THE EMERGENCE OF GLADSTONE'S MORAL MONSTER:

SOME ASPECTS OF UNDENOMINATIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND FROM THE WORK OF JOSEPH LANCASTER TO THE PASSING OF THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1870.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by

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Abstract

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The Emergence of Gladstone's Moral Monster: Some Aspects of Undenominational Religious Education in England from the Work of Joseph Lancaster to the Passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870

In my thesis I argue that a partial solution to the religious difficulty in English education, with State involvement sufficient to pave the way for the eventual universal provision of school places, was achieved through clause 14 (2) of the 1870 Elementary Education Act (the Cowper-Temple clause) whereby a *new* species of undenominational religious instruction, primarily negative as regards content, was devised. I identify Henry Austin Bruce as the Cabinet member who secured the acceptance of this proposal over against W. E. Forster and his superior Earl de Grey and Ripon at the Committee of Council on Education. The Cowper-Temple amendment was closely connected to, but not identical with, the undenominationalism of the British and Foreign School Society with its concern for Sunday worship to complement the work of its day schools. It was Cowper-Temple's principle, rather than any other version of undenominationalism such as the positive undenominationalism of content and intention associated with the failed amendments of Sir John Pakington and Jacob Bright to the 1870 Bill, or reliance on a conscience clause alone, or a secular solution, which was decisive in reaching this partial solution of the religious difficulty in education.

I trace the origins of this undenominationalism in English religious education to the work of Joseph Lancaster, arguing that this mode of religious instruction was inspired by the theology of Bishop Francis Gastrell.

This thesis presents original work in two main ways: first, in that, whereas other writers have written on the religious difficulty in English education in the nineteenth century, in this thesis I concentrate specifically on undenominationalism; and, second, in that I have accessed a variety of hitherto largely unresearched materials, particularly from such sources as the British and Foreign School Society archives.

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I acknowledge with gratitude Liverpool Hope University's financial support for numerous research visits to archives. I recall with affection all colleagues at Liverpool Hope University who have encouraged me in this venture, especially my former colleague, Phil Grice, now Headteacher of Lytham St. Anne's Roman Catholic High School, who took on the strain of covering many of my duties and responsibilities while I enjoyed a sabbatical to work uninterrupted on this project.

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John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester, and at Burnley Central Library have always provided such a congenial atmosphere in which to study.

My family would not have occasion to read my work, but they have over many years been generous in accommodating the hours spent both at home and away on research visits in completing what is known as the '*magnum opus*'.

Abbreviations

Add MSS	Additional Manuscripts
BFSS	British and Foreign School Society
BL	British Library
BU	Brunel University
col./cols.	Column/s
CSE	Central Society of Education
ibid.	In the same place
KJV	King James Version translation of the Bible (1611)
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
LPSA	Lancashire Public Schools' Association
n. d.	No date given
n. p.	No page given
MEAS	Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society
NEL	National Education League
NEU	National Education Union
NPSA	National Public School Association
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
RLI	Royal Lancasterian Institution
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
NA: PRO	National Archives: formerly Public Record Office, Kew
UCL	University College, London

Stylistic conventions

Wherever possible, this thesis follows the conventions of the MHRA Style Guide.

Comment on quotations

In quotations there has been no attempt to alter the style of language used in contemporary sources to render it inclusive. Block letters, italics and underlining are preserved as in the original quotation. The use of square brackets [ ] designates my additional glosses to quotations. [...] denotes an ellipsis. Where double inverted commas are found in quotations, these have been changed to the single form.

Comment on footnotes to Hansard

Footnotes references to Hansard show the series number in Arabic numerals followed by the volume number in Roman numerals and, finally, column numbers. In many footnotes dates have also been included if these will aid the reader.

Comment on terminology

When primary and other sources use the phrase 'the Establishment' or 'Church of England', 'Anglican' will normally be substituted in this thesis for the sake of conciseness.

Comment on British and Foreign School Society archives

When consulted, papers within these files did not have folio numbers.

Preface

During the nineteenth century prior to 1870 there was a growing realization that the national prosperity of Great Britain required the extension of provision for basic schooling. This realization was accompanied by increasing pressure to move away from total reliance on the exclusively voluntary provision of schooling. 'Voluntary' here denotes a system whereby government, whether at local or national level, was not involved in the *direct* provision of schools. Direct provision was the responsibility of a combination of individual initiative, often on the part of local dignitaries including clergy, and of aid and encouragement from national charities.

Indirect government financial involvement in educational provision had begun in 1833 by payment of grants to two voluntary societies. These were the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, usually known simply as the National Society, and the British and Foreign School Society [hereafter BFSS], both of which then disbursed government grants to local schools. However, through the nineteenth century pressure grew for the State to intervene to fill in the gaps within the voluntary system of education instead of this exclusively voluntary principle, under which not all children could attend school. Schooling could then initially be made available to all children and eventually become compulsory. One aim of this thesis, therefore, is an attempt, within the disciplines of the history of education and of church history, to trace the move from the exclusively voluntary system of schooling to one where the intervention of central government gradually became decisive in terms of both financial commitment and administrative control. As will become clear, this is not a task which can best be done on the basis of secondary evidence alone – far from it. The numerous unpublished sources used in this thesis demonstrate just how central such material is in seeking to construct the fullest possible analysis of undenominationalism in the period covered by this thesis.

However, in the nineteenth century it is arguable that this movement towards the extension of educational opportunities for all children was impeded by the so-called 'religious difficulty' in English and Welsh education. This religious difficulty was evident in the need to secure agreement about the type of religious education which could or should be provided in

schools, or indeed whether the day school was an appropriate context for this kind of instruction. The 'religious difficulty' thus referred to the failure to agree about the *character* of any religious education, either denominational or undenominational, which would be taught in schools. The question of religion in the maintained education system of England has been a controversial issue throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Beneath the surface of this religious difficulty there is an intimate connection between religion, finance and what might today be most readily termed human rights or the rights of conscience. With regard to finance, there was a question whether it was just to levy taxes, either nationally as income tax, or locally as rates, from one individual when the monies so raised might be used to support another person's religious teaching, the content of which was anathema to some taxpayers: this was a concern to Nonconformists in particular. There was probably less resistance to the idea of monies raised through national taxation because, unlike rates, there was no hypothecation. The rights dimension meant preventing a child being exposed to, or deliberately taught, religious doctrines which were at variance with or inimical to those of the child's family.

Another strand of the thesis touches upon the struggle for religious freedom and for equality among the denominations. It might be anachronistic to speak too much in terms of human rights for there is an historiographical trap of reading too many present-day insights into judgments on the past. Nevertheless by the nineteenth century the concept of the rights of individuals had already emerged and the growth of toleration for Christian denominations other than the Church of England, including reducing and gradually eliminating their civil disabilities, runs through this thesis.

One potential solution to the religious difficulty was to provide denominational religious instruction which was distinctive of a particular denomination with a concession to toleration by means of a conscience clause. Under such a conscience clause a child would be excused attendance in school during denominational religious instruction. There was much interest in the use of a conscience clause and from the early 1840s this had been encouraged by the Government as a requirement for insertion into the trust deeds of newly-established schools. It was then the subject of some considerable debate in the early 1850s with the Church of England National Society, previously resistant to the inclusion of such a clause, changing its policy, while the High Anglican Archdeacon George Denison continued to resist stridently the imposition of a conscience clause in schools with which he was connected. But a

conscience clause alone ultimately proved insufficient to secure greater state provision of education.

A second strategy was termed the secular solution. In the nineteenth century, however, the meaning of the word secular was contested. One interpretation was to exclude religious teaching from day schools and to leave it to parents or, more feasibly, the Churches, to supply distinctive denominational teaching at other times, either in churches or on school premises after normal school hours.[1] But not all who advocated a secular solution to the religious difficulty were theological secularists such as free-thinkers or agnostics who wished to restrict the influence of Christianity. Some were committed Christian believers whose theology of education and Church-State relations convinced them that religious instruction should be provided either exclusively on church premises or, if at school, outside regular school hours. Others simply believed that the tension could only be defused and education extended if religion was not taught in schools.

A third solution was to teach religion in the day school, but to limit it to unsectarian or undenominational religious teaching. A version of this solution was eventually enshrined in a clause incorporated in the 1870 Elementary Education Act. From the early years of the nineteenth century the BFSS was undoubtedly the most well-known example of this undenominational approach to schooling. The BFSS will be treated in significant detail throughout the thesis, and my key argument, not previously articulated by previous writers, will be that the undenominationalism established through the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was not the BFSS programme, because the Bible reading associated with that organization was not *guaranteed* in the new Board schools, but was *sui generis* negative undenominationalism.[2]

Thus various types of undenominationalism may be distinguished. Joseph Lancaster, whose work will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, envisaged what I shall call mixed, but separated, undenominationalism since the day schools had rigorously to avoid distinctive

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[1] Cf. in 1763 the French educationist La Chalotais had outlined the idea of the lay secular school, from which religious teaching was to be excluded, in his *Essai d'Education nationale*. See Louis René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale: ou plan d'études pour la jeunesse* (Geneva, 1763).

[2] Negative undenominationalism is a type of undenominationalism which does not prescribe in any way the positive content of religious teaching, but only that distinctive denominational teaching reflected in printed catechisms or formularies must be avoided. See below chapters 9, 10 and 11 passim for detailed analysis of how this type of undenominationalism emerged in 1870 and Appendix I for a summary of the main types of undenominationalism explored in this thesis.

denominational teaching, but on Sundays children were required to attend a chosen place of worship to receive distinctive denominational teaching. 'Mixed' indicates that the undenominationalism was supplemented by other teaching which was compulsory and not restricted to undenominational material. The term 'separated' denotes the physical separation between the weekday classes in school and the teaching in churches on Sundays.

There were some experiments in the nineteenth century of combining undenominationalism in the schools during normal teaching with after-hours instruction in the same location, where church officials could teach their distinctive denominational doctrines. Some unsuccessful nineteenth century education Bills for national education in England envisaged a mixed system along these lines. But there were also successful examples of putting this model of undenominationalism into practice. They included the Irish system established by Lord Stanley in 1831, which worked well for a number of years despite the objections of Anglican clergy in England. Inspired by that, the Corporation schools in Liverpool followed a similar pattern from 1836 until a Tory victory in local elections in 1842 snuffed it out. These initiatives, however, had fallen into abeyance well before the successful passage of the 1870 education Bill for England and Wales. I classify this option as mixed unseparated undenominationalism, because there was no separation into different buildings for the denominational teaching.[3]

But a further distinction within the overall concept of undenominationalism must now be made to accommodate the situation which arose in 1870. This concerns the content of the teaching. Undenominationalism could hitherto have been described as positive in the sense that there was an indication of the content to be taught in the undenominational teaching. This was true, preeminently, of the BFSS system by its use of the Bible. But three points about the legislation in 1870 paint a rather different picture to the scheme outlined so far. First, the 1870 legislation on religious instruction was permissive undenominationalism because the School Boards set up under the Act were not required to include religious instruction in the curriculum. Second, it was permissive unmixed undenominationalism because there could be no relation between a School Board school and a church or Sunday school and no permission for a clergyman to enter the school to teach distinctive denominational doctrines. But, third, unlike examples of undenominational schemes earlier in the century, the prescription in the

[3] The arrangements for religious education in post-1944 Voluntary Controlled schools were similar to this, although the distinctive denominational teaching was part of the school day.

1870 Act made no mention of what the content of teaching should be, only that the religious teaching, if any, in a School Board school should not use any distinctive denominational material. This was a negative definition. I shall therefore call this pattern permissive unmixed negative undenominationalism. Thus, I argue, the 1870 legislation provided for a *sui generis* model of undenominationalism.[4]

The core of this thesis is therefore to examine the movement towards legislation on the religious difficulty in English education. The thesis will be devoted to education in what would now be called the primary – formerly elementary – phase of schooling. The secondary sector, apart from a few passing comparisons, is outside the scope of this work. The study will draw upon the role of the Government and its agencies, pressure groups and the Churches. I shall touch upon the successive attempts to solve this religious difficulty during the nineteenth century, culminating in the pivotal Elementary Education Act of 1870. The greater part of the thesis will be devoted to two periods: first, to the early years of the nineteenth century when the unsectarian system became established in the BFSS; and, second, the period from 1869 to 1870 because of the extensive debates leading to the incorporation of undenominationalism in the new national system of schooling in England. The intervening period will be more lightly treated, partly for reasons of space and also because much of the discussion did not lead to any clear progress on the religious difficulty.

Thus the thesis culminates with an analysis of the inclusion of clause 14 (2) of the Act, known as the Cowper-Temple clause after the MP who introduced the amendment during the committee stage of the Bill in May 1870.[5] The text of the Cowper-Temple amendment reads as follows: 'No religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school'.[6] The schools referred to in this clause were the Board schools, so called, to be established, if there were a need for school places additional to those provided by voluntary bodies, by locally elected School Boards. The

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[4] See below in this chapter the section on previous work on this topic to highlight the distinctiveness of my contribution.

[5] William Francis Cowper-Temple, M.P. for South Hampshire at the time of the passing of the 1870 Act. See below chapter 9 for a detailed discussion of his role in the question of the religious difficulty during the debates on the 1870 Bill. For full details of the life of Cowper-Temple and his wife, Georgina, readers may now refer to the recent monograph by James Gregory, *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists. The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010). The element 'Temple' is from Palmerston's family name: Henry John Temple. He will be called Cowper-Temple consistently throughout the text because of the familiarity with that name from the eponymous clause, even though he was formerly known as Cowper and he became Baron Mount-Temple in 1880.

[6] The Act is cited as 33 and 34 Vic. c. 75. Elementary Education Act.

Boards were to be potential new creations after the successful passage of the Elementary Education Bill of 1870.

A word should be said at this point about the main title of the thesis and the phrase Gladstone's Moral Monster. The Cowper-Temple amendment was successfully incorporated in the Bill because it was believed that, without this compromise, the entire Bill and all that it represented in terms of educational progress was at risk. Gladstone was later reported as vehemently condemning the compromise enshrined in the Cowper-Temple amendment, although at the time of the debates on the Bill it was not apparent that the clause would be interpreted by the future school boards in a more rigorous way than was intended by the wording of the 1870 Act itself.

The Cowper-Temple clause provided at a *local* level (that is, within the new school Boards) for the permissive compulsion within the school curriculum of undenominational religious instruction: that is, central government allowed the new local School Boards to make the teaching of one type of undenominational religious instruction compulsory, but Boards were not required to include the subject.

The struggle over the so-called religious question in English education in the nineteenth century makes no sense unless it is recognized that individual citizens have rights. Thus the Cowper-Temple issue of state-sponsored undenominational religious education may be interpreted, for Nonconformists, as defending the integrity of the ecclesiastical commitment of the family unit as against the claims of the national church.[7]

Thus a distinction can be made between a concept of a religious education which is distinctive of a particular denomination and one which is not distinctive but rather undenominational. In the first half of the nineteenth century the terms 'comprehensive' or 'combined' were also used to denote a school which catered for children from different denominations who might together be taught a kind of 'common' Christianity. In the 1830s,

[7] The terms 'unsectarian/ism' and 'undenominational/ism' may be regarded as synonymous. In the earlier period covered by the thesis, unsectarian was the usual word employed to convey the idea of religious teaching which was not distinctive of any particular denomination. 'Unsectarian' was more frequently used in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, particularly in the work of Joseph Lancaster. On Lancaster see further in chapters 2 and 3.Towards the close of the timeframe of the thesis, undenominational becomes more frequent and will be used instead.

for example, Thomas Arnold, the educationist and Head Master of Rugby School, envisaged as part of his plans for the reform of the Church of England a Church sufficiently comprehensive to take Dissenters into its fold. Such a conception of the Church was mirrored in the education system by those schools who sought to establish a school system embracing undenominationalism. Ironically these early nineteenth century attempts to bridge the religious difficulty appear to have fallen into disuse by the time of the successful passage of the education Bill in 1870.

In the case of the Church of England, for example, *denominational* instruction could be seen in worship through the use of the 1662 Prayer Book and also in the classroom instruction of Christian doctrine exemplified in the use of the catechism. By contrast *undenominational* religious instruction might be characterised by the predominant use of the Bible and also the teaching of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. These might include the doctrine of the Atonement, notwithstanding the fact that, from a strictly theological view, there was dispute about how that doctrine might be understood.

I shall trace the pattern of discussion around these types of undenominationalism from the first decade of the nineteenth century until the passing of the Act of 1870. But tracing the lines of discussion in the nineteenth century is complicated by the fact that denominations were not always consistent *qua* denominations in their attitudes to the question of religion and education. It is often remarked that the BFSS's policy of undenominationalism was associated with the Dissenters or Nonconformists in particular.[8] However supporters of the BFSS who were also members of the Anglican Church can be readily identified. As for diversity among the Nonconformists, in the first half of the nineteenth century the Wesleyan Methodists were much more inclined to establish, with state support, schools with their own denominational type of education. Congregationalists, by contrast, were often associated in the first half of the nineteenth century with Voluntaryism – that is the *refusal* to accept State financial support for their schools.

[8] In the earlier part of the period covered by this thesis the term 'Dissenters' is the most common designation in the literature, but by 1870 'Nonconformists' became the more usual term. Some writers misleadingly describe the BFSS as a Dissenting or Nonconformist organization. See, for example, Patrick Jackson, *Education Act Forster* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 136.

The suggestion is often made (including in pronouncements by public figures at the time of the passing of the 1870 Act) that the Cowper-Temple amendment was simply absorbing the undenominational policy of the BFSS into a new 'state' system of education. I shall argue that, on the contrary, the 'British' system of schools, notwithstanding a weekday programme of undenominational religious education, involved a specifically denominational element by requiring a commitment to attendance at a place of worship on Sundays. Gladstone's Liberal administration, in passing the Act of 1870, precluded such an overall understanding of the character of religious education in the new Board schools. This was a result of their proviso in the legislation that it should not be a condition of attending a Board school that a pupil attend or abstain from attending a place of worship on Sunday.[9] The settlement of 1870 thus broke the intimate nexus between Sunday worship and weekday religious education in the BFSS system and in that sense made the Cowper-Temple amendment a new form of *Undenominationalism*. Notwithstanding this, after 1870 many British schools did not consider it worth their while to retain their own separate schools but decided to transfer them to the control of the new School Boards set up as a result of the 1870 Act.

I shall argue that the Cowper-Temple clause has been frequently misrepresented by many commentators, both when the legislation was first passed and thereafter. I shall show that this is connected with confusion between the roles and powers of *local* as opposed to *central* government. The clause did not *per se* establish a national system of undenominational religious instruction in England and Wales. Even the BFSS vacillated between acknowledging that the Bill did not reflect the system of the Society and claiming, when the Act was passed, that the British undenominational system of religious education had been adopted.[10]

There must be an examination of why an education Bill in 1870 ultimately succeeded when there had been a recent unsuccessful attempt in 1868 to establish a national system of schooling and other abortive Bills in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. For the 1870 Bill itself I shall describe the background of Cowper-Temple as the sponsor of the successful amendment introduced into the Bill. I shall trace the ebb and flow of debate and the reluctant

[9] Elementary Education Act, 1870, section 7 (1), of which the relevant part reads: 'it shall not be required, as a condition of any child being admitted into or continuing in the school, that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday school, or place of religious worship, or that he shall attend any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects in the school or elsewhere.'

[10] See Henry Bryan Binns, *A Century of education: being the centenary history of the British and Foreign School Society 1808 -1908* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1908). Contrast pp. 183-84 with p. 187.

'conversion' of Gladstone to accepting the provision of a type of undenominational religious instruction in the new Board schools. This was achieved notwithstanding Gladstone's own past theological outlook and his later description of undenominationalism as a 'moral monster'.[11] In particular I shall examine how and why it was that Cowper-Temple's species of undenominationalism rather than Jacob Bright's alternative amendment was successfully included in the Bill of 1870. Bright's amendment, as was the case with Cowper-Temple's proposal, was equally concerned with securing educational advance by providing an undenominational solution to the religious difficulty. But Bright's proposed amendment was more far-reaching in seeking to forbid denominationalism through proselytisation: that is, there must be no attempt through the teaching of religious instruction in Board schools to attach children to, or detach them from, any particular denomination. This could be characterized as an undenominationalism of *aims* and *content* as opposed to Cowper-Temple's undenominationalism of *content* alone.

I shall conclude the thesis with the passing of the Elementary Education Act in 1870 since the analysis of how the Cowper-Temple clause was subsequently interpreted in practice by individual School Boards is a separate study. Many Boards, led by the influential London School Board, did, in fact, introduce their own bylaws, reflecting the thrust of Jacob Bright's amendment, to augment the Cowper-Temple principle.

Although the focal point of this thesis is the 1870 Elementary Education Act, the Act was not a final and uncontested solution to the religious difficulty, even to the issues facing the nation at that stage. In some ways it was an interim measure. Certainly changing circumstances, perhaps not envisaged by those who framed and debated the 1870 legislation, make it plain that the religious difficulty would if anything become more acrimonious and challenging, certainly in 1902 and to a somewhat lesser degree in 1944. There is still a religious difficulty in education. It is far from a spent force. Indeed contemporary reflection on the relationship between schools as institutions and the demands of parents regarding their children reveals some continuity with the concerns of the nineteenth century. It is, however, the historical elucidation of this topic with which I shall be concerned.

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[11] Gladstone to Rev. Septimus Buss, 13 September 1894, cited in *Correspondence on church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ed. by D. C. Lathbury, II (London: J. Murray, 1910), p. 148.

For non-faith schools the principle of undenominational Christianity remains on the statute book in the present-day provision for religious education, although in a modified form since the Education Reform Act of 1988. 'Teaching about' distinctive denominational Christianity is now permitted, reflecting a modern understanding that to 'teach about' is not to initiate school pupils into accepting any particular belief. Schools linked to particular Christian denominations have, of course, always been able to teach their own distinctive doctrines and practice.

Previous work on the topic and what is new about this study

Previous standard treatments of the religious difficulty in the nineteenth century do not concentrate on the specific theme of undenominationalism and therefore there is excellent scope for this new study. There are three general monographs on the religious difficulty in the nineteenth century. First, there is Marjorie Cruickshank's *Church and State in English Education 1870 to the present day*, but this is avowedly a study of the dual system from its origins with the Elementary Education Act of 1870 to the middle of the twentieth century.[12] Therefore the period *before* 1870 is only cursorily examined as a necessary backdrop to the author's main concern.

Second, some analysis of the religious difficulty is available in a 1971 survey study by Murphy, but much of the content of this thesis will be along different lines from his work.[13] Murphy's treatment covers both nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in a much more general fashion than this thesis. In any case the book is designed as part of a series of undergraduate textbook introductions to themes in the history of education. Such a comment is not, of course, to be interpreted as any kind of slur on Murphy's scholarship, but only to place his work in its proper genre. Murphy has also written a very detailed scholarly analysis within the area represented by my thesis, *The Religious Problem in English Education. The Crucial Experiment.*[14] This, however, concentrates on a local study of the religious difficulty in Liverpool in the 1830s.

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[12] Marjorie Cruickshank, *Church and State in English Education. 1870 to the Present Day* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1963).
[13] James Murphy, *Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800 – 1970* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul 1971).
[14] James Murphy, *The Religious Problem in English Education. The Crucial Experiment* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1959).

Third, Murphy has also written a further work related to the theme of this thesis: a study of the 1870 Act itself, but this does not have the kind of detailed foundations of the earlier period as set out in this thesis.[15] In both of his general studies of the religious difficulty in the period covered by this thesis, Murphy refers only to printed material. By contrast, the analyses provided in some sections of this thesis such as the controversy between Francis Place, the West London British Association and the central BFSS body, the Unitarian controversy, and the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society and, crucially, the background to the debates on the 1870 Bill are constructed exclusively from unpublished archival sources.

I have already indicated the importance in the growth of undenominationalism of the British and Foreign School Society. A general history of the BFSS was written by Binns covering the period up until 1908.[16] Naturally this covers the themes of undenominationalism but mainly in relation to the life and work of the Society itself. Moreover, although Binns must have had access to BFSS archival material which was later destroyed in the London Blitz during the Second World War, he appears to have made little use of such papers. In general Binns's treatment of the religious issue in the history of the BFSS was remarkably thin. My aim, by contrast, is to set the theme of undenominational religious instruction in the broader context of the struggle to improve the provision of educational opportunity in England.

Two additional relatively recent monographs which intersect with this topic are, first, John T. Smith's *Methodism and Education 1849-1902. J. H. Rigg, Romanism and Wesleyan Schools*, which examines the role of one branch of Nonconformity during the period covered by this thesis[17] and, second, the same writer's *A Victorian Class Conflict?' Schoolteaching and the Parson, Priest and Minister, 1837-1902.*[18]

Three more general monographs which provide valuable material intersecting with parts of this thesis should be mentioned. First, Jonathan Parry's study of Gladstone and the Liberal

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[15] James Murphy, *The Education Act 1870. Text and Commentary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972).
[16] Henry Bryan Binns, *A Century of education: being the centenary history of the British and Foreign School Society 1808 -1908* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1908).
[17] John T. Smith, *Methodism and Education 1849-1902. J. H. Rigg, Romanism and Wesleyan Schools* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
[18] John T. Smith, *'A Victorian Class Conflict?' Schoolteaching and the Parson, Priest and Minister, 1837-1902* (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2009).

Party in the period of his first administration refers briefly to the progress and outcome of the 1870 Bill debates, but demonstrates detailed archival research in the period covered by chapters 8 to 10 of this thesis.[19] Second, Patrick Jackson's biography of W. E. Forster, a modern successor to Wemyss Reid's 1888 biography, devotes three chapters to the progress of the 1870 Elementary Education Bill.[20] This is one of the most detailed analyses of the progress of the Bill, based on meticulous examination of the archival sources.[21] However, the treatment in both these monographs is not specifically designed to focus either on Cowper-Temple or on the concept of undenominationalism. In neither of these two monographs is the origin of the Cowper-temple clause discussed or the Melville Papers analysed. Third, James Gregory's *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists. The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England* does valuable service by painting a picture of the wider cultural and social milieu in which Cowper-Temple and his wife moved.[22] This gives detailed biographical background to one of the central politicians treated in this thesis, but discussion of Cowper-Temple's political activity is brief in relation to the book as a whole and, although he does cite the Melville Papers, he does not evaluate this material critically.

Some valuable material is also to be found in a small number of doctoral or other advanced dissertations. So the early period of the origins of Lancaster and the BFSS is covered by the doctoral theses of Wall[23] and McGarry.[24] Both are valuable, but do not continue the analysis to the pivotal Act of 1870. Neither does Wall explore the possible antecedents to Lancaster, either in Britain or abroad, although there is an admittedly narrow time focus for his dissertation; there is, however, awareness of general movements in church and society prior to the time of Lancaster. Wall's chapter on the origins of undenominational religious instruction is in many ways very good, but Freame's catechism, used by Lancaster as a

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[19] J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[20] Patrick Jackson, *Education Act Forster: a political biography of W.E. Forster (1818-1886)* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997).

[21] In an otherwise excellent monograph Jackson errs by describing the BFSS as promoting Nonconformist schools. He also gives 1844 as the date of the abortive Graham Factory Education Bill instead of 1843. 1844 was the year in which Graham succeeded in putting through his Bill without the controversial clauses on education.

[22] James Gregory, *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists. The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010).

[23] Edward Flavin Wall Jr., 'Joseph Lancaster and the Origins of the British and Foreign School Society' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1966).

[24] Kevin J. McGarry, 'Joseph Lancaster and the British and Foreign School Society: the evolution of an educational organization from 1798 to 1846' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1985).

practical support for the unsectarian policy, is not analysed or even mentioned here.[25] Freame's work is, however, mentioned in two earlier places in the dissertation in reference to the activity of the printing press at Borough Road, which produced multiple copies of the catechism for the new schools. But apart from one reference to omitted doctrines such as sacramental teaching and the nature of the Church and its hierarchy, the chapter gives little positive clarification about what undenominationalism consisted in, though it fairly makes the point that what for one person is inessential, for another is part of the very heart of the Christian faith.[26] All who research the debates leading to the 1870 Act are indebted to the precise detail of David Roland's thesis.[27] Roland's thesis title is, perhaps, somewhat misleading in specifying 1870-1873 given that it is almost entirely devoted to the preparation for and debates on the bill in 1870 itself; it is rather thin on the subsequent narrative to 1873.

However, this must be the most detailed account of the progress of the many and varied aspects of the 1870 Bill itself, and it is based fundamentally on archival sources, as well, of course, as Hansard.

Recent scholarship also includes articles on the role of religious education and finance (crucial, as will be seen, in the theme of this thesis), explored by Denise Cush[28] and by Robert Jackson,[29] and his 2001 editorial in the same journal 'Faith-based Schools and Religious Education within the State System in England and Wales'.[30] The Oxford Review of Education also devoted a special number of the journal to *The State, Schools and Religion.*[31] There is also a recent monograph edited by Marie Parker Jenkins and others entitled *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion and Public Funding.*[32] It is, however, with the historical elucidation of this topic with which I shall be concerned.

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[25] See below chapter 2.
[26] Wall, p. 331.
[27] David Roland, 'The Struggle for the Elementary Education Act of 1870 and Its Implementation, 1870-1873' (unpublished B. Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1958).
[28] Denise Cush, 'Should the State fund schools with a religious character?', *Resource*, 25, 2 (Spring 2003), 10-15.
[29] Robert Jackson, 'Should the State Fund Faith Based Schools? A Review of the Arguments', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 25, 2 (2003), 89-102.
[30] *British Journal of Religious Education*, 24, 1 (2001), 2-6.
[31] *Oxford Review of Education*, 27, 4 (December 2001).
[32] Marie Parker-Jenkins, D. Hartas, & B. Irving, *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion & Public Funding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

Thus there is neither a single full-length treatment of this theme in particular, nor an exposition of my own interpretation of undenominationalism. In sum, the main original features of this study are, first, the extensive use of hitherto largely unresearched archival sources relating directly to the subject of the thesis and, second, a concentration on the concept of undenominationalism and an attempt to show the unique character of the Cowper-Temple amendment as one type of undenominational teaching. This detailed study and singularity of focus, it is here argued, adds significantly to existing literature in the field and indeed fills a substantial gap in it. It should be useful to readers who seek a broad understanding of the way in which religion in education has developed in the school curriculum over the last two hundred years. The extent of this use and the nature and range of the materials concerned will emerge in the remainder of this study.

Before proceeding further with the thesis, it is necessary to draw attention to the work of those writers who have questioned the significance of the religious difficulty in general or the Cowper-Temple clause in particular. I shall draw attention to two writers.

Norman Morris has sought to downplay the significance of the Cowper-Temple clause in the 1870 Act and argued that '[religious issues] were not *prime* issues. Religious questions only arose as a result of a prior decision to establish local authorities for education, with rating powers.'[33] But a religious difficulty in education goes back as far as Lancaster and the problem was rooted not merely in theology in isolation, but was also interwoven with issues of control, power and influence.

The other relevant writer in this connection is Frances Knight, whose work on the fluidity of denominational affiliation in the nineteenth century provides a different perspective on denominational rivalry. The so-called religious difficulty was based on the supposition that tensions between the competing denominations prevented progress in providing education for the children from the poorer classes. This section, drawing on Knight, puts those inter-denominational issues into a broader context by examining the question of denominational allegiance in the nineteenth century. There are three parts to this section. The primary emphasis is on the second and third parts where the question of denominationalism in relation to education is examined. However, this is prefaced by an initial part which seeks to point out

[33] Morris, Norman, '1870: the Rating Option' in *History of Education*, ed. by Malcolm Seaborne, I (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), p. 24. Morris is, however, a useful source on the financial dimension of the 1870 Act.

the dangers of perceiving denominational loyalties as being fixed characteristics of English church life in the nineteenth century.

Knight has cautioned that one must be wary of projecting the clear denominational boundaries of the later nineteenth century on to the earlier part of the century.[34] While the seeds of this process of demarcation were apparent in the early part of the century, the evidence is that in the early years of this period denominational allegiance among the laity was more fluid.

The emphasis in Knight's work is concentrated especially on the blurring of allegiances between the Church of England and Methodism. It is a refinement of this discussion to examine to what extent similar blurring occurred between Old Dissent such as Independents or Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists and the Church of England, but it is not possible to comment on this in any detail here. Knight's investigation draws on Alan Gilbert's notion that in urban areas where, for example, the number of Congregationalists and Baptists was greater than Methodists, there would be a sharper demarcation between nonconformity and the Church of England because these traditions would represent two distinct belief and social systems.[35] Some writers such as Henry Pelling have argued that this overlap of attending both Anglican and Nonconformist places of worship is to be explained by the indifference of some lay people in religious questions.[36] Knight argues that the explanation lies rather in a deep commitment to attending both denominations. Admittedly there is evidence of awareness of clear doctrinal distinction between some members of the Church of England who adopted a Calvinist theology and Methodists with their Arminianism. But while there was antagonism between the Church of England and Methodist clergy in the controversy over the 1843 Factory Bill against a background of the growth of Tractarianism in the Church of England, this was not necessarily matched at the level of the local community.

The apparent blurring of denominational allegiance between Methodists and Anglicans in particular can be linked to the continuing legacy from the eighteenth century pattern of John

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[34] Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See especially pp. 24-36.

[35] See A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976).

[36] Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1968) cited Knight, p. 30.

Wesley's ideal of attending the Church of England parish service in the morning and the Methodist society later in the day. As late as the Religious Census of 1851 Methodists continued to worship in Anglican churches.[37] Also well into the nineteenth century many Nonconformists presented themselves for rites such as confirmation in the Church of England, possibly believing that there was a greater efficacy in these rites if they were administered by a member of the Anglican clergy. All this caused some Anglican clergy a degree of agonizing over the attitude they should adopt towards those from a Nonconformist background.[38]

Indeed Knight's judgement is that one cannot in some cases decisively define some individuals as Anglican until the end of the nineteenth century.[39] So for the period covered by this thesis the situation is to some degree fluid. But the context of Knight's work here is significant: she is referring to lay religion. Further she stresses that this fluidity of denominational allegiance may be more a feature of rural life rather than of urban. Over the course of the nineteenth century denominational boundaries tended to become more pronounced as an increasing proportion of the population moved to urban areas. From the 1830s there was also some hardening of denominational divisions with the increase in the numbers of resident Anglican incumbents as part of the movement for reform in the Church of England. For clergy, however, there was much greater awareness of the distinction between denominations. They might be led to try and define who were members of their church as they were required to respond to the bureaucratic demands of filling in returns to their clerical superiors.

Notwithstanding Knight's work on the fluidity of denominational boundaries, denominational rivalry was a fact of life in English society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The religious difficulty worked at a local as well as national level and it went back to the very beginnings of the Lancasterian project as witnessed by the fact that at least 42 towns and villages wrote to Lancaster about this.[40]

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[37] Knight, p. 28, n. 23.
[38] Knight, p. 27.
[39] Knight, p. 24.
[40] Calculation by Wall, p. 133, based on Lancaster papers in the USA. See p. 134 for examples.

Caveat on Roman Catholicism and unsectarianism

Much of the content of this thesis will be devoted to debates involving Anglicans and Nonconformist denominations. The Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, will feature much less in this analysis. However, it is essential to note in passing the denominational breadth of Lancaster's original unsectarian vision. Perhaps for this reason he chose not to adopt as a textbook J. G. Burckhardt's 1797 publication *A System of Divinity*, whose attempt to outline a system of unsectarian Christianity would not have been acceptable to Lancaster on account of its anti-Catholicism.

The English Roman Catholic Vicars Apostolic and priests were in general unwilling to accept the *religious* dimension of the Lancasterian system, although they acknowledged the benefits of Catholic children learning to read in RLI/BFSS schools. It is important to note that they set out their reasons for rejecting the undenominationalism of the BFSS, but that the BFSS over many years completely failed to engage with the Roman Catholic position. The fact that by the 1840s the BFSS version of unsectarianism had in practice come to represent orthodox Protestant Dissent does not negate the original Lancasterian vision of an unsectarianism which sought to include Roman Catholic children.

While individual Catholics were involved to various degrees in debates about the desirability, or otherwise, of undenominational religious education and the political manoeuvres in the development of what became the Elementary Education Act of 1870, the institutional Roman Catholic Church has always seen its educational mission as one of providing denominational religious education: a place in a Catholic school for every baptised Catholic child.

Against that background it would not be appropriate, not would it be possible, to do justice to the complexities involved in the space available. It is not feasible for me to cover the role of individual Catholics and the Catholic Church in any detail. For those who are interested in the development of Catholic education during this period, the collection of essays entitled 'The English Catholics 1850-1950' would be a useful starting point.[41]

[41] *The English Catholics, 1850-1950: essays to commemorate the centenary of the restoration of the Hierarchy of England and Wales*, ed. by G. A. Beck (Glasgow: Burns, 1950).

Chapter 1

The pre-nineteenth century background

Introduction

In this chapter I shall consider the historical background to the problem of unsectarian religious education in the nineteenth century. There will be two main aspects to this treatment. First, Church-State relations from the period of the English Reformation will be very briefly described as they bear upon the attitudes of the emerging English denominations to one another. This section will also include some brief reference to currents of theological thought during this period. This sketch is provided in order to show the backdrop to Lancaster's educational programme and to appreciate more fully the attitudes of those who opposed him. Second, I shall consider the pre-nineteenth century background in the provision of education including possible precursors of the unsectarian religious teaching pioneered by Joseph Lancaster in the nineteenth century. The detailed programme of Joseph Lancaster will be examined in chapter 2. But a particularly important feature of this strand as discussed in this chapter will be a new suggestion about the inspiration for Lancaster's unsectarian approach to religious instruction, namely that the motive was theological, rather than economic. Specifically, I shall argue that the theological inspiration for this approach lay in the writings of the early eighteenth century theologian and bishop, Francis Gastrell.

The State and the Church

One of the key strands of this thesis is the control of education and in particular the involvement of the State in providing education and the relationship of the State to the Church. From medieval times English education had been controlled by the Church, although elements of what might now be termed State intervention in education can be traced back as

far as the reign of King Alfred (*c.* 849-99).[42] In practice the Church exercised control through the licensing of teachers. This arrangement presented no difficulties while the English Church was undivided. Neither did the English Reformation, which separated the English Church from control by Rome, initially affect the provision of education.

Problems did, however, arise when the English Church spawned different denominations. The origins of these denominations can be traced to the last half of the seventeenth century although the term 'denomination' itself dates from the eighteenth century.[43] Thus by the late seventeenth century the Church of England could no longer in practice be regarded as the church for all English people. Hence Bishop Ken could bow low over the bed of the dying Charles II in 1685 and ask him if he were a member of the Church of England.

