ministers was described by Robert Brook Aspland as 'one of the few

---

<sup>37</sup> PHC, CHU97, *Southern Unitarian Association Minutes*, 8 July 1807.

<sup>38</sup> DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*.

<sup>39</sup> *Bury and Norfolk Post*, 18 February 1807.

<sup>40</sup> The Old Unitarian Meeting House, Tenterden, [www.unitarians.org.uk/tenterden/history.html](http://www.unitarians.org.uk/tenterden/history.html).

<sup>41</sup> *Gloucester Herald*, 5 December 1818.

<sup>42</sup> <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com>

<sup>43</sup> J. Murch, *A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England* (1835).

<sup>44</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 230.

<sup>45</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 6 (1839), 244.

remaining institutions among the Protestant Dissenters in which the Three Denominations continued to act in unbroken harmony.’<sup>46</sup>

Brook Aspland, reflecting on Unitarianism during the life of his father, highlighted what he saw as progression from a ‘sect’ by 1808 to a ‘denomination’ by 1818.<sup>47</sup> He illustrates a theme of considerable interest to historians of religious ideas. For him in 1808 a group with few formal structures which was becoming distinctively different in its theology from Orthodox Dissent was becoming more formalised in organisation. Aspland saw this as a gradual process. In his preface to the first edition of *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship* in 1810 he specified that ‘It is not meant that a hymn should be a creed in verse,’ and that ‘happily [Unitarianism] is not yet reduced to a creed or drawn out in a number of articles.’<sup>48</sup> By 1824, however, he was referring to ‘the Unitarian’s Creed’ and ‘Unitarian doctrines.’<sup>49</sup>

By 1817 the Unitarian minister of Loughborough, Thomas Crompton Holland referred specifically to ‘a scriptural creed’ which distinguished Unitarianism.<sup>50</sup> Even so the comments of many Unitarians suggest that not all saw Unitarianism as a distinct dogmatic denomination, despite the growth of denominational philanthropy. Catharine Cappe and Lant Carpenter still viewed Unitarians as essentially non-dogmatic. Catharine observed in a letter to Carpenter in 1809 that

I was much pleased with your paper in *The Repository* which proposes tracts in favour of piety and virtue without any of the dogma of any particular sect.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, pp. 294.

<sup>47</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, pp. 202, 409.

<sup>48</sup> *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship*, ed. R. Aspland (1810), pp. v-vii.

<sup>49</sup> R. Aspland, *A plea for Unitarian Dissenters* (1824).

<sup>50</sup> T. C. Holland, *Unitarianism a Scriptural Creed* (1817).

<sup>51</sup> HMCO, MS Lant Carpenter 1, C. Cappe to L. Carpenter, 14 May 1809.

William Turner wrote of the congregation at Hanover Square, Newcastle that they had ‘no creed of human composition to which they required assent.’<sup>52</sup> John Marsom, General Baptist minister and Unitarian bookseller in High Holborn, adopted a middle position on creeds. While Marsom condemned the ‘creeds’ of other denominations, he specified that ‘We do not mean to condemn all those who do not happen to think with us or subscribe our creed.’<sup>53</sup> Despite his use of the term ‘creed’, his comment suggests that he had the same sense of ease with diversity of belief that characterised Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s.

Arguments over the preamble to the London and to the Western Unitarian Societies in 1791 and 1792 respectively had led to debate among Unitarians over how specific and exclusive the statement of beliefs, with which members were presumed by virtue of their membership to agree, should be. The debate amongst Unitarians themselves about the precise wording of preambles continued. Many Unitarians found it difficult to reconcile rejection of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, or to any human formularies, with the notion that those who sought to join a Unitarian Society were presented in preambles with an explicit statement of Unitarian beliefs. Despite being listed by 1812 as a subscriber to the Unitarian Fund,<sup>54</sup> John Prior Estlin’s simple definition of his own personal beliefs suggest that his earlier doubts about a more extended and specific ‘Unitarian Creed’ were still evident in 1815:

A Unitarian is a person who believes in and worships one God only. A Christian is a person who believes the divine mission of Jesus Christ. In the

---

<sup>52</sup> W. Turner, *A Short Sketch of the Society Assembling in Hanover Square, Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1811), p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> J. Marsom, *A Sermon delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1804).

<sup>54</sup> *MR*, 8 (1813), ‘A List of Subscribers to the Unitarian Fund’. See also Chapter 8, ii.

sense of these definitions I claim for myself the title of Unitarian Christian.<sup>55</sup>

Estlin himself did not accept the pre-existence of Christ, but did not see that acceptance should preclude others, specifically Arians, from joining Unitarian Societies. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Estlin believed his opportunities for influencing the direction of Unitarianism would be greater from within a Unitarian organisation, than without. W. J. Fox expressed a similar view when observing that all Christians were entitled to their own interpretations of the Scriptures but that these must not be ‘vested with any sort of importance or authority,’<sup>56</sup> or imposed on others.

Although the preamble of the London Unitarian Society in 1817 remained uncompromisingly unchanged, there was some movement towards compromise on the part of some regional Unitarian Societies. The Southern Unitarian Book Society preamble stated that ‘By calling ourselves Unitarians we mean only to avow our belief of the simple unity of God.’<sup>57</sup> The Northern Unitarian Society preamble in 1807 urged ‘the unity of God’ but contained no specific allusions to the humanity of Christ or the question of his pre-existence. The Rules of the Unitarian Tract Society of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1813 declared God the Father ‘the only object of worship,’ but asserted that ‘we lay no claim to any exclusive privileges on account of our creed,’ while nevertheless openly recognising that they had ‘a creed.’ The Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association, founded in 1814, and still in existence in 1834,<sup>58</sup> revamped the original preamble of the London and Western Unitarian Societies to be more inclusive, specifying that the basis of the Association was simply that ‘God was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Only True God, and the Only Proper Object of Religious

---

<sup>55</sup> J. P. Estlin, *A Unitarian Christian’s Statement and Defence* (1815).

<sup>56</sup> W. J. Fox, *A course of lectures*, Lecture v, *On Creeds* (1819), p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> PHC, CHU97, *Southern Unitarian Association Minutes*, 13 July 1803.

<sup>58</sup> Referred to in *The Unitarian Magazine and Chronicle* (1834), 1, 285.

Worship.’<sup>59</sup> No specific reference was made to a belief in the total humanity of Christ or to the concept of Christ’s pre-existence. The preamble of the Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Association, established in 1818, and still in existence in 1843,<sup>60</sup> stated simply that it was ‘united on the important principle that God the Father is alone the object of worship.’<sup>61</sup> It likewise avoided referring specifically to the total humanity of Christ or to the issue of his pre-existence.

For the first time in 1810 a book of psalms and hymns was openly declared to be intended for ‘Unitarian Worship.’<sup>62</sup> Aspland clearly saw this publication as significant, noting that ‘The Unitarian doctrine appertains to practice as well as faith’ and observing that he ‘designed the volume as a manual of Unitarianism.’ While the preface to the first edition does not specifically allude to the total humanity of Christ, it defines Unitarianism in very precise terms as ‘the belief and worship of one only God the Father - one only being, person or mind.’ Inherent in this was the concept of the Father’s infinite benevolence and the rejection of the notion of the everlasting misery of the wicked.<sup>63</sup> A second edition followed a year later, confirming Aspland’s belief that the 1810 volume had been favourably received, in areas where it would be expected to be well received. A third edition, published in 1815, reinforced the emphasis on its Unitarian character in the reference on the front cover to its editor as ‘Pastor of the Unitarian Church, Hackney,’ a building previously referred to simply as the Gravel Pit Chapel.

Alongside *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship*, Rational Dissenting denominational magazines appeared. *The Protestant Dissenter’s Magazine*

---

<sup>59</sup> DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, 26 June 1816.

<sup>60</sup> Referred to in *Christian Pioneer*, 17, 402.

<sup>61</sup> SHC, PAM 30383, *Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Association* (1818).

<sup>62</sup> A. Ruston, ‘Unitarian Hymnbooks 1794-1914, *TUHS*, vol. XV (2011), cf. idem, ‘James Martineau and the Evolution of Unitarian Hymnody’, in I. Rivers and D. L. Wykes, *Dissenting Praise*.

<sup>63</sup> *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship*, front cover, pp. v-vii.

published between 1794 and 1799 had been aimed at Protestant nonconformists generally, and included the Orthodox Dissenters, Samuel Palmer and the Particular Baptist Andrew Fuller amongst its key contributors. *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, founded by Ralph Griffiths and published between 1749 and 1845, attracted a similar wide range of Protestant nonconformist contributors. However, *The Monthly Repository*, which ran between 1806 and 1832, and its section on Unitarian Intelligence, issued for six months in 1832 as a separate supplement named *The Unitarian Chronicle*, together with *The Christian Reformer* established in 1815, were aimed primarily at Rational Dissenters. In particular, as demonstrated in the final section of this chapter, they were aimed at Unitarians. So too was *The Christian Reflector and Theological Inquirer* established in Liverpool and printed by Francis Browne Wright, brother of Richard Wright. These publications clarified thought, provided details of local activities amongst Unitarians, provided information about Unitarians throughout the country and encouraged financial contributions towards Unitarian funds. Donations towards the building of New Road Unitarian Church in Brighton, for example, were made by Fellowship Funds in Exeter, Bristol, Brighton, Portsmouth, Tenterden, Leicester, Birmingham and Sheffield.<sup>64</sup> Raising the profile of Unitarianism, they made possible the publication of *Unitariorum in Anglia* in 1821 and its inclusion, translated from Latin into English, in *The Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor* in 1822.

*Unitariorum in Anglia* was the result of contact between Unitarians in England and in Transylvania. It attributed international importance to Unitarianism in England. It presented Unitarianism as a distinct entity, separate from the Church of England, Orthodox and Evangelical Dissent, implying a move towards denominationalism. It

---

<sup>64</sup> ESRO, NU6/5/2 (September 1820).

validated Unitarianism by rooting its origins in history. It traced these back to Reginald Peacock, Bishop of St Asaph in the fifteenth century, and in the seventeenth century to John Biddle, imprisoned for his beliefs under Cromwell and Charles II, to John Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* and to the works of Thomas Firmin, subsequently included in Unitarian tracts. It established a link with William Whiston, deprived of his mathematical professorship in the University of Cambridge for advancing the doctrine of divine unity, and with Samuel Clarke, who removed from the liturgy all expressions of religious worship not attached to God the Father. It emphasized the extent of commitment to the Unitarian faith amongst 'almost all the Presbyterian Dissenters from the Church of England' and the 'larger part of General Baptists.'<sup>65</sup> It recognised the role played by the London Unitarian Society and, in particular, by establishment of the Unitarian Fund in 'tending to combine and animate the efforts of English Unitarians.'<sup>66</sup>

Rational Dissenting networks in the 1770s and 1780s had been informal in nature. In the 1790s the London and Western Unitarian Societies were part of an attempt to strengthen such networks through committee meetings and annual general meetings, and to spread their ideas through the publication of preambles and the distribution of books. These were followed by the establishment of the Southern Unitarian Society in 1801, the Midland and Northern Unitarian Society in 1807, and the Eastern Unitarian Society in 1813. In the early nineteenth century Unitarian organisations proliferated, as shown in Table 15 below.

In addition to the regional societies covering large areas, smaller Unitarian Societies based on counties or towns were founded. These smaller societies were reminiscent of the Attercliffe and Cambridge and York Unitarian Societies in the late

---

<sup>65</sup> *Unitariorum in Anglia*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>66</sup> *Unitariorum in Anglia*, pp. 116.



eighteenth century. However an increasing number of these appeared in the early nineteenth century. Unitarians in Newcastle took advantage of the Trinity Act in 1813 to establish a local Tract Society, motivated by the fact that ‘we can now claim, with the rest of our Dissenting brethren, a legal existence.’<sup>67</sup>

Table 15: Unitarian Organisations in the Early Nineteenth Century

Date	Foundation of Societies
1801	Southern Unitarian Book Society
1804	Unitarian Evangelical Society
1806	Unitarian Fund Society
	Birmingham Unitarian Tract Society
1807	Midland and Northern Unitarian Society
	Unitarian Book Society in Newport, I.O.W.
	Hackney Conferences
1812	Cheshire and Lancashire Unitarian Book Society
	Kent and Sussex Unitarian Association
1813	Eastern Unitarian Society
	Lincolnshire and Cambridge Unitarian Society
	North East Unitarian Book Society
	Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society
1814	Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Society
1815	Southern Unitarian Fund Society
1816	Unitarian Tract Society of the West Riding
1817	Devonshire Unitarian Fellowship Fund
	Liverpool Unitarian Tract Society
1818	Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Society
	Warwickshire Unitarian Tract Society
1819	The London Association for the Protection of the Civil Rights of Unitarians
1820	North East Unitarian Association, Wisbeach
1824	Society of Unitarian Christians, Sunderland

---

<sup>67</sup> *Rules of the Unitarian Tract Society of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1813).

It is clear that a change in approach to the dissemination of Unitarian ideas and consequently to its organisation was taking place. Meetings of such local societies were more geographically accessible to subscribers, and thus the potential existed for more regular meetings. In such settings Book and Tract Societies need not rely purely on distributing publications but could meet and discuss them. The Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association proposed Lecture Sundays, urging that the ‘leading object of the meeting is to increase our acquaintance with the Scriptures and to consider any difficulties which may have arisen in the minds of any.’<sup>68</sup> Discussion was clearly their intention. Such organisations were intended to consolidate Unitarianism in a way that the London and Western Unitarian Societies at the end of the eighteenth century had not done, by providing far more structured methods of spreading the Unitarian message and more realistically aiming these at smaller areas. These were more indicative of denomination than a diffuse way of thought.

Amassing funds for particular purposes also became increasingly important. The Unitarian Fund Society established in 1806 and the Benefit Society established in 1809 by Robert Aspland were based on an awareness that the poor were not being reached by Unitarianism. The Fund Society aimed at sending missionaries to different parts of the country and encouraging popular preaching. Much of the impetus for this came from Aspland who conducted a tour of Kent in 1808, accompanied by the Unitarian missionary Richard Wright.<sup>69</sup> This clearly encouraged people to demonstrate their support through financial contributions since Robert Brook Aspland noted that ‘the consequences of this tour were very beneficial to the Unitarian Fund.’<sup>70</sup> Five years

---

<sup>68</sup> DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, 19 December 1814.

<sup>69</sup> F. B. Wright, ‘Memoir of the late Rev Richard Wright’, *Christian Reformer, or Unitarian Magazine and Review*, 3 (1836), 750-753 indicates that Wright made contact with theological sympathisers in Scotland, visiting Aberdeen.

<sup>70</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 206.

later Aspland conducted a series of visits to Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Worcestershire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Shropshire, preaching in each of these counties.<sup>71</sup> The Eastern Unitarian Society also engaged a missionary preacher, Henry Winder of Norwich.<sup>72</sup> Such tours consolidated connections between different geographical areas of Unitarianism and reinforced networks. The Southern Unitarian Fund Society was founded in 1815.<sup>73</sup> The Devonshire Unitarian Fellowship Fund was started in 1817 with the specific aim of promoting plans for the education of ministers and defraying the expenses of travelling ministers.<sup>74</sup> In 1819 the Unitarian Fund brought Wright to London with the specific purpose of organising local preachers.<sup>75</sup> Unitarian Book and Tract Societies sprang up in a number of locations.

Analysis of whether Unitarianism had become a ‘denomination’ by the early nineteenth century rests on the definition of the term. While the term ‘sect’ suggests an offshoot of a religious belief system, ‘denomination’ implies a level of recognised autonomy, of organisation, of visible networks supported by funds and structures for the training of ministers and the dissemination of theological ideas. The continuing debate over preambles to Unitarian societies is suggestive of an attempt at autonomy on the part of a number of Unitarians. The prevalence of Unitarian organisations, to which the label Unitarian was openly appended, supported by funds and by missionary activity, gave Unitarianism the public appearance of a denomination. The culmination of this was the foundation in 1825 of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. The far greater level of publication by Unitarians than by Arians remained conspicuous

---

<sup>71</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 335.

<sup>72</sup> *MR*, 9 (1814), 437. The Welsh Unitarian minister, David Davis sent details of the missionary journeys of Benjamin Philips, the first itinerant Unitarian minister in Wales to *The Monthly Repository*; G. H. Evans, F. M. Jones, D. C. Jones, eds, *The Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg II*, David Davis to Iolo Morganwg, 3 April 1807.

<sup>73</sup> PHC, CHU97, *Southern Unitarian Association Minutes*.

<sup>74</sup> J. Murch, *A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England* (1835), p. 100.

<sup>75</sup> F. B. Wright, ‘Memoir of the late Rev Richard Wright’, 3 (1836), 750-753.

in the early nineteenth century. Attacks on Socinians by Orthodox Dissenters led to what had become an increasingly organised Unitarian response,<sup>76</sup> many such sermons being published under the umbrella of Unitarian Societies. However, not all Unitarians agreed with preambles which could cause problems for Arians, and a number of regional organisations adjusted these preambles. A number of Rational Dissenters surviving into the nineteenth century, as indicated above, continued to resist the idea of creeds. For others too of a younger generation, amongst them W. J. Fox, the essential Rational Dissenting characteristic of individual interpretation of the Scriptures, still inevitably meant diversity of doctrinal opinion. While the organisational structure of Unitarianism had grown, this fundamental element remained unchanged. In organisational terms Unitarianism had assumed the characteristics of a denomination, but modified preambles indicated that this was a denomination which allowed for freedom of theological thought alongside agreed doctrinal concepts.

### **iii: Continuity and Change in Unitarian Appeal**

In the late eighteenth century the complex language and theological concepts of Rational Dissenting sermons often based on individual interpretation of Scriptures in Latin, Greek and Hebrew had largely confined their appeal to the educated classes, although Hugh Worthington, William Tayleur and Theophilus Lindsey, for example, had been keenly aware of a need for dissemination of theological ideas to the lower classes. In the early nineteenth century this awareness persisted. The London Unitarian Tract Society aimed to reach out to the poor, disseminating three tracts amongst them, namely *William's Return or Good News for Cottagers*, a second tract by Richard Wright and a third by Catharine Cappe, who was still actively involved in propagating

---

<sup>76</sup> Amongst them W. J. Fox, *The comparative tendency of Unitarianism and Calvinism to promote love to God and love to man* (1813); idem, *The spread of Unitarianism a blessing to Society* (1817); W. Broadbent, *An open and fearless avowal of the Unitarian Doctrine recommended and enforced* (1816).

Unitarian ideas. By 1820 the Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society was sending copies of its tracts to Sunderland, Liverpool, Leeds and London.<sup>77</sup> An article in *The Monthly Repository* recorded that *The Christian Reflector and Theological Inquirer*

was published in cheap numbers to furnish those who have not access to a variety of books with short expositions of Scripture.<sup>78</sup>

The fact that it was still being published in 1821 clearly suggests that this need had not yet been met.

One of many of his published pamphlets stated the object of Richard Wright, son of a Norfolk labourer, as being

To present the unlearned, and those who cannot afford to purchase large publications with such hints as may lead them to a careful examination of the Scriptures. The reader is requested to examine with care the passages of Scripture referred to and to judge for himself.<sup>79</sup>

Sold at two pence, its price placed it within the reach of the literate amongst the less skilled. Its length of fourteen pages suggests a serious attempt at simplifying a complex theological message, although it still required the reader to cross reference the Scriptures. Wright's own preaching style was recorded by Robert Brook Aspland as 'simple', but, although he travelled extensively, 'his great obstacle was the ignorance of the masses of the people.'<sup>80</sup>

As with many Unitarian arguments for the extension of the franchise,<sup>81</sup> there was an awareness that the poor needed education in order to understand the Unitarian message. In this spirit, James Losh, for example, drew up a plan in 1806 for the education of colliers' children and attended a public meeting in 1810 for the

---

<sup>77</sup> TWA, C.NC66/159/14.

<sup>78</sup> *MR*, 16 (1821), 173.

<sup>79</sup> R. Wright, *Hints on the universal restoration. Submitted to the consideration of all serious professors of the gospel* (Wisbech, 1799), p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 286.

<sup>81</sup> J. Losh, Chairman of Meeting to request *A Reform of Representation in the Commons House of Parliament* (Newcastle, 1820).

establishment of schools for the poor.<sup>82</sup> The success of attempts to extend Unitarian theological ideas to a more socially varied audience than late eighteenth century Rational Dissenters had done appears to have been patchy and variable. However, attempts amongst Unitarians in the early nineteenth century to extend their message to the poor should not be dismissed as completely ineffective. An article in *The Monthly Repository* in 1816, commenting on the opening of the new Unitarian chapel in Oldham, recorded ‘the liberality which has been shown in enabling them to build their chapel, as affording a demonstration of the fitness of Unitarianism for the poor.’ This article does not comment on how the poor responded. Richard Wright observed of the congregation, ‘They were poor, unlearned people.’<sup>83</sup> The Society of Unitarian Christians of New Church, Rossendale in Lancashire in 1816 provides an example of active acceptance of Unitarian beliefs by a congregation ‘all of whom were poor labouring men and women.’<sup>84</sup> How poor they actually were is more difficult to establish. In their appeal for financial assistance to the trustees of Lady Hewley’s Fund they described themselves as ‘uneducated persons’ who had arrived at Unitarian beliefs ‘without the aid either of books or missionaries.’<sup>85</sup> John Lord, glazier, a trustee, had been served with debtor’s insolvency papers ten years before.<sup>86</sup> Yet trustees and lay preachers were unsurprisingly drawn from skilled tradesmen. Amongst lay preachers, John Ashworth was a woollen manufacturer, James Taylor a fuller and cloth dresser, James Wilkinson, a shoe maker.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> J. Losh, *Diaries*, vol. 12, 28 October 1806; vol. 13, 26 February 1810.

<sup>83</sup> *MR*, 11 (1816), 122.

<sup>84</sup> *MR*, 11 (1816), 156.

<sup>85</sup> *An account of a Bible-formed Society of Unitarian Christians at Rossendale* (Bristol, 1816), p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> LRO, QJB/51/100, Lancashire County Sessions (1801).

<sup>87</sup> LRO, DDX 118/43 (1805).

The report of the meeting in 1818 of the Rossendale and Rochdale Association of Unitarian Brethren<sup>88</sup> indicated the extent of their organisational powers in the drawing up of a plan of preaching for the next nine months. This was no insignificant meeting. Fifty-five persons were recorded as sitting down to ‘a plain and economical dinner’ immediately afterwards. Their reputation spread amongst other Unitarian Societies, a further indication of the perceived importance of networks. The Southern Unitarian Book Society ordered 100 copies of *The Account of the rise and progress and present state of the Society of Unitarian Christians at New Church, Rossendale*, while the Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association ordered copies of Ashworth *On the Rise of Unitarianism in Rossendale*.<sup>89</sup>

Some Unitarians were unhappy with the new idea of Unitarian missionary teaching.<sup>90</sup> Thomas Belsham, despite his membership of the Unitarian Fund Society, wrote to Lant Carpenter that he had no high expectations from missionary preaching,<sup>91</sup> and displayed cautious sympathy for Sidmouth’s Bill against it.<sup>92</sup> Apart from the example of Rossendale, no reference to any influx at all by the poor into Unitarian congregations appears in *The Monthly Repository* between 1812 and 1828. There is no consistent evidence to suggest an influx of the lower classes into Unitarian congregations as a result of the missionary tours or as a result of sermons delivered to Unitarian congregations<sup>93</sup> and societies. At Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel in Somerset annual subscribers between 1805 and 1815 contributing between 2s 6d and 8s amounted to only 8%. As suggested by subscription figures for this chapel in the late

---

<sup>88</sup> *MR*, 13 (1818), 281.

<sup>89</sup> PHC, CHU97, *Southern Unitarian Association Minutes*, 12 January 1816; DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, 5 July 1820.

<sup>90</sup> *York Herald, County and General Advertiser*, 24 April 1813.

<sup>91</sup> HMCO, MS Lant Carpenter 1, T. Belsham to L. Carpenter, 28 October 1817.

<sup>92</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 265; B. L. Manning, O. Greenwood, ed., *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies*, p. 136, indicates that the Deputies viewed the Bill as unnecessary.

<sup>93</sup> E.g. *Christianity an Intellectual and Individual Religion. A discourse delivered in Renshaw Street, Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1812).

eighteenth century, these are likely to have been skilled tradesmen. Subscribers were not drawn from the unskilled poor. The remaining 92% of Crewkerne subscribers contributed between 10s and £6 6s, and clearly derived from a more prosperous sector of society.<sup>94</sup> Analysis of the Bristol Unitarian Fellowship Fund records between 1819 and 1821,<sup>95</sup> in Table 16, indicates a significant proportion contributing between 1s 3d and 7s. Once more, however, these can only have been skilled workers. The next subscription up from the lowest of 1s 3d, amounted to 1s 6d. As with the records of Crewkerne Unitarian Chapel, this suggests a small number of people at the lower end of the scale to whom pence mattered. They were still not, however, the unskilled poor.

Table 16: Bristol Unitarian Fund Subscriptions 1819-1821

1s 3d – 2s 6d	2.3%
5s 0d	52.4%
6s 0d – 7s 0d	7.3%
Total of above	61%
10s 0d – 2 Guineas	39%

Aspland's own sermon to the Warwickshire Unitarian Tract Society in 1820 displayed no obvious modification of language, concepts or length, in the interests of ease of understanding by the less well educated. Nor did Turner's sermon delivered to the Society of Unitarian Christians at Sunderland in 1824. Awareness of such tendencies may well have encouraged W. J. Fox to assert in 1816 that

It is necessary to unite the gift of popular tracts and popular preaching if we wish to make a permanent impression upon the lower order.<sup>96</sup>

Robert Brook Aspland noted that the publications of the Unitarian Book Society 'had not found their way to the homes of the poor, but were for the most part confined to the

---

<sup>94</sup> SHC, D/N/crew/4/3/1.

<sup>95</sup> BRO, 39461/F/6(b).

<sup>96</sup> HMCO, MS Lant Carpenter 1, W. J. Fox to L. Carpenter, 25 January 1816.



middle classes.<sup>97</sup> The list of 257 Tracts available for loan from the Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association in 1830<sup>98</sup> included 18 which were clearly aimed at the poor, amongst them some by Wright.<sup>99</sup> The publication of the Story of the Prodigal Son in four parts was clearly an attempt to render it more easily understandable.<sup>100</sup> However there is no indication of precisely which level of society read these particular tracts or how popular they were. Moreover 18 was a very small proportion of 257.

The records of Northiam Unitarian Book Society appear to confirm this view. These records have previously received little attention and, while one must be cautious about over-generalising from them, they provide a rare glimpse of rural and small town Rational Dissent. The annual subscription, at four shillings, was considerably lower than those of the Southern Unitarian Society and subscriptions to Hackney and Manchester Academies, generally set at a minimum of a guinea. Four shillings was still a high cost in terms of agricultural incomes at the time and rapidly rising food prices. A predominance of names in Northiam from small landowners and the skilled classes appear. These included the Frewens who were minor gentry,<sup>101</sup> John Plomley of Hole Farm, Northiam, chairman of Northiam Unitarian Book Society, and tenant of Edward Frewen,<sup>102</sup> Charles Cox, farmer,<sup>103</sup> John Baker, farmer,<sup>104</sup> Eleanor Lord, also from a family of farmers,<sup>105</sup> Richard Wood, blacksmith and librarian of Northiam Union

---

<sup>97</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 281.

<sup>98</sup> DRO, 3693D/LMI, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*.

<sup>99</sup> E. g. *Friendly Advice to the Unlearned; An Affectionate Address to the Poor; A Visit to Ruth's Cottage; Village Dialogues, parts 1 and 2*.

<sup>100</sup> *The Lost Son; The Recovery of the Lost Son, The Father's Treatment of the Lost Son; The Conduct of the Elder Brother*.

<sup>101</sup> ESRO, Frewen Archive.

<sup>102</sup> ESRO, FRE/6892, *Letter from J. Plomley to Rev J. Durham* 9 June 1800, for publication in *MR*, AMS6034, *List of Subscribers to Unitarian Book Society*.

<sup>103</sup> ESRO, AMSE/AMS5430/8/179-180.

<sup>104</sup> ESRO, FRE/7146, *Copy of Mortgage*, 9 May 1808.

<sup>105</sup> ESRO, FRE/1607, 7 December 1804.

Library,<sup>106</sup> Benjamin Johnson, a businessman who appealed to the Frewens for a loan,<sup>107</sup> and the Powell and Jenner families of surgeons.<sup>108</sup> This was a sure sign that the Northiam Unitarians were seeking to extend their message, although not to the unskilled, labouring poor.

William Vidler provided key support for the congregation at Northiam, making a number of gifts of books to the library, as did Robert Aspland and John Plomley. The Register of Issues records 122 pamphlet borrowings, the bulk of pamphlets in the library issuing from the pen of Richard Wright. In the space of two years between 1809 and 1811, subscribers to Northiam Unitarian Book Society grew in number from 24 to 38,<sup>109</sup> approximately two thirds male and a third female, and by 1823 the Library contained 186 books and pamphlets. Of the 38 borrowers five borrowed at least two books or pamphlets a month, 10 borrowed a minimum of one a month. Small numbers of craftsmen and merchants, along with more numerous gentlemen and members of professions, were reflected too in the list of fellow subscribers from Northiam and Tenterden who joined Lawrence Holden in the Unitarian Fund in 1810. These included from Northiam, Charles Cox, John Plomley, Thomas Elliott and William Hansom,<sup>110</sup> and from Tenterden, Richard Clout, tallow chandler,<sup>111</sup> Henry Coveney, farmer,<sup>112</sup> John Mace, surgeon,<sup>113</sup> Philip Ovenden, gentleman.<sup>114</sup> Holden's congregation<sup>115</sup> included over the course of his long ministry, several generations of the Viny,<sup>116</sup> Blackmore<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> ESRO, AMS6454, NU/4/4/2 (1808, 1823).

<sup>107</sup> ESRO, FRE/2007, 26 February 1807.

<sup>108</sup> ESRO, FRE/2822, 7 January 1809, AMS6454/45/1.

<sup>109</sup> ESRO, AMS 6034/1, Northiam Unitarian Chapel Book, NU/4/4/2, Register of Issues.

<sup>110</sup> ESRO, FRE/6892, *Letter from J. Plomley to Rev J. Durham* 9 June 1800, for publication in *MR*, AMS6034, *List of Subscribers to Unitarian Book Society*.

<sup>111</sup> LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS 11936/395/613802.

<sup>112</sup> ESRO, DAP/BOX83/2/2.

<sup>113</sup> MA, EK-UL453/b3/15/1243.

<sup>114</sup> LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS 11936/377/582030.

<sup>115</sup> L. Duncan, *Inscriptions in the Old Meeting House Burial Ground* (1919).

<sup>116</sup> ESRO, DAP/BOX83/2/2.

and Grisbrook families,<sup>118</sup> all gentry, and John Johnson, Unitarian Mayor of Tenterden in 1780.<sup>119</sup>

Lists of subscribers to Lewes Unitarian Vestry Library between 1818 and 1825 never exceeded 15, including three members of the Johnston and four of the Ridge families, suggesting that this library was of more limited appeal than the Northiam Unitarian Book Society. Membership was predominantly male, with only two female members alongside eleven laymen and two ministers in 1818. Here too a subscription of four shillings a year suggests that the intended readership did not include the poor, nor is there any evidence of short tracts amongst the library acquisitions. Alongside works by the Latitudinarian Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff (1737-1816), were included Hugh Worthington's *Sermons*, Thomas Belsham's *Infant Baptism and Commentaries*, sermons by Thomas Jervis, Abraham Rees, Joseph Fawcett, William Turner, John Prior Estlin, Robert Aspland, John Yates and the Unitarian minister James Hews Bransby, Thomas Belsham's *Memoirs of the Late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey*, Newcome Cappe and of William Wood, and regular subscriptions to *The Monthly Repository*.<sup>120</sup> The volumes acquired were by no means all Rational Dissenting works but there was nevertheless a concerted effort to disseminate Unitarian beliefs amongst the small readership.

In the market town of Bridport in Dorset the Unitarian Chapel Vestry Library, was established with the encouragement of its minister, Thomas Howe and had over 100 books by 1819.<sup>121</sup> It charged a subscription of one penny a week,<sup>122</sup> marginally higher than the annual subscription to the Northiam Unitarian Book Society. According

---

<sup>117</sup> ESRO, DAP/BOX83/2/3.

<sup>118</sup> LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS 11936/356/548891.

<sup>119</sup> L. Duncan, *Inscriptions in the Old Meeting House Burial Ground* (1919).

<sup>120</sup> ESRO, NU1/6/1.

<sup>121</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 6 (1819), 19.

<sup>122</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 6 (1819), 19-20.

to the *Rules of Bridport Unitarian Library*, subscriptions were to be paid in advance every week, every six weeks or annually. The *Account Book for the Library*, recorded in the same volume, contains no record of weekly payments from the less well off.<sup>123</sup> According to Jerome Murch,<sup>124</sup> who cites Howe's biographer<sup>125</sup> as his source, 'a considerable part of the congregation was formed of labouring mechanics and the industrious poor.' There is no evidence to suggest that the influx of the labourers into the congregation which Bransby, Presbyterian minister at Dudley, detected and may have exaggerated, was reflected in the readership of the library. Indeed, amongst library subscribers between 1819 and 1825<sup>126</sup> were six members of the Gundry family of rope makers,<sup>127</sup> four members of the Colfox family of chandlers and wool staplers,<sup>128</sup> three members of the Hounsell family, property owners with shares in Bridport ships, twine manufacturers and iron mongers,<sup>129</sup> and three from the Downes family of merchants.<sup>130</sup> Daniel, Joseph and Samuel Gundry, John, Joseph and William Hounsell, along with Joshua Carter, merchant and William Fowler, spinner, appear amongst the late eighteenth century multiple subscribers from Bridport to Rational Dissenting works identified in this research.<sup>131</sup> These were families of merchants and skilled workers who maintained their active involvement in Unitarianism. It is clear that women from amongst these prominent Bridport Unitarian families played a key role. *The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting* held on 19 December 1819 recorded its thanks 'to Mrs Anne Hounsell, Mrs Eustace, Miss Grundy and Miss Colfox for their laudable exertions in establishing the Unitarian Library' and requested that

---

<sup>123</sup> DHC, NU.1/LI.1/1.

