

**DRAFT: ‘Sins of the fathers’: religious dissent and the burdens of history in
eighteenth-century England**

John Seed

Roehampton University London

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‘Remember!’ was Charles I’s last word on the scaffold, moments before he was beheaded on a January afternoon in 1649. He was probably intending no more than to remind Juxon, his loyal Bishop of London and the only churchman present on the scaffold, of the messages he had been instructed to deliver to the king’s son and others.¹ But Charles’s final decree echoed down the eighteenth century. It was institutionalised in the pages of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Each year on January 30th every church, including the college chapels of Oxford and Cambridge and Eton and Winchester Schools, was required by law to commemorate the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. They were also required to commemorate another related political event: May 29th, Royal Oak Day and the Restoration (and birthday) of Charles II in 1660. A specific service and forms of prayer were laid down for each of these commemorations.²

These were politically contentious memorials, as the full title of the service for January 30th signals:

A Form of Prayer with Fasting, to be used yearly on the Thirtieth of January, being the Day of the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First; to implore the mercy of God, that neither the Guilt of that sacred and innocent Blood, nor those of other sins, by which God was provoked to deliver up both us and our King into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time hereafter be visited upon us or our posterity.³

Throughout the service Charles is represented as an innocent victim divinely appointed -- ‘thine annointed blessed King Charles the First’ -- to suffer for the sins of his people. Those responsible for his execution are described in the formal prayers as ‘violent and blood-thirsty men’, and ‘cruel men, sons of Belial’.

The church service for May 29th goes further in underlining the political message. The Restoration of Charles II is represented as ‘a deliverance from the unnatural

Rebellion, Usurpation, and Tyranny of ungodly and cruel men, and from the sad confusions and ruin thereupon ensuing'. And the final prayer of the service raises the spectre of the return of these shadowy unnamed men:

Infatuate and defeat all the secret counsels of deceitful and wicked men against us ... cut off all such workers of iniquity, as turn Religion into Rebellion, and Faith into Faction, that they may never again prevail against us, nor triumph in the ruin of the Monarchy and thy church among us.

In thousands of churches, year after year, these services – and especially the January 30th service – directed the thoughts of the parish to events of the previous century. Charles was a martyred saint, a Christian king brutally put to death by wraithlike figures without names. And the successors of these 'ungodly and cruel men' were still at work, through 'secret counsels', using a deformed version of religion, plotting similar rebellions against Church and King. The reference was, of course, to the Dissenters, the descendents of those who had rebelled against the king and shared responsibility for his death.

What right had any clergyman to accuse Dissenters of the actions of puritans under Cromwell, one Dissenter vigorously complained in 1734. A recent sermon by Dr Middleton at St. Paul's had questioned the legal status of Dissenters, 'by accusing those great bodies of Men with Crimes committed before they were born, and visiting Sins of the Fathers on the third and fourth Generations'.⁴

Would he take it well, that they should charge him and his Brethren with the Conduct of the Clergy under Charles the First? ... if the Church of England will not be accountable for what their Ancestors will be Guilty of, the Dissenters are equally innocent in the Eyes of God and Men.⁵

For churchmen, this missed the point. It was just and proper, as the second commandment stated, that the sins of the fathers be visited upon their children. Luke Milbourne, a London cleric, put the case in one of his January 30th sermons. Those who were directly or indirectly involved in the king's execution, received their due punishment, he argued, if they died impenitent. But, he goes on, 'if we their Children consider and abhor their Practices, and their Principles; if we neither Justifie nor Extenuate their Sins, nor imitate their Examples, We shall not dye for the Sins of our Rebellious Fathers'. On the other hand, if we do justify either their principles or their actions and fail to mourn for their guilt, then we are as guilty of the king's execution as they were: 'it's a vain thing for us to pretend that if we had lived in their days, we

would not have been Guilty of their Sins, while we were afraid to renounce or declare against those Errors, whether speculative or practical which they fell into'.⁶ And who was it in eighteenth-century England who failed to repent the sins of their fathers – failed, in other words, to denounce the actions of those involved in the rebellion against their lawful monarch in the 1640s? Milbourne's friend, Dr Sacheverell, made the point with brutal succinctness from the bar of the Lords at his trial in 1710, pointing an accusatory finger at the Dissenters: 'they tell us they have relinquish'd the Principles, as well as the Sins of their Forefathers; if so, why do they not renounce their Schism, and come sincerely into our Church?''⁷ It is a good question.

The impact of the January 30th service was fading by the middle years of the eighteenth century. Some clergymen questioned the appropriateness of persisting in this annual commemoration which served only to provoke political animosities.⁸ Others ignored the requirement of delivering an appropriate sermon. The service and accompanying sermons remained important, nevertheless. They circulated a highly-politicised interpretation of the seventeenth century and reinforced hostile representations of Dissenters as the heirs of puritan fanatics and regicides. They were part of the common vocabulary of eighteenth-century England. Dictionaries, for example, defined enthusiasts as 'fanaticks' and fanatics were also, usually, 'sectaries', who were, in turn, Dissenters. Dissenters and puritans were more or less synonymous. And puritans were enthusiasts and sectaries and fanatics, and so on in a closed circle of interconnected definitions which tied Dissenters in the present to a set of historical images of Stuart England.

How deeply this language penetrated the world of everyday life is suggested in *The Convert*, a 1747 account of a young man's conversion to Dissent. Born and brought up in a Church of England family, he was taught from his earliest years he said, to 'despise and abhor' Presbyterians, a term which covered Dissenters in general: 'The very Name was synonymous to Cut-throat, Incendiary, Blasphemer, Traitor, Hypocrite, Enthusiast, Fanatic; in fine, everything wicked, despicable, ridiculous.'⁹ He and his brothers were taught not to associate with Dissenting children, unless to jeer at them for the 'Family stain' of their religion. And each Sunday they looked on with bitter resentment at Dissenters passing freely through the churchyard, 'our hallowed ground', to attend their meeting-house close by. He believed that the Dissenter was 'a Person of a singular, obstinate, envious, factious, hypocritical Temper or turn of Mind', who opposed out of sheer bloody-mindedness

anything proposed by the Church of England: ‘In short, one who would infallibly over-turn both our Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitutions, pull down our Churches, and cut the Throats of both Minister and Congregation’.¹⁰ These representations of Dissenters came from stories told in his family circle, which, as he noted, ‘we were oblig’d to believe, or call in Question the Veracity and Judgments of our Parents, Grand-mothers, etc.’¹¹ When he was subsequently discovered to have attended the meeting house out of curiosity the full force of parental discipline came into play. It put his father into ‘an immoderate passion’ with threats of a beating and a lecture on the evils of Dissent: ‘The good Man proceeded to enlarge, with great Vehemence, upon the usual Topics urg’d against the Dissenters; and dwelt particularly on the Beheading of King Charles, charging the whole Body of Dissenters as his Murderers’.¹² This experience strengthened all his biases. It is these ‘Infant Prejudices’ which are, he commented, ‘the Support of all our religious Differences and Animosities’.