To appreciate the relationship between religion and education in England in the post-Reformation period and the subsequent associated problems it is necessary to recall the work of one of the greatest Anglican theologians since the split with Rome, Richard Hooker (1554-1600). As the Church in England sought to identify its distinctive character over against both the Church of Rome and the continental Reformers, Hooker presented the national state and the national church as coterminous. But this understanding of what was known as a comprehensive Church made sense only in the context of Hooker's own time and could not be maintained in the changing conditions of the following centuries.[44] Long before the nineteenth century, which is the major period covered by this thesis, it was no longer possible to hold to the position adopted by Hooker, despite the later rearguard actions of some High Churchmen in the Victorian era.

In fact the Elizabethan ideal of a comprehensive national church set out by Hooker was undermined as early as the middle of the seventeenth century because of the Puritans, who were ambivalent about the idea of a national church.[45] But although Puritanism was politically defeated at the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the dream espoused by those

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[42] J. E. G. de Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education: a short history from the earliest times down to 1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), p. 5.
[43] David L. Edwards, *Christian England*, II, *From the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Fount paperbacks, 1989), p. 427.
[44] Kenneth Hylson Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England. From the Sixteenth Century to the late Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 15-17. 'Comprehensive' may be considered a technical term in the context, meaning a church which included within itself different theological tendencies.
[45] Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), I, p. 15.

such as Henry Jacob[46] of holding together a gathered church[47] with the established Church of England was also destroyed.[48] In that way English Christianity now came to consist of competing groups and the question therefore arose of how those who did not accept the ecclesiology of the established Church would be treated by the State.

Notwithstanding the desire for toleration for those who departed from the mainstream of the Church in England reflected by Charles II in the Declaration of Breda in 1660, the hopes for his reign were almost immediately overshadowed by legislation hostile to all those who refused to conform to the national church. Under the Clarendon Code, the Corporation Act of 1661 required all members of municipal corporations to renounce rebellion against the king and to have received the sacrament of the Church of England within the year before they took up their office. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 required that all clergy, and also schoolmasters and even private tutors, gave assent to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. To this end a bishop's licence was required to teach in a school. In January 1664 the First Conventicle Act laid down that meetings for worship of more than five people which were not according to the Book of Common Prayer were banned. The Five Mile Act in 1665 banned Dissenting clergy from coming within five miles of a town where they had previously ministered. The sum of this legislation meant the abandonment of the ideal of a 'comprehensive' church.

Those who refused to accept these legal requirements emerged from the Puritan tradition and became known as Dissenting Christians, regarding the Reformation as incomplete.[49] But possibly the most difficult challenge for these Dissenters was that they were regarded as traitors for failing to swear allegiance to the King. While Charles II desired a comprehensive church, the Restoration Church of England emphasized what divided it from Dissenters. However the attempt at a Laudian-inspired revival in the Church of England was compromised by the secret commitment of Charles to the Roman Catholic Church and the open affiliation of his brother and successor as James II.[50]

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[46] (1562/3-1624), semi-separatist minister, who, while being critical of the established Church of England, nevertheless remained within it until very near the end of his life; also emphasized the need for members of a church to covenant together for the sake of their salvation.

[47] A view of the Church which emphasizes membership as limited to those who have freely chosen Christian commitment, as opposed to a territorial view, which sees all resident in an area as members of the Church.

[48] Watts, I, p. 217.

[49] See Hylson Smith, p. 4.

[50] Hylson Smith, pp. 42-43. Charles and James held a secret meeting on 29 January 1669 with Lord Arundel of Wardour, an adherent of the Roman Catholic faith, to declare their acceptance of the Roman faith and Charles

Alongside these legal strictures there were also recurrent attempts to effect a degree of reconciliation between the different denominations. After 1660 some moderate Dissenters had hoped that the Church of England could be so ordered that they would feel able in conscience to take their place within that body. But attempts in 1666-67, 1680 and 1689 to comprehend Dissenters within a single Church of England all failed.[51] There was also an attempt in 1668, led by Sir Orlando Bridgman, to bring some of these Dissenters into the Church of England. The Commons, however, failed to be persuaded. The ambiguity of Charles's own religious allegiance may have been paralleled by his desire to mitigate some of the penalties which were laid on Dissenters at this time. But although Parliament had not accepted his first declaration of indulgence in 1662, he was able to succeed, temporarily, with a second declaration ten years later. This indulgence provided for Protestant Dissenters to meet for worship if the location were licensed. Many Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists did apply for licences, but all Quakers declined to do so.

This brief moment of respite was, however, followed by the restriction of the Test Act of 1673 whereby all holders of offices under the Crown were required to take Holy Communion according to the practice of the Church of England. In this way Charles II moved away from toleration favouring Dissenters, and this policy lasted until the end of his reign in 1685.

Under the new King James II the worst of the persecution of Dissenters which had marked the later half of Charles's reign came to an end. In 1687 James, who wanted freedom for his own Roman Catholic faith, announced a declaration of indulgence for Dissenters. This suspended the penal statutes and the Test Act, but failed in its political objective of winning over support for James's cause and he was forced to escape from England. Prince William of Orange, who succeeded him as William III, was known to be agreeable to granting religious liberty. A Toleration Bill was therefore introduced in the intermission between James's flight in December 1688 and the agreement to make William king in February 1689. At the Restoration in 1660 the Church of England had faced a choice between Comprehension and Toleration. Again at the time of the overthrow of James II, known as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a comprehension Bill was also planned in 1689. This plan would have left only

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was reconciled with the Roman Church on his death-bed: there had even been talk of his accepting the Roman faith as part of a secret diplomatic deal with France in 1670.

[51] Watts, I, p. 219.

Quakers and Baptists outside the national church.[52] However the Convocations of the Church of England rejected this plan. Instead of toleration being applicable only to the most extreme Dissenters it was now perforce applied to all Dissenters without distinction.

The accession of William III secured for the immediate future a Protestant monarchy and also appeared to bode well for the success of a more 'comprehensive' Church of England. Specifically there was the expectation that Presbyterians could be accommodated within the national Church. But the Revolution of 1688 and the Toleration Act of 1689 in fact changed the legal position of the Church of England from uniformity to plurality. The significance may be explained as follows: a unitary state has the common experience and shared beliefs which allow the State itself to adopt a distinctive religious or philosophical stance. It may take the liberty of presuming to speak on behalf of all its members and can fairly expect uniformity in religious practice. In a pluralist State, by contrast, the very concept of a denomination bespeaks a kind of pluralism.[53] On the European continent the arrangement of *cuius regio, eius religio* dating from the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 had meant that there was religious pluralism *between* areas rather than *within* them. However, the growth of a stress on the free choice of the individual and the sovereignty of the individual conscience led to pluralism within a single State, as happened in England.

The attempt to shape a comprehensive church in a unitary State having failed,[54] denominational plurality prevailed. This came as something of a shock to the Church of England,[55] yet it still retained a special privileged status. William III had wished toleration to be more wide-ranging than Parliament would accept. So Dissenters still could not hold certain offices, and the Corporation and Test Acts both remained in force until 1828. Catholic Emancipation was achieved the following year. Thus in 1689 the opposition of High Churchmen to comprehension within the Church of England led to the decision to adopt a species of toleration.

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[52] Attempts to fashion a more comprehensive Church of England returned from time to time. Thomas Arnold outlined his vision of such a Church in his *Principles of Church Reform* (London: SPCK, 1962) [original edition: 1835], but to no avail.

[53] John Briggs, 'From Christendom to Pluralism', in *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics*, ed. by David F. Wright (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 61.

[54] See Mark Goldie, 'John Locke, Jonas Proast and religious toleration 1688-1692' in *The Church of England c. 1689- c. 1833. From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. by John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 156-58.

[55] Cf. G. V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State 1688- 1730. The career of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. vii.

The Toleration Act of 1689 was a legislative landmark in the evolution of the theme of this thesis.[56] But it must be emphasised at this stage that the concept of Toleration was limited in its scope because it chiefly concerned Protestants. By contrast Roman Catholics were only freed from penal laws in 1791,[57] and Unitarians, who claimed to be within the Christian tradition, but who denied the doctrine of the Trinity, in 1813.[58] But while there can be no doubt that the Toleration Act of 1689 is deservedly regarded as a milestone in the history of religious sensitivity in England, wider toleration was achieved only by way of twists and turns, setbacks and odd political alliances.

It was in fact mainly in the nineteenth century when the toleration of Dissenters moved in stages to emancipation: the Toleration Act of 1812 marked a stage in the development of greater religious equality. Further restrictions for non-Anglicans such as prohibition from entry to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or from burial in Anglican churchyards, were removed gradually throughout the nineteenth century. The achievement of the Cowper-Temple clause in the Elementary Education Act of 1870 could also be viewed as part of a process of emerging equality between competing Protestant denominations.

The roots of toleration in religion and politics can be located in the work of John Locke (1632-1704). Locke set out his views on this issue in his *Letter on Toleration* published in 1689 in the Netherlands, although probably first composed some twenty or more years before.[59] Locke himself was faced with a decision about whether to remain in the Church of England or go over to Dissent since he held similar ideas on church government and priesthood to many Dissenters. Having chosen to remain in the Church of England, he advocated a broad conception of the State Church. The individual was due perfect freedom in the religious sphere. 'The care of every man's soul belongs unto himself, and is to be left unto himself.'[60] Locke's case for toleration was based on the nature of a religious community and the limitations of human knowledge. Locke argued that no church had a right to

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[56] The official title of the Act was 'An Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws'.

[57] John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570- 1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), p. 295.

[58] See below chapter 7 for the specific controversy between the Unitarians and the BFSS in the nineteenth century.

[59] Locke, John, *The second treatise of civil government, and A letter concerning toleration,* edited with an introduction by J.W. Gough (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). For fuller details of the sequence of Locke's various letters on Toleration see Mark Goldie, in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor, ed., pp. 143-45.

[60] Locke, p. 137.

persecute, nor should it draw upon the resources of the civil power to do the same. The civil power had the responsibility for the care of the citizen's body and property, but not his soul. The State should give equal protection to all currents of religious thought. For Locke it was axiomatic that no church, or indeed any individual, had a monopoly of the full truth. Persecution could enforce only outward conformity, not inward conviction. Locke here recognised the psychological dimension of the problem. He believed in an ideal of a broad comprehensive church which could contain within itself adherents of differing views. Christianity was essentially a rational creed, but confused by the theologians with their dogmas and articles. Locke's personal position led to his orthodoxy being questioned, for he appeared to have much similarity with Unitarians. The centrality of the Cross and the atonement fell away in his system. But toleration in Locke's understanding had clear limits. It did not extend to Roman Catholics because of their allegiance to a foreign ruler. Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 had a negative impact on the trust which might be placed in Roman Catholics. Muslims and atheists were also outside the scope of toleration.

In the early eighteenth century there was some attempt to end toleration. Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702 to 1714, was keen to counteract the ethos of her predecessor William's reign by promoting the interests of the Church of England.[61] The Schism Act of 1714 was a short-lived setback to the interests of the Dissenters because it shut down their schools and required that a bishop's licence should be obtained in order to teach.[62] But it was repealed in 1719 along with the Occasional Conformity Act. By contrast Archbishop William Wake was sympathetic to non-episcopal ministries and valued contacts with foreign Protestants.[63]

The death of Queen Anne in 1714 and the accession of the Elector George of Hanover as George I, however, began to restrain the Tory and Church ascendancy which had prevailed under Queen Anne. In 1717 the Whig government stymied some of the activities of the Church such as the Convocations. An Indemnity Act providing limited protection for Dissenters was brought in for a year and this was renewed on various subsequent occasions after 1727. However this limited toleration existed alongside the Test and Corporation Acts, which remained in force.[64]

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[61] Edwards, II, p. 472.
[62] Edwards, II, p. 476.
[63] (1657-1737) Archbishop of Canterbury from 1716.
[64] Edwards, II, p. 478.

The eighteenth century as a whole continued to be a period of vacillation in State policy towards Dissenters. In the late 1770s there was some improvement in their situation with the removal in 1779 of legal restrictions such as the requirement for Dissenting minsters to subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England.[65] Yet by the late 1780s tensions were again exacerbated by the attempt to repeal completely the Test and Corporation Acts.[66]

On the other hand by the end of the eighteenth century there were attempts to bridge denominational divisions. The *Evangelical Magazine* founded in 1793 was a co-operative venture by a combination of Dissenters and Evangelical Churchmen. Similarly the *Eclectic Review* was first published in 1805 to satisfy all denominations 'by entering into a compact of neutrality on disputed points of secondary importance.' This enterprise however was not destined to meet the original hopes of its founders. Anglicans withdrew their support after only one year and the compact of neutrality was abandoned in 1814.[67]

Much of the later discussion in this thesis about the work of Joseph Lancaster and his successors in seeking to provide a general Christian education relates to his attempt to transcend the theological disagreements between the different denominations in his day. The above sketch, therefore, aims to provide an outline of the origin and development of those groups.

Latitudinarianism and Deism

I shall now briefly consider two currents of theological thought which provide the backdrop to the controversy over Joseph Lancaster's work because of their relevance to the debates surrounding the unsectarian approach to religious education of the poor to be discussed in the next chapter. Both currents were at times used as part of the attacks by opponents of Lancaster's unsectarian scheme. The first of these currents is Latitudinarianism in the Church of England. It is unclear whether Latitudinarianism had any defining doctrinal principles, but

[65] See G. M. Ditchfield, 'Ecclesiastical policy under Lord North' in ed. by Walsh and others, pp. 235-36.
[66] See Jan Albers, 'Religious identities in Lancashire' in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 331.
[67] Donald Davie, *A Gathered Church. The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest 1700-1930* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 61.

it was associated with a liberal theology. It also sometimes reflected a tendency to look for a measure of comprehension which sought to forge positive relations with Dissenting Christian denominations.[68] Some of Lancaster's supporters were on occasion accused of holding latitudinarian views and therefore less than fully orthodox in their theology.[69]

The second current of theological thought was Deism, which, as with Latitudinarianism, was not always susceptible to precise definition of its exact beliefs. But this much can be said about Deism: first, it saw God as a transcendent and loving creator, yet also as one who had withdrawn from active involvement in the world; second, Deism emphasized natural religion: that is, it stressed the role of reason rather than revelation, which was regarded as unnecessary.[70] Deism is important in the discussion about Lancaster since he was regularly accused of this unorthodoxy.

Despite the assertion that Deism was already in decline by the middle of the eighteenth century,[71] there was in fact a revival of popular Deism in the 1790s.[72] But alongside this there was also a reaction against liberal thinking.[73] This reaction against a revived Deism may have exacerbated some of the criticisms of Lancaster, who began to write soon after this time.

The Background to Unsectarianism: David Williams

I shall now explore the possible inspiration for Lancaster's unsectarian approach to the teaching of religion. The search for possible antecedents of a systematic unsectarian approach to religious education may begin first with the ideas of the eighteenth century writer David Williams.[74] Williams is of interest both for his attitudes to issues of Christian doctrine and for his practical involvement in education. Williams's theological position can be detected

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[68] See John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction: the Church and Anglicanism in the long eighteenth century' in ed. by Walsh and others, pp. 35-39 and Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways: a suggestion' in ibid., p. 209, who sees a breakup of this affiliation towards the end of the eighteenth century.

[69] But Gastrell, who is discussed later in this chapter and who was the theological bulwark for Lancaster's approach to unsectarian religious teaching, cannot be accused of this.

[70] Hylson-Smith, p. 7. A more detailed analysis of the varieties of Deism is given in Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 257-77.

[71] Rupp, p. 276.

[72] Walsh and Taylor, in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 19.

[73] ibid., p. 41.

[74] (1738-1816) See Damian Walford Davies on Williams in *ODNB*.

through his liturgical work. He described his volume *A Liturgy on the Universal Principles of Religion and Morality* published in 1776 as a protest against what he saw as the iniquities of the Acts of Uniformity. In an introduction to this work he wrote that 'the principal object of religion is to promote virtue;'[75] and further:

> We wish to try the effect of a *Form of Social Worship* composed on the most enlarged and general principles; in which all men may join who acknowledge the existence of a supreme Intelligence, and the universal obligations of morality.[76]
>
> [...]
>
> Do not Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Mahometans, own his power, his wisdom, and his goodness?'[77]

So it appears that Williams was advocating what would now be called an inter-faith approach.

The introduction above was followed by an Order for Morning Prayer. This included praise, for example for the beauty of creation, and thanksgiving, a confession of sin using some of the language of the Prayer Book and the singing of psalms, which were new compositions by Williams. The liturgy also referred to a lesson to be read but gave no indication of the derivation of that material. The liturgy was conservative in its social attitudes, with prayers for the royal family, judges, the nobility and universities. But there was no mention of Jesus or Muhammad, and although Williams was concerned here with worship which might be offered by a religious community, it was certainly not the kind of religious expression which Lancaster and his supporters would have countenanced.

Williams's philosophy of education, however, was some way removed from that of Lancaster. Williams deprecated rote learning and, whatever other merits may be discerned in Lancaster's monitorial system, the use of boys as instructors, albeit under the overall supervision of the master, inevitably promoted rote learning rather than any deeper understanding. Doctrinally, Williams would have found no favour with Lancaster either. I shall refer in chapter 2 to Lancaster's attack on Unitarianism and Deism, yet this was the essence of Williams' theology. There is in any event no evidence that Lancaster was aware of

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[75] David Williams, *A Liturgy on the Universal Principles of Religion and Morality* (London, 1776), p. vii.
[76] Williams, pp. x-xi.
[77] Williams, p. xi.

Williams and his work even though the closing years of Williams' life overlapped with the beginnings of Lancaster's rise to prominence. Politically, Williams's sympathy for the American and French revolutionaries was hardly in keeping with Lancaster's desire to exploit his contacts with royalty and the aristocracy and to deny any intention on his part to weaken the Church of England.

The background to unsectarianism: an economic explanation

In his unpublished doctoral dissertation Wall helpfully devoted a chapter to an analysis of the origins of the unsectarian aspect of Lancaster's work. That chapter, however, is somewhat narrow in its focus. Wall's conclusion is that Lancaster's scheme is to be explained by economic reasons.[78] That is, it would be cheaper to found schools which could cater for children from different denominations and educate them together than for different denominations to establish separate schools which all received the children of their own communion alone and which might in any case be prohibitively expensive. But, if there were common schools, it would then be preferable to exclude distinctive denominational catechisms to avoid children being required to learn doctrines of which their families might disapprove. At a time when people were beginning to believe that day schooling provision should be increased, any procedure which might tend to reduce costs would be attractive. It is not to be denied that economic arguments for educating together children from different persuasions were often deployed in the nineteenth century. There was then also a need to find ways under such an arrangement for solving the problem of what kind of religious instruction might be feasible. But such economic considerations do not appear to have been a feature of Lancaster's thinking on the specifically unsectarian principle of education. If economic factors were relevant, they applied to the system as a whole, including in particular the monitorial system and not narrowly to the plan of unsectarian religious instruction. Indeed Lancaster himself acknowledged the economic dimension in his response to Daubeny's attack on his plan where he described it as the 'easiest, best and cheapest' way of educating poor children.[79]

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[78] Wall, pp. 309-40.

[79] Joseph Lancaster, *An Appeal for Justice in the Cause of Ten Thousand Poor and Orphan Children; and for the Honour of the Holy Scriptures: being a reply, exposing the misrepresentations in the charge delivered at the Visitation of Charles Daubeny, Archdeacon of Sarum, 'June 1806'*, 2nd edn (London: Darton and Harvey and

The background to unsectarianism: the Sunday School movement

Another possible inspiration for Lancaster's unsectarianism was the influence of the Sunday School movement.[80] At the end of the eighteenth century there were examples of inter-denominational co-operation in education, especially among Evangelicals[81] and Elizabeth Varley has written of a semi-ecumenical strand in eighteenth-century latitudinarian Christianity. But this was alien to early nineteenth century bishops such as William Van Mildert of Durham (1765-1836), who was unhappy about the removal of restrictions on Protestant Dissenters.[82] The outstanding example of such co-operation was the Sunday School movement, which was much more successful than the Charity school movement,[83] overlapping in time with the development of day schools. The origin of the Sunday School movement is often attributed to Robert Raikes in the 1780s. The rise of Sunday Schools should be viewed in relation to the proliferation of cross-denominational societies in the 1790s and brought together Church of England Evangelicals, Methodists and Dissenters.[84] The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools, formed in 1785, was expressly ecumenical with a governing body of twelve lay churchmen and twelve Dissenters. The Sunday School Union was founded in London in 1803.[85] Importantly, the Sunday School movement was also originally committed to an unsectarian approach to schooling:[86]

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others, 1806), p. 3. The Edinburgh Review article, 1811, p. 37 does discuss the economic aspect in relation to the character of teaching of religion, explaining that, where it would be too expensive to have two schools for Church and Dissent, an unsectarian school would be valuable. But this does not undermine my contention that the economic case is not part of Lancaster's argument.

[80] Thomas W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability. Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). See in particular pp. 65-74.

[81] Hylson-Smith, p. 96.

[82] Elizabeth A. Varley, *The Last of the Prince Bishops. William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the early nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 39.

[83] See further below in this chapter.

[84] *The Sunday School Movement. Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools*, ed. by Stephen Orchard and John H.Y. Briggs, (Milton Keynes and Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 14-15.

[85] Orchard and Briggs, ed., p. 78.

[86] An eirenical attitude to the non-denominational approach of Sunday School was recorded in Joshua Toulmin, *The Rise, Progress and Effects of Sunday Schools, considered in a Sermon preached at Taunton, March 28, 1789* (Taunton, 1789). See Orchard and Briggs, ed., p. 38. Ibid., also p. 38, records the claim of Charles Wellbeloved, the Unitarian Principal of Manchester College, York to teach 'Christianism' rather than Unitarianism or Trinitarianism. The importance of undenominationalism in the early years of the Sunday School movement has also been highlighted by W. R. Ward in his *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972), pp. 12-16, though his detailed examples come almost entirely from Lancashire, Yorkshire and north Cheshire. We may detect the character of undenominationalism in the Sunday School movement by the Resolution passed in 1824 that auxiliary and county unions would be accepted if the doctrines of the Deity and atonement of Christ were accepted and also that all scripture was inspired by God. See Orchard and Briggs, ed, p. 79.

> Early Sunday Schools on an undenominational basis relied on the Bible as both a textbook for literacy and a sufficient religious curriculum. Denominational Sunday Schools introduced catechetical elements peculiar to themselves.[87]

The movement gave instruction to both Church and Dissenting children. But to some Anglican clergy the ecumenical co-operation of Sunday schools was perceived as a threat.[88] Many such schools were attached to Dissenting churches, but others had no overt association with any particular denomination. The Sunday School Union itself was interdenominational, but Anglican dissatisfaction with this state of affairs led to the formation of a specifically Church of England Institute in 1843.[89] High Church clergymen were determined to assert their control over these Sunday schools and to ensure that the Church of England catechism was taught in them. But the use of the catechism could be the focus of a breakdown in relationships between the denominations in the Sunday School movement, as for example in Saddleworth in 1825.[90]

So by the time Lancaster's project emerged, the Sunday School movement was already well-established and Lancaster was certainly aware of it. Indeed there were contacts between the movement and Lancaster and his followers. But the movement, although widespread, was concerned, as its name suggests, with providing Sunday instruction and was therefore a different sort of organization from Lancaster's weekday schooling. However, an even more important point is that the early undenominational hopes for the Sunday School movement were not sustained. At first the Sunday School Union had sold catechisms from a range of different denominations. But pressure from local unions forced the central committee to stop publishing Church of England catechisms. Another local problem was that many Church of England Sunday Schools refused to join local unions and the Wesleyan Methodists were also often reluctant to take part. Thus in practice most local Sunday School unions came to represent mainly Dissenting congregations, although they were often organizationally distinct from church and chapel.[91] By contrast Lancaster's ideal was to ensure a link between attending his day schools and a preferred place of worship on Sundays.

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[87] Orchard and Briggs, ed, p. xvi.
[88] Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), p. 31.
[89] Davie, p. 18.
[90] See Mark Smith, 'Anglicanism in Saddleworth' in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 121.
[91] Note the idea of Sunday Schools as taking the responsibility for basic instruction and not making church members; hence their difficulties following the gradual introduction of compulsory schooling after 1870. Cf. the 'ecclesiological ambiguity' of the earliest Sunday schools in Stephen Orchard, 'Introduction. Sunday Schools: Some Reflections', in Orchard and Briggs, ed., pp. xiii-xix, specifically p. xv.

The background to unsectarianism: Burckhardt and Gastrell

Lancaster was not alone in advocating unsectarian religious education in day schools. Shortly before Lancaster became prominent, J. G. Burckhardt, a German pastor in London,[92] had outlined a system of non-sectarian education in his *A System of Divinity for the Use of Schools, and for the Instruction of Youth, in the essential Principles and Duties of Religion.*[93]

Burckhardt had written:

> I know that there is a prejudice against teaching religion in public schools, where children of different denominations of Christians are educated, which have their own opinions and forms of religion. But cannot we teach them Christianity itself, rather than the particular and distinguishing tenets of sects and parties? Cannot our instruction contain those most important things, wherein the generality of Christians, and indeed, of all sensible men are agreed? Is it not adviseable, to leave the lesser differences of opinion, which are disputable, and consequently uncertain, and not necessary to salvation, to their own determination in advanced years, when their understandings are better able to pass a judgment upon these points?[94]

It is unclear whether Lancaster would have been familiar with Burckhardt's work as a possible explanation for his adoption of an unsectarian system. But there is a final possibility, not strongly represented in the literature on the origins of unsectarian education, which provides a much more fruitful insight into the origins of Lancaster's plan. It stems from a chance detail in one of Lancaster's publications. In compiling a list of books recommended for a school library - and here it must be presumed that he was thinking not just of resources for pupils, but of a stimulus for teachers - Lancaster referred to Francis Gastrell's *Christian Institutes*:

> As a religious book for a circulating library, I recommend BISHOP GASTREL'S Institutes: they have this excellence; they are Scripture! which in conformity to the 6th article of the church of England, he believes are able to make us wise unto salvation.[95]

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[92] On Burckhardt see briefly W. R .Ward, 'The eighteenth-century Church: a European view' in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 286.

[93] (Robinsons, 1797). Cited in the review by Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, April 1803, pp. 227 et seq. Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810) Author and educationist, evangelical member of the Church of England, who held conservative views on educational practice and rejected the educational views of Rousseau. Noted for the use of pictorial material in books for children. See Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg in *ODNB*.

[94] ibid., p. 229.

[95] [Joseph Lancaster] *The British System of Education being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions practised at the Royal Free Schools. Borough-Road, Southwark* (London: Longman & Co., 1810) p. 50.

Gastrell was undeniably a theological counterbalance to both Latitudinarianism and Deism. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, when Lancaster was developing his plans for schooling, Gastrell's *Christian Institutes* was already long-established and his reputation rests on this book.[96] Gastrell was an orthodox theologian at a time when Christianity was under threat from, first, Unitarian tendencies such as Socinianism and, second, deism.[97] Gastrell argued against both of these movements. He was also a keen supporter of the charity schools movement which emerged at the end of the seventeenth century and which was a prominent provider of basic education in the eighteenth century.[98]

Gastrell's Preface set out his conception of the Scriptures: 'Whoever reads them [*sc.* the Scriptures] with due Care and Attention, may, without any farther Help, be truly and fully informed what he ought to believe, and do, in order to be saved.'[99] This conception of the scriptures as not requiring any further explanation was later to be a feature of the BFSS's approach to religious instruction in its schools. It accords with the commitment to scripture reading 'without note or comment' and, correspondingly, was a feature attacked from time to time by opponents of the unsectarian approach.

Gastrell's *Christian Institutes* was designed as a summary of Christian doctrine.[100] But Lancaster would have been aware not only of the value of a summary of Christian doctrine for his enterprise, but also of Gastrell's specific lament on the way such doctrine was compromised by:

> the many Differences and Divisions that have happened among Christians, both with regard to their Faith, and to their Rules and Measures of serving God. [no full stop here in original] Which differences, as they plainly rose at first, from a greater Deference that was paid, either to the Traditions, or Writings of Men, than to the

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[96] Francis Gastrell, *The Christian Institutes, or, The Sincere Word of God, being a Plain and Impartial Account of the Whole Faith and Duty of a Christian. Collected out of the Writings of the Old and New Testament etc.* 2nd edn (London: 1709). The first edition was published in 1707 with subsequent editions from 1721 to 1832. In our analysis we shall be referring to the 1709 edition. Note that the spelling of Gastrell's name may differ from Lancaster's in his item noted in this section.

[97] Francis Gastrell (1662-1725). See further Stephen W. Baskerville in *ODNB*. Bishop of Chester from 1714. Lancaster described Gastrell as a liberal bishop whose work had the benefit that it was scripture. See [Lancaster] *British System*, p. 50. Jan Albers in ed. by Walsh and others described him as High Church, p. 322. Socinianism may be briefly defined as a type of Unitarianism.

[98] See Francis Gastrell, *The Religious Education of Poor Children Recommended in a Sermon Preach'd in the Parish Church of St. Sepulchre's June 5 1707.....at the Anniversary Meeting of the Gentlemen concerned in promoting the Charity School lately erected in the cities of London and Westminster* (London: J. Bowyer; H. Clement, 1707).

[99] Gastrell, *Institutes*, p. vii. The original orthography, including capitals, has been retained.

[100] Gastrell, *Institutes*, p. ix.

> Word of God; so have they been kept up ever since, by a greater care that hath been taken by the several Sects, to instruct their Children in those things which distinguish them from one another, than to teach them the common Doctrines and Duties of their most holy Profession:...[101]

Gastrell's aim was to provide this compendium of doctrine, 'by keeping all along the Language of Scripture, to leave no room for Misrepresentation.'[102] It was to be a defence of revealed religion.[103] He declared that he had kept his own language to an absolute minimum for linking the contents.[104] Nor did he rely on the help of any previous book, mentioning only a book called *Scripture Sufficiency* published in 1676, which he found unhelpful in its method.[105]

The content covered by the book[106] began in chapter I with the importance of the Scriptures themselves. Chapter II continued with the nature of God, his works and attributes, for example his perfection. Chapter III examined the nature and condition of man. Chapter IV treated the redemption of man by Jesus Christ. This section also outlined the nature of Christ as God and man and also covered the nature of the church. What might be called the metaphysical part of the book concluded with Chapter V on Angels and Spirits. The remainder of the book was taken up with ethical material in the broad sense including the duties of men towards God and to their fellow-men. This encompassed some treatment of worship, including baptism and the Lord's Supper. The main text of the book then listed scriptural texts with footnotes to indicate from where the material had been derived.

The more practical aspect of Gastrell's concern for education can be seen by an examination of his 1707 Charity Schools sermon:

> The only sure way of rendring (*sic*) a People truly happy, is to make them truly Religious. And the most likely Method that can be taken to raise a new Spirit of Piety

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[101] Gastrell, *Institutes,* p. ix. Cf. Gastrell's concern for educating the poor. See the mention of his 1707 sermon on charity schools above.
[102] Gastrell, *Institutes,* p. xi.
[103] Gastrell, *Institutes,* p. xiv.
[104] Gastrell, *Institutes,* p. xv.
[105] Gastrell, *Institutes,* p. xix. I have been unable to locate this book in the catalogue of the British Library. It is possibly listed in the Bodleian Library catalogue as *A common place-book to the Holy Bible: or, the scripture's sufficiency practically demonstrated...* The third edition; improved with twelve intire additional chapters; ... London: printed for R. and J. Bonwicke, and R. Wilkin; J. Walthoe and T. Ward 1725.
[106] See pp. xxii-xxxi for an overview of the contents.

> where it was decaying, is by an early and a careful Instruction of our Children in the Fear of God, and in the Ways of Virtue and Holiness.[107]

The aim of the charity was for an education which would provide 'a just Account of the Being and Providence of God, and of the End and duty of Man;'. There was no mention of Jesus.[108] But there was no mention of any need to defend the established church either. Perhaps this would have been an anachronism in 1707 and Gastrell was, in fact, very optimistic about the progress of the nation.

Curiously Gastrell's work did not feature prominently in any defence of the Lancasterian unsectarian system in the nineteenth century.[109] Lancaster and others who supported him were accused of infidelity to Christian orthodoxy and of being a danger to the Established religion of the Church of England, yet there seems to have been no developed attempt to draw on this work of unimpeachable scriptural orthodoxy by Gastrell.[110] This was the more remarkable in that it was written by a Church of England clergyman who, in a century of increasing religious and doctrinal scepticism, stood out as a beacon of scriptural orthodoxy with its reliance on a traditional view of revelation in buttressing Christian doctrine. Thus, rather than any narrow economic explanation for the origins of Lancaster's unsectarianism or possible influences from the Sunday School movement, Lancaster's inspiration for his unsectarian approach to schooling was, at root, theological. This argument is supported by the fact that Lancaster recommended as a practical book of religious instruction in schools teaching the catechism of John Freame, a Quaker banker, who acknowledged his debt to Gastrell. In selecting Freame, Lancaster must have eschewed other potential choices such as Sarah Trimmer's *Scripture Catechism* where, in discussing baptism for example, she wrote that to be baptized was to enter into a solemn covenant which was explained further in the church Catechism.[111] Such a reference would have run contrary to Lancaster's declared principles of avoiding catechisms distinctive of any single denomination despite the book's other virtues in terms of explaining the context and application of Bible passages and asking questions in a pedagogically sounder way than in Freame.

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[107] Gastrell, *Religious Education*, p. 4. I have preserved the spelling of the original in this quotation.
[108] Gastrell, *Religious Education*, p. 5.
[109] There is, however, one mention by Fox in his *Scriptural Education*.
[110] Attacks on Lancaster and his followers will be considered in chapter 3 below.
[111] Sarah Trimmer, *A scripture catechism, Part II. Containing a familiar explanation of the lessons selected from the writings of the four evangelists. For the use of schools and families* (London, 1797), p. 237.

Charity schools

I shall now consider the educational background prior to the emergence of the religious difficulty in English education at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Christian concern for the education of the poor was evident in the work of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [hereafter SPCK] which was founded in 1698. Under its auspices Charity schools were founded to teach the basics of reading and to give instruction in the Church of England Catechism. Subscription schools were maintained by annual donations and run by a committee of subscribers. The SPCK was very much a Church of England institution, so much so in fact that the works of such eminent Nonconformist writers as Watts, Bunyan and Doddridge were not allowed to be printed under its auspices.[112]

The origin of the Charity schools lay in the need to defend Anglican doctrine against Roman Catholicism.[113] They were also partly a reaction against the conviction that, under the Restoration, morals and manners had declined and this was an attempt to restore moral standards. As far as doctrine was concerned, if Charity schools were founded in a spirit of opposition to Roman Catholicism, there is also evidence that at least in the earliest years of the SPCK, its supporters were latitudinarian and keen to comprehend Dissenters.[114] Some Charity schools were established as a result of individual effort. This can be exemplified in the work of Hannah More, who had a degree of sympathy with some Dissenting denominations, although not with Methodism.[115] But not all children could benefit from the religious teaching in Charity schools, for they never took more than a small proportion of working class children[116] and after a peak of activity in the early eighteenth century their significance declined.[117]

A crucial element in the religious education in Charity schools was the use of the Church of England catechism. Doctrinally the Catechism was used out of a desire to protect and

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[112] F. W. Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan & Co., 1910), I, p. 86. For a more nuanced analysis of the SPCK's attitude to Dissent see Craig Rose, 'The Origins of the SPCK 1689-1716' in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 188.

[113] See Jeremy Gregory, 'The eighteenth-century Reformation' in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 76.

[114] See Robert W. Unwin, 'The Established Church and the Schooling of the Poor: the Role of the S.P.C.K. 1699-1720' in ed. by Vincent Alan McClelland, *The Churches and Education* (Leicester: History of Education Society, 1984).

[115] Jones, *Hannah More* pp. 78-102.

[116] Davie, p. 18.

[117] Nancy Ball, *Educating the People. A Documentary History of Elementary Schooling in England 1840 - 1870* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1983), pp. 10-11.

maintain a believer in a truly constituted church.[118] The emergence of religious groups which broke away from a single undivided Church had created a problem. The rise of these Dissenters became a central cause of difficulty in the religious question in English education. The subsequent debate about teaching children by using catechisms distinctive of a particular denomination can be traced back to the seventeenth century. After the 1662 Act of Uniformity and the 1665 Act, which forbade Dissenters from teaching in any public or private school, the Church of England catechism was seen as a necessary device for keeping Dissent in check.

Denominational co-operation in education, however, had not been unknown even by the end of the seventeenth century and Bossy refers to a system of interdenominational education existing in towns after 1750.[119] Moreover, some Dissenters showed their indifference to the religious question by sending their children to Church of England schools.

After the initial enthusiasm for Charity schools in the early part of the eighteenth century a period of stagnation set in. But the religious revival at the end of the eighteenth century and fears evoked by the revolutionary upheavals in France led to a greater sympathy for educating the poor; education, particularly Christian education, it was believed, would provide an antidote to revolutionary fervour.

The background to unsectarianism: John Freame

While Gastrell's *Institutes* was primarily a work of Christian doctrine without thought for any implications for the basic education of children, the Quaker banker John Freame was concerned to apply Gastrell's approach to the catechizing of children. After 1689 Freame struggled against the Church of England to promote greater toleration between denominations.[120] This catechism entitled *Scripture Instruction*, a textbook of morals, was first published in 1713 with a third posthumous edition in 1769 and reprinted many times

[118] See Craig Rose, 'The origins of the SPCK 1699-1716' in ed. by Walsh and others, pp. 181-84. On the practicalities of catechizing see Jeremy Gregory 'The eighteenth-century Reformation' in ibid., pp. 71-75. See also Davie, p. 42 *et seq.*

[119] Bossy, p. 275.

[120] John Freame (1665-1745). See Leslie Hannah in *ODNB*. Freame denied that his Quaker affiliation prejudiced his high valuation of the Scriptures.

during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[121] When Freame's Catechism is compared with Gastrell's *Institutes*, it can be seen that Freame was very much a bowdlerized version of Gastrell. It is noteworthy that when opponents of the unsectarian system throughout the nineteenth century objected to this approach to religious instruction and asked what it was, or whether it made sense, or whether one could justifiably isolate some common core of Christian doctrine acceptable across the different denominations, no defender of unsectarianism drew attention to Gastrell. That said, it is arguable that Lancaster, through the influence of Freame, did not sufficiently reflect the full range of doctrinal orthodoxy represented by Gastrell.