<sup>124</sup> J. Murch, *A History of the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches in the West of England*, p. 259.

<sup>125</sup> J. Hews Bransby, *A tribute to the Memory of the Reverend Thomas Howe of Bridport* (1820)

<sup>126</sup> DHC, NU.1/LI.1/1.

<sup>127</sup> DHC, D/BGL/A11.

<sup>128</sup> DHC, D/COL/B5.

<sup>129</sup> LMA, Sun Fire Insurance Records, MS/11936/362/560044.

<sup>130</sup> DHC, D/BGL/A11.

<sup>131</sup> See Appendix 2.

With any others they may think proper to associate with, they be specifically requested to act as the stated committee in conjunction with the Treasurer and the Librarian.<sup>132</sup>

They were being given an influential position. Membership numbers ranged from 22 to 41 between 1819 and 1825, with women constituting 30.7% in 1819 and a high of 43.7% in 1823. The Account Book records the purchase of Unitarian publications, amongst them Jebb's *Works*, Turner's *Sermons* and Israel Worsley *On Dissent*. Thomas Howe's description establishes that the range of books, unsurprisingly, included a number which attacked perceived corruptions of the message of the Scriptures and those advocating the cause of religious liberty, not all of whom were Rational Dissenters.<sup>133</sup>

The Vestry Library at Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle had a total of 628 volumes by 1828.<sup>134</sup> Initially established in 1787, before the development of regional Unitarian Societies, it was aimed at 'rational dissenters.'<sup>135</sup> Although optional contributions were invited, no charge was made for borrowing books. This was an unusual and highly significant move, rendering books accessible to all who could read. Amongst the audience targeted were 'Servants, poor persons and those who have had no real advantages of education', who 'will meet with many practical treatises suited to their circumstances.'<sup>136</sup> Partly in support of this aim a whole section of the catalogue was devoted to 'Sermons and Treatises on Practical Subjects and Family Prayer Books.' Amongst them was *Advice to a Daughter* by Jonas Hanway, abridged by Catharine Cappe, and Edward Harwood's *Temperance and Intemperance*, and the anonymous *Thoughts by a Plain Layman*. Clearly these can only have been intended

---

<sup>132</sup> DHC, NU.1/LI.1/1.

<sup>133</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 6 (1819), 20.

<sup>134</sup> *Catalogue of Books in the Vestry Library, Hanover Square, Newcastle* (1828).

<sup>135</sup> *Hanover Square Catalogue*, p. i.

<sup>136</sup> *Hanover Square Catalogue*, p. v.

for the literate. The absence of many Christian names in the list of borrowers, however, renders their precise identity and consequently their social status unclear.

*The Register of Borrowers* for the Vestry Library at Hanover Square Chapel between 1787 and 1809, with its record of 1097 loans, does however provide a number of insights into the range of reading matter available to the Unitarian congregation and into those works of greatest appeal.<sup>137</sup> Volumes written by Arians, including Hugh Worthington's *Sermons*, and *The Life of Firmin* by Joseph Cornish, although in smaller numbers, featured alongside more numerous publications by Unitarian authors, twelve volumes of Unitarian Tracts, and seven publications by the Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society. The categories in which books were organised, including 'The grounds of dissent from the Church of England and of separation from Popery' and 'Extracts from transactions which had immediately concerned Dissenters', were of appeal to both Arians and Unitarians. *The Exposition of the Old Testament*, in six volumes, by the Independent Orthodox Dissenting minister Job Orton, and the Socinian Nathaniel Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel*, in twelve volumes, were amongst the most popular works, borrowed respectively on 28 and 23 occasions. Their lengthy nature and complex theological message are suggestive of an educated readership. The *Sermons* of Samuel Bourn, (1648-1719), minister of Bank Street Chapel, Bolton, who left Cambridge after refusing to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles,<sup>138</sup> works by the Arian George Benson (1699-1762),<sup>139</sup> and *Sermons* by the contemporary Unitarian ministers William Enfield and David Jardine sat alongside Latitudinarian works. Amongst these were the earlier *Sermons* of Archbishop Tillotson (1630-1694) and the *Theological Tracts* of Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff. *Sermons* by Hugh Blair,

---

<sup>137</sup> TWA, C. NC66/104.

<sup>138</sup> S. Bourn, *Several Sermons preached by the late Rev Samuel Bourn* (1722).

<sup>139</sup> G. Benson, *The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion* (1743); *idem*, *A paraphrase and notes on six of the Epistles of St. Paul* (1752); *idem*, *The History of the Life of Christ* (1764).

(1718-1800),<sup>140</sup> Church of Scotland minister, described in *The Critical Review* of 1807 as ‘the most popular work in the English language, excluding *The Spectator*’<sup>141</sup> were borrowed on 21 occasions. John Abernethy’s *Sermons on the Attributes of God*, published in 1742, focussed on the perfections of God the Father, rejecting Calvinism and thus appealing to both Rational Dissenters and the Church of England. It was singled out for study by 15 readers. William Turner’s emphasis on the congregation as a ‘Voluntary Association,’ untied to any particular denominational discipline or doctrine<sup>142</sup> was in keeping with the inclusion of authors from, or approved by, the Established Church amongst others, alongside Rational Dissenters.

Stephen Harbottle recognises the immense theological commitment of Margaret Hogg, Hanover Square Girls’ School Sunday School teacher between 1805 and 1821, who borrowed 102 volumes between 1787 and 1809, but devotes little attention to the nature of these.<sup>143</sup> Yet *The Register of Borrowers* indicates a great deal about the nature of her theological interests and those of other frequent borrowers. Her reading list reflects her particular interest in the key continuing issues of Rational Dissent, the interpretation of scriptural evidence, the nature of God the Father and Son, and of salvation. These doctrinal issues were not, of course, only of interest to Rational Dissenters. Indeed Margaret’s wide theological reading, beyond purely Rational Dissenting works, is apparent. She avidly returned to the study of the same volumes, often years apart, 7 of them twice,<sup>144</sup> to Bourne’s *Sermons* in 1789, 1793 and 1805, to

---

<sup>140</sup> H. Blair, *Sermons*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1778).

<sup>141</sup> *Critical Review*, 11 1807), 170.

<sup>142</sup> W. Turner, *The Present State of the Congregation Assembling in Hanover Square, Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1811), p. 29.

<sup>143</sup> S. Harbottle, *The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1997), p. 30.

<sup>144</sup> G. Benson, *The Life of Christ* in 1787, 1797, 1805 and 1806, G. Benson, *Sermons* in 1804 and 1806; H. Blair, *Sermons* in 1796, 1805; Clark’s *Sermons* between 1796 and 1805; Craig’s *Life of Christ* in 1789 and 1807; B. Hoadley’s *Terms of Acceptance* in 1790; J. Orton *On Christian Worship and Zeal* in 1787 and 1807; W. Sherlock *Discourses* in 1789 and 1790.

Dalrymple's *History of Christ* in 1805, 1806 and 1807, and to Hoadly on *The Lord's Supper* on four occasions between 1805 and 1808, an indication of their importance to her and of her theological commitment. A number of other borrowers shared the same characteristic of reading and re-reading,<sup>145</sup> a tendency suggestive of serious study and intellectual consideration of the same key theological issues amongst Rational Dissenters by educated individuals. William Lawrence, Boys' Charity School teacher, for example focussed on four volumes of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel* in 1787, read volume 2 twice in 1789, and a further four volumes in 1792.

Amongst 13 of the most popular borrowings from the Hanover Square Library, 7 were books of sermons, one example of the continuing network of communication and ideas between ministerial and lay Rational Dissenters.<sup>146</sup> On 32 occasions Margaret Hogg borrowed sermons, discourses and tracts. Of John Selkirk's 36 borrowings, 15 were sermons. Amongst 26 works which John Taylor borrowed were 13 sermons. John Murray borrowed ten sermons amongst 14 works, Miss Wellbank ten amongst 20 works. Although by no means unique to Rational Dissenters, amongst Rational Dissenters enthusiastic reading of sermons, particularly of the wide range present in Hanover Square Library, encouraged individual consideration of a range of theological viewpoints.

These Libraries were specifically and deliberately aimed at Unitarian readers. These stood in contrast to, for example the Royston Dissenting Book Club founded earlier on 14 December 1761 for Protestant Dissenters as a whole. Henry Crabb Robinson,<sup>147</sup> John Towill Rutt, Benjamin Flower and George Dyer belonged in the 1790s, along with the Baptist minister Robert Hall and the Independent, Thomas

---

<sup>145</sup> Amongst them Miss Hall, Miss Airey, Mr Bell, John Selkirk, John Taylor, John Murray and William Lawrence, Boys' Charity School teacher.

<sup>146</sup> C.f. Chapter 2, fn 12.

<sup>147</sup> H. C. Robinson, *Reminiscences*, 1, 78-79.



Bailey. Debates referred to in the Minute Book of the Club 1786-1790 included ‘Whether mankind are at present in a state of moral improvement’ and ‘Which is the greater evil, to educate children above or beneath their probable station or circumstances?’<sup>148</sup> These were issues which, given their rejection of original sin and their optimistic view of man’s potential for improvement, were of particular interest to Rational Dissenters, but even in 1796, when Crabbe Robinson became a member of the Royston Book Club, he could entertain the possibility of debate with Orthodox Dissenters. Unitarian libraries and organisations in the early part of the nineteenth century represented a move away from such a possibility and towards a denominational approach to the dissemination of Unitarian ideas.

While libraries encouraged many, in London a new generation of hearers was attracted to Unitarianism by the Hackney Conferences, held on a Wednesday. Robert Aspland was assisted by a number of ministers, amongst them William Vidler, John Simpson and William Gilchrist, as well as the layman John Towill Rutt. These conferences were ‘open to all comers, of every variety of faith’ and Robert Brook Aspland, at least, believed ‘that many persons were made Unitarians by means of these discussions.’<sup>149</sup> This may well have been an optimistic view, and was certainly unsubstantiated by any precise evidence, examples or figures. Robert Aspland himself did, however, find that the first of his popular addresses of 20 minutes to young people, was ‘to my astonishment, crowded.’<sup>150</sup> Held at the close of morning service on a Sunday, these focussed on theological, scriptural and historical subjects. Reaching out mainly to the offspring of Rational Dissenting parents, this was not representative of social broadening of the Unitarian message. However, the substance of these were

---

<sup>148</sup> A. Kingston, *Fragments of Two Centuries: Glimpses of Country Life when George III was King* (Royston, 1893).

<sup>149</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 200.

<sup>150</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 202.

included in *The Christian Reformer*,<sup>151</sup> which was aimed at the humbler classes, and continued under the editorial supervision of Aspland for 30 years. This periodical included a number of articles intended specifically for the poor,<sup>152</sup> setting its subscription to 'place it within the reach of almost anyone accustomed to read.'<sup>153</sup> How far this was actually realised is more difficult to establish. The Reverend John Marsom still argued in this publication that Unitarianism was 'not suited to the vulgar taste.'<sup>154</sup>

The trends evident in analysis of the membership of the London and Western Unitarian Societies in the 1790s continued into the early nineteenth century, as demonstrated in Table 17 below. These trends were equally evident in the membership of the Southern Unitarian Society, the Midland and Northern Unitarian Society, and in subscriptions to the Unitarian Fund. The percentage of lay subscribers in the London, Western and Southern Unitarian Societies continued to grow, as it had done in the London and Western Societies in the 1790s. The percentage of females remained so small that variations here are of hardly any statistical significance. The layman Edward Higginson of Derby, writing to George William Wood, about the number of subscribers to Manchester Academy, commented on the 'increasing number of friends to the institution' in 1815 many of them laymen and women.<sup>155</sup> These included John Pemberton Heywood,<sup>156</sup> William Shore of Sheffield<sup>157</sup> and James Losh.<sup>158</sup> These were precisely the types attracted to Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century.

---

<sup>151</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 202.

<sup>152</sup> E.g. M. Hughes, *The Poor Man's Friend*, 'A Theological Debate on a Stage Coach', pp. 28-30; J. Marsom, *Letters to Christians of the Lower Classes*, pp. 40-42, 'To the Poor of this World', pp. 213-217.

<sup>153</sup> Preface to *Christian Reformer*, 3 (1817).

<sup>154</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 3 (1817), 65.

<sup>155</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 39 (1815).

<sup>156</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 5, J. Pemberton Heywood to G. W. Wood, 22 January 1815.

<sup>157</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 6, J. Ashton Yates to G. W. Wood, 23 January 1815.

<sup>158</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 23, 17 March 1815.

Table 17: Subscribers to Early Nineteenth Century Unitarian Societies

Date	Subscribers	% Ministers	% Laity	Female % of Laity	Location
London Unitarian Society					
1806	166	18%	82%	9.7%	London (61%) Other Areas (39%)
1813	227	17.6%	82.4%	9%	London (65%) Other Areas (35%)
1817	259	14%	86%	8.5%	London (69%) Other Areas (31%)
Western Unitarian Society					
1800	80	24%	76%	9.8%	West (88.7%) London (7.5%)
1802	97	21%	79%	6.5%	West (90%) London (4%)
1811	211	15%	85%	5.5%	West (97.6%) London (2.4%)
1815	209	14.4%	85.6%	7.8%	West (94.7%) London (1.9%)
Southern Unitarian Society					
1803	50	16%	84%	3.6%	South (81%) London (19%)
1810	93	10.8%	89.2%	6.4%	South (75.5%) London (11%)
Midland & Northern Unitarian Society					
1808	89	27%	73%	7.7%	Midland & Northern Counties (94.4%) London (5.6%)
Unitarian Fund Society					
1810	177	32.8%	67.2%	16.8%	Diverse
1813	488	14.3%	85.7%	7.6%	Diverse

Of the hard core of male subscribers to multiple works and organisations at the end of the eighteenth century, 13 ministers joined the Unitarian Fund Society.<sup>159</sup> Amongst ministers Lindsey and Belsham, members of the London, Western, Southern, Midland and Northern Societies and of the Unitarian Fund Society, stand out. Lawrence Holden became an increasingly visible supporter of Unitarianism, joining the

---

<sup>159</sup> Lindsey, Belsham, Lawrence Holden, Jeremiah Joyce, John Prior Estlin, John Rowe, John Kentish, Jacob Isaac, William Shepherd, John Yates, Charles Wellbeloved, Samuel Kingsford and James Pickbourn.

London Unitarian Society, the Unitarian Fund Society and the Sussex and Kent Unitarian Society, of which he was secretary. Amongst the hard core of lay male subscribers to multiple works and organisations at the end of the eighteenth century, Samuel Shore of Meresbrook, Samuel Shore of Norton Hall, from London Dr. Samuel Pett and Timothy Brown, shop factor, from Birmingham Edward Smith, manufacturer, from Exeter William Kennaway, merchant, and from Maidstone Thomas Pine, manufacturer all joined the Unitarian Fund Society in the early nineteenth century. Holden brought with him to the Fund Society ten members of his congregation in Tenterden, and five from neighbouring Northiam, including John and William Plomley.

Given the aim of the Unitarian Fund, that of encouraging Unitarian missionary activities, the higher proportion of ministerial subscribers in 1810 than in any of the other Unitarian Societies indicated in the Table 17 is not surprising, although as with the other Unitarian Societies listed, by far the highest proportion of subscribers came from the laity. Amongst the chairmen of the Fund between 1806 and 1825 Robert Aspland was the only minister, holding the office once in 1820. Nine laymen held the same position in these years. John Towill Rutt and William Frend<sup>160</sup> both held it on four occasions, Edward Johnson, John Young, John Christie and the M.P. William Smith twice, William Sturch, William Hammond and Edward Taylor once. These individuals provided active support over a long period. The higher proportion of females amongst the laity who contributed to the Unitarian Fund than to any regional Unitarian Society may be seen in part as an indication of continuing female support for the value of social worship.

---

<sup>160</sup> By 1806 Frend had left holy orders and become actuary at the Rock Life Insurance Company, [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com).

Numbers attending annual meetings of the Fund show a steady increase of 30 to 40 members a year between 1806 and 1813, rising from a total of 70 to 300 over this period. In 1814 the number remained stable, falling to 260 by 1816. Between 1817 and 1825 numbers fluctuated, reaching 300 again in 1825. These figures reinforce the suggestion of growing concern with placing Unitarianism on a more formal, structured foundation, giving it a basis for continuity over generations.

By 1811 membership of the Western Society approximated that of the London Society. Membership of the Southern, Midland and Northern, and Eastern Unitarian Societies remained generally considerably smaller than the London Unitarian Society. Attendance figures at the annual meeting of the Eastern Unitarian Society were particularly small, reported as 46 in 1815, 55 in 1817, and as 90 in 1820.<sup>161</sup> An anonymous comment in *The Monthly Repository* for 1813 casts some light on this. Its author observed that these societies were not widely known.

I sit down with a small congregation of Unitarians, the majority of whom are totally ignorant of these societies or of the existence of any active proceedings by bodies of men in the cause of rational religion.<sup>162</sup>

In 1800 46 per cent of the total membership of the Western Unitarian Society came from Somerset, over half of them from Bristol, 25 per cent from Devon and none from Cornwall. Subscribers were increasingly local. This is unsurprising given the far greater number of regional societies, many of those founded in the early nineteenth century based on smaller geographical areas. The geographically uneven spread of Unitarianism, characteristic of the late eighteenth century, continued into the nineteenth. The bulk of members featuring in subscription lists, unsurprisingly, continued to originate from key towns.

---

<sup>161</sup> *Bury and Norfolk Post*, 19 July 1815, 2 July 1817, 5 July 1820.

<sup>162</sup> Letter on Unitarian Associations, 16 February 1813, quoted in *MR*, 8 (1813), 246.

Financial fortunes could be uncertain. The Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society and Hanover Square Sunday School, experienced difficulty in attracting new subscriptions, their financial fortunes suffering on the death of long term supporters. Thus subscribers to the Tract Society, numbering 81 in 1814, increased to 104 in 1815, but had fallen to 48 by 1826,<sup>163</sup> while the Sunday School attracted 80 subscribers in 1807 but only 50 ten years later.<sup>164</sup> By 1822 the Southern Unitarian Book Society recommended sale of sermons and tracts to recover from arrears.<sup>165</sup>

The growing divergence between Unitarians and Orthodox Dissenters which had developed in the late eighteenth century over doctrinal differences and differences of perception over the right way forward in overcoming legal constraints on Dissenters, continued to increase, finally culminating in the secession of Unitarians from the body of Protestant Dissenting Deputies in London in 1836.<sup>166</sup> In their attempts to reform the marriage law which required Dissenters to marry in a Church of England service, Robert Brook Aspland noted that Unitarians ‘toiled alone, unhelped by other Nonconformists.’<sup>167</sup> Legal struggles over Unitarian Chapel property continued. The basis of the Wolverhampton Chapel case in 1817, a case brought to court by nine Independent ministers, was that the founders of the chapel had held Orthodox Presbyterian opinions, and that since rejection of the Trinity was still at that time illegal, Unitarians could not then lawfully hold any property.<sup>168</sup> Trustees included both the Calvinist brothers, John and Benjamin Mander, and the Unitarians, Joseph Pearson and his son, Peter. The Unitarians barred the Trinitarian minister, William Jameson in October 1816. This was a long running case. In 1836 judgement was postponed until

---

<sup>163</sup> TWA, C. NC66/107, C. NC66/159/9.

<sup>164</sup> TWA, C. NC66/80.

<sup>165</sup> PHC, CHU97, *Southern Unitarian Association Minutes*, 6 December 1822.

<sup>166</sup> B. Manning, D. Ormerod, ed, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (1952).

<sup>167</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 415.

<sup>168</sup> Aspland, *Memoir*, p. 378.

the result of Lady Hewley case was known. The Lady Hewley case too centred on a trust, established between 1705 and 1707 in Yorkshire, which had originally been Presbyterian. By the late eighteenth century it had become Unitarian, Newcome Cappe being selected by the majority of the trustees as sole minister of St. Saviourgate, York. The transition had attracted opposition from evangelicals, including George Hadfield, Manchester Congregationalist and solicitor. The Lady Hewley case was finally resolved in 1842, after 12 years of litigation.<sup>169</sup>

These lengthy legal struggles were symptomatic of the continuing weakness of the Unitarian position, and perhaps go a long way to explain Unitarian concern to consolidate and formalise the structure and aims of their organisations. Not until 1844 did the Dissenters' Chapels Act establish that, where no trust deed existed, a usage of 25 years would be taken as conclusive evidence of the right of any congregation to possession of their place of worship, burial grounds and schools.

#### **iv: The Fate of Arianism**

By the early nineteenth century the term Rational Dissent had been replaced by the terms Arian and Unitarian, highlighting their growing divergence. The author of the obituary of Hugh Worthington observed that

He very seldom brought controversy into the pulpit or delivered what might properly be denominated doctrinal sermons. He had too much knowledge of the difficulties of theology to condemn the creeds of any of his brethren.<sup>170</sup>

This was reminiscent of the Arian Paul Henry Maty's earlier *Works* which had, for similar reasons, attracted support from subscribers belonging to the Church of England because of their moderate, non-threatening, nature.

---

<sup>169</sup> R. Potts, *Dame Sarah's Legacy: A History of the Lady Hewley Trust* (N. Tyneside, 2005)

<sup>170</sup> *MR*, 8 (1813), 548. The author of this obituary, E. B., was possibly the Unitarian, Edmund Butcher.

The existence of Arianism was still recognised in *The Monthly Repository*, but allusions to it were sparse and widely dispersed. Between 1812 and 1828, fleeting references to the terms Arian and Arianism occur only from 1814 to 1818. Correspondents addressing *The Monthly Repository* perceived Arianism as a historical entity, but not any longer as a significant force. The same perception is evident from outside of Rational Dissent in *The Congregational Magazine*. Only four references to Arianism appeared in 1823. Of eight references to the same terms in 1824, seven were set in a historical context.<sup>171</sup> By 1832 only four references to the same term appeared in this magazine, two in a historical and two in a contemporary context respectively.<sup>172</sup> Bogue and Bennett, Orthodox Dissenters, likewise refer only to Arians in a historical setting.<sup>173</sup>

*The Monthly Repository* of 1825 featured the obituary of the Reverend Robert Lewin, minister of Ben's Garden, Liverpool, aged 85, whose tenets were reported as 'remaining to the last decidedly Arian.'<sup>174</sup> In the same edition an anonymous correspondent referred to 'the half way Arian.'<sup>175</sup> He did not see a vibrant and distinctive brand of Arianism as a legacy of late eighteenth century Rational Dissent. Lewin was one of an earlier, ageing generation. The Unitarian historian Alexander Gordon saw the death of Thomas Barnes in 1810 as a turning point, noting that until then 'in Lancashire Arianism held the field.'<sup>176</sup> Thomas Belsham observed that 'It will not be easy to find another Arian to supply his place.'<sup>177</sup> Gordon was hardly an unbiased commentator, yet the absence of allusions to conspicuous and active Arians in

---

<sup>171</sup> *Congregational Magazine*, 7 (1824), 308, 377, 481, 554, 587, 593, 649.

<sup>172</sup> *Congregational Magazine*, 15 (1832), 234, 237, 540.

<sup>173</sup> Bogue and Bennett, *A history of the dissenters*.

<sup>174</sup> *MR*, 22 (1825), 180.

<sup>175</sup> A Correspondent, *MR*, 22 (1825), 386.

<sup>176</sup> A. Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History* (1895), p. 50.

<sup>177</sup> J. Williams, *The Memoirs of the late Reverend Thomas Belsham* (1833), p. 609.



the first two decades of the nineteenth century in the contemporary magazines mentioned appears to support the idea that many of them were dying. Robert Aspland referred to ‘the few Arians that are left.’<sup>178</sup> James Burgh, Samuel Bourne, Joseph Cornish, David Williams and Hugh Worthington left no surviving offspring.

The memoir of Joseph Bealey ‘until the last year and a half of his life a zealous Arian’, noted that he was converted to Unitarianism by Thomas Belsham and commented on the progress of Unitarianism at Cockey Moor where the congregation determined on a Unitarian successor to Bealey.<sup>179</sup> The Arian Thomas Jervis, who died in 1833, had moved towards Unitarianism and joined the London Unitarian Society in 1794, remaining a member in subsequent years. John Simpson experienced a similar shift in view, as did Philip Holland. Holland was succeeded as minister in Ormskirk, Lancashire by his Unitarian nephew, John Holland. The children and successors of a number of Arians adopted Unitarian views. Rochemont Barbauld, master of Palgrave School, Suffolk, who later became Unitarian, left a niece and nephew, Lucy and Arthur Aikin, both Unitarians. Habakkuk Crabb’s nephew, the diarist, Henry Crabb Robinson, was similarly Unitarian, as was Joseph Towers’ son, Joseph Lomas Towers. Abraham Rees’ daughter was the wife of the Unitarian minister, John Jones. Although Micaiah Towgood’s son, Matthew appears to have retained Arian views, he ceased being a minister, and became first a merchant and by 1773 a banker. Jeremiah Joyce in *The Monthly Repository* of 1815 advanced the view that ‘The epithet Arian is well nigh worn out, as is the doctrine itself.’<sup>180</sup> William Gellibrand’s *The Confessions of an Arian Minister*, published in 1817, rejected his earlier Arian theological beliefs.<sup>181</sup> Although Gellibrand continued to accept Christ’s pre-existence, he came to believe in Christ’s

---

<sup>178</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 754.

<sup>179</sup> *MR*, 8 (1813), 756.

<sup>180</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 554, 745.

<sup>181</sup> *Christian Reformer*, 3 (1817).

total humanity. Gellibrand criticized his own earlier inadequate examination of the Scriptures.<sup>182</sup> Others who moved from Arianism to Unitarianism may well have privately attributed the same failing to themselves, but Gellibrand published his self-criticisms. Even in *The Monthly Repository* he was accused of ‘inconsistency’, and its anonymous author referred to Gellibrand’s earlier lack of scholarly effort in terms almost of ridicule.<sup>183</sup> Such public condemnation cannot have helped the Arian cause.

This picture of an ageing generation of Arians, moderate in their theology, avoiding controversy in the sermons of their ministers and gradually replaced by a younger generation of active Unitarians keen to organise themselves formally and publicly, was reiterated by Thomas Belsham. In a letter to James Hews Bransby on 15 December 1823 he wrote

My suspicion is that the old and wealthy are Arian indifferentists: and would like to have a minister who would preach seriously and give them no trouble about doctrines or politics. The younger members I presume to be zealous, active Unitarians who would be glad to support the exertions of a zealous and active minister.<sup>184</sup>

Arians listed in the Biographical Register at the beginning of this dissertation, who survived into the nineteenth century and retained their Arian identity, did not maintain a significant level of sermon and discourse publication or organisation. A new generation of Arians, publishing views which were specifically and distinctively Arian, failed to emerge. No specifically Arian creed was either published or referred to. In contrast the Unitarians Thomas Belsham and Robert Aspland continued to publish prolifically in the early nineteenth century as did, to a lesser extent, John Prior Estlin. Between 1800 and 1817, except in 1801, 1811 and 1816, Belsham, for example,

---

<sup>182</sup> *MR*, 12 (1817), 620.

<sup>183</sup> *MR*, 12 (1817), 620.

<sup>184</sup> JRUL, Bransby III, p. 263, cited by D. Wykes, ‘“A good discourse, well explained in 35 minutes”’: Unitarians and preaching in the early Nineteenth Century,’ TUHS, xxi (1997), 173-190.

published at least one sermon or work every year. He resumed this level of activity between 1821 and 1827. While not exactly a new generation of Unitarians, Belsham and Aspland took the place of John Jebb, Andrew Kippis and William Tayleur, who died in the final years of the eighteenth century, and of Theophilus Lindsey, Newcome Cappe and Timothy Kenrick, who died early in the new century. Ann Jebb defended Unitarian theological views in *The London Chronicle* under the pseudonym of 'Priscilla' in 1812.<sup>185</sup> A series of letters from Ann Wellbeloved to William Wood are indicative of her key role in the organisation and running of the Academy.<sup>186</sup> By 22 July 1815 Manchester College was being described as the 'Unitarian Academy.'<sup>187</sup> Unitarians, and not Arians, were at the forefront of attention.

Published in 1821, *Unitariorum in Anglia* did not refer to Arianism after Peirce, implying that it had been absorbed, at least in part, into Unitarianism. As a contemporary assumption this was significant. A monthly magazine launched in 1826 to propagate Arian views, *The Christian Moderator* lasted a mere two years.<sup>188</sup> In *The Monthly Repository* and *The Christian Reformer*, as one might expect, the dominance of Unitarian authors is evident. Thomas Belsham and John Towill Rutt were contributors to every edition of *The Christian Reformer* from its foundation until 1820. Richard Wright, Catharine Cappe and Benjamin Flower, followed by William Friend, made almost as many contributions. Lawrence Holden, described in *The Repository* as 'becoming more abundant in labours, as he has advanced in age,'<sup>189</sup> submitted articles in 1816, 1818, 1819 and 1822 and corresponded with the editor of *The Christian Reformer* on three occasions in 1817 alone. In the latter periodical Rutt, Wright and

---

<sup>185</sup> 'Memoir of Mrs. Jebb,' *MR*, 7 (1812).

<sup>186</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 43, 14 July 1815, f. 46, 15 July 1815; f. 58, 5 June 1816; MS Wood 11, f. 53, 1 July 1819; f. 85, 31 July 1819; f. 109, 25 August 1819.

<sup>187</sup> HMCO, MS Wood 7, f. 54, C. Kinder to G. W. Wood, 22 July 1815.

<sup>188</sup> A. Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History*, p. 51.

<sup>189</sup> *MR*, 17 (1822), 558.

Catharine Cappe were also frequent contributors. Only a small number of Arian authors appeared or were mentioned on a few occasions in either periodical. In *The Repository* Benjamin Carpenter wrote an obituary of Hugh Worthington in 1813. The moderate tone of this article made it acceptable, Carpenter stressing that for Worthington the debate over pre-existence and atonement had proved far less important than the unity of God and pre-eminence of God the Father.<sup>190</sup> Worthington had made no attempt to formulate a specifically Arian creed. His attempt at an Arian organisation in 1789 had not only failed,<sup>191</sup> but attracted little attention and was not even mentioned in Carpenter's obituary. Articles submitted by James Manning in 1813, 1815, 1817, 1818 and 1822 were theologically non-controversial in the eyes of Unitarians. Those in 1815, 1817 and 1818 focussed on 'The Use of Reason', 'The History of the Exeter Assembly' and on 'A Memorial of the Dissenting Academies in the West of England.'<sup>192</sup> Equally non-controversial was that contributed by Joseph Cornish on 'The Decline of Presbyterian Congregations' in 1818, which he attributed to the lack of replacement for Presbyterian ministers who had died, the expense involved in the support of Dissent and the growth of Methodism.<sup>193</sup> Cornish also submitted extracts and anecdotes from his own life, comments on the poverty of Dissenting ministers' families,<sup>194</sup> and articles in *The Christian Reformer* relating more to practice than to doctrine in 1818, 1820, 1821 and 1823.

The multiplicity of organisations and of publications, many of the latter issued by Tract Societies, which emerged in the new century bore the name of and represented the public face of Unitarianism. Arians were thus disappearing from public view,

---

<sup>190</sup> *MR*, 8 (1813), 7.

<sup>191</sup> A. Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History*, p. 50.

<sup>192</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 250; 12 (1817), 542; 13 (1818), 89.

<sup>193</sup> *MR*, 13 (1818), 77.

<sup>194</sup> *MR*, 13 (1818); 16 (1821).

overshadowed by Unitarian publications and organisations. Yet the continuing existence of Arian views was recognised by some contemporaries. William Turner of Newcastle, for example, believed that they accepted a modified form of atonement.<sup>195</sup> Others, such as Jeremiah Joyce, recognised the previous existence of Arianism as an historical fact, observing that

believers in the pre-existence of Christ are desirous of shifting [the term Arian] off their shoulders. Let them if they please rank themselves under the term Unitarians.<sup>196</sup>

Joyce's final comment raises the question of whether this was the route taken by some Arians. Joyce was prepared to compromise, rather than emphasising differences in shades of belief. The modification of the preambles of the London and Western Unitarian Societies by the new regional Unitarian Societies of the early nineteenth century allowed this course of action by Arians to be at least an option. The Arian Minister James Manning was invited to preach to the Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association in 1814, his sermon subsequently published and available for loan from the Association.<sup>197</sup>

Controversial issues between Unitarian and Arian were no longer emphasized in the same high profile way by these new societies. Even Thomas Belsham commented

I presume that the Unitarian Fund Society is composed of Arians and of believers in the proper humanity of Christ. Instructors may be Arians,<sup>198</sup>

continuing evidence of the existence of varying shades of belief within Unitarian Societies. While this was somewhat inconsistent with his own view that 'Arianism and

---

<sup>195</sup> *MR*, 9 (1815), 196.

<sup>196</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 554, 745.

<sup>197</sup> DRO, 3693D/LM1, *Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes*, 19 December 1814.

<sup>198</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 417.