Hostile representations of Dissenters were institutionalised in – and legitimised by – a set of legal sanctions which remained in force until well into the nineteenth century, giving the imprimatur of the state to the view that Dissenters were, in some sense, the living representatives of seventeenth-century rebels and regicides. An Act for the Uniformity of Public Prayers, &c. which received royal assent in July 1662, required all clergy of the Church of England, all fellows of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, all schoolmasters and private tutors, to sign a declaration renouncing resistance to the crown or its agents, refusing any obligations incurred under the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and promising conformity to a revised and profoundly anti-puritan liturgy. Any minister failing to comply with these terms by St Bartholomew’s Day, 24 August 1662, was to be deprived of his living. If he was subsequently to preach, he would be liable to prosecution and imprisonment for three months. The effect of these two Acts was the resignation or expulsion of around 1800 clergymen from their livings and some 150 college fellows and schoolmasters from their positions.

There were further hostile measures. The Corporations Act of 1661 laid down that nobody could be elected to a Corporation or serve in any office unless they took communion according to the rites of the Church of England. The Conventicle Act of May 1664 prohibited any meeting for Dissenting worship of more than four persons. The Five Mile Act, a year later, prohibited

any Dissenting minister from teaching or from coming within five miles of a city or corporate town or borough. The Test Act of 1672 required anyone taking up any kind of civil or military office to receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England within three months.

The so-called ‘Act of Toleration’ of 1689 was the price the High Church paid to block a comprehension, which could have reformed the Church of England, including several thousand Presbyterian ministers and leaving outside it a minority of Independents, Baptists, Quakers and other dissenting groups. The Toleration Act did not repeal previous legislation: the Test and Corporation Acts remained in force and Dissenters continued to suffer from a range of disabilities. The Church of England was left unchanged and in possession of all its privileges, rights, endowments. Nevertheless, 1689 did mark a recognition, however grudging on the part of many churchmen, that a single, uniform, national church could not be imposed on the whole population. After 1702, the resurgence of the High Church Tories under Queen Anne threatened a return to the dark days before 1688. The Occasional Conformity Act (1711) and the Schism Act (1714) struck at core freedoms of Dissenters. The Queen’s fortuitous death in 1714 prevented the realisation of Dissenters’ worst fears.¹³ But any hopes that their loyalty during the Jacobite rising of 1715 would earn some relaxation of the penal laws against them was disappointed. The new Hanoverian regime had to conciliate the High Church and Tories and the first administration of George I included the Earl of Nottingham, the principal author of the Occasional Conformity Act. Only in December 1718 did the new Stanhope-Sunderland government take active steps to conciliate the impatient Dissenters with a bill ‘for strengthening the Protestant Interest in these kingdoms’. The legal status of Dissenters merely reverted to the status quo before 1711 – and even this was opposed by a majority of the bishops and by both archbishops.¹⁴

The main planks of anti-Dissenting legislation remained in place and the most authoritative legal textbook of the second half of the eighteenth century – first published in 1769 and in its thirteenth edition by 1800 -- reaffirmed their legitimacy. According to William Blackstone, in the fourth volume of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, the penalties for religious Dissent were only *suspended* by the Toleration Act and care should be taken that ‘this indulgence’ was not carried so far as to threaten the security of the Church. Blackstone cannot resist summoning up the spectre of fanatical sectaries and ‘the Great Rebellion’:

As to the papists, their tenets are undoubtedly calculated for the introduction of all slavery, both civil and religious: but it may with justice be questioned, whether the spirit, the doctrines, and the practice of the sectaries are better calculated to make men good subjects. One thing is obvious to observe, that these have once within the compass of the last century, effected the ruin of our church and monarchy; which the papists have attempted indeed, but have never yet been able to execute.¹⁵

It was, he said, ‘the experience of their turbulent disposition in former times’ which led to the introduction of the severe laws against Dissenters. The Act of Toleration, ‘with a spirit of true magnanimity, extended that indulgence to these sectaries, which they themselves, while in power, had held to be countenancing schism, and denied to the church of England’. But this ‘indulgence’, Blackstone warns, stretches only as far as *suspending* those penalties against Dissent introduced during the reign of Charles II.¹⁶ His remarks were brief, but coming from the Solicitor-General, and published under the auspices of Oxford University, they attracted a considerable amount of worried attention among Dissenters.

For the Church of England, defence of the Test and Corporations Act was bound up with the defence of established interests, threatened by the sudden eligibility of tens of thousands of Dissenters to various lucrative offices. Patronage created complex networks of loyalty and dependency in eighteenth-century England – networks which sustained the power of governments, of landowners and of the church hierarchy. The stability of a whole institutional order was at stake, or at least perceived to be. And those who were threatening that order in the late 1780s had overturned church and state once before. On the basis of Priestley’s admittedly uncompromising *Letter to William Pitt*, one churchmen claimed that the Dissenters aimed not merely at repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts but also repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, abolition of the subscriptions required for students at Oxford and Cambridge, the abolition of tithes and, ultimately, ‘the turning the Bishops out of the House of Lords, and of course setting up an Assembly of Divines’.¹⁷ In other words, repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts would lead to the unravelling of the post-Restoration Church of England and a return to the rule of the Saints.

For churchmen, the Test and Corporation Acts were justified by history – they were a continuing punishment for the Sins of the Fathers of the Dissenters in the seventeenth century. As one vehement churchman put it:

...what Class of People ever voted the Lords useless? The Dissenters! Who abolished Episcopacy? The Dissenters. Who first destroy'd the Freedom of Parliaments? The Dissenters. Who introduced the arbitrary Form of Governing by Standing Armies? The Dissenters. I have no need to enquire who murder'd their King! since the Perpetrators, of this barbarous and cruel Deed, cannot escape the Recollection of the most ignorant, nor the Feelings of the most obdurate. It is from such Days as these that we are to deduce the fatal Consequences of this premeditated Repeal.¹⁸

This was just one of numerous interventions by churchmen which placed the Test and Corporations Acts in the context of an unfinished seventeenth century history and the ghost of an executed king. Memories of the Civil War, of Cromwell, of 'the royal martyr' to Presbyterian fanaticism, were summoned up in parliamentary speeches, in the sermons of Anglican clerics, in a thousand pamphlets and in the yells of church and king rioters even in the 1790s.

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Turning to the experience of the Dissenters, the battery of legislation which followed the Restoration affected families in every part of England. Thousands of Dissenters suffered spells of imprisonment. Several contemporaries suggested that as many as 5,000 Dissenters died in prison in the Restoration period; Defoe proposed 8,000. A recent estimate has given 1,000 as a more accurate total of Dissenting deaths in custody.¹⁹ Many thousands more suffered serious fines, the confiscation of goods and legal harassment – and many of these were financially ruined as a result. As the great Dissenting minister John Howe, a former chaplain to Cromwell, put it in 1689, by these laws against Dissenters 'our Magna Charta was torn in Pieces':

Penalties inflicted; Goods rifled; Estates seiz'd and imbezzled; Houses broken up; Families disturb'd, often at most unseasonable Hours of the Night, without any Cause, or Shadow of a Cause, if only a malicious Villain would pretend to suspect a Meeting there. No Law in any other Case like this; as if to worship God without those Additions, which were

confessed unnecessary, were a greater crime than Theft, Felony, Murder, or Treason!²⁰

In practice enforcement of anti-Dissenting laws in Restoration England was inconsistent and on occasion effectively resisted. There were periods of intense repression and there were considerable local variations. Some Bishops were active in pursuing Dissenters, others were indifferent, some even gave practical support to persecuted Dissenters. In some places magistrates refused to accept the evidence of informers and juries refused to convict.²¹ Dissenters sometimes remained active and respected members of their local community.²² Nevertheless, as a legally-determined enemy of the state, every Dissenter in England between the 1660s and 1688 knew considerable insecurity.