Gastrell's *Christian Institutes* was over four hundred pages long. Freame's catechism at one hundred and eighty-three pages, therefore, represented a significant shortening of Gastrell's coverage, although one can detect a degree of continuity in the basic structure, particularly as Freame introduced a catechetical structure of framing questions to which the scripture extracts were the response. He emphasized, 'I have made no comment upon, or addition to the words of the Text; ...'[122] Freame was anxious to rebut any suggestion that, because of his affiliation to the Quakers, he was not committed to the importance of scripture. Freame's original concern as expressed in his preface had been to support parents in teaching their children. Lancaster, by contrast, in using Freame's catechism, was focused on the day-school teacher.

Freame stated the aim of his catechism as follows:

> Having perused several Catechisms, I found most of them contain controversial points of Religion, much above the comprehension and capacity of children, and treating of matters concerning which many professors differ in their judgements.[123]

The catechism was divided into twenty-nine sections, each of which ranged in length from around four pages to seventeen. But of these twenty-nine sections only three addressed what might be considered key areas of doctrine in the strict sense (I Of God Almighty, II Of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and III Of the Word of God). The other sections were primarily ethical in character. Examples included Parents, Children, Lying and Flattering, Backbiting and Tale-Bearing, Anger, Wrath and Malice, Punishments of the Wicked, this last being the

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[121] John Freame, *Scripture Instruction* (Bristol: 1769). The references in this thesis will be to the 1769 third edition.
[122] Freame, p. vi.
[123] Freame, pp. iii-iv.

longest section. There were two sections on religion itself, for example Section XIX Of Holiness and Righteousness.

But even allowing for the passage of time and a cultural gap between Freame and our own era the scriptural part of the work must be regarded as a somewhat flawed document. Freame stated that he aimed to avoid disputatious points of Christian doctrine, but he did this at the expense of omitting some of the traditional doctrines in Christianity. His treatment of some of the doctrinal material is also unbalanced. The first section on questions about God was based almost entirely on quotations from the Old Testament and only one from the New Testament. Even in the second section entitled 'Of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' many of the questions were drawn from the Old Testament, for example:

> Q. What did the Prophet Isaiah say concerning the coming of Christ?
> A. Isai ix 6. - Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;... [124]

The catechism was in places explicitly anti-Jewish and moreover misleading in its construction. This can be seen with the following extract from the Passion Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew:

> Q. Did not the *Jews* crucify Christ, notwithstanding he wrought so many great miracles among them?
> A. Matth. xxvii. 1 - When the morning was come, all the Chief Priests and Elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.
> 2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.
> 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.[125]

The questioning of the catechism here is deliberately structured so as to place the blame for the death of Jesus on the Jews. But in omitting the section from verses 3 to 27 inclusive, Freame was able misleadingly to suggest that the pronoun 'they' in verse 28 was identical with the 'they' of verse 2. In fact verse 27 demonstrates that the pronoun 'they' by that point in the narrative is not the Jewish leaders, but Roman soldiers. The anti-Jewish theme was also reinforced in the section on Lying:

> Q. What said Christ to the *Jews*, who called God their *Father*, and yet contrived in their *Wickedness*?

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[124] Freame, p. 7.
[125] Freame, p. 18.

> A. John viii 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.[126]

Leaving aside the defects in citation, Freame's catechism gave only limited coverage to central and uncontroverted doctrines of the Christian faith. The incarnation was only lightly alluded to:

> Q. What does the Evangelist *John* say concerning the Word of God?
> A. John I 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
> 3. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.
> 4. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.[127]

The doctrine of the Atonement was covered by implication in a reference to the propitiation of God's wrath in I John.[128] The doctrine of the Trinity was completely lacking, and, given the predominantly individual emphasis of the teaching, there was, unsurprisingly, little or nothing on the nature of the church as community. The catechism was in fact much more focused on ethical material than doctrinal. It devoted much more attention to matters such as the relationships between master and servants or, despite being a catechism for children, husbands and wives.

The catechism was also pedagogically weak. In complete contrast to the Catechism in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, for example, many of the questions in Freame's catechism included within their wording the essence of the desired response, e.g.:

> Q. Was Christ a propitiation for the sins of the whole world?
> A. 1 John ii 1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
> 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.[129]

This did not augur well for a truly undenominational exposition of the fullness of Christian doctrine which yet succeeded in avoiding points of controversy.

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[126] Freame, p. 53.
[127] Freame, p. 22. Note that Freame had deliberately omitted verse 2.
[128] Freame, citing I John 2.1, p. 11.
[129] Freame, p. 11.

How by comparison did Gastrell treat some of the areas which were defective in Freame? In one crucial area on the nature of Christ Gastrell's section has one reference to Isaiah 9. 6 and 53. 9, Psalm 68. 18; Isaiah 53. 12.[130] Thus only four Old Testament texts were cited out of a total of over two hundred and sixty different references. This was quite different from Freame's treatment of this theme noted above. Gastrell, it should also be said, had in his day an established scholarly reputation, which could not justly be accorded to Freame whatever his other merits. By contrast with the much richer range of unsectarian material in Gastrell, Freame's unsectarianism was most likely rooted in his pedagogy. How far was Gastrell thinking of children? Freame certainly was thinking of the concepts with which children could cope.

The growth of concern for the education of the poor

The end of the eighteenth century with religious revival and fears from the revolutionary upheavals in France led to a greater sympathy for educating the poor. The origins of the Sunday School movement from the 1780s reveal attitudes which matched the concerns of those who followed Lancaster's initiative. Dick has argued that the impetus for the creation of mass schooling as exemplified by Sunday Schools was not so much about the consequences of the embryonic industrialization, but more the moral alarm associated with growing libertarian notions and the Enlightenment challenge to authority. There was also concern that the privileged sections of society, including the Churches, were failing in their traditional duties to inculcate attitudes of obedience and respect. Dick wrote that the rise of Sunday School (note that he does not refer to any concept of undenominationalism in their teaching/curriculum) made acceptance of mass schooling acceptable to the middle and upper classes.[131] However, this would not be true of the first decade of the nineteenth century, where speeches in Parliament did on occasion object to the extension of schooling.

The Hackney Phalanx, a group of Anglican High Churchmen sometimes known as the Clapton Sect, was a reform and renewal movement dating from the end of the eighteenth

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[130] Gastrell, *Institutes*, pp. 94-116.

[131] Malcolm Dick, 'Religion and The Origins of Mass Schooling: The English Sunday School *c.* 1780 – 1840' in *The Churches and Education*, ed. by Vincent Alan McClelland (Leicester: History of Education Society of Great Britain, 1984), pp. 33-51.

century. They were determined to react to the challenge posed by the rise in population, especially in the growing urban areas. They believed that the societies which had done such useful work in the eighteenth century were no longer adequate for the task which the changes in society posed. Even though the Hackney Phalanx were Tories and eventually opposed the extension of the franchise and the Reform Act of 1832, they were not to be included among those who were suspicious of providing more education to children because of its potential for subversion.

Members of the Phalanx were also concerned about the issue of the control of education: as will be seen below, the rival undenominationalist movement the BFSS was often, unfairly and inaccurately, viewed as under the control of Dissenting bodies. The Hackney Phalanx contributed to the revival of the SPCK around the time of its centenary in 1798.[132] But dissatisfaction with the slow progress at which the SPCK made available some of its promised publications led ultimately to the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society. This caused offence to High Churchmen because of its liberal constitution whereby Dissenters were welcomed to play a full role in its work. The Phalanx, who had good connections with the bishops, also had a major role in establishing the National Society in 1811.[133] They placed a high value on the appropriate ministry of the Church and regarded Dissenters as schismatic and their sacraments as ineffectual since their ministry was invalid and viewed all Christians, including Dissenters, as members of the Anglican Church.

Summary

In this chapter I have examined the historical background to denominational rivalry in education and outlined some early experiments in providing basic education, both those which were based on Anglican principles, and also those which sought to ignore denominational distinctions. The work of Gastrell has been treated in order to pave the way for the argument in the next chapter that Joseph Lancaster's unsectarianism was rooted primarily in theology. I contend, therefore, that there was a direct line of influence from Gastrell, refracted through Freame, to the character of Lancaster's unsectarianism. However,

[132] See Varley, ch. 3 on this and Kenneth Hylson-Smith, pp. 111-13.
[133] On the National Society see further in Chapter 2 below.

because of the defects in Freame identified above, the benefit which Lancaster could gain from this tradition was considerably weakened.

Chapter 2

Joseph Lancaster and the rise of unsectarian religious education

Introduction

In the previous chapter something of the broad context of the historical background to this research was sketched. The purpose of that sketch was to show the origins of the denominations and the diversity of relations between them, and the anticipation of an unsectarian approach to religious teaching, or what in contemporary terms might be called an inclusive approach. In this chapter the focus is significantly sharpened in that here I will consider the emerging question about the character of education at the start of the nineteenth century. Attention will be directed to the rise of the voluntary movement associated originally with Joseph Lancaster and the body with which he was connected, the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Education of the Poor of Every Religious Persuasion. As will be seen, it was Lancaster who brought to the attention of a wide circle of people the possibility of trying to provide religious teaching which transcended denominational boundaries.

Lancaster's personal background

In 1802 the MP for Tamworth since 1790, Sir Robert Peel the Elder (1750-1830) had been responsible for a Factory Act, which limited the hours of work for children employed in factories and required that they should receive instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic.[134] But the most significant step in extending schooling at this point was not legislative activity but the efforts of a single individual, Joseph Lancaster.

The biographical background of Joseph Lancaster can be told briefly.[135] Born in 1778, in early adulthood he conceived a desire to extend educational opportunity for children from the

[134] The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act. Cornish, I, p. 88.
[135] For a more detailed recent standard biography see G. F. Bartle, 'Lancaster, Joseph (1778-1838)' in *ODNB*. This treatment, however, does not discuss the origins of Lancaster's unsectarianism.

poorest strata of society. The turn of the nineteenth century witnessed an awakening awareness of the need to provide basic education to the swarms of illiterate children in the towns and cities expanding as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Basic education meant instruction in the elements of reading (and sometimes only this), writing and counting with a grounding in religious and moral education. Lancaster founded his first school in 1798 and later moved to the Borough Road in Southwark, London. In 1804 he established at Borough Road a training school for intending teachers.[136]

Although Lancaster was not alone in feeling impelled to extend schooling, what marked him out was his propagandizing efforts for the cause of education. Lancaster initially propagated his message with books; later he also travelled extensively around this country and abroad with lecture tours. His earliest supporters and contacts were Quakers, but he was assiduous in enlisting the support of prominent members of the aristocracy and the Churches as well. As early as March 1803 the subscription list included the Duke of Bedford and Lord Somerville, as well as three other peers and six MPs. In 1805 Lancaster even secured the financial support of King George III.[137] Not all of these supporters were favourable to religion: Francis Place, for example, was in his own words an avowed 'infidel'[138] These supporters and associates of Lancaster were mostly liberal in outlook and Whigs by political affiliation. Some, including two bishops, would persist in their support for Lancaster despite the emerging disapproval of the Church of England.

Lancaster was also to become famous internationally for his advocacy of the so-called 'monitorial' system of instruction whereby older pupils, called monitors, taught the younger children under the general supervision of the master of the school. I shall not here enter into any discussion of the contested arguments over whether Lancaster or the Church of England clergyman Dr. Andrew Bell can fairly claim to be the originator of the monitorial system. But the controversy with Bell was a harbinger of other dissensions which would regularly surround Lancaster.[139]

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[136] Wall, p. 74.
[137] Wall, pp. 66-70.
[138] *The Autobiography of Francis Place*, ed. by Mary Thale (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. xiii.
[139] See below chapter 3 passim.

What is especially important about Lancaster's innovation is that his school was committed to excluding any religious teaching based on a denominational catechism. The emphasis was on the simple reading of the Bible without any additional sectarian teaching. As far as the use of catechisms was concerned, it was assumed from the time of the Elizabethan settlement that catechizing did not take place continuously throughout all of childhood, but was time-limited and undertaken by clergy during Evensong. This was to prepare young people for membership of the Church. Under Puritan influence catechizing had become more rigorous. The Westminster Assembly produced a *Shorter Catechism* much fuller by comparison with the catechism in the old Prayer Book. After 1662 the Nonconformists continued to use the Westminster *Shorter Catechism* in similar fashion to those in the continuing Church of England catechizing from the Prayer Book.[140] Dissenters were more demanding in their use of the longer catechism. The Westminster Assembly and subsequent Nonconformists, however, saw this activity as one where children should indeed be taught the Christian faith but outside of service times. There were strong similarities between the catechisms of the Church of England and the Westminster Assembly. Both catechisms stressed knowledge of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments as an essential part of Christian life. The Westminster Shorter Catechism reflected Zwinglian influences, as one might have anticipated from a document influenced by the Puritans. But the Puritan-style catechizing of the second half of the seventeenth century bore no relation to what Robert Raikes and like-minded people were attempting from the 1780s in the emerging Sunday Schools.[141]

Lancaster's own religious commitment at the start of the nineteenth century was to the Quakers: on 31 January 1801 he was admitted to Quaker society, but later broke with them because of his financial irregularities.[142] Thus Lancaster was a convert to Quakerism, but had been aware of the Quaker roots on his father's and grandfather's side. His impulse to charitable activity (making his school free rather than charging small fees) predated his membership of the Quakers. But his association with the Quakers would have helped his movement to grow. Wall describes the Quakers of that time as liberal Christians. But

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[140] The Westminster Shorter Catechism at 108 pages was short only by comparison with the Westminster Longer Catechism. See Orchard and Briggs, ed., p. 3.

[141] For brief historical background on the significance of catechisms see Stephen Orchard, 'From Catechism Class to Sunday School', in *The Sunday School Movement. Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools*, ed. by Stephen Orchard and John H.Y. Briggs (Milton Keynes and Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 2-8.

[142] Wall, p. 24.

Evangelical Quakers also began to appear in this period. These were orthodox in doctrine and applied doctrinal tests as a reaction to eighteenth-century quietism.[143]

Lancaster's early theological writing

Lancaster, as will be shortly seen, became well-known for his educational writing, but at a comparatively early stage in his career he also published anonymously[144] a theological pamphlet *A Vindication of Some Truths Contained in the Scriptures, by the Exercise of Reason only.*[145] It is curious that a young man of Lancaster's age, given his relative lack of schooling, was able to publish such a work. While the book is not especially significant as an original contribution to the theological thought of the time, it is relevant to an evaluation of Lancaster's theological position and its relation to Christian orthodoxy. It demonstrates that he did not appear to be guilty of theological unorthodoxy, something which the opponents of an unsectarian approach to religious teaching were keen to pin on him.

Vindication was a short publication of only twenty-three pages and directed against Deism. Two features of Lancaster's argument against Deism are noteworthy here. First, in the initial section on the attributes of God Lancaster argued that, God having created human beings (creation, he contended, could not be the product of chance), it was not reasonable to leave them to their own devices without revelation. Revelation (denied by Deism) was required in order that humans could imitate the perfection of the creator. But, although the concept of revelation was important in Lancaster's exposition, *Vindication* did not refer to scripture as such.[146] Second, God had not stood back from involvement in the world: 'It is not reasonable that God should make man, to desert him, to stand aloof from the noblest part of all his works; a part that no tender parent would act.'[147] This was written before Lancaster was attacked for the alleged unorthodox theological views, including Socinianism (a species of Unitarianism), which underpinned his system of schooling. In fact Lancaster had himself

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[143] Wall, p. 27. On Evangelical Quakers see further, for example, Watts, I, pp. 461-64.
[144] Lancaster later acknowledged his authorship of *A Vindication* in *An Appeal*, p. 29.
[145] Joseph Lancaster, *A Vindication of Some Truths Contained in the Scriptures, by the Exercise of Reason only* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1801).
[146] Lancaster later explained that the work had been addressed to Deists and therefore he had used reason rather than revelation through scripture in his arguments. See his *An Appeal*, p. 30.
[147] Lancaster, *Vindication*, p. 9.

attacked Socinianism, so in that respect he could only be regarded as a fully orthodox Christian.[148]

Lancaster's exposition of his educational programme

A crucial primary source for understanding Lancaster's aims for his new educational enterprise is his *Improvements in Education.*[149] A first edition of this book was published in 1803 and a second shortly afterwards in the same year. But the edition of 1805, which was a much expanded and substantial reworking of the original edition, is the usual main source for Lancaster's ideas on the education question.

The first edition of his *Improvements* is, however, important in order to examine whether the unsectarian principle for religious instruction was present in his thinking from the very beginning of his self-publicity. Wall has suggested that there is some uncertainty in what exactly Lancaster's position on unsectarianism was at this time.[150] This raises the question of whether Lancaster could on occasion sit loose to the unsectarian principle if necessary. In some of his writing Lancaster was capable of omitting reference to unsectarianism. His publication *The British System of education*, for example, said nothing about the unsectarian approach to education. This might be justified on the grounds that it was predominantly a practical book about school organization.[151] However, despite Wall's remark just cited above I suggest that Lancaster's theoretical position was in fact clear. Wall's hesitation can be explained by noting that Lancaster had a degree of pragmatism in his approach to establishing schools. Clear evidence of this comes in a work where he wrote unashamedly of the arrangements for a Lancasterian school in Cambridge.

The local committee in Cambridge 'engrafted on the elementary system of education, that religious instruction which pleased them best. The clergy of the committee of this school, are now the means of teaching the Church catechism in the Quakers [*sic*] meeting-house.'[152] This

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[148] William Smith's Trinity Act of 1813 removed the penalties against the public profession of Unitarianism. See *Sunday School Movement*, ed. by Orchard and Briggs, p. 24.
[149] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 1st edn (London: 1803).
[150] Wall, p. 309.
[151] [Lancaster], *British System*. For examples of deviations at local level from unsectarianism see below chapter 4.
[152] [Joseph Lancaster] *British System*, p. xii.

was a clear breach of the unsectarian ideal which was the distinguishing feature of Lancaster's plan, yet he allowed this information to be published in a book about his scheme. Certainly there was a liberality about Lancaster's approach. This liberal ethos of Lancaster's vision for schooling was further well expressed in the following remark: 'Therefore every master must be left at liberty to pursue the path of his own choice,...'[153] And again:

> It most probably would not be thought proper to insist upon, or enforce, any particular modes of tuition, religious systems, or creeds. If a teacher was honest, assiduous, and careful, it is as much as any society ought to expect from him.[154]

Lancaster never attempted to influence the beliefs of those in his care. In addressing parents he wrote:

> It is by no means designed, or even wished, that your children should be educated in a Religious profession, or attend that Religious Worship that you do not approve, and which is different from your own.[155]

Already in the first edition of *Improvements* Lancaster articulated his educational vision in the following terms which must be quoted in full because of their importance:

> Let me add, that a society for this purpose should be established on general Christian principles, and on them only. Mankind are [*sic*] divided into sects, and individuals think very differently on religious subjects, from the purest motives; and that gracious common Parent, who loves all his children alike, beholds with approbation every one who worships him in sincerity. Yet it cannot be reasonably expected that conscientious men should promote a religious opinion directly contrary to their own; a Presbyterian, Baptist, Quaker, or any other, cannot, with sincerity, sacrifice their opinions to those of their amiable and Christian brethren in the establishment. Neither can the last, conscientiously, unite entirely in opinion with those of other denominations; but the grand basis of Christianity alone, is broad enough for the whole bulk of mankind to stand on, and join hands as children of one family..... let the friends of youth, among every denomination of Christians, exalt the standard of Education, and rally round it for their preservation; laying aside all religious differences in opinion, and pursue two grand objects:- The promotion of good morals; and the instruction of youth in useful learning, adapted to their respective situations.[156]

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[153] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 1st edn, p. 40. 3rd edn (London: Darton and Harvey, 1805), p. 195.
[154] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 1st edn, p. 39.
[155] Quotation from a leaflet in the Lancaster papers cited by Wall, p. 208.
[156] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 1st edn, pp. 24-26. Repeated in 3rd edn (1805), p. 184.

In the third edition of *Improvements* Lancaster also remarked:

> Alas! my brethren and fellow Christians of every denomination, you have been contending whose influence should be greatest in society, while a national benefit has been lost.[157]

Thus education, for Lancaster, was not to be beholden to the propagation of the distinctive doctrines of any individual denomination. Denominations might fairly seek to spread their message among their own adherents, but it would be exploitative to try to proselytize beyond those boundaries. The essential virtues could be inculcated in children without 'violating the sanctuary of private religious opinion in any mind'.[158] The care should be not to add proselytes and make nominal Protestants or Catholics but rather 'to exalt, by precept and example, the beauty and excellency of our Holy Religion'.[159]

A clear demarcation of the requirements for religious instruction was published around five years after the third edition of Lancaster's *Improvements*. But there is some question of how far Lancaster may have had sole responsibility for the publication of those requirements. By 1810 because of financial difficulties Lancaster had already been subjected to supervision by a small committee, and Joseph Fox,[160] a dominant personality on that committee, may have had a decisive hand in shaping the details. By comparison with the spirit of love and enthusiasm for learning the Scriptures, and the stress on the religious character of the teacher himself, which was reflected in the chapter of *Improvements* especially devoted to the teaching of Religious Instruction,[161] the provisions of 1810 reflect a somewhat more prescriptive and indeed bureaucratic ethos:

> It ought to be a fundamental article in the regulations of these schools, that the instruction be confined to *general principles*, and that no book should be introduced but the Holy Scriptures, or lessons extracted therefrom, Watts's Hymns for children, and lessons for spelling and arithmetic. That on being admitted into the school, the children of churchmen should be registered as such, and the children of dissenters as such. That on Sundays they should assemble at the school, in the morning and

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[157] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 3rd edn, p. viii.
[158] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 3rd edn, p. ix.
[159] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 3rd edn, p. xi.
[160] Fox, Joseph (1775–1816), dental surgeon and philanthropist. One of the early supporters of Lancaster and his system of schooling, who saved the Royal Lancasterian Society from bankruptcy in 1808. Fox became the first secretary of the Society. Unlike many of the original collaborators in the RLI, who were Quakers, Fox was a Baptist. See Wall, p. 27.
[161] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 3rd edn, pp. 161-62.

> afternoon, previous to the hour for divine service, and the children of each denomination, be conducted from thence, to their respective places for worship. As these schools can only be universally beneficial by adhering rigidly [*sic*] to a line of conduct, which shall embrace the whole community, it is particularly necessary that nothing which is peculiar to any sect or party be introduced. [...] Catechisms or creeds should not be introduced into the school, as confusion will be produced by any sect, [...] who shall insist upon introducing those peculiar to their persuasion; which may induce persons of other denominations, with equal propriety, to introduce their catechism or creed. Where a desire for the teaching of these children prevails, the children of those who belong to the establishment may go to the church at stated times, to be catechized by the clergyman, and those children who belong to the dissenters, may go to their meeting houses to be catechized by their respective ministers. Thus the ministers of each denomination will be able to watch over the children of their respective congregations.[162]

This plan was accompanied by model regulations applying both to the character of the weekday religious instruction and, crucially, to the arrangements for Sunday worship:

> That no book, pamphlet, or other paper, be introduced into the school, without being first presented to, and approved of by the committee; and that the same be confined to the Holy Scriptures, extracts therefrom, Watts's hymns for children, and lessons for spelling and arithmetic.[163]

Further:

> That the children shall attend every Sunday at those places for worship, to which, by their recommendations, they appear to belong; for which purpose they shall assemble at the school-room every morning and afternoon of that day, in sufficient time to go from thence to their respective places for worship. [164]

The schoolmaster had to attend every Sunday morning and afternoon to check where the children were going to worship and note absences. He escorted those children attending his own place of worship.[165] Consequently Lancaster and his associates in this way established a species of religious teaching which was strictly unsectarian in the weekday school, but this was not all. For from the time when a child was first entered on the register of the school along with basic personal details his denomination was recorded, and on Sundays it was a requirement that he should attend a place of worship. It was immaterial to Lancaster where that should be, but it meant that the unsectarian education of the school was complemented by an additional denominational experience. For Lancaster, therefore, the fulness of the

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[162] [Lancaster] *Instructions*, p. vi.
[163] ibid., pp. 14-15.
[164] ibid., p. 17.
[165] ibid., pp.18-19.

experience of unsectarianism involved the compulsory blending together of the generalized Christianity of the weekday school curriculum with the Sunday component of denominational worship and/or teaching. In view of my argument later in this thesis that the undenominationalism established through the 1870 Elementary Education Act was *sui generis*, I stress here that Lancaster's system was at this point quite different from the type of undenominationalism which took shape after the Forster Elementary Education Act of 1870, where any compulsory connection between undenominational day-school religious instruction and a worshipping community became illegal.[166]

One phrase which was highlighted in Lancaster's publicity was 'general Christian principles'.[167] Much here turns on what could be regarded as such 'general Christian principles'. Lancaster also expressly proclaimed that his system advocated teaching only 'uncontroverted Christian beliefs'. Given the involvement of Unitarians from the very earliest days in the building up of the Royal Lancasterian Institution, the outsider might be forgiven for some perplexity in wondering how precisely all this could be accommodated in the Lancasterian system of schools. One might suspect that avoiding controverted doctrines would mean excluding the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement. However, I have already alluded to Lancaster's clear theological position; he was virulently opposed to Christian deviations such as Socinianism. Given the difficulties which arose later in the nineteenth century between the Unitarians and the BFSS, anyone who knew this much about Lancaster should have been clear that he was not contemplating a system which would accommodate Unitarian convictions.[168] But the problem might be that, in his writing about his school system, Lancaster did not express himself clearly enough to avoid confusion. I have noted that his polemical theological writing such as *Vindication* was, initially in any event, anonymous, so it is not now possible to be sure whether his orthodox theological position was clear to all who read his ideas about schooling. There is also the question of whether adherence to theological orthodoxy alone would have been enough to defuse the force of objections that his unsectarian plan was a threat to the stability of the Church of England.[169]

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[166] Elementary Education Act, 1870, section 7 (1).
[167] Cf. Wall, p. 323.
[168] See below chapter 7 on the BFSS and the Unitarians.
[169] Apart from quotations the term 'Establishment' where it occurs in the original sources has normally been rendered as the Church of England as this is more accurate than the rather broader range of meaning which now attaches to the term.

Lancaster was not afraid to acknowledge his own distinctive Christian commitment, but set limits to its effect on his teaching:

> I desire to avoid making the education given to such a large number of children in my institution a means of instilling my own *peculiar* religious tenets into their minds,.. I am a member of the society of Friends called Quakers. I wish to avoid bringing my peculiar religious opinions into public controversy. [170]

Lancaster could scarcely have been unaware of the predominant role played by the Church of England in educational provision at that time. This provision, he realised, would suffer if Dissenters sought to block any extension of schooling because they feared the risk of ceding additional power to the Church of England and, vice versa, Church of England clergy had shown themselves resistant to proposals which originated from the Dissenters out of their concern for the stability and integrity of the Anglican Church. Such Anglican clergy believed that this would be affected if Dissenting influence were permitted to expand.

Lancaster foresaw the dangers of control in the hands of one powerful denomination being abused and it is probably in that context that he wrote:

> It has been generally conceived, that if any particular sect obtained the principal care in a national system of education, that party would soon be likely to possess the greatest power and influence in the state.[171]

Such a comment almost certainly revealed his desire to check the power and influence of the Anglican Church. A fear that the clergy of the Church of England should aggrandize themselves too much also produced more overt opposition from Dissenters to any proposal for extending education; on the other hand those same clergy opposed any initiative from Dissenters out of a fear that this might prejudice the interests of the Church of England.

Lancaster's view of the Bible was that the scriptures were 'dictated and written by Divine inspiration'.[172] In order to be on a sound foundation education should therefore be scripturally-based. In the light of his view of the Bible Lancaster believed that a scripture catechism should be used with children.[173] If this kind of education had been available at an

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[170] Lancaster, *Improvements,* 3rd edn, pp. xii-xiii.
[171] ibid., pp. 185-86.
[172] ibid., p. 155.
[173] ibid., p. 157.

earlier time, it would, he believed, have provided a bulwark against the attractions of Deism, an interesting assertion in the light of the attacks on Lancaster himself as a Deist.[174]

Lancaster cited Freame as part of desirable school furniture.[175] Financial records from the early days of the Lancasterian movement show the costs of printing large numbers of copies of Freame for distribution to the new schools being set up on the Lancasterian plan.[176] However, it is unclear when precisely Lancaster began using Freame. His accounts for the period June 1801 to Midsummer 1804 do not, as was the case later, mention Freame, but do itemize expenditure on Trimmer's *Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature, and Use of the Holy Scriptures.*[177]

Trimmer wrote that the *Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature, and Use of the Holy Scriptures* was originally designed for charity schools.[178] It is instructive to compare two versions of the book: the second edition published in 1781 and the tenth in 1799. The earlier second edition is a curious item. The content did not fairly reflect the title of the book: by far the greater part was devoted to a study of the world of nature and on that basis moved to a consideration of the designer who must perforce lie behind that creation. Only in the closing pages of the second edition was the Bible discussed, and even then only to relate the story of the Exodus and the giving of the Ten Commandments: there was nothing here to mark out the material as specifically Christian rather than Jewish.

The tenth edition was a significant enhancement by comparison with the second edition of 1781. It was a much broader introduction to the character of the Bible and how to begin reading it.[179] In that later edition there was also an acknowledgement of the attacks on Christianity and the Bible. There is an inconsistency here between what Trimmer wrote about the value of the Bible in the second edition and that of which she subsequently accused Lancaster: Trimmer appeared to have had a change of heart about the adequacy of the Bible in teaching in response no doubt to the changed historical circumstances of the *fin-de-siècle.*

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[174] ibid., p. 155.
[175] [Lancaster] *British System*, p. 47. The reader may find the location of this advice in Lancaster's text incongruous.
[176] McGarry, *Lancaster*, p. 77 asserts that Lancaster edited Freame although I cannot find evidence that this was so. He also comments (p. 366) that there were early objections to the use of Freame, but does not give any specific references to support this statement.
[177] Lancaster, *Improvements*, 3rd edn, pp. 13-19.
[178] Sarah Trimmer, *An easy introduction to the knowledge of nature, and reading the holy scriptures. Adapted to the capacities of children*, 10th edn (London, 1799). See Preface, pp. vi–vii.
[179] For discussion of the Bible see Trimmer, *Introduction*, 10th edn, pp. 142-47.

In the second edition of 1781 she had written, 'The Bible contains all that is necessary for us to know and practise, and is truly called the *Word* of GOD, tho' penned by Men.'[180]

With this statement one would hardly see how Trimmer would be at variance with Lancaster's emphasis on the Bible alone.[181] But this statement was missing from the tenth edition. It says something for Lancaster, whose reputation is deservedly one of antagonism with his collaborators, that he did not exploit this inconsistency in his defence against Trimmer. Perhaps it should be said of Trimmer that, if she had changed her mind by the time she produced the tenth edition, she would be at one with many of her contemporaries.

No doubt even without the fraught political anxieties of the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth century there would have been criticisms of Lancaster's unsectarian plan of teaching, but this was exacerbated by the strained political temper of the times. For in the second edition Trimmer had been writing some ten years before the French Revolution and it is hard to convey through the written word alone the impact this event had made on those who believed that the stability of the State was in danger from the potential spread of this revolutionary movement. In this understanding, any threat to the teaching of the Church of England was a potential danger to national security. Yet even if Trimmer had withdrawn her earlier view that the Bible alone was enough, the later reworking of the book still made no reference to any need for supplementation through the specific teaching of the Church of England.

Summary

Thus, Wall's work notwithstanding, it can be argued, and indeed documented, that unsectarianism as a potential solution to the religious difficulty in English education achieved a hitherto unique prominence with Lancaster's theological commitment. But, despite that commitment, Lancaster could, on occasion, compromise the unsectarian principle in order to advance the cause of educational extension. Freame's *Catechism* provided the basis for the

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[180] Trimmer, *Introduction*, 2nd edition, p. 168.

[181] The exclusive emphasis on the Bible by Lancaster and his followers as an attempt to avoid the differences dividing Protestant Christians had been prefigured as early as 1637 by Chillingworth's declaration 'the Bible, I say the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants'. See Martin Fitzpatrick in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 212.

actual classroom practice of unsectarian teaching, although this choice lost something of the strong doctrinal content of Gastrell discussed in the previous chapter.

I have here introduced for the first time mention of the component which became a significant part of the unsectarianism of the later BFSS: the emphasis on the need for weekday religious teaching to be complemented by attendance at Sunday worship is crucial for my argument later in the thesis about the nature of undenominationalism and whether it was connected to a church community or not. In the following chapter I shall consider some of the objections raised against Lancaster's scheme.

Chapter 3

Objections to Lancaster and unsectarian religious instruction and the response from Lancaster and his supporters

Introduction

Having thus far expounded the nature and origins of Lancaster's unsectarian approach to religious teaching, I shall now examine objections put forward against this scheme. I shall consider first the reaction to Lancaster from Sarah Trimmer. In view of Wall's judgment that Trimmer's assessment of Lancaster was determinative for subsequent critics of his plan, it is important to look carefully at her initial judgment about his system.[182] By comparison with the more detailed treatment of 152 pages in her November 1805 work the review of 1803 was relatively brief and not without generosity of spirit.[183] This review of 1803 showed warmth towards Lancaster as a person and she commended his monitorial method of teaching. Her willingness to see the value in Lancaster's work was maintained in her 1805 work.[184] She was still keen to say that there was much in Lancaster's work which was worthy of adoption. But in one area she expressed her dissatisfaction:

> We cannot agree with him in his desire to confine the *Religious Instruction*, of this large class of children, to a few *general points*, in which persons of all religious persuasions may agree; for this would lead immediately to DEISM. [185]

However, this was possibly an unfair account of Lancaster's plan and system, though not as unfair as Daubeny's attack below. Trimmer took no account of Lancaster's emphasis on a scriptural education and the delight which Lancaster displayed towards the Scriptures.

Lancaster retorted that parents could teach their own children doctrine (that is, of a particular sect or denomination) and despatch them to Sunday schools. But it may have been fair comment from Mrs. Trimmer that poor parents would not be sufficiently well-informed to

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[182] Wall, pp. 325-26.
[183] See Trimmer's review of the first edition of *Improvements* in *The Guardian of Education*, 2, 11 (March 1803), pp. 171-75.
[184] See the final page of that work, p. 152.
[185] Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 2, 11 (March 1803), p. 172.

take on this responsibility; nor were they themselves always punctilious about their religious duties so as to provide a good role model for their children.[186] Religious education was for her, on the contrary, an 'every day business' and children needed the benefit of the comprehensive knowledge which would be provided by a day school.[187] When Lancaster suggested that parental teaching could be further supplemented by Sunday schools, it should be remembered that many of these had an interdenominational character to them. Additionally, in relation to Mrs. Trimmer's criteria, they often lacked the clear clerical control and influence that would make them acceptable in her eyes.

Her anxiety about Lancaster's plan was linked to her concern to preserve the stability of the established church. Her view of Christianity was that the valid form of the faith had been definitively established in England at the time of the Reformation:

> They (sc. Mankind) are required to receive Christianity as it is revealed from heaven in the Scripture, and to transmit it in the same unmutilated state to their children from generation to generation.[188]

Against Lancaster's urging that there was a need for a national system of education based on the plan he was proposing, Trimmer argued that a national system of education had in fact already been set up as part of the Reformation settlement in England.[189] She hoped that the Legislature would do nothing which threatened the stability of the Church of England. She was, however, committed to toleration of Dissenters at a time when there were still legal restrictions on Dissenting communities. Dissenters should be free to educate their children as they wished.[190] But those baptized in the Church of England should not be deprived of learning the peculiar doctrines of that Church,[191] and she had no sympathy for what would later be called a conscience clause, whereby the children of Dissenters in schools associated with the Church of England could be exempted from learning distinctive Anglican formularies.[192]

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[186] Sarah Trimmer, *A Comparative View of the New Plan of Education promulgated by Mr. Joseph Lancaster in his Tracts concerning the Instruction of the Children of the Labouring Part of the Community; and of The System of Christian Education founded by our Pious Forefathers for the Initiation of the Young Members of the Established Church in the Principles of the Reformed Religion* (London: Rivington, 1805), p. 10.
[187] ibid.
[188] ibid., p. 174. For evidence of her view that this Christianity which should remain 'unmutilated' arose at the Reformation see, for example, pp. 149 and 152.
[189] ibid., p. 5.
[190] See chapter 1 above for a discussion of the role of toleration in the background to the theme of this thesis.
[191] Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 2, 11 (March 1803), pp. 173-74.
[192] Trimmer, *Comparative View*, p. 150.

Trimmer perceived a parallel between Lancaster's scheme and the growth of a non-denominational school system on the continent, but it is unclear whether Lancaster was aware of this development. She wrote:

> We see among the higher orders at this time on the continent, and even in our own country, the sad effects of these *generalizing plans* which, as we shewed at the commencement of our work, began with the *Philanthropine Institutions* in Germany.[193]

Trimmer considerably expanded her initial evaluation of Lancaster's scheme in her 1805 publication *Comparative View*. This work was dedicated to supporting the work of the SPCK. She cited Lancaster relating an anecdote about the American philosopher Franklin, so he may have been aware of Franklin's non-denominational school.[194] She still supported the mechanical part of Lancaster's system.[195] But her book concentrated on the religious and moral aspects of Lancaster's plan.

Trimmer concluded her review by urging her readers that they should nonetheless read Lancaster's pamphlet despite its limitations. But in her material in the *The Guardian of Education* there were two examples of possible inconsistencies over her attitude towards generalized Christianity. First, she cited with approval the work of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Fénelon of Cambray's *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter.*[196] Trimmer wrote:

> Indeed, the system contained in the learned Fénelon's Treatise is such as the Protestant parent may safely follow; for it is founded on the broad basis of CHRISTIANITY, and has very little reference to the peculiar tenets of the Romish Church.[197]

Trimmer's evaluation of Fénelon is probably fair. In respect of death and the soul Fénelon did not write of Purgatory, for example. Nor was there any distinctive Roman teaching in the sections on Holy Communion or Eucharist. The presence of teaching on Confirmation,

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[193] ibid., p. 174.
[194] ibid., p. 22.
[195] ibid., p. 6.
[196] F. De Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter, by the Author of Telemachus [F. De Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon] to which is added A Small Tract of Instructions for the Conduct of Young Ladies of the Highest Rank with Suitable Devotions Annexed. Done into English, and revised by Dr. George Hickes*, 2nd ed., (London: Jonah, Bowyer, 1708).
[197] Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 2, 12 (April 1803), p. 210.

however, might not have been acceptable to Dissenters. Second, in the same issue she commended Dr. Watts's *Treatise on the Education of Children and Youth* even though she acknowledged he was not a minister of the Church of England.[198]

Trimmer could not accept this generalized system, probably not because of any intrinsic conceptual error which she could identify, but because she did not think it could be realized in practice and because of its likely adverse effect on the Church of England. She noted the tendency to divide the Christian world into sects and parties. But she regarded the Church of England as above such divisions. But members of the Church of England should, she believed, be scrupulous in teaching carefully every point of the doctrine of that Church to their children.