Unitarianism can no more unite than fire and water,'<sup>199</sup> he appears to have believed that Arians could entertain the possibility of co-existing within the Unitarian Fund Society with those who believed in the total humanity of Christ. Joshua Toulmin noted that in the Southern Unitarian Society not all were in agreement with the total humanity of Christ or had the same views on the question of his pre-existence.<sup>200</sup> The anonymous correspondent Vectis made a similar observation.<sup>201</sup> John Fullager admired 'the broad base upon which most of our Unitarian Societies stand,' asserting that '[The term Unitarian] includes and of right belongs to Arians - I would say even of the highest description.'<sup>202</sup> The Arian Nathaniel Phillippis preached in May 1818 before supporters of the Unitarian Fund, and was chairman of the Sheffield Fellowship Fund.<sup>203</sup> Difference of theological view between Arian and Unitarian continued to be no bar to personal friendship. The Arian Joseph Cornish viewed the Unitarian Joshua Toulmin as a firm friend, and a memorial of Cornish was written by the Unitarian Lawrence Holden.<sup>204</sup>

However, James Manning was not listed as a subscriber to the Unitarian Fund between 1812 and 1814. Seven Arians listed in the Biographical Register, who survived into the early nineteenth century, remained aloof from regional Unitarian Societies, evidently deciding not to join any of them.<sup>205</sup> Those who protested about the preambles to the London and Western Unitarian Societies had been Unitarians, not Arians. Yet the comments of a number of Unitarians suggest a rather more flexible

---

<sup>199</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 428.

<sup>200</sup> J. Toulmin, *Sermon delivered to the Southern Unitarian Society* (Portsmouth, 1802), p. 123.

<sup>201</sup> *MR*, 15 (1820), 21.

<sup>202</sup> *MR*, 10 (1815), 554.

<sup>203</sup> *MR*, 14 (1819), 40-41.

<sup>204</sup> *MR*, 18 (1823), 35.

<sup>205</sup> Joseph Cornish, James Manning, Nathaniel Phillips, Abraham Rees, George Walker, David Williams and Hugh Worthington.

interpretation of the term Unitarian than that advanced by Socinians in the 1790s, recognising the possibility at least that Arians could join Unitarian Societies.

Within Unitarian organisations nuances continued to exist. Many Unitarians, as this chapter has demonstrated, remained uncomfortable with the concepts of ‘creed’, and while emphasizing the unity of God and pre-eminence of God the Father, preferred not to explore difficulties over the doctrine of pre-existence. Many Arians in the late eighteenth century had been prepared to work with Unitarians, while others had remained within the fold of the Church of England. Hugh Worthington in the final years of the eighteenth century had been almost a lone conspicuous Arian voice in his 1796 sermon on *The Utility of Religious Associations*. Worthington did not in this sermon advocate Arian religious associations, nor did he, unlike Unitarians, establish an Arian organisation. Indeed he saw the value of such associations as that of bringing together members of different churches, allowing debate on difficult passages of Scripture, and encouraging the revival of religion. His sermon made no reference to creeds, sects, or denominations.<sup>206</sup> Surviving evidence of early nineteenth century sermons, publications and correspondence in *The Monthly Repository* do not include a return to this subject by Arians. Thomas Arnold made the point that Arians who became absorbed into the Church of England were best left undisturbed:

If an Arian will join us in our worship of Christ, and will call him Lord and God, there is neither wisdom nor charity in insisting he shall explain what he means by these terms.<sup>207</sup>

In the early nineteenth century mortality reduced the number of Arians and there is no clear evidence to suggest that numbers were increased by new adherents. Others adopted Unitarian theology. Arianism, whether within Unitarianism or within

---

<sup>206</sup> H. Worthington, *The utility of religious associations. A sermon preached before an association of ministers at Chalfont St. Giles in the county of Buckinghamshire* (1796), pp. 6, 16, 21.

<sup>207</sup> T. Arnold, *Principles of Church Reform* (1833), pp. 36-37.

the fold of the Church of England, was more rarely referred to and became less visible. Any Arians who joined Unitarian Societies are hard to identify. Those who had actually left the Church of England by refusing to subscribe to the thirty-Nine Articles had made a very public stand. Retreat from this position and return to the Established Church may well have seemed difficult to them. Certainly conspicuous reports of such events are lacking. Arians never organised themselves into societies in the formal manner of Unitarians, and did not actively seek to propagate their views in the same way, either through publication or through societies for the distribution of books perpetuating Arian theological ideas.



## 11: CONCLUSIONS

It has been widely acknowledged that identity can take a variety of different forms, religious, social, economic, political, occupational, linguistic, national and regional, amongst others.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation analyses a particular religious identity which developed amongst the adherents of a distinctive body of beliefs in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, taking account of labels applied by others, often in an atmosphere of hostility, against a background of fear, in a derogatory manner and with varying degrees of accuracy. It analyses attempts by Rational Dissenters to define, explore and justify the theological ideas which formed the basis of their distinctiveness, and the evolution of their identity in this context.

This research is underpinned by two new approaches. Firstly the study of a wide range of individuals, ministers, laymen and women, Arians and Unitarians, who adhered to Rational Dissenting theological ideas, allows a far broader perspective and analysis in greater depth of a number of elements in the make up and evolution of Rational Dissent than any study based principally on Richard Price and Joseph Priestley. Furthermore this approach highlights statements in which Rational Dissenters specifically made the point that Price and Priestley were not representative of their views and methods, and the development of theological arguments amongst Rational Dissenters which reached very different conclusions from those of Price, and in particular of Priestley. Greater diversity within Rational Dissent than has previously been acknowledged is evident. Secondly an analysis of Rational Dissenting published authors on the one hand, and on the other, their readers identified through their financial subscriptions to such works and their borrowing habits as members of Unitarian Chapel Vestry libraries, illuminates the nature of the appeal of Rational

---

<sup>1</sup> C.f. Chapter 1, fns. 17-21, Chapter 2, fn. 2.

Dissent in a way that no focus on Price and Priestley, two untypical polymaths, could hope to do.

The key conclusion emerging from the research in this dissertation is the overwhelmingly theological nature of the identity of Rational Dissent, in contrast to a secular focus apparent in many historiographical studies. The distinctive nature of Rational Dissenting theology had a major impact on the nature of commitment by its adherents in the later eighteenth century to progress and liberty, as they perceived them. Previous scholars have referred to the co-existence of the rejection of three doctrines, those of original sin, atonement and pre-destination, with an optimistic belief in the possibility of progress for all mankind. This research establishes that this optimistic concept was the direct result of Rational Dissenting dismissal of these doctrines. These theological ideas not only drove their notions as to the nature of society but also made them in their reformism more inclusive and progressive than Orthodox Dissenters or members of the Established Church. Theology and optimism were inseparably bound together. The approach in this dissertation directs attention more widely beyond Rational Dissenting ministers and a very small number of laymen and women, to establish the extent to which these precise theological ideas determined the everyday lives, priorities and commitments of lay Rational Dissenters. It was these theological positions which led to their involvement in the extension of education and, in particular, of denominational Sunday Schools amongst the lower levels of society, conspicuously encouraging pupils to consider and question the ideas with which they were presented. Through increasing literacy amongst the poor, Rational Dissenting tracts and sermons would potentially become more accessible to the lower social classes. For most Rational Dissenters extending the provision of education was a necessary prerequisite of extension of the franchise. As with extension of the franchise,

Rational Dissenting arguments for the abolition of the slave trade were determined by the same concept of the possibility of improvement for all mankind, rooted in Rational Dissenting theology. The long-standing involvement of James Losh, amongst others, in all these areas demonstrated the belief that progress would be achieved gradually.

Rational Dissenters repeatedly emphasized the importance of theology in their presentation of the case against the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles. They referred specifically to those Articles which required adherence to points of doctrine which they denied were present in the Scriptures. These issues remained important not only to Rational Dissenting ministers, but to laymen and women such as John Aikin, Henry Wansey and Jane Toulmin, despite the Dissenters Relief Act of 1779, which removed the requirement to subscribe from dissenting ministers and allowed tutors and schoolmasters to practise without the need to be licensed.<sup>2</sup> It was the re-iteration of the precise theological grounds of their objections, which led Rational Dissenters to take their arguments against the Test and Corporation Acts further than Orthodox Dissenters. While they perceived removal of the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts as a right, rather than a concession, it was a theological right, albeit with practical implications. The mellowing of their views towards Roman Catholics fits in with this picture. Despite their own very different theological views, Rational Dissenters also saw the right to practise Roman Catholic beliefs as a theological right. While they might dismiss the basis of the ideas which underpinned Roman Catholic beliefs and practice, Rational Dissenters did not question the right of Roman Catholics to arrive at

---

<sup>2</sup> [Qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/research/the-dissenting-academies-project/legislation](http://qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/research/the-dissenting-academies-project/legislation). Subscription to these Articles was still a requirement at the University of Oxford until 1854 on matriculation and graduation. As Ditchfield points out in 'The Subscription Issue in British Politics', *Parliamentary History*, 7, 1 (1988), the oaths of allegiance and supremacy remained compulsory for all receiving Cambridge degrees.

such ideas. The distinction which they drew between Roman Catholicism and Popery, which set them aside from many Orthodox Dissenters, enhances the conclusion that theology and the right to diversity within it was the foundation stone of Rational Dissent. Evangelical Orthodox Dissent became militantly anti Roman Catholic. Moreover, emphasis amongst Rational Dissenters that it was against the corruptions of the Roman Catholic Church that revolutionaries in France took a stand was entirely in keeping with their arguments for the corruption of Christianity as a whole once it had moved away from sole dependence on the Scriptures.

At the heart of this dissertation is its demonstration of the distinctive nature of Rational Dissenting theology and its increasing divergence from Orthodox Dissent. This central argument is significant because of its contribution to scholarly debate. Bradley's contention that it was ecclesiastical polity and ecclesiology which determined Dissenting arguments as a whole, rather than precise theological beliefs,<sup>3</sup> is borne out in Rational and Orthodox Dissenting reactions to the American Revolution. This is unsurprising. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the arguments of Rational and Orthodox Dissenters favoured toleration of all Protestant sects in America and their objection to the proposed introduction of bishops was based on the same hostility to the possibility of a Episcopalian form of the Anglican Church in America as to the existing structure of the established church in England.

However, the wider study of Rational Dissenting identity in this research indicates that Bradley's contention is not borne out in other contexts. Clark's recognition that the theology of Rational Dissent fed into the political activities of Rational Dissenters, although based on published primary sources alone and dependent

---

<sup>3</sup> J. Bradley, 'The British Public and the American Revolution: Ideology, Interest and Opinion,' in H. T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (2014), p. 144.

on a very small number of Rational Dissenters, principally Price and Priestley, is endorsed by the prosopographical approach, including the study of a number of unpublished and lay sources which underpins this dissertation. Indeed this research takes Clark's contention further, beyond the political activities of Rational Dissenters into activities which reflected their view of the nature of society.

Initial support amongst many Rational Dissenters for the principles which underpinned the Revolution in France did not detract from their support for the British constitution, based on the Glorious Revolution. Their belief that the Glorious Revolution had not gone far enough did not lead them to question the existence of the monarchy, but rather to urge republican values within a constitutional monarchy. This too was a long-term reforming aim hoped for within the boundaries of the existing constitution, not extreme political radicalism.

Further emerging from this research into the wider circle of adherents of Rational Dissent is a clearer picture of the key points at which Rational Dissenting theology evolved. No primary focus on Price and Priestley adequately demonstrates the extent to which the late 1780s and in particular the 1790s were a turning point in this evolution, particularly in view of Price's death in 1791 and Priestley's emigration in 1794. In the 1770s Rational Dissenters had a sense of a corporate identity which separated them from both the Church of England and Roman Catholicism. *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal* addressed all Protestant Nonconformists, while bodies of Protestant Dissenting Ministers implied a degree of solidarity between Rational and Orthodox Dissent. Nevertheless Rational Dissenters were clear about their doctrinal position within Protestant Dissent. During the late 1780s and the 1790s in particular fundamental differences between Rational and Orthodox over doctrine fed into an increasing divergence in the precise objections advanced by each to the Test and

Corporation Acts and the requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and disagreement over methodology in this struggle. The impact of doctrinal differences had become increasingly clear. Established in 1792, after the Birmingham Riots, the committee of the Society of Unitarian Christians in the West of England arranged for the delivery of an address to its members every year between its foundation and 1800. Publication of these addresses ensured that they were accessible not simply to the relatively small numbers able to attend Annual General Meetings, nor even simply to subscribers, but to a much wider audience. This was a carefully planned, regular method of disseminating its views amongst its adherents in the West and beyond, reiterating, confirming and consolidating its Unitarian sense of identity.

In the 1790s, too, heightened levels of invective against Rational Dissenters were accompanied by increasing numbers of published as well as physical attacks. The Birmingham Riots, directed principally but not solely against Priestley, were the most conspicuous but by no means the last or only example of the latter. Attacks followed in 1792 on Unitarian homes in Nottingham, on the workshops of Robert Denison, cotton manufacturer of Leeds, and in Taunton where an effigy of Thomas Paine was burnt outside the home of Joshua Toulmin and his wife Jane felt forced to give up the trade of bookseller. Their son Henry Toulmin fled persecution in Chowbent for Virginia. In 1793 James Belcher, Unitarian bookseller in Birmingham was imprisoned for selling the works of Paine, and the following year Joseph Gales, Unitarian editor of the *Sheffield Register*, also fled to America. In 1799 Benjamin Flower and Gilbert Wakefield were imprisoned for libel, and Joseph Johnson for sedition. English Rational Dissenters like Lindsey were concerned by the transportation to Australia of Thomas Fyshe Palmer and Thomas Muir, reformers in Scotland who displayed Unitarian sympathies.

During the 1790s an increase of 5.2 in the percentage of publications referring to Rational Dissent is reflected in records in ECCO and itemized in Table 1 (p. 21). This was matched by the increasing activity amongst published Rational Dissenting authors who feature in the Biographical Register. The number of these publications in the 1790s was almost double that in the 1780s. Dr. John Aikin, Anna Letitia Barbauld, William Belsham, John Disney, William Roscoe, Joshua Toulmin, Gilbert Wakefield and Helen Maria Williams were prolific in their output. As shown in Table 3 (p. 190), their works were republished in new editions. Such authors were both defending themselves against heightened levels of attack on Rational Dissenters and defining more precisely the identity of Rational Dissent, as they perceived it. Thus Rational Dissenters in the 1780s and 1790s, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, repeatedly and insistently referred to themselves as Christian. In the 1790s they took such assertions one stage further, advancing definitions of what being a Rational Dissenting Christian involved. In the same decade they demonstrated their adherence to the scriptures with specific examples, and sought to establish, not just the justification for a rational approach but, beyond this, the soundness of their reasoning.

In the 1790s Unitarianism was becoming the public face of Rational Dissent. The output of authors listed in the Biographical Register demonstrates the far greater proliferation of publications by Unitarians than Arians. The debate over the preamble to the London and Western Unitarian Societies was a very public debate, attracting much comment. Denial of the doctrines of the pre-existence and of the total humanity of Christ, a problem for Arians, was explicitly expressed in these preambles and initiated a more formal stage in the evolving identity of Rational Dissent. Liturgies, likewise produced by Unitarians rather than Arians, made a further contribution towards this process in the 1780s and 1790s, since as Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate, there was a

significant degree of overlap amongst the Unitarian liturgies adopted. It is, however, important not to over-emphasize this contribution since support for these liturgies was variable.

The 1790s were also a period of tension within Rational Dissent, tensions which emerged out of increasing definitions of its identity. Only through a prosopographical study does this become fully apparent. Unitarians could, and did, argue that their theological concepts continued to derive purely from the scriptures, but liturgies and preambles could be perceived as human formularies, against which Rational Dissenters had previously argued. This seeming contradiction caused something of an inherent difficulty for Unitarians.

The beginnings of more formal organisation began in the 1790s, escalating after 1800. As Table 15 (p. 244) demonstrates the early nineteenth century saw a conspicuous growth in Unitarian Societies. Unitarianism became increasingly organised. Unlike the Western Unitarian Society, which adopted verbatim the preamble of the London Unitarian Society, however, modification of the preamble wording in subsequent Unitarian Societies suggests an attempt to resolve tensions and make it at least possible to absorb Arians as members. It suggests too an awareness of the dangers of exclusivity. Compilers of the preambles to the Devon and Cornwall, and Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Societies chose to avoid any allusion to the pre-existence and divinity of Christ. The nuances evident in Rational Dissenting theological belief in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century form an important theme of this dissertation. Members of the Devon and Cornwall, and Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Societies remained open to such nuances of Rational Dissenting belief, while still adding by the very existence of these Societies another layer of formality to the identity of Rational Dissent and retaining the increasingly publicly used title of Unitarian.



By the 1790s the outward appearance of Rational Dissent had changed. The term Unitarian very gradually replaced those of Presbyterian and General Baptist amongst its adherents. Unitarianism had assumed the appearance of a denomination, characterised by visible organisation rather than a looser way of thought, while still retaining its central theological ideas, rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the divinity of Christ, and of Christ's atonement on the cross for original sin. Local networks were reinforced in a more formal manner, culminating in 1825 in the merger of the Unitarian Book Society, the Unitarian Fund and the Unitarian Association for civil rights into the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. In the early nineteenth century this increasing formalisation in organisation manifested a number of characteristics.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of the Unitarian Fund Society in 1806 was followed by local fellowship funds which were variously based on counties, cities and small towns. In the 1790s an awareness of the importance of training both chapel and itinerant preachers in order to maintain the theological ideology of Rational Dissent was evident. In the early nineteenth century this awareness solidified into the creation of fund societies specifically for this purpose. Alongside the Southern, Midland and Northern, and Eastern regional Unitarian Societies, a number of Unitarian Societies based on smaller geographical units of counties appeared. In addition to the *Tracts printed and published by the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the practice of Virtue* between 1791 and 1802, local Book and Tract Societies also appeared, some based on regions or counties, but a number too established in individual towns and cities. Smaller organisations offered at least the possibility of meeting and discussion, enhancing more formal networks, alongside informal. *The Monthly*

---

<sup>4</sup> C. f. Chapter 10.

*Repository* and *Christian Reformer*, along with Unitarian tracts, were aimed at Unitarian readers.

This dissertation, in presenting through detailed analysis a clearer picture of the key points at which late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Rational Dissenting theology evolved, takes the research of Herbert John McLachlan and Sarah Mortimer into Socinianism in the seventeenth century further. Both McLachlan and Mortimer saw Socinianism in that period as a way of thought adopted by individual sympathisers who made no attempt to form any organised group publicly labelling itself Socinian. While Mortimer demonstrates that Socinianism was a ‘challenge’ even in the 1690s, analysis in this dissertation of its evolving identity helps to explain the very much greater perception of it as a threat by those who did not adhere to it in the 1790s.

The prosopographical approach in this research also allows for further social mapping of support for Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While John Seed’s work on the social status of Rational Dissent<sup>5</sup> provides some useful examples of its adherents, his study in 1985 was confined to the 1770s and 1780s and to Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, Bowl Alley Lane, Hull, Wakefield Chapel and Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle, located in the midlands and north of England. His focus on trustees unsurprisingly identified landed gentlemen, professionals and the more affluent among the merchant class. The picture suggested by Seed is taken considerably further by analysis in this dissertation of levels of financial contribution in lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting works and organisations, and in lists of subscribers to Unitarian Chapels, together with readership lists of Unitarian libraries. These constitute additional sources of evidence to which

---

<sup>5</sup> J. Seed, ‘The role of unitarianism in the formation of Liberal culture, 1775-1851: a social history’ (University of Hull Ph.D., 1981) This also included a study of Call Lane Chapel, Leeds and Upper Chapel, Sheffield; idem, ‘A set of men powerful enough in many things’: Rational Dissent and political opposition in England, 1770-1790,’ in Haakonssen, ed, *Enlightenment and Religion*.

little attention has previously been paid. Taken together, these lists allow a much wider geographical study over a more extensive period, including the all-important 1790s and beyond, of the social map of the adherents of Rational Dissent.

Of course conclusions drawn from the lists must necessarily be cautious, since details of social status are not consistently supplied, hence all figures are minimum estimates. Analysis of multiple subscribers in this research, however, demonstrates that the presence of educated professionals, amongst them the bankers, doctors and surgeons identified by Seed, was replicated elsewhere in England. Appendix 2 features, for example, five bankers, ten doctors and three attorneys, alongside many gentlemen and esquires. The results in Table 11 (p. 221) endorse, with wider evidence, Seed's image of Rational Dissent as educated and affluent. Seed emphasised the level of opulence amongst the merchant trustees of the chapels he studied. This level of affluence amongst London merchants is endorsed, amongst others, by the example of Francis Kemble. Kemble, a grocer of Swithin's Lane, a multiple subscriber featured in Appendix 2, bequeathed to his father a property in Swindon valued at £4,020, which his father was currently occupying, along with an annuity of £60. Kemble had two business partners.<sup>6</sup> This research, however, also provides examples of incomes of Rational Dissenters which unsurprisingly could reflect prosperity but not opulence. The wills of a number of merchants, shopkeepers and manufacturers operating outside the large cities, who feature as Rational Dissenting subscribers in Appendix 2, are suggestive of widely ranging incomes at death. Amongst the more affluent were the clothier George Wansey of Warminster, and the merchant Joseph Gundry of Bridport. In marked contrast, the bequests of William Brown, clothier of Cullompton, Devon, the merchant George Dunsford of Tiverton, and the Bridport ironmonger John Hounsell were more

---

<sup>6</sup> TNA. PROB 11/ 1303: Will of Francis Kemble, St Swithin's Lane, 30 March 1798.

modest. The research in this dissertation is suggestive of the inclusion amongst Rational Dissenters of smaller scale merchants, shopkeepers and manufacturers operating outside the large cities and achieving a lower level of affluence, even where regarded as prosperous locally.<sup>7</sup> In Northiam, a rural setting in even greater contrast to congregations of large cities and their trustees analysed by Seed, subscribers to the Unitarian Book Society included a preponderance of small landowners.<sup>8</sup> While the evolution of theological ideas amongst Rational Dissenters stemmed principally from an intellectual elite, its appeal extended beyond this to skilled craftsmen, manufacturers and merchants. The minimum number of multiple subscribers identified in Appendix 2 belonging to the latter social sphere suggests that the appeal of Rational Dissent was more widespread here than previously recognised.

Moreover, this research provides a glimpse of the financial status, contributions and interests of women and of the presence of families amongst Rational Dissenting subscribers, in a way that Seed's focus on trustees of Rational Dissenting chapels could not. Subscribers in Appendix 2 include women such as Elizabeth Rayner, Elizabeth Moore, spinster of Taunton and Judith Bull, whose wills indicate their independent means. Amongst Rational Dissenting subscribers, the presence of families endorses the importance of networks.

Seed's work concentrated on the midlands and the north. This dissertation includes new forms of evidence relating to the south and west, as well as to the capital. In its cumulative approach it enhances the picture of the geography of Rational Dissent in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Once more, conclusions drawn from the lists of subscribers to Rational Dissenting works and organisations analysed in this

---

<sup>7</sup> Including John Evans, saltman of Exeter, William Reyner, draper of Barnstaple, William Fowler, spinner of Bridport, William Notcutt, draper of Ipswich.

<sup>8</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter 10.

dissertation must necessarily be cautious. The map in Figure 2 reveals the areas where multiple subscribers were identified. It does not follow that those areas where none are shown were areas where Rational Dissent attracted no adherents. This study, however, casts some further light on the interactions of the capital with other areas and its influence on the fortunes and appeal of Rational Dissent. The dominant role of London, illustrated in Table 10 (p. 219), as place of publication and sale continued, and, as shown in Table 9 (p. 216), by far the larger number of multiple subscribers came from there. However, Table 6 (p. 210) illustrates that the involvement of London subscribers in support of individual works was very variable. Table 5 (p. 208) demonstrates that as the 1790s wore on, the percentage of subscribers from the capital to the Western Unitarian Society was always lower than in 1792, the year of its inauguration. By 1799 London involvement in support of this organisation had declined significantly, while that of the west and of other areas had increased. These were not new areas of support for Rational Dissent, but areas where support was becoming more visible and the confidence of its adherents was growing. Still one of only two existing regional Unitarian societies, the reputation of the Western Unitarian Society had spread. At the same time, the proportion of London members of the London Unitarian Society increased. Undoubtedly because of its unique status as the capital, in the early nineteenth century the Unitarian Society based in London still attracted a significant proportion of its membership, between 30 and 40 percent, from outside London, while subscriptions to other Unitarian societies were overwhelmingly more local.

In the broader context of the religious identity of England in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, this research into the identity of Rational Dissent and its place within this context has further conclusions to offer. For some contemporaries there was a worry that this was an increasingly secular age. Awareness of events in

France, reported in Kent within four days of their occurrence,<sup>9</sup> on one occasion at least, heightened fears about the future of religion. John Nichols, editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* noted in the Preface in January 1793 that 'Europe has never experienced more alarm and danger than at the present moment - Religion menaced by a foe.'<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the arrival of French émigrés, among them exiled clergy, 'great numbers landed daily on all parts of the coast,'<sup>11</sup> aided the transmission of first hand information, in turn heightening such fears.

Much has been added to understanding of anti-clericalism in England in this period by the work of Nigel Aston, James Bradley and Grayson Ditchfield.<sup>12</sup> Powerful arguments advanced by these scholars point to Dissenting contribution to hostility to the clergy of the Church of England in the form of their opposition to the concept of a State Church and Rational Dissenting insistence on attacking the distortion of the religious belief in subsequent ages by the hierarchy in the Church. The research in this dissertation endorses the interpretation of these scholars through its wider prosopographical approach into the identity of Rational Dissent and the theological ideas which underpinned it and which directed Rational Dissenting objections to subscription and the Test and Corporation Acts. This study has shown the widespread nature of Rational Dissenting arguments that they were not attacking the Church of England but rather the concept of an Established Church, expressed with far greater frequency than those of Orthodox Dissenters. Amongst others, Joseph Fownes, Gilbert Wakefield, Dr. John Aikin and Samuel Heywood maintained that the Church itself was not under threat from Dissenters.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 28 August 1792.

<sup>10</sup> *GM*, January 1793, LXIII, ii (1793), 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 2 October 1792.

<sup>12</sup> N. Aston, 'Horne and Heterodoxy; The Defence of Anglican Beliefs in the Late Enlightenment,' *EHR*, 108 (1993); N. Aston, M. Cragoe, eds, *Anticlericalism in Britain c. 1500-1914*.

Yet despite fears of growing secularisation and anti-clericalism, this was an age overwhelmingly concerned with salvation. Salvation was the fundamental hope of all Christians and therefore central to theological debate. The profile of this issue was indeed raised by Rational Dissenters in the course of defining and defending their theology. As this research has further demonstrated, the notion of returning to the purity of primitive Christianity uncorrupted by post-apostolic additions to doctrine and practice was advocated in published form by significant numbers of Rational Dissenters in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. It owed as much to arguments voiced amongst Rational Dissenters before 1782, as to Priestley's *An History of The Corruptions of Christianity*. Furthermore Rational Dissenters continued to return to this theme for the remainder of the eighteenth century. It became a central feature of their Christian identity. Increasing references to rejection of the doctrine of atonement from the 1770s to the 1780s, and particularly significant increases in the 1790s demonstrate the extent of the contribution made by Rational Dissenters to the debate around the nature of salvation and the route to achieving it. The rejection of predestination, a further major concern, opened up the possibility of salvation to all. The primary concern of Rational Dissenters was the gateway to Heaven. In securing entry through this gateway, Christ's crucial role in instruction and salvation as the representative of God was central to them. Their redefinition of the significance of miracles fitted into their definition of Christ's role in salvation. So too did their rejection of the everlasting torments of Hell. All such thoughts were reflected in extensive reading and theological debate amongst Rational Dissenting laity as well as amongst ministers. Rational Dissenters made a significant contribution to family devotional literature in the late eighteenth century. The frequency and prolific nature of Rational Dissenting theological publications, and the vehement attacks which they attracted from members

of the Established Church and from Orthodox Dissenters, bear testimony to the continuing importance of religion and religious concerns in this period. The activities of Rational Dissenters, both in print and in their everyday lives, and reactions to them demonstrate that theology still mattered and determined their view of the world.

Inevitably, this research raises further questions, questions which relate specifically to the identity and evolution of Rational Dissent itself in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century and its legacy in the early nineteenth century. Arians prove harder to identify than Unitarians. They wrote less prolifically and did not organise themselves into societies unique to themselves. It is reasonable to assume that they felt less need to defend their views, since they did not come under such vehement attack. While there is the possibility that Arians became members of later, less exclusive, Unitarian Societies, their presence is difficult to track. Due to the nature of the surviving sources our knowledge of the social basis and geography of Rational Dissent, although extended by this research, remains incomplete, as does our understanding of the role of women within it and of those laymen amongst its adherents who did not publish. In particular the fate of Arianism alone could form the basis for further extended study, despite the difficulties of identifying Arians.

What then does analysis in this research about the evolution of Rational Dissenting identity in the later eighteenth century contribute towards our understanding of histories of ideas, their emergence and evolution? Firstly it endorses the importance of a prosopographical approach, and the extent to which such an approach can alter perspectives and adjust imbalances in interpretation. Sell's crucial argument that there is a need in academic research to look beyond the best-known individuals is vindicated by analysis in this dissertation. It simultaneously endorses the value of a wide range of unpublished as well as published sources, together with a fundamentally important



awareness of their limitations. Secondly this study traces movement within ideology from initially negative reactions towards more clearly defined positive positions and argued theological views, exploring the extent to which definition is evolved in the course of response to attack from outside. The identity of Rational Dissent was constructed by Rational Dissenters themselves, imagined by those hostile towards it, and in response to such opposition, further defined by Rational Dissenters.

Rational Dissenters, in their belief in the possibility of progress for all, went a step further than Calvinists. Without ever becoming totally socially or educationally inclusive in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Rational Dissent offered the potential for further inclusiveness in the future. At the same time this research demonstrates a point in ideological evolution where closer definition can lead to exclusivity, as in the statement of belief in preambles of the London and Western Unitarian Societies. It further highlights subsequent reactions from within against such exclusivity. It illustrates the possibility of a change in outward organisation amongst the adherents of an ideology, alongside the preservation of many of the original and central ideas underpinning it. Analysis of the identity of Rational Dissent provides a case study of the complexities inherent in the evolution of the history of ideas, in a religious context of the movement from a sect to a denomination. That none of these tendencies may be described as unique to the emergence of Rational Dissenting ideas, increases their relevance and significance to the history of ideas as a whole.

## APPENDIX 1

### Nature of Attacks on Arians and Socinians

UC-Unchristian, US-Unscriptural, FR-Faulty Reasoning, AB-Abhorrent, DA-Dangerous, HC-Historical Comment.