Vulnerable to intimidation in every aspect of daily life, the emotional trauma could mark a Dissenter for life. In the England of George I there were many Dissenters who could still remember the terrors of their childhood forty or fifty years before – a terror revived during the Sacheverell riots of 1710, again in 1715 during the Jacobite uprisings, and sporadically in the casual violence to which Dissenters were always exposed. Edmund Calamy, born in London in 1671, recalled two occasions during his childhood when private meetings for worship were violently disrupted by magistrates with constables and soldiers-- 'they were fierce and noisy, and made great havoc'.²³ Another Dissenting minister, James Peirce, living in the 1680s in the Stepney household of the minister Matthew Mead, recalled houses being broken into at night by violent men:

I forebear to mention the rudeness used towards women upon such occasions, and how they purposely frightened children, tho' I shall not easily forget, how I was myself, being very young and in a Minister's house when it was broke open, put in great fear of my life by them, which together with what then I saw, begat in me such an aversion to their cruel and persecuting practices, as I hope shall never wear off.²⁴

The Revolution of 1688 delivered Dissenters from the worst consequences of this regime and the so-called 'Act of Toleration' of 1689, despite its limitations, provided some kind of official recognition of their right to practice their religious faith. Historians in recent years have suggested that under successive Hanoverian monarchs anti-Dissenting legislation was increasingly a

dead letter. By the second half of the century there were not just the occasional Dissenting town councillor or alderman but even Corporations – at Portsmouth, Bristol, Nottingham and Bridport – dominated by Dissenters for a period. In addition, many of the new local bodies and commissions set up to manage local affairs were not subject to the Test and Corporation Acts. In probably the most influential and wide ranging study of eighteenth-century Dissenting politics published in recent years, James Bradley has argued that: ‘the law in relation to the Dissenters actually operated in a remarkably benign manner’.²⁵ He stresses the pluralistic and tolerant character of church and state: ‘the Dissenting elite did not often feel that the law was oppressive; in fact, it often seemed accomodating’.²⁶ Paul Langford has argued a similar case. The late eighteenth century debate over dissenting disabilities was, he says, ‘a debate about apprehensions rather than realities’ and he quotes Burke’s remark, that their legal disabilities were ‘rather disgustful than inconvenient’. ‘There were somewhat desperate attempts to find real cause for complaint’, Langford says, but occasional infringements of the liberty of dissenters were, as he puts it, a matter of ‘petty disputes’. They were satisfactorily dealt with by recourse to the courts, which Dissenters generally found supportive. ‘Much industry went into discovering victims of intolerance, but the fact was there were none’.²⁷

One index of the leniency of anti-Dissenting legislation is the apparent political passivity of Dissenters under George I and George II. At least before the 1770s, Dissenting ministers, even later radicals such as Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, ‘had almost without exception voiced aloud their universal appreciation for the English government’.²⁸ It was a combination of political crises, notably the Wilkes case and the struggle with the American colonies, that pushed Dissenters into some kind of opposition, though radicals and intellectuals like Price and Priestley – and perhaps a few dozen others -- should not be taken as more than a vociferous and hot-headed minority within the ranks of Dissent.²⁹

I want to question these historical orthodoxies – both about the religious liberalism of the Hanoverian state and the political integration of Dissenters within it. These large and complex questions require a more sustained discussion than is possible here, but some relevant points can be made. First, the reality of being a Dissenter in Hanoverian England was less comfortable than Bradley, Langford and several other historians have suggested. Dissenters had to pay tithes or church rates

for the support of an institution they did not attend. And they were compelled to marry in that church, according to a rite they disapproved of, otherwise their children would be officially designated as illegitimate. To serve in public office without breaking the law a Dissenter was subject to a bewilderingly complex set of legal conditions. On a strict reading of the law, as the Dissenting lawyer Samuel Heywood demonstrated, the Test Acts applied to a wide range of public institutions under Royal Charter, including the East India Company, the Russia and South Sea Companies, some of the great Insurance companies, as well as many hospitals and charitable bodies. On the other hand, if potentially inclusive the law was also remarkably contradictory and haphazard. A Dissenter could serve as a commissioned officer in the navy, but not in the army. He could be a commissioner for the land tax, for instance, but not a commissioner for other departments of the revenue. He could vote for a mayor but he could not become one. He could become a member of parliament for a borough, even a member of the government, though he was incapacitated from being employed in the most subordinate office in the local government of that borough. As Heywood remarked:

It will not be an easy task to reconcile to reason and common-sense a system of law, whereby a greater security for the civil government and established church is required from the sword-bearer or meanest officer of a petty corporation, than from a member of the House of Commons or a Lord of Parliament.³⁰

Most absurd of all, perhaps, since 1727 the king had granted an annual sum of money – the Regium Donum – to a committee of Dissenting ministers, which then distributed charitable support to deserving ministers or their families. Such a trust fell within the terms of the Test Acts, though nobody had threatened to enforce it.

In practice, of course, the Test Acts – and the rest of the battery of anti-dissenting legislation – were rarely put into execution. This was in part because of their sheer absurdity and the confused state of the law. And this was recognised, as Heywood and other Dissenters claimed, by the annual Acts of Indemnity, though the implications of these were not as straightforward as Langford and others have suggested.³¹ Most important of all, they were not implemented because of what Heywood termed, ‘the liberal and enlarged spirit of the times’.³² But, as Dissenters frequently observed, the spirit of the times was not a solid ground on which to base their liberties and their rights. One Dissenter, in 1772, noted the ‘lenity and wisdom’ of government and the

‘moderate temper’ of many (though by no means all) of the clergy in their dealings with Dissenters. But, he went on, whatever confidence Dissenters had in the ‘lenity and wisdom’ of government, they could never feel secure in it:

A small degree of acquaintance with men, will convince us of their mutability, so that the mere good pleasure of temporal Governours, is a tenure too uncertain by which to hold, a privilege so great as liberty of conscience. This nation hath produced bigots of the most furious zeal; what has been, may be again...³³

In one of the most important interventions in the subscription debates of the early 1770s, the Clapham Dissenting minister Philip Furneaux stressed that ‘toleration is not founded in the forbearance of the magistrate, but in the right of the subject’.³⁴ If toleration means anything, Furneaux argued:

it means, that ample security which every good subject hath a right to expect; not from the circumstances of the times, not from the temper of the public, not from the mercy of every individual member of the community but, from that only solid basis of the liberty and property of every British subject, the constitution and the laws of the country.³⁵