The concept of a general Christianity, Trimmer believed, was impossible:

> Nor do we conceive it practicable to compose a system, which shall, in every respect, suit all the various sects and parties that differ from the National Church.[199]

A second example of Trimmer's inconsistency related to Dr. Watts's *Divine Songs for Children*. Trimmer wrote approvingly of Watts because he agreed with the Church of England on fundamental theological points such as the Atonement and Divinity of Jesus, the ministry of angels, the existence of the Devil and the doctrine of the Trinity.[200] Watts himself was keen to transcend denominational divisions. Of his hymn collection he wrote:

> You will find here nothing that savours of party; the children of high and low degree, of the church of England dissenters, baptized in infancy or not, may all join together in these songs.[201]

Trimmer was concerned about those Christians who rejected such doctrines. But, as I have indicated already, this should not have included Lancaster.

If Trimmer was indeed inconsistent in her attitude to generalized expressions of Christianity, how might this be explained? It may have been because, first, Watts was not setting out to

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[198] ibid., pp. 219-20. On Watts see also further below.
[199] Trimmer, *Comparative View*, p. 320.
[200] *The Guardian of Education*, 2, 14, (June 1803), p. 361.
[201] Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs attempted in easy language for the use of Children* (Derby and London: John and Charles Mozley, 1850), Preface, p. viii.

establish a system of schooling as Lancaster was and, second, his doctrinal orthodoxy was unimpeachable: there was no suggestion that key doctrines such as the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus and the Atonement were compromised. Similarly with Fénelon, the Catholic Church would hardly be harbouring deviants from doctrinal orthodoxy. When Trimmer was active, there was no threat from an expanding Catholicism in England. *Protestant* Dissent, however, accommodated deviations such as Deism and Unitarianism, regarded as subversive by the doctrinally orthodox such as Trimmer. It is likely to have been these fissures within Protestant Christianity which Trimmer saw as the greatest danger to the Church of England.

The difference of opinion between Trimmer and Lancaster was also partly a mismatch of their assumptions. Lancaster stood in the tradition of the social concern of Raikes in wanting to give basic instruction to poor children, albeit during the week rather than for a few hours on a Sunday. But Trimmer, although writing about day-school education and indeed acknowledging the inadequacy of instruction on Sundays alone, compared Lancaster's scheme with the catechizing carried out in a denominational context in parish churches. Here she judged Lancaster to be inadequate.

Lancaster had called for education to be a national concern. But Trimmer objected that it had already been so since the Act of Uniformity.[202] Religion, for Trimmer, must of necessity have some connection with the State.[203] For Trimmer the Church of England was a tolerant church. It could not be charged with proselytism; it would be content with retaining those who belonged to that church already.[204]

Trimmer cited Lancaster as saying:

> A reverence for the sacred name of God and the scriptures of truth, a detestation of vice, a love of veracity, a due attention to duties to parents, relations, and society; [...] may be inculcated in any seminary for youth without violating the sanctuary of private religious opinions in any mind.[205]

But she regarded this as inadequate: sound day-school instruction was necessary because parents were inadequate and Sunday schools could not give a comprehensive knowledge of Christianity.

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[202] See chapter 1 above.
[203] Trimmer, *Comparative View*, p. 9.
[204] ibid., p. 13.
[205] ibid., pp. 8-9.

Trimmer was critical of Lancaster's catechetical scheme for religious instruction. She gave an example of the kind of problem which showed how Lancaster's approach was vulnerable:

> Question. Is the man blessed unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity?
> Answer. Psalm xxxii. verse 2. Blessed is the man untowhom [*sic*] the Lord imputeth not iniquity...[206]

But suppose, said Trimmer, a child asked the meaning of the word 'iniquity' and what was meant by imputing iniquity and how could any man be blessed? 'The Christian who believes in the atonement of Christ, and the Socinian who denies it would not agree in their answers; for no point of doctrine has been more controverted than these.'[207]

Additionally Trimmer said that, until Freame was re-published, it was not possible to know what Lancaster considered as Institutes of Christianity.[208] But was she also ignorant of the existence of Freame already? Freame was readily available and this suggests Trimmer had not been thorough enough in her investigation and hence was unfair on Lancaster.

Having maintained that it was not clear what Lancaster meant by the phrase 'General Christian Principles', Trimmer answered her own question. She presumed that it meant that 'the doctrines of Faith, as held by all parties, are to be excluded from his system'. As evidence of that assumption she cited Lancaster's public advertisements in which he declared his aim of instructing children 'in the leading principles of Christianity expressed in the language of Holy Scripture, without comment'.[209]

Trimmer developed her description of Lancaster's system as being built on the 'basis of morality alone, under the name of the '*Leading Principles of Christianity*'.[210] She acknowledged that what she regarded as the national system of education had failed, not because of any inherent weakness or error in the system itself, but because it had not been properly applied. She criticized the weakness in children's rote responses to a catechism,

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[206] This quotation originated in Freame, p. 149.
[207] Trimmer, *Comparative View*, pp. 58-59.
[208] ibid., p. 60.
[209] Trimmer, *Comparative View*, p. 77. Compare Lancaster's use of the phrase 'without comment' with the discussion in chapter 4 below of the key phrase 'without note or comment'.
[210] ibid., p. 124.

arguing for a more colloquial form of catechizing in which the language of the children's responses would have revealed their understanding of what the teacher had taught them.[211]

> Though I conceive the Church of England Catechism to be superior to all others, it is far from my intention to depreciate those very useful ones composed by Dr. Watts (I mean the two first of his set) and others, in which there is nothing inimical to the established religion, but much to instruct and edify.[212]

If the analysis above of Freame is recalled, Trimmer's point has some force here. Although Lancaster traced his unsectarianism back to Gastrell's *Institutes*, in using Freame he lost much of the doctrinal content of Gastrell.

A further strand in Trimmer's argument against Lancaster's system was a practical one. She was sympathetic to having assistant schoolmasters trained under Lancaster's plan brought into Charity schools to instruct pupils that:

> there has always been upon earth a visible church, to which the Church of England, as a branch of the Holy Catholic or Christian Church, essentially and properly belongs; that this church is distinguished by having Holy Sacraments ordained by Christ himself, as outward signs of heavenly blessings bestowed on mankind by the grace of God through Christ, and as means for obtaining an interest in these blessings; that there is also in our Church an order of ministers regularly ordained, and many other important truths, of which there is no intimation in Mr. L's plan.[213]

But she questioned whether, in practice, Lancaster's assistants would be capable of rising to the great challenge of turning men from darkness to light.

This analysis of the reception of and reaction to Lancaster's version of unsectarianism is instructive in the context of the thesis which is being developed here (and indeed in that of educational history more broadly) in that it enables the reader to appreciate the origins of an unsectarian solution to the religious difficulty in English education.

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[211] Given what has been said about Freame, this would have been a fair criticism on Trimmer's part.

[212] ibid., p. 128 footnote. Isaac Watts, *Dr. Watts's Catechisms for Children with the Catechism of the Assembly of Divines* (London: Williams and Son, [n.d.]) There was a first Set of Catechisms for Little Children. One deduces from the Second Set for children from ages 7 to 12 (the pagination of this begins again at p. 1) that the First Set is for what we would call Infants. There was also a Historical Catechism based on scripture history. In the second set there was a question and answer format and underneath the answer relevant scripture references were supplied. Watts is thus superior to Freame.

[213] ibid., p. 151.

Suspicion of Lancaster could also be linked to Anglican Evangelicals' wariness about lay leadership.[214] Other objections to Lancaster's work came from the clerical hierarchy of the Church of England. Indeed something of a national storm was now beginning to gather on account of Lancaster's new system. In a sermon preached at Salisbury Cathedral in June 1806 the Archdeacon of Salisbury, Charles Daubeny, fulminated against what he claimed were the deistical principles of Lancaster's system.[215] Lancaster quoted Daubeny as saying that dissent from the Church of England was always an evil to be lamented.[216]

Daubeny, according to Fox, argued that every government had the right to establish its own religion.[217] Daubeny had attacked Lancaster on account of the latter's Quaker connections. He condemned Quakers as an anti-christian sect who, if they condescended to use the Bible, made of it what they would.[218] However, as part of his self-defence, Lancaster was in the meantime corresponding with the Archbishop of Canterbury to assure him that he intended no harm to the Established Church and that his school had received admiring visits from Anglican bishops. Moreover Lancaster expressed his regrets at not being a member of the Church of England himself.[219]

But Daubeny's attack on Lancaster[220] was not, *contra* the assertion of Wall, a simple recapitulation of Trimmer's work.[221] For one crucial distinction between Trimmer and Daubeny was that, while Trimmer indicated the danger, as she perceived it, of Lancaster's system leading to Deism, Daubeny unjustly accused Lancaster directly of this unorthodox

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[214] See Hylson-Smith, p. 12. On this cf. also Daubeny's suspicion towards the Church of England promoter of education Hannah More discussed in Anne Stott, ed., 'Hannah More and the Blagdon Controversy 1794-1802' in ed. by Mark Smith and Stephen Taylor, *Evangelicalism in the Church of England c. 1790-c. 1900. Church of England Record Society 12.* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), p. 5.

[215] Charles Daubeny, *A Charge delivered at the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Sarum, June 1806* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1806) But this kind of attack on Lancaster was vague and unfocussed since there were varieties of Deism ranging from a God who, after creation, took no further part in the world to rejection of revelation.

[216] Lancaster cited p. 10 of Daubeny's *Charge.* See Joseph Lancaster, *An Appeal for Justice in the Cause of Ten Thousand Poor and Orphan Children; and for the Honour of the Holy Scriptures: being a reply, exposing the misrepresentations in the charge delivered at the Visitation of Charles Daubeny, Archdeacon of Sarum, 'June 1806'*, 2nd edn (London: Darton and Harvey and others, 1806), p. 6.

[217] Fox, *Scriptural Education*, p. 3. The SPCK was hostile towards Quakers, putting them in the same category as Socinians and Deists. See Craig Rose, 'The Origins of the SPCK 1699-1716', in ed. by Walsh and others, pp. 174-75, 178 and 186-87.

[218] ibid., p. 6.

[219] Lancaster, *An Appeal*, p. 7.

[220] Charles Daubeny, *A Letter Respectfully Addressed to the Most Reverend and Right Reverend the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England on Mr. Joseph Lancaster's Plan for the Education of the Lower Orders in the Community* (London: John Stockdale, 1806).

[221] Wall, pp. 325-26.

position. However, when Daubeny argued that, in teaching children, the Bible alone was not enough, he in one way struck a more modern pose. For he touched on what today might be regarded as a hermeneutical issue - that the Bible must always be viewed in some form of interpretative framework and that it could not be a neutral text. 'Without note or comment' as espoused by the unsectarians had a deceptive simplicity about it, but was for critics such as Daubeny and other later opponents of the unsectarian approach an inadequate treatment of the Bible. Daubeny had contended that 'merely to admit the BIBLE as constituting the basis of religious opinions is, in fact, to admit DEFINITIVELY NOTHING.'[222]

So while Daubeny's accusation of Lancaster's heterodoxy was simply untrue, his view of Lancaster's use of the Bible can today perhaps be more readily appreciated. Thus Daubeny's argument was stronger than Wall allows. Furthermore the educational psychology of that era argued that early impressions were paramount before reason was developed to a degree sufficient for children to make judgments.[223] Young children should not therefore be precluded from learning distinctive denominational doctrines or creeds.

I shall now consider the attack on Lancaster made by Dr. Herbert Marsh in 1811. The significance of Marsh's attack was not in any new critique of Lancaster's plan. But if it is not so much for the freshness of his arguments that Marsh is worthy of attention, it is for two other reasons. First, his position as the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge was significant within the church hierarchy and gave weight to his declarations.[224] Second, although his attack was couched very much as a defence of the kind of provision which the SPCK charity schools had been trying to provide for over a century, it did in fact give a new stimulus to a concern on the part of the Church of England for the education of children from the lower classes. This stimulus was reflected in the creation in the same year as Marsh's sermon of the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.

Marsh's attack on Lancaster was delivered in a sermon in which he articulated a defence of the kind of religious education which the SPCK Charity schools had been seeking to provide for a century or more. The sermon was preached on Thursday 13 June 1811 at St. Paul's

[222] Daubeny, p. 26, according to Lancaster.
[223] So Daubeny in his *A Collection of the Charges Delivered by the Late Archdeacon Daubeny*, pp. 23-24, cited Wall, p. 332.
[224] Herbert Marsh (1757-1839), later bishop successively of Llandaff from 1816 and of Peterborough from 1819.

Cathedral in London on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Charity school children educated in London and Westminster. The sermon was defined as a bridge between the old Charity school movement and the new National Society system.[225] Entitled 'National Education must be conducted on the principles of the National Religion', the sermon argued that the Protestant Reformers had envisaged a system of education which was to be conducted under the aegis of the parochial clergy and that, to benefit from that system, regular attendance was required at the Parish church on the Sabbath (*sic*).

Marsh saw the foundation of education in the responsibility of the parish clergyman to catechise the children of his parish.[226] To ensure that religious education was securely founded, the seventy-seventh Canon had laid down that every schoolmaster should not only receive his licence from the Bishop of the Diocese, but also subscribe to the Liturgy of the Church of England and the Thirty-Nine Articles.[227] The seventy-ninth Canon required schoolmasters both to use the Catechism and to bring their pupils to the Parish Church.[228] This Liturgy, wrote Marsh, was confirmed by the law of the land and must be regarded as the *National* [my emphasis] Religion. The concept of basing a national system of education on the national religion had been used earlier by John Bowles, but Marsh gave it added weight. To act otherwise was to do irreparable damage to that National Religion. This affirmation by Marsh was, however, combined with a recognition of the rights of Dissenters to worship in their own way and to educate their children in their own principles.[229] But he was critical of members of the Church of England supporting educational systems where, for example, the Church of England liturgy was disregarded, for to do so was a betrayal.[230]

When he turned specifically to comment on Lancaster's system, Marsh did not, however, analyse what Lancaster referred to as the uncontroverted principles of Christianity but only

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[225] Cornish, I, p. 94, citing Canon J. G. Overton, the ecclesiastical historian of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
[226] Marsh, p. 3.
[227] Canon 77 under the heading 'None to teach School without Licence' read 'No man shall teach either in publick school, or private house, but such as shall be allowed by the Bishop of the diocese, or Ordinary of the place,...and also except he shall first subscribe to the first and third Articles afore-mentioned simply, and to the two first clauses of the second Article.' [n.a.] *The Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), p. 33.
[228] On Canon 79 under the heading 'The Duty of Schoolmasters' reads in part 'All Schoolmasters shall teach in English or Latin, as the children are able to bear, the larger or shorter Catechism [...] they shall train them up with such sentences of holy Scripture, as shall be most expedient to induce them to all godliness;' [n.a.] *The Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical,* p. 34.
[229] Marsh, p. 7.
[230] ibid., p. 8.

condemned the idea.[231] It was understandable, Marsh argued, that Dissenters should support such schools providing generalized Christianity because the children raised up in them would become indifferent to the Church of England. Neutrality in respect of creeds was a kind of hostility towards them.[232]

Within the Church of England other opposition to Lancaster came mostly from many of the old 'orthodox' or High Church clergy. The High Church school within the Church of England was clear in its hostility to Dissent. After Samuel Whitbread approached the Prince Regent in December 1813 to gain support for Lancaster's scheme, the Prince had asked that the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Lancasterian Institution be sent to Dr. Manners-Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury.[233] The Archbishop accepted that parents should have the liberty to bring up their own children through instilling in them the religious opinions of their own sect of Christianity.[234] But he distinguished individual education, that is within the family, from national education. A scheme of education as that practised by Lancaster would be dangerous to the ecclesiastical establishment.

In sum the crux of the opposition to Lancaster seemed to be that, as with Tyndale many centuries earlier, Lancaster bypassed the teachings of the Church and led his pupils directly to a basic Christianity.[235]

This account of three of the more prominent critics of Lancaster has been given to illustrate a number of points. Not the least of these is to give an indication of the sheer strength and breadth of the opposition he personally faced and thereby to put his achievement of establishing, and maintaining his unsectarian system, into its own context. It shows also, however, how for social-historical reasons that lie outside this study, reaction came in different guises that highlight social and other tensions operative at the time of Lancaster's work. There were those who feared the breakdown of religion, those who thought Lancaster was wrong theologically and, perhaps, most obviously in the light of historical events abroad, those who feared the breakdown of society itself.

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[231] ibid., p. 11 *et seq.*
[232] ibid., p. 13.
[233] Mora Dickson, *Joseph Lancaster. Teacher Extraordinary* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1986), p. 167. Charles Manners-Sutton (1755-1828) Archbishop of Canterbury 1805-28.
[234] The article in *A Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd edn (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) notes Manners-Sutton's sympathy towards Dissenters, but not to Roman Catholic emancipation. See p. 1028.
[235] Dickson, p. 115.

The counter-attack by Lancaster and his supporters

Both Lancaster himself and his supporters responded to these attacks on his system. I shall consider first Lancaster's own defence, for in the early years of his campaign he was still able to operate independently to a considerable degree. Later, as the tensions within the leadership of the Royal Lancasterian Institution grew, Lancaster's associates took on more of the responsibility for counteracting the criticism of his plan.

Lancaster's own defence of his system against these attacks began in a pamphlet written in 1806, only months after the publication of Daubeny's critique.[236] The pamphlet started with a rebuttal of Daubeny's attacks, but went on, despite its title, to consider Trimmer's ideas at considerable length. Lancaster gave short shrift to the accusations against him of Socinianism and Deism, denouncing them as politically motivated.[237] In rejecting Daubeny's false accusation of being a Deist, Lancaster listed his beliefs in five areas of doctrine, which, he argued, were not accepted by Deists: the divinity of Jesus Christ; that scripture was given by inspiration and contained the written revealed will of God; the fall of man; the Trinity and Justification by Christ.[238]

To Daubeny's suggestion that to use the Bible alone as the basis of religious opinions was to admit nothing of substance,[239] Lancaster objected by referring to the sixth of the Thirty Nine articles of the Church of England that Scripture contained all things necessary for salvation.[240] Against the accusation that he was indifferent or even hostile to creeds Lancaster had a two-point response. He declared himself unequivocally in favour of using the Apostles'

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[236] Joseph Lancaster, *An Appeal for Justice in the Cause of Ten Thousand Poor and Orphan Children; and for the Honour of the Holy Scriptures: being a reply, exposing the misrepresentations in the charge delivered at the Visitation of Charles Daubeny, Archdeacon of Sarum, 'June 1806'*, 2nd edn (London: Darton and Harvey and others, 1806).

[237] Lancaster, *An Appeal*, p. 18.

[238] ibid., p. 13. Fox in *Scriptural Education* gave a sixth area which Lancaster did not mention in *An Appeal*, namely that salvation could be obtained only by the name of Christ and the oblation was finished on the cross, pp. 14-15. Joseph Fox, *A Scriptural Education the Glory of England: being a Defence of the Lancastrian* (*sic* – not Lancasterian) *Plan of Education, and the Bible Society in answer to the late publications of the Rev. C. Daubeny, Archdeacon of Sarum, the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth, the Rev. Mr. Spry etc. etc.* (London: 1810).

[239] See above in this chapter.

[240] Lancaster, *An Appeal*, p. 14. The introduction to this article reads: 'VI. Of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation. Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.'

Creed. But he clearly diverged from the practice of the Church of England in deprecating the Athanasian Creed, citing the precedent of Archbishop Tillotson.[241] Alluding to Trimmer, Lancaster said that of course he believed the Apostles' Creed: it was a just inference from the Bible. But he simply preferred to use the actual words of scripture itself.[242] Nor did he or Quakers in general have any problem with the teaching of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.[243]

But part of Lancaster's defence, in expressing warmth towards aspects of the Church of England, laid him open to a charge of inconsistency in his commitment to unsectarian religious instruction. He recognized Trimmer's praise for Watts's Hymns. But he also acknowledged that these were paraphrases of parts of the Book of Common Prayer, including the Anglican Catechism, the Morning and Evening Services, the Creed of Athanasius, the Litany, Festivals and the Communion service. Notwithstanding the Anglican echoes, Watts's hymns were used in Lancaster's school.[244]

For a teaching book Lancaster had originally used Sarah Trimmer's *An easy introduction to the knowledge of nature, and reading the holy scriptures* cited in the accounts near the beginning of the third edition of his *Improvements* but, realizing that he would be 'exposed to controversy', ceased using it and adopted a 'better' book and confined himself to that, namely the Bible.[245]

On the question of using the Bible alone 'without note or comment'[246] Lancaster said that 'the Scriptures were in the primitive Churches for some time, without comment'.[247] It is not exactly clear what Lancaster had in mind here for there is a sense in which the emerging scriptures of the New Testament were a commentary on the Hebrew Bible. But Lancaster

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[241] ibid., *An Appeal*, pp. 16-17. On John Tillotson (1630-1694) Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691, see Isabel Rivers in *ODNB*. Tillotson is reported to have said of the Athanasian Creed, 'I wish we were well rid of it'. Regarded as a Latitudinarian, he was known for his sympathy towards Dissenters.

[242] ibid., pp. 20-21.

[243] ibid., pp. 21-22.

[244] ibid., p. 23. Lancaster used, he stressed, the original edition, and not the Socinian version produced after Watts's death.

[245] ibid., pp. 32-33. This is at variance with what Fox stated in his *Scriptural Education*, p. 73. Fox was there keen to reject the view that Lancaster was lately seeking to bring the Bible into his schooling system: 'The plan of education in its several parts has been matured; but the Bible was the chief book for reading from the beginning.'

[246] See below chapter 4.

[247] ibid., p. 33. Cf. Fox in *Scriptural Education* argued that the Bible was read without comment in church services.

perhaps lacked a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of the emergence of the New Testament for this to be a sound argument. Lancaster also argued for the principle of 'without note or comment' by reference to Freame: 'He (sc. Freame) did it without any comment.'[248] Lancaster said that he thought there was hardly a text in Freame which was not in Gastrell, evidence from Lancaster that there was in his mind a direct line from Gastrell through Freame to his own plan.

To the accusation from Lancaster's opponents that he was setting up a rival system of national education when one already existed (even if, as Trimmer admitted, it was not working effectively), Lancaster was at pains to deny that he was establishing a national system.[249] At this relatively early stage in his endeavours Lancaster said:

> In all cases in which schools are established in the country the resident clergyman, and members of the church of England, who are willing to catechise the children, and take them to church at such times as they please, shall be at full liberty to so do.

Once a school was set up on his principles, the local community was to be free to 'engraft on it such religious opinions as they please.'[250]

The defence of Lancaster's original system was also undertaken by one of the inner circle of his supporters, Joseph Fox.[251] Fox was by profession a dental surgeon and also a philanthropist, whose later years were much devoted to the education of poor children. After attending a lecture by Lancaster in November 1807, he became a strong advocate of non-denominational religious teaching. His generosity was displayed when the following year he contributed £2,000 pounds towards Lancaster's debts of over £6,000, thus ensuring that the enterprise was not bankrupted. Fox became the first secretary of the newly-formed Royal Lancasterian Society and William Allen the first treasurer.[252] Shortly after Fox's death Lord Brougham attributed to Fox the survival of the Lancasterian plan.[253]

That someone other than Lancaster should take up arms in support of unsectarian religious education is unsurprising given that by 1810 the tensions within the original group were

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[248] ibid., p. 40.
[249] ibid., p. 35. The situation would later be different when the BFSS was well-established.
[250] ibid., p. 36.
[251] See Fox, *Scriptural Education* passim.
[252] On William Allen see further in chapter 4.
[253] House of Commons, 21 May 1816. On Fox (1775-1816) see R. A. Cohen in *ODNB*.

reaching breaking point. Fox recorded Lancaster's own rejection of the charges against him in his *An Appeal for Justice in the Cause of 10,000 Poor and Orphan Children, and for the Honour of the Holy Scriptures.*[254] But Daubeny had continued to rail against Lancaster despite the latter's *apologia* in his *Appeal.* Fox cited Lancaster as saying:

> Much as I love liberality, I do not want to see liberality extended at the expense of christianity. I love the christian religion too well to wish for a moment, that any integral part of christianity should be sacrificed to the boast of reason, the pomp and fallacy of theory, or the idle chimeras of any man's brain. [255]

Fox's defence was not so much an *apologia pro vita Lancasteri* as a more general defence of the foundational scriptural principle of the Royal Lancasterian Institution. By the time that Fox was writing this defence the tensions between Lancaster and the other leading members of the committee were already very strained, although the final breach was still several years in the future. Fox expounded Daubeny as arguing, first, that a government had a right to establish its own religion; and, second, that Lancaster's plan coalesced everyone into a deistical system. Fox, as a non-Quaker, responding to Daubeny's attack on Lancaster's Quaker associations, acknowledged that the Quaker rejection of baptism and the Lord's Supper was not to his taste; he did not view them as essential to salvation, but as a means of grace.[256]

Fox began his pamphlet with a brief attempt to defend Lancaster from personal aspersions against his character such as that he was not highly regarded by the Quakers.[257] To this objection he adduced Lancaster's relations with the Royal family[258] and played down the predominant role of the Quakers in the project.[259] Fox then directed most of his attention to a theological analysis of the relationship between the Church of England, Dissenters and the Reformation, focusing on scripture and its interpretation. The root of the problem, according

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[254] Fox, p. 14.
[255] Lancaster, *An Appeal*, p. 12.
[256] Fox, p. 10.
[257] Given the high reputation of the Quakers, to suggest that Lancaster was not in good standing would have adversely affected his reputation. Despite Fox's effort here Lancaster was eventually expelled from the Quaker fellowship. Certainly his financial problems would not have endeared him to Quaker society. See Fox, *Scriptural Education*, pp. 16-17.
[258] Fox argued for the *bona fides* of Lancaster on the basis of the support of the Royal Family. See *Scriptural Education*, p. 75.
[259] Fox tried to suggest that it was not Quakers who had taken the lead in establishing the Lancasterian system. While it would be true to state that many of the leading subscribers came from across the denominational spectrum, the inner circle of half a dozen or so Lancasterian protagonists were indeed Quakers. See Wall, p. 16.

to Fox, was Lancaster's determination to teach the scriptures 'without note or comment'.[260] To those who objected to this Fox countered that the Bible was read during church services and this, he believed, had made many people Christian.[261] There was a contrary view that the Bible in itself was nothing. It was significant only when it was interpreted, but Fox considered this a popish view.[262]

Daubeny had also argued that the Bible of a Dissenter might be a very different Bible from that of a member of the Church of England.[263] By this he presumably meant that the Bible became, as it were, different because of the diversity of interpretations. Such an opponent of Lancaster's scheme would say, 'For the Scripture is not a sufficient rule of faith, without an authentic interpreter'.[264] The church was in this view the only authentic judge of how the scriptures might be interpreted.[265] There was a danger of private judgment. The traditional role of the clergy as the providers of spiritual wisdom for the laity would be at risk.[266] It would also compromise the requirement of the parish clergy under the forty-ninth canon[267] to examine and instruct the young and ignorant persons of the parish and that under the fifty-ninth Canon[268] school-masters be licensed by the bishop.

In defence of his view of the Bible Fox described an imaginary council of Reformation dignitaries discussing the translation and availability of the scriptures. The Reformers, said Fox, would have been appalled at the idea that a system of education should be established 'of which christianity did not constitute an essential part.' [269] Fox implied that separatists were regarded as enemies. But who precisely were these separatists? They were descendants

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[260] Fox, pp. 35-36.
[261] ibid., p. 57.
[262] ibid., p. 34.
[263] ibid., p. 20.
[264] ibid., p. 28.
[265] ibid., p. 29.
[266] ibid., p. 47.
[267] Canon 49 headed 'Ministers, not allowed preachers, may not expound' read:
'No person whatsoever, not examined, and approved by the Bishop of the diocese, or not licensed, shall take upon him to expound in his own Cure, or elsewhere, any Scripture or matter of Doctrine; but shall only study to read plainly and aptly (without glossing or adding) the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter to be published by lawful authority, for the confirmation of the true faith, and for the good instruction and edification of the people.'[267] [n.a.] *The Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), pp. 21-22.
[268] The first part of Canon 59 headed 'Ministers to catechize every Sunday' read:
'Every Parson, Vicar, or Curate, upon every Sunday and Holy-day, before Evening Prayer, shall, for half an hour or more, examine and instruct the youth and ignorant persons of his parish, in the Ten Commandments, the Articles of the Belief, and in the Lords' [*sic*] Prayer; and shall diligently hear, instruct, and teach them the Catechism set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.' [n.a.] *Constitutions and Canons*, pp. 25-26.
[269] Fox, p. 17.

of those who aligned themselves with Archbishop Cranmer, Bucer and Bishop Jewel. In later times they had united with Archbishop Tillotson and the bishops Patrick, Tennison, Kidder, Stillingfleet and Burnet to strive for what the first Reformers had not been able to complete. Fox commented: 'They have ever held the doctrines of the Reformation, but could not acquiesce with the discipline and ceremonies retained in the church.' Fox thus distinguished two types of Dissenters: first, with regard to doctrine and, second, with regard to discipline.[270] This was a novel argument in the debate over unsectarian religious education.

Fox also discussed objections on social grounds to Lancaster's scheme. There were two strands to these social objections. The first strand concerned the atmosphere in any schools set up under Lancaster's system. Because the Dissenters had separated from the Church of England, they were therefore presumed to be ill-disposed to the Church of England. The school might become a 'bear garden' as the tensions of the parents would be reflected in the relationships between the children. Lancaster's scheme would not work because of the social tensions. This led to a call from Wordsworth[271] for social segregation, as a rule, of members of the Church of England and Dissent.[272] Fox responded to this attack on the plan for generalized Christianity and the alleged danger of promoting religious indifference by turning the argument about social division envisaged by his opponents on its head: he argued that, on the contrary, because of the nature of Christianity, bigotry and party prejudice would fall away and the Christian conduct which was the fruit of the faith would produce a catholic spirit which bound together children from different denominations in the same school.[273]

The second strand of these social objections was an argument against education in general for the poor because it would give them ideas above their station.[274] However, logically, this objection could not be confined to education on Lancaster's principles, but would be broadly applicable to any schools set up to provide education for the poor. It would therefore apply even to those schools which had been set up a century earlier by the SPCK. This conception did not moreover prevent the establishment of schools for the poor under the new National Society from 1811.

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[270] ibid., p. 60.
[271] He was one of the Church of England clerical opponents mentioned in the title of Fox's work.
[272] Fox, pp. 41-42.
[273] ibid., p. 56.
[274] ibid., pp. 44 and 58.

Daubeny and his friends had argued that no Church of England member should associate with Dissenters in any movement to improve the lot of the poor.[275] But in response to this Fox commended the example of the Bishop of St. David's in his charge of 1807 in which he encouraged members of the Church of England not to regard Dissenting brethren with rancour.[276]

Fox turned the tables on Daubeny, arguing that it was he who had not taken sufficiently seriously the views of Luther and Calvin. Fox's polemic reflected the acute tension in the Church of England between Calvinists and Arminians in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.[277] He attacked Daubeny for regarding the Reformers as Arminian and for defining a sound churchman as one who denied the doctrine of election and justification by faith alone and who held the doctrines of free-will and human merit.[278] Thus Fox did much more than merely defend Lancaster's plan, but impugned the faithfulness of Daubeny in his membership of the Church of England. So the tensions over unsectarian education were set in the much broader context of an argument about the doctrine of the Church of England.[279] But precisely because of the divisions within that Church an argument on these lines would never be conclusive since certain of the Articles could be interpreted in either a Calvinist or an Arminian sense.

Summary

To what extent did Lancaster's project survive the criticisms described above? Lancaster himself, having been forced out in 1814 from the society which he founded, soon disappeared from the scene in England. As a person possibly, as a businessman certainly, he may be said to have failed since he was crippled by debts. He was perhaps more successful as a publicist. For, despite the strictures which Lancaster and his organization had faced at the start of his enterprise, he, or the movement inspired by him, succeeded in attracting widespread support from the establishment. The nobility and even royalty became patrons of the BFSS on a long-

[275] ibid., p. 59.
[276] ibid., p. 63.
[277] See Peter Nockles, 'Church parties in the pre-Tractarian Church' in ed. by Walsh and others, pp. 342-43.
[278] Fox, *Scriptural Education*, p. 61.
[279] ibid., p. 61 cited the eighteenth century statesman the Earl of Chatham saying that the Church of England had a popish liturgy, a Calvinistic creed and an Arminian clergy.

term basis. The Lancasterian plan spread to a variety of countries in different parts of the world. The kernel of his unsectarian idea in fact prospered and his approach was to undergird one of the two main voluntary providers of education in the nineteenth century, the BFSS. Thus undenominationalism as a principle began to take root in the voluntary provision of elementary schooling in England. That undenominational principle would survive, albeit in an attenuated form, in the Elementary Education Act of 1870. Notwithstanding his failures, Lancaster's achievement was his organizational skill, which institutionalized the undenominational principle in a way which was not achieved by any of his predecessors.

Chapter 4

The consolidation of unsectarian religious education: from Joseph Lancaster to William Allen

Introduction

Thus far I have demonstrated the origins of the Lancasterian unsectarian system and shown something of the objections raised against it. In Chapter 4 I shall first describe the end of Lancaster's involvement with the RLI and the changes in the BFSS, the successor organization to the RLI, during the brief, but difficult, ascendancy of Joseph Fox in the leadership of the Society and then during the longer period under William Allen. Within this framework I shall examine, first, some aspects of BFSS day schools, including statistics on the denominational distribution of pupils, aspects of the character of unsectarianism in practice and divisions over the commitment to this principle in the early years of the BFSS; and, second, the relationship between the BFSS undenominational day schools and the requirement for denominational Sunday worship. Much of the material used to construct this analysis will be based on previously unutilized archival sources, and this therefore contributes to the originality of the thesis.

The early years of the Lancasterian project

Soon after beginning his unsectarian project Lancaster ran into considerable financial difficulties and, to extricate him from these problems, he was assisted by William Allen, William Corston and Joseph Fox. Fox, whose role in combating the opponents of Lancaster's unsectarian plan of teaching has already been discussed in the previous chapter, became the first secretary of the Royal Lancasterian Institution. Allen became the first treasurer and, after Fox's death, the leading figure in the project.

The first committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution, consisting of Lancaster, Corston and Fox, was set up in January 1808 to oversee its affairs.[280] As his financial problems continued and increased, Lancaster was gradually forced to share more and more control with this committee. However, the existence of the committee did not completely forestall Lancaster's continuing difficulties. Eventually the committee realized that they would have to remove Lancaster in order to preserve the project. A serious dispute in the summer of 1813 caused the intervention of the royal Dukes of Kent and Sussex.[281] The final breach with the committee came in April 1814 and Lancaster departed. On 21 May 1814, with confirmation of the final breach with Lancaster, the name of the project was then changed from the Royal Lancasterian Institution to the British and Foreign School Society.[282]

In the early years of the BFSS the majority of pupils in some BFSS schools were Anglican. At the school in Canterbury, for example, one hundred and ninety-eight were Anglican, forty-four were Dissenters and thirty-six were Roman Catholics. Again, at Chichester, one hundred and fifty-six pupils were Church of England and eleven were Dissenters.[283] However, Halifax presented an even wider and more balanced distribution, where seventy-three pupils were Anglican, sixty-seven Independent, one hundred and thirty-eight Methodist, forty-eight Salem Methodist, twenty-seven Unitarian and twenty-three Baptist.[284] There was some rivalry between the BFSS and the slightly younger Church of England National Society. The BFSS, with its claim to include all denominations, complained that the National Society misled people, citing a charge in September 1813 from the Bishop of St. David's that: 'The National Society comprehends within its Schools the children of all denominations of Christians; and to the support of this Society Churchmen and Sectaries contribute their joint and voluntary aid.'[285] The reality at local level could appear markedly different from the picture at national level. Despite the fact that by 1815 there had been a considerable loss of support from the Church of England hierarchy, admissions at the BFSS Horseferry Road school since 16 January 1815 were overwhelmingly weighted towards the Church of England, viz.: Church of England three hundred and fifty nine, Jews three, Kirk of Scotland

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[280] Wall, p. 19.
[281] David Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), p. 49. These Royal Dukes were sons of George III.
[282] ['William Allen'], *Life of William Allen with Selections from his Correspondence,* 3 vols (London: Charles Gilpin, 1846, 1847), I, p. 191.
[283] *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1811* (London: Longman and Co., 1812), Appendix, p. 16.
[284] BFSS, *Annual Report,* 1815, p. 66.
[285] BFSS, *Annual Report,* 1814, p. 24.

five, Baptists seven and other Dissenters thirty six.[286] Some BFSS schools were described as linked to particular denominations: Church of England, Methodist and Dissenting traditions were specified. [287]

Yet, despite the rise of the National Society and the consequent problems for the BFSS, as late as 1821 some Church of England bishops still supported the BFSS.[288] Roman Catholic pupils were admitted in more limited numbers. In 1811 five Catholic noblemen had given their public approval for the establishment of schools on the RLI system.[289] It was, however, alleged that Roman Catholic priests, not the laity, undermined Catholic support for BFSS schools.[290] However, this was still the era before Catholic emancipation and priests were no doubt anxious for the security of their congregations; the noblemen were, perhaps, more secure.