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians					Attacks on Socinians							
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	
Baillie, John	A vindication of the divinity of Jesus Christ	1789	*												
	Two Sermons	1792	*												
Bellamy, Joseph	A careful and strict examination of the external covenant	1770							*	*		*			
	The sacramental controversy brought to a point	1770								*					
	Essay on the nature and glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ	1784								*					
	Letters and dialogues on the nature of love to God	1792									*				
Benson, Joseph	Remarks on Dr. Priestley's system of materialism	1788								*	*				
	A defence of the Methodists	1793							*	*			*		
	A further defence of the Methodists	1793										*			
	A sermon preached at the Methodist Chapel in Hull	1798										*			
Berkeley, George	A caution against Socinianism	1787		*						*					
	Sermons	1799	*						*						
Burgess, Thomas	Remarks on Josephus's account	1788	*												
	Reflections on the controversial writings of Dr. Priestley	1791									*				
Burgh, William	A scriptural confutation	1774		*											
	An inquiry into the scriptural beliefs of the Christians	1778		*						*					

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
Cleaver, William	A sermon on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper	1789							*	*				
	Pardon and sanctification proved	1791								*				
	A sermon preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal	1791							*					
Elliot, Richard	Encouragement for sinners	1772							*					
	Sacred controversy	1774							*					
	Scriptural efficiency	1774		*										
	Scriptural testimony of Christ	1775			*				*					
	The consistent Protestant	1777								*				
	Vicarious sacrifice	1783							*					
	Dipping, not baptising	1787							*					
Evans, Caleb	Christ crucified	1789							*					
	Remarks on a letter addressed to the minister of the Orthodox Baptists	1789							*					
	The deceitfulness of sin	1792						*						
Fletcher, John	A vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's last minutes	1771									*			
	Doctrines of grace and justice	1771							*					
	First part of an equal check to Antimonianism	1774							*					
	A rational vindication of the catholic faith	1790						*	*	*				
	Socinianism unscriptural	1791							*	*				
Fuller, Andrew	The gospel of Christ worthy of all acceptance	1785								*				

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
	A defence of a treatise entitled the gospel of Christ worthy of all acceptation	1787										*		
	The Calvinistic and Socinian systems examined and compared	1793							*	*				
Geddes, Alexander	Dr. Geddes address to the public	1793					*							
	A sermon preached on the day of the general fast	1799					*		*				*	
	A modest appeal for the Roman Catholics of Great Britain	1800						*						*
Graham, William	Four discourses on public vows	1778						*						
	A candid vindication of the Secession Church	1790	*											
	A Review of ecclesiastical establishments in Europe	1796						*						
Harvest, George	The reasonableness and necessity of explanatory articles of faith	1772	*											
	A letter to Mr. Samuel Chandler	1772		*					*					
Harwood, Edward	Five dissertations	1772		*										
	New introduction to study and knowledge of the New Testament	1773				*								
	Of the Socinian scheme	1783								*	*			
	The case of the Reverend Dr. Harwood	1784									*			
Haweis, Thomas	Evangelical principles and practice	1794	*						*					
	An impartial and succinct History of the rise of the Church of Christ	1800	*				*		*					
Hawkins, John	An appeal to Scripture, reason and tradition	1785						*						
	An expostulatory address to the Rev. Dr. Priestley	1788					*							
	A general defence of the principles of the Reformation	1788						*						

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
Hey, John	A short defence of the doctrine of atonement for sin by the death of Christ	1777											*	
	Lectures in divinity	1798											*	
Hill, Sir Richard	The finishing stroke	1773					*							
	An apology for brotherly love	1798				*								
Horne, George	Christ the object of religious adoration and therefore very God	1775			*					*	*			
	Sermon preached before the Honourable. House of Commons	1780										*		
	The duty of contending for the faith	1786									*		*	
	Sixteen sermons on various subjects and occasions	1793			*					*				
	An apology for certain gentlemen in the University of Oxford	1799			*									
Horsley, Samuel	Letters from the Archdeacon of St. Albans, in reply to Dr. Priestley	1784		*	*						*			
	Of the incarnation	1785								*				
	Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's 2nd letter to the Archdeacon of St. Albans	1786									*			
	Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley	1789						*		*				
	A Review of the Protestant Dissenters	1790						*					*	
Huntington, William	The skeletons, or the Arminian anatomized	1783	*		*									
	God the poor man's guardian	1784				*								
	The Arminian skeleton	1787	*		*									
	The music and odour of Saints	1788			*							*	*	
	A letter to the Rev. Mr. Caleb Evans	1789								*				
	Epistles of faith or spiritual letters on various subjects	1790	*	*									*	

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
	A key to the hieroglyphical print of the Church of God	1791									*			
	Forty stripes save none for Satan	1792	*	*										
	A feeble dispute with a wise and learned man	1793	*	*						*				
	Advocates for devils refuted	1794	*						*					
	The deluded Arian	1796			*					*				
	Living testimonies	1797										*		
	Discoveries and cautions from the streets of Zion	1798	*							*			*	
	The broken cistern and the springing well	1800				*			*		*			
Hurn, William	The fundamental principles of the established church	1790								*				
	Men warned to examine the ground of their religion	1792								*				
Jesse, William	A defence of the established church	1788					*		*					
	The happiness of man	1793							*					
	On the scriptures	1799		*					*	*				
Jones, William	A full answer to an essay on the Spirit	1770					*			*				
	Remarks on the principles and spirit of a work entitled The Confessional	1770			*						*			
	A disquisition concerning the metaphorical usage and application of sleep in the scriptures	1772								*				
	A free enquiry into the sense and significance of the spring in the Song of Solomon	1772								*				
	The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity	1776	*		*					*	*			
	The fear of God and the benefits of civil obedience	1778											*	

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
	A preservative against the publications dispersed by modern Socinians	1787							*		*			
	A course of lectures on the figurative language of Holy Scripture	1787								*				
	An essay on the Church	1787							*		*			
	Sermons on religious and moral subjects	1790							*					
	The difficulties and resources of the Christian ministry	1791											*	
	A small whole length of Dr. Priestley	1792									*			
	A short way to truth	1793								*				
	Four discourses	1799								*				
Macgowan, John	Infernal conference or dialogue of devils	1772	*						*					
	Socinianism brought to the test	1773		*					*					
	The Arian and Socinian Monitor	1781	*	*						*	*			
Mead, Henry	Christ both God and man	1789	*											
	Fast Day sermon	1796		*						*				
Newton, John	Letters and sermons	1787							*	*	*			
	Cardiphonia, or the utterance of the heart	1792							*					
Orton, Job	Letters to a young clergyman	1791									*			
	Letters from the Rev. Job Orton	1800								*				
Palmer, Samuel	The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted	1786								*				
	Thoughts on the progress of Socinianism	1786								*				
Priestley, Timothy	A crown of eternal glory preferred to all the riches of the world	1791								*				

Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
	The new and complete evangelical history of the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ	1793							*					
Randolph, Thomas	A vindication of the worship of the Son and Holy Ghost	1775									*			
	A letter to the remarker on the layman's Scriptural Confutation	1777	*	*							*			
	A view of the blessed Saviour's ministry	1784									*			
Reader, Thomas	A letter to Sir Henry Trelawny	1778		*										
	Remarks on the prophetic part of the Revelation of St. John	1778	*											
Reeve, Joseph	A view of the oath tendered by the legislature to the Roman Catholics of England	1790	*	*										
	Practical discourses on the perfections and wonderful works of God	1793	*											
Ryland, John	A contemplation on the existence and perfections of God	1774											*	
	Contemplations on the beauty of creation	1780											*	
	The character of the Rev. James Hervey	1790							*		*	*		
	A body of divinity in miniature	1790							*		*			
Scott, Thomas	The force of truth	1779							*		*			
	The doctrines of election and perseverance stated from Scripture	1786								*				
	Essays on the most important subjects in religion	1794							*	*				
Serle, Ambrose	An address to the serious and candid professors of Christianity	1773		*							*			
	Horae Solitiae	1776	*		*						*			
	The Church of God	1793	*											
Sharp, Granville	A tract on the law of nature, and principles of action in man	1777								*	*			



Author	Publication	Date	Attacks on Arians						Attacks on Socinians					
			UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC	UC	US	FR	AB	DA	HC
	Remarks on the uses of the definitive article in the Greek text of the New Testament	1798							*		*			
Simpson, David	Strictures on religious opinions	1792							*	*	*			
	An essay on the authenticity of the New Testament	1793							*	*	*			
	A key to the prophecies	1795							*					
	An apology for the doctrine of the Trinity	1798								*	*	*		
	God speaking from Mount Gerizim	1799									*			
Townsend, George	A word of caution against the Socinian poison of William Frend	1788								*				
	The brief rejoinder, in a letter to Mr. W. Frend	1789								*				
Whittaker, William	Four dialogues on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity	1786								*				
	A sermon on 30 January	1787							*					
	A letter to Dr. Priestley	1787								*				

**APPENDIX 2**

Late Eighteenth Century Subscribers to Rational Dissenting Published Works and Organisations

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Adair	Alexander	Esq.	London							*						*									2	
Addicott	Edward	Esq.	Exeter																			*	*	*	3	
Aikin	John	MD	London															*	*	*					3	
Ainsley	James	MD	Kendal					*	*																2	
Ainsley		Rev.	Pembroke Hall, Camb							*						*									2	
Aldersey	Robert	Esq.	Wigan										*						*						2	
Anstis	Matthew	Rev.	Bridport							*							*					*	*	*	5	
Armstrong	Edward	Rev.	Bath							*								*							2	
Arnold	Thomas	MD	Leicester							*									*	*					3	
Astley	Thomas	Rev.	Derbyshire					*	*										*						3	
Bailey	James	Manufacturer	Manchester								*				*										2	
Bailey	John	MD	Chichester			*				*			*						*						4	
Bailey	Thomas	Weaver	Manchester								*								*						2	
Bakewell	William		Burton on Trent							*			*												2	
Barbould	Rochment	Rev.	London									*				*		*							3	

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscribers
Barnes	Thomas	Rev.	Manchester	*													*								3	
Basnett		Mr	Bath	*																		*	*		3	
Bealey	Joseph	Rev.	Cockey Moor						*		*								*						3	
Bell	Archibald	Merchant	Manchester					*			*														2	
Belsham	Thomas	Rev.	London	*									*					*		*	*	*	*	*	8	#
Belsham	William	Esq.	Bedford										*					*		*					3	
Bennett	Richard	Esq.	Bewdley																			*	*	*	3	
Bing		Rev.	Tamworth							*									*						2	
Bretland	Joseph	Rev.	Exeter				*										*								2	
Broardhurst	Thomas	Rev.	Daventry																*	*		*	*	*	5	
Brown	John		London		*					*						*									3	
Brown	Timothy	Shop Factor	London														*			*					2	
Browne	William	Serge maker	Cullompton													*					*	*	*	*	5	
Bull	Judith	Mrs	Westminster			*				*						*		*							4	
Buller	William	Manufacturer	Wilton				*			*							*								3	
Burkitt	Thomas		London	*		*																			2	
Buxton	John		Nottingham				*												*						2	
Cadell	Thomas		London		*				*								*								3	
Calumny	Edmund		London	*					*								*								3	



										Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions		
Clegg	John	Merchant	Manchester															*	*											2			
Coates	J	Rev.	Birmingham				*																*								3		
Coates	William		Bristol				*								*								*	*							4		
Colmore	Thomas	Merchant	Birmingham		*																		*								2		
Cooke	Richard		London			*										*						*									3		
Cornish	Joseph	Rev.	Colyton		*		*									*						*									4		
Cox	William	Rev.	Kings College, Camb							*					*							*										2	
Crane	William	Merchant	Manchester												*				*												2		
Crank	J	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb							*					*						*											2	
Crawford	Adair		Lincolns Inn				*																*									2	
Crompton	John	Esq.	Derby												*										*							2	
Crompton	Peter	MD	Derby											*	*							*		*								3	
Currie	James	MD	Liverpool							*					*				*													3	
Dalton	T	Rev.	Carisbrook, IOW					*	*	*					*	*								*								4	
Darbyshire	James	Esq.	Bolton					*							*			*					*									3	
David	Job	Rev.	Frome		*																	*							*			3	
Davies	John	Rev.	Cullompton																							*	*					2	
Deane	John	Rev.	Bradford				*							*								*										2	
Denison	Robert	Esq.	Nottingham				*															*										2	

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Dilly	Charles	Bookseller	Poultry, London							*		*						*							3	
Disney	John	Rev.	London		*		*	*				*	*			*	*	*	*						10	#
Dodson	Michael	Attorney	London			*				*		*			*		*						*		6	#
Downer	Swan		Addle street		*												*								2	
Dowse	John		London				*			*															2	
Dowson	Benjamin	Merchant	Norfolk														*	*							2	
Duckworth	George	Esq.	Manchester								*		*	*				*							4	
Duncombe	Henry	MP	London							*					*			*							3	
Dunsford	George	Merchant	Tiverton														*				*	*	*	*	4	
Dunsford	Martin	Merchant	Tiverton													*					*	*	*	*	5	
Dyson	Edward		Diss				*											*							2	
Eaton		Rev.	Soho									*			*										2	
Emans	Peter	Rev.	Coventry				*			*	*	*						*	*	*					6	#
Enfield	William	Rev.	Warrington				*	*		*	*	*					*	*	*						6	#
Esdaile	William		Lombard St, London					*	*	*	*	*						*	*	*					2	
Estlin	J P	Rev.	Bristol		*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	13	#
Evans	Jonathan	Saltman	Exeter																	*	*	*	*		4	
Evans	Joseph	Rev.	Sheffield					*	*	*	*	*													2	
Evans	Richard	Manufacturer	Manchester					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*										4	



					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions	
Girlé	Samuel	Rev.	North Shields																*	*						2	
Gooch	John	Prebendary	Ely							*						*										2	
Gosset	Isaac	Rev.	Portman Sq									*				*										2	
Green	Samuel		Nottingham													*			*							2	
Gregory	Edward	Rev.	Langar, Notts							*									*							2	
Grigby	Joshua	Jnr	Suffolk							*								*								2	
Grimshaw	Robert	Manufacturer	Manchester								*			*	*					*						4	
Gundry	Daniel	Merchant	Bridport		*	*																				2	
Gundry	Joseph	Merchant	Bridport		*	*												*								2	
Gundry	Samuel	Merchant	Bridport		*	*											*									3	
Guy	William	Surgeon	Chichester							*		*														2	
Hailstone	John		Trinity College, Camb							*						*				*	*					3	
Hall	Robert		Nottingham																*	*						2	
Halls	James		Hornchurch							*		*														2	
Hammond	John	Rev.	Cambridge							*		*														2	
Hancock	John		Nottingham				*									*			*	*						4	
Hancock	Matthew	Merchant	London																*	*						2	
Hanson	William	Merchant	Manchester								*			*	*											3	
Hardman	Samuel		Manchester							*	*		*	*				*								4	



					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Harris	Christopher	Watch Maker	London				*																		2	
Harris	Robert		Maidstone				*											*							2	
Harrison	Ralph	Rev.	Manchester					*			*			*					*						4	
Haslingden	John		Manchester								*				*										2	
Hatfield	Jonathan	Merchant	Manchester					*							*					*					3	
Hatfield	Thomas	Manufacturer	Manchester								*			*	*										3	
Hawes	William	MD	London							*								*							2	
Hawker	William		Taunton			*				*							*								3	
Hawkes	William	Rev.	Birmingham				*				*						*		*	*					5	
Hawkes	William	Rev. jnr	Manchester				*												*						2	
Haywood	Samuel		Nottingham								*					*									2	
Hazlitt	William	Rev.	Maidstone		*							*					*								3	
Heberden	William	MD	London									*								*					2	
Heywood	Joseph		Manchester								*			*	*										3	
Heywood	Richard	Banker	Liverpool			*					*														2	
Heywood	Samuel		London				*			*		*					*	*							5	
Heywood	Samuel	Attorney	Nottingham				*			*							*		*						4	
Hibbert	John		King's College, Camb													*				*					2	
Hibbert	Samuel	Merchant	Manchester							*			*	*				*							4	

				Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Hibbert	Titus		Manchester					*		*			*	*										4	
Hibbert	William	Merchant	Manchester							*			*	*										3	
Hobhouse	Benjamin		Wiltshire	*													*							2	
Hobson	John		Manchester							*			*	*										3	
Hogg	John	Rev.	Exeter								*					*								2	
Holden	Joseph		Islington	*													*							2	
Holden	Lawrence	Rev.	Tenterden								*					*	*							3	
Holland	John	Rev.	Bolton				*										*							2	
Holland	Philip	Rev.	Bolton					*	*	*	*					*								5	
Hollins	Henry		Nottingham														*	*						2	
Hollis	John	Esq.	High Wycombe						*			*					*							3	
Hollis, Brand	Thomas	Esq.	London		*				*		*	*					*							5	
Houghton	George		Exeter																		*	*	*	3	
Hounsell	John	Ironmonger	Bridport	*												*								2	
Hounsell	Joseph		Bridport	*	*																			2	
Hounsell	William	Sail Maker	Bridport	*	*																			2	
Hughes	John	Rev.	Bury, Lancs					*					*				*							3	
Hunt	Harry	Manufacturer	Birmingham		*										*									2	
Hunt	William	Merchant	Birmingham	*													*	*						3	

						Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions	
Hunt	William	Esq.	Manchester									*															2	
Hutchenson	G	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb														*				*						2	
Isaac	Jacob	Rev.	Moreton, Devon																			*	*	*	*		4	
Jacob	William		Newgate St											*							*					2		
Jardine	David	Rev.	Bath											*					*		*					3		
Jefferies	Edward	Treasurer	St Thomas Hospital				*				*			*		*	*	*	*							7	#	
Jellicoe	Adam		Highbury Place				*				*		*													3		
Jervis	John	Rev.	Lymston														*	*								2		
Jervis	Thomas	Rev.	London		*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*						9	#	
Johnson	Joseph		St Paul's Churchyard				*						*	*				*								4		
Johnston	Ebenezer		Bishopsgate St		*	*																		*		3		
Johnston	William	Rev.	Brighthelmstone				*												*							2		
Jones	J	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb													*				*						2		
Jones	Richard	Rev.	Greenwich		*													*								2		
Jones	Samuel	Banker	Manchester						*		*			*	*						*					5		
Jones	William	Draper	Manchester								*			*	*											3		
Joy	Thomas	Rev.	Smeaton, Yorks								*							*								2		
Joyce	Jeremiah	Rev.	London		*								*	*							*					4		
Jukes	Joseph		Birmingham		*	*														*						3		

				Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Kay	Daniel		Bolton							*								*						2	
Kemble	Francis	Grocer	Swithin's Lane		*				*			*					*		*					5	
Kennaway	William	Merchant	Exeter		*	*																		2	
Kenrick	Samuel	Esq.	Bewdley			*					*									*	*	*	*	6	#
Kenrick	Timothy	Rev.	Exeter	*							*	*		*		*				*	*	*	*	9	#
Kentish	John	Rev.	Plymouth	*			*					*								*	*	*	*	7	#
Kerrich	John		Harleston, Norfolk						*			*												2	
Kerrich	Thomas	Rev.	Horringer, Suffolk						*			*					*							3	
Kershaw	Thomas	Calico Printer	Manchester											*				*						2	
Kettle	Godfrey	Esq.	London						*			*			*									3	
Kettle	John	Merchant	Birmingham	*						*	*					*	*							5	
Kingsford	Sampson	Rev.	Canterbury	*			*					*												3	
Kippis	Andrew	Rev.	London			*			*			*			*	*	*	*						7	#
Kirkham	Ralph	Merchant	Manchester					*		*		*	*											4	
Lambert	James	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb						*							*		*						3	
Landell	David		Newcastle														*	*						2	
Lawford	Samuel	Esq.	Peckham	*														*	*					2	
Lawrence	John	Hosier	Birmingham	*													*	*						3	
Lawrence	Nathaniel		Birmingham	*													*							2	

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Lawrence	Samuel		Cheapside		*		*						*												4	
Lawrence	Thomas	Haberdasher	Birmingham		*														*						2	
Leaper	John	Esq.	Derby							*		*							*						3	
Lee	John	Manufacturer	Birmingham			*					*					*			*						3	
Lee	John		London							*		*				*									3	
Lee	Thomas	Attorney	Birmingham		*						*														2	
Lees	Thomas	Merchant	Stoke Newington			*						*													2	
Leicester	Charles		Trinity College, Camb							*						*									2	
Leicester	Henry Augustus		Trinity College, Camb							*						*									2	
Lewin	Robert	Rev.	Liverpool								*						*								2	
Lewis	John William		Parliament St										*					*							2	
Leyson	John		Norwich				*	*											*						3	
Lightbody	Elizabeth	Mrs	Liverpool		*						*			*											3	
Lightbody	Hannah	Miss	Liverpool								*								*						2	
Lindsay	James	Rev.	Newington Green				*					*						*							3	
Lindsey	Theophilus	Rev.	Essex Street		*	*	*		*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	14	#
Lister	Daniel		Hackney		*													*							2	
Lofft	Capel	Esq.	Suffolk			*			*			*			*		*	*							5	
Lomas	Joseph		Islington		*												*	*		*					3	









					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Peckard	Peter	Rev.	Magdalen College, Camb							*		*								*					3	
Pemberton	Samuel	Manufacturer	Birmingham		*		*				*														3	
Percival	Thomas	MD	Manchester					*	*	*				*					*						5	
Pett	Samuel	MD	Hackney		*																	*	*	*	4	
Philips	John	Jnr	Manchester								*									*					2	
Phillips	Robert		Manchester						*		*		*						*						4	
Pickbourn	James	Rev.	Hackney															*		*					2	
Pilkington	James	Rev.	Derby								*								*						2	
Pilkington	John	Manufacturer	Bolton						*		*									*					3	
Pine	Jordan		Maidstone				*		*		*														3	
Pine	Mary	Mrs	Maidstone				*										*								2	
Pine	Thomas	Manufacturer	Maidstone				*		*		*		*				*								4	
Porter	John	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb						*		*		*												2	
Porter	Thomas	Rev.	Plymouth									*							*	*					3	
Postlethwaite	T	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb						*		*		*			*			*	*					4	
Potter	Benjamin	Merchant	Manchester					*					*												2	
Potter	James		Manchester					*		*			*						*	*					4	
Potter	John	Merchant	Manchester					*	*		*		*						*	*					4	
Potter	Richard	Merchant	Manchester					*					*												2	

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Potter	Thomas	Merchant	Manchester					*			*			*											3	
Price	Richard	Rev.	Hackney			*		*		*		*				*	*		*						7	#
Priestley	Joseph	Rev.	Birmingham				*			*	*	*				*	*		*	*					9	#
Pugh	David		London				*					*							*						3	
Radcliffe	Ebenezer		Walthamstow							*		*													2	
Radford	Thomas		Manchester								*			*											2	
Ramsden	William	Rev.	Charterhouse							*						*									2	
Rathbone	William	Merchant	Liverpool							*		*							*						3	
Rathbone	William	Jnr	Liverpool								*	*	*						*						2	
Rayner	Elizabeth	Mrs	Sunbury				*			*	*	*													4	
Reed	William	Manufacturer	Bristol									*									*	*	*		3	
Rees	Abraham	Rev.	Hackney		*		*			*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*					9	#
Reynell	Thomas	Rev.	Thorveston																		*	*	*	*	4	
Reynell	William	Draper	Barnstaple																		*	*	*	*	4	
Reynolds	Richard		Paxton, Hunts							*	*	*				*	*								5	
Reynolds		Mrs	Hatton Garden			*						*				*	*	*							4	
Rickards	John	Esq.	Birmingham			*					*	*													2	
Rigby	John	Merchant	Manchester								*								*						2	
Rigby	William	Merchant	Manchester								*			*											2	







						Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Taylor	William	Esq.	Shrewsbury			*		*		*				*		*										8	#
Taylor	Charles	Esq.	Birmingham									*		*					*	*						3	
Taylor	John	Joiner	Birmingham			*							*			*										3	
Taylor	Meadows	Esq.	Diss				*												*							2	
Taylor	Samuel	Manufacturer	Manchester						*					*	*											3	
Taylor	Thomas	Manufacturer	Manchester											*	*											2	
Taylor	William	Merchant	Norwich			*													*	*						3	
Temple	Richard		Mortlake										*						*							2	
Thompson	Isaac	Merchant	London			*				*		*	*	*		*	*	*								6	#
Tingcombe	John	Banker	Plymouth		*								*	*						*	*	*	*	*	*	7	#
Touchet	James	Merchant	Manchester						*		*			*	*				*							5	
Toulmin	Henry	Rev.	Chowbent				*	*		*		*	*	*					*	*						5	
Toulmin	Joshua	Rev.	Taunton		*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	13	#
Toulmin	Samuel	Esq.	London				*										*	*								3	
Toulmin	William		Hackney				*										*	*								3	
Towers	Joseph	Rev.	London		*					*							*	*								3	
Towgood	John		London			*				*		*		*		*	*	*								5	
Towgood	Matthew	Banker	London		*	*				*		*		*		*	*	*								6	#
Towgood	Micaiah	Rev.	Exeter		*				*		*				*	*	*	*								3	

					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Towgood	William		Hackney			*												*							2	
Townsend	Josiah	Rev.	Rotherham							*	*														2	
Travis	Matthew		Manchester								*			*	*										3	
Trotter	John Oswald	Esq.	London		*		*																		2	
Turner	Joseph	Rev.	Cambridge University							*		*													2	
Turner	William	Rev.	Wakefield						*		*	*	*				*		*						6	#
Turner	William	Rev. jnr	Newcastle				*		*		*	*	*						*						5	
Tyrwhitt	Robert	Rev.	Jesus College, Camb							*		*				*		*		*					5	
Unwin	Samuel		Sutton		*	*													*						3	
Urwick	Thomas	Rev.	Clapham		*				*																2	
Valentine	Peter	Manufacturer	Chowbent				*				*	*	*	*	*				*	*					8	#
Vaughan	Benjamin		London							*							*		*						3	
Vaughan	Samuel		London										*						*						2	
Vaughan	William	Esq.	London							*		*	*			*	*		*						6	#
Waddington	George	Rev.	Trinity College, Camb							*						*									2	
Wainewright	Arnold		Hatton Garden		*													*							2	
Wainewright	Robert	Jnr	Hatton Garden		*							*						*		*					4	
Walker	George	Rev.	Nottingham			*			*		*				*					*					5	
Walker	Thomas	Merchant	Manchester									*								*					2	

				Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Walker	William		Leeds			*		*																4	
Wallace	William	Merchant	Liverpool							*				*										2	
Wansey	George	Clothier	Warminster		*						*			*									*	4	
Wansey	John	Merchant	Lothbury	*	*												*							3	
Ward	John	Rev.	Taunton													*		*						2	
Watson	Thomas	Rev.	Bridgewater				*									*								2	
Webster	George		Hampstead		*				*															2	
Wedgwood	Josiah		Staffs			*								*										2	
Wellbeloved	Charles	Rev.	Hackney				*												*					2	
Wellman	Simon		Taunton	*												*								2	
West	James		London		*				*		*	*												4	
White	Snowden	MD	Nottingham			*			*	*								*	*					5	
Wiche	John	Rev.	Maidstone				*				*	*				*								4	
Wilkinson	Anne	Mrs	Chesterfield, Debyshire					*					*											2	
Wilkinson	Isaac	Merchant	Chesterfield		*								*											2	
Wilkinson	John	Merchant	Chesterfield		*								*											2	
Williams	John	Rev.	Sheffield																		*	*		2	
Wood	William	Rev.	Leeds			*	*	*	*	*	*					*	*							8	#
Worthington	George		Altringham											*				*						2	



					Butcher	Hackney Benefactors	Hackney Subscribers	Hazlitt	Hood	Jebb	Kirkpatrick	Lardner	London Unitarian Society 1794	Manchester Benefactors	Manchester Subscribers	Maty	Toulmin	Towers	Walker	Wakefield	Western Unitarian Society 1792	Western Unitarian Society 1797	Western Unitarian Society 1798	Western Unitarian Society 1799	Total	More than 5 Subscriptions
Worthington	Hugh	Rev. jnr	Islington		*		*								*										3	
Worthington	Hugh	Rev.	Leicester		*	*																			2	
Worthington	Isaac		Altringham											*	*										2	
Worthington	Samuel		Nottingham				*													*					2	
Wren	Thomas	Rev.	Portsmouth							*		*													2	
Wright	John	Esq.	Clapham			*				*		*													3	
Wright	John	MD	Bristol					*									*								2	
Wright	Thomas		Fleet St							*		*													2	
Yates	John	Rev.	Liverpool			*	*			*	*	*	*							*					7	#
Yates	Ralph		Manchester											*	*										2	
Yerbury	John		London		*	*																			2	

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

(In all cases place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.)

### **PRIMARY SOURCES**

#### **Manuscripts**

##### **Bristol Record Office**

- 39461/F/4a: Bristol Unitarian Fellowship Fund, Subscribers and Investors 1781-1792  
39461/F/4b: Bristol Unitarian Fellowship Fund, Subscribers and Investors 1801-1859  
39461/F/6a: Bristol Unitarian Fellowship Fund Accounts 1819-1833  
39461/F/6b: Bristol Unitarian Fellowship Fund, List of Subscribers 1819-1848  
39461/M/2a: Lewin's Mead Unitarian Chapel, Minutes of Vestry Meetings 1793-1807  
39740/3: Lewin's Mead Unitarian Chapel, Girls' School Subscriptions and Accounts

##### **British Library: Add. MSS**

- 35068: Miscellaneous Original Letters  
35614-35625: Andrew Kippis Correspondence  
35630: John Jebb Correspondence  
36527: Biographical Notices by Joseph Hunter 1809-1833  
41423: George Walker Papers  
44992 - 44995: Letters of Gilbert Wakefield and of Joseph Priestley  
50957: Thomas Belsham Correspondence  
64814: The London Revolution Society Minute Book

##### **British Library: Photocopies of Original Manuscripts**

- RLF 96: William Frend Letters 1802-1824  
RP 2328: Joseph Priestley to John Seddon, nd.  
RP 5895/4: Abraham Rees to Thomas Cadell, 26 November 1777  
RP 8649/13: Gilbert Wakefield Correspondence, 28 February 1801  
RP 9539: Thomas Percival to Joseph Johnson

##### **Carlisle Public Library, Local Studies Centre**

- B320, Vols. 6-18, Manuscript Diaries of James Losh, 1796-1820

##### **Devon Record Office**

- 240A/PO 129/5, 240A/PO 148/21: Records of William Brown of Cullompton

48/8/4: Records of Samuel Milford of Exeter  
3693D/LM1, Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association Minutes

**Dr. Williams Library, London**

MS 12.13: Priestley Letters

MS 12.45: Wakefield to Frend Correspondence

MS 12.45: Joshua Toulmin, Letter to John Sturch

MS 12.45: Francis Blackburne, Letters to John Wiche

MS 12.48: Estlin to Belsham Correspondence

MS 12.52: Blackburne to Lindsey Correspondence

MS 12.57: Lindsey Correspondence

MS 12.58: Correspondence of Joseph Johnson, Lindsey to Belsham Correspondence

MS 12.71: Catharine Cappe to Charles Wellbeloved 1801

MSS 12.79-12.80: Unitarian Letters

MS 12.116: Letters of Thomas Reader

MS 24.8: Priestley Letters

MS 24.60: Towgood Papers

MSS 24.81, 24.86, 24.92: Unitarian Letters with Sermons and Papers

MS 24.93: Correspondence of John Disney

MSS 24.93: Correspondence of Hugh Worthington

MSS 24.107, 24.157: Wodrow - Kenrick Correspondence

MSS 24.168-173: John Jebb Papers

MS 28.14: Joseph Towers Sermons

MS 28.48: Sermons by Rev. Joseph Hunter, Unitarian Minister of congregation at Bath, 1819-1833

MS 28.54: Sermons of Rev. Richard Fry, Unitarian Minister at Cirencester and Kidderminster

MSS 28.152-3: Sermons preached in Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle

MS 38/38/143: Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead Records 1752-1903

MS 38.6: 'Thompson List', List of Protestant Dissenting Congregations in England and Wales 1772-1773

MS 38.7-11: History of Protestant Dissenting Congregations from 1772

MS 38.105-10: Minute Books of the Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations in and about the Cities of London and Westminster 1727-1797

MSS 87.1- 6: Letters and Essays on the Subject of Religious Liberty published in the newspapers, Essex Hall Archives, Unitarian Society Minute Book

HCR. 6.12.4: Thomas Robinson Pocket Book 1812  
OD 21-35: Lewin's Mead Unitarian Chapel, Bristol, Minutes and Accounts 1774-1898  
OD 43: Princes Street Chapel, Westminster Records 1751-1823

### **Dorset History Centre**

NU.1/CW/6//1-2: Bridport Unitarian Chapel Subscriptions, Accounts 1813, 1821  
NU.1/LI1/1: Bridport Unitarian Chapel Library Records  
NU.1/MI/1: Correspondence of Thomas Collins Colfox of Bridport Unitarian Chapel  
NU.1/MI/7: Bridport Unitarian Chapel Records of Ministers, Wardens and Legacies  
NU.1/SP/1: Correspondence of Thomas Belsham  
NU.1/SP/2: Correspondence of Harriet Martineau

### **East Sussex Record Office**

FRE/689: The Frewen Family Archives  
NU4/3/1: Extract from a memoir of William Vidler (1817)  
NU/4/4/1: List of Subscribers to Northiam Unitarian Book Society  
NU/4/4/2: Register of Issues to Northiam Unitarian Book Society

### **Essex Record Office**

DNC 25/1: Church Book of Billericay Congregational Meeting 1798-1842

### **Hackney Archives**

D/E/257/NEW: Newington Green Unitarian Church Account Books and Minutes  
D/F/BRD/172: Old Gravel Pit Chapel Records  
S.R.257: Notes on the early history of the Newington Green congregation and of the early history of Islington (1861)

### **Harris Manchester College, Oxford**

MSS Aspland 1-4: Sermons of Robert Aspland  
MSS Aspland: Sermons of Robert Brook Aspland  
MSS Aspland 10-33: Notebooks of Robert Aspland on the History of English Dissent  
MSS. Lant Carpenter 1-3: Correspondence addressed to Lant Carpenter  
MS M.N.C. Misc. 1: Manchester New College Miscellaneous Papers  
MS. Misc. 3: Papers relating to Joseph Bretland and Liturgy of the Mint Meeting, Exeter  
MS Misc. 7, fols 1-51: Sermons by William Enfield

MS Misc. 8, fols 3, 63-67: Unitarian Letters

MS Robberds 1: Letters to Mary Robberds, daughter of William Turner of Newcastle

MS Wood 1: Letters of Charles Wellbeloved to William Wood

MS Wood 2: Letters of George William Wood to Charles Wellbeloved

### **Kent History and Library Centre**

KB/ MAR MUS: Sermon by Christopher Murston of Milton, Kent

K230: Letters of Lawrence Holden to John Ellis Mace

### **Liverpool Record Office**

920 NIC 6/3/1-11, 9/6/1-27, 9/8/1, 12/2/1-6: Nicholson Family Letters.

920 NIC 9/2/15, 9/6/26, 9/11/1, 9/20/1-15: Letters to Nicholas Clayton.

### **London Metropolitan Archives**

MSS 11936/381/590636 - 390/607976: Sun Fire Insurance Records.