And this is precisely how anti-Dissenting legislation exerted its power throughout the eighteenth century. The sanctions of the law do not need to be applied consistently to exert influence. Just as in the case of the bewildering apparatus of anti-Dissenting legislation, no capital statute was repealed before 1808, though many were obsolete. Exemplary public hangings were essential to the maintenance of authority, though they were relatively few. The bloody penal code of eighteenth-century England operated through terror, but a selective terror often mitigated by mercy: roughly half of those condemned to death were subsequently reprieved. Mercy was part of the currency of patronage. In the words of Douglas Hay: ‘It allowed the class that passed one of the bloodiest penal codes in Europe to congratulate itself on its humanity’.³⁶ So too, I want to suggest, the fact that punitive sanctions against Dissenters were not acted on and were mitigated by annual Indemnity Acts, was a way of permitting the establishment, in church and state, to congratulate themselves on their liberality, moderation and tolerance – while ensuring that this liberty, moderation and tolerance was at their discretion and could be withdrawn at any time. Dissenters knew this and experienced the insecurity of depending on the connivance of authorities whose disposition towards them was always uncertain. ‘A sword hangs over our heads’, as

the young Dissenting minister and historian Joseph Cornish succinctly put it in 1772.³⁷

Their insecure legal status influenced the social relations of everyday life. As a 1796 report of the Dissenting Deputies put it: ‘The prejudices of the vulgar were confirmed by the insinuated opinion of the legislature in their disfavour’.³⁸ Isaac Watts, addressing his fellow Dissenters, spoke of ‘the inconveniences and difficulties’ and the ‘indignities’ of their position. Dissenters had to accept that they were not merely ‘cast out of all public offices, trusts and salaries as men unworthy of civil benefits and honours’. They were also ‘retrenched as to the more private and common profits of this world’.

Perhaps you meet with now and then a frown, a token of contempt, or a word of mockery and bitter reproach among your neighbours...; and it is possible you lie under some disadvantages in trade and business in the world upon this account too...³⁹

More than this, as Watts noted, there were ‘some angry Bigots’ who would not hesitate to subject them to violence did they not have the protection of the law.

It is certain that we are observed with an evil eye, we are sometimes bantered and ridiculed by evil tongues; we suffer many an opprobrious name, many a malicious sneer and insolent affront...⁴⁰

A Dissenting layman, Abraham Bourn, son and brother of Dissenting ministers, though himself a surgeon, admitted that Dissenters in the 1750s were ‘more fortunate’ than their predecessors, having some legal protection against the violent bigotry they sometimes encountered. But their situation remained difficult. No-one, he said, would become or remain a Dissenter out of ‘temporal interest’: ‘Are they not too often slandered and abused, tho’ not openly persecuted, yet secretly wounded in their tenderest Part, their Characters and Reputation?’⁴¹

This question of the stigma and public disgrace of their uncertain legal status, figured again and again in Dissenting writing on this topic, though generally unnoticed, I think, by generations of historians. According to Joshua Toulmin: ‘Protestant Dissenters feel themselves injured by those acts... Those statutes hold us up, as persons not worthy of confidence, as not deserving any share in the revenues or honours of the state, which we contribute to support’.⁴² The Dissenters of Wiltshire, assembled in a large public meeting in September 1789, stated in their third resolution that the Test and Corporations Acts were a matter of ‘disgrace’, ‘by unjustly

stigmatizing a numerous body of well-deserving men'.⁴³ And Robert Hall described the Test and Corporations Acts in 1791 as 'a stigma': 'It proscribes not an individual who has been convicted of a crime, but a whole party, as unfit to be trusted by the community to which they belong.'⁴⁴ The Dissenters of Hanoverian England were not burning at stakes in Smithfield or dying in their hundreds in filthy gaols. Relative to the brutalities of the Tudor and Stuart state, the Hanoverian regime was indeed benign. But it is a failure of historical understanding to ignore evidence of the difficulties Dissenters sometimes encountered in everyday life: troublesome obstructions of local magistrates or clergymen or laymen; acts of vandalism against their chapels; insults, threats and assaults in the street; even the coolness and disapproving looks of neighbours. How many Dissenting families could have endorsed at any time in the eighteenth century this sad comment in the diary of a laywoman in 1707: 'even the Best of those who differ from me in Things by them accounted indifferent, seem to justify a Strangeness to me and all other Dissenters: Lord! Appear to the Joy of those, whom their Brethren have cast out of their Communion and Converse...'⁴⁵

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Were these 'indignities' and 'dishonours' registered in political opposition or political alienation? This brings us back to Sacheverell's question at his trial in 1710: 'they tell us they have relinquish'd the Principles, as well as the Sins of their Forefathers; if so, why do they not renounce their Schism, and come sincerely into our Church?'⁴⁶ Or, to put it another way, if Dissenters were so contented, so comfortably integrated into the political and social world of Hanoverian England, why did they continue to Dissent? It is the answer to that question which begins to engage with the politics of religious Dissent.

As early as 1667 John Locke had warned that, though numerous, the Dissenters were 'yet crumbled into different parties, and are at as much distance from one another as from you.' But, he went on, 'if you persecute them, you make them all of one party and interest against you, tempt them to shake off your yoke, and venture for a new government.'⁴⁷ The English revolution of the 1640s had splintered the puritans into Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers as well as numerous smaller sects. It was the ecclesiastical legislation

of the 1660s and 70s which began to create, out of this confusing collection of groups, the common identity of 'Nonconformist' or 'Dissenter'. Eighteenth-century Dissenters continued to disagree on many issues, but they shared a common experience of an injustice which the Glorious Revolution and Act of Toleration had not remedied. And, as Locke had warned, this generated a degree of political disaffection to an established order which continued to maintain that historical injustice.

The political history of religious Dissent between the 1660s and the 1790s is too complex to be summarised in a couple of paragraphs but again a few important points can be signalled. First, Dissenters never accepted the legitimacy of the battery of sanctions against them. As soon as the Hanoverian succession was established, they pressed vigorously for repeal between 1716 and 1718. They demonstrated considerable resentment at the slowness of the Whigs in meeting their demands and considerable discontent at the limited relief they were finally given in 1718. However, they were placed in an awkward political position, since outright opposition threatened a return to Tory rule, even the destabilising of the crown. And this is the key fact for any understanding of the compromised political position of Dissenters, at least until the 1760s. They were compelled to support Whig governments whose concessions to their interests were always limited and whose promises were never fulfilled, in order to keep out of power Tory and Jacobite political factions. If we find, as we do, Dissenters consistently voting for government, this is not a sign of their political integration and contentment. Rather, it was a matter of strategic calculation about the lesser of two evils. And even this was never guaranteed. Despite Walpole's concessions in the later 1720s – the *Regium Donum*, the annual Indemnity Acts – Dissenters mobilised their forces from 1732 in a concerted campaign for repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts which, in 1734, threatened to bring down the government. Dissenting discontent remained a fact of political life throughout the 1730s and into the early 1740s. Other considerations, as Samuel Heywood noted half a century later, mitigated Dissenting opposition in the 1740s and 50s. Governments in these years had to deal with international wars and a major Jacobite rebellion at home and Dissenters were unwilling to risk destabilising government and crown at such a juncture.⁴⁸ Also worth noting, a point raised by Priestley in 1769, is a depth of

political alienation which produces neither integration nor opposition but withdrawal. As he commented:

A great number of Dissenters... constantly refuse to enter into any measures to oppose the administration, though they may condemn their conduct ever so much; because they are fearful of giving umbrage to the court, which, without any new law, may certainly distress us all very much.⁴⁹

If a majority of Dissenters moved increasingly into outright opposition to governments from this time, the later 1760s, as they evidently did, this is not a simple case of a radicalisation by events and/or by the influence of leading Dissenting ministers. Rather governments were perceived in all kinds of ways to be moving away from the principles and practices that had predominated between the 1720s and the 1750s. The Wilkes Affair and the deepening American crisis were just two important symptoms of a deeper political malaise. In other words, it was not simply a case of governments remaining where they were and Dissenters becoming more radical. Some Dissenters would have argued precisely the reverse: their principles were unchanged but successive governments of George III were moving steadily to the right.