Following Lancaster's departure, Fox briefly assumed the leadership of the BFSS but, worn out by his exertions, he died on 11 April 1816.[291] James Millar then became Assistant Secretary, but William Allen, remaining as Treasurer, emerged as the leading public face of the BFSS. Notwithstanding Brougham's praise to Fox shortly after his death for saving the Lancasterian project, Fox's involvement was a mixed blessing.[292] Brougham was aware that, because of Fox's pivotal position in the BFSS and the tensions he provoked, there was the danger of a split among the leading supporters of the Society into pro- and anti-Fox factions.[293] If Lancaster presented a problem for his own undenominational project because of his inability to work with others and his financial profligacy, Fox in his own way was also a divisive force. This was due partly to his aggressive Calvinism and partly to his determination to confront those such as Francis Place, who risked diluting the Christian character of the BFSS. By contrast, other leading supporters of the BFSS such as James Mill, and especially Henry Brougham, were by no means enthusiasts for unsectarian Christianity

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[286] *Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis. First report,* 1816, p. 101. Evidence of Mr. Jameson, master of the school.
[287] ibid., p. 104. Evidence of James Miller, Assistant Secretary to the BFSS.
[288] For example, Henry Ryder, Bishop of Gloucester 1815-24, speaking at BFSS anniversary meeting, 2 May 1821. Allen, *Life*, II, p. 203.
[289] *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1812*, p.11.
[290] *Select Committee, First Report*, p. 3. Evidence of A. Finnegan.
[291] See his entry in *ODNB*. McGarry, p. 186, gives the date of death as 22 May. But in the Commons Brougham's praise for Fox's contribution to the RLI was on 21 May, according to *Hansard,* 1, XXIV, 635.
[292] *Hansard*, 1, XXIV, 635, 21 May 1816. See also Brougham to Whitbread, 7 September 1814, warning against the fanaticism of Fox, cited McGarry, p.182.
[293] Brougham to Whitbread, 30 January 1815, Whitbread MSS 3748, cited McGarry, p. 182, n. 43. On tensions see below on Place.

per se to the same degree as Fox. But Brougham was at least loosely identified as Church of England.[294] He and others of like mind were far more concerned with how the BFSS could advance the cause of the education of the poorer classes, for which they were prepared to submerge their personal commitments and desires in order to support a greater good, than to go to the stake for unsectarianism. But at least the admittedly tenuous identification of such BFSS supporters as Brougham with Christianity meant that they did not pose the same threat as Place.

The nature of undenominationalism: the Bible 'without note or comment'

Some aspects of the character of undenominationalism will now be considered in order to show that this was no mere theoretical exercise. One feature of an undenominational or unsectarian approach to the teaching of religion to children in the early nineteenth century was a phrase that was attached to the stipulation about reading from the Holy Scriptures, namely that it should be 'without note or comment'. This phrase, which was to become one of the shibboleths in the history of undenominationalism, can be linked with the practice of the BFSS's sister organization, the British and Foreign Bible Society. This interdenominational body, founded in 1804, recognized that previous published Bibles had included a variety of marginal and doctrinally interpretative comments on the English text of the Bible. Consequently the British and Foreign Bible Society established from the very beginning of its work a cardinal principle of publishing Bible translations which did not include any such doctrinal references.[295] At its formation, therefore, one of its declared aims was to make available the Scriptures 'without note or comment'.[296]

There was, however, suspicion of the Bible Society, based on the fears, first, that overlapping with the work of the SPCK, it would weaken the latter organization; second, that it involved co-operation with Dissenters, who might lack loyalty to the State; and, third, that it operated

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[294] McGarry, p. 97.

[295] Roger Steer, '"Without Note or Comment": Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', in *Sowing the Word. The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1804-2004*, ed. by Stephen Batalden, Kathleen Cann and John Dean (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2004), pp. 63-80.

[296] This commitment was modified only from 1939, so it was of paramount importance in the period covered by this thesis. ibid., p. 72.

outside the normal channels of authority in the Church of England.[297] This suspicion mirrored the unease in some quarters about the rise of the BFSS with its commitment to unsectarian education and the use of the Bible 'without note or comment'.

Some of these comments printed alongside the biblical text might be seen as legitimate basic aids to understanding the cultural context of the original Bible passages. Tyndale, for example, explained the term 'publicans' as 'Publicans gathered rents, toll, customs and tribute for the Romans.....'.[298] But other comments might be designed to support a Protestant interpretation of Bible passages. For example, when the Geneva Bible was published in 1560, the comment on the phrase in the book of Revelation 'the beast that cometh out of the bottomless pit'[299] explained that this was the Pope.[300] Catholics also gave like measure, attacking Protestant beliefs through comments included in the Douai-Rheims translation of the Bible.

But when the King James version of the Bible was being prepared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 resolved that a translation be made and printed 'without any marginal notes'.[301] The exception to this guideline was those marginal notes which indicated variant manuscript readings and notes which were needed to explain difficult Hebrew and Greek expressions.

The practical reality of the principle of using Bibles without note or comment in BFSS schools was shown in the two declarations of general policy below, which were designed as a reassurance that the schools would not teach any distinctive denominational doctrines:

> It is an inviolable law to teach nothing but what is the standard of belief to all christians, THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES. The children are not only taught to read the Bible, but are trained in the habit of reading it, and are left entirely to the explanations and commentaries which their parents or friends may think it their duty to give them at home.[302]

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[297] See Mark Smith, 'Henry Ryder: A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester in the Year 1816' in *Evangelicalism in the Church of England c. 1790-c.1900. Church of England Record Society 12*, ed. by Mark Smith and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), p. 81.
[298] Bruce, *The English Bible*, p. 35, cited in Steer, p. 64.
[299] Revelation 11. 7.
[300] Bruce, *The English Bible*, p. 90, cited in Steer, p. 64.
[301] Steer, p. 66.
[302] Royal Lancasterian Institution, *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1811* (London: Longman, 1812), p. v. Cf. also the discussion of Rule IV of the BFSS, introduced shortly after this statement. See below chapter 6.

> That fundamental regulation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which confines the dispersion of the Scriptures to editions without note or comment, is also here recognised, in teaching children to read that sacred Volume without the addition of any sectarian bias in attempting to explain its contents according to the tenets of any particular religious denomination. Whilst the Bible Society leave it to the Clergy to expound the doctrines of Holy Writ in their sermons or pastoral visits, so the Lancasterian Institution considers it to be the province of the Clergy, distinct from the schoolmaster, to instruct the children in their respective catechisms.[303]

I have incorporated the above section in order to show the attempt to produce a version of the Bible which transcended denominational differences. This approach was also a fundamental aim of the nascent unsectarian movement in education.

The nature of undenominationalism: Allen's *Scripture Lessons*

Following Lancaster's resignation in April 1814 from the project which he had created, William Allen became, with Fox, one of the leading figures in the BFSS. Similar to Lancaster, Allen was closely involved with the Society of Friends (Quakers). He, again as with Lancaster, was able to cultivate a wide circle of highly influential people as supporters of the BFSS. He wrote appreciatively of the continuing involvement of the Royal Dukes of Kent and Sussex in chairing meetings of the Society. He was in touch with a number of highly placed Establishment figures such as the Duke of Wellington, George Canning and the Emperor of Russia. He also travelled extensively throughout Europe. The ideals of the BFSS thus had an international impact in its early years even if the promise later faded. The availability and use of the Bible was a recurrent theme in the accounts of the Society. Already in 1815 Allen had proposed to revise Freame[304] by leaving out the questions, although this only seems to have been brought to fruition after the contacts with Russia.[305]

Lancaster was not alone among his associates in the religious basis of his commitment to undenominational religious teaching as a central feature of his plan. Allen's motivation was also primarily religious: 'The presence of the Bible and the absence of all Catechisms in the

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[303] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1814, pp. 49-50.
[304] Allen, *Life*, I, p. 217, 2 January 1815. Suggested in discussion about the Horseferry Road school.
[305] Allen to Joseph Foster, [n.d.], but after 22 February 1819. Allen, *Life*, II, p. 6.

Schools are prime objects with me.'[306] For Allen, as for Lancaster, unsectarian religious teaching meant the opportunity to reduce 'those prejudices and animosities which often have been found so mischievous in society'. So, in his evidence to Brougham's 1816 Select Committee, Allen emphasized not so much the theological or ecclesiological reason for unsectarianism, as its benefits for social harmony.[307] A letter from Allen to the inhabitants of New Lanark, who had addressed a letter to him, Joseph Foster and Michael Gibbs gave other evidence about what unsectarianism meant to Allen. The letter acknowledged that Allen and his collaborators at New Lanark differed on 'some less important particulars', but his own attitude to other denominations was revealed in two quotations:

> The true Church of Christ consists of members of all visible churches, who, in the sincerity of their hearts are endeavouring to know and to perform the will of God, who are faithful to what is manifested to them to be their duty. These will be finally accepted whatever denomination they may have borne among men, and will, in a glorified state, form part of that company which no man can number, gathered from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, which the Evangelist John, in the visions of God, saw surrounding the throne, and uniting in the universal hallelujah.[308]

One assumes that this could include Roman Catholics, yet he also described the Jesuits as 'those foes to real Christianity'.[309] Other specific beliefs included a strong emphasis on divine revelation through both the created order (some of the group were scientists) and the written revelation of the Holy Scriptures.

Unsectarian teaching in practice

Fox outlined the teaching process in a Lancasterian school as beginning with teaching children to read words of one syllable. Thereafter they learned to read moral songs composed by Watts, after which they were taught to read the Bible itself. This had two stages. First, lessons of scripture instruction were arranged in catechetical fashion based on Freame. In the second stage the children were given access to the complete Bible.[310]

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[306] Allen to Brougham, possibly 29 October 1837, Brougham Papers 13,622. Cited Wall, p. 276.
[307] *Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis*, evidence of Allen, 3 June 1816. Cited Salmon, p. 39, quoting *Second Report of the Select Committee*, p. 115.
[308] Allen to inhabitants of New Lanark, 1818, *Life*, I, p. 350. The letter was undated, but certainly composed in May 1818.
[309] Allen to Emperor Alexander I of Russia, 29 April 1823, *Life*, II, p. 344.
[310] Fox, pp. 54-55.

Another insight into the nature of unsectarian teaching encouraged in BFSS schools in its early years can be seen in William Allen's *Scripture Lessons for Schools on the British System of Mutual Instruction*, published in 1820.[311] For many years this was the only reading material for pupils which the BFSS permitted in its schools.[312] The book was divided into three parts. The entire contents were nothing more than actual extracts from scripture 'without note or comment'.[313] According to the preface the selection was originally made in the winter of 1818 and 1819 for schools in Russia and it was subsequently adopted there with the support of Emperor Alexander I.

The contents list in the book itself gave little or no explanation of, or rationale for, its structure apart from headings at the beginning of each part.[314] Thus Part I was given the rather anodyne title 'Historical Lessons selected from the Old Testament'.

The first part consisted of extracts from the Old Testament giving an historical overview of that period. It began with the creation both of the world and of man and woman including the institution of marriage. It continued with the murder of Abel, the Deluge and six narratives on Abram (*sic*). The Elijah and Elisha narratives were very prominent. This first section concluded with a selection from the Psalms. A significant omission was the giving of the Ten Commandments, which was included in Part Two. This first section naturally contained no material from the New Testament.

Part Two was entitled 'Lessons on our Duty towards God and Man, selected from the Holy Scriptures'. It covered doctrinal and ethical issues, and included passages both from Old and New Testaments. In the area of Christian doctrine the extracts in the subsection 'Of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' began with Genesis 3. 14-15, moved to Genesis 22. 15 and 18 and then proceeded to Galatians 3. 16, the link here being that of the seed.[315]

There were then extensive quotations from various passages in Isaiah and some specific links such as Isaiah 7. 14 with Matthew 1. 21. This second part also contained ethical material such as the Ten Commandments, the duties of parents to children and vice versa, of husbands to

[311] William Allen, *Scripture Lessons for Schools on the British System of Mutual Instruction* (London: BFSS, 1820).
[312] See G. F. Bartle on William Allen in *ODNB*.
[313] See above in this chapter on the phrase 'without note or comment'.
[314] pp. 1-2, although unnumbered in the book itself.
[315] Allen, *Scripture Lessons*, pp. 55-61.

wives, of masters and servants, lying, anger, malice, all very redolent of the moral thrust of much of Freame's material. Although, as mentioned above, the preface claimed that the selection was without note or comment, the scripture passages in the second part gave a minimal interpretative structure through the headings at the start of each theme.

The third part entitled 'Lessons taken from the Four Evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles' gave quasi-historical selections from the ministry of John the Baptist, then reverted to the birth of Jesus and his ministry, but did not include the Passion Narrative. Sections on Miracles and Parables followed. The rationale for placing particular narratives in their context is sometimes questionable: the Transfiguration and Passion Narrative, for example, were located under Parables. The book concluded with selections from the Acts of the Apostles.

Thus Allen understood unsectarianism as nothing other than biblical material:

> lessons from the Bible are intended to supersede all others even to the exclusion of lessons on natural history and other branches of useful and practical knowledge, however well adapted they might be to the various walks of life.[316]

This exclusive concentration on the Bible alone represented a hardening of policy by comparison with the period of Lancaster's leadership. He, by contrast, had recommended a range of other books for children, including works by his opponent, Mrs. Trimmer. A different, and more doctrinally-based, understanding of unsectarianism will be discussed in the next chapter.

Divisions over the unsectarian policy of the BFSS

Having shown something of the character of undenominationalism in the early years of the BFSS, I shall now examine to what extent this principle was maintained in all schools associated with the BFSS. The originality of this section derives from the use of archival material not previously utilized by earlier writers. The principle of providing education on a non–sectarian basis was at the heart of the system of schooling introduced by Lancaster. But

[316] McGarry, n. 52, p. 112.

it is difficult to be sure how far all schools set up under the inspiration of the RLI/BFSS plan adhered to unsectarian religious instruction. This was partly due to the diffuse organization of the BFSS and the lack of central control from the BFSS parent body in London. I shall first set out the details of two contrasting examples showing deviations from the BFSS unsectarian policy.

This first example is based entirely on archival materials which develop significantly the brief details in the contemporary accounts published in the BFSS Annual Reports. At the Royal Free Lancasterian school, which had opened in Canterbury on 1 January 1808, the Church of England catechism was introduced as a school lesson.[317] The detail provided in the BFSS minute book about the Canterbury Lancasterian school contrasts with the sometimes bland accounts of the work of the Society in its Annual Reports. The 1814 Annual Report, for example, included statistics for the denominational affiliation of pupils of the Canterbury Lancasterian school, adding, without further comment, that the Church catechism was taught.[318] The overwhelming proportion of children in this school was Anglican.

In an apparently partially burnt manuscript minute book which survived the fire-bombing of the London blitz, there is one outstanding illustration of the concern of the parent body in London to maintain this distinctive foundational principle of unsectarianism in religious instruction. The Lancasterian school in Canterbury might not have come to the attention of the central body of the RLI had it not been for the financial difficulties which led the local committee to seek help from London.[319] The Canterbury committee had applied to a recently established diocesan (that is, Church of England) school to admit the Lancasterian school pupils.[320] The diocesan committee agreed to take as many Lancasterian pupils as possible into their school, but could not accommodate all of them. The Lancasterian committee were therefore anxious about the loss of schooling for those who could not be admitted to the diocesan school. There was a lack of enthusiasm for continuing the Lancasterian school since Dissenters were not committed to supporting it under its existing constitution: it had been set

[317] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1814, p. 46.
[318] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1814, p. 19.
[319] BU, BFSS, Minutes, 2 October 1812, p. 176 of manuscript minute book. Note that the title of the minute book used the term BFSS, although it covered the period 27 December 1811 to 11 March 1813 and the British and Foreign School Society officially dated from 1814.
[320] BU, BFSS, Minutes as above, 31 October 1812, p. 191.

up 'on church principles with a view to conciliate the clergy. The children having been instructed in the church catechism, and regularly taken to church.'[321]

After the central Lancasterian committee in London became aware of the situation in Canterbury, they took determined action to try to re-establish the policy of unsectarian religious instruction. When the London committee met on 12 June 1813, Joseph Fox outlined a plan for which he had enlisted the support of the Duke of Kent[322] to seek a merger of the Royal Lancasterian Free School in Canterbury with the Canterbury Diocesan school 'on an unexclusive plan', that is not requiring all children to receive denominational teaching.[323] The Duke of Kent had agreed to contact the Archbishop of Canterbury in support of this initiative. The RLI hoped by this means to set up a school 'on the principle that the children of Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics should be admitted, without enforcing the necessity of their repeating the Church Catechism and that they should be allowed to attend the places of worship to which their parents respectively belong.'[324] Since the Canterbury Lancasterian School had from the beginning taught the Church of England catechism to Church of England pupils, a great many of the children had even been taken to a service at the Cathedral, but they were refused admittance. The Lancasterian school had requested prayer books for reading materials, but these were refused. The rebuff, recorded the RLI minutes, was based on fear and prejudice.[325] There had, however, been more success in sending boys from the Lancasterian school to attend worship at parish churches.

The evidence that the central Lancasterian institution took this case very seriously is shown in the measures they adopted to try to change the policy of teaching the Church catechism in the Canterbury school. The RLI sought to take advantage of its 'friends in high places', in this instance a member of the royal family. Consequently the Duke of Kent[326] was enlisted to petition the Archbishop of Canterbury[327] about changing the policy on religious teaching. However, the Duke's appeal was unsuccessful. He reported that he had received a terse letter from the Archbishop declining to alter the policy of teaching the Church catechism: all

[321] BU, BFSS, Minutes, 31 October 1812, p. 194.
[322] ibid., 12 June 1813, pp. 362-68.
[323] ibid., p. 363.
[324] ibid., p. 364.
[325] ibid., p. 366.
[326] Prince Edward (1767-1820) fourth son of George III and father of Queen Victoria.
[327] Charles Manners-Sutton.

children without exception, wrote the Archbishop, must be instructed in the Church Catechism.[328]

Here the unsectarian principle was compromised by distinctive denominational teaching in a school which had begun in Lancaster's time. The RLI, despite its attempt to alter the policy in the diocesan school, had no desire at this time to offend the Church of England. Later, however, the BFSS, the successor to the RLI, would take a more politically aggressive stance towards the Church. Allen came to view the work of the BFSS as a counterweight to the influence of the Church of England.[329] This policy was apparent by the late 1830s and through the controversy over the Graham Factory Education Bill in 1843 and the concern about the increasing Tractarian influence on the Church of England.[330]

I have considered one example of where the unsectarian approach to religious education could be compromised by the teaching of denominational material. I shall now also examine whether there was any effort at removing entirely the religious element in the curriculum of Lancasterian or British schools. This second example of a challenge to the RLI/BFSS was the case of Francis Place and the West London Lancasterian Association. This analysis is based entirely on archival material. In this instance the RLI was dealing with an internal matter rather than an external organization.

Francis Place and his associates represented one type of supporter of the Lancasterian approach to schooling.[331] As has been noted, many of the innermost circle of the leading supporters of the Lancasterian system were Dissenting Christians. Place, however, made no secret of the fact that he was not a Christian believer: indeed he openly referred to himself as an 'infidel'.[332] Place, describing his relationship with Edward Wakefield[333] and James Mill, said, 'We were not religious ourselves, and had therefore no sectarian notions to teach, we

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[328] Archbishop of Canterbury to Duke of Kent, 17 June 1813, transcribed and reported in BFSS minute book for 18 June 1813, pp. 381-82. This differs somewhat from a short printed account of the outcome of the incident, where it was stated that in the Canterbury Diocesan school non-Anglican children were *not* required to repeat the Church of England catechism. This species of what would later be termed a conscience clause would, if that were indeed correct, have been attractive to the BFSS as a compromise. See BFSS, *Annual Report,* 1814, p. 19.

[329] Allen to Brougham, 14 August 1837, Brougham Papers, 13,620. Cited Wall, p. 277, n. 40.

[330] See below chapter 6.

[331] Francis Place (1771-1854). Radical thinker.

[332] Thale, ed., *Place*, p. xiii.

[333] Wakefield, Edward (1774-1854), philanthropist, land agent, and writer on political economy.
Brought up a Quaker but later loosely connected to the Church of England. Developed close friendships with Place, John Mill, and Brougham. Helped organize several Lancastrian schools in London and cleverly manipulated public opinion to raise funds. His use of large public meetings, set agendas, and planted questions from the audience to create the right atmosphere was particularly sophisticated.

wished the improvement of the people...'[334] Although Place was prepared to set on one side these differences in order not to affect the provision of schooling, some of his opponents within the Lancasterian Association did not show the same generosity of spirit. Place was therefore keen to preserve the Lancasterian project and was involved with the pressure to remove Joseph Lancaster from his key role in the RLI and with the formulation of the rules of the new BFSS.[335] On the surface Place accepted the use of scripture passages in the West London Lancasterian Association school. But Fox feared that in the future Place, or others like him, would strive to remove the scriptural element of the teaching:

> It is perfectly natural to conceive that those members of the Committee who profess their disbelief of Christianity, would not be disinclined to withdraw from the lessons to be used in the schools, those parts of the Sacred Scripture which relate to the Divine founder, and teach the fundamental truths of that holy religion.[336]

The antagonism between the leaders of the central Lancasterian movement and Francis Place was crystallized in the establishment of the West London Lancasterian Association in 1813.[337] During its existence the West London Lancasterian Association founded only one school, at Horseferry-road. By this time Lancaster himself had become increasingly marginal in the direction of the RLI, a fact noted by the change of name of the RLI to the BFSS in 1814. However, in its short life, the West London Lancasterian Association kept the original name of Lancaster in its title. The vision of Place and his associates for the West London Lancasterian Association was that the way to teach children from all sects was 'to teach no religious doctrine, but to leave what is called spiritual instruction to those who were paid to teach it or to the parents of the children.' [338] This notion ran counter to the strong emphasis in the central Lancasterian society that a core of religious doctrine was an irreplaceable part of the curriculum, supported by the children's compulsory attendance at a church on Sundays.[339]

At a meeting in August 1813 the presence of Joseph Fox, one of the leading members of the central RLI Society and a doughty defender of the cardinal principle of unsectarian education,

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[334] Place Papers, XXXV, British Library, Add MSS 27823, fol. 84.
[335] Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place*, 4th edn (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1925), p. 95.
[336] Fox to James Silver, 22 June 1814, BM PNC Set 60, cited Wall, p. 271.
[337] The term West London could be misleading since it in fact referred to what we recognize as central London. The precise geography of the West London area was: in the north, the road from Paddington to Battersea Bridge; in the east, Grays Inn Road and City of London to the Thames; in the west, Park Lane and Edgware Road. McGarry, p. 99.
[338] Place Papers, XXXV, BL, Add MSS 27823, fol. 85.
[339] See below on the question of compulsory Christian Sunday worship in connection with BFSS schools.

may have led to the declaration of a plan which included the prescription, outlined in a speech by Edward Wakefield, that: 'all distinctions on the ground of religion will be avoided, and of religious books, the Bible alone, without gloss or comment, written or spoken, will be read.'[340] This statement was subsequently to become a point of dispute between Place and his supporters in the West London Lancasterian Association on the one hand and the central Society, especially Fox, on the other.

The central BFSS attempted to force the West London Lancasterian Association to use only the Bible for reading material if the latter wished to be in formal association with the parent body. Place objected to Fox on the range of books to be used, noting that:

> It never was intended to exclude every book the Bible alone excepted from the schools as was now insisted upon. It was well understood that the school could use books or lessons which had no reference to religious doctrines, and this was the reason for the use the words "of religious books, the Bible alone without gloss or comment written or spoken will be read". The intention was that each child should read one or more lessons in the Bible every day complemented by instruction in areas such as geography, mechanics and the use of tools for future employment.[341]

The tension was increasing when Place reported on a meeting in July 1814, attended by Brougham, at which Fox's behaviour was reported to be so awful that it had driven supporters away. Place said Fox had called the West London Lancasterian Association an 'abortion'.[342] Thus Place came to rue the day he became involved with Fox, saying that he and his associates would never have taken this step had they known the sort of person he was and that he (Fox) would try to exercise such a degree of control over the West London Lancasterian Association. Fox, in turn, raised a cry of 'infidelity' against Place.[343] In writing to Place he set out the fact that since he (Fox) was a Christian and Place was not, it compromised their joint educational work together. Fox took his stand on the doctrine of the Atonement as the only way in which sin and guilt could be dealt with. This, for Fox, was the core of Old and New Testaments and the object of education was to enable every child to read the Scriptures for themselves and to discover that truth: 'my object is to enable every

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[340] Place Papers, XXXV, BL, Add MSS 27823, fol. 88, Printed record of a meeting entitled 'Schools for All' on Monday 2 August 1813.
[341] ibid., fol. 97.
[342] Place to Brougham, 23 Nov 1814, Place Papers, LXXXIII, BL, Add MSS 35152, fol. 109.
[343] Place Papers, XXXV, BL, Add MSS 27823, fol. 98.

child to read those Scriptures and in Scripture language only to enable them to come to a knowledge of the truth.' [344]

Place regarded the charge of infidelity as a gross slur (presumably as a slur against the West London Lancasterian Association in its entirety rather than directed individually against members such as himself) and said that, even if anyone had been so insane as to try to teach infidelity, or anything approaching it, there was ample safeguard against this in the diversity of belief among the thirty-six members of the committee of the West London Lancasterian Association, this being: four infidels, six 'crazy ignorant Methodists', several churchmen, at least two Baptists, two Scotch Presbyterians, two Roman Catholics and the remaining members of the committee being of unknown religious allegiance.[345] Place also accused the central Society of hypocrisy over personal Christian belief, alleging that several members of the Borough Road (the central school of the BFSS) committee were not religious believers either.[346]

Place, in reply, also argued that Fox was himself a member of the West London Lancasterian Association; he must therefore have been willing to support its aims. He stressed that Fox did not need to sacrifice anything. Place argued:

> It is the duty of every man before he joins any association to make himself acquainted with its principles, and having joined it, it becomes his duty to see that its practice corresponds to its professions, these two duties I have performed and shall continue to perform as a member of the Association I examined myself carefully I examined the nature of the Association I estimated its probable aberrations [commas missing in original], I saw that every honest man might conscientiously be a member of it and I joined it, my opinion remains the same [sc. as?] it was – the Association has not varied a jot.....the Association is not however exactly what I would have it - it is not what you would wish - ...but it is the nearest to our wishes that it can be, and it is therefore our duty to support it such as it is –.[347]

Place also alleged that the Borough Road school of the BFSS permitted the Bible to be taught with gloss and comment.[348] The dispute came to a head on 15 February 1816 when a delegation from the parent body of the BFSS met a subcommittee of the West London Lancasterian Association to set out demands to be met if an auxiliary association such as the

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[344] Fox to Place, 26 March 1814, Place Papers, LXXXIII, BL, Add MSS 35152, fols 43-44.
[345] Place Papers, XXXV, BL, Add MSS 27823, fols 98-99.
[346] Place to James Mill, 10 December 1814, Place Papers, LXXXIII, BL, Add MSS 35152, fol. 120.
[347] Place to Fox 27 March 1814, ibid., fols 45-46.
[348] McGarry, n. 49, p. 111.

West London Lancasterian Association wished to continue its link with the central body. The BFSS parent body wished to insist on the principle that 'No catechism, peculiar to any religious sect, shall be taught in the Schools, and the General Reading Lessons *shall consist* of extracts from the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures.' The West London Lancasterian Association, however, had always refused to agree to the exclusion of lessons on other subjects. The BFSS policy, they argued, would mean that lessons from the Bible would thereby supersede lessons on all other areas.

Another crucial requirement of the BFSS parent body was:

> That the parents or relations of every child admitted into the Schools of this Society, *shall engage* that their children shall attend, every Sunday, at such place of religious worship as they may prefer, *under the superintendence* of such persons as may be appointed by the Committee.

The 15 February meeting was followed by a special General Meeting of the members of the West London Lancasterian Association on Thursday 8 August.[349] To the requirement quoted above the West London group replied that this was 'a SPIRITUAL *jurisdiction*, and enacts, authoritatively, compliance with a religious act; *thus forming a* TEST and *ground* of EXCLUSION.'[350] In the light of this difficulty the West London Association suspended operations in their only school.[351] Thus Place's attempt at a more liberal and secular policy for the West London Lancasterian Association was defeated. The West London experiment had failed. Rules insisting on the use of the Bible alone and compulsory attendance at church on Sundays were imposed.[352]

The two examples immediately above have been explored by the use of unpublished archival material. But were there any examples of deviation in the published reports available to all to

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[349] Place Papers, XXXV, BL, Add MSS 27823, fol. 115.
[350] ibid., fol. 116.
[351] The suspension of operations may not have been permanent. The 1816 Select Committee took evidence from the Master of a Horseferry Road school. The Horseferry Road School was described as having no connection with the BFSS apart from the similarity of the plan of instruction. See *Select Committee, First Report*, 1816, p. 37. Evidence of Thomas Biggs, secretary to the West London Lancasterian Association.
It was reported that the West London Lancasterian Association arose with the Earl of Darnley, who was stated to be a trustee to the St. Patrick's Society [presumably Catholic]. See *Select Committee, First Report*, p. 43. Evidence of Edward Wakefield. The education system was based on theological concerns. There arose the idea of forming 'general schools' to take in children of the entire district. There was a question about small districts and the danger of children being left uneducated if they were excluded, although Wakefield noted that even for large districts he preferred common schools. This policy was based upon a concern about the tendency to perpetuate distinctions and religious parties. See *Select Committee, First Report*, p. 44.
[352] Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 111.

read? One brief example of deviation from the official policy occurred in a statement which describes what I have identified above as mixed unseparated undenominationalism.[353] The President of the Ipswich branch of the RLI, Rev. Dr. Wallis, laid down that:

> By the 22nd rule of this Society, it is provided, that the children of Churchmen are to be taught that admirable summary of the faith and practice of a Christian, called the Catechism of the Church of England, and may receive such further religious instruction as the subscribing members of her communion may judge expedient or proper; and in like manner, the children of Dissenters are to be instructed as the subscribers of that denomination shall think proper;[354]

Some other instances of departure from the unsectarian principle are mentioned in RLI/BFSS Annual Reports, but without the background detail which I have supplied for Canterbury and West London. For example, in 1811, Bishop Auckland, West Street in Seven Dials, Great Peter Street in Westminster and Maidstone were named.[355] Such schools were classified as 'schools of exclusion'.

The response of the BFSS to these deviations was to emphasize the degree to which the parent body lacked control over the local committees. Even the hard-line Fox showed a degree of pragmatism by saying that the principle of the BFSS was that education should be available to the children of every denominational background and that no one should be forced to profess any particular creed, but once that had been secured, 'I can see no objection to the teaching of a Catechism provided it is not part of the school business.'[356]

After the consideration of how far there was a consistent commitment to the unsectarian principle in the BFSS day schools, the evidence of the extent to which the requirement to attend worship on Sundays was maintained will now be examined.[357] This might have been more difficult to control, particularly given the poor social background of many, if not most, of the pupils attending BFSS schools.

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[353] See Preface above.
[354] *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1811* (London: Longman and Co., 1812), Appendix, p. 24.
[355] RLI, *Annual Report,* 1811, p. 3. Cited Leyson Lewis, *Historical Statement of the Principles and Practice of the British and Foreign School Society* (London: 1856), p. 29.
[356] McGarry, pp. 183-84, citing Wedgwood MSS 2635-4. Cf. also the two interpretative glosses of 1844 on the application of Rule IV. See below chapter 6.
[357] On the issue of compulsory denominational worship on Sundays for BFSS children see also above on the West London controversy in chapter 4.

The Sunday worship regulation of one local association, the Exeter Lancasterian Society laid down that:

> On Sundays, the Children (except those who belong to Sunday-schools or who regularly attend divine service with their Parents or Friends) will be assembled in the school-room, and conducted to those places for Worship which *their parents* desire they should attend.[358]

The regulation of the national BFSS parent body of 1813 stated that:

> All schools which shall be supplied with teachers at the expense of this Institution shall be open to the children of parents of all religious denominations; Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needlework shall be taught; the lessons for reading shall consist of extracts from the Holy Scriptures; no catechisms or peculiar religious tenets shall be taught in the schools, but every child shall be enjoined to attend regularly the place of worship to which their parents belong.[359]

Three years later, in giving evidence to Brougham's Select Committee, Allen outlined the following system, which represented more elaborate administrative arrangements than those of the regulation above in 1813:

> That all the children, on entering their schools, shall be registered under the religious denomination to which their parents belong; and that they be required to assemble at the school-house at an early hour, say nine o'clock, on every Sunday morning, where they are to be met by certain persons from the different religious denominations, who shall attend the children of their own sect to a place of worship; and that these persons be furnished with tickets, one of which they shall deliver to each child after the worship is over, as his certificate to the master of the school, on Monday morning.[360]

One may accept in principle that a child's denomination was important to the BFSS in the sense that it was to be maintained and there was consequently a need for close links and co-operation between school and worshipping community. But whether the system of tickets specified by Allen worked in practice, it is impossible to say.

Examples of statistics on attendance at worship which can be gleaned from primary sources include the following: on 3 December 1811 the three hundred and forty boys on the roll of

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[358] *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1811* (London: Longman and Co., 1812), Appendix, p. 21. Brunel University, BFSS archives, file 065.
[359] *Address of the Committee of the Institution for promoting the British system*, Wednesday 10 November 1813 (London: 1813). BU, BFSS archives, file 070.
[360] *Select Committee, Second Report*, 1816, p. 72. Evidence of William Allen.

the RLI school in Birmingham were all accounted for as follows:[361] one hundred and eighty-seven attended Sunday schools, sixty-four were taken to Church of England worship, eighty were taken to Dissenting Chapels and Meeting Houses, four were taken to a synagogue and five were kept at home by accidents.[362] The school in Newbury had one hundred and fourteen Church of England pupils, of whom seventy attended worship under the supervision of the Master, who belonged to the Church of England: thus a majority of, but by no means all, of the children attended worship.[363] At the Jewish Free School on Saturdays boys listened to the weekly portion of the Bible in Hebrew and English, 'as well as to the discourse afterwards held by the master.'[364] The school at Uxbridge, opened in April 1809, allowed the ministers of every denomination to catechize and instruct the children of their denomination in the formularies of their own religious creed. It is unclear at what precise point the catechizing took place, whether before, during or after school. It may have been an example of mixed unseparated undenominationalism.[365]

So, in summary, the destruction of some of the nineteenth century records of the BFSS in the blitz of the Second World War makes it difficult to ascertain a fuller picture of how far there were challenges to the undenominational policy of the Society and the requirement for Sunday worship. However, I have noted examples demonstrating that instances of deviation from the official national policy did occur and that they were recognized by the parent body. It is impossible to know for sure the extent of any other departures from the theoretically compulsory BFSS unsectarian system. Particularly in parts of the country far from London there could easily have been examples of BFSS associations which did not strictly adhere to the principle of unsectarian religious instruction. But there were significant differences about the West London Lancasterian Association. First, it included leading figures such as Place, who was well known in political circles; second, for reasons of geography, knowledge of the West London experiment was easily accessible to the central parent body; third, with such a determined organizer as Fox, the dice were loaded against Place and the West London Lancasterian Association. Fox's status in the BFSS parent body meant that he could insist on a more consistent policy. So for the moment the compulsory unsectarian pattern of the BFSS schools was secured. But Place's intellectual descendants found a home in the secular

[361] This date was, in fact, a Tuesday, not a Sunday. However, it may not invalidate the statistics.
[362] *Report of the Finance Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Year 1811* (London: Longman and Co., 1812), Appendix, p. 14.
[363] BFSS, *Annual Report,* 1815, p. 82.
[364] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1818, pp. 99-100.
[365] BFSS, *14th Annual Report,* 1819, pp. 128-29.

approaches to the school curriculum such as the Central Society of Education [hereafter CSE], which would begin to emerge from the late 1830s.[366] The most that can be said is that in one ecclesiastically significant town, Canterbury, the central body of the Royal Lancasterian Institution considered the issue important enough to involve one of their royal patrons in an effort to maintain the founding unsectarian principle of the RLI. Certainly discussion of the Canterbury issue occupied a considerable amount of space in the minutes of the BFSS. The lack of success in no way undermined the importance placed on unsectarianism in the minds of the central committee of the Society. There may have been other instances which had not come to the attention of London. Notwithstanding their efforts over the school in Canterbury the RLI also appeared anxious to avoid any suggestion that it was seeking, through its unsectarian policy, to undermine the Church of England.

Thus from the earliest days of the RLI/BFSS there was tension over the place of religion in the school curriculum and therefore over the commitment to unsectarianism. But while Place was still involved in the BFSS, it was possible for a variety of benefactors to support the core purpose of the Society without implying that all were equally committed to every aspect of the work. This might also account for the continuing financial support for the BFSS from members of the aristocracy, if not the hierarchy of the Anglican Church, because they were able to identify with what was, for them, of crucial importance, namely the extension of education for the poor.

Summary

Extensive use of archival sources for this chapter has shown how the nascent unsectarian education movement survived the traumas associated with its original leader and, after the brief interlude under Fox, moved to consolidate its position under the new sustained leadership of Allen. It had continued to enjoy significant support from members of the establishment even if many members of the Church of England had reacted against its unsectarian approach. The BFSS had begun to make changes such as defining more strictly some of its principles. So far it had survived the challenges posed by the formation of a specifically Church of England National Society which aimed to reach the same sort of

[366] Cf. the emergence of the Lancashire (later National) Public School Association in the late 1840s and the unsuccessful Bill of W. J. Fox in 1850, on which see chapter 7.

children as the BFSS but with overt Anglican teaching. In the following chapter the impact of the BFSS on the wider educational life of the nation will explored.

Chapter 5

The beginnings of State involvement in education: the era of the Select Committees c. 1816- c. 1838

Introduction

In the previous chapter I showed the origins of unsectarianism within the BFSS and the initial efforts to secure that principle within the BFSS system. In this chapter I shall continue to examine the early period of the BFSS, now separated from the influence and control of the original founder, Lancaster. Moving to the national context, I shall begin with a consideration of the work of Henry Brougham, who became the new leader of the movement for extending the education of the poor. I shall include a study of the work of five Select Committees over a period of a little over twenty years, thus taking the analysis of unsectarian religious education to the late 1830s. Alongside the consideration of the Select Committees I shall consider some of the internal issues affecting the BFSS during this period. To some degree these two strands will overlap, particularly as the Select Committees themselves reveal something of the internal workings and reflections of the BFSS about the practice of unsectarian teaching. Much of the detail found in this chapter is from hitherto largely unresearched, often unpublished, sources and hence contributes significantly to the originality of this thesis.