### **Portsmouth History Centre**

CHU97, Southern Unitarian Association Minutes

### **John Rylands University Library, Manchester**

UCC/2/22/1, UCC/2/22/17: Letters of Robert Nicholson

UCC/2/22/22: Letters to Nicholas Clayton

UCC/2/22/1: Letters to James Nicholson and others

UCC/2/22/4 - UCC/2/22/6: Nicholson Letters

Eng MSS 1041-1053: Nicholson Papers

MSS C2.13: William Tayleur to Theophilus Lindsey Correspondence

### **Somerset Heritage Centre**

D/N/bw.chch/4/2/1: Christ Church Unitarian Chapel, Bridgwater, Minutes and  
Accounts 1815-1858

D/N/bw.chch/4/3/1: Christ Church Unitarian Chapel, Bridgwater Subscriptions 1787

D/N/ crew/4/3/1-2: Crewkerne Unitarian Church, Subscription Lists 1755-1809, 1807-  
1847

D/N/ crew/7/3: Crewkerne Unitarian Church Records 1812

D/N/ ilm/4/3/2: Ilminster Unitarian Chapel Records, Trustees, Wardens and Accounts  
1782-1808

D/N/ ilm/5/2/1: Ilminster Unitarian Chapel Records, Sunday Schools, Donations and Accounts 1789-1885

D/N/ WU/ 1/1: Minute Book of Unitarian Society in the West of England (1792-1805)

D/N/ WU/ 2/1: Account Book of Unitarian Society in the West of England (1792-1805)

DD/X/WBB/216: List of Subscribers to An Historical View of the State of Protestant Dissent in England (1814)

PAM 30383, The Devon and Cornwall Unitarian Association (1814)

PAM 30383, The Somerset and Dorset Unitarian Association (1814)

### **TNA**

PROB 11/1217: Will of John Hounsell of Bridport

PROB 11/1303: Will of Francis Kemble, Swithin's Lane London

PROB 11/1340: Will of Samuel Milford of Exeter

PROB 11/1345: Will of Elizabeth Rayner, Tichfield Street

PROB 11/1281: Will of Elizabeth Moore of Taunton

PROB 11/1317: Will of Judith Bull, Westminster

PROB 11/1399: Will of John Kettle of Birmingham

PROB 11/1460: Will of George Wansey of Warminster

PROB 11/1655: Will of George Dunsford of Tiverton

PROB 11/1678: Will of Joseph Gundry of Bridport

PROB 11/1690: Will of William Brown of Cullompton

PROB 11/1696: Will of Mary Hughes of Bristol

PROB 11/1768: Will of Daniel Gundry of Bridport

T S 11/961: Resolutions and Orders of The Society for Constitutional Information

T S 11/1133: Minutes of The Society for Constitutional Information

### **Tyne and Wear Archives**

C.NC66/80, Subscription and Account Book, Hanover Square Chapel Sunday School 1805-1818

C.NC66/104, Register of Books Withdrawn and Returned, Hanover Square Chapel Vestry Library 1787-1809

C.NC66/107, List of Subscribers, Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society 1814

C.NC66/159/9, List of Subscribers, Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society 1815, 1823, 1824, 1826

## **Printed**

### **Manuscript Sources Printed Subsequently**

- Anson, Sir W., ed., *The autobiographical and political correspondence of Augustus Henry, third Duke of Grafton* (1898)
- Bray, G., ed., *The Anglican Canons 1529-1947* (Church of England Record Society, 6, Woodbridge, 1998)
- Brooks, M., ed., *The correspondence of Mary Hays, British Novelist, 1779-1843* (Lampeter, 2004)
- Clemit, P., ed., *The Letters of William Godwin: Volume 1: 1778-1797* (Oxford, 2011)
- Cobban, A. and Copeland, T.W. et al, eds, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 10 vols (1967)
- Cozens-Hardy, B., ed., *The Diary of Syllas Neville 1767-1788* (Oxford, 1950)
- Davis, T. W., ed., *Committees for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Minutes 1786-1790 and 1827-1828* (London Record Society, vol. 14, 1978)
- Ditchfield, G. M., ed., *The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, Vol. 1, 1747-1788* (Church of England Record Society, vol. 15, Woodbridge, 2007), *Vol. 2, 1789-1808* (Church of England Record Society, vol. 19, Woodbridge, 2012)
- Evans, G. H., Jones, F. M., Jones, D. C., eds, *The Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg*, vols 1-3 (University of Wales Press, 2007)
- Finer, A. and Savage, G., eds, *Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* (1965)
- Hughes, E., ed., *The Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh, Vol. 1, 1811-1823* (1962), *Vol. 2, 1823-1833* (1963)
- Macaulay, J. S. and Greaves, R. W., eds, *The Autobiography of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury* (Lawrence, Kansas, U. S. A., 1988)
- Peach, W. B. and Thomas, D. O., eds, *The Correspondence of Richard Price*, 3 vols (Durham, NC, U. S. A. 1983-1994)
- Redford, B., ed., *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1992-4)
- Sell, A., ed., with Hall, D. J., Sellars, I., *Protestant Nonconformist Texts, Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century* (Ashgate, 2006)
- Shepherd, W., *A selection of the early letters of the late Rev. William Shepherd* (Liverpool, 1855)
- Thomas, D.O., ed., *Richard Price Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991)
- , ed., ‘John Disney’s Diary: 1 January 1783-17 May 1784’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.21 (2002)
- Todd, J., ed., *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York, 2003)
- Thale, M., ed., *Selections from the papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799* (Cambridge, 1983)
- Wardle, R. M., ed., *The collected letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1979)

Whelan, T., ed., *Politics, Religion and Romance: the letters of Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould 1794-1808* (Aberystwyth, 2008)

**On-Line Editions of Primary Sources (With thanks to Dr. Williams Library, London)**

Burley, S., ed., *New College, Hackney (1786-1796): A Selection of Printed and Archival Sources* (2010)

Mills, S., ed., *The Letters of Joseph Priestley to Theophilus Lindsey 1769-1794* (2007)

Surman Index: Biographical Data on Dissenting Ministers

**Published Sermons**

*An address from the ministers of the Western Calvinistical Association* (1795)

Ackland, T., *Religion and loyalty recommended, and a caution against innovations. A Sermon preached at Christ Church, Surrey on 30 September 1798* (1798)

Addington, S., *The divine architect. A Sermon on psalm xxvii* (1785)

Amner, R., *Considerations of the doctrine of a future state, and the Resurrection, as Revealed, or supposed to be so, in the Scriptures* (1797)

Amory, T., *Daily devotion assisted and recommended in four sermons* (1770)

———, *Sermons on the following subjects; The divine omnipresence. The Ascension of Christ. The obligation to search the Scriptures.* (1775)

Aspland, R., *Divine judgements on guilty nations: their causes and effects considered in a discourse delivered at Newport, Isle of Wight before a congregation of Protestant Dissenters on the late Fast Day* (1804)

———, *The Properties of Charity* (1807)

———, *The tendency of the human condition to improvement and its ultimate perfection in heaven. A Sermon delivered on the death of James Hennell* (1816)

———, *A Sermon delivered at the funeral of Abraham Rees* (1825)

Aspland, R. B., *The beneficial influence of Christianity on the character and condition of the female sex. A Sermon preached at the Reverend Dr. Rees's meeting house, Jewin Street, in behalf of the Society for the Relief of the Necessitous Widows and Fatherless Children of Protestant Dissenting Ministers* (1812)

———, *An attempt to ascertain the importance of the title 'Son of God'* (1821)

Baillie, J., *The Influence of a Crucified Saviour* (1772)

———, *The nature and fatal influence of Popery on civil society. A Sermon preached before the Committee of the Protestant Association in Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1780)

———, *A vindication of the divinity of Christ* (1789)

———, *Two Sermons; the first on the divinity of Jesus Christ* (1792)

———, *A funeral discourse on the death of the papacy* (1798)



- Bampton, J., *Sermons preached before the University of Oxford* (1789)
- Baptist Ministers of Olney, *The doctrine of the Trinity stated in a circular letter from the Baptist Ministers and Messengers assembled at Olney, Buckinghamshire* (1776)
- Barbault, A. L., *Civic sermons to the people* (1792)
- Barnard, J., *The divinity of Jesus Christ demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures and from the doctrine of the Primitive Church* (1789)
- Barnes, T., *A discourse delivered at the commencement of the Manchester Academy* (1786)
- , *Sermons* (1788)
- Beasley, T. E., *A brief vindication of the dissenters: a sermon delivered before an association of ministers in the county of Buckinghamshire* (1792)
- Beatson, J., *Compassion the duty and dignity of man: and cruelty the disgrace of his nature. Preached to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Hull, January 21, 1789* (1789)
- Beilby, P., *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of London, at the visitation of that diocese* (1794)
- Bellamy, J., *A careful and strict examination of the external covenant, and of the principles by which it is supported* (1770)
- , *The sacramental controversy brought to a point* (1770)
- , *An essay on the nature and glory of the gospel of Christ* (1784)
- , *Letters and dialogues on the nature of love to God* (1792)
- Belsham, T., *The importance of truth, and the duty of making an open profession of it: recommended in a discourse, delivered on 28 April 1790* (1790)
- , *Dishonest shame the primary source of the corruptions of the Christian doctrine. A Sermon preached at the Gravel Pit meeting in Hackney* (1794)
- , *Knowledge the foundation of virtue. A Sermon addressed to the young persons who attend at the Gravel Pit meeting, Hackney* (1795)
- , *Freedom of enquiry, and zeal in diffusion of Christian truth, asserted and recommended in a discourse delivered at Bristol, 9 July 1800* (1800)
- , *The Christian character exemplified in a discourse occasioned by the death of Mrs Hannah Lindsey* (1812)
- Bennett, A., *A Sermon delivered to the Southern Unitarian Book Society* (1817)
- Benson, J., *Remarks on Dr. Priestley's system of materialism* (1788)
- , *A defence of the Methodists* (1793)
- , *A sermon preached at the Methodist Chapel in Hull* (1798)
- Benson, M., *Sermons on Various Subjects* (1794)
- Berington, J., *An address to Protestant Dissenters* (Birmingham, 1787)
- Berkeley, G., *The Danger of Violent Innovations in the State* (1785)

- , *A Caution against Socinianism given in a discourse preached at the cathedral and metropolitical church of Christ, Canterbury* (Canterbury, 1787)
- , *Sermons by the Late Reverend George Berkeley* (1799)
- Bocking, D., *The blessedness of the righteous at death* (1771)
- Bogue, D., *A Sermon preached at Salters Hall on March 30, 1792* (1793)
- Booth, A., *A Sermon preached in Little Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields* (1792)
- Bourn, S., *A Sermon on the Resurrection* (1793)
- Bourn, S., *The true Christian way of striving for the faith of the Gospel. A Sermon preached to a congregation of Protestant Dissenting ministers and private Christians* (Carmarthen, 1771)
- Bretland, J., *A Sermon preached before an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers in Exeter* (1786)
- , *A second appendix to a sermon preached before an assembly of protestant dissenting ministers in Exeter* (Exeter, 1787)
- Broadhurst, T., *The importance of just sentiments of God, considered in a sermon preached before the Society of Unitarian Christians in the West of England* (Taunton, 1795)
- , *Obedience to God, rather than man. Recommended in a sermon preached at Taunton* (Taunton, 1795)
- Burgess, T., *Reflections on the controversial writings of Dr. Priestley* (1791)
- Burgh, J., *The dignity of human nature* (1794)
- Butcher, E., *Sermons* (1798)
- Button, W., *National calamities the token of divine displeasure: a sermon preached at the meeting-house in Dean Street, Southwark* (1794)
- Cappe, N., *Sermon preached at the chapel of St Saviour Gate, York. To a congregation of Protestant dissenters on the occasion of the death of Rev. Edward Sandcock* (1770)
- , *Sermon preached on 13 December, the late day of national humiliation. To a congregation of Protestant dissenters in St Saviour Gate, York* (1777)
- , *Sermon preached on 4 February 1780, the late day of national humiliation. To a congregation of Protestant dissenters in St Saviour Gate, York* (1780)
- , *Sermon preached on 21 February 1781, the late day of national humiliation. To a congregation of Protestant dissenters in St Saviour Gate, York* (1781)
- , *Sermon preached on 29 July 1784, the late day of national thanks, to a congregation of Protestant dissenters in St Saviour Gate, York* (1784)
- , *Remarks in vindication of Dr. Priestley, on that article of the Monthly Review for June 1783, which relates to the first part of Dr. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1783)
- , *Sermon preached on 8 February 1782, the day of national humiliation, and again on 25 February, 1795 to a congregation of Protestant dissenters* (1795)
- , *Discourses on providence and the government of God* (1795)

- Carpenter, B., *Difference of sentiment no objection to the exercise of mutual love. A Sermon preached at the annual meeting of ministers at Dudley* (1780)
- Collins, T., *An assize sermon preached in the Minster at York* (York, 1794)
- Cornish, J., *A serious and earnest address to Protestant dissenters of all denominations. Representing the many and important principles on which their dissent from the establishment is grounded* (1773)
- , *The miseries of war, and the hope of final and universal peace, set forth in a thanksgiving sermon, preached at Colyton in the county of Devon* (Taunton, 1784)
- Cleaver, W., *A sermon on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (1789)
- , *Pardon and sanctification proved* (1791)
- , *A sermon preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal* (1791)
- Crabb, H., *Sermons on practical subjects* (Cambridge, 1796)
- Croft, G., *The Test Laws defended. A Sermon preached at St. Phillip's Church in Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1790)
- Disney, J., *The birth and resurrection of Christ* (1786)
- , *Progressive improvement of civil liberty. A Sermon preached in the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, London, on Sunday, 4 November 1792* (1792)
- , *A defence of public and social worship. A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street* (1792)
- , *A caution to young persons against infidelity. A sermon preached in the Unitarian Chapel, in Essex Street* (1797)
- , *Sermons in two volumes* (1793)
- , *The superiority of religious duties to worldly considerations. A Sermon preached in the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street on April 20, 1800* (1800)
- Elliot, R., *Encouragement for sinners; or righteousness attainable without works* (1772)
- , *Sacred controversy; or a defence of the Christian faith* (1774)
- , *Scriptural efficiency; or the Bible Christian's plea* (1774)
- , *The Scriptural testimony of Christ* (1775)
- , *Vicarious sacrifice* (1783)
- Enfield, W., *The duties of religious societies considered* (1770)
- , *An apology for the clergy, and particularly for Protestant Dissenting Ministers* (1777).
- , *The principles and duty of Protestant Dissenters considered, in a sermon preached at the ordination of the Reverend John Prior Estlin, at Lewin's Mead, Bristol* (1778)
- , *Three discourses on the progress of Christian knowledge* (Warrington, 1780)
- , *A Sermon on the centennial commemoration of the Revolution, preached at Norwich, 5 November 1788* (1788)

- , *Sermons on practical subjects* (1798)
- Estlin, J. P., *Causes of inefficiency of public instruction considered, in a sermon preached at the ordination of Reverend David Jardine, at the Unitarian Chapel, Bath* (Bath, 1790)
- , *Evidences of Revealed religion stated, with reference to a pamphlet called The Age of Reason, in a discourse delivered at the Chapel in Lewin's Mead* (Bristol, 1796)
- , *The nature and causes of atheism* (Bristol, 1797)
- , *Sermons* (1802)
- Evans, C., *British constitutional liberty. A Sermon preached in Broad-mead, Bristol* (Bristol, 1775)
- , *The remembrance of former days. A Sermon preached at Broad-mead, Bristol* (1778)
- , *Christ crucified; or the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement briefly illustrated and defended* (Bristol, 1789)
- Evans, J., *A Sermon delivered at Lewes before the Southern Unitarian Society* (1819)
- Fawcett, J., *Sermons delivered at the Sunday evening lecture, for the winter season at the Old Jewry* (1795)
- Fleming, C., *The Equality of Christians in the Province of Religion. Or Popery has no Divine Foundation* (1760)
- , *The Open Address of New Testament Evidence* (1771)
- , *Religion not the magistrate's province, or arguments from reason and from Scripture, against the civil magistrate's claim of authority in the province of religion* (1773)
- Fletcher, J., *Doctrines of grace and justice equally essential to the pure gospel* (1771)
- Flexman, R., *A Sermon preached at the Old Jewry, on the occasion of the death of Rev. Thomas Amory* (1774)
- , *The Christian life supported* (1781)
- Fownes, J., *The glory of the Gospel* (1783)
- Frend, W., *An Address to the inhabitants of Canterbury exhorting them to turn from the false worship of three persons to the worship of the One True God* (1788)
- , *An Address to members of the Church of England and to Protestant Trinitarians* (1790)
- Fry, R., *No shame in suffering for truth. A Sermon delivered to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Billericay, on the occasion of being excluded from the meeting-house for professing Unitarian principles* (Sudbury, 1798)
- , *The exercise of reason and liberty of conscience, the sacred right of all men* (Snobury, 1800)
- Fullager, J., *The worship of Christ unauthorised by Scripture* (1818)

- Furneaux, P., *The duty of benevolence and public spirit, before the Correspondent Board in London of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands* (1775)
- Gilchrist, J., *Jesus of Nazareth: A man approved of God* (1812)
- Gill, J., *A collection of sermons and tracts* (1773)
- Harrison, R., *A Sermon preached at the dissenting chapel in Cross Street, Manchester on the occasion of the establishment of an academy in Manchester* (Warrington, 1786)
- Hawker, R., *Sermons on the divinity of Christ* (Bath, 1793)
- Hazlitt, W., *Human authority in matters of faith, repugnant to Christianity* (1774)
- , *A thanksgiving discourse preached at Hallowell* (Boston, 1786)
- Holden, J., *A Sermon preached at Northiam* (1812)
- , *A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Chapel, Tenterden* (1822)
- Holland, P., *Sermons on practical subjects. In two volumes* (Warrington, 1792)
- Holland, T.C., *Unitarianism a Scriptural Creed* (1817)
- Hood, R., *Fourteen sermons on various subjects* (1782)
- , *On the nature of Christendom, preached before the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Cumberland* (Newcastle, 1780)
- Horne, G., *The Christian King. A Sermon preached before the University of Oxford at St. Mary's, on Friday, 30 January 1761. Being the Day Appointed to be Observed as the Day of Martyrdom of King Charles I* (1761)
- , *Christ the object of religious adoration and therefore very God. A Sermon preached before the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1775)
- , *A Sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons* (Oxford, 1780)
- , *Discourses on Several Subjects and Occasions* (1787)
- , *Two Sermons on Trinitarianism* (Canterbury, 1786)
- , *Sunday schools recommended in a sermon preached in the parish church of St. Alphage, Canterbury on December 18, 1786* (Oxford, 1786)
- , *Six Sermons on Various Subjects and Occasions* (1790)
- Horsley, S., *A Charge delivered to the clergy of the archdeaconry of St. Albans* (1783)
- , *A Sermon preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal, in the abbey church of St. Peter, Westminster* (1793)
- Houlbrooke, T., *A Sermon occasioned by the death of William Tayleur, Esq., delivered at a meeting of Unitarian dissenters in Shrewsbury* (Liverpool, 1796)
- Hughes, W., *The titles and attributes of God* (Newport, IOW, 1812)
- Hunter, J., *Sermon on modern miracles* (1832)

- Independent Ministers, *Christian Liberty: a sermon on the history and principles of the Nonconformists. Preached at the Monthly Meeting of the Independents in London* (1800)
- Ivimey, J., *An address to Protestant Dissenters on the present state of Roman Catholics* (1819)
- Jardine, D., *The unpurchased love of God in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ* (Bath, 1792)
- Jenkins, J. *The Christian's strength* (1775)
- Jervis, T., *The danger of following a multitude. A Sermon, chiefly addressed to young persons, and preached at St Thomas's, 1 January 1784* (1784)
- , *A Sermon preached by the Reverend Thomas Jervis, and a Charge delivered by the Reverend Thomas Belsham, at the ordination of the Reverend Timothy Kenrick in the New Meeting, Exeter on 28 July 1785* (1785)
- , *A Sermon preached at Leather-Lane, 24 February 1788. Occasioned by the death of the Late Rev. Michael Pope.* (1788)
- , *Consolatory views of Christianity. A Sermon, preached in the chapel in Princes Street, Westminster, on 27 November 1796, on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Kippis* (1796)
- , *The social worship of the one God agreeable to reason and scripture. A Sermon preached in the chapel in Prince's Street, Westminster* (1796)
- , *Sermons on Various Subjects* (1811)
- Jones, D., *Thoughts on the riots at Birmingham. By a Welsh freeholder* (Bath, 1791)
- , *The nature and duties of a minister of religion; also the impiety, injustice and absurdity of persecution, considered in a discourse delivered before the congregations of the New and Old Meetings* (Birmingham, 1792)
- , *Reasons for Unitarianism; or the primitive Christian doctrine* (1792)
- , *Reasons for peace, stated in a discourse delivered at the Union Chapel, Birmingham, 25 February 1795, being the day appointed for a General Fast* (Birmingham, 1795)
- Jones, W., *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* (1787)
- Joyce, J., *An analysis of Paley's views of the evidences of Christianity* (1797)
- Kenrick, J., *The Scriptural meaning of the title Son of God, as applied to our Lord. Discourse delivered before the Unitarian Tract Society* (Birmingham, 1818)
- , *A Discourse delivered to the Warwickshire Unitarian Society* (Birmingham, 1818)
- Kenrick, T., *An enquiry into the best method of communicating religious knowledge to young men. A Sermon preached 7 May 1788* (Exeter, 1788)
- , *The Spirit of Persecutors Exemplified: and the conduct to be observed towards their descendants. A Sermon delivered at George's meeting-house, Exeter* (Exeter, 1791)

- , *A Discourse delivered at Taunton, 3 September 1793, before the Society of Unitarian Christians, established in the West of England, for promoting Christian Knowledge and the practices of virtue by the distribution of books* (1794)
- , *Sermons on Numbers xxxii and on I Corinthians xv.33* (1808)
- Kentish, J., *The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine. A discourse, written with reference to Mr. A. Fuller's examination of the Calvinistic and Socinian systems and delivered at the Bow Meeting House in Exeter, 6 July 1796. Before the Society of Unitarian Christians assembled in the West of England, for the promotion of Christian knowledge and the practice of virtue by the distribution of books* (1796)
- Kinghorn, J., *Public worship considered and enforced* (Norwich, 1800)
- Kippis, A., *An Introductory Discourse on A Sermon preached at the Ordination of Mr Samuel Wilton by Philip Furneaux* (1766)
- , *The Excellency of the Gospel, as suited to the poor, preached at Salters' Hall, 11 April 1777* (1777)
- , *The example of Jesus in his youth, recommended to Imitation; in a sermon preached at St Thomas's, 1 January 1780* (1780)
- , *A Sermon preached at the Old Jewry, on 26 April 1786, on occasion of a new academical institution* (1786)
- , *A Sermon preached at the Old Jewry, on 4 November 1788, before the Society for commemorating the glorious Revolution* (1788)
- , *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (1791)
- , *An Address Delivered at the Internment of the Late Rev. Richard Price on 26 April 1791* (1791)
- , *A Sermon preached at the chapel in Prince's Street, Westminster, on 28 February 1794* (1794)
- , *A Sermon preached at the meeting-house in Hoxton Square, on 15 March 1795, On the occasion of the death of the Rev. Thomas Toller* (1795)
- Kirkpatrick, H., *Sermons on various subjects; with an account of the principles of protestant dissenters, their mode of worship, and forms of public prayer, baptism, and the Lord's supper* (Warrington, 1785)
- Laurence, R., *Critical reflections upon some important misrepresentations contained in the Unitarian version of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1811)
- Law, E., *Considerations on the theory of religion* (1755)
- Lewin, R., *A nation reminded of its transgressions: being a discourse delivered at Benn's Garden Chapel, Liverpool. On account of the public fast on April 19, 1793* (1793)
- Lindsay, J., *A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. Joseph Towers, L.L.D., delivered at Newington Green 1799* (1799)
- Lindsey, T., *A Sermon preached at the opening of the Chapel in Essex House, Essex Street, in the Strand, on Sunday, 17 April 1774. To which is added a Reformed Liturgy, on the plan of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (1774)

- Manning, J., *A Sermon preached at George's Meeting House, Exeter on 19 April, 1793, being the day appointed for a general fast* (Exeter, 1793)
- , *A Sermon delivered before an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers at the new meeting at Bridport, April 30, 1794* (Exeter, 1794)
- , *A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Reverend Rice Harris* (1795)
- Marsom, J., *A Sermon delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians in the South of England* (1805)
- , *The Impersonality of the Holy Ghost* (1812)
- Maty, P. H., *Sermons preached in the British Ambassador's Chapel at Paris in the years 1774, 1775, 1776* (1788)
- Murston, C., *A funeral sermon on the death of Miss March, daughter of Sir Thomas March Esq. of Borden, Kent* (Milton, 1792)
- Palmer, J., *A summary view of the grounds of Christian baptism; with a more particular reference to the baptism of infants* (1788)
- Peckard, P., *Further observations on an intermediate state* (1757)
- , *The nature and extent of civil and religious liberty. A Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge, November 5, 1783* (Cambridge, 1783)
- Pike, J. B., *Fourteen Sermons on several interesting subjects* (1786)
- Pilkington, J., *The doctrine of equality of rank and condition examined and supported on the authority of the New Testament, and on the principles of reason and benevolence* (1795)
- Pope, J., *Two Sermons preached to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Blackney, Lancashire* (1792).
- Porter, T., *A defence of Unitarianism* (Plymouth, 1793)
- Pretyman, G., *A Charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Lincoln at the triennial visitation of that diocese* (1794)
- Price, R., *A Sermon delivered to a congregation of Protestant dissenters at Hackney, on 10 February last, being the day appointed for a general fast* (1779)
- , *A Discourse Addressed to a Congregation at Hackney, on 21 February 1781* (1781)
- , *Sermons on the Christian doctrines as received by the different denominations of Christians* (1787)
- , *A Discourse on the love of our country, delivered on November 4, 1789, at the meeting house in the Old Jewry* (1790)
- Priestley, J., *A Sermon preached before the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds* (1773)
- , *A free address to Protestant Dissenters on the subject of the Lord's Supper* (1774)
- , *The doctrine of divine influence on the human mind, considered in a sermon* (Bath, 1779)



- , *A Sermon on the subject of the Slave Trade: delivered to a society of Protestant dissenters at the New Meeting in Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1788)
- , *The Conduct to be observed by Dissenters in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, recommended in a sermon* (Birmingham, 1789)
- , *The proper objects of education in the present state of the world, to which is subjoined a prayer by Thomas Belsham* (1791)
- , *A Sermon preached at the Gravel Pit Meeting 19 April 1793* (1793)
- Prowitt, E., *A funeral address, delivered at the chapel in Hanover-Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, occasioned by the death of Mrs. Turner* (Newcastle, 1797)
- Pye Smith, J., *A Sermon on the comparative advantages of prescribed forms and of free prayer in public worship* (1821)
- Radcliffe, E., *A Sermon preached to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Crutched-Friars; occasioned by the denial of Relief, respecting subscription, to the Articles of the Church of England* (1772)
- Reader, T., *The incurable abomination, or Popery always the same, considered in a sermon preached at Taunton, November 5, 1779* (Taunton, 1779)
- , *God's experimental probation of intelligent agents. A Sermon preached at a meeting of ministers at Kettering* (Northampton, 1780)
- Rees, A., *Acceptable religion illustrated and recommended in a sermon preached at St Thomas's, 1 January 1770, for the benefit of the charity school in Gravel Lane, Southwark* (1770)
- , *The obligation and importance of searching the Scriptures, as a preservative from popery. A Sermon preached at Salters' Hall, 5 November 1779* (1779)
- , *The benefit of early instruction in religion, illustrated and evinced: in a sermon preached at St Thomas's, 1 January 1787, for the benefit of the Charity School in Gravel Lane, Southwark* (1787)
- , *The advantages of knowledge, illustrated and recommended in a sermon, delivered on 30 April 1788. At the Meeting House in the Old Jewry, London to support of a new Academical Institution among Protestant Dissenters* (1788)
- , *The doctrine of Christ, the only effectual remedy against the fear of death: and the union of good men in the future world, in two sermons* (1790)
- , *A Sermon preached at the meeting house in Prince's Street, Westminster, on 18 October 1795, upon the much lamented death of the Rev. Andrew Kippis* (1795)
- , *A Sermon preached at the meeting-house in the Old Jewry on 28 June, 1795 on the occasion of the death of the Rev. Roger Flexman* (1795)
- , *The privileges of Britain. A Sermon preached at the meeting-house in the Old Jewry on 29 November 1798, being the day appointed for a general thanksgiving* (1798)
- , *Economy illustrated and recommended: and a caution against modern infidelity: in two sermons, preached at the meeting house in Old Jewry* (1800)
- , *Practical Sermons*, 4 vols (1812-1821)

- Rees, T., *A Discourse delivered at Portsmouth before the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the South of England* (1811)
- Robberds, G., *On the prevailing charges against Unitarians, A Sermon preached before the Eastern Unitarian Society* (Yarmouth, 1820)
- Romaine, W., *Works of the late Rev. William Romaine* (1796)
- Rowe, J., *A Discourse delivered at Warminster, 3 July 1799 before the Society of Unitarian Christians* (1799)
- Ryland, J., *The certain increase of the glory and kingdom of Jesus: A sermon preached at Chard, Somerset* (1794)
- Sabine, J., *A Sermon delivered on February 8, 1809 in the Protestant Dissenting Church in Tunbridge* (1809)
- Savage, S. M., *Sermons on several evangelical and practical subjects* (Taunton, 1796)
- Seddon, J., *Discourses on the person of Christ, on the Holy Spirit, and on self-deception* (1793)
- Simpson, J., *Christian arguments for social and public worship. A Sermon preached before an annual assembly of Protestant dissenting ministers at the chapel in Lewin's Mead, Bristol* (Bath, 1792)
- Southwood Smith, T., *The wisdom and benevolence of the Deity* (1820)
- Taylor, J., *A Sermon containing a sketch of the character of the late Rev. George Walker* (1807)
- Temple, A., *Sermons* (York, 1795)
- Thomas, B., *Sermons on Various Subjects* (1782)
- Toulmin, Joshua, *Sermons principally addressed to youth* (Honiton, 1770)
- , *A practical discourse on the moral uses and obligations of the institution of baptism* (1773)
- , *The character of Christ as the witness to the truth, considered and applied in a sermon, preached at Crediton, 6 September 1792, to the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the West of England* (Birmingham, 1792)
- , *The promise of Christ's presence with his disciples, explained and applied in a sermon preached at the opening of the Bridewell Chapel, near Ufculme, Devon* (Taunton, 1792)
- , *The character of Christ as the witness of the truth, considered and applied in a sermon preached at Crediton to the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the West of England* (1792)
- , *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine considered in a series of letters to the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1796)
- , *The name 'Lord of Hosts' explained and improved: In a sermon preached in the chapels of Princes Street, Westminster, on 16 February, and Essex Street, Strand, on 23 February 1800* (1800)
- , *Sermon delivered to the Southern Unitarian Society* (1802)

- , *The Unitarian doctrine stated and the objections to it obviated, on the ground of Christ's declaration: A Sermon preached before the Devon and Cornwall congregations* (1814)
- Towers, J., *A Sermon preached in aid of the Charity School at Gravel Lane, Southwark* (1777)
- , *An Oration delivered at the London Tavern, on occasion of the Commencement of the Revolution, and the completion of a century from that great event* (1778)
- , *Oration at the interment of Caleb Fleming* (1779)
- Towgood, M., *The grounds of faith in Jesus Christ briefly stated. Addressed to A Candid Society of Christians at the close of his Ministrations among them* (1784)
- Townsend, G., *A testimony for truth: in a brief vindication of the divinity of Christ, and a trinity in unity; denied in the Reverend Mr. Frend's Address to the Citizens of Canterbury* (Canterbury, 1788)
- , *Acquiescence in the divine will, the duty and privilege of believers considered in a sermon delivered in Canterbury* (Canterbury, 1789)
- , *The replication: Or, A familiar address to Mr. William Frend of Jesus College, Cambridge, presenting him with the proofs required in his public challenge* (Canterbury, 1789)
- , *The privilege of Christians thankfully to acknowledge divine deliverances. A Sermon preached in Ramsgate* (Canterbury, 1792)
- Townsend, J., *The principles of the Protestant dissenters asserted, in a sermon preached at Fairford* (Bath, 1791)
- Trelawny, H., *Ministers, Labourers together with God. A Sermon preached at Exeter before the assembly of the United Dissenting Clergy of Devon and Cornwall* (1778)
- Treleaven, B., *The spiritual distinction between God and Jesus Christ* (Salisbury, 1815)
- Turner, D., *An exhortation to peace, loyalty and the support of the government. Addressed to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Abingdon* (Henley, 1793)
- Turner, W., *Sunday Schools recommended, in a sermon to the annual meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers at Morpeth* (1786)
- , *Sermons on various subjects, published at the request of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Wakefield* (1793)
- , *Fast Sermon 1795* (1795)
- , *A Discourse printed for the Unitarian Tract Society* (Newcastle, 1818)
- Vidler, W., *The designs of the death of Christ; a sermon delivered October 1794 at Parliament Court Chapel, Artillery Street* (1795)
- Walker, G., *A Sermon preached to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Nottingham on 27 February 1778, being the day appointed for a general fast* (1778)
- , *The duty and character of a national soldier, represented in a sermon preached 2 January 1779. At the High Church in Hull, before the Nottinghamshire Militia* (1779)

- , *The doctrine of providence, illustrated and applied in a sermon, preached to a congregation of protestant dissenters, at Nottingham, 29 July 1784* (1784)
- , *Sermons on Various Subjects, in two volumes* (1790)
- , *Christian fortitude: a sermon preached at Salters' Hall, on 24 March 1793* (1793)
- , *On the right of individual judgement in religion. A Sermon preached at Chowbent, Lancashire, on 25 June 1800 at the annual provincial meeting of ministers of the Presbyterian persuasion* (1800)
- Ward, J., *The view and conduct of a minister of the Gospel, represented in a sermon preached at Lewin's Mead in an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of different denominations* (Bristol, 1776)
- , *A Short Discourse by John Ward* (Taunton, 1778)
- Whitefield, G., *Twelve Sermons on various important subjects* (1792)
- Williams, D., *Sermons, in two volumes* (1774)
- Winterbotham, W., *The commemoration of national deliverances* (1794)
- Wood, W., *The reciprocal duties of a Christian minister and his hearers. A Sermon preached before a Society of Protestant dissenters at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds on 30 May 1773* (1773)
- , *Sermons on Social Life* (1775)
- , *The Christian duty of cultivating a spirit of universal benevolence amidst the present unhappy national hostilities. A Sermon preached on 4 July 1781, at Bradford in Yorkshire, before an assembly of dissenting ministers* (1781)
- , *Two Sermons, preached at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds on celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the happy Revolution* (1788)
- , *The treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels. A Sermon addressed to a congregation of Protestant dissenters in Worcester on 28 May 1792* (1792)
- , *A Sermon preached to a Society of Protestant dissenters in York on 31 December 1800, immediately after the interment of Rev. Newcome Cappe, with an appendix containing brief memoirs of his life* (1800)
- , *A Sermon preached at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds on the commencement of the nineteenth century* (1800)
- , *A Serious Address to Christians of Trinitarian and Calvinistic sentiments* (1800)
- Worthington, H., *A good character better than a great fortune. A discourse preached in London, 28 May 1775* (1775)
- , *Christianity, an easy and liberal system: that of Popery, absurd and burdensome. A Sermon preached at Salters' Hall on 5 November 1778* (1778)
- , *The progress of moral corruption. A Sermon preached at St Thomas's, 1 January 1778. For the benefit of the Charity School in Gravel Lane* (1778)
- , *The growth of Christianity in the world: A Sermon preached at Salters' Hall, 16 April 1783* (1783)