Explorations of electoral behaviour are important but take us only so far in understanding the political disposition of eighteenth-century Dissenters. We also need to look more closely at how the very existence of religious Dissent carried political implications. In an important essay on Dissenters in Restoration London, Gary de Krey has explored how their commitment to liberty of conscience uncoupled the link between priest and king which had been fundamental to the English state since the break from Rome in the 1530s.⁵⁰ In some cases, the Quakers for instance, there was an uncompromising rejection of the authority of the state. Others accepted a limited authority on the part of the crown. But all Dissenters rejected traditional assumptions about the necessity of religious uniformity and rejected also the legitimacy of coercion in matters of conscience. Dissenters not only argued about, they also defied in practice, laws enforcing uniformity throughout the reigns of the last Stuart monarchs.

As in Stuart England, so too in Hanoverian England, to affirm the right and duty of liberty of conscience was, at the same time, and unavoidably, to contest ground with established institutions and with dominant historical narratives of

church and state. There were, in other words, correspondences between opposition to authority in the sphere of religion and in the sphere of secular politics, as indicated in this comment by the radical Baptist minister Richard Baron:

Oppression in matters of religion, and ecclesiastical tyranny, ever made way for, and will eternally introduce, civil bondage, and the tyranny of princes: and in our own history more especially it appears, that civil and religious oppression rise and fall together.⁵¹

The same point was made in a powerful essay in the Wilkite weekly the *North Briton* in 1768. The anonymous author stressed the elective affinities between Dissenters and the extra-parliamentary opposition of these years. James I had famously declared: ‘No Bishop, no King’:

I would say, and, I believe, with equal truth, NO DISSENTER, NO LIBERTY. The Dissenters are, and ever have been, the very life and soul of the republican part of our government. They have often saved it, when upon the brink of destruction... Accustomed to think freely in religious matters, the Protestant Dissenters have ever exercised the same freedom in their political speculations.⁵²

They and their puritan forebears, the article continued, had opposed the absurdities of divine right, passive obedience and non-resistance. They had consistently maintained that government was for the people, that the king was the first servant of the public and was bound by the laws, that the subject was freed from allegiance to a king who violated laws essential to the constitution:

These are the principles, which the Dissenters have ever embraced, and which they still embrace. These are the principles upon which the civil war was begun, and the revolution effected.⁵³

Note how historical continuities between the 1640s and the Revolution of 1688 are affirmed here, legitimising and aligning popular acts of resistance to tyranny and the puritan and Dissenting tradition of resistance to arbitrary power.

No wonder then that Samuel Johnson was growling in 1770 that Wilkes was supported by ‘the sectaries, the natural fomentors of sedition, and confederates of the rabble, of whose religion little now remains but hatred of establishments.’⁵⁴ Or that David Hume was appalled by the echoes of the rantings of seventeenth-century puritans in the calls of ‘Wilkes and Liberty’: ‘the present fury of the people, though

glossed over by pretensions to civil liberty, is in reality incited by the fanaticism of religion.’⁵⁵

4

Religious Dissent was an effect of dominant discourses about the recent past, crystallised in the form of exclusionary legislation. But it was also an active resistance to those discourses, laws and histories. And in this final section I want to suggest that the political disposition of eighteenth-century Dissenters only makes sense in terms of their historical situation.⁵⁶ The past was part of their present. As long as the Test and Corporations Acts remained on the statute book, Dissenters were subjected to the posthumous authority of a papist Stuart dynasty. To challenge not just the legitimacy of these laws but of their whole discursive and institutional underpinnings was to challenge dominant histories of the present. Churchmen obeyed Charles I’s decree, ‘Remember!’; but so too did generation after generation of English Dissenters. To be a Dissenter was to belong to an embattled minority, representatives of the incompleteness of the sixteenth-century English reformation and of the Revolution of 1688.

The most important Dissenting figure of the early eighteenth century in developing a counter-history of Tudor and, especially, Stuart England, was Edmund Calamy. Between the 1690s and the 1720s he made a series of controversial interventions in debates about the nature of the Restoration regime, the character of the Glorious Revolution and the relations between church and state in England in the recent past and in the present.⁵⁷ His accounts of the experiences of Richard Baxter and other ejected ministers after 1662 highlighted the illegalities, the violence and the injustices of the England of Charles II and James II. Some ejected ministers lived on quietly. Many others were subject to official harrassment, troublesome court appearances and fines, confiscation of property and spells of imprisonment. They were abused in the street. Their private meetings and meeting houses were broken into during religious worship and minister and congregation threatened and abused. At various times ministers were forced into hiding, living as fugitives separated from their families. Others died in prison.

His character sketches of the first generation of Dissenting ministers were, Calamy says, “but a just Debt to the Memory of so many deserving Persons, who suffer’d so bravely to maintain their Integrity, and rather expos’d themselves and their

Families to no small Hardship, than they would strain their Consciences".⁵⁸ His historical work was a memorial for the victims and martyrs of religious intolerance, of Stuart duplicity and of High Church bigotry. Far from being a defence of an embattled national church, anti-dissenting legislation was -- and by implication remained -- an aggressive assault by a crypto-papist and proto-absolutist court and church hierarchy on the enclaves of true protestantism and liberty within England.

The Reformation in England was incomplete and each generation, Calamy says, had a duty to continue to represent the principles of liberty of conscience against all who wanted to impose a single human authority. English history had been a series of missed opportunities and the Dissenters stood witness, generation after generation, to the path not taken:

For besides the Opportunity of an happy Settlement among us at the Restoration, another has been lost at the Revolution, and so that farther Reformation that has been so earnestly fought for from one Reign to another would be altogether desperate, should all now yield to rigorous Imposers, and their groundless Pretences to Church Power...⁵⁹

If Dissenters were grateful for their protection under the Hanoverian regime in the 1720s and were supporters of the government, they remained uncompromising in their opposition to one of the pivotal structures of the Hanoverian state: the Church of England. As Calamy stressed, their continuing dissent was a refusal of human authority in matters of religion, a denial of "unscriptural impositions" and a commitment to the right of private judgement and liberty of conscience:

These were the chief Principles of the old Puritans. They were the principles of our Fathers; and they are also ours.⁶⁰

The comparative liberty of contemporary dissenters was not a gift of their rulers. It was earned: "it comes to us as the Fruit of the Prayers and Tears, the Sufferings and Hardships, the Conflicts and Views of our Fathers before us".⁶¹ It was the consequence of long and painful resistance to the popish councils of Charles II and James II and their allies within the church hierarchy.