The BFSS and the denominations

The secondary literature illustrative of this period is helpful, but not complete or, indeed, completely accurate. Thus even specialized monographs on the political, religious and educational history can misleadingly describe the BFSS as a Nonconformist organization *tout court* and therefore set up a rigid polarization between the BFSS and the distinctive denominationalism of the Church of England, especially following the establishment of the National Society in 1811.[367] In fact, the boundaries of the BFSS were more blurred than this

[367] For example, C. K. Francis Brown, *The Church's Part in Education 1833 -1941 with special reference to the work of the National Society* (SPCK, 1942), p. 7; R. G. Cowherd, *The politics of English dissent: the religious aspects of liberal and humanitarian reform movements from 1815 to 1848* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 37.

description would suggest. It is true that the innermost circle of the RLI was composed entirely of members of Old Dissent,[368] but at the very beginning of the institution's activity its supporters included committed members of other Christian churches as well as those such as Brougham and Place, for whom religious commitment was not paramount. It is also true that the extent of this support from non-Dissenters began to decline fairly rapidly in the early years of the RLI's existence, especially after the formation of the National Society in particular, but it did not disappear entirely. Bishop Stanley of Norwich in the fourth decade of the BFSS's existence could still be found prominently praising its work.[369]

Admittedly, the BFSS policy of unsectarian religious education became, in time and certainly by 1870, more suited to the political and religious interests of many Nonconformists. But, even in the middle years of the period covered by this thesis, it was by no means true that, in terms of their official denominational educational policy, the Nonconformists could be considered as uncritical supporters of the BFSS. There are two points which support this argument: first, the beginnings of a distinctive Wesleyan Methodist denominational system of education developed from 1837[370] and, second, the dissatisfaction among many Nonconformists such as the Congregationalists with the BFSS policy of accepting government grants led to the Voluntaryist movement.[371]

Despite the reputation of the BFSS as a Dissenting organization, almost half the known correspondents among its early teachers were, or appear to have been, Anglican.[372] Of the inner circle around Lancaster five out of six were Dissenters.[373] But initially not many of Lancaster's subscribers were conventional Dissenters such as Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterian or Independents. They were mostly Quakers and Unitarians.[374] The list of seventy-one loan subscribers and/or members of the RLI Finance Committee included two

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[368] That is, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Unitarians and Quakers.

[369] He dismissed critics of the BFSS who alleged it desecrated the creeds. The creed and doctrines of the Church of England were contained in the Bible. The catechism was largely a commentary on the commandments. See Quarterly Extracts from the Correspondence of the British and Foreign School Society, No. 46 - 30 June 1838, p. 4. He also defended the BFSS against the accusation that it encouraged Unitarianism. He found, on the contrary, that children were well versed in the doctrines of the divinity of Christ and in the Atonement. See Quarterly Extracts from the Correspondence of the British and Foreign School Society, No. 50 - 29 June 1839, p. 5.

[370] John T. Smith, *Methodism and Education 1849-1902. J. H. Rigg, Romanism, and Wesleyan Schools* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 6.

[371] See Preface above.

[372] See Wall, p. 242 on the religious affiliation of RLI teachers.

[373] ibid., p. 285.

[374] ibid., pp. 295-96. See below chapter 7 on the Unitarian controversy.

people identified as Roman Catholics. Around twenty-five were indicated as Quaker. The list also included the Utilitarian James Mill and Whitbread, who moved the 1807 Parochial Schools Bill. Many were also noted as supporters of Fox. There were five Unitarians. The most common designations were Evangelical and Church of England. Two were marked as ministers, one Quaker and one Church of England.[375]

The national situation - Select Committees on education 1816-1818

From the internal affairs of the RLI/BFSS I shall now turn to the impact of the unsectarian movement in the wider national context. Concern for the development of education was not confined to the BFSS and the Anglican National Society. Outside these organizations there was an increasing effort to raise the profile of schooling of the poor. Samuel Whitbread, in introducing his unsuccessful Parochial Schools Bill in 1807, had paid fulsome tribute to Lancaster's work.[376] However, there was no evidence of unsectarian religious education in the Bill.[377] After Whitbread died in 1815, Henry Brougham emerged as the leading promoter of the education of the poor outside the Royal Family and the nobility.[378] Brougham was already a supporter of the BFSS and had done sterling service in promoting its cause through articles in the Edinburgh Review, many of which he himself wrote. Part of Brougham's strategy was to gather information on educational provision and to marshal statistics in support of his cause. Hence in 1816 he secured the agreement of the Commons to set up a Select Committee to investigate education among the poor in London. The Committee was reappointed in 1817, although it achieved little because of Brougham's indisposition. However, it achieved new momentum again in 1818 when it extended its coverage to the rest of England, Wales and Scotland.[379]

The Select Committee meetings of the period 1816-1818 are regularly referred to in standard histories of this period, but I shall provide a more detailed analysis of the religious difficulty

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[375] Wall, Appendix IV, Loan Subscribers and Finance Committee, pp. 352-55. The *ODNB* entry for Whitbread does not specify his denominational allegiance, but notes that his father had abandoned Dissent for Anglicanism.
[376] *Hansard*, 1, VIII, 885, 19 February 1807.
[377] Parochial Schools Bill. For a summary of the debates on the Bill, see J. E. G. de Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education*, pp. 220-24.
[378] On Brougham's work and loyalties see McGarry, pp. 188-90.
[379] Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham 1778-1868. His Public Career* (London: Bodley Head, 1985), p. 123; Chester W. New, *The Life of Henry Brougham to 1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 213.

as treated in the Reports. The attitude of the Roman Catholic community in particular needs a more nuanced treatment.

Previous commentators have not drawn attention to the evidence that Unsectarianism was not confined to the BFSS. There were other schools, which followed a similar plan, under the inspiration of the BFSS, but without any formal connection to it. For example, Joseph Fletcher of the British Union School informed the Select Committee that the school, founded in June 1816, had admitted four hundred and fifty-seven Church of England, two hundred and seventy-four Roman Catholic and two hundred and seventeen Dissenting boys and girls.[380] The rules for religious teaching were an exact parallel to those of the BFSS, namely that the reading lessons were to consist only of scripture extracts, no catechism or tract was to be introduced, and that 'upon every written requisition of any minister in the district, the children of his own denomination shall be immediately sent to him for the purpose of being catechised.'[381]

A similar example can be found in the East London Irish Free School, whose Rule 4 specified: 'That the only books to be used in the school shall be a spelling book and the holy scriptures, without note or comment, and consequently that all creeds, catechisms and tracts shall be excluded.'[382] There was, however, no evidence of arrangements for catechizing pupils by ministers of their own denomination as with the British Union school.

Brougham's Bill of 1820

In 1820, closely following the recommendations of the Select Committee, Brougham introduced a Bill, which exemplified his conviction that there should be a close connection between education and the Anglican clergy, yet he also indicated: 'It was not necessary that the schoolmaster should teach any particular religion.'[383] Brougham's Bill was similar to Whitbread's 1807 Bill in the priority given to the Anglicans. Brougham's original plan required that the schoolmaster must be a member of the Church of England and, to

[380] *Second Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders*, 1818, p. 33.
[381] ibid., p. 36.
[382] *Second Report*, p. 40.
[383] *Hansard*, 2, II, 78, 28 June 1820.

demonstrate that, should have received Holy Communion one month before appointment to his post. Brougham was aware of the Dissenters' argument that Anglican control of the schoolmaster's appointment made it seem like another species of tithe. Dissenters would be required to pay for a kind of second parson in each parish, though their consciences would not allow them to be guided by his instruction. The schoolmaster was a layman and the clergy had been providentially appointed to assist in making education distinctively religious.[384] The clergy would have a veto in the choice of schoolmaster. However, despite his great fear of Dissenting opposition, Brougham decided to go further than he had previously done in assigning a controlling influence to the Anglican Church. His fear of Dissenting opposition was outweighed by the need for the Anglican clergy to implement his plan. Brougham's Radical friends were disappointed with this surrender to the Established Church.[385]

Brougham spoke to allay the fears which, despite the clear exposition in his speech on 28 June, had arisen as a result of his Bill. It was alleged that Roman Catholics believed that they would be compelled to send their children to Protestant schools. Dissenters had described the Bill as rooting out the last remains of religious liberty in this country.[386] Brougham did not believe that this attitude was justified when there was an annual Indemnity Act to dispense with the sacramental test. Brougham protested his abhorrence of intolerance; he disliked tests such as taking the sacrament except 'where their abrogation might interfere with the existence of government.'[387] In the light of this opposition, Brougham, while still adhering to the principle that the schoolmaster must be an Anglican, omitted the proposed sacramental test. It is not clear how precisely this was supposed to mollify the Dissenters when Brougham's reasoning was that there were those who were 'averse' to taking the sacrament because of reverence for the ceremony.

Some of the features of Brougham's Bill appeared congruent with the cardinal BFSS unsectarian principle. The proposals appeared to contain a modicum of undenominationalism through his plan to restrict religious teaching to the reading of the Bible, with explanations: 'In every School [...] the master thereof shall diligently teach the Holy Scriptures in the version authorized [...] and shall use select passages thereof for lessons, whereby to teach

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[384] *Hansard*, 2, II, 74, 28 June 1820.
[385] Peter Gordon, *The Victorian School Manager. A Study in the Management of Education 1800-1902* (London: Woburn Press, 1974), p. 84.
[386] *Hansard*, 2, II, 365, 11 July 1820.
[387] Debate on Education of the Poor Bill, *Hansard*, 2, II, 365-67, 11 July 1820. Quotation is col. 366.

reading and writing.'[388] The clergy could specify the Bible extracts to be used in teaching and in worship.[389] However, formularies would not be totally excluded: viz., the Anglican catechism and portions of the liturgy could be taught in the regular school hours on one half day each week as well as on Sundays. Children would not be punished if they absented themselves on that half day. Compulsory Sunday Anglican worship was prescribed, again with an option for withdrawal in order to attend a non-Anglican place of worship. [390]

The proposals for clerical control were two-edged. On the one hand the parish clergy were prohibited from actually teaching.[391] However, there were also contrary indicators. The Anglican parish was the organizational framework for the proposed education system.[392] The clergy also had the right of entry to the school to question the pupils.[393] Brougham hoped that Anglicans would therefore support the Bill. He did not believe they had any valid grievance when the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, so central a part of the Christian religion, were to be used in the school.

The requirement in the Bill for all teachers to be Anglican and approved by the local clergyman alienated the BFSS and others. Although Brougham had been sympathetic to the aims of the BFSS in its early days, being also a BFSS Vice-President, there was some friction between the Society and him since his Bill did not enshrine unsectarianism.[394] On 15 July 1820 the BFSS therefore passed a resolution against Brougham's Bill.[395] The BFSS found itself ranged against the Edinburgh Review, which normally supported the Lancasterian tradition, but on this occasion inevitably supported Brougham.[396] BFSS opposition caused the Bills to fail,[397] although Brougham later tried to shift the responsibility for the failure to Dissenters more generally.[398]

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[388] *A Bill for better providing the means of Education for His Majesty's Subjects*, p. 16. The printed text of the Bill does not have sections, therefore references are to page numbers. The use of the Bible for teaching other areas of the curriculum mirrored the changed culture introduced by Fox and Allen after the departure of Lancaster.
[389] *Education of the Poor Bill*, p. 17.
[390] ibid.
[391] ibid., p. 13.
[392] ibid., passim.
[393] ibid., p. 14.
[394] Binns, p. 101.
[395] Allen, *Life*, II, p. 176.
[396] ibid., p. 193.
[397] Binns, p. 102
[398] So Brougham in his evidence to the 1834 Select Committee (Parliamentary Paper, No. 572, p. 222), cited in de Montmorency, p. 233.

Evaluation and summary of Brougham's work 1816 – 1820

Two commentators have misinterpreted the import of Brougham's Bill. First, drawing on Brougham's statement that the schoolmaster did not need to teach any particular religion and perhaps misled by the provision for the use of the Bible alone, Adamson, for example, described the system as one of the earliest assertions in England of what was later called undenominationalism.[399] But, if so, it must, in view of the provision for the teaching of the Catechism in school hours, be described as qualified undenominationalism, notwithstanding the right given to parents to withdraw their children, without penalty, from the school at those times. However, in the evaluation of prospective legislation, the whole Bill must be considered, and not merely a part. Brougham's Bill was certainly not the system of the BFSS. Second, de Montmorency was incorrect to say that Brougham's proposal for religious teaching in this Bill 'was a distinct foreshadowing of the Cowper-Temple clause of 1870' because that Act did not mention Scripture.[400] Furthermore Brougham's provisions on worship made a link between pupils and church attendance on Sundays, which was expressly forbidden by the 1870 Act.[401]

Brougham's Bill had an Anglican bias, as did Whitbread's over ten years earlier. Brougham enjoyed no more success than Whitbread. But there were some medium-term benefits from this apparent failure. First, the political power of the Dissenters revealed in this defeat led to further pressure for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.[402] Second, the evidence gathered from the Select Committee investigations of 1816 to 1818 would ultimately lead to state involvement in education by means of the grants channelled through the BFSS and the National Society from 1833. But it would be 1837 before another education Bill was attempted, again by Brougham.

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[399] J. W. Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), p. 22.
[400] De Montmorency, p. 231. His view would have required the passing of Pakington's unsuccessful amendment on 30 June 1870. See below chapter 10.
[401] Elementary Education Act 1870, section 7 (1).
[402] R. W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907) [2nd edn, completed and edited by A.W.W. Dale, [SI], Hodder and Stoughton, 1957], p. 409.

The 'quiet' 1820s

While in other areas of national life political reform and pressure to remove the restrictions on non-Anglicans continued apace, in the sphere of education after the failure of Brougham's Bill there was what I have called the 'quiet' 1820s which lasted until the first parliamentary education grants in 1833. However, if there was no great advance in education in this period, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the first Reform Act of 1832 had a significant impact on society as a whole, including education. After the religious disabilities of non-Anglicans had been lifted, Parliament could no longer be regarded as a lay synod of the Church of England. So the alleged state indifferentism to religion and the secularism of which the 1870 Act has been accused were rooted in the events of the late 1820s.[403] But the removal of religious disabilities led not to peace in Church and State, but to heightened conflict at national level as Anglicans reacted to militant Dissent.[404]

Maintaining the unsectarian policy in BFSS schools

In chapter 4 I analysed the Canterbury and West London challenges to unsectarianism. In this section I shall examine whether, in the third and fourth decades of the BFSS's existence, there were any further examples of difficulties in maintaining the BFSS unsectarian policy, either from local desires to use distinctive catechisms or to permit withdrawal from unsectarian religious instruction. As can be seen from the references, the material in this section is based on unpublished archival sources and it is this material which provides new insights.

I have found no evidence comparable to the significance of the controversy over the Lancasterian school at Canterbury discussed in the previous chapter, but correspondence is extant about minor issues of this type. In 1829, for example, the BFSS received a letter from Mr. Smith, the schoolmaster of the BFSS school at Corfe, stating that the school committee (presumably local) did not object to the teaching of the Church of England catechism to Church of England children on Saturdays 'provided this practice does not interfere with the

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[403] Walsh and Taylor, 'The Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' eighteenth century', in ed. by Walsh and others, p. 62.

[404] D. G. Paz, *The Politics of Working Class Education in Britain 1830-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 2.

routine of the school on other days.'[405] The following year a letter was received from Rev. George Freer of Yaxley, Suffolk because the BFSS was trying to clarify whether the church catechism would be taught to the children of Dissenters.[406] The central organization of the BFSS appeared to have accepted this arrangement.[407]

Regarding exemptions using a species of conscience clause or permission for withdrawal from unsectarian religious instruction the dominant issue here concerned the Jews. In the BFSS manuscript book of General Minutes commencing October 1830 a difficulty concerning the treatment of Jewish children under the British system of religious instruction was mentioned. A Jewish challenge on the presence of Jewish pupils in religious instruction was discussed by the General Committee of the BFSS on 20 May 1831. This issue had been referred by the BFSS Ladies Committee because of an objection received about Jewish children having to read the New Testament. This meeting of the General Committee resolved unanimously: 'That it is one of the fundamental principles of this Society that the Scriptures or the selection wherefrom published by the Society be read by all children admitted into the schools, and that no alteration whatever can be made...'[408] This resolution reaffirmed an earlier decision of the Ladies' Committee.

At a further General Committee meeting on 17 August 1832 a communication was received from the Jews' Free School in Spitalfield about the religious instruction in the central schools of the Society as it affected Jewish pupils. The BFSS Secretary was instructed to reply that the policy had not changed.[409] However, there was soon a *volte-face* in the policy for Jewish children. At a meeting on 15 November 1833 it was reported that a letter had been received from the Secretary of the Jews' School Committee requesting that Jewish children at the Borough Road school (the central school of the BFSS referred to above) be excused from reading the New Testament.[410] The BFSS Secretary was instructed to reply that the Committee wished to take the greatest care to avoid offence to Jewish parents or children. More explicitly, a BFSS meeting on 18 April 1834 recorded that it was an inviolable rule that

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[405] BFSS, Manuscript book of Minutes of the Inspectors' Committee, 2 February 1829.
[406] BFSS, Minutes, Inspectors' Committee, 19 November 1830.
[407] William Allen was prepared to admit the use of Catechism provided it formed no part of the regular school business. See Allen to Brougham, 22 Jan 1839, Brougham MSS, cited by McGarry, p. 241. Cf. also Fox above.
[408] Manuscript book entitled *British and Foreign School Society General Minutes commencing October 1830.* Minutes of meeting held on 20 May 1831, p. 54 of manuscript book.
[409] BFSS, Minutes, General Committee, 17 August 1832, pp. 129-30.
[410] ibid., 15 November 1833, pp. 221-22.

Jewish children should never be compelled to read from the New Testament.[411] The BFSS General Committee obviously had a short memory. However, this change in policy did not succeed in placating the committee of the Jews' Free School. Six months later the Secretary of the committee for that school wrote to the BFSS severing all connection with the central Society.[412] These examples suggest that in general the unsectarian policy was by now increasingly well-established and that deviations from the policy were the exception rather than the norm.[413]

Unsectarianism and the religious affiliation of teachers

In exploring the theme of unsectarianism in education not only the content of the religious teaching, but also the question of the denominational affiliation of the teachers and their relationship to worshipping communities in the localities where they taught should be considered. When one examines the question of how firm the BFSS's commitment was to undenominationalism, there is a conflict between what is suggested by public documents and what is revealed in the Society's archives. This research brings this conflict to the surface. When Henry Dunn,[414] Secretary of the BFSS, appeared before the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiring into Education in 1834, he was asked 'Have you had any applications from particular sects for teachers?' He answered, 'We have; but in every case refused them, if the schools are to be conducted on sectarian principles.' He was further asked, 'When particular sects have applied, have they asked for a preference?' Dunn's reply was, 'Yes, we have had applications of that kind. The application has come in this form: 'We are a certain

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[411] ibid., 18 April 1834, p. 271.
[412] ibid., 6 October 1834, p. 326.
[413] That said, it is sometimes necessary to distinguish official policy from the private statements of individuals who may stretch the rules a little. So, for example, in a letter to Brougham in 1839, Allen remarked, 'I should as an individual [*sic*] be prepared to consent to the admission of the Church Catechism into schools provided that it formed no part of the regular school business and was taught to the children of Churchmen only – and at a time separate and distinct from all other business – provision must be made, when the schoolmaster is a Dissenter, for its being taught by some lay or clerical member of the Church.' See Allen to Brougham, 16 January 1839, Brougham Papers, University College, London, Catalogue reference 20,471.
[414] Dunn, Henry (1801-78) 1828 first full-time BFSS Secretary since Fox's death in 1816. McGarry, p. 197. 1830 superintendent at Borough Road. In the 1830s Allen and Dunn were jointly in charge at BFSS. Dunn published *Popular Education, or, The Normal School Manual* in eleven editions. In 1840 with John Crossley, master of the Borough Road model school, published graduated *Lesson Books* which were widely used in British schools. McGarry p. 233 describes Dunn as similar to Fox in his theological convictions with a tinge of Calvinism. By the late 1830s Dunn took over from Allen, though the latter was still the public voice of the Society and a spokesman for Dissent. McGarry, pp. 250-51. Dunn retired in 1857. See also G. F. Bartle in *ODNB*.

congregation, in a particular town or village; a National school has just been established from which we are excluded; we want now a school in connexion with our chapel, which will also be our own.' We have invariably replied to such communications, that while we regret their circumstances, we will never sanction any school which is not freely and fully open to all parties; nothing sectarian or exclusive being introduced. On that point the committee are exceedingly firm.'[415]

It would appear, however, that the reality of the situation was that the published evidence in Annual Reports was something less than the full picture. This caution must also apply to evidence given to a Select Committee as above. A more realistic picture is given in the letters of the Society's agents, which over decades consistently show that the Society received denominationally-specific requests for teachers. It is, of course, necessary to consider what reply was made. Again, the loose connection between schools and the central parent body of the Society must be noted. From these letters it would appear that, even if the curriculum of the schools was to include unsectarian religious education, the denominational affiliation of the prospective teachers was very much a consideration in the placing of individuals in particular schools.

The beginning of direct government financial involvement in education

1833 marked a new stage of government involvement in education. By this time Brougham, the previously acknowledged national leader of the movement to extend education and now elevated to the Lords, had cooled towards a *national* system of education.[416] In the reformed Parliament the Radical John Arthur Roebuck, MP for Bath, called for a compulsory, non-denominational national system of education.[417] Although Roebuck did not succeed in bringing in an education Bill, Brougham has been credited with securing an education grant to the two voluntary societies.[418] The Government envisaged that grants would be mainly for schools in towns. But a great many applications came from the National Society for rural

[415] Evidence of Henry Dunn of the BFSS to 1834 Select Committee, cited in Frederic Hill, *National Education; its present state and prospects*, 2 vols (London: Charles Knight, 1836), I, p. 64.
[416] McGarry, p. 219.
[417] Paz, p. 13. *Hansard*, 3, XX, 139, 30 July 1833. Roebuck, John Arthur (1802-79) independent-minded Radical. MP for Bath 1832-37, 1841-47 and Sheffield 1849-68, 1874-79. See S. A. Beaver in *ODNB*.
[418] Paz, p. 13.

areas. Neither the National Society nor the BFSS received any government money themselves: they acted as intermediaries between the Government and local schools.[419] The unsectarian principle governed the BFSS's approval of grants. Thus, when a request for funds from a Catholic school was forwarded by the Treasury to the BFSS because it was not an Anglican school, Dunn declined to support the application.[420] The grant arrangements from 1833 thus confirmed the status of the BFSS as a significant force in the provision of education and officially recognized its unsectarian religious teaching.

However, although the BFSS had secured this Government *imprimatur*, the formation in 1836 of the CSE, occupying a position to the left, as it were, of unsectarianism, emerged as a threat to the BFSS. The CSE advocated a national secular system of education. George Combe,[421] inspired by the Massachusetts system of education, called for a national, secular and universal system of education in England. By 'secular' Combe meant more than merely non-sectarian: it denoted all that prepared a child to live in the world.[422] Leading members of the CSE included B. F. Duppa[423] as Honorary Secretary and Thomas Wyse, a Roman Catholic MP.[424] The CSE attracted support from advanced Whigs, Liberals, and philosophical radicals. The Society advocated government intervention in education along the Irish model of separation of religious from secular education.[425] Some BFSS committee members were supporters of the CSE, for example, Robert Slaney, who was to be chair of the 1837-38 Select Committee.[426] William Allen was also a CSE member for a short time.[427] The CSE was criticized by Anglicans and orthodox Dissenters alike. In particular, Dunn in his publication *Strictures on the Publications of the Central Society of Education* criticized the CSE after its attack on the Borough Road school.[428] On 14 June 1837 Wyse sought unsuccessfully the establishment of a board of education. This triggered the demise of the

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[419] McGarry, p. 245.
[420] Paz, pp. 27-29. See also McGarry, p. 223.
[421] Combe, George (1788-1858), phrenologist, accused of atheism on the basis of his emphasis on self-sufficiency of science rather than divine providence. See L. S. Jacyna in *ODNB*.
[422] A. Cameron Grant, 'A Note on Secular Education in the Nineteenth Century', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, xvi, 3 (October 1968), 308-17 (p. 312).
[423] (1801-40). Influenced by the ideas of the Swiss educationist P. E. von Fellenberg. See Curthoys in *ODNB*.
[424] Wyse, Sir Thomas (1791-1862), moderate Whig, MP for Waterford 1835-47. Whip 1839-41. Joint secretary Board of Control for Indian affairs 1846-49. Minister-plenipotentiary to Greece 1849-62. Sought to model English education along Irish lines with schools aided by rates, separate secular and religious instruction, with central boards. See D. G. Paz in *ODNB*.
[425] For different views of the character of the CSE see McGarry, p. 231.
[426] Slaney, Robert Aglionby (1792–1862). Moderate Liberal, MP for Shrewsbury 1826-35, 1837-41, 1847-52, 1857-62.
[427] Paz, p. 70.
[428] Henry Dunn, *Strictures on the Publications of the Central Society of Education* (London, 1837).

CSE. However, from Combe and the CSE a link can be traced to the Lancashire Public School Association, which continued something of the spirit of the CSE and which will be discussed in chapter 7.

The Select Committees of the 1830s

The year following the first award of grants for building schools channelled through the BFSS and the National Society the first of the three Select Committees of the 1830s was set up to examine the mechanisms for education expenditure. General evaluations of the Committees reveal them to have been of variable quality. However, the concern of this thesis is not with the overall effectiveness of the Committees in promoting education. Rather the importance of the Select Committees lies in the questioning of witnesses, especially those connected with the unsectarian system of the BFSS and the evidence thus given to the Committees. I shall here provide a more detailed analysis of the theme of unsectarianism than is available either in the existing published literature or in McGarry's doctoral thesis on the BFSS. By doing this a much fuller picture than has heretofore been available can be put together with the result that our understanding of this period is significantly improved.

The 1834 Select Committee

After the failure of Roebuck's motion in Parliament in 1833 for a national system of education, the establishment of the 1834 Select Committee[429] to explore the possibility of a national system of education at first might appear to be one of Roebuck's achievements.[430] However, Roebuck and the Radicals were outmanoeuvred. The Committee was more sympathetic to the BFSS than to the National Society.[431] The Whig Lord John Russell, a life-long BFSS supporter, chaired most of the sessions.[432] Spring Rice[433] and Brougham were also

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[429] *Report from the Select Committee of Inquiry into the present state of the Education of the People in England and Wales, And into the application and effects of the Grant made by Parliament for the erection of Schools.* Sess. 1834 (572) vol 9.

[430] Paul Scherer, *Lord John Russell. A Biography* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 102; Paz, p. 16.

[431] Paz, p. 17.

[432] Russell was the second son of the sixth Duke of Bedford, who was an RLI subscriber from around 1803. See Salmon, p. 16.

[433] Later Lord Monteagle. BFSS supporter. Appointed Chancellor when Whigs took power in April 1835 until 1839. Also CSE life member from 1839. See Paz, p. 70.

leading figures in the Committee, the former because of his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1835 with responsibility for the grants disbursed to the two voluntary societies.[434] Other significant members of the Committee included Roebuck, Sir James Graham, Sir Robert Peel and a young William Gladstone.

William Allen, the BFSS Treasurer, was questioned on the use of Scripture in BFSS schools. He gave evidence that the Scripture used was both moral and doctrinal.[435] Scripture questions in the BFSS system were on the grammatical sense of the passage.[436] For example, with a text such as 'This is my beloved son' the teacher would ask who was called the Son and by whom in this passage.[437] The BFFS was concerned to avoid teachers giving interpretations of Bible passages through any explanation which pupils might require. Allen believed it was possible to distinguish explanation and interpretation.[438] Moreover, explanations were not enforced: they were merely to check whether children understood what had been read. Conduct and character needed to be moulded by the *ipsissima verba* of Scripture.[439] Although the BFSS did not wish to see interpretation given, Allen acknowledged: 'but we cannot dictate to the numerous committees that emanate from us; but our general recommendation is, that they shall confine themselves to the text of Scripture without note or comment.'[440] As to interpretation of scripture, scripture was its own interpreter.[441]

The concept of explaining to pupils merely the grammatical sense of the passage was a frequent refrain in the BFSS's justification of its unsectarian system and its associated desire to demonstrate that it did not proselytize even through oral explanations by teachers of biblical passages. Where no explanation of scripture passages was given, children could draw their own inferences. Having said it was possible to distinguish explanation and interpretation, Allen was not pressed as to what this would mean in practice. For Allen there was a 'common capacity' to interpret the Scriptures. Without the divine spirit which produced the scripture, no understanding would be possible. The BFSS believed that the doctrines were so clear in the Bible that any attempt to use the natural capacity of humans to

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[434] Scherer, p. 102.
[435] *Select Committee,* 1834, evidence of Allen, p. 25.
[436] ibid., evidence of Mr. J. T. Crossley, master of the BFSS, p. 82.
[437] ibid., 1127, p. 91.
[438] ibid., 887, p. 73.
[439] ibid., 875, p. 73.
[440] ibid., 879, p. 73.
[441] ibid., evidence of Crossley, p. 91.

interpret them would lead to error. Questioned on Trinitarian doctrine, Allen averred that the BFSS stressed the terminology of scripture. Thus, since Trinity was not a New Testament term, they would not use that, but would speak of the Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In respect of the Trinity Allen was more cautious than Dunn.

The other main BFSS witness was Henry Dunn, who stated that the BFSS did not interfere with the religious denomination of children except to expect that they attended a place of worship decided by the parents. On Mondays the children had to confirm attendance at Sunday worship.[442] However, Dunn's definite response differs from a more liberal response of William Allen, when he was questioned about pupils' attendance at Sunday worship.[443] Allen said that the requirement depended rather on the local committee, who might inquire whether the children had attended. When the Committee inquired whether prayer might be made on schooldays, perhaps as compensation, Allen replied that it was not in general recommended, though it might be used in some schools.

Dunn's evidence on requiring attendance at Sunday worship was confirmed by Crossley on 30 June 1834.[444] Wigram of the National Society, however, argued that the requirement was not enforced and it was a weakness in the organization that children could not be collectively taken to worship. The National Society, by contrast, kept the children together so that they could go as a body to an Anglican place of worship.[445] However, in the 1838 Report Henry Althans, now a BFSS inspector, wished the BFSS Sunday worship regulation were better observed. He thus contradicted Dunn's evidence and confirmed Wigram's assertion that Sunday worship did not always happen.[446]

The 1834 Select Committee also heard evidence from Professor James Pillans.[447] Given his reputation as an educationist, it was a coup for the BFSS and unsectarians to have his support at the Committee. Pillans was questioned on how a generalized Christianity could be taught.

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[442] ibid., 211, 212, p. 15.
[443] ibid., 859, 862, p. 70.
[444] ibid., p. 92.
[445] ibid., p. 62, 24 June.
[446] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, p. 143, 19 June 1838.
[447] James Pillans, (1778-1864), classicist and educational reformer, lifelong Whig, Rector of the Edinburgh high school, Professor of humanity and laws (Latin) at Edinburgh University from 1820-63. Believed in universal compulsory education and was a moderate supporter of secular education programmes, believing they encouraged tolerance and arguing that early religious training properly took place in the home. See Elizabeth J. Morse in *ODNB*.

He argued for Scripture to be directed to the moral dimension, as a basis for solving the religious difficulty. Doctrine was not profitable for children, but he continued, 'the leading and distinctive doctrines of Christianity ought not to be omitted.'[448]

Paz's judgment that the 1834 Select Committee was markedly sympathetic to the BFSS and the unsectarian position can be sustained.[449] There was little more than exposition of the BFSS position and the inconsistencies between the evidence of Allen and Dunn on the Sunday worship requirement, for example, were not explored by the Committee.

The 1835 Select Committee and a new Bill from Brougham

The material produced by the 1835 Select Committee was not formally a Report, but only a record of evidence.[450] The witnesses called with reference to unsectarianism were somewhat curious. The two main speakers were Francis Place and Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel.[451] Place's contribution was partly backward-looking for he spoke much of his unsuccessful experience with the West Lancasterian Association well over 20 years before.[452] He had little to offer the contemporary situation. But support for unsectarian religious teaching came from Noel. He set out another interpretation of unsectarianism, which differed from the BFSS model. Whereas Dunn struggled, particularly in the 1837-38 Select Committee below, to hold at the same time to a generalized, yet orthodox, Trinitarian Christianity without losing the cardinal principle of relying only on the text of the Bible, Noel presented a system of unsectarian teaching which would not exclude the Unitarians. Under questioning, he argued that the Government should give financial support to a school which excluded any biblical texts which were contrary to Unitarian doctrine.[453] Pupils would imbibe 'peculiar Christian doctrines' because 'they lie upon the surface; they are the plain literal meaning of thousands

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[448] *Select Committee*, 1834, p. 45, 20 June.
[449] Paz, p. 17.
[450] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *1835 (465) Report from Select Committee on the State of Education in England and Wales together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index.*
[451] Noel, Baptist Wriothesley (1799-1873), Evangelical clergyman, seceded from Anglican ministry and joined Baptists in 1849. See Grayson Carter in *ODNB*.
[452] See chapter 4 above. Note that Place's contribution was to the 1835 Select Committee, and not 1838, as recorded in Brian Simon's authoritative and landmark history of education. Brian Simon, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), p.150.
[453] An example of such a text was given to the 1834 Select Committee by Rev. Samuel Wood, a Unitarian minister and Secretary to the BFSS Harp Alley school, who stated that he would not teach the text, 'For there are three that bear record in heaven.' (1 John 5. 7 [KJV]). See section 2101, p. 160.

of passages.'[454] Thus Noel stood here in the same methodological tradition as the BFSS representatives who had given evidence in the 1834 Committee. He believed that exposure to the grammatical sense of biblical texts containing key Christian doctrines would lead to their assimilation by the children. Where he differed from the BFSS informants was in terms of biblical content. He would proscribe certain texts if they posed a problem for the Unitarians, thus making an unsectarian school more inclusive. He did not touch on the question of the Catholics, so the result of his plan was merely to broaden the potential scope of a Protestant school.

After the two Select Committees of 1834 and 1835 Brougham returned to prominence in 1837 by preparing a Bill which prescribed that religious teaching should be based only on the Bible without explanation or commentary. This was a contrast to his 1820 Bill. Although the Bill pleased the Dissenters, it was opposed by the Anglican Evangelical clergyman Francis Close and ultimately failed.[455] Close argued that this teaching would produce pupils who would assimilate an interpretation of the Bible corresponding to the denominational allegiance of the teacher.[456]

The 1838 Select Committee

The third and final Select Committee of the 1830s was set up when, on 30 November 1837, Robert Slaney, MP for Shrewsbury and a member of both the BFSS and the CSE, secured the establishment of a Select Committee on Education to 'consider the best means of providing useful Education for the Children of the Poorer Classes in large Towns throughout England and Wales.'[457] Often known as Slaney's Committee on urban working-class education because he chaired the sessions, it made much use of the statistical enquiries recently conducted in Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Birmingham and London. The Committee was critical of the accuracy of Returns laid before Parliament as recently as the Committee on

[454] *Select Committee*, 1835, 742, p. 63.
[455] Francis Close, (1797-1882) Evangelical, incumbent of Cheltenham Parish Church from 1826. Dean of Carlisle from 1856. Promoter of schools and teacher training. See A. F. Munden in *ODNB*.
[456] Michael Hennell, *Sons of the Prophets. Evangelical Leaders of the Victorian Church* (London: SPCK, 1979), p. 113. See further below on Close and Dunn.
[457] *Report from the Select Committee on the Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales*, 13 July 1838, p. ii. See in general Paz, pp. 65-69.

Education in 1835, yet the 1838 Report as a whole was hardly radical. Neither was it particularly wide-ranging and it appeared limited in the scope of its reflection on the question of religion in education when set against other contemporary reports such as the Committee on Irish Education.[458] The 1838 Committee Report came to the unremarkable conclusion that in London and the great towns of England and Wales there was a great need for education for working-class children, estimated as at least one eighth of the population, but at that time they were not prepared to recommend any closer involvement of the Government other than the 'continuance and extension' of channelling Treasury grants through the National Society and the BFSS.[459]

Unlike the Select Committees of 1834 and 1835, Allen was not called to give evidence on behalf of the BFSS. Henry Althans, the BFSS Inspector for London and the immediate region, gave evidence, but he did not touch upon the nature of unsectarian religious teaching. The main interest in the 1838 Report is, therefore, in the evidence of Henry Dunn, the BFSS Secretary.

More than twenty-five years since the Anglican attacks on the BFSS and the establishment of the National Society, a significant proportion of pupils, according to Dunn, were still Anglican: about two fifths in the Borough-road school and in some rural areas, in the absence of a convenient national school, one third. [460] There were few Catholic pupils and Dunn was pessimistic about the possibility of any agreement for Catholics, or indeed Jews, to be educated in British schools.[461] This marked a change from information provided in the 1834 or 1835 Reports.

The connection between individual schools and the BFSS central body was generally maintained by correspondence rather than inspection, with the exception of the London area.[462] The 1838 Report made the first mention of an attempt by the BFSS to exercise control over the commitment to unsectarian religious teaching by schools outside the London area, where the remit of an inspector ran. This involved schools signing a certificate of adherence to the BFSS principle of excluding 'the peculiar catechisms of the different

[458] Report by the Lords' Select Committee appointed to inquire into the progress and operation of the plan of education in Ireland, 1837.
[459] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, p. xi.
[460] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, p. 51.
[461] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, p. 51.
[462] See Henry Althans below.

denominations'.[463] Treasury grants were made to schools only after the certificates were returned. No control could be exercised over schools' efficiency and indeed one senses a certain lack of clarity in the exchange between Gladstone and Dunn. The school was to be conducted upon 'the plan and principles' of the BFSS, but Dunn acknowledged that the certificates bound people to the leading features only and not to 'all the rules, intellectual and mechanical' of the BFSS.