- , *Discourses on various subjects, evangelical and practical* (1785)
- , *A Sermon delivered on 6 May 1789, at the meeting house in the Old Jewry, London, to the supporters of a new academical institution among Protestant Dissenters* (1789)
- , *The duty of instructing and relieving necessitous children. A Sermon preached at Salters' Hall on 16 July 1793* (1793)
- , *The utility of religious associations. A Sermon preached before an association of ministers at Chalfont St Giles, in the county of Buckinghamshire* (1796)

### **Other Contemporary Published Sources**

- A Christian, *Reasons from prophecy. Why the second coming of Christ and the commencement of the millennium are immediately to be expected* (1786)
- A Clergyman of Suffolk, *Remarks on the Temper of the Present Times. Addressed to the Gentlemen, Yeomanry and Common People* (Ipswich, 1792)
- A Friend to the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, *Animadversions by way of reply to a pamphlet entitled 'An address to the members of the establishment, in the town and neighbourhood of Bolton, signed a Dissenter'* (1791)
- A Kentish Curate, *A letter to the Rev. Archdeacon Law* (1780)
- A Minister of the Church of England, *An essay towards a religious union between Protestants and Catholics* (1782)
- A Liturgy for the use of the Mint Meeting in Exeter* (1792)
- A Unitarian Christian, *A serious address to Christians of Trinitarian and Calvinistic sentiments* (1792)
- Addington, S., *The Christian Minister's reason for baptising infants, and for administering the ordinance by sprinkling or pouring of water* (1771)
- Aikin, J., *The spirit of the constitution and that of the Church of England compared. To which are added by another hand, remarks on two letters addressed to the delegates of several congregations of Protestant dissenters, who met at Devizes* (1789)
- , *The general biography of lives critical and historical of the most eminent persons of all ages, 10 vols* (1799-1815)
- , *An address to the Dissidents of England on their late defeat* (1790)
- , *Miscellaneous pieces in prose by John Aikin, M.D. and Anna Letitia Barbauld* (1792)
- , *Letters from a father to his son on various topics relative to literature and the conduct of life* (1793)
- , *The works of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (1825)
- Aikin, L., *Memoirs of John Aikin* (1823)
- Ainsworth, H., *Two Treatises* (Edinburgh, 1789)
- Amner, R., *Considerations on the Doctrines of a Future State, and the Resurrection, as Revealed or supposed to be so in the Scriptures* (1797)

- Amory, T., *The Life of John Buncl* (1770)
- Anonymous, *A remonstrance with Rev. Mr. Clayton, on his sermon on the duty of Christians to civil magistrates, occasioned by the riots at Birmingham* (1791)
- , *The civil and ecclesiastical systems of England defended and fortified* (1791)
- , *Free remarks on the public psalmody of dissenters* (Hull, 1814)
- , *A plain man's answer to the question 'Why do you go to the Unitarian Chapel?'* (1824)
- Apthorpe, E., *Discourses on prophecy* (1786)
- Ashdowne, W., *A dissertation on St. John* (Canterbury, 1768)
- , *A key to the Scripture character of Jesus Christ; or the doctrine of the ancient existence of his glorious soul in union with his deity* (1784)
- , *The Unitarian, Arian and Trinitarian opinion respecting Christ, examined and tried by Scriptural evidence alone* (Canterbury, 1789)
- , *A letter to the author of a letter to the bishops, on the application of the dissenters for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (Canterbury, 1790)
- , *New and decisive proofs, from scripture and reason, that adults only were included in the design of the new covenant* (Canterbury, 1792)
- , *Two letters addressed to the Right Reverend Bishop of Llandaff* (1798)
- Ashworth, J., *An account of the rise and progress of the Unitarian doctrine in the societies at Rochdale, Newchurch in Rossendale, formerly in connection with the Rev. Joseph Cooke, a teacher among Wesleyan Methodists* (1817)
- Aspland, R., *Collection of Hymns for the Gravel Pit Meeting, Hackney* (1810)
- , *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship* (2nd ed., 1811)
- , *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship* (3rd ed., 1815)
- , *An attempt to ascertain the importance of the title 'Son of Man' commonly assumed by our Lord* (1821)
- , *A plea for Unitarian Dissenters* (1824)
- Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, *Association Papers* (1793)
- Bailie, J., *The nature and fatal influence of Popery on civil society* (1780)
- , *A vindication of the divinity of Jesus Christ, with impartial observations on the Unitarian scheme* (1789)
- Bailey, N., *The new universal etymological English dictionary* (1775)
- Barbault, A. L., *Devotional pieces, compiled from the Psalms and Book of Job* (1775)
- , *Lessons for Children* (1778-1779)
- , *Hymns in prose for children* (1781)
- , *An address to the opposers of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790)

- , *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the rejection of the bill for abolishing the slave trade* (1791)
- , *Civic sermons to the people* (1792)
- , *Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's 'Enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public and social worship'* (1792)
- , *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation* (1798)
- , *The Works of Anna Letitia Barbauld. With a memoir by Lucy Aikin* (1825)
- Barker, J., *The harmony of truth* (1776)
- Bealey, J., *Observations on the Reverend J. Orton's sermon* (1790)
- , *Observations upon the Rev. Mr. Owen's sermon, preached in the parish church of Warrington* (Warrington, 1790)
- Beatson, J., *Compassion the dignity and duty of man* (1789)
- Belsham, T., *A Review of Mr Wilberforce's treatise, entitled 'A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians. In letters to a lady.'* (1798)
- , *The Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey* (1808)
- Belsham, T. and Kentish, J., *A Selection of Hymns for private and social worship. Compiled by T. Belsham and J. Kentish for the Gravel Pit Meeting, Hackney* (1800)
- Belsham, W., *Essays, philosophical, historical and literary, 4 vols* (1789)
- , *An Essay on the African Slave Trade* (1790)
- , *Observations on the Test Laws, in reply to 'A Review of the case of the Protestant dissenters'* (1791)
- , *An Historic Memoir on the French Revolution; to which are annexed Strictures on the Reflections of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1791)
- , *Remarks on the nature and necessity of a Parliamentary Reform* (1793)
- , *Memoirs of the kings of Great Britain of the house of Brunswick-Lunenburg, 2 vols* (1793)
- , *Memoirs of the reign of George III to the session of Parliament ending A. D. 1793* (1795)
- , *Examination of an Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs; to which is prefixed an introduction containing remarks on Mr Burke* (1792)
- , *A history of Great Britain from the Revolution to the session of Parliament ending A.D. 1793* (1798)
- Benjamin, T., *A Letter to the Right Reverend Father in God, Shute Barrington, Lord Bishop of Llandaff, from a petitioner* (1774)
- Bentham, E., *Reflections upon the study of Divinity* (1771)
- Berington, J., *The state and behaviour of English Catholics, from the Reformation to the year 1780* (1780)
- , *The rights of dissenters from the established Church, in relation principally to the English Catholics* (Birmingham, 1789)

- Best, T., *A true state of the case; or a vindication of the orthodox dissenters, from the misrepresentations of the Rev. Robert Foley, M.A. of Oriel College, Oxford and Rector of Old Winford, Worcester. Contained in a late publication of his, entitled 'A Defence of the Church of England in five letters'* (1795)
- Blackburne, F., *The confessional; or a full and free inquiry into the right, utility, edification and success, of establishing systematical confessions of faith and doctrine in Protestant churches* (3rd ed., 1770)
- , *Reflections on the fate of a petition for relief in the matter of subscription, offered to the Honourable House of Commons* (1772)
- , *An historical view of the controversy concerning an intermediate state between death and the general resurrection* (1772)
- Blackstone, Sir W., *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1765-1769)
- Blake, W., *The right and duty of private judgement and free enquiry on religious subjects* (Taunton, 1810)
- Bicheno, J., *The sign of the times: or the overthrow of papal tyranny in France, the prelude to the destruction of popery and despotism* (1793)
- , *The sign of the times, to which is added an appendix, containing thoughts on the fall of papal government* (1799)
- Birks, J., *Memorials of Friar Gate Chapel, Derby* (1793)
- Bogue, D., *The great importance of having right sentiments in religion* (1788)
- , *Reasons for seeking a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, submitted to the Consideration of the candid and impartial. By a Dissenter* (1790)
- Bogue, D., Bennett, J., *A History of the Dissenters from the Revolution to the year 1808*, 4 vols (1808)
- Book of Common Prayer* (1662)
- Booth, A., *Commerce in the human species and the enslaving of innocent persons* (1792)
- Boston, M., *Discourses on important subjects of the Gospel* (1787)
- Boswell, J., *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791)
- Boucher, J., *A view of the causes and consequences of the American Revolution* (1797)
- Bourn, S., *The Christian family prayer book* (1770)
- Bowdler, E. S., *Practical observations on the Revelation of St. John. Written in the year 1775* (Bath, 1780)
- Bretland, J., ed., *A Liturgy for the Use of the Mint Meeting in Exeter* (Exeter, 1792)
- Brodbelt, G. C., *Original Essays in miscellaneous subjects in religion* (1796)
- Burgess, T., *Reflections on the controversial writings of Dr. Priestley, relative to religious opinions, establishments and tests* (Oxford, 1791)
- Burgh, J., *Crito or Essays on Various Subjects* (1767)
- , *Political Disquisitions*, 3 vols (1774)



- , *The dignity of human nature. Or a brief account of the certain and established means for obtaining the true end of our existence* (1794)
- Burgh, W., *A scriptural confutation of the arguments against the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost provided by Rev. Mr. Lindsey in his late Apology* (1774)
- , *An inquiry into the scriptural beliefs of the Christians* (1778)
- Burke, E., *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791)
- Butler, J., *The analogy of religion natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature* (1788)
- Cappe, C., ‘Memoir of Mrs Lindsey’, *Monthly Repository*, vii (1812)
- , *Memoirs of Catharine Cappe by Herself* (2nd ed., 1822).
- Cardale, P., *A new office of devotion adapted to the present times* (1758)
- , *The true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered* (1771)
- , *A comment upon some remarkable passages in Christ’s prayer, at the close of his public ministry* (1772)
- , *A treatise on the application of certain terms and epithets to Jesus Christ, shewing that they have no foundation either in the written Revelation or in any principles of sound reason and true Philosophy* (1774)
- Carpenter, B., *A Letter to the Reverend R. Foley, Rector of Oldswinford. In answer to the charges brought against the dissenters in Stourbridge* (Stourbridge, 1793)
- , *A Liturgy containing forms of devotion for each Sunday in the month* (Stourbridge, 1793)
- , ed., *Sacred Poetry, adapted to Public and Private Characters* (Stourbridge, 1806)
- Carpenter, L., *An Examination of Bishop Magee’s Charges against Unitarians and Unitarianism* (1820)
- Chedworth, Lord, *A Charge delivered to the grand jury at the general quarter sessions for the peace* (Ipswich, 1793)
- Christos, P., *The pre-existence of Christ Unscriptural* (1772)
- Clark, G., *A vindication of the honour of God, and of the rights of men. In a letter to the Rev. Mr. De Coetlogon, occasioned by the publication of Mr. Edward’s sermon on the eternity of hell torments* (1789)
- , *A defence of the unity of God* (1789)
- Clarke, S., *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, 4 vols (1738)
- Clayton, J., *The duty of Christians to magistrates. With a pre-fixed address to the publick, intended to remove the reproach lately fallen on Protestant Dissenters* (1791)
- Chalmers, A., *A New and General Biographical Dictionary containing an historical, critical and impartial account of the lives and writings of the most eminent persons in every nation*, 8 vols (1795)

- Cobbett, W., *Observations on the emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (1798)
- Coleridge, S. T., *A moral and political lecture delivered at Bristol* (1795)
- , *The plot discovered; or an address to the people against ministerial treason* (1795)
- , *Advertisement, On Friday, the 5th day of February will be published a Miscellany under the name of The Watchman* (1796)
- Committee of the seven Congregations of the three Denominations of Protestant Dissenting Ministers in Birmingham, *Extracts from books and other small pieces; in favour of religious liberty and the rights of the dissenters* (Birmingham, 1789)
- Congregational Churches of Warwickshire, *A circular letter from the Independent Ministers assembled at Nuneaton* (Birmingham, 1793)
- Congregational Churches of Yorkshire, *A Plan for a General Union in Extraordinary Prayer* (Huddersfield, 1795)
- Cornish, J., *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle, containing some remarks on a few passages of his Lordship's pamphlet, intituled 'Considerations on the Propriety of Requiring a Subscription to Articles of Faith'* (1770)
- , *A Serious and Ernest address to Protestant Dissenters of all Denominations; representing the many and important principles, on which their Dissent from the establishment is grounded* (2nd ed., 1772)
- , *A brief and impartial history of the Puritans* (1772)
- , *A blow at the root of all priestly claims, proving from Scripture that all laymen not only have the right to pray and preach in public, but also to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (1775)
- , *A letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle, containing a few remarks on his Lordship's pamphlet intituled 'Considerations of the propriety of requiring a Subscription to the Articles of Faith'* (1777)
- , *The life of Thomas Firmin* (1780)
- , *A brief treatise on the divine manifestations* (1787)
- , *Evangelical motives to holiness* (Taunton, 1790)
- , *A Brief History of Nonconformity, from the Reformation to the Revolution: with remarks on church-establishments* (1797)
- Country Curate, *A country curate's observations on the advertisement in the Morning Herald of January 18, 1790, from the Leeds clergy relative to the Test Act in a letter to a friend* (1790)
- Croft, G., *Cursory observations chiefly respecting Dr. Priestley* (1788)
- Currie, J., *A letter, commercial and political, addressed to the Right Honourable William Pitt, in which the real interests of Britain in the present crisis are considered* (1793)
- Currie, W. W., *Memoir of the life, writings and correspondence of James Currie, M.D., F.R.S., of Liverpool* (1831)

- Dawson, B., *A letter to the clergy of the archdeaconry of Winchester. Being a vindication of the Petition presented the last sessions of Parliament for the removal of subscription to human formularies of religious Faith and Doctrine* (1773)
- Dawson, J., *James our elder brother; or the harmony of the Scriptures* (1790)
- Dissenting County Attorney, *A letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1791)
- Dissenting Minister, *An apology and a shield for Protestant dissenters. In these times of instability and misrepresentation* (1784)
- Disney, J., *A short view of the controversy occasioned by the confessional, and the petition to Parliament for relief in the matter of subscription to the liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1773)
- , *A letter to the Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on the present opposition to any further Reform* (1774)
- , *Reasons for resigning the rectory of Panton and the vicarage of Swinderby in Lincolnshire and quitting the Church of England* (1783)
- , ed., *The Works of John Jebb*, 3 vols (1787)
- , *An arranged catalogue of the several publications which have appeared, relating to the enlargement of the toleration of Protestant Dissenting ministers, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790)
- , *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay-gentleman: occasioned by the late application to Parliament for the repeal of the Test Laws* (1792)
- , *The progressive improvement of civil liberty* (1792)
- , *The Memoirs of the Life and Writings of John Jortin* (1792)
- , *Tracts* (1794)
- , *A short memoir of Michael Dodson* (1800)
- Dodridge, P., *Practical Discourses on Regeneration* (1799)
- Dodson, M., *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Sturges, author of short remarks on a new translation of Isaiah* (1791)
- Duppa, R., *A brief account of the subversion of the Papal government* (1798)
- Dutton, T., *A vindication of 'The Age of Reason' by Thomas Paine, being an answer to the strictures of Mr Gilbert Wakefield and Dr. Priestley* (1795)
- Dyer, G., *A testimony for truth: in a brief vindication of the divinity of Christ, and a trinity in unity* (1788)
- , *An inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1792)
- , *Poems* (1792)
- , *The complaints of the poor people of England* (1793)
- , *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson* (1796)
- Eaton, D., *Scripture the only Guide to Religious Truth* (2nd ed., 1809)
- Enfield, W., *Remarks on Several late Publications relative to the Dissenters in a letter to Dr. Priestley. By a Dissenter* (1770)

- , *Sermons for the use of families* (3rd ed., 1770)
- , *Prayers for the use of families* (1770)
- , *A collection of psalms proper for Christian worship* (Liverpool, 1787)
- , ‘A Review of Letters on the Female Mind, its Powers, and Pursuits, addressed to Miss H. M. Williams, with particular reference to her Letters from France’, *Monthly Review* (1793)
- , *A Selection of hymns for social worship. Compiled by Dr W. Enfield for use of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich* (1795)
- Estlin, J. P., *Psalms and Hymns* (Bristol, 1806)
- , *A Unitarian Christian’s Statement and Defence* (1815)
- Evans, C., *The open address of New Testament evidence* (1771)
- , *A letter to the Reverend Mr. J. Wesley, occasioned by his calm address to the American colonies* (1775)
- , *Observations on the vindication of a letter to the Calvinistic Baptists of the Western Association on the subject of unscriptural doxologies* (1789)
- Evans, J., *A brief sketch of the several denominations into which the Christian world is divided* (1795)
- , *A letter to a friend in the country, respecting the Petition for the Abolition of all Penal Statutes in matters of religion, with remarks on the extraordinary correspondence between the Reverend Joseph Ivimey and J. Butterworth Esq., M.P. for Coventry* (1813)
- , ‘Memoir of Abraham Rees’, *Christian Moderator*, 1/1 (1826)
- Evanson, E., *A letter to the Right Reverend the lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, wherein the importance of the prophecies of the New Testament, and the nature of the grand apostacy predicted in them, are particularly and impartially considered* (1777)
- , *The Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists and their Authenticity Examined* (1792)
- Fawcett, B., *Candid Reflections on the different manner in which many of the learned and pious have expressed their conceptions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, in a letter to a friend* (1778)
- Fell, J., *Genuine Protestantism; or the inalienable rights of conscience defended; in opposition to the late and new mode of subscription proposed by some dissenting ministers* (1773)
- , *A fourth letter to the Rev. Mr. Pickard, on genuine Protestantism; being a full reply to the Rev. Mr. Toulmin’s Defence of the dissenters new mode of subscription* (1775)
- ‘Fidelia’, *A consolatory letter to the Reverend J. Clayton* (1791)
- Fleming, C., *The Open Address of New Testament Evidence: or three plain monuments authenticating three facts, on which the divinity of our holy religion has its support. Humbly proposed to public consideration in an unthinking age* (1771)

- , *Religion Not the Magistrate's Province, or arguments for reason and scripture, against the civil magistrate's claim of authority in the province of religion.* By Philotheorus (1773)
- , *The ingratitude of infidelity; proveable from the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ* (1775)
- Fleming, R., *Apocalyptical key: An extraordinary discourse on the rise and fall of papacy* (1793)
- Fletcher, J., *Political Sophistry Detected, or Brief Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Fletcher's Late Tract* (Bristol, 1776)
- , *A reply to Rev. Mr. Fletcher's Vindication* (Bristol, 1776)
- , *American Patriotism Further Confronted with Reason, Scripture and the Constitution* (1776)
- , *An appeal to matter of fact and common sense* (1785)
- , *A rational vindication of the catholic faith* (1790)
- , *Socinianism Unscriptural* (1791)
- Fletcher, S., *Letter to Sir Thomas Plumbe, Esq., Chairman of the Bolton Committee* (1790)
- Flower, B., *The French Constitution; with remarks on some of its principal articles, in which their importance in a political, moral and religious point of view is illustrated, and the necessity of a Reform in Church and State in Great Britain enforced* (1792)
- , *The principles of the British Constitution explained, and right, necessity, and expediency of reform asserted. In a series of letters to the author of a late publication entitled 'The British Constitution Invulnerable'. By a Friend to the Constitution* (1793)
- , *National sins considered, in two letters to Rev. Thomas Robinson, vicar of St Mary's, Leicester, on his Serious Exhortation to the inhabitants of Great Britain* (1796)
- , *Proceedings of the House of Lords in the case of Benjamin Flower, printer of The Cambridge Intelligencer, for a supposed libel on the Bishop of Llandaff* (Cambridge, 1800)
- Fownes, J., *An enquiry into the principles of toleration: the degree to which they are admitted by our laws and the reasonableness of the late application made by the Dissenters to Parliament for an enlargement of their religious liberties* (1772)
- , *An appendix to an enquiry into the principles of toleration* (1773)
- , *The Glory of the Gospel, and the excellence and honour of the ministration of it* (Shrewsbury, 1783)
- Fox, C. J., *Two Speeches delivered in the House of Commons, on Tuesday 2 March, 1790, by the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, in Support of his Motion for a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790)
- Fox, W. J., *Letters to the Rev. Pye Smith* (1813)

- Frend, W., *Thoughts on subscription to religious tests, particularly that required by the University of Cambridge, of candidates for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts* (1789)
- , *An address to the inhabitants of Cambridge and its neighbourhood, exhorting them to turn from the false worship of three persons to the worship of one true God* (1788)
- , *Mr. Coulthurst's blunders exposed; or a Review of several texts, which Mr. Coulthurst lately produced in his sermon before the University of Cambridge as proofs of the established doctrine of the Trinity* (1789)
- , *An address to members of the Church of England* (1790)
- , *Peace and Union recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St. Ives, 1793)
- , *Animadversions on the elements of Christian theology by the Rev. George Pretyman, Lord Bishop of Lincoln, in a series of letters* (1800)
- Fullager, J., *The Southern Unitarian Society* (1818)
- , *Unitarianism vindicated from the imputation of tending to infidelity in a letter to the Rev. Richard Lloyd, Vicar of Midhurst, occasioned by his account of the recent conduct of the Rev. Robert Taylor* (Chichester, 1819)
- Fuller, A., *The gospel of Christ worthy of all acceptance* (Northampton, 1785)
- , *The Calvinistic and Socinian systems examined and compared, as to their moral tendency* (1793)
- , *Socinianism indefensible, on the ground of its moral tendency: containing a reply to two late publications: the one by Dr. Toulmin, entitled 'The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine'; the other by Mr. Kentish, entitled 'The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine'* (1797)
- Furneaux, P., *Letters to the Honourable Mr. Justice Blackstone concerning his exposition of the Act of Toleration, and some positions relative to his celebrated communications on the laws of England* (1770)
- , *An Essay on Toleration with a particular view to the late Application of Protestant Dissenting Ministers to Parliament for amending the Act of William and Mary, commonly called the Act of Toleration* (1773)
- Fry, R., *No shame in suffering for truth* (Sudbury, 1798)
- Garnham, R. E., *Examination of a sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the judges, aldermen and sheriffs* (1788)
- Geddes, A., *A letter from the Reverend A. Geddes to the Right Reverend J. Douglas, Vicar Apostolic in the London District* (1794)
- General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, *A meeting convened for the purpose of expressing our concurrence with our brethren in the country on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1789)
- Gentleman, R., *A discourse upon the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, with the advantages which may be reasonably expected from a regular and serious attendance upon it* (Shrewsbury, 1786)

- , *Plain and affectionate addresses to youth* (Kidderminster, 1792)
- Glazebrook, J., *A defence of infant baptism in three letters to the Reverend Mr. Wakefield* (1793)
- Grafton, A. H. F., 3rd Duke of, *The serious reflections of a rational Christian, written down at different times, from 1788-1797* (1797)
- Greg, H., *A collection of maxims and observations* (Liverpool, 1799)
- , *Practical suggestions towards alleviating the sufferings of the sick* (1828)
- Godwin, W., *An enquiry concerning political justice, and its influence on general virtue and happiness* (1793)
- , *Cursory strictures on the charge delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the grand jury, 2 October, 1794* (1794)
- Hackney College, *Address of the students at the New College, Hackney to Dr. Priestley in consequence of the Birmingham Riots* (1791)
- Hanway, J., *Virtue in humble life: containing reflections on relative duties* (1777)
- Hampson, J. *To the worthy trustees of the Dissenting Chapel at Tunbridge Wells: A blow at the root of intended Calvinism* (1788)
- Hardy, T., *The Trial of Thomas Hardy for High Treason* (1795)
- Harwood, E., *Five Dissertations* (1772)
- Hays, M., *Cursory remarks on an enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public or social worship* (1792)
- , *Letters and essays, moral and miscellaneous* (1793)
- , *An appeal to the men of Great Britain on behalf of women* (1798)
- , *Historical dialogues for young people* (1808)
- Hazlitt, W., *Human authority, in matters of faith, repugnant to Christianity* (1774)
- , *Discourses for the use of families, on the advantage of free enquiry, and on the study of the Scriptures* (1790)
- Heywood, S., *The right of Protestant dissenters to a compleat toleration asserted: By a layman* (2nd ed. 1789)
- , *A digest of law respecting county elections* (1790)
- , *High Church Politics, being a seasonable appeal to Friends of the British Constitution against the practice and principles of high churchmen as exemplified in the late opposition to the repeal of the Test Laws, and in the riots at Birmingham* (1792)
- , *A digest of so much of law respecting borough elections* (1797)
- Holden, L., *The First Meeting of the Kent and Sussex Unitarian Christian Association* (1812)
- Holme, E., *A Directory for the towns of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester, 1788)
- Hopkins, W., *An attempt to restore Scriptural forms of worship; or a friendly dialogue between a common Unitarian Christian, converted by some late writings, and an Athanasian* (Worcester, 1765)

- , *An appeal to the commonsense of all Christian people, more particularly members of the Church of England, with regard to an important point of faith and practice* (1787)
- Horne, G., *Sunday Schools Recommended* (1786)
- , *Observations on The Case of the Protestant Dissenters with reference to the Corporation and Test Acts* (Oxford, 1790)
- Horsley, S., *Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley, upon the historic question of the belief of the first ages, in our Lord's divinity* (1783)
- , *Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's second letter to the Archdeacon of St Albans, with proofs of certain facts asserted by the Archdeacon* (1786)
- , *A Review of the Case of Protestant Dissenters; with reference to the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790)
- , *A speech delivered by the Bishop of St. David's, in the House of Lords, May 31, 1791, on the second reading of the bill for the relief of Papists, or Persons professing the Popish Religion* (1791)
- Huntington, W., *Epistles of Faith* (1785)
- , *The music and odour of Saints* (1788)
- , *A key to the hieroglyphical print of the Church of God* (1791)
- , *Living testimonies or spiritual letters on divine subjects* (1795)
- , *Discoveries and cautions from the streets of Zion* (1798)
- Ivimey, J., *A brief sketch of the History of the Dissenters* (1810)
- , *The Roman Catholic Claims: A question not of religious liberty but political expediency* (1828)
- , *Dr. Williams's Library and the Debate on the Roman Catholic Claims: A Letter addressed to the Trinitarian Members of the General Body of Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations on the above subject* (1829)
- James, D., *A short view of the tenets of Tritheists, Sabellians, Trinitarians, Arians and Socinians: intended to assist plain Christians in forming a general idea of the principle opinions held on the Trinity* (1780)
- Jardine, D., *The unpurchased Love of God in the Redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, a great argument for Christian Benevolence* (Bath, 1792)
- Jebb, A., *Two penny-worth of truth for a penny* (1792)
- , *Two penny-worth more of truth for a penny* (1793)
- Jebb, J., *The excellency of the spirit of benevolence* (1772)
- , *A short account of theological lectures now reading at Cambridge. To which is added, a new harmony of the Gospels* (1772)
- , *Letters on the subject of subscription to the Liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England: First printed in the Whitehall Evening Post under the signature of Paulinus; Now reprinted with Notes and Additions. Humbly dedicated to the Honourable House of Commons, and the two Universities* (1772)
- , *A short state of the reasons for a late resignation* (Cambridge, 1775)



- , *An address to the freeholders of Middlesex, assembled at Free Masons Tavern* (1779)
- Jenkins, J., *The Orthodox dissenting ministers reasons for a farther application to Parliament, for relief in the matter of subscription to the articles of religion* (1775)
- Jenyns, S., *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (4th ed., 1761)
- Johnson, S., *The Patriot, An address to the Electors of Great Britain* (1774)
- , *Taxation no Tyranny: An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress* (1775)
- Jones, D., *Reasons for Unitarianism: or the Primitive Christian Doctrine* (1771)
- , *The Welsh freeholder's farewell epistle to the Right Reverend Samuel, Lord Bishop of Rochester* (1794)
- Jones, W., *The Works of The Right Reverend George Horne* (1801)
- , *The Memoirs of the Life, Studies and Writings of The Right Reverend George Horne* (1799)
- , *One Penny-Worth of Truth from Thomas Bull to his brother John Bull* (1792)
- , *A preservative against the publications dispersed by modern Socinians, in which the piety and absurdity of their principles are clearly shown* (1782)
- Joyce, J., *An analysis of Paley's view of the evidences of Christianity* (Cambridge, 1797)
- Kenrick, T., *Discourses on Various Topics*, 2 vols (1805)
- , *An Exposition of the Historical Writings of the New Testament*, 3 vols (1807)
- Kentish, J., *A vindication of the principles upon which several Unitarian Christians have formed themselves into Societies, for the purpose of avowing and recommending their views of their Religious Doctrine, by the Distribution of Books* (1794)
- , *A Letter to James White, Esq. of Exeter, on the late correspondence between him and Mr Toulmin, relative to the Society of Unitarian Christians* (1794)
- , *Strictures upon the reply of Mr A. Fuller, to Mr Kentish's discourse, entitled 'The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine.' By the author of that discourse* (1798)
- Kersey, J., *A new English Dictionary* (1772)
- Kershaw, J., *An essay on the principle points of the Book of Revelations; in a series of dialogues between Didascalos and Phylotheos* (1780)
- Kippis, A., *Biographica Britannica; or an accurate and impartial account of the lives and writings of eminent persons in Great Britain and Ireland* (1766)
- , *The Character of Jesus Christ as a public speaker considered* (1769)
- , *A Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, with regard to their late application to Parliament* (1772)
- , *The Life of Nathaniel Lardner* (1780)

- , *Considerations on the Provisional Treaty with America, and the Preliminary Articles of Peace with France and Spain* (1783)
- , *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1788)
- , ed., *The Life of Anthony Ashley Cooper, First Earl of Shaftesbury* (1790)
- , *The Family Expositor: or a Paraphrase and version of the New Testament; with critical notes* (1799)
- , *A Collection Of Hymns And Psalms, For Public And Private Worship: selected and prepared by Andrew Kippis, Abraham Rees, Thomas Jervis and Thomas Morgan* (1795)
- Knott, J., *A vindication of the doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus Christ* (Rochester, 1794)
- Knowles, S., *Revealed religion asserted* (Taunton, 1786)
- Knowles, T., *Primitive Christianity: or testimonies from writers of the first four centuries to prove that Jesus Christ was worshipped as God from the beginning of the Christian Church* (1789)
- Lamb, J., *An account of the ordination of the Rev. J. Lamb, to the co-pastoral care of the Independent church at Weymouth, Dorset* (1797)
- Law, E., *Considerations on the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith* (1774)
- Liddon, J., *The genuine principles of a religious dissent, and especially of the Protestant Dissenters in England* (1793)
- Lindsey, T., *Apology on resigning the vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire* (1774)
- , *A sequel to The Apology of Theophilus Lindsey on resigning the vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire* (1774)
- , *A summary account of the Reformed Liturgy, made use of in the Chapel in Essex Street* (1774)
- , *Two Dissertations. On the preface to St. John's Gospel, On praying to Jesus Christ* (1779)
- , *The Catechist; or, an inquiry into the doctrine of the scriptures, concerning the only true God and object of religious worship* (1781)
- , *An historical view of the state of Unitarian doctrine and worship, from the Reformation to our own times, with some account of the obstruction it has met with at different periods* (1783)
- , *Vindici? Priestleian?: an address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge* (1788)
- , *A second address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge, relating to Jesus Christ and the origin of the great errors concerning him* (1790)
- , *Conversations on Christian idolatry* (1792)
- , *On prayer, and forms of prayer, their defects and remedy* (1793)
- Lofft, C., *An observation on Mr. Wesley's second calm address, and incidentally on other writings upon the American question* (1777)

- , *Elements of Universal Law and particularly the Law of England* (1779)
- , *An argument on the nature of party and faction. In which is considered the duty of a good and peaceable citizen at the present crisis* (1780)
- , *An history of the Corporation and Test Acts. With an Investigation of their Importance to the Establishment in Church and State* (1790)
- Losh, J., *A meeting for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the improvement and gradual emancipation of the slave population of the British Colonies* (Newcastle, 1824)
- , *Speech on the immediate abolition of British Colonial Slavery* (Newcastle, 1833)
- Macaulay, C., *An Address to the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland on the Present Important Crisis of Affairs* (2nd ed., 1775)
- , *Letters on education, with observations on religious and metaphysical subjects* (1790)
- Macgowan, J., *Familiar epistles to the Rev. Dr. Priestley* (1771)
- , *Infernal Conference: or dialogues of devils* (1772)
- , *Socinianism brought to the Test* (1773)
- , *The Arians and Socinians Monitor* (1781)
- Maden, S., *A plain caution to every honest Englishman against certain false arguments* (1793)
- Manning, J., *A sketch of the Life and Writings of the Reverend Micaiah Towgood* (Exeter, 1792)
- Manning, J. and Carpenter, L., *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Social and Public Worship* (Exeter, 1812)
- Marson, J., *The Impersonality of the Holy Ghost* (1812)
- Martin, J., *A speech on the repeal of such parts of the Test and Corporation Acts as affect conscientious dissenters: intended to have been delivered before the general body of dissenting ministers at the Library at Red Cross Street* (1790)
- Mather, C., *Student and Preacher* (1781)
- Mauduit, I., *The Case of the Dissenting Ministers. Addressed to the Lords Spiritual and Temporal* (4th ed., 1772)
- Meadley, G.W., *Memoirs of Mrs Jebb* (1812)
- Mickle, W.K., *A Letter to Mr. Harwood, wherein some of his evasive glosses, false translations, and blundering criticism, in support of the Arian heresy, contained in his liberal translation of the New Testament, are pointed out and confuted* (1768)
- Milner, J., *Essays on several religious subjects, chiefly tending to illustrate the Scripture-Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (1789)
- More, H., *A country carpenter's confession of faith: with a few plain remarks on 'The Age of Reason'* (1794)
- Morgan, W., *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price D.D., F.R.S.* (1815)