The second great work of eighteenth-century Dissenting history was Daniel Neal's *History of the Puritans*, published in four massive volumes during the 1730s.⁶² Neal was as committed as Calamy to a history which integrated present and past, forging identities between eighteenth-century Dissenters and their puritan antecedents, keeping alive a collective memory of persecution and injustice. *The History of the*

Puritans underlined the crucial role that puritans and, after 1660, Dissenters played in laying the foundations for the liberties of early Hanoverian England. And, like so much of the writing of Calamy, who is cited here in the first sentence, Neal stressed a familial inheritance and a duty of remembrance:

“When Protestant Dissenters recollect the sufferings of their fathers in the last age for the freedom of their consciences, let them be thankful that their lot is cast in more settled times.” The Liberties of England are the price of a great deal of blood and treasure; wide breaches were made in the constitution in the four reigns of the Male Line of the Stuarts; persecution and arbitrary power went hand in hand; the Constitution was often in convulsive Agonies, when the patrons of liberty appeared boldly in the noble cause, and sacrificed their estates and lives in its defence. The Puritans stood firm by the Protestant Religion, and by the liberties of their country in the reigns of King Charles II and King James II, and received the Fire of the Enemy from all their batteries without moving sedition, or taking advantage of their persecutors, when it was afterwards in their power.⁶³

The collective memory of Dissenters was, then, a political priority. Only loyalty to this past will transmit its limited and insecure gains to the future.

Calamy and Neal were the most important Dissenting historians in eighteenth-century England, but they were by no means the only ones. Benjamin Bennett, James Peirce, Thomas Crosby and Isaac Kimber made important contributions in the 1720s and 1730s. Micaiah Towgood produced a remarkable and radical historical text in 1748: *An Essay towards attaining a True Idea of the Character and Reign of King Charles the First*. William Harris in the 1750s and 1760s produced a series of proto-Wilkite histories of the seventeenth century. He, in turn, was linked to the circles around the Dissenting republican Thomas Hollis who edited and published new editions of works by Commonwealth and Old Whig writers like Milton, Algernon Sydney, Edmund Ludlow and Robert Molesworth.

These Dissenting histories were not providing a narrow, parochial history of a marginal people. At pivotal moments in the history of England – Tudor Reformation, English civil war, Restoration, Glorious Revolution, the Hanoverian succession – the puritans or the Dissenters were decisively involved. No national history could omit them. But a whole series of national histories, most importantly Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion* and Hume’s *History of England*, had represented their role as

negative, even pathological. All Dissenting histories, in their different ways, challenged this dominant narrative. They followed in the footsteps of Neal and Calamy in vindicating the historical record of the Dissenters and their puritan forebears, emphasising their positive contribution to the development of the constitution and to the creation of civil liberty.

At the same time, Dissent's continued existence as a distinct set of churches depended upon maintaining themselves as communities of memory. Belonging to a meeting house or chapel which traced its history back to the aftermath of the great ejection, and which honoured its ancestors and founders, reinforced this Dissenting identity rooted in narratives of persecution, of resistance to popery and arbitrary power, and of unflinching commitment to religious and civil liberty. The strong family roots of Dissent gave history a powerful emotional charge. 'The first foundations of all history', Voltaire commented, 'are the tales fathers tell to their children and which are then handed down from one generation to another'.⁶⁴ For the Dissenter, genealogy and family lore intersected with the political history of the nation. Fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers had suffered for the cause of truth. In numberless forms the memory of the Restoration betrayal, of "the Great Ejection" and "Black Bartholomew Day", of the persecutions of the 1670s and 1680s, were transmitted down the generations in a collective and familial resentment, reconnecting the present to the heroic sufferings of a previous generation.

Continuing loyalty to Dissent was a commitment to a founding historical moment – a commitment which needed renewing. As William Enfield explained in 1770, all that Dissenters really agreed on was the right of private judgement in matters of religious faith and religious practice – and a concomitant rejection of the right of any man or body of men to impose any form of these on any individual:

These principles were, doubtless sufficient to justify the resolute opposition, which the Puritans and Nonconformists of the last century made to the encroachments of ecclesiastical tyranny... And the fortitude and chearfulness with which they suffered persecution, rather than resign their integrity, will be admired and applauded, as long as the history of their times shall be preserved.⁶⁵

Times may have changed, persecution may have relaxed, but, Enfield stresses, 'it is on solid principles and with good reason, that the Dissenters of the present age tread in the steps of their forefathers, and continue the separation from the Church of

England'.⁶⁶ In order to preserve the historical link to their 'forefathers', a new generation of Dissenters needed to be taught about 'the history of their times'. In numerous sermons and addresses new generations of Dissenters were reminded of the sacrifices and the virtues of their founding fathers.⁶⁷

Catechisms for Dissenting children were published which rehearsed in simple but uncompromising form the main arguments and central narrative of histories such as those of Neal and Calamy. Samuel Palmer's *The Protestant-Dissenter's Catechism*, first published in 1773 was in its eleventh edition by 1800. Written at the request of several ministers, the text was carefully revised and given their imprimatur by Job Orton and Philip Furneaux, two key figures of an older Dissenting generation. The full title declared its aim: 'to instruct and establish Young Persons among the Dissenters in the Principles of Nonconformity'.⁶⁸ As the title suggests, it was organised as a sequence of questions and answers, providing in simple terms the rationale for Dissent from the established church. It covered the history of Dissent chronologically, providing a critical and political account of the ecclesiastical policies of successive monarchs. Young Dissenting readers were not just educated in the long history of puritan and Dissenting sufferings in the cause of genuine protestantism. They received a political education too. No young Dissenter who had gone through Palmer's *Catechism* could be ignorant of basic facts about the historical origins of anti-Dissenting legislation. He or she would also have learned of the wickedness of the Stuarts, of the unreformed character of the Church of England, and of the qualified liberation of Dissenters by the Revolution in 1688.

Palmer's catechism was nowhere near so uncompromising as Robert Robinson's *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity*. Its aim too was to be of practical help to pastors in inculcating among the youth of their congregations some knowledge of the ground of their Dissent. It provided a succinct history, in note form, of nonconformity from the sixteenth century to the present. It was very critical of the the Church of England under successive Tudor and Stuart monarchs and it pulled no punches in dealing with sensitive topics. 'The unhappy Charles was an incorrigible tyrant – AND deserved to die', Robinson asserts. But he then exonerates the puritans of any responsibility. Criticisms of the Revolution settlement are equally forthright. Robinson pointed the finger at the bishops who, he said, were lukewarm in their support for the new regime: 'They pretended to abide firmly bound by oath to an abdicated tyrant – who had broken all his oaths to them'. They had preached the

doctrines of non-resistance, ‘and had considered the whole nation as the property of a tyrant – inalienable in his family – to be transmitted from father to son – like a herd of cattle to be fed – worked – or butchered – as their master pleased’.⁶⁹