Scripture reading, for Dunn, did not involve the master expressing any opinion of his own; rather 'the plain obvious grammatical meaning of the text' would produce an impression on the minds of the pupils. Was Dunn guilty of some degree of evasion when asked if pupils were envisaged as drawing their own conclusions from the biblical language or whether they received clues from the teacher's observations on the text? Dunn replied, 'I think the child receives the text of the Bible as it would receive the text of any other book, *as it stands* (my emphasis).[464] Further the master would question pupils about 'the plain and obvious grammatical meaning of the text.' There was no denial that, *contra* the Unitarians, 'doctrines which are usually denominated the orthodox doctrines' were brought out.[465] By 'orthodox' Dunn meant, for example, the Atonement and the Divinity of Christ.[466] Dunn, in fact, felt that it would be impossible to hold together a Trinitarian and a Unitarian if one were watching the system closely. Consequently the master might, if need be, give pupils 'a more correct opinion' if they seemed likely to form an erroneous impression. Instruction in religion, therefore, depended very much on the character of the teacher, whether or not creeds or catechisms were used. The teacher, even the most devout and believing, had a responsibility to teach that in which he passionately believed, but had, *qua* teacher, no right 'to communicate any opinions which are peculiar to himself', for example, the rightness of an Episcopal form of government. The views of truth 'common to the great body of Christians will necessarily come out of the plain meaning of the text.'[467]

The Chairman inquired with probing percipience, 'If I understand you rightly, the master asks if the child understands the passage, and if not, he explains the great doctrine contained in it, but in such a manner that the master shall not impress upon the child any peculiar creed of

[463] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, Dunn's response to Gladstone, 385, p. 50.
[464] ibid., 491, p. 59.
[465] ibid., 498, p. 59.
[466] ibid., 512, p. 60.
[467] ibid., 503, p. 59.

any one sect of Christians.'[468] Dunn was repetitive and vague, perhaps fearful of admitting so plainly the full force of the Chairman's statement of the BFSS position. Although school committees tended to appoint masters of the same religious opinion as themselves, Dunn confessed that it was indeed possible that 'in all cases, to a great extent, the opinions of the master will colour any explanations of the master, however simple those explanations may be.'[469]

Final reflection on the BFSS and the era of the Select Committees

The questioning in the Select Committees of the 1830s revealed something of the diversity within schools which stemmed from the loose association of the local schools and their relation to the central body of the BFSS. Some of the divergences even among leading officials of the BFSS have been noted. There was Dunn's admission in the 1838 Committee that the teacher's views might slip through to the pupils. The Unitarian minister Rev. Samuel Wood, who gave evidence at the 1834 Committee, would not at all points be at one with Dunn, certainly, or with Allen, possibly. No doubt there was also such variation among local schools scattered across the country.

Summary

The content of this chapter has revealed the tension between the evidence in printed documents and that in unpublished archival material about adherence to unsectarianism. The elaboration of this distinction contributes significantly to the originality of this thesis. The period covered by this chapter reveals both failure and a small degree of success in education in the 1830s. After the burst of activity in the second half of the 1810s, the third decade of the nineteenth century, as far as education was concerned, would prove to be remarkably quiescent. After the failure of his Bill in 1820 Brougham had busied himself with higher education. The events with, eventually, far-reaching implications for basic education were the alleviation of disabilities for non-Anglicans in 1828 and 1829. The pace of change quickened

[468] ibid., 520, p. 61.
[469] ibid., 524, p. 61.

in the 1830s with the Reform Bill in the broad arena of politics and the 1833 contribution of Roebuck on education. The Select Committees had succeeded in drawing out the character and also the weaknesses of the unsectarian system of religious teaching. Although there are references to the continuing attendance of some Catholic pupils in BFSS schools, there was no evidence that the statements by BFSS officials of its position had in any way been modified by the problems set out by Catholic clergy in the Brougham Select Committees hearings twenty years earlier. It was apparent that there were difficulties in holding in practice to a commitment to using the Bible without the teacher's commitment colouring the explanations given to pupils. Yet, despite these concerns, the BFSS system was by now well-established nationally and was about to enter into the period of its greatest national influence. This will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The British and Foreign School Society and unsectarianism in the period of Kay-Shuttleworth

c. 1838 -1848

Introduction

The previous chapters have charted the growth of unsectarianism in schools for the poor over a period of almost four decades. In chapter 5 I showed how the BFSS, as the main representative of unsectarianism, survived some of the challenges posed by the Select Committees of the 1830s and how from 1833 government grants to the BFSS, and to the larger National Society, enhanced its prestige.

This chapter has three main sections. First, I shall begin with the national perspective by showing how the BFSS became closely involved with the Whig government in an attempt to promote unsectarianism and the effect of the partial failure of the government plans for education in 1839. Second, I shall address the internal affairs of the BFSS itself to examine continuing attacks on its system from without (from Close) and responses both from within the BFSS (from Dunn) and without (from Baden Powell). I shall also explore some changes in BFSS rules and the willingness of the Society to use a wider variety of reading books besides the Bible. For the third and final section of the chapter I shall return to the national perspective by treating a further government attempt to legislate on education and, after its failure, the move to influence education by administrative means. Nearly all this material falls within the period during which Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was Secretary of the new Committee of the Privy Council on Education. Thus it is appropriate for the title of this chapter to reflect his contribution.

The primary sources used in this chapter are predominantly printed, although at points I shall draw on unpublished archival documents to bring my own interpretation to the material, and sometimes to challenge the interpretations offered in secondary literature.

The mood of the 1830s

In an attempt to gauge the mood of the 1830s, the views of contemporary writers cannot always be taken at face value. Hill, for example, writing in 1836, maintained that the educational dispute of the early nineteenth century between Anglicans following Bell and Dissenters following Lancaster had by then died away: most people had realized that it was foolish to allow religious differences to provoke mutual hostility and so compromise educational progress.[470] In fact the 1830s were a period of increasing religious tension due to a process of action and reaction from the competing Anglican and Dissenting denominations. From the mid-1830s the Anglican Church had become increasingly self-confident. This was due not solely to the rise of the Tractarian movement and its heightened emphasis on the Church, a factor which would soon affect the education issue. The creation of the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1835 and the work of reforming clergy such as Bishop Blomfield in London also gave a new impetus to the claims of the Anglican Church. Anglican vulnerability had decreased since relief measures for Dissenters in 1836. In this Anglican revival some younger High-Church National Society members, including Gladstone, who were known as the 'Young Gentlemen', pressed for the expansion of Anglican religious education[471] to counter the pressure from the Radicals for a national board of education.[472] A clash between Church and Dissent was therefore inevitable.[473]

A national perspective on education in the late 1830s

This Anglican resurgence alarmed the BFSS for fear that the Church of England would dominate the education system. In 1838 William Allen sent a memorandum to Lord John Russell[474] urging a national board of education: the memorandum also envisaged mandatory Bible teaching for all children with the exception of Jews and Catholics.[475] This would become the basis of a comprehensive system of national education. Additionally a conscience clause would exempt Dissenters from learning the Catechism.[476] Support for the BFSS

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[470] Frederic Hill, *National Education; its present state and prospects*, 2 vols (London: Charles Knight, 1836), I, p. 57.
[471] Paz, pp. 62-65.
[472] Scherer, p. 103.
[473] Norman Gash, *The Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830*, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 228-31.
[474] John Russell, from 1861 first Earl Russell, Paymaster General 1830-34. Home Secretary 1835-39. Secretary for War and Colonies 1839-41, Prime Minister 1846 -52, Foreign Secretary 1852-53, In Cabinet without office 1853-54, Lord President of the Council 1854-55, Secretary for Colonies 1855, Foreign Secretary 1859-65, Prime Minister 1865-66.
[475] R. J. W. Selleck, *James Kay- Shuttleworth. Journey of an Outsider* (Ilford: The Woburn Press, 1994), p. 145.
[476] Binns, p. 128; McGarry, p. 242.

scheme came also from the Manchester Society for Promoting National Education.[477] In October 1838 Russell set out his own proposals for an education Bill, including provision for the Scriptures to be read in all schools.[478] On 26 November the Cabinet gave their approval. Russell also planned to set up a government Normal School, in which Scripture would be read daily with Roman Catholics using their own version. But Spring Rice, the Chancellor, advised Russell that this would antagonize the National Society because the Anglicans would be required to give up what was a fundamental principle and it was unjust to try to browbeat them into accepting this by threatening the withdrawal of grant.

The politicization of the BFSS in response to the Anglican resurgence

In evidence to the 1837-38 Select Committee, Dunn had denied that the BFSS could be seen as representative of the interests of Dissenters. 'The British and Foreign School Society does not represent the dissenters as a body; its committee consists of churchmen and dissenters; there are many churchmen on it.'[479] That said, Dunn did not rule out the possibility that Dissenters would approve the policy of the BFSS, but he was unwilling to allow himself to be seen as an official representative of Dissenters: the BFSS '...is just as much a Church of England society as it is a dissenting society.'[480] As will be seen, this public assertion of neutrality is at odds with the discussions revealed in unpublished archives.

The most illuminating evidence of the continuing exclusive links between the BFSS and the Whig government is the letter which Dunn sent to Russell containing the expression of the BFSS's confidence in the plans of the Whigs. It contained the phrase: 'we are safe in the hands of Lord John Russell.'[481] The need for the BFSS to make this overt political commitment to the Whigs and put its trust in Russell was perhaps an understandable response to the increasingly strained relations between Church, State and Dissent throughout the

[477] Dunn to Brougham, 20 November 1837, UCL, Brougham Papers, Catalogue reference 9574.
[478] Scherer, p. 104.
[479] *Select Committee*, 1837-38, 471, p. 57.
[480] ibid., 474.
[481] Dunn to Russell, 5 October 1838, PRO 30/22, vol 3B, Russell Papers, fol. 286. Cowherd, p. 74, notes the close links between Dissenting bodies and the Whigs, but gives no evidence such as the letter I have quoted. Cowherd also argues that this close relationship between the Whigs and Dissenters was broken after the election of 1837. Against Cowherd, the letter cited here points to the continuing confidence of the BFSS leadership in the Whigs under Russell.

1830s.[482] In this context, therefore, the BFSS could be suitably described as a Dissenting body.[483] Allen had also previously written to Russell about forming associations throughout the country to promote the Liberal cause in areas besides education, similar to the Tories' use of 'their Ecclesiastical machinery for their [underlined in original] exclusive purposes.'[484]

Henry Dunn was opposed to a state system of education, believing that it would fall under the control of the Anglican clergy. Concerned for the maintenance of the BFSS's distinctiveness, he was fearful that the National Society's exclusiveness would put it in a superior position to the BFSS. The BFSS would need to merge its schools in the national provision. Dunn saw the Tories as *part* of the enemy rather than the Church of England as a whole. Anglican liberals as well as orthodox Dissenters, he argued, were supporting the BFSS.[485]

The attempt to establish a government unsectarian normal school

The year 1839 was an anxious time for the BFSS because of the greatly increased tension between Church and Dissent. Russell introduced his proposals in February 1839. The main provisions were: the establishment of a Committee of the Privy Council for Education, in effect a board of education; inspectors would be appointed by this Committee; and the setting up of a Normal School, a day school, and a model school. The model school would have two types of religious instruction; first, general instruction, in which the Scriptures would be read daily, with Catholics permitted to read their own version of the Bible; second, the general instruction would be complemented by denominational teaching given by clergy of the respective denominations.[486]

The interpretations of two writers on these events merit modification. First, Cornish's judgement on this arrangement was that there was then no idea of creating a uniform system of State-controlled education or of a plan of unsectarian religious education.[487] However, Cornish's view that the Government's policy was neutrality towards the different religious

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[482] David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends* (London: John Murray, 1966), p. 219.
[483] J. L. Alexander, 'Lord John Russell and the Origins of the Committee of Council on Education' *The Historical Journal*, 20, 2 (1977), 395-415 (p. 399).
[484] William Allen to Lord John Russell, 11 September 1837, PRO 30/22, vol 2F, fols 76-77.
[485] Dunn to Allen, 6 September 1837, UCL, Brougham Papers, Catalogue reference 9572.
[486] John Prest, *Lord John Russell* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 147-48; Selleck, p 147.
[487] Cornish, I, p. 199.

denominations[488] requires emendation, for Kay-Shuttleworth informed Russell that the aim of the Committee of Council was to prevent the Anglican Church from maintaining an exclusively ecclesiastical system of education.[489] Second, Gash regards the arrangement as a more secular system of education presaged by a non-confessional normal school.[490] But the Minute of the Privy Council of 3 June 1839 specified: 'that the children and Teachers of this [*sc.* Normal] school should be duly trained in the principles of the Christian religion, while the rights of conscience should be respected.'[491] On the contrary, I argue, *contra* Gash, that education was, therefore, to have a clear religious basis: this was not the secularism of the CSE.

The Dissenters generally accepted the government plan as redressing the balance between Church and Dissent. Dissent regarded the Government as its friend and owed much to the impact of the radical CSE founded in 1836. But Peel, the Conservative leader, argued in Parliament that no system of national education should be set up which excluded the dignitaries of the National Church. The important meeting of the National Society in May 1839 had passed a resolution that the control of the education system should be in the hands of the National Church. The government Normal school proposal was accordingly defeated by the efforts of Blomfield and Peel.[492] Kay-Shuttleworth and his friends subsequently founded an undenominational Normal school at Battersea without government funding. But it was not a financial success and in 1844 it was handed over to the National Society.[493]

Alexander has provided a meticulously detailed analysis of the education question in the late 1830s.[494] The relevance of this analysis for the thesis is the attempt to discern the inspiration for Russell's proposals in 1839. Some historians have seen the basis in the Irish education system, which had both a board of education and nondenominational schools.[495] Alexander proposed the alternative term 'multidenominational' for the Irish system, since it provided separate denominational doctrinal instruction. However, he failed to clarify that the Irish

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[488] Cornish, I, p. 205.
[489] Newsome, p. 222.
[490] Gash, pp. 228-31.
[491] Powell, p. 14.
[492] Newsome, p. 221.
[493] Cornish, I, pp. 202-03.
[494] J. L. Alexander, 'Lord John Russell and the Origins of the Committee of Council on Education', *The Historical Journal*, 20, 2 (1977), pp. 395-415.
[495] For example, Murphy, *Church, State and Schools in Britain 1800-1970*, p.19.

system also allowed for additional, non-compulsory 'common' religious teaching from Bible extracts in addition to the denominational teaching.[496]

Despite the close connection between the BFSS and the government plans, Russell's eventual proposal was not itself, therefore, the BFSS programme; what was proposed was a plan to which the BFSS agreed as a compromise to establish a national education system. In Alexander's interpretation, the idea for a nondenominational normal college was a Trojan horse for the national introduction of the BFSS scheme. But there would in fact be no successful legislation to introduce a national system of education for another 30 years, when a species of undenominational religious instruction, although still not the BFSS system, was finally established.[497] The government plan was not about social advance, but about Russell keeping his favours to a society he supported.[498] Whatever the interpretation of these events, in retrospect this was the climax of the political influence of the BFSS and its unsectarianism.

The establishment of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education

Despite the failure of the Normal School scheme, there was one successful development in 1839: the establishment on 10 April 1839 of a Committee of the Privy Council for Education in order to keep a more effective watch over the disbursement of funds to the National Society and the BFSS. This did not require an Act of Parliament, but only an order in Council.[499] The establishment of the Committee, cutting across the existing education system and soon augmented by government inspection, increased state control.[500] Dr. James Kay was appointed Secretary.[501] He had earlier been a supporter of the idea of united education, but the events of 1839 convinced him that the rivalries between the Churches made this politically impossible at that time.[502] The BFSS was not mollified by any reassurances about

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[496] Alexander, p. 396.
[497] See chapters 9, 10 and 11 passim.
[498] The importance of the long association between the BFSS and Lord John Russell was shown many years later in the grateful praise of a condolence letter from BFSS Secretary Alfred Bourne to Russell's widow: 'amongst the many wise reforms and beneficent measures which Earl Russell either originated or adopted, his efforts on behalf of the religious unsectarian education of the labouring masses occupy a prominent place; that he was the fearless champion of the cause when it was unpopular; and that he joyfully welcomed the educational zeal of the country in later years.' Bourne to Lady Russell, 17 June 1878, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 17B, fol. 128.
[499] Gosden, p. 2.
[500] Gash, pp. 228-31.
[501] After his marriage in 1842 known as Kay-Shuttleworth. I shall use this designation throughout.
[502] Murphy, *Church, State and Schools*, p. 26.

the events of 1839-40. On 8 January 1841 they drew up a memorial to the Government, still fearing that concessions had been made which would gradually put education into the hands of the Anglicans.[503]

Close's critique of the unsectarianism of the BFSS

I shall now turn to the second section of this chapter, in which I shall examine a number of internal affairs in the BFSS. In 1839 the Evangelical Anglican clergyman, Rev. Francis Close, accused the Master of the BFSS's Borough-road School in London that: 'in compliment to the Jews, [he] *skips every word relating to* Jesus Christ.'[504] Close further alleged that it depended upon the particular teacher whether the children were even allowed to read the name of Christ.

Close had also criticized the BFSS on the basis of the putative teaching of the Harp Alley School, but Dunn, the BFSS Secretary, countered that this school had never been in any formal association with the BFSS. According to Dunn, Harp Alley was a school which did reflect something of the BFSS's system of unsectarian religious teaching.[505] But the committee responsible for the school, which followed the British system, consisted of seven churchmen and eight Unitarians.[506] There were in fact no committee members at the school who were connected directly with the BFSS. In Dunn's interpretation, therefore, Close's error was to impugn the BFSS by taint of association.

On the question of the doctrinal character of the teaching at the Borough Road school, this being the flagship institution of the BFSS, Close's critique drew on the answer to a question in a Parliamentary Enquiry addressed to the BFSS Treasurer, William Allen, who was a member of the Society of Friends. Allen had answered that he believed what Scripture said about Father, Son and Holy Ghost and that this was accepted 'just in the terms of Scripture, without presuming to go into niceties and distinctions which are not found there'.[507] Close

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[503] Allen, *Life*, III, p. 410.
[504] Henry Dunn, *Strictures on the Rev. Francis Close's "Justification" of his Charges against the British and Foreign School Society* (London: 1839). See McGarry, p. 304 on Close and hermeneutics.
[505] Dunn, *Strictures*, p. 2.
[506] i.e. members of the Church of England.
[507] Dunn, *Strictures*, p. 3.

found this to be demeaning in terms of the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity: it was, therefore, claimed Close, evidence that BFSS schools either downplayed or ignored this central Christian doctrine. But Dunn argued that Close should have visited the Borough-road school and seen that this accusation was unfounded.

Furthermore Dunn stated categorically:

> The British and Foreign school Society has never.....compromised, in any School or Schools *under its control, or reaping benefits from its funds*, the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement, or any other of those great fundamental truths on which our common Christianity is based; it has never sanctioned the omission of a single text or word of scripture in order to meet the views of any class of objectors;...[508]

Note the italicized words in Dunn's statement above: there were two factors which militated against the centralized, and therefore homogenized, character of the schools. On the first of these factors, regarding management of the schools, Dunn acknowledged that the BFSS central organs could not exercise any power over individual schools; these were under the control of the local committees. This was necessarily so because it was precisely at a local level that funds for the schools were raised. Furthermore, HMI expressed concerns on the management of BFSS schools owing to the managers' lack of participation in the life of the school.[509] As to the second factor, the quality of the religious influence on pupils depended on the character of the teachers whom the local committees appointed.

The importance of this material in the development of the thesis is that, like Baden Powell's critique discussed later in this chapter, it demonstrates the weaknesses of the unsectarian system; yet objections notwithstanding, the system continued to survive.

The publication of Dunn's *Strictures*, from which his response above was taken, was dated 2 May 1839 and it is noteworthy that, in a post-script to the pamphlet, Dunn called attention to an event which was remembered for many years after as evidence of the BFSS's unswerving devotion to specifically Trinitarian undenominational religious instruction. The occasion was on the day following the publication of the pamphlet (3 May 1839). On this day the then

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[508] Dunn, *Strictures*, p. 3.

[509] John T. Smith, *'A Victorian Class Conflict'. Schoolteaching and the Parson, Priest and Minister, 1837-1902* (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), p. 44. This might have been welcomed by many of the other teachers mentioned in Smith's book who resented the social superiority and close control by clergy, especially Anglican.

Bishop of Norwich, Edward Stanley presided at the Annual Public Examination of the BFSS Boys' School. During the course of that examination the Bishop recorded that he had carefully examined the children on the person and work of Christ and was greatly impressed at the quality of the pupils' answers.

The nature of unsectarianism: an example from a Christian school in India

Although the focus of this thesis is primarily on England, the account of the religious curriculum of an educational initiative in India is relevant because Baden Powell referred to it in his analysis of unsectarian religious teaching discussed below and because it illustrated a scheme of general Christian doctrine. This was described as an example of *comprehensive* Religious Instruction in a Public Institution. The school, named La Martinière, was founded in Calcutta according to the will of Major-General Claude Martin. The arrangements for the establishment of the school were in the hands of the Supreme Court in Bengal. An order of the Court on 22 October 1832 provided:

> I. That the public religious instruction given to the children in the school be in conformity with the principles held in common by the English, Scotch, Roman, Greek, and Armenian Churches; but that the school be not placed under any particular denomination of Christians, and that no points which are in controversy between the said churches be touched upon in the course of public instruction.
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> II. That the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, the Most Rev. Dr. St. Leger, and the Rev. James Charles, be requested to frame a plan of religious instruction, and a form of prayer for family devotional exercises, in conformity with these principles. [510]

The religious instruction was divided into two parts, general and particular. The particular included discipline, church government, the sacraments, and other issues on which there were differences between the Churches.

The general religious instruction may be seen under the plan below:

> The following are the main truths held in common, on which the public religious instruction should, in your Committee's opinion, proceed:
> 1. the Being of God; his unity and perfections.

[510] National Education Union, *First Annual Report,* 1870, p. 67.

2. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, a Revelation inspired by the Holy Ghost.
3. The mystery of the adorable Holy Trinity.
4. The Deity, Incarnation, Atonement, and Intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
5. The fall and corruption of man, his accountableness and guilt.
6. Salvation thorough grace by the meritorious sacrifice and redemption of Christ.
7. The Personal[i]ty and Deity of the Holy Spirit, and His operations and grace in the sanctification of man.
8. The indispensable obligation of repentance towards God, faith in Christ, and continual prayer for the grace of the Holy Spirit.
9. The moral duties which every Christian is bound to perform towards God, his neighbour, and himself, as they are summed up in the Ten Commandments, and enlarged upon in other parts of Holy Scripture; all based on the doctrines above specified, and enforced as their proper fruits.[511]

The Committee recommended that this general instruction be mainly drawn from the Holy Scriptures and delivered in catechetical form. However the Committee also believed that parts could be extracted from particular, that is denominational, catechisms for illustrative purposes even though the complete form of such documents would be necessarily excluded. About two hours were to be set aside weekly for the particular religious instruction. This was seen as supplementary to the general plan as above with 'free ingress being given to the particular ministers and teachers who undertake these lessons.'[512]

This may be contrasted with an early BFSS statement of the common ground of Christianity, which went beyond the mere statement that the Bible was used: viz., there is a God, who is the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the World; and there is a future state of retribution, in which every individual would be rewarded or punished according to his works. Children were taught to reverence the Deity, to detest vice, to love truth, to perform duties to parents, friends and society. The absence of any distinctive Christian content or mention of Jesus and the strong moral component linked to judgement should be noted.[513]

After the failure of the government plan for unsectarian education in a normal school in 1839, Baden Powell, Professor of Geometry at Oxford University and in the Broad Church tradition, published a pamphlet the following year giving a guarded welcome for unsectarian

[511] ibid., pp. 68- 69.
[512] ibid., p. 69.
[513] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1815, p. 44.

education.[514] This was a more penetrating analysis of unsectarianism and its attempt to use the Bible as the common ground of religious teaching in schools for the poor. Like his fellow Anglican clergyman Francis Close, Powell saw the problems of the claim that it was possible to rely on the Bible alone. But whereas Close was hostile to unsectarianism, Powell set out carefully a sympathetic case for an unsectarian approach, especially as fostered by the State.

The pamphlet had two strands: it examined, first, an unsectarian approach based on the Bible as the basis for religious teaching, and, second, the relationship between the State and the nature of religious teaching. Powell was rather wistful: he saw the potential for an unsectarian approach, but recognised the reality of the conflicting forces. He was encouraging of the BFSS, believing that they alone had the right among the Dissenting communities to receive government funds for their schools. Ironically, Powell was writing on the eve of a resurgent denominationalism in education, when some Dissenters would decline State money for their schools. Although he approved of the BFSS, his understanding of unsectarian education was broader than theirs.

While praising the clarity of the Calcutta scheme set out above, Powell described it as very dogmatic and exclusive, even if its limits were broader than any one denomination. It would exclude Jews or, among Christians, Socinianism, Sabellianism or Arianism. Also language such as 'meritorious sacrifice' would be unintelligible.[515] Powell concluded that no comprehensive formulary was possible. To teach some rudiments of Christianity might be possible, but it was a weakness of his treatment that he did not specify exactly what these might be.[516] The BFSS, however, was explicit about teaching doctrine which rejected a Unitarian understanding of Christ. The BFSS's single concession was to allow Jewish pupils to read the Old Testament alone.

Powell was scornful of the defects in existing undenominational systems such as the kind of instruction which taught arithmetic and grammar through biblical examples:[517]

> Multiplication.

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[514] Baden Powell, *State Education considered with reference to Prevalent Misconceptions on Religious Grounds* (London: J. W. Parker, Oxford: D. A. Talboys, 1840). For brief general background on Powell see Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, I, pp. 553-55.
[515] Powell, p. 34.
[516] ibid., p. 35.
[517] ibid., p. 17.

> At the Marriage at Cana in Galilee there were 6 water-pots of stone, holding 2 or 3 firkins a piece. If they held 2 firkins, how much water would it take to fill them? And how much, if they held 3 each?[518]

He was also critical of any 'watered-down' version of unsectarianism:

> To teach a vague sentiment of religion for the gospel, is to mistake a part for the whole. But if it be impossible in a *comprehensive* form to teach *Christianity*, it is practicable thus to teach much which is highly valuable as *preparatory* to it. [519]

Powell was aware of the difficulties of agreeing a system of a general or comprehensive Christianity which could genuinely embrace all faiths. He therefore envisaged a system which might include nearly all denominations of Protestant Christians.[520] He suggested including material on the Evidences of Christianity[521] because of differences of opinion on the respective claims of natural theology and revelation, and Scripture History,[522] which raised the question of interpretation of narratives such as the creation stories and their relation to recent discoveries in geology. Powell thus brought his scholarly awareness of critical questions relating to the Bible to bear on unsectarianism. There were problems in the mere reading of the Bible such as selection and omission of some passages and different versions of the Bible.[523] Reading without note or comment was condemned by many who argued that the written scripture was only part of God's word and needed additional Church teaching.[524] The distinction in the nature of particular biblical passages, argued Powell, meant that context should be considered.[525] Powell himself attacked a too literal interpretation of the scriptures by the Chartists.

Powell rejected the Church of England's claim to supremacy in educational provision: it smacked of dishonesty and subterfuge on the part of the Anglicans, who did not at that time command the allegiance of the entire nation, to draw in Dissenters by means of its schools.[526] He attacked Brougham's notion that supreme ascendancy in education should be given to the

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[518] ibid., p. 95.
[519] ibid., p. 82.
[520] ibid., p. 33.
[521] ibid., pp. 26-28.
[522] ibid., pp. 28-30.
[523] ibid., pp. 30-32.
[524] ibid., p. 31.
[525] ibid., p. 32.
[526] ibid., p. 39.

Church of England: equality among the different denominations was impossible.[527] 'The government of a country, where all forms of religion are freely professed by law, could not support any system which did not give education with equal and unrestricted freedom, either collectively or separately, to all parties;'[528] Powell rejected the idea of a national religion and the idea that there could therefore be a state religion to be taught in schools.[529]

One of the foundations of Powell's argument for religion as the basis of a general system of education, including secular knowledge, was the State's need to reduce crime. This must include an inculcation of duties and, consequently, a need to inculcate the underlying authorities which sanctioned such principles.[530] The Government could therefore introduce some general system of religious education of 'social and civil duties' which would be augmented by distinctive teaching by the separate denominations. But he regretted that the suspicion among some Christians rendered this hope unattainable.[531]

Grants would be given preferentially to the two voluntary societies and to those in which 'while the daily reading of the Scriptures is provided for, yet no compulsion is used with regard to catechisms or forms of worship.'[532] He regarded the system of giving grants to the National Society and the BFSS as the best compromise which was obtainable in the circumstances of the time. The comprehensive BFSS schools should be supported rather than those of individual denominations. But this should be seen as a temporary measure.[533]

Against the legacy of a lack of theological sophistication from both Lancaster and his successors in the BFSS, and the criticisms displayed through the Select Committee evidence of the 1830s, unsectarianism needed the support of a more moderated academic analysis than the virulent polemic of Fox.[534] Powell's analysis, while sympathetic to unsectarianism in general, and the BFSS in particular, was disappointing in its conclusions.

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[527] ibid., pp. 64-65.
[528] ibid., p. 69.
[529] ibid., p. 56.
[530] ibid., p. 52.
[531] ibid., p. 53.
[532] Minute of the Committee of Privy Council, 3 December 1839.
[533] Powell, pp. 72-73.
[534] See above chapter 3.

The 1844 glosses on BFSS Rule IV

Rule IV was one of the crucial identifying features of the BFSS's unsectarianism. In this section I shall show how it was modified. This issue was treated briefly by Binns in his history of the BFSS, but without indicating sources. In addition to providing the evidence which Binns lacks, I shall give a more detailed analysis of the material. To aid understanding of the changes I set out the Rules below in tabulated form.

Rule IV: formulation of 1813	**revised formulation**
	This formulation followed the introduction of reading books other than the Bible.
'All schools which shall be supplied with teachers at the expense of this Institution shall be open to the children of parents of all religious denominations; Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needlework shall be taught; the lessons for reading shall consist of extracts from the Holy Scriptures;	I. In all schools established in connection with, or assisted by, the British and Foreign School Society, the Holy Scriptures in the Authorized Version, or extracts therefrom, shall be read and taught daily.
no catechisms or peculiar religious tenets shall be taught in the schools,	II. No Catechism, or other formulary peculiar to any religious denomination, shall be introduced or taught during the usual hours of school instruction.
but every child shall be enjoined to attend regularly the place of worship to which their parents belong.'	III. Every child attending the day school shall be expected to attend the particular place of worship or Sunday school which its parents prefer.
	'These great general principles being observed, all other matters, whether relating to the government of the school or the extent of instruction imparted, fall under the direction and control of the Patrons or Local Committees.'[535]

The Scripture stipulation in section I of the revised formulation would have had to have been altered to fit the Committee of Council's requirement that no grant was payable to a school unless the Scripture was read daily.

[535] BFSS, *National Education and the Religious Difficulty* (London: BFSS, 1872) pp. 3-4.

The importance of the BFSS's Rule IV was mentioned in chapter 4 above in the discussion of supplementary Sunday worship in the experience of children at BFSS schools with its dual stipulation that no distinctively denominational catechisms should be used in teaching in BFSS schools and that children were required to attend a place of worship on Sundays according to their parents' wishes. In 1844, probably as a result of the challenges faced by the BFSS over the intervening years, some expansion, clarification, and slight modification, was made of the original Rule IV. This was set out, first, by the Borough Road[536] and, second, at an Educational Conference.[537] There are a number of points which are worthy of attention in both the Borough Road explanation and the Educational Conference gloss on Rule IV. Salmon's comment that the original rule on reading the Bible and excluding distinctive denominational teachings had never been altered was right in the sense that the *core* of the rule had never been altered,[538] but here I examine the subtle shifts. The full texts of the explanatory glosses are given in a footnote below.

First, the original Rule IV adopted in November 1813 referred to the use of *extracts* from the Bible for the reading lessons.[539] The Borough Road's denial that there was any 'mutilation' of the Scriptures may have been an attempt to distinguish the BFSS from the Irish models of

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[536] Substance of Rule IV, as explained by the Borough Road Committee in 1844:
I That from the very earliest period the Society has recognised, as the sole basis of religious instruction, the entire volume of the sacred Scriptures in the authorised version. It never sanctioned any mutilation of the Scriptures. It never compromised a single text.
II That by the exclusion of catechisms, or peculiar religious tenets, it was not intended to prevent the inculcation from the Scriptures of any or all of the great doctrines of the everlasting gospel.*
III Further, it appears that the Society never objected to catechisms, as such, or ever discouraged their being taught at suitable times, and under proper regulations. On the contrary, 'the Committees are requested to provide for the catechetical instruction of the children according to the religious community to which the parents of the children belong;' a request which is subsequently explained by a recommendation that the children should, for this purpose, be put under the religious guidance of their respective ministers, as the 'way least likely to prevent the most cordial co-operation.'
*It was noted that Dunn intended to include the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement.

[537] Substance of Rule IV, as accepted by the Educational Conference of 1844:
I That the fundamental rule of the Society, that 'no catechism, or peculiar religious tenets, shall be taught in the schools,' was never intended to exclude, and never had practically impeded, the teaching of any of the great, leading, fundamental doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, in the plain, simple, and intelligible language of Holy Scripture.
II That it *was intended* to forbid, and has practically prevented, the teaching of denominational catechisms *in school-hours, and as a part of ordinary school instruction,* on the ground that such denominational teaching was incompatible with the union of Christians in the promotion of education, and inconsistent with any regulation for making the school really available to children of all religious denominations.
III That it did not preclude, nor was it ever intended to interfere with, any separate arrangement which parties might choose to make for teaching such peculiarities, *out of school hours*, to children whose parents might think fit to send them for this purpose.

[538] Salmon, p. 15 n.

[539] See above chapter 4.

the Kildare Place Society[540] and the system set up by Lord Stanley[541] after 1831, in which agreed extracts from the Scriptures were used as a Bible reading book.[542] In chapter 4, however, the policy on the use of the Bible in teaching referred to *extracts*.

Second, the glosses of Section II of the Borough Road explanation and Section I of the Educational Conference both deal with the teaching of doctrines. I argued in chapter 1 that the influence of Gastrell's clear doctrinal scheme on Lancaster's actual practice had been blunted by its refraction through the more limited ethical emphasis in Freame's Catechism and that this diminished the importance of central Christian doctrines. In response to these Unitarian challenges, the BFSS emphasized the teaching of the great doctrines of Christianity as grounded in the Bible. Two examples mentioned by Dunn have been mentioned in the footnote, namely the Trinity and the Atonement.

Third, the glosses of Section III of the Borough Road and Section III of the Educational Conference deal with the issue of denominationally distinctive teaching. The Borough Road emphasized that there was no objection to denominational teaching as such. On the contrary, it *required* the day school teaching to be complemented by attendance at denominational worship on Sundays.[543] The concern was that the denominational teaching should be in an appropriate place and at a suitable time. The Borough Road thrust was perhaps a slight softening of the rigidity of the original Rule IV towards a *recommendation* that children be taken for supplementary instruction to the ministers of their own denominations. A further change was the move to recommend catechetical instruction rather than mere attendance at Sunday worship.

Fourth, section II of the Educational Conference explanation dealt with the question of when such supplementary instruction should take place and emphasized that the denominationally distinctive teaching should not occur as a part of the regular curriculum of the BFSS school. While the specific explanatory gloss on Rule IV as set out at the Educational Conference did

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[540] Schools where Bible read without note or comment. Funded by government subsidies. See Murphy, *Church, State and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970*, p. 15.
[541] Chief Secretary for Ireland 1830-33.
[542] The *British School Manual* of 1843, p. 59, gave a similar gloss on the unsectarian principle of Rule IV: 'It must be distinctly understood that the Society has never in any single instance, compromised in any school or schools under its control, or reaping benefits from its funds, any truth of sacred Scripture; nor has it ever sanctioned the omission of a single text or word of the authorised version to meet the views of any class of objectors.' Cited Lewis, p. 59.
[543] Cf. the term 'enjoin' in Rule IV of 1813.

not express a judgement about whether the premises of BFSS schools might be used *after* regular school hours for supplementary denominational teaching, this was discussed elsewhere at the Conference. Opinions were divided about the propriety of using for the denominational teaching of any one denomination premises which might have been erected with funds gathered from a range of different denominations.[544] It was recognized that some schools belonged to a single denomination, which chose to set up a day school on the BFSS principles. Where this was the case, there was no difficulty. In other cases the central BFSS body acknowledged that it must be left to the decision of the local committee to decide what was permitted. In 1846 it was confirmed that a school where denominational catechisms were taught was not barred from association with the BFSS provided that such teaching took place outside the regular curriculum.[545]

Not all those connected with the BFSS were content with the formulations of the 1844 Conference. The Unitarian George Armstrong objected to Dunn about implications of the glosses on Rule IV. First, he repudiated the authority of the Conference to make any determinations of policy. Second, he contended that the religious teaching in BFSS schools should be, in some sense, doctrinal. Third, doctrine should be conveyed through the surface language of scripture without any explanation or commentary and any additional explanation was the responsibility of parents or friends in the home.[546] It is unclear how Armstrong imagined that doctrines could be taught without in some sense inculcating them. His argument also appeared to rule out the potential for Scripture to be susceptible of different interpretations.

Changing unsectarianism at the BFSS

I shall now examine two publications which give some insights into the changes in undenominational Christian instruction in the BFSS system in the middle years of the nineteenth century, almost twenty years after Allen's work. The first work, Dunn's *Principles of Teaching; or, the Normal School Manual*, was more of a theoretical treatise, although it

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[544] *Proceedings of an Educational Conference held by the British and Foreign School Society*, March 14 and 15 1844, p. 16, cited Lewis, p. 62.
[545] Educational Reports for 1846 (Accounts and Papers, vol. xlv), p. 464, cited Lewis, p. 64.
[546] Armstrong to Dunn, 29 June 1846, BU, BFSS archives, file 011.

did include some examples of practical teaching.[547] Dunn quoted an unnamed correspondent to the Christian Observer:

> The religion of little children ought eminently to be an affection of the heart, grounded indeed upon scriptural truth, the elements of which are intelligible to a little child, but not ramified into all the doctrinal discussions and mental developments which we sometimes survey with wonder.[548]

Dunn recommended a daily catechetical approach to the teaching of Divine truth.[549] He rejected rote learning: what was needed was rather a repetition which responded with understanding. Moreover the answers given by children should lead on to the teacher's next question.

The use of Scripture in teaching was paramount and should be linked to the study of the world. Thus Jeremiah 8. 7[550] could introduce a study of the habits and migration of birds.[551] The aim here was to impress on children the relationship between the world of nature and the manifestation of divine revelation.

For the early years of schooling Dunn urged that the 'elementary truths of Christianity should be firmly inculcated.'[552] Such truths included 'the being and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul, and a state of future retribution.'[553] But Dunn adduced no actual scripture references in support of these doctrines. This is particularly noteworthy in respect of the idea of the immortality of the soul, which many have considered to be an imposition from Greek philosophical thinking and not derived from the biblical thought world. Dunn's argument for including this doctrine was a pedagogical one: there was a danger of an 'ill-judged practice of building up in the understanding a dogmatical system of theological truths, without first even attempting to lay a firm foundation in this broad ground-work of Divine

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[547] London: Sunday School Union, [n.d.]. From internal evidence the first edition may have been 1837. But page references in this thesis are to the nineteenth edition, revised and enlarged. This was possibly published in 1872, since this date is pencilled in the copy consulted.