- Northamptonshire Association of Baptist Churches, *The doctrine of the Trinity stated, in a circular letter from the Baptist Ministers assembled at Olney, Buckinghamshire, May 28, 1779* (1779)
- Nichols, J., *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (1812)
- , *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century: memoirs and letters of eminent persons* (1817)
- Orton, J., *Letters from Job Orton* (Shrewsbury, 1800)
- Paley, W., *A defence on the consideration of the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith* (1774)
- Palmer, J., *Free thoughts on the inconsistency of conforming to any religious tests as a condition of toleration with the true principle of Protestant dissent* (1779)
- , *Observations in defence of the liberty of man as a moral agent: In answer to Dr. Priestley's illustrations of philosophical necessity* (1779)
- , *A summary view of the grounds of Christian baptism* (1788)
- Palmer, S., *The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted in a Letter to the Archdeacon of St. Albans* (1786)
- , *The Protestant Dissenter's Catechism. Containing i. A Brief History of the Nonconformists: ii. The reasons of the Dissent from the National Church. Designed to instruct and enable Young Persons among the Dissenters in the Principles of Nonconformity* (1792)
- , *Letters to Dissenting Ministers from the Rev. Job Orton* (1806)
- Palmer, T. F., *An attempt to refute a sermon by D. T. Inglis on the Godhead of Jesus Christ, and to restore the long lost truth of the First Commandment* (Edinburgh, 1792)
- Paradise Street Chapel, Liverpool, *A Collection of Hymns* (1815)
- Park, J. A., *The Memoirs of William Stevens Esq.* (1814)
- Peckard, P., *Further Observations of an Intermediate State* (1757)
- , *Subscription: or historical extracts humbly inscribed to the Bishops and to the Petitioners showing the impropriety of their petition* (1776)
- Percival, T., *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* (Manchester, 1785)
- , *An appendix to the inquiry concerning the principles of taxation* (Warrington, 1790)
- , *A father's instructions; adapted to different periods of life from youth to maturity* (Warrington, 1800)
- Pigot, *Directory of Kent* (1824)
- Pilling, W., *A dialogue between a protesting Catholic dissenter and a Catholic: on the nature, tendency and importance of the oath lately offered to the Catholics of England* (1779)
- Pope, J., *Observations on the miraculous conception and the testimonies of Ignatius and Justin Martyr on that subject* (1792)

- Porter, T., *A defence of Unitarianism, intended as an answer to Dr Hawker's sermons on the divinity of Christ* (Plymouth, 1793)
- Powell, W. S., *A Defence of the Subscriptions required in the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1772)
- Price, R., *Observations on the nature of civil liberty, the principles of government, and the justice and policy of the war with America* (5th ed., 1776)
- , *Additional observations on the nature and value of civil liberty, and the war with America: also observations on schemes for raising money by public loans; an historical deduction and an analysis of the national debt; and a brief account of the debts and resources of France* (1777)
- , *Four Dissertations, i. On providence, ii. On prayer, iii. On the reasons for expecting that virtuous men shall meet death in a state of happiness, iv. On the importance of Christianity, the nature of historical evidence and miracles* (1777)
- , *The general introduction and supplement to two tracts on civil liberty, the war with America, and the finances of the kingdom* (1778)
- , *Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty* (2nd ed., 1778)
- , *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution, and the means of making it a benefit to the world* (1784)
- , *The evidence for a future state of improvement in the state of mankind* (1787)
- , *Britain's happiness and its full possession of civil and religious liberty briefly stated and proved* (1791)
- Price, R., Priestley, J., *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism and Philosophical necessity, in a correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley* (1778)
- Priestley, J., *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of Political, Civil and Religious Liberty* (1768)
- , *Additions to the address to Protestant Dissenters on the subject of the Lord's Supper* (1770)
- , *An Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity* (1771)
- , *A free address to Protestant Dissenters, as such. By a Dissenter* (1771)
- , *An Address to Protestant Dissenters, on the Approaching Election of Members of Parliament with Respect to the State of Public Liberty in General, and of American Affairs in Particular* (1774)
- , *A letter to the Reverend Mr. John Palmer, in defence of the illustrations of Philosophical Necessity* (Bath, 1779)
- , *Lectures on History and General Policy* (Birmingham, 1781)
- , *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. 2* (1782)
- , *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit. To which is added the history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul* (1782)

- , *Additional letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever in answer to Mr. William Hammon* (Birmingham, 1782)
- , *Forms of prayer and other offices, for the use of Unitarian societies* (Birmingham, 1783)
- , *History of early opinions concerning Jesus Christ, compiled from original writers, proving that the Christian Church was at first Unitarian* (Birmingham, 1786)
- , *A catechism for children and young persons* (5th ed., 1787)
- , *Defences of Unitarianism for the year 1786, containing letters to Dr. Horne, Dean of Canterbury, to young men in the course of education for the Christian ministry* (Birmingham, 1788)
- , *An appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity* (1792)
- , *Letters to a young man, occasioned by Mr. Wakefield's essay on public worship* (1792)
- , *An Appeal to the Public, on the subject of the Riots in Birmingham* (1792)
- , *The present state of Europe compared with ancient prophecies* (1794)
- , *An answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, being a continuation of letters to the philosophers and politicians of France, on the subject of religion; and of letters to a philosophical unbeliever. With a preface by Theophilus Lindsey* (1795)
- , *Discourses related to the evidence of Revealed religion* (Philadelphia, 1797)
- Priestley, T., *The Christian's Looking Glass* (1790)
- Protestant Dissenters of Manchester, *Forms of prayer for the use of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Manchester* (Birmingham, 1789)
- Protestant Dissenters of Salisbury, *Forms of prayer, for public worship, baptism and the Lord's Supper, collected from various devotional offices, composed for the use of Protestant dissenters. To which is added a liturgy chiefly selected from the Book of Common Prayer* (1776)
- Protestant Dissenters of York, *At a meeting of the committee of the Protestant Dissenting Laymen and Ministers of the Three Denominations of the West Riding of Yorkshire* (York, 1791)
- Randolph, T., *Scriptural Revision of Socinian arguments* (Bath, 1792)
- Reader, T., *A letter to the Reverend Sir Harry Trelawny. Occasioned by his sermon preached at Taunton, May 26, 1779 before an assembly of Protestant Dissenting Ministers* (1780)
- , *An enquiry into whether Popery is a proper subject of toleration in Protestant states* (1780)
- , *Sir, A Protestant dissenting minister hopes that your benevolence will pardon the freedom of a few miscellaneous hints, which are respectfully offered from the tenderest love to my King and country. Addressed to William Wilberforce* (Taunton, 1790)
- Rees, A., *Acceptable religion illustrated and recommended* (1770)

- , *The doctrine of Christ, the only effectual remedy against the fear of death and the union of good men in the future world* (1790)
- , *Letters concerning the regium donum, addressed to the editor of the Morning Chronicle. By a dissenter* (1792)
- , *Economy illustrated and recommended; and a caution against modern infidelity* (1800)
- Rees, T., *Objections to the doctrine of the Trinity* (1821)
- Reid, W.H., *The rise and dissolution of the infidel societies in this metropolis* (1800)
- Reynolds, J., *The Divinity of Christ defended and his equality with God the Father fully proved from Scripture* (1790)
- Rogers, H. A., *Spiritual Letters by Mrs. H. A. Rogers, written before and after her marriage, peculiarly calculated to illustrate and enforce holiness of heart and life* (Bristol, 1796)
- Roscoe, W., *A general view of the African slave trade, demonstrating its injustice and impolity: with hints towards a bill for its abolition* (1788)
- , *The nature and duties of a minister of religion; also the impiety, injustice and absurdity of persecution, considered in a discourse delivered before the congregations of the New and Old Meetings* (Birmingham, 1792)
- , *A spiritual refutation of a pamphlet by the Reverend Raymond Harris, intitled 'Scriptural researches on the slave trade'* (1788)
- , *The life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent*, 2 vols (Liverpool, 1795)
- Rossendale Unitarian Christians, *An account of a Bible-formed Society of Unitarian Christians at New Church, Rossendale* (Bristol, 1816)
- Rowles, S., *Revealed religion asserted* (Taunton, 1786)
- Rutt, J. T., ed., *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols (Hackney, 1817-1831)
- Rutt, J. T. and Wainewright, A., eds, *Memoirs of the Life of Gilbert Wakefield* (1804)
- Ryland, J., *The wonderful extremes united in the person of Christ: Proposed as brief hints of thought, and materials of meditation for true Christians* (1772)
- , *A contemplation on the existence and perfections of God* (1774)
- , *A contemplation on the insufficiency of human reason* (1775)
- , *A contemplation on the nature and evidences of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (1776)
- , *A body of divinity in miniature* (1790)
- , *The character of the Rev. James Harvey considered* (1790)
- Savage, S. M., *National reformation the way to prevent national ruin* (1782)
- Sayer, E., *Observations on Dr. Price's Revolution sermon, and on the conduct of Dissenters, and Mr. Pitt, respecting the repeal of the Test Act* (1790)
- Scargill, W.P., *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister* (3rd ed., 1835)

- Scott, M., *The Messiah; a poem* (Bath, 1788)
- Scott, W. *O Tempora! O Mores!* (1775)
- Seddon, J., *Discourses on the person of Christ, on the Holy Spirit and on self-deception.* (1793)
- Serle, A., *An Address to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity* (1773)
- Sharp, G., *Remarks on the uses of the definitive article in the Greek version of the New Testament, containing many proofs of the divinity of Christ* (Durham, 1798)
- Sharp, R., *A letter to the public meeting of the friends to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts* (1790)
- Shepherd, R., *Free Examination of the Socinian exposition of the Prefatory Verses of St John's Gospel* (1781)
- , *A Letter to Dr. Priestley* (1783)
- Simpson, D., *Miscellaneous Tracts on Theological Subjects* (1795)
- , *An apology for the doctrine of the Trinity* (1798).
- Simpson, J., *Thoughts on the novelty, the excellence, the evidence of the Christian religion* (Bath, 1798)
- Stevens, W., *A Treatise on the Nature and Constitution of the Christian Church* (1773)
- , *The Revolution Vindicated and Constitutional Liberty Asserted* (Cambridge, 1776)
- , ed., *The Theological, philosophical and Miscellaneous Works of the Reverend William Jones, M.A., F.R.S.*, 12 vols (1807)
- Taylor, D., *Fundamentals of religion in faith and practice* (Leeds, 1775)
- , *The eternity of future punishment, asserted and improved* (1789)
- , *The eternity of future punishment, reasserted; the importance of the Doctrine stated and the Truth of it vindicated* (St. Ives, 1790)
- Taylor, H., *Confusion worse compounded, rout on rout: or the Bishop of Gloucester's commentary on Rice or Arise Evans's 'Echo from Heaven' examined and exposed* (1772)
- , *A full answer to a late view of the internal evidence of the Christian religion. In a dialogue between a rational Christian and his friend. By the editor of Ben Mordecai's letters to Elisha Levi* (1777)
- , *Thoughts on the nature of the Grand Apostacy* (1781)
- , *The apology of Ben Mordecai to his friends for embracing Christianity, in seven letters to Elisha Levi, merchant of Amsterdam* (1784)
- , *Considerations on ancient and modern creeds compared* (1788)
- Taylor, J., *The scripture – doctrine of original sin proposed to free and candid examination* (1740).
- , *The scripture account of prayer* (1762)
- Temple, A., *Addenda to remarks on Mr. Burgh's 'Scriptural confutation of the arguments of the Reverend Mr. Lindsey'* (York, 1775)



- , *Objections to Mr. Lindsey's interpretation of the first fourteen verses of St. John's Gospel* (1776)
- The Baptist Ministers of Coventry, *The authority and sanctification of the Lord's Day, explained in a circular letter* (1786)
- The Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information, *Address of The Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information* (Birmingham, 1792)
- The Bristol Society for Constitutional Information, *Address of The Bristol Constitutional Society for a Parliamentary Reform, to the people of Great Britain* (1794)
- The Committee of English Catholics, *A short account of the principle circumstances attending our attempt to procure for the Catholics of England an exemption from the laws enacted against persons professing the Popish religion* (1789)
- The Committee of Protestant Dissenting Laymen and Ministers of the Three Denominations for the West- Riding of the County of York, *Minutes of the quarterly meeting held at Wakefield on Thursday, September 1, 1791* (York, 1791)
- The Dissenting Ministers of Cambridgeshire, *A letter from the associated dissenting ministers of Cambridgeshire, recommending a plan for the further extension of the gospel in that county* (Cambridge, 1785)
- The London Corresponding Society, *Address of the London Corresponding Society to the British nation* (1798)
- The London Unitarian Society, *Rules* (1791)
- The Particular Baptist Fund in London, *Rules and Orders* (1784)
- The Revolution Society, *An Abstract of the History and Proceedings of the Revolution Society in London* (1789)
- , *The correspondence of the Revolution Society in London, with the National Assembly, and with various societies of the friends of liberty in France and England* (1792)
- , *A collection of addresses transmitted by certain English clubs and societies to the national convention of France* (2nd ed., 1793)
- The Salisbury Liturgy* (1770)
- The Society for Constitutional Information, *An address to the public from the Society for Constitutional Information* (1780)
- , *Tracts published and distributed gratis with a design to convey to the minds of the people a knowledge of their rights, principally those of representation* (1793)
- , *Proceedings of the public meeting held at Sheffield* (1794)
- The Society of Unitarian Christians at Attercliffe, *An answer to a brief defence of the first article of the Church of England* (Sheffield, 1784)
- The Society of Unitarian Christians established in the West of England, *Preamble* (Exeter, 1792)
- The Yorkshire and Lancashire Association of the Particular Baptists, *Circular Letter* (Leeds, 1791)

- Thomas, B., *A Letter to the Rt. Rev. Father in God, Shute, Lord Bishop of Llandaff from a petitioner* (1774)
- Thomas, L., *An essay on the toleration of Papists* (1779)
- Thomas, R., *A letter to the remarker on the layman's Scriptural confutation. Wherein the divinity of the Son of God is further vindicated against the remarker's exceptions* (Oxford, 1771)
- Toulmin, Jane, *A vindication of speaking openly in favour of important truths, especially those respecting the divine unity* (1790)
- Toulmin, Joshua, *Memoirs of the life, character, sentiments and writings of Faustus Socinus* (1771)
- , *Two letters on the late application to Parliament by Protestant dissenting ministers* (1774)
- , *The American War Lamented* (1776)
- , *Memoirs of the Life, Character, Sentiments and Writings of Faustus Socinus* (1777)
- , *A free and serious address to the Christian laity, especially such as embracing Unitarian sentiments conform to Trinitarian worship* (1781)
- , *An exhortation to all Christian people to refrain from Trinitarian worship* (1789)
- , *An appeal to the Bishops, on the application of the Protestant dissenters to Parliament, for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1789)
- , *The rise, progress and effects of Sunday Schools* (Taunton, 1789)
- , *A vindication of speaking openly in favour of important truths* (Taunton, 1790)
- , *Six Tracts, in vindication of the worship of one God* (1791)
- , *A Review of the life, character and writings of the Reverend John Biddle* (1791)
- , *A History of the town of Taunton* (Taunton, 1791)
- , *The Injustice of classing Unitarians with Deists and Infidels. A discourse written with reference to some reflections from the pens of Bishops Newton, Hurd and Horsley, Doctors White, Knox and Fuller, Mrs Piozzi and others delivered at Taunton. Before the Society of Unitarian Christians* (1797)
- , *A Letter from a dissenting minister, addressed separately to three Gentlemen* (1800)
- , *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine: Considered in a series of letters to the Rev. Andrew Fuller: occasioned by his publication entitled 'Of an essay on the grounds of love to Christ'* (1801)
- , *A biographical tribute to the memory of the Rev. Joseph Priestley. In an address to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters at the New Meeting, on the occasion of his death* (1804)

- , *Four discourses on the nature, design, uses and history of the ordinance of baptism* (1811)
- , *An historical view of the state of the Protestant Dissenters in England: and of the progress of free enquiry and religious liberty, from the Revolution to the accession of Queen Anne* (1814)
- , *Family devotion assisted: Containing forms of morning and evening prayers for a fortnight* (1814)
- , *A Review of the preaching of the Apostles; or the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine* (1817)
- , *Posthumous discourses of the very venerable Joshua Toulmin* (1818)
- Towgood, M., *A dissent from the Church of England, fully justified: And proved the genuine and just consequence of the allegiance due to Christ* (5th ed., 1779)
- , *The baptism of infants, a reasonable service; founded on scripture, and undoubted apostolic tradition* (3rd ed., 1791)
- Townsend, G., *A testimony for truth* (1788)
- , *A letter to Mr. W. Frend of Canterbury* (Canterbury, 1789)
- , *The Replication: or A Familiar Address to Mr. William Frend* (Canterbury, 1789)
- Towers, J., *A Review of the genuine doctrines of Christianity. Comprehending remarks on several principal Calvinistic doctrines* (1763)
- , *Observations on public liberty, patriotism, ministerial despotism, and national grievances* (1769)
- , *A letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, in answer to his late pamphlet, entitled 'Free Thoughts on the present State of Public Affairs'* (1771)
- , *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Nowell, occasioned by his very extraordinary sermon, preached before the House of Commons on 30 January 1772* (1772)
- , *A dialogue between two gentlemen, concerning the late application to Parliament for relief in the matter of subscription to the thirty-nine articles and liturgy of the Church of England* (1772)
- , *An examination into the nature and evidence of the charges brought against Lord W. Russell, and A. Sydney, by Sir J. Dalrymple, Bart.* (1773)
- , *A letter to Dr. Samuel Johnson: Occasioned by his Late Political Publications, with an appendix, containing some observations on a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr Shebbeare* (1775)
- , *Tyranny Unmasked: An Answer to a late Pamphlet, 'Taxation No Tyranny.'* Addressed to the Author and to Persons in Power (1775)
- , *Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England* (1778)
- , *A Vindication of the Political Principles of Mr Locke, in answer to the objections of Dr Tucker, Dean of Gloucester* (1782)
- , *A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Shelburne, First Lord of the Treasury* (1782)

- , *Observations on the rights and duties of juries, in trials for libels* (1784)
- , *Dialogues concerning the ladies* (1785)
- , *An enquiry whether juries are, or are not, judges of law, as well as of fact; with particular reference to the case of libel* (1785)
- , *An Essay on the Life, Character and Writings of Samuel Johnson* (1786)
- , *An oration delivered at the London Tavern, on the fourth of November, 1788 on the occasion of the commemoration of the Revolution* (1788)
- , *Memoirs of the life and reign of Frederick the Third, King of Prussia*, 2 vols (1788)
- , *Thoughts on the Commencement of a new Parliament, with an appendix, containing remarks on the letter of Edmund Burke on the Revolution in France* (1790)
- , *Remarks on the Conduct, Principles and Publications of the Association, at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers* (1793)
- , *A dialogue between an associator and a well-informed Englishman, on the grounds of the late associations and the commencement of the war with France* (1793)
- , *An Address to the electors of Great Britain* (1796)
- , *Tracts on political and other subjects*, 3 vols (1796)
- Towers, J. L., *Illustrations of prophecy: in the course of which are elucidated many predictions, which occur in Isaiah, Daniel, and the writings of the Evangelists* (1796)
- , *Thoughts on national insanity* (1797)
- Towgood, M., *A Dissent from the Church of England, fully justified: And proved the genuine and just consequence of the Allegiance due to Christ, the only lawgiver in the Church. Being the Dissenting Gentleman's three letters and postscript, in answer to Mr. John White's on that Subject.* (1753)
- , *A calm and plain answer to the enquiry, Why are you a Dissenter from the Church of England? By the author of the Dissenting Gentleman's letters to Dr White* (1772)
- , *Serious and free thoughts on the present state of the Church and of religion addressed as a humble expostulation to the Right Rev. their lordships, the Bishops of the Church of England* (4th ed., 1774)
- , *The grounds of faith in Jesus Christ, briefly stated. Addressed to a Candid Society of Christians at the close of his ministrations among them* (1784)
- Turner, W., of Newcastle, *A Short Sketch of the History of Protestant Nonconformity and of the Society Assembling in Hanover Square, Newcastle* (Newcastle, 1811)
- Turner, W., of Halifax, *The Lives of Eminent Unitarians*, 2 vols (1843)
- Tyrwhitt, R., *Two discourses on the creation of all things by Jesus Christ, and on the resurrection from the dead of the man Jesus Christ* (1787)

- Unitarian Tract Society, *Rules of the Unitarian Tract Society* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1813)
- Vidler, W., *God's love to his creatures asserted and vindicated; being a reply to the 'strictures upon an address to candid and serious men'* (1799)
- Wakefield, G., *An essay on inspiration* (1781)
- , *A new translation of the first Epistle of St. Paul* (1781)
- , *A new translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew* (1782)
- , *An enquiry into the opinions of the Christian writers of the first three centuries concerning the person of Christ* (1784)
- , *A collection of psalms for public worship* (1789)
- , *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham, occasioned by a letter lately sent to the mayor and some other members of the Corporation of that town* (1789)
- , *Memoirs of the life of Gilbert Wakefield B.A., late fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. Written by himself* (1792)
- , *An Enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public or social worship* (3rd ed, 1792)
- , *A general reply to the arguments against the enquiry into public worship* (1792)
- , *Evidences of Christianity* (2nd ed., 1793)
- , *An examination of 'The Age of Reason' by Thomas Paine* (2nd ed., 1794)
- , *A reply to Thomas Paine's second part of the Age of Reason* (1795)
- , *A letter to William Wilberforce Esq. on the subject of his late publication* (1797)
- , *A reply to some parts of the Bishop of Llandaff's address to the people of Great Britain* (1798)
- Wakefield, R., *Wakefield's merchant and tradesman's general directory for London, Westminster, the borough of Southwark and 22 miles circular from St. Paul's* (1798)
- Walker, R., *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and eternal sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Revealed in the Scriptures, in opposition to a late scheme of temporal sonship* (1791)
- Walker, G., *The substance of a speech of the Rev. Mr. Walker at a general meeting of the county of Nottinghamshire, held at Mansfield on 28 February 1780* (1780)
- , *Collection of Psalms and Hymns for public worship, unmixed with the disputed doctrines of any sect* (1788)
- , *An address to the inhabitants of Nottingham* (1789)
- , *A letter to William Wilberforce* (1789)
- , *The dissenters' plea: or the appeal to the justice, the honour and the religion of the kingdom against the Test Laws* (1790)
- , *Letter to the meeting at Leicester on 9 December 1790* (1790)

- , *Essays on various subjects*, 2 vols (1809)
- Walker, T., *A Review of some of the Political Events which have Occurred in Manchester during the Last Five Years* (1794)
- Wansey, H., *A Letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, on his late charge to the clergy of his diocese. By a dissenter* (Salisbury, 1798)
- Watson, R., *A letter to the Honourable House of Commons* (1772)
- , *An apology for the Bible: in a series of letters, addressed to Thomas Paine, author of a book entitled 'The age of reason, part the second, being an investigation of true and fabulous theology'* (1796)
- Wellbeloved, C., *The Principles of Roman Catholics and Unitarians Compared* (1800)
- , *Memoirs of the late William Wood* (1809)
- Wesley, J., *The principles of a Methodist* (Bristol, 1742)
- , *A further appeal to men of reason and religion* (1781)
- Wilson, W., *The History and Antiquity of Dissenting Churches in London* (1808-14)
- , *Various Dissenting Congregations in England* (1808-14)
- Williams, D., *A Liturgy on the Principles of the Christian Religion* (1774)
- , *Letters on political liberty, and the principles of the English and Irish reform* (1789)
- , *Lessons to a young prince, on the present disposition in Europe to a general Revolution* (1790)
- Williams, G., *An attempt to restore the supreme worship of God the Father Almighty. To which is now added a dialogue between an Athanasian and a Unitarian* (1765)
- Williams, H. M., *Letters containing a sketch of the politics of France* (1795)
- Williams, J., *Memoirs of the late Reverend Thomas Belsham* (1833)
- Williams, T., *A vindication of the Calvinistic doctrines of human depravity, the atonement and divine influences in a series of letters to the Reverend T. Belsham* (1799)
- Wollstonecraft, M., *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (1787)
- , *A vindication of the rights of men, in a letter to the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (1790)
- , *A vindication of the rights of women; with strictures on political and moral subjects* (1794)
- , *An historical and moral view of the origin and progress of the French Revolution* (1794)
- Wood, W., *At a meeting of Protestant Dissenters and other gentlemen of the West Riding of the county of York, held at Wakefield, 30 December 1789* (1789)
- Wright, R., *Hints on universal restoration, submitted to the consideration of all serious professors of the gospel* (Wisbech, 1799)
- , *The eternity of hell torments indefensible: being an examination of several passages in Dr. Ryland's sermon* (1800)

———, *A Review of the Missionary Life and Labours of Richard Wright, written by himself* (1824)

Wright, W., *Letters Addressed to the Reverend Thomas Belsham* (1813)

Wyvill, C., *A Defence of Dr. Price and the Reformers of England* (1792)

### **Serial Publications**

Aikin, J., *The general biography of lives critical and historical of the most eminent persons of all ages*, 10 vols (1799-1815)

Cobbett, W., ed., *The Parliamentary History of England*, 36 vols (1806-1820)

Kippis, A., *Biographica Britannica; or an accurate and impartial account of the lives and writings of eminent persons, in Great Britain and Ireland* (1766)

Rees, A., *The New Cyclopaedia, or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences* (1812-1820)

The Unitarian Society, *Tracts printed and published by The Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the practice of Virtue*, 13 vols (1791-1802)

Towers, J., ed., *British Biography; or, an accurate and impartial account of the lives and writings of eminent persons, in Great Britain and Ireland*, vols 1-7 (1766)

Wyvill, C., *Political Papers*, 6 vols (York, 1806)

### **Contemporary Newspapers, Journals and Periodicals**

*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*

*Jackson's Oxford Journal*

*Lloyd's Evening Post*

*St James's Chronicle*

*The Analytical Review or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign*

*The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*

*The Bury and Norfolk Post*

*The Cambridge Intelligencer*

*The Christian Moderator*

*The Christian Reformer*

*The Christian Reflector and Theological Inquirer*

*The Congregational Magazine*

*The County and General Advertiser*

*The Critical Review of the Annals of Literature*

*The Daily Advertiser*

*The Derby Mercury*

*The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*

*The Evening Mail*  
*The Gentleman's Magazine*  
*The General Evening Post*  
*The Gloucester Herald*  
*The Hampshire Telegraph*  
*The Hull Packet*  
*The Kentish Chronicle and Canterbury Journal*  
*The Kentish Gazette*  
*The Lancashire Gazette*  
*The Leeds Mercury*  
*The London Chronicle*  
*The London Evening Post*  
*The London Gazette*  
*The London Chronicle*  
*The Maidstone Journal*  
*The Manchester Mercury*  
*The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*  
*The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*  
*The Monthly Review*  
*The Monthly Repository*  
*The Oracle*  
*The Norfolk Chronicle*  
*The Political Register*  
*The Protestant Dissenters Magazine*  
*The Public Advertiser*  
*The Royal Cornwall Gazette*  
*The Star*  
*The Sun*  
*The Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*  
*The Times*  
*The True Briton*  
*The World*  
*Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*  
*Woodfall's Register*  
*The York Herald*



## SECONDARY SOURCES

### Books

- Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread on nationalism* (1983)
- Anstey, R., *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (1975)
- Anstey, R. and Hair, P. E. H., eds, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition* (Historic Series of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 2, 1974)
- Apetrei, S., *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 2010)
- Ashcroft, R., *Revolution politics and John Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (1986)
- Aspinall, A., *Politics and the Press c.1780-1850* (1949)
- Aspland, R.B., *Memoir of the life, work and correspondence of the Reverend Robert Aspland* (1850)
- Aston, N., *The End of an Elite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution 1786-1790* (Oxford, 1992)
- , *Religion and Revolution in France 1780-1804* (Basingstoke, 2000)
- , *Christianity in Revolutionary Europe 1750-1830* (Cambridge, 2003)
- , *The French Revolution 1789-1802: Liberty, authority and the search for stability 1789-1804* (Basingstoke, 2004)
- Aston, N. and Campbell Orr, C., eds, *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in Context, 1737-1805* (Woodbridge, 2011)
- Aston, N. and Cragoe, M., eds, *Anticlericalism* (Stroud, 2001)
- Balibar, E. and Wallerstein, I., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (1991)
- Barker, H., *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1998)
- , *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000)
- Bebbington, D., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989)
- Bellenger, D. A., *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789* (Bath, 1986)
- Berlin, I., *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (1979)
- Black, E. C., *The Association; British extraparliamentary political organisation, 1769-1793* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963)
- Black, J., *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (1987)
- , ed., *British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt 1742-1789* (1990)
- , *Eighteenth Century Britain 1688-1783* (Basingstoke, 2001)
- , *The English Press 1621-1861* (Stroud, 2001)

- Bonwick, C., *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1977)
- Bradley, J. E., *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown and Public Opinion* (Macon, Georgia, 1986)
- , *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism; Nonconformity in English Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990)
- Braithwaite, H., *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Basingstoke, 2003)
- Brockett, A., *Nonconformity in Exeter, 1650-1875* (1962)
- Brown, R., *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1986)
- Burley, S., *Hazlitt the Dissenter; Religion, Philosophy and Politics, 1766-1816* (Basingstoke, 2014)
- Byrne, J., *Glory, Jest and Riddle: Religious Thought in the Enlightenment* (1996)
- Christie, I. R., *Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform: The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics 1760-1785* (1962)
- , *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution* (Oxford, 1984)
- Clark, J. C. D., *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1985)
- , *English Society 1660-1832, Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime* (Revised ed., Cambridge, 2000)
- , *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1986)
- , *The Language of Liberty 1660-1832; Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge, 1994)
- Claeys, G., *Tom Paine: social and political thought* (1989)
- Clemit, P., ed., *Cambridge Companion to British Literature on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010)
- Clemit, P., Walker, G. L., *Memoirs of the author of a vindication of the rights of women* (Peterborough, 2001)
- Colligan, J. H., *The Arian Movement in England* (Manchester, 1913)
- Colley, L., *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992)
- Corfield, P., *The Impact of English Towns* (Oxford, 1982)
- Cone, C. B., *The English Jacobins: reformers in late Eighteenth Century England* (New York, 1968)
- , *Torchbearer of Freedom: The Influence of Richard Price on Eighteenth Century Thought* (Kentucky, U.S.A., 1951)
- Conway, S., *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford, 2000)
- Cookson, J. E., *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England, 1793-1815* (Cambridge, 1982)

- Cornwall, R. D. and Gibson, W., eds, *Religion, Politics and Dissent 1620-1832* (Ashgate, 2010)
- Davidson, E. H. and Scheick, W.J., *Paine, scripture, and authority: 'The Age of Reason' as religious and political idea* (Pennsylvania, 1994)
- Davie, D., *A Gathered Church: The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930* (New York, 1978)
- , *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (Cambridge, 1993)
- , *Essays in Dissent, Church, Chapel and the Unitarian Conspiracy: The religious aspects of liberal and humanitarian reform movements 1815-1875* (Manchester, 1995)
- Davis, D. B., *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford, 1984)
- Davis, H., *Worship and Theology in England from Watts and Wesley to Maurice 1690-1850* (Princeton, U.S.A., 1961)
- Davis, R. W., *Dissent in Politics 1780-1830: The Political Life of William Smith, M. P.* (1971)
- Davis, V. D., *A history of Manchester College* (1932)
- Deconinck-Brossard, F., *Eighteenth Century Sermons and the Age* (New York, 1993)
- Dickinson, H. T., *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1977)
- , *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1985)
- , *Britain and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke, 1989)
- , ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (1998)
- Ditchfield, G. M., *The Evangelical Revival* (1998)
- Downey, J., *The Eighteenth Century Pulpit* (Oxford, 1969)
- Dozier, R. R., *For King, Constitution and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Kentucky, 1983)
- Duncan, L., *Inscriptions in the Old Meeting House Burial Ground, Tenterden* (1919)
- Dunn, J., *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (1982)
- Ellis, K. L., *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century; a study in Administrative History* (1958)
- Emsley, C., *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (1979)
- Engstrom, A. A., *Joseph Johnson's Circle and The Analytical Review; a study of English radicals in the late Eighteenth Century* (California, 1986)
- Ehrman, J., *The Younger Pitt*, 3 vols (1969-1996)
- Farooq, J., *Preaching in Eighteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 2014)
- Field, A. and Hole, G., *How to Design and Report Experiments* (2012)
- Fitzpatrick, M., ed., *The Enlightenment World* (2004)