Their historical criticisms of the political establishment brought Palmer and Robinson into sudden and unexpected notoriety. Robinson’s *Plan of Lectures* was written, he said, ‘without any malevolent design’ and was privately printed in Cambridge in 1778, with the imprimatur of the Eastern Association of Baptist churches, for the use of local congregations. But the book attracted attention among Dissenters, and was subsequently published in London, reaching a fifth edition by 1781. Theophilus Lindsey noted that it had upset a number of churchmen, and described it as ‘the most cutting book agst the ch of England and Prelacy that ever was written’.⁷⁰ The vehemence of its attacks on the historical record of the Bishops was exploited a few years later to undermine the Dissenting case for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. According to George Horne, Bishop of Oxford, Robinson’s *Plan of Lectures*, recommended by ‘a Synod of Baptists’, was directed at the Bishops, ‘pronouncing sentence upon them, as bloody tyrants and persecutors of the Non-conformists’.⁷¹ Burke took the cue, and in his attack on the third motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in the Commons in March 1790, he seized on Palmer’s *Catechism* and, more especially, Robinson’s *Plan of Lectures*. They were proof, he told the House, that Dissenters aimed at much more than merely a repeal of specific laws. Robinson’s ‘catechism’, he said, (mixing up the volumes) ‘contained no one precept of religion’ and was ‘one continued invective against Kings and Bishops’:

Grossly libelling the National establishment in every part and passage, these catechisms were to be put into the hands of Dissenters’ children, who were thus to be taught in their early infancy to lisp out censures and condemnation of the Established Church of England, and to be brought up as a rising generation of its determined enemies...⁷²

5

Dissenters produced an alternative history which throughout the eighteenth century resisted and largely prevented the consolidation of an official history of the English state. They kept alive connections to the past for new generations of Dissenters to retrieve once more the memory of their forebears. The historical past, then, was not merely one preoccupation of eighteenth-century Dissenters, it was a central and

shaping force, or, perhaps more accurately, a set of sometimes contending forces. It was through the narratives it told about itself that a fluid and unstable historical community called ‘the Dissenters’ was produced and reproduced during the eighteenth century. And because memory is emotional, involving a degree of identification with those who are long dead, to remember is often to refuse forgiveness and to keep alive the antagonisms of the past in the present.⁷³

This historical tradition might, in one reading, point to a radical political engagement in the 1790s. Benjamin Flower, soon to become editor of the radical anti-war *Cambridge Intelligencer*, reacted to the political defeats of the cause of reform with defiance. ‘Remember’, he told his fellow-Dissenters in 1792, ‘you are the descendants of those who by resisting unto blood, preserved that excellent constitution, to which the nation owes so much freedom and happiness.’⁷⁴ And he went on:

It is the bounden duty of the different denominations of Protestant Dissenters, to unite, to claim, and to persist in claiming those rights of which they, the constant, firm supporters of the constitution, have been too long robbed. They should never cease to associate, to petition, to remonstrate...⁷⁵

Flower, like many Dissenters, still assumed that they would not have to face the kinds of sufferings experienced by their Dissenting forebears: ‘you are not called to such painful duty’, he said. But in 1799 he was sentenced to a £100 fine and six months imprisonment in Newgate for an alleged libel against Bishop Watson.

Flower was voicing in 1792 a Dissenting disposition, but it was nevertheless a minority one. A much wider body of Dissenters assimilated the hardships they experienced in the 1790s to a longer history of persecution and martyrdom. The evangelical Independent William Kingsbury, defending itinerant preaching from threats of prosecution in 1798, warned Christians: ‘let us expect reproaches, revilings, and to have our names cast out as evil’. And he brought into a single focus the victims of the Marian persecutions of the 1550s, the ejected ministers after 1662 and the vulnerable Dissenters of the present:

Thus did the Papists treat our excellent Reformers of the Church of England. Thus did the worldly-minded and profane enemies of real Christianity, insult and abuse pious and zealous Ministers of the Gospel in the last century. And could some have their wish, we doubt not, that bonds of restraint would now be placed upon us, and that we must either be silenced or suffer.⁷⁶

A footnote directed the reader to Calamy's *Abridgment*. The lesson here was not active political opposition but a stoical acceptance of suffering in the cause of truth. But this too had its politics in its refusal to compromise the principles of liberty of conscience.

The eighteenth-century English polity was divided along religious lines, a division which was politically volatile and impossible to transcend. Eighteenth-century churchmen and dissenters threatened and reinforced each other's sense of themselves. They were incommensurable and mutually determining. And they were locked into a historical juncture in which the execution of Charles I, the brutalities of the Clarendon code, the betrayals of 1688 were still alive and present. The 'Great Rebellion' was not over as long as there were Dissenters in England. The English reformation was incomplete, as long as there were Bishops and laws which enforced religious uniformity. The Revolution of 1688 was incomplete as long as punitive sanctions against religious dissent, passed under two papist kings, remained on the statute book. Toleration was never going to be anything more than a matter of how the mutual incompatibility of religious grouping was to be conducted. Intolerance was not merely irrational. It was rooted in historical experience, collective memories, cultural identities.

¹ S.R.Gardiner, *The History of the Great Civil War, Vol.4 1647-49*, (1894), p.322

² See Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge, 2003).

³ *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Church of England...* (Oxford 1776). Numerous editions, all unpaginated, were printed throughout the eighteenth century..

⁴ *A Vindication of Liberty of Conscience; of the Toleration of Protestant Dissenters; And of the Present Happy Establishment...* (1734), p.6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7

⁶ Luke Milbourne, *The Royal Martyr Lamented, in Fourteen Sermons, Preach'd on the Thirtieth of January...* (1723), pp.13-14.

⁷ Henry Sacheverel, *Dr Sacheverell's Speech upon his Impeachment at the Bar of the House of Lords, in Westminster Hall, March 7. 1709/10. With Reflections thereupon, Paragraph by paragraph* (1710), p.33. This repeats almost verbatim the sermon for which he was impeached: Henry Sacheverel, *The Perils of False Brethren, both in church and state: set forth in a sermon preach'd before the Rt Hon the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and citizens of London...* (1709).

⁸ See for instance: John Watson, *The Apology... for his Conduct, Yearly, on the 30th of January. Together with a Sermon preach'd on that Day, in the Year 1755* (1755); 'Plebius', Letter, 26 January 1765, in [Francis Blackburne] *A Collection of Letters and Essays in Favour of Public Liberty, First Published in the Newspapers in the Year 1764-70 by an Amiable Band of Well-Wishers to the Religious and Civil Rights of Mankind* (1774), 1, p.34.