- Fox, C., *Locke and the Scriblerians: identity and consciousness in early eighteenth century Britain*, (Berkeley, California, 1988)
- Francis, K. A. and Gibson, W., eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901* (Oxford, 2012)
- Fruchtman, J., *The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A Study in Late Eighteenth Century Millenialism* (1983)
- , *Republican Millenarianism* (Philadelphia, 1983)
- Garrett, C., *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore, 1975)
- Gascoigne, J., *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Gellner, E., *Nations and Nationalism* (1983)
- Gibson, W., *Church, State and Society 1760-1850* (Basingstoke, 1994)
- Gibson, W. and Ingram, R.G., eds, *Religious Identities in Britain 1660-1832* (Aldershot, 2005)
- Gilbert, A. D., *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (1976)
- Goldie, M., *Political Studies* (1983)
- Gleadle, K., *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-1851*(1995)
- Goodwin, A., *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979)
- Gordon, A., *Heads of English Unitarian History* (1895)
- Gordan, L., *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2005)
- Graham, J., *The Nation, the Law and the King: Reform Politics in England 1789-1799*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000)
- Haakonssen, K., ed., *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996)
- Halévy, E., *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols (2nd ed., 1945-1952)
- Harbottle, S., *The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1997)
- Harrison, J and Laslett, P., *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford, 1965)
- Harrison, J. F. C., *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (1979)
- Hay, C. H., *James Burgh, Spokesman for Reform in Hanoverian England* (Washington, D.C., 1979)
- Haydon, C., *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England: a Political and Social Study* (Manchester, 1993)
- Haywood, I. and Seed, J., eds, *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2012)

- Hellmuth, E. ed., *The Transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (1990)
- Hempton, D., *The religion of the people: Methodism and popular religion, c. 1750-1900* (1996)
- Henriques, U., *Religious Toleration in England 1787-1838* (1961)
- Hewitt, R. and Rogers, P., eds, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Eighteenth Century* (2002)
- Hinks, J. and Armstrong, C., *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade* (2006)
- Hoecker, J. J., *Joseph Priestley and the idea of progress* (New York, 1987)
- Hole, R., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Holt, R. V., *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (1938)
- Hone, J. A., *For the cause of truth. Radicalism in London 1796-1821* (Oxford, 1982)
- Horne, T. A., *Property, Rights and Poverty: Political Argument in Britain 1605-1834* (1990)
- Hoppit, J., ed., *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland 1660-1850* (Manchester, 2002)
- Hull, C. H., *The Service of Statistics to History* (1914)
- Isaac, P. and McKay, B., eds, *The Reach of Print: Making, Selling and Reading Books* (Winchester, 1998)
- , eds, *The Mighty Engine: The Printing Press and its Impact* (Winchester, 2000)
- Issitt, J., *Jeremiah Joyce: Radical, Dissenter and Writer* (Aldershot, 2006)
- Jacob, W. M., Yates, N., *Crown and Mitre; Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 1993)
- Jacobs, D., *Her Own Woman: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2000)
- James, F. and Inkster, I., eds, *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860* (Cambridge, 2012)
- Jarausch, K. H. and Hardy, K.A., *Quantitative Methods for Historians: A Guide to Research, Data and Statistics* (1991)
- Jeremy, W., *The Presbyterian Fund and Dr Williams's Trust with Biographical Notes of the Trustees* (1885)
- Johnson, D. A., *Women in English Religion, 1700-1925* (New York, 1985)
- , *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925* (Oxford, 1999)
- Jones, R. T., *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1962* (1962)
- Kaufman, P., *Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773-1784* (Charlottesville, 1960)
- Kelly, G., *Women, writing and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993)
- Kennedy, D., *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (2002)
- Kidd, T. S., *American Christians and Islam. Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ, 2009)

- Kirk, B., *The Taunton Dissenting Academy* (Taunton, 2005)
- Kirkby, A. H., *A Heritage Biography: Andrew Fuller 1754-1815* (1961)
- Knight, F., *University rebel. The life of William Frend 1757-1841* (1971)
- Knott, S. and Taylor, B, eds, *Women, gender and the Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005)
- Koss, S., *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (1975)
- Laboucheix, H., *Richard Price as moral philosopher and political theorist* (Oxford, 1982)
- Landes, J. B., *Women and the public sphere in the age of the French Revolution* (1988)
- Lincoln, A. H., *Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent* (Cambridge, 1938)
- Lovegrove, D. W., *Established Church, Sectarian People; Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 1988)
- Lutnick, S., *The American Revolution and the British Press 1775-1783* (Columbia, Missouri, 1967)
- Lynd, R. D., ed., *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995)
- Lynd, S., *The Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (1973)
- Macleod, E. V., *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792-1802* (Aldershot, 1998)
- Macdonald, D. L. and Scherf, K., eds, *The vindications: the rights of men, the rights of women* (Peterborough, 1997)
- Major, E., *Madam Britannia: Women, Church and Nation, 1712-1812* (Oxford, 2012)
- Manning, B.L., *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies*, ed. O. Greenwood (Cambridge, 1952)
- Marshall, J., *John Locke: resistance, religion and responsibility* (1994)
- , *John Locke: toleration and early Enlightenment culture* (Cambridge, 2009)
- Marshall, P. H., *William Godwin* (Newhaven, 1984)
- Mather, F. C., *High Church Prophet, Bishop Samuel Horsley and the Caroline Tradition in the Late Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992)
- Maxted, I., *The London Book Trades 1775-1800. A preliminary checklist of members* (Woking, 1977)
- MacBride, I. and Claydon, C., eds, *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650 -c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998)
- McCarthy, W., *Anna Letitia Barbauld. Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2008)
- McLachlan, H., *English education under the Test Acts: being the history of the nonconformist academies 1662-1820* (1931)
- , *Alexander Gordon* (Manchester, 1932)
- , *The Unitarian movement in the religious life of England. Its contribution to thought and learning 1700-1900* (1934)

- McLachlan, H. J., *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1951)
- Mingay, G. E., ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Miall, J. G., *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (1868)
- Mineka, F. E., *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository 1806-1838* (Toronto, 1963)
- Mitchell, L. G., *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992)
- Mori, J., *William Pitt and the French Revolution 1785-1795* (Edinburgh, 1997)
- Mortimer, S., *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, 2010)
- Murch, J., *A history of the Presbyterian and General Baptist churches in the west of England* (1835)
- Murphy, M. J., *Cambridge Newspapers and Opinion 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 1977)
- Nagle, B. C., *The Monthly Review, First Series, 1749-1789: index of contributors and articles* (Oxford, 1934)
- Namier, L., *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (2nd ed., 1961)
- Namier, L. and Brooke, J., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790*, 3 vols (1964)
- Navickas, K., *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford, 2009)
- Norman, E. R., *Church and Society in England 1770-1970* (Oxford, 1992)
- Nuttall, G. F., *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (1967)
- O'Dea, M and Whelan, K., eds, *Nations and Nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the Eighteenth Century Context* (Oxford, 1995)
- Orchard, S. and Briggs, J. H. Y., *The Sunday School Movement: Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools* (Milton Keynes, 2007)
- Packer, B., *The Unitarian Heritage in Kent* (1991)
- Page, A., *John Jebb and the Enlightenment Origins of British Radicalism* (2003)
- Peaston, A. E., *The Prayer Book Reform Movement* (1940)
- Philp, M., ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991)
- Plamenatz, J., *The English Unitarians* (Oxford, 1966)
- Plant, H., *Unitarianism, philanthropy and feminism in York 1782-1821: the career of Catharine Cappe* (Borthwick Institute, University of York, 2003)
- Porter, R., *The creation of the modern world: the untold story of the British Enlightenment* (2000)
- Potts, R., *Dame Sarah's Legacy: A history of the Lady Hewley Trust* (North Tyneside, 2005)
- Rack, H. D., *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (2nd ed., 2002)

- Rauschenbusch-Clough, E., *A study of Mary Wollstonecraft and the rights of woman* (1898)
- Rawlinson, D. H., *Seventeenth Century Latitudinarians and Eighteenth Century Freethinkers* (1961)
- Read, D., *Press and People 1790-1850: Opinion in Three English Cities* (1961)
- Rivers, I., ed., *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth Century England* (Leicester, 1982)
- , *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660-1780* (New York, 1992)
- Rivers, I. and Wykes, D.L., eds, *Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian* (2008)
- , eds, *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford, 2011)
- Rodgers, B., *Georgian Chronicle: Mrs Barbauld and her family* (1958)
- Routley, E., *I'll praise my Maker: A Study of the Hymns of Certain Authors Who Stand in or near the Tradition of English Calvinism* (1951)
- Royle, E., *Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief* (1971)
- Royle, E. and Walvin, J., *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848* (Brighton, 1982)
- Rudé, G., *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford, 1962)
- Ruston, A., *Unitarianism and Early Presbyterianism in Hackney* (1980)
- Rupp, G., *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986)
- Sainsbury, J. A., *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America* (Kingston, 1987)
- Sapiro, V., *A vindication of political virtue: the political theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago, 1992)
- Seed, J., *Dissenting Histories: Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth Century England* (Edinburgh, 2008)
- Sekers, D., *A Lady of Cotton: Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill* (Stroud, 2013)
- Sell, A., *John Locke and the Eighteenth Century Divines* (Cardiff, 1997)
- , *Hinterland Theology* (Nottingham, 2008)
- , *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600-2000* (Oregon, 2011)
- Schofield, R., *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley 1733-1773: a study of his life and work from 1733-1773* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1997)
- , *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773-1804* (Philadelphia, Pa., 2004)
- Scott, C. and Scott, I., *A family biography 1662 to 1908, drawn chiefly from old letters* (1908)
- Shaw, I. J., *High Calvinists in Action* (Oxford, 2002)



- Skeats, H. and Miall, C., *A History of the Free Churches of England* (1891)
- Skinner, Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol 2, The Age of Reformation* (1978)
- Smith, A., *National Identity* (1991)
- Smith, B., ed., *Truth, liberty, religion: essays celebrating two hundred years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986)
- Snell, K. D. M. and Ell, P. S., *Rival Jerusalems; the Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2004)
- Spadafora, D., *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth Century Britain* (1990)
- Stange, D. C., *British Unitarians against American Slavery 1833-1865* (1984)
- Sykes, N., *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1934)
- Taylor, B., *Mary Wollstonecraft and the feminist imagination* (Cambridge, 2003)
- Taylor, B. and Knott, S., eds, *Women, gender and enlightenment* (New York, 2005)
- Taylor, S. and Wykes, D., eds, *Parliamentary History, Parliament and Dissent* (Edinburgh, 2005)
- Thomas, D. O., *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977)
- Thompson, D. M., ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (1972)
- Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (1st ed., 1963)
- Thorne, R. G., ed., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820*, 5 vols (1986)
- Thorncroft, M., *Trust in Freedom: The Story of Newington Green Unitarian Church 1708-1958* (1958)
- Titford, A. R., *A Family of Dissenters* (2005)
- Toohy, R., *Liberty and Empire: British Radical Solutions to the American Problem* (1978)
- Tulley, J. and Skinner, Q., *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Context* (Cambridge, 1993)
- Tyson, G., *Joseph Johnson: a liberal publisher* (Iowa City, 1979)
- Ugnow, J., *The Pinecone: The story of Sarah Losh* (2013)
- Underwood, A. C., *A History of the English Baptists* (1947)
- Walker, G. L., *Mary Hays (1759-1843): The growth of a woman's mind* (Burlington, VT, 2006)
- Walsh, J., Haydon and C., Taylor, S., eds, *The Church of England, c. 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993)
- Ward, W. R., *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (1972)
- Watson, J. R., *The English Hymn: A critical and Historical Study* (Oxford, 1997)
- Watts, M. R., *The Dissenters Vol.1: from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978)

- , *The Dissenters Vol.2: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford, 1995)
- Watts, R., *Gender, power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (1998)
- Weinbrot, H. W., *Literature, Religion and the Evolution of Culture 1660-1780* (Baltimore, 2013),
- Whelan, T., *Other British Voices: Women, Poetry, and Religion 1766-1840* (New York, 2015)
- Wilbur, E. M., *A History of Unitarianism* (Boston, 1945)
- , *A Bibliography of the Pioneers of the Socinian-Unitarian Movement* (1950)
- , *A History of Unitarianism I; In Transylvania, England and America* (1952)
- , *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its antecedents* (1977)
- Wilson, K., *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995)
- Wilson, B., *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* (1970)
- Womersley, D., ed., *Religious Scepticism: contemporary responses to Gibbon* (1997)
- Young, B. W., *Religion and Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (1998)
- Young, D., *F. D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford, 1992)

### **Contributions to Books**

- Aston, N., 'Church and State in Catholic Continental Europe', in Tackett, T. M. and Brown, S. J., eds, *Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 7, Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (Cambridge, 2006)
- , 'Archbishop Markham and political preaching in wartime England 1776-1777', in Cornwall, R. D. and Gibson, W., *Essays in Honour of James E. Bradley* (Aldershot, 2010)
- , 'Rationalism, The Enlightenment and Sermons', in Francis, K.A. and Gibson, W., eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901* (2012)
- Bonwick, C., 'English Dissenters and the American Revolution', in Allen, H.C. and Thompson, R., eds, *Contrast and Connection: bicentennial essays in Anglo-American history* (1976)
- Collinson, P., 'Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition', in R. C. Cole and M. E. Moody, eds, *The Dissenting Tradition: Essays for Leland H. Carson* (Athens, OH, 1975)
- Dickinson, H. T., 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in Hellmuth, E., ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990)
- Ditchfield, G. M., 'English Rational Dissent and Philanthropy c. 1760-c. 1810', in Cunningham, H. and Innes, J., *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850* (1998)

- , ‘Ecclesiastical Legislation during the Ministry of the Younger Pitt 1783-1801’, in Parry, J. P. and Taylor, S., eds, *Parliament and the Church 1529-1960* (Edinburgh, 2000)
- , ‘English Rational Dissent and Sunday Schools’, in Orchard. S. and Briggs, H.Y., eds, *The Sunday School Movement* (Milton Keynes, 2007)
- , ‘Sermons in the Age of the American and French Revolutions’, in Francis, K. A. and Gibson, W., eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901* (2012)
- Eastwood, D., ‘Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s’, in Philp, M., ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991)
- Emsley, C., ‘Revolution, War and the National State: the British and French Experiences 1789-1801’, in Philp, M., ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991)
- Fitzpatrick, M., ‘Heretical Religion and Radical Political Ideas in Late Eighteenth Century England to the French Revolution’, in Hellmuth E, ed., *The Transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1978)
- Gascoigne, J., ‘Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the late Eighteenth Century’ in Haakonssen, K., ed., *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996)
- Gleadle, K., ‘British women and radical politics in the nonconformist enlightenment c. 1780-1830’, in Vicary, J., ed., *Women, privilege and power* (Stanford, 2001)
- Orchard. S., ‘Sunday Schools: Some Reflections’ in Orchard. S. and Briggs, H.Y., eds, *The Sunday School Movement* (Milton Keynes, 2007)
- Short, H. L., ‘Presbyterians Under a New Name’, in Bolam, C. G., ed., *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (1968)
- Wykes, D., ‘The Contribution of the Dissenting Academy to the Emergence of Rational Dissent’, in Haakonssen, K., ed., *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996)

### **Articles in Journals**

- Allen, E. A., ‘The ‘Patriot’ Cures of 1789 and the ‘Constitutional’ Cures of 1791: A Comparison’, *Church History*, 54 (1985)
- Aston, N., ‘Horne and Heterodoxy: The Defence of Anglican Beliefs in the Late Enlightenment’, *EHR*, 108 (1993)
- , ‘Infidelity Ancient and Modern: George Horne Reads Edward Gibbon’, *Albion*, 27 (1995)
- , ‘The Golden Age of Gallicanism? Religious History and its Place in Current Writing on Eighteenth Century France’, *French History* (1999)
- , ‘John Wesley and the Social Elite of Georgian Britain’, *Bulletin of John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 85 (2003)

- Bahar, S., 'Richard Price and the moral foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism', *E & D*, no18 (1999)
- Barker-Benfield, G. J., 'Mary Wollstonecraft: Common-wealthwoman', *JHI*, 50 (1989)
- Bellenger, D. A., 'Seen but not heard: French clergy exiled in Kent 1789-1815', *Kent Recusant History*, 6/7 (1981-2)
- , 'The émigré clergy and the English Church 1789-1815', *JEH*, 34, no. 3 (1983)
- Bradley, J. E., 'Whigs and Nonconformists: Slumbering Radicalism in English Politics, 1739-1789', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 9 (1975)
- , 'The Anglican Pulpit, the Social Order, and the Resurgence of Toryism during the American Revolution', *Albion*, 21 (1989)
- , 'Religion and Nonconformity in the Polls: Nonconformity in Cambridge Politics, 1774-1784', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1984), 55-78.
- Brooks, M. L., 'Mary Hays: finding a voice in Dissent', *E & D*, no.14 (1995)
- , 'Priestley's Plan for a 'Continually Improving' translation of the Bible,' *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no. 15 (1996)
- Brown, M., 'Rethinking Early Nineteenth Century Asylum Reform,' *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006)
- , 'From Foetid Air to Filth: The Cultural Transformation of British Epidemiological Thought, c. 1780-1848', *The Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 82 (2008)
- Canovan, M., 'Two Concepts of Liberty: Eighteenth Century Style', *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no. 2 (1978)
- , 'Paternalistic Liberalism: Joseph Priestley on Rank and Inequality', *E & D*, no.2 (1983)
- Clark, J. C. D., 'Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain', *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998)
- Colley, L., 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820', *Past and Present*, 102 (1984)
- , 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past and Present*, 104 (1986)
- Crane, V. W., 'The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 23 (1966)
- Cunningham, H., 'The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914', *History Workshop*, 17 (1981)
- Dickinson, H. T., 'Thomas Paine and his British Critics', *E & D*, no. 27 (2011)
- Ditchfield, G. M., 'The early history of Manchester College', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 123 (1971)
- , 'The Parliamentary Struggle over the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-90', *EHR*, Vol. No. 89 (1974)
- , 'Dissent and Toleration: Lord Stanhope's Bill of 1789', *JEH*, 29 (1978)

- , ‘A Unitarian view of English Dissent in 1807’, *TUHS*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1984)
- , ‘Dr. Johnson and the Dissenters’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester*, vol. 68, no. 2 (1986)
- , ‘The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics 1772-79’, *Parliamentary History*, 7, no. 1 (1988)
- , ‘Anti-Trinitarianism and Toleration in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics: The Unitarian Petition of 1792’, *JEH*, 42, no.1 (1991)
- , ‘The Priestley Riots in Historical Perspective’, *TUHS*, vol. 20, no. (1991)
- , ‘Public and Parliamentary Support for the Unitarian Petition of 1792’, *E & D*, no. 12 (1993)
- , ‘“All truth, all righteous things”: The correspondence of Caleb Fleming and Syllas Neville 1769-1776’, *E & D*, no. 18 (1999)
- , ‘Testaments of Faith: Some Unitarian Wills in the age of Lindsey’, *TUHS*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2000)
- , ‘Hannah Lindsey and her circle: the Female Element in Early English Unitarianism’, *E & D*, no. 26 (2010)
- , ‘The right of private judgement, with the care of public safety’: the Church of England’s perceptions of Protestant Dissent in the later eighteenth century, *E & D*, no. 28 (2012)
- Donnelly, F. K., ‘Joseph Towers and the Collapse of Rational Dissent’, *E & D*, no. 6 (1987)
- Duffy, M., ‘William Pitt and the origin of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792’, *HJ*, 39, no. 4 (1996)
- Duthille, R., ‘Thirteen uncollected letters of Richard Price’, *E & D*, no. 27 (2011)
- , ‘Richard Price on patriotism and universal benevolence,’ *E & D*, no. 28 (2012)
- Dybikowski, ‘David Williams and Eighteenth Century Distinction between civil and political liberty’, *E & D*, no. 3 (1984)
- Fawcett, T., ‘Measuring the provincial enlightenment: the case of Norwich’, *Eighteenth Century Life*, 8 (1982-3)
- Field, C. D., ‘Counting Religion in England and Wales: the Long Eighteenth Century, c. 1680 – c. 1840’, *JEH*, 63, 4 (2012)
- Fitzpatrick, M., ‘Joseph Priestley and the Cause of Universal Toleration’, *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no. 1 (1977)
- , ‘William Godwin and the Rational Dissenters’, *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, 3 (1979)
- , ‘Toleration and truth’, *E & D*, no. 1 (1982)
- , ‘Rational Dissent and the Enlightenment’, *Faith and Freedom*, 38, part 2 (1985)
- , ‘Reflections on a footnote: Richard Price and love of country’, *E & D*, no. 6 (1987)

- , ‘Richard Price and the London Revolution Society’, *E & D*, no. 10 (1991)
- , ‘Enlightenment, Dissent and toleration,’ *E & D*, no. 28 (2012)
- Flavell, M. K., ‘The Enlightened Reader and the New Industrial Town: A Study of the Liverpool Library 1758-1790’, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 8 (1985)
- Frame, P., ‘A further seven uncollected letters of Richard Price’, *E & D*, no. 27 (2011)
- French, R. S., ‘Dr. Priestley’s religious philosophy of history and Dr. Jefferson’s failure of republican nerve’, *E & D*, no. 3 (1984)
- Fruchtman, J., ‘The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A Study in Late Eighteenth Century Republican Millenarianism’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 73, part 4 (1983)
- Gilliam, P., ‘William Whiston: No longer an Arian?’, *JEH*, 66, 4 (2015)
- Godfrey, P. B. and Ditchfield, G. M., ‘The Unitarian Archives at Essex Hall’, *Archives. The Journal of the British Records Association*, XXVI, no. 4 (2001)
- Goldie, M., ‘Alexander Geddes at the limits of Catholic enlightenment’, *HJ*, 53, no.1 (2010)
- Greene, J. P., ‘Paine, America, and the ‘Modernization’ of Political Consciousness’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 93 (1978)
- Hay, C. H., ‘The Making of a Radical: The Case of James Burgh’, *Journal of British Studies*, 18 (1979)
- Hill, A., ‘Newcome Cappe at York’, *TUHS*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2013)
- Hitchin, N., ‘The Politics of English Bible Translation in Georgian Britain’, *TUHS*, 9 (1999)
- James, F., ‘A Life of Dissent: Harriet Martineau and Unitarianism’, *E & D*, no. 26 (2010)
- Ippel, H. P., ‘British Sermons and the American Revolution’, *Journal of Religious History*, 12 (1982-3)
- Issitt, J., ‘A Network for Radical and Political Education in the 1790s’, *Publishing History*, 54 (2003)
- Kramnick, I., ‘Religion and Radicalism: English Political Theory in the Age of Revolution’, *Political Theory*, 4 (1977)
- Macleod, E.V., ‘British Attitudes to the French Revolution’, *HJ*, 50 (2007)
- Martinich, A. P., ‘A Moderate Logic of the History of Ideas’, *JHI*, vol. 73, no. 4 (2012)
- McCarthy, W., ‘Anna Letitia Barbault, alienated intellectual’, *E & D*, no.26 (2010)
- McLachlan, H. J., ‘The Taylors and Scotts of the Manchester Guardian’, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 8, no.4 (1946)
- , ‘Theophilus and Hannah Lindsey: Two Hundred years later’, *TUHS*, vol. 25, no.2 (1974)
- , ‘William Hazlitt 1778-1839’, *TUHS*, vol. 16, no.4 (1978)

- , ‘The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland: its heritage and ethos’, *TUHS*, vol. 17, no.4 (1982)
- Mitchell, A., ‘The Association Movement of 1792-3’, *HJ*, 4 (1961)
- Nicholson, F., ‘Kendal Unitarian Chapel and its Registers’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* (1905)
- Packer, B., ‘Nonconformity in Tenterden 1640-1750’, *TUHS*, vol. 20, no.2 (2)
- Page, A., ‘Enlightenment and a ‘Second Reform’: the religion and philosophy of John Jebb’, *E & D*, no.17 (1998)
- , ‘Liberty has an asylum’: John Jebb, British Radicalism and the American Revolution’, *History*, 87 (2002)
- , ‘ ‘Probably the most indefatigable Prince that ever existed’: A Rational Dissenting Perspective on Frederick the Great’, *E & D*, no. 23 (2005)
- , ‘ ‘A Great Politicianess’’: Ann Jebb, Rational Dissent and Politics in late Eighteenth Century Britain’, *Women’s History Review*, no. 17 (2008)
- , ‘ ‘No effort can be lost’’: the Unitarianism and Republicanism of Ann Jebb’, *E & D*, no. 26 (2010)
- , ‘Rational Dissent, Enlightenment and the Abolition of the Slave Trade’, *HJ*, 54, 3 (2011)
- Peart, A., ‘ ‘Deconsidered by men’’: Women and the British Unitarian movement before 1904’, *TUHS*, vol. 24, no.2 (2008)
- Peaston, A. E., ‘The Unitarian Liturgical Tradition’, *TUHS*, vol. 16, no.2 (1976)
- Philp, M., ‘Rational religion and political rationalism in the 1790s’, *E & D*, no. 4 (1985)
- , ‘Enlightenment, Toleration and Liberty’, *E & D*, no. 9 (1990)
- Powick, F.J., ‘Apology for the Nonconformist Arians of the Eighteenth Century’, *TUHS*, vol. 1 (1918)
- Radcliffe, E., ‘Revolutionary writing, moral philosophy, and universal benevolence in the eighteenth century’, *JHI*, 54, no. 2 (1993)
- Ready, K., ‘Dissenting Heads and Hearts: Joseph Priestley, Anna Barbauld, and Conflicting Attitudes towards Devotion within Rational Dissent’, *Journal of Religious History*, 34, 2, (2010)
- Rees, D. A., ‘Optimism and Pessimism in the Enlightenment’, *E & D* no.19 (2000)
- Richey, R. E., ‘The Origins of British Radicalism: The Changing Rationale for Dissent’, *Eighteenth Century Studies* 7 (1973-4)
- Richey, R. W., ‘Did the English Presbyterians become Unitarians?’ *Church History*, XLVI (1973)
- Ruston, A., ‘The Non-Con Club and Some Other Unitarian Clubs’, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol.14, no. 3 (1969)
- , ‘Price and Priestley at the Gravel Pit, Hackney’, *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, 4 (1980)

- , ‘Joseph Priestley at the Gravel Pit, Hackney: The Collier Manuscript’, *E & D*, no. 2 (1983)
- , ‘When did the Presbyterian Chapels become Unitarian?: The Dissenters Chapels Bill petitions’, *TUHS*, vol.19, no. 1 (1987)
- , ‘Unitarian Hymnbooks 1795-1914’, *TUHS*, vol. 25, no. (2011)
- Seed, J., ‘Unitarian Ministers as Schoolmasters, 1780-1850: Some Notes’, *TUHS*, vol. 27 (1979-1982)
- , ‘Jeremiah Joyce: Unitarianism and Radical Intelligensia in the 1790s’, *TUHS*, vol. 17, no.3 (1981)
- , ‘Gentleman Dissenters: the social and political meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s’, *HJ*, 28, 2 (1985)
- Sell, A., ‘Henry Grove: A Dissenter at the parting of the ways’, *E & D*, no. 4 (1985)
- , ‘Andrew Fuller and the Socinians’, *E & D*, no.19 (2000)
- Short, H. L., ‘From Watts to Martineau: a Century of Unitarian Hymn Books in England’, *TUHS*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1951)
- Sireci, F., ‘The Spiritual Vindications of Mary Wollstonecraft’, *E & D*, no. 26 (2010)
- Smith, J., ‘James Losh (1763-1833): Dissenter and Reformer’, *E & D*, no. 19 (1999)
- Smith, J. E., ‘Thomas Paine and *The Age of Reason*’s Attack on the Bible’, *The Historian*, 58 (1996)
- Spalding, J. C., ‘The Demise of English Presbyterianism 1660-1760’, *Church History*, xxviii (1959)
- Spence, G., ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s theodicy and theory of progress’, *E & D*, no. 14 (1995)
- Spongberg, M., ‘An Extraordinary Destiny: Mary Hays, Dissenting Feminist’, *E & D*, no. 24 (2008)
- Stafford, W., ‘Dissenting Religion translated into politics: Godwin’s Political Justice’, *History of Political Thought*, 1, 2 (1980)
- Stephens, J., ‘The London Ministers and Subscription 1772-1779’, *E & D*, no.1 (1982)
- Stone, L., ‘Prosopography’, *Daedalus*, 100, 1 (1971)
- Sutton, I., ‘Unitarians and the Construction of History and Biography 1740-1820’, *EHR*, CXXV (2010)
- Thompson, A. C., ‘Popery, Politics and Private Judgement in Early Hanoverian Britain’, *HJ*, 45 (2002)
- Thompson, E. P., ‘Eighteenth Century English Society: class struggle without class’, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1978)
- Walker, G. L., ‘Energetic Sympathies of Truth and Feeling: Mary Hays and Rational Dissent’, *E & D*, no. 26 (2010)
- Watts, R., ‘The Unitarian Contribution to the Development of Female Education, 1790-1850’, *The History of Education*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1980)
- , ‘Joseph Priestley and education’, *E & D*, no.2 (1983)



- , ‘Revolution and reaction: Unitarian Academies 1780-1800’, *History of Education*, 20, no. 4 (1991)
- , ‘Rational Dissenting Women and the Travel of Ideas’, *E & D*, no.26 (2010)
- Webb, R. K., ‘Price amongst the Unitarians’, *E & D*, no.19 (2000)
- Whelan, T., ‘Radical politics and Unitarian piety: the life and career of Benjamin Flower, 1775-1829’, *TUHS*, vol. 24, no.4 (2010)
- Williams, S. N., ‘Restoring Faith in Locke’, *E & D*, no.6 (1987)
- Wilson, A., ‘Conflict, Consensus and Charity: Politics and the Provincial Voluntary Hospitals in the Eighteenth Century’, *EHR*, vol. 111, no. 422 (1996)
- Wykes, D. L., ‘The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified: The Priestley Riots and the victims of Church and King mobs’, *TUHS*, vol. 20 (1991)
- , ‘Joshua Toulmin (1740-1815) of Taunton: Baptist minister, historian and religious radical’, *The Baptist Quarterly*, xxxix, no. 5 (January, 2002)
- , ‘Joshua Toulmin of Taunton: Baptist Minister, Historian and Radical’, *Baptist Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 39 (2002)
- Young, B. W., ‘John Jortin, Ecclesiastical History, and the Christian Republic of Letters’, *HJ*, 55 (2012)
- Zebrowski, M., ‘The corruption of politics and the dignity of human nature: the critical and conservative radicalism of James Burgh’, *E & D*, no.10 (1991)

### **Unpublished Dissertations**

- Braithwaite, H., ‘Joseph Johnson and the politics of publishing’ (University of Birmingham Ph. D., 1998)
- Brod, M., ‘Dissent and Dissenters in Early Modern Berkshire’ (Oxford University D.Phil., 2002)
- Burley, S., ‘Hazlitt the dissenter: religion, philosophy and politics, 1766-1816’ (University of London, Queen Mary College Ph.D., 2011)
- Bushrod, E., ‘The History of Unitarians in Birmingham from the middle of the eighteenth century to 1893’ (University of Birmingham M.A., 1955)
- Cooper, C., ‘The Impact on the County of Kent of the French Revolution 1789-1802’ (University of Kent Ph.D., 2004)
- Donoughue, B., ‘English politics and the American Revolution’ (Oxford University D. Phil, 1963)
- Duffy, E., ‘Joseph Berington and the English Catholic Cisalpine Movement 1772-1803’ (Cambridge University Ph.D., 1972)
- Fitzpatrick, M., ‘Rational Dissent in the Late Eighteenth Century with particular reference to the growth of toleration’ (Aberystwyth, University College, Wales Ph. D., 1982)
- Garnett, M. A., ‘The political ideas of William Hazlitt, 1778-1830’ (University of Durham Ph. D., 1990)

- Henriques, U. R. Q., 'Some aspects of the theory of religious toleration in England, 1787-1833' (University of Manchester Ph. D., 1959)
- Hole, R., 'Joseph Priestley and the Enlightenment' (University of Manchester M.A. Dissertation, 1978)
- Issitt, J., 'The Life and Works of Jeremiah Joyce' (Open University Ph. D., 2000)
- Mills, S., 'Joseph Priestley and the intellectual culture of rational dissent, 1752-1796' (University of London, Queen Mary College Ph.D., 2009)
- Murphy, M. J., 'Newspapers and opinion in Cambridge 1790-1850 (University of Kent M.A., 1971)
- Murray, N.U., 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals 1789-1802' (Oxford University D. Phil, 1975)
- Navickas, K. A., 'Redefining 'loyalism', 'radicalism' and national identity: Lancashire under the threat of Napoleon, 1798-1812' (Oxford University D. Phil, 2005)
- Nevitt, J., 'William Godwin, 1789-1796' (Oxford University D.Phil., 1981)
- Peart, A., 'Forgotten prophets; the lives of Unitarian women 1760-1904' (University of Newcastle upon Tyne Ph. D., 2005)
- Plant, H., 'Gender and the aristocracy of dissent: a comparative study of the beliefs, status and roles of women in Quaker and Unitarian communities 1770-1830, with particular reference to Yorkshire' (University of York D. Phil., 2000)
- Seed, J., 'The Role of Unitarianism in the formation of Liberal Culture, 1775-1851' (University of Hull Ph. D., 1981)
- Smith, J., 'James Losh: His ideas in relation to his circle and his time' (University of Northumbria, Ph. D., 1996)
- Smith, V. A., 'High Church Networks in Kent During the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries' (University of Kent M. A., 2009)
- Stevens, C.E. 'The Gordon Riots: a daring violation of law, or a defence of the Protestant constitution?' (University of Kent M.A. Dissertation, 2011)
- Thomis, M. I., 'Nottingham radicalism, 1785-1835' (University of Nottingham Ph. D., 1967)
- Thorpe, J., 'The cause of religion: Coleridge's dissenting ministry 1794-1798' (University of Liverpool Ph. D., 2006)
- Tindall, P. N., 'The Manchester Socinian controversy, its background and its sequel' (University of Newcastle on Tyne M.Lit., 1979)
- Watts, R., 'The Unitarian Contribution to Education in England from the late Eighteenth Century to 1853' (University of Leicester Ph. D., 1987)