⁹ *The Convert: or, an Apology for the Conduct of a Young Gentleman, who, By attending the Sunday Evening Lectures of a celebrated Preacher, was convinced of the Errors he had imbibed in his Education, and became a Dissenter...* (1747), p.9. I cannot vouch for the authenticity of this work as personal testimony. It is published by the Dissenting printer Ralph Griffiths but it is annoyingly unspecific about names, places and dates. If a work of fiction, which I do not think it is, then its value as testimony is reduced but not annulled.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.11,12

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11

¹² *Ibid.*, p.20

¹³ Daniel Defoe, *The weakest go to the wall, or the dissenters sacrific'd by all parties: being a true state of the dissenters case, as it respects either high-church or low-church*, (1714)

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- ¹⁴ See G.M.Townend, 'Religious Radicalism and Conservatism in the whig party under George I: The Repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts', *Parliamentary History* 7 (1988), 24-44
- ¹⁵ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England. Book the Fourth*, (Oxford 1769), p. 52
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53
- ¹⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine* (May 1787), p.423
- ¹⁸ *Cursory Reflections, on the Present Intended Repeal, of the Test Act. Addressed to the Members of a Certain Meeting, Friends to the Established Church. By a Member of the Same Church* (1790), p.12-13.
- ¹⁹ John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture. Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightened' Europe* (Cambridge 2006), p.95n
- ²⁰ [John Howe] *The Case of the Protestant Dissenters, Represented and Argued* (1689), p.2.
- ²¹ On the complexity of political relations in Restoration towns and the unpredictable fate of Dissenters see for instance Paul Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic. Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650-1730*, (Cambridge 1998).
- ²² See, for instance, Donald Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger. Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740* (Cambridge 2000), pp.162-3, 169, 171.
- ²³ Calamy, *Historical Account*, 1, p.89.
- ²⁴ James Peirce, *A Vindication of the Dissenters: in Answer to Dr. William Nichol's Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England...*, 2nd ed., (1718), p.252.
- ²⁵ James Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge 1990), p.36
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.
- ²⁷ Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford 1991), p.72
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.57
- ²⁹ See for instance, Langford, *op.cit.*, p. 90
- ³⁰ [Samuel Heywood], *The Right of Protestant Dissenters to a Compleat Toleration*

Asserted; containing an Historical account of the Test Laws... By a Layman (2nd ed., 1789) p.38

³¹ Ibid., pp.31-2

³² Ibid., p.48

³³ Ibid., p.14

³⁴ Philip Furneaux, *An Essay on Toleration: with a particular View to the Late Application of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers to Parliament....* (1773), p.72

³⁵ Ibid., pp.72-3.

³⁶ Douglas Hay, 'Property, Authority and the Criminal Law', in D.Hay et.al., *Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth 1977), p.48-9.

³⁷ Joseph Cornish, *A Brief and Impartial History of the Puritans; representing their principles and sufferings, with occasional observations...*, (1772), p.79

³⁸ *An Abstract of the Proceedings of the Deputies and Committee appointed for supporting the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters...* (1796), p.ii.

³⁹ Issac Watts, *A Serious Address to the People...* (1731) in *Sermons, Discourses, and Essays: ...By the Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts, DD* (1753), Vol.III, p.68

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.68-9.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.56

⁴² Joshua Toulmin, *A letter to the Bishops, on the application of the Protestant Dissenters, to Parliament, for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts...*, (1789), pp.22, 23.

⁴³ *Extracts from books, and other small pieces; in favour of religious liberty, and the rights of Dissenters. Number I....* (2nd edition, Birmingham, 1790?), p.27

⁴⁴ Robert Hall *Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom: being an answer to a sermon, lately published by the Rev. John Clayton* (1791) p.69

⁴⁵ *An account of the life and death of Mrs. Elizabeth Bury, who died, May the 11th 1720. Aged 76. Chiefly collected out of her own diary...*, (2nd ed., Bristol, 1721) pp.148-9.

⁴⁶ Henry Sacheverel, op.cit., p.33.

⁴⁷ John Locke, 'An Essay on Toleration' in *John Locke: Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie, (Cambridge 1997), pp.156-7.

⁴⁸ Samuel Heywood, *op.cit.*, p.33

⁴⁹ Joseph Priestley, *A View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters, with respect to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of England ...*, (1769), p.43

⁵⁰ Gary de Krey, 'Radicals, reformers and republicans: academic language and political discourse in Restoration London', *A Nation Transformed. England after the Restoration*, eds A.Houston and S.Pincus (Cambridge 2000), pp.71-99.

⁵¹ [Richard Baron] *A Cordial for Low Spirits...*, Vol.3 (1763), p.v

⁵² *The North Briton*, 61, (13 August 1768), p.366

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.367

⁵⁴ Samuel Johnson, 'The False Alarm' (1770) in *Samuel Johnson, Political Writings*, ed. D.Greene (New Haven 1977), p.344

⁵⁵ 'Of the Coalition of Parties' in Hume, *Essays*, p. 500

⁵⁶ This is the theme of John Seed, *Dissenting Histories: religious division and the politics of memory in eighteenth-century England*, (forthcoming Edinburgh 2008).

⁵⁷ The key texts by Calamy are: *An Abridgment of Mr Baxter's History of his Life and Times. With an Account of many others of those Worthy Ministers who were Ejected, after the Restauration of King Charles the Second*, (1702); *An Account of the Ministers ... who were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660*, (1713); *A Letter to Archdeacon Echard, Upon Occasion of his History of England...*, (1718); *The Church and the Dissenters Compar'd, as to Persecution, In Some remarks on Dr Walker's Attempt to recover the names of the Clergy that were Sequestrated, &c, between 1640, and 1660*, (1719); *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Revd. Mr John Howe*, (1724); *A Continuation of the Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and fellows of Colleges and Schoolmasters, who were Ejected and Silenced after the Restoration in 1660...*, (1727).

⁵⁸ Calamy, *Abridgment* (1702), n.p.

⁵⁹ Calamy, *Continuation*, p.xx

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xv

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.xxxviii

⁶² Neal, Daniel, *The History of the Puritans; or, Protestant Nonconformists...* 4 Vols, (1732-1738)

⁶³ Ibid., IV, p.133

⁶⁴ 'History', from the *Philosophical Dictionary* in Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV and other selected writings*, ed. J.H.Brumfitt (New York 1966), pp.312-13.

⁶⁵ [William Enfield] *Remarks on Several late Publications relative to the Dissenters in a Letter to Dr Priestley. By a Dissenter* (1770), p.9

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.10

⁶⁷ The Quakers were particularly assiduous in keeping alive memories of their sufferings in the Restoration period. See for instance: Joseph Besse, *A collection of the sufferings of the people called Quakers, for the testimony of a good conscience, from the time of their being first distinguished by that name in the year 1650, to the time of ... the Act of Toleration, ... in the year 1689. Taken from original records and other authentick accounts, by Joseph Besse...*, (1753), 2 vols.

⁶⁸ [Samuel Palmer] *Protestant-Dissenter's Catechism...* 2nd ed., (1774).

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.45-6.

⁷⁰ Lindsey, *Letters*, p.272

⁷¹ [George Horne] *Observations on The Case of the Protestant Dissenters with Reference to the Corporation and Test Acts* (Oxford 1790), pp.8-9. See also [Samuel Horsley] *A Review of the Case of the Protestant Dissenters...* (1790), pp.22-3, 30.

⁷² *The Debate in the House of Commons on the Repeal of the Test and Coropration Acts, March 2nd, 1790, 2nd ed.*, (1790), p.44

⁷³ See Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans K.Blamey & D.Pellauer (Chicago 2004).

⁷⁴ Benjamin Flower, *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 Reformation in Church and State in Great Britain, Enforced* (1792), pp.473-4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.475.

⁷⁶ W. Kingsbury, *An Apology for Village Preachers...* (Southampton 1798), pp.49-51.