[548] Henry Dunn, *Principles of Teaching; or, the Normal School Manual* (London: Sunday-School Union, 1839), p. 126

[549] Dunn, *Principles*, p. 153.

[550] 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' [KJV].

[551] Dunn, *Principles*, p. 154.

[552] Dunn, *Principles*, p. 155.

[553] ibid. Of these three areas the belief in the immortality of the soul was not in Francis Gastrell's *Institutes*.

revelation.'[554] Indeed the discussion of the immortality of the soul made no reference to the Bible, but set out a pedagogy based on the comparison of objects (for example, the properties of a pebble, a flower, a watch, an animal and a human).[555] The pedagogy perhaps owed more to Paley than to the Bible.[556] The pupil was to be taught to recognize qualities in an ascending order. One could detect something lacking in flowers, watches, animals which one sensed intuitively in humans. This quality could not be defined in positive terms, but this awareness led to the proposition that it was something which must necessarily live for ever.

Dunn's practical outworking of an undenominational approach to teaching Christianity was quite different from Freame's. Given Lancaster's reproduction of Freame's catechism in its entirety for distribution to schools, Freame had been a significant influence on Lancaster, but once Lancaster was removed from involvement in the society he had instituted, there were moves to alter the relationship between Freame's catechetical content and the material published by the BFSS. At first there was merely a move to truncate Freame's structure: Allen had suggested that the questions in Freame's catechism should be removed, leaving the answer statements, all in the actual words of scripture, untouched.[557] But a more substantial revision was prompted by BFSS contacts with Russia in 1819.[558]

Dunn's argumentation, however, was strikingly different from Freame's structure. Although both Dunn and Freame purported to offer teaching based on a catechetical method, the catechisms were quite distinct. Freame's questions and answers were wholly rooted in the text of scripture itself: the undenominationalism was completely scriptural. Some of Dunn's methodology drew on scripture, but whereas Freame's answers in the catechism always remained scriptural, Dunn used the scripture more as a 'jumping off' point for broader issues. Dunn's Christian teaching could indeed be described as undenominational, but not scriptural in the same sense or to the same degree as Freame. This is well illustrated by a typical example from Dunn of one of several model dialogues provided for teaching:[559]

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[554] Dunn, *Principles*, p. 155.
[555] ibid., p. 157.
[556] William Paley's *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, published in 1794, continued to be an influence on theological teaching for more than one hundred years after its initial publication.
[557] William Allen, *Life*, I, p. 217, 2 January 1815, in discussions about the Horseferry Road school.
[558] Allen to Joseph Foster, [n.d.] The letter must be dated some time after 22 February 1819. See Allen, *Life*, II, p. 6.
[559] See Dunn, *Principles*, Appendix A, p. 255. A Day at the Borough Road School.

> Boy reads: "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."[560]
>
> "What God is this? Our God. – Is he any other people's God? Yes, those that believe in him. – What are those people called who do not believe in him? Atheists. – What do some people make to worship as a god? Images. – what are these people called? Idolaters, Heathens. - In what parts of the world are people heathen? In China, in Hindoostan...
> What sort of a being is God? He is holy. Another boy: He is wise. Another: he is good, he is omnipotent. What is that? Able to do every thing."

The second example revealing the changing practice of undenominationalism was a series of classroom books, the BFSS *Daily Lesson Books*, written jointly by Dunn and John Crossley.[561] This series appeared some twenty years later than Allen's book.[562] This was now the work of the BFSS generation dominated by Dunn.

In this series of four graded slim volumes, which were almost small enough to be carried in the pocket, there was now a marked predominance of secular material. The directly religious content was mainly centred on God, for example as creator;[563] an attitude of gratefulness was encouraged;[564] and valuing the Bible was stressed.[565]

In book 2, composed of prose and poetry extracts, occasionally on religious themes, it was almost at the very end of this volume before one finds the first mention in the series of Jesus. It is therefore salutary to see how Jesus is spoken of. The context was a reading passage about prayer: 'Prayer is asking God for what we want; and that our prayers may be heard, they must be offered in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.'[566] And later in the same passage: 'Pray that your sins may be forgiven, and your souls saved, through Jesus Christ.'

The third volume in the series, which, however, appears to have been the first to be published, had a more prominent religious element. This was conveyed through beginning each lesson with a short text. In this volume all the texts were taken from the book of

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[560] Dunn did not give the scriptural reference. It is Psalm 48. 14.
[561] Henry Dunn and John Thomas Crossley, eds, *Daily Lesson Book for the use of schools and families No. 1* (London: 1840). On Crossley see also his evidence before the Select Committee of 1834.
[562] See chapter 4 above on Allen's material.
[563] ibid., p. 15.
[564] ibid., p. 17.
[565] ibid., p. 34.
[566] Dunn and Crossley, II, p. 102.

Proverbs. A supplement to the third volume just mentioned included selections of prose. These selections were designed to have 'a direct bearing on the formation of character; illustrating the laws which govern society, the virtues that are essential to individual excellence, and the bearing of true religion on the happiness of life.'[567] The material was emphatically not doctrinal, although occasional glimpses of apologetic can be discerned: for example, three readings to demonstrate Providence included Paley on the Eye.[568] Perhaps the choice of an extract on 'Importance of Religion' which contained the following passages gives some clue about the stance of the editors: 'In its nature, religion is a matter of the heart rather than of the intellect,'[569] and 'Where religion is neglected, there can be no regular practice of the duties of morality. The character will be inconsistent.'[570]

The Supplement to No. 4,[571] which functioned as a textbook, was devoted to English and general history, physics (this subsumed also chemistry, geology and astronomy) and Natural History. There was little material on specifically religious topics, but an Appendix included a list of dates in Sacred Chronology. The list began with a series of dates for Old Testament events such as the creation of Adam in 4004 BC, the deluge in 2348 BC, the Tower of Babel in 2244 BC and Abraham born in 1996 BC.[572]

Through this material it can be seen that the Society had moved some way from the almost entirely scriptural material of the early years of its existence. Part of the unsuccessful battle waged by Place in the middle of the second decade of the nineteenth century over the teaching at Horseferry Road, London was now realized under Dunn's leadership. The material by this time was more moral and the doctrinal, although not entirely absent, was less emphasized. This has demonstrated the continuing diversity of unsectarian religious teaching, which is a central element in the elaboration of my thesis.

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[567] Dunn and Crossley, Supplement to Vol 3, p. iv.
[568] Dunn and Crossley, III, pp. 232-34.
[569] ibid., p. 230.
[570] ibid., p. 231.
[571] Thus on the cover, but inside it is described simply as Daily Lesson Book No. IV.
[572] Dunn and Crossley, IV, p. 296.

A vision for undenominational religious teaching in the 1840s

In the evidence to the Select Committees of the 1830s BFSS representatives still maintained the ban on reading books other than the Bible,[573] although Allen stated that there were other books in a school library at Linfield which could be taken home to read.[574]

However, '*Hints on Scripture Teaching*', a short paper published in 1846, departed from the rigid exclusion of all other reading material apart from the Bible under Fox and Allen. The anonymous author observed that in some schools, presumably BFSS, pupils showed a high level of knowledge of Bible history, geography or memory of texts, but holiness and piety were missing. The task, however, was to create the right atmosphere, for religion should touch the heart. So the change in policy on teaching materials was well summed up in the stipulation:

> Bibles should never be employed for spelling, dictation, or parsing lessons, or for any merely mechanical purpose. The times allotted to Scripture reading should be marked by peculiar silence and decorum, and by the cessation of all other occupations throughout the school.[575]

This sensitive concern for the right atmosphere evoked the writing of Lancaster in his *Improvements*, a subtlety which had perhaps been lost in the intervening years when the BFSS had become preoccupied with its survival and its distinctiveness.

The article included a worked example of a scripture lesson on Luke 18: 1-8 on the duty of importunate prayer, for which the age range was not given. The questioning of the pupils was important as a teaching method. First, questioning was designed to secure the pupils' recall of the details of the story. Second, the teaching plan moved to understanding the argument that, if an unjust judge responded to the pleas of a persistent widow, so our heavenly Father will hear us. Third, the lesson to be drawn from the story was that we should pray always and persevere in prayer.

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[573] See, for example, Crossley's evidence, 30 June 1834.
[574] *Select Committee*, 1834, 914, p. 76.
[575] [n. a.] *Hints on Scripture Teaching*, Educational Record, No. 79, 30 September 1846, p. 33.

Sir James Graham's 1843 Factory Education Bill

In the third and final section of this chapter I return to events at national level. In 1841 a Conservative government had replaced the previous Whig Melbourne administration. In March 1843 the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, introduced his Factory Bill, which included provision for the education of children in factories.[576] Conscious that Anglican opposition in 1839 had blocked the Whig plan to develop education, Graham had, therefore, expended efforts in 1842 in trying to head off Anglican objections. Graham thought that, even though his proposal for scriptural education was combined with requiring that the school's Master and the teaching must be Anglican, the Bill could still satisfy the Dissenters. However, control and management was thus in the hands of the Anglicans.[577] What the abortive 1843 Bill showed was that, even with Bible reading included in a scheme, if the control lay with the Anglican Church, it stood no chance of winning the approval of the Dissenters. In this respect the fate of Graham's Bill was remarkably similar to that of Brougham's proposals in 1820.

Although the Commons, as predominantly Anglican, gave a second reading to the Bill, publicity provoked extensive Dissenting opposition in the country. Petitions flooded in. Therefore the Government halted the progress of the Bill until after Easter hoping that the furore would subside. Peel's fears were realized. After Easter he announced hasty modifications, but to no avail. Therefore on 15 June Graham withdrew the educational clauses. Although the Commons was, on a strict majority, supportive of the Bill, events outside Parliament made it politically inexpedient to push proposals through.[578] Within the space of four years two successive governments of different political persuasions had now tried, and failed, to pass a Bill to extend education. It would not be true to say that this put members of Parliament off trying to legislate for education: in the 1850s there would be ten unsuccessful Bills, including a government attempt under Russell.[579] But, after the failure of the Graham Bill, the Conservative government and the Liberals, when they returned to power in 1846, both concentrated on developing education through administrative measures on the management of schools rather than direct legislation.[580]

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[576] On the Graham Bill see Selleck, pp. 200-07.
[577] Selleck, p. 205.
[578] Gash, pp. 376-78.
[579] Selleck, p. 313.
[580] See, e.g. immediately below on the 1846 Minutes.

The Minutes of 1846

The Minutes of 1846 mark a significant milestone in the development of popular education.[581] They had been prepared by Kay-Shuttleworth and were adopted by the Whigs when they returned to power in 1846. Besides establishing a system of pupil-teachers, the Minutes were also significant in that the Methodists reversed their earlier policy of 1839 and agreed to accept government money.[582] The previous alignment of Wesleyan schools with the BFSS system was therefore reduced.[583] It was also followed closely by the provision of State aid for Roman Catholic schools. So while this was significant step forward in the provision of education, it strengthened denominational education rather than unsectarianism. The 1840s were, therefore, a period of heightened denominational tension in which a shared cross-denominational approach was unlikely to find fertile ground.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown three broad interpretations of unsectarianism. First, the BFSS in its theoretical exposition attempted to limit unsectarian Christianity to orthodox Protestant Christianity (that is, excluding non-Trinitarian deviations such as Unitarianism). In its theory the BFSS continued to emphasize the Bible, though, under Dunn, the practice of unsectarian teaching moved away from an exclusively scriptural basis. With the subtle changes in the formulation of Rule IV, the BFSS's own understanding of unsectarianism was modified. Second, this can be contrasted with Powell's hopes for a much broader concept of general Christianity which relied less on the Bible. Third, the Calcutta school exemplified unsectarianism understood primarily in doctrinal terms. In a national perspective unsectarianism survived the 1840s, yet with diminished political influence at government level and reduced support from the Dissenting denominations.

In the next chapter I shall show how the Unitarians sought to contest this narrow interpretation imposed by Dunn and, in a national perspective, the continuing failure to pass

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[581] See in general on this Selleck, pp. 224-28.
[582] Smith, *Victorian Class Conflict*, pp. 12-13.
[583] ibid., p. 44.

legislation on education. In the final chapters of the thesis I shall show that none of the three options above was incorporated in the Elementary Education Act of 1870.

Chapter 7

Undenominationalism c. 1848-1868

Introduction

Thus far I have shown how undenominationalism,[584] became effectively restricted to Protestant denominations, since it was by now recognized that Jews and Roman Catholics could not be accommodated. In this chapter, I shall again pursue two strands of the discussion. First, using archival sources, I shall examine the controversy about whether the Unitarians could be kept within the BFSS undenominational project. As with the earlier question of whether Jews and Roman Catholics could be accommodated within undenominationalism,[585] so this discussion continues the debate about the breadth of undenominationalism. This will be complemented by an examination of one view of what undenominational Christianity represented. Again, having devoted some space to the practical classroom reality of what undenominationalism meant for the teaching of pupils,[586] I shall now explore how denominational issues affected the staffing issues of BFSS schools, using exclusively archival sources from the BFSS files of reports from a number of their regional agents.

The second strand, which covers the national dimension of the topic, will treat the Lancashire/National Public School Association, and the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society. In both cases this is because they provide evidence of undenominationalism outside the BFSS. In the final section of new material in this chapter I will examine aspects of the treatment of the religious difficulty in one of the most extensive educational documents of the nineteenth century, the Newcastle Commission Report of 1858-61.

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[584] The Newcastle Commission Report uses this term. Since this chapter includes that Report, I shall now use the term 'undenominationalism' in this thesis.
[585] On Jews see chapter 5 above.
[586] See in particular the discussions of the Select Committees of the 1830s in chapter 5.

By the late 1840s the BFSS and the cause of undenominationalism had been weakened by national events in education. The 1840s were a period of heightened denominationalism and this militated against the strength of the BFSS. While aspects of this rising denominationalism, such as the award of government grants for Roman Catholic schools from 1847,[587] affected the BFSS only indirectly, the decision of some Nonconformist denominations to found their own schools in order to provide denominational teaching reduced the impact of the BFSS.

The late 1840s is a suitable point to begin this next phase in the study of undenominationalism. Nationally, the date is a watershed because of the enforced retirement on health grounds of Kay-Shuttleworth from the Secretaryship of the Committee of Council on Education. He was succeeded by Ralph Lingen, a secularist.[588] The end date brings the analysis to the eve of the climax of the thesis, where I shall examine the genesis of the compromise solution to the religious difficulty in the 1870 Elementary Education Act and its unique version of undenominationalism.

In the previous chapter I showed the failure of two government Bills which represented both unsectarianism and a bias to the Anglican Church with provision for conscience. This sets the legislative context. The Bills of the 1850s were sponsored variously by pressure groups, individuals and the Government itself. The closest to undenominationalism was that from the NPSA, but that too failed. When Sir John Pakington emerged in 1857 as the acknowledged leader of the movement for National Education, he too was unsuccessful in bringing in an education Bill. But his proposals were still biased towards the Anglican Church (unlike his amendment proposed during the debates on the 1870 Bill, it should be noted).[589]

After the failure of his 1857 Bill, Pakington adopted a different tactic and on 11 February 1858 secured the appointment of a Commission under the Duke of Newcastle.[590] As the nation digested the Commission's Report from 1861, and the Revised Code was introduced from 1862, there was a lull in legislative activity until the second half of the 1860s. In the

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[587] Based on minute relating to conditions of aid to Roman Catholic schools, 18 December 1847. See Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education with Appendices, 2 vols (London: HMSO, 1848), I, p. xlvii.
[588] Ralph Robert Wheeler Lingen, Baron Lingen (1819-1905) Permanent Secretary to the Education Department 1849-69. Abrasive administrator, worked harmoniously in tandem with Robert Lowe, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1860s.
[589] See below chapter 10.
[590] Selleck, p. 314.

first half of the 1860s there was a great emphasis on the conscience clause as a potential solution to the religious difficulty. After the Education Select Committee of 1865-66 pressure for legislation for educational extension again began to build up. This would ultimately contribute to the successful efforts to pass the Bill of 1870.

It is important to note that the primary source materials in this chapter are almost entirely archival. It is for this reason that the detail and version of events given in this chapter both add to and give a rather different perspective upon other accounts of these important developments in the history of education. Indeed, it is claimed here that what is presented in this chapter contributes significantly to our understanding of this period and is hence an original contribution to learning. This is not of course to dismiss the work of others, but simply to claim that, as is so often the case in this kind of work, accessing primary material rather than relying on later published accounts and syntheses gives the scholar a much better insight into what was really happening 'on the ground'. Specifically this account of the Unitarian controversy, as in previous chapters, draws extensively on unpublished and largely unresearched material from the BFSS archives. Indeed, when originally consulted, much of this material was unsorted. Thus there are no folio numbers with which to identify individual documents or letters.

The Lancashire, later National, Public School Association [591]

It is perhaps important to note in the context of the development of English education that some English educational reformers travelled to the United States and were inspired by the common school system, under which committees were elected by rate-payers and the religious teaching was usually based solely on Bible reading. For example, in 1826 Massachusetts had declared that 'the school committee shall never direct to be purchased or used, in any of the town schools, any school books which are calculated to favour the tenets of any particular sect of Christians.'[592] Since the law allowed the omission of religious instruction altogether, this arrangement, especially with its reference to denominational

[591] The term 'public' has here no connection to the great independent English boarding schools.
[592] P. N. Farrar, 'American Influence on the Movement for a National System of Elementary Education in England and Wales, 1830-1870', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XIV (November 1965), 36-47 (p. 38).

books, was very similar to the eventual Cowper-Temple clause adopted in England and Wales in 1870.

The Massachusetts system had become the envy of Radicals in England including the so-called Manchester school. Under Richard Cobden's leadership, once the struggle over the Corn Laws was concluded, the Radicals' attention turned to national education. The Radicals believed that further progress in their education campaign required the masses to be educated to harness their strength. Urged by George Combe, Samuel Lucas,[593] a Manchester businessman, planned to draw on the Massachusetts plan in the LPSA scheme. Samuel Lucas recruited Cobden to the leadership of the group,[594] although soon Cobden was less highly regarded because of his willingness to permit Bible reading in schools.[595] Cobden referred to his desired scheme as 'secular' but by this term he meant 'that religious education which is common to all sects.'[596] The L/NPSA, although a short-lived pressure group, was significant because of the echoes of undenominationalism outside the BFSS. The LPSA immediately faced problems in defining what it meant by 'secular',[597] that is excluding the whole Bible in favour of biblical extracts as in the Irish system, or the total exclusion of all religious education. Lucas's decision was to follow the Irish Commissioners, that is, banning the use of the whole Bible, choosing instead a book of agreed Scripture extracts and closing the schools at defined times for denominational instruction to be given.[598]

This plan was rooted in the premise that the educational provision was a voluntary effort, not by Government, as in despotic countries, but the problem was that families unconnected with a religious denomination would be untouched by voluntary effort.[599] The government system of funding, it was argued, worked against the poorest communities. The LPSA plan proposed

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[593] For Lucas's views see Samuel Lucas, *National Education Not Necessarily Governmental, Sectarian or Irreligious* (1850).

[594] Donald K. Jones, 'Samuel Lucas, 1811-1865, Journalist, Politician and Educational Reformer', in *Biography and Education: Some Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Studies*, ed. by Roy Lowe (History of Education Society Occasional Publication, No. 5, 1980), p. 42.

[595] ibid., p. 46.

[596] Richard Aldrich, *Sir John Pakington and National Education* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1979), p. 25.

[597] Both the LPSA and its later descendant, the National Education League at the time of the 1870 Elementary Education Bill, vacillated between a secular solution and undenominationalism. In 1865 a clergyman named Rogers founded an undenominational school which became secular. This crystallized fears of some Anglicans about undenominationalism. See Heeney, pp. 96-97.

[598] Jones, p. 38.

[599] *A Plan for the Establishment of a General System of Secular Education in the County of Lancaster*, Seventh edition (London and Manchester, 1847), p. 3. [Fol. 1 in Brotherton scrapbook, Manchester Central Library archives.]

that the local community should be taxed and should control any new schools.[600] All catechisms and creeds should be avoided in the schools, so no child would be debarred from admission.

It was prescribed for the common day schools that:

> And inasmuch as these virtues [these were earlier identified as including justice, kindness, temperance, frugality and industry], together with reverence and love towards the Divine being, are clearly taught and powerfully enforced in the Scriptures, a selection of examples and precepts inculcating them shall be made therefrom, and read and used in the said schools, but without reference to the peculiar theological tenets of any religious sect or denomination.
>
> For the purpose of making this selection, a commission shall be appointed by the County Board, consisting of nine individuals, no two of whom shall be members of the same religious denomination; and in order that the peculiar tenets of no religious sect may be favoured, the unanimous concurrence of the commission shall be required in the selection.[601]

The LPSA was certainly anti-Church of England and had links to the Anti-State Church Society founded in 1844. No clergy from any denomination could hold any salaried office in the schools, although their experience and expertise in education would be welcomed in a voluntary capacity.[602] All books used in the schools required the County Board's approval to avoid anything favouring the peculiar tenets of any religious sect.[603] The Board could dismiss a teacher whose teaching favoured any peculiar theological opinions.[604] In defining the term 'secular' the plan urged a broad and negative understanding of the term, that is, it should include everything which was *not* theological. By this they meant everything which did not favour the tenets of any religious sect. [605] The plan did not regard the Bible as a panacea for solving the religious problem in education: using the entire Bible, in the view of the plan's authors, caused strife. After the selection of Bible passages had been made, the commission would cease to exist. On this basis the LPSA was formed at a meeting in Manchester on 25 August 1847 and aimed to work towards the tabling of a parliamentary Bill to reflect the concerns of the Association.[606]

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[600] LPSA, *A Plan*, p. 4.
[601] ibid., p. 6.
[602] ibid., p. 7.
[603] ibid., p. 9.
[604] ibid., p. 9.
[605] ibid., p. 15.
[606] ibid., p. 23.

A public meeting held in the Manchester Free Trade Hall on 28 March 1850 endorsed a petition to both Houses of Parliament including the stipulations that:

> (Fourthly) that in order that the rights of conscience may be effectually secured it should be a fundamental rule that nothing should be taught in any of the said schools which favours the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination.
>
> Fifthly That this system instead of injuriously affecting the interests of religion would do much to soften the asperities and remove the prejudicies [*sic*] of sects and parties.

Four days later on 1 April 1850 there was a public meeting called by the Mayor to consider a petition to Parliament to establish a general system of secular education supported by local rates and managed by local authorities:

> That, inasmuch as various forms of opinion in regard to religion prevail in the country, and large numbers of persons stand aloof from existing religious communities freedom from sectarian and denominational peculiarities ought to characterize any new Educational enactments.

Thus the petition called for the exclusion of 'all theological doctrines and sectarian influences.'

The General Committee meeting of 3 September 1850 carried a motion that the LPSA be renamed the NPSA and that a Bill be prepared for Parliament.[607] Some NPSA members wished to exclude religious instruction completely, but Cobden insisted that the school committees, elected locally by the rate-payers, could permit Bible reading in school time.[608] The NPSA advocated free, compulsory and secular education supported by local rates. Finally, on the religious question, the NPSA determined upon the following wording for a Bill: 'Nothing shall be taught in any of the schools which favours the peculiar tenets of any sect of Christians.'[609] Again the school committees could, if they wished, exclude religion altogether.

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[607] See in general National Public School Association archives, Manchester Central Library, minute book of general and executive committee M136/1/1/1.
[608] Farrar, p. 40.
[609] ibid., p. 41; S. E. Maltby, *Manchester and the Movement for National Elementary Education 1800 - 1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1918), Appendix VIII.

The new NPSA subsumed the London Workingmen's Association for National Secular Education and committees which had similar aims in a variety of towns and cities, including Birmingham, Leeds, Leicester, Sheffield and Coventry, which, apart from London, was the southernmost location represented. The General Committee for the new body included W. H. Fox and thirteen other members of Parliament and six clergy.

The minutes of the General Council on 17 March 1851 record the adoption of the draft plan. The aim was to impart secular education only: 'leaving to parents, guardians and religious teachers the inculcation of doctrinal religion, to afford opportunities for which the schools shall be closed at stated times in each week.' But this understanding of 'secular' should be seen alongside a further stipulation: 'Nothing shall be taught in any of the schools which favours the peculiar tenets of any sect of Christians'[610] and, to secure this, the ratepayers or parents could complain to the School Committee or upwards to the County Board. Thus the result was partial negative undenominationalism, not an exact anticipation of the Cowper-Temple provision, for in the Act of 1870 there was no provision for closing schools to allow for distinctive denominational teaching.

The BFSS and the Unitarian controversy

This aspect of the undenominational approach to religious instruction has been covered by Binns. What Binns has to say is helpful; however, a shortcoming of this earlier work on this topic is the lack of references to the relevant primary sources. Binns may have had access to them, but his work is of a more general character. The analysis presented here is by contrast significantly more detailed and, as was noted above, based largely on archival sources.[611]

A controversy over Unitarianism's relationship with the BFSS School Society can be identified over a period of almost 50 years from the second decade of the nineteenth century until the late 1850s. The significance of this dispute is two-fold: first, it illuminates the boundaries of the concept of undenominationalism, and, second, it reveals some issues involved in the use of the Bible as a reading book in BFSS schools in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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[610] See section 10 of the Plan.
[611] Binns, pp. 146-49.

In 1811 Marsh[612] had asserted that the RLI would be more favourable to Unitarians because the schools taught only 'uncontroverted doctrines.' Much here turns on the understanding of 'uncontroverted.' This is not a new observation: indeed, a pamphlet published at the time accused Marsh of misusing the word because in the original context Joseph Lancaster linked the term with the adjective 'leading'.[613] By this phrase Lancaster meant to refer to doctrinal principles accepted by all Christians who did not consider it idolatry to worship Jesus Christ.

In 1847 a more prolonged dispute arose within the BFSS over allegations of Unitarianism. This dispute was to last, intermittently, for over a decade. However, unlike the attacks of Marsh in 1811 and Close in 1839,[614] this threat came from a pressure group of the Unitarians themselves and, more insidiously, from within the supporters of the BFSS.[615]

The involvement over many decades of Unitarian members, both ministerial and lay, was a significant indicator of the breadth of support for the BFSS. It must be regarded as one of the triumphs of the BFSS that disparate groups of Christians were prepared to submerge their doctrinal differences in order to promote children's education. The significance of this cooperation is more vividly appreciated if the attitude of mainstream Protestant Dissent to Unitarians at this period is recalled. Many would have regarded Unitarians as beyond the pale: it was recorded, for example, of the father of Augustine Birrell,[616] who was a Baptist minister in Liverpool for over thirty years, that he would agree to go to listen to Cardinals Wiseman or Manning, but regarded it as unthinkable to enter a Unitarian chapel.

This stage of the controversy began when a group of Unitarians accused the BFSS committee of introducing a rule change. In the following year a Unitarian committee was formed to campaign for the maintenance of what it maintained were the original BFSS principles. A meeting of the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association took place on 29 November 1847.[617] At that meeting the Opinion of Counsel about the alleged breach of trust

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[612] See above chapter 3.
[613] *A Vindication of Mr. Lancaster's System of Education from the Aspersions of Professor Marsh etc.*, cited Binns, p. 5.
[614] See above chapter 6.
[615] Binns, p. 146 *et seq.*
[616] (1850-1933). Early twentieth-century politician.
[617] Preston to Rees, 29 November 1847, BU, BFSS archives, file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.

in the management of the BFSS was read and this Opinion was therefore forwarded to the Committee of the Borough-road school.

A crucial section of this Opinion was:

> We think that the exclusion of all doctrinal teaching, except so far as it necessarily results from the unaided reading of the Scriptures, is a fundamental principle of the Society. And assuming that doctrinal tests are now applied to the Teachers, or that doctrinal distinctions are now introduced and taught in the School, either by explanations of, or Commentaries on, the Scriptures, or otherwise, we are of opinion that the present administration of the Funds of the Society is a breach of trust.[618]

Accordingly these Unitarians also decided to form a committee both in London and in the rest of the country to stamp out the alleged exclusive pattern within the BFSS and to restore a system of undenominational and comprehensive teaching as it considered was originally envisaged under the rules of the Society.[619]

The Unitarian argument was based on what appears to be a certain intellectual sleight of hand and even a rather devious argument. The issue centred on the use of the phrase 'peculiar tenets' to relate to the character of religious instruction in BFSS schools. The BFSS, and its earlier incarnation in the RLI, was committed to religious instruction which contained no 'peculiar tenets', that is, distinctive denominational doctrines. The Society envisaged gathering together in one building children from Baptist, Independent (Congregationalist), Anglican or, in the earliest days of the Society, Roman Catholic homes. The Society intended that the religious teaching should not inculcate the 'peculiar tenets' of any one of these denominations considered individually. In theory, the distinctive denominational teaching could then be provided either at home or in the places of worship of these different denominations. Hence children were required to attend a place of worship on a Sunday as a condition of receiving schooling from the BFSS.

However, the Unitarians aggregated the various denominations into a single group called Trinitarians. They then proceeded to accuse the BFSS of teaching the 'peculiar tenets' of this Trinitarian group, namely the divinity of Jesus Christ in particular. But one might object that

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[618] John Jervis and John Rolt, *Opinion of Counsel on a Case submitted to them relative to an Alleged Breach of Trust in the Administration of the Funds of the British and Foreign School Society.* Printed sheet in BFSS archives, file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.

[619] This was probably the 'Committee for maintaining the Original Constitution of the British and Foreign School Society' reflected in Davison to the Chairman of the Committee of the British and Foreign School Society, 14 June 1848, on which see further below. BU, BFSS archives, file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.

Trinitarians were not a denomination as envisaged by the BFSS. Hence it was unfair to build a case against the BFSS on these grounds.

Another interesting point for analysis centres upon the use of the Bible in the teaching complained of in BFSS schools. Anglican clerics such as Francis Close[620] attacked the BFSS on the grounds that its teachers omitted biblical texts from their teaching so as to favour the Unitarians. But, ironically, Close's attack would not have matched the attitude of the Unitarians themselves! For when the Unitarians attacked the BFSS, they were not looking for a bowdlerized Bible: they were keen to use the whole Bible in teaching. They accepted that children would be exposed to the entire Bible because they assumed that the plain sense of the Bible was not Trinitarian. They, therefore, objected to any explanatory glosses which put upon Biblical texts interpretations which were not doctrinally acceptable to Unitarianism.

A further strand of the Unitarian concern about the BFSS was alleged discrimination against Unitarian students. Individual evidence of such discrimination against Unitarians students is found in the deposition of William Hugh, a former student under the BFSS system.[621] Hugh described how, on admission to the Normal College, he was barred from becoming involved in discussion about his Unitarian beliefs; orthodox students, however, were subject to no comparable ban.

To further an organized campaign against the BFSS, a meeting of Unitarian ministers and laymen from various towns and cities in England took place in Birmingham on 31 October 1855.[622] At this meeting the Unitarians' future policy towards the BFSS was considered. Options included, first, a complete Unitarian withdrawal from the BFSS and the establishment of their own Unitarian Normal School; second, taking legal action against the BFSS for breach of its original principles, and, third, an appeal to Parliament to withhold the government grant to the BFSS.

After discussion of several resolutions it was decided to accept wording as follows:

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[620] On Close see above in chapter 5.
[621] William Hugh to the Gentlemen Members of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 25 June 1855, BU, BFSS archives, file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.
[622] Daily News, 1 November 1855.

> The British and Foreign School Society was originally intended to fill, and the Legislature had recognised it as filling, a great public educational position; and its perversion to sectarian objects is a great national wrong, which it is incumbent on this body immediately to repel by every lawful means practicable.

After this meeting the chairman, Mark Phillips, sought to achieve the intended aim by drawing on the aristocratic members of the BFSS.[623]

The BFSS defence against the Unitarians drew upon several officers who had been connected with the Society since Lancaster's time. They confirmed that there had been no change in the teaching over the previous 45 years and that this teaching had always included the divinity of Christ, his atonement and the Trinity.

The Unitarians were also concerned about the BFSS's attitude to the admission of students and their denominational affiliation. The BFSS did not accept people for training on the basis of any particular church membership, but only on the grounds of whether they would make a suitable teacher.[624] The BFSS Secretary, Henry Dunn, recognized that many local schools would be willing to receive as a teacher only someone whose theological standpoint was broadly along the same lines as the school's. The BFSS, he acknowledged, could have no influence in such a situation.

The rejoinder to these Unitarian allegations was set out in a pamphlet issued by Dunn in 1855.[625] The Unitarians had traced the roots of their concerns and disagreement to 1811. A crucial statement in the discussion was the Fourth Rule of the Society.[626] The Unitarians alleged that Bible passages which reflected the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement were not taught at that time, or that, if they were, there was no discussion of their meaning. Dunn argued that, on the contrary, since for over thirty years the only reading material in the schools was Bible passages, there could have been no educational (moral, intellectual) benefit to the children if there had been no questioning on Bible passages.

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[623] Mark Phillips to the Duke of Bedford, 15 January 1857, BU, BFSS archives file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.
[624] Dunn to Frankland, 19 August 1848, BU, BFSS archives file, 'Unitarian Controversy'.
[625] Henry Dunn, *The Unitarians and the British and Foreign School Society. A Plain Statement of Facts* (privately published, 1855).
[626] See Chapter 6 above.

To argue the case that there had been no departure from the BFSS's original principles and practice, Dunn recounted the evidence of the late John Pickton, a former BFSS student and teacher, who had, at Dunn's special request, made a written statement about the practice in the Borough Road schools in the early days of the Society. Pickton confirmed a number of points: first, that no Bible passage was ever omitted because of objections from any group; second, that the teachers were never prevented from asking the children questions on any passage of the Bible; third, that the early officers of the RLI/BFSS such as Lancaster and Fox would never have compromised on the doctrines of the Trinity or Atonement; fourth, that the Unitarians at the time never regarded the use of texts reflecting these doctrines as infringing the comprehensive principle of the Society. Furthermore Dunn's case was that at this early period in the history of the Society it was not the established practice to regard the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement as 'peculiar religious tenets' as the phrase was used in clause IV of the Society's rules.

Dunn asked why, if this were the truth of the matter, the Unitarians of that time had not complained against the BFSS. They had not complained, argued Dunn, because they knew full well that the nation would not accept an education system which was not fully grounded in a doctrinal scheme incorporating those two key Christological doctrines. What distinguished BFSS schools, wrote Dunn, was that they excluded 'human formularies'.[627] BFSS schools were designed to be open for all children and such children were required, as a condition of their admission, to accompany their parents to their chosen place of worship on a Sunday: this could include a Unitarian chapel.

However, despite the careful rebuttal of the Unitarian objections, the legal argument initially seemed to go against the main BFSS committee. When this dispute about the BFSS's having departed from its original principles was tested at law in 1847, Counsel's opinion went against the BFSS, although not suggesting that the administration of the BFSS's funds was a breach of trust.

Following this judgment Dunn published at his own expense '*A Letter to James Heywood, Esq. M.P. on the Case of the Unitarians*' in which he argued against what he viewed as the highly erroneous statements underlying Counsel's Opinion. This letter resulted in a second

[627] Dunn, *Plain Statement*, p. 9.

search for legal opinion on which the Attorney General[628] and John Rolt[629] pronounced on 12 June 1848.

In this Opinion the lawyers stated that the BFSS Rules laid down that it was forbidden to teach any religious tenets 'peculiar to, or entertained exclusively by, any class of Christians.'[630] They further considered that 'tenets entertained exclusively by Trinitarians are peculiar religious tenets within the language of this proviso'.[631] Dunn's interpretation of this judgment was that it made the Unitarians the Holy Catholic Church and, within that, Trinitarian Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians formed a class which held peculiar religious tenets. On an historical note the judgment commented that, when the BFSS was founded, the Unitarians could not benefit from the greater degree of toleration which was subsequently available, but that this should not have affected their rights when this legal Opinion was sought in 1847.

A further stage in the discussion was taken in 1854 when two distinguished BFSS supporters, Dr. Stephen Lushington[632] and Lord Monteagle [formerly Spring Rice], mediated with the Unitarians. Their memorandum to the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association stated *inter alia*, 'We consider, therefore, that the schools are open to those professing Unitarian opinions, as well as to any other Christians.'[633]

As to how it could be permissible for children to be questioned in a public examination on the Divinity and Atonement of Christ, Dunn replied that it was possible because these doctrines lay on the surface of the authorized version of the Bible: it would have been 'impossible to teach that version in its plain, literal, grammatical sense, *without* inculcating the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement.'[634]

Dunn drew an analogy with the Quakers, who had always been keen BFSS supporters, yet who would not, as did Dunn, accept Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Such doctrines, as also the Divinity of Christ and his Atonement, were, it was argued, equally on the surface of the

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[628] Sir John Jervis (1802-56). Attorney-General 1846-50.
[629] Sir John Rolt (1804-71) judge, took silk and Bencher of Inner Temple, 1846.
[630] Dunn, *Plain Statement*, p. 13.
[631] ibid.
[632] Stephen Lushington (1782-1873) judge, Anglican, but sympathetic to Dissenters. Independent-minded Whig.
[633] Dunn, *Plain Statement*, p. 15.
[634] ibid., p. 16.

biblical text. What Unitarians wanted, according to Dunn, was that the teaching in BFSS schools should exclude texts such as 1 John 5. 7. Dunn charged the Unitarians with inculcating atheism and of trying to take over the society. But he was aware of the lukewarm support for his views among some prominent BFSS members. In 1855 he revealed that he was considering resignation on health grounds and a year later he handed over the secretaryship.[635]

A Unitarian view of undenominational Christianity

To provide an accompaniment to the theoretical and legal arguments above between Dunn and the Unitarians, Henry W. Crosskey's *Tracts Illustrative of Unsectarian Christianity* presented a less prescriptively doctrinal undenominational Christianity in which he argued for the temporary character of all human creeds and systems of theology.[636] 'But there is something in Christianity more lasting than dogma and that is in the life of Jesus [...] in the life of Jesus we find the uncorruptible [*sic*], unchangeable, everlasting substance of Christianity'.[637] Crosskey lamented the separation of the Christian religion from the Christian life. He repudiated the authority of contemporary Christian leaders to pronounce condemnation on others because of what they believed.[638] He described Christ as the world's religion 'because God and man were within him blended to the utmost possible extent.'[639] The Unitarian, in Crosskey's schema, admitted that God was in Christ. But he did not agree with the orthodox understanding of the union because he did not accept that it was possible to define the way mind and body were united. These disputations, in his view, were in any case irrelevant against the background of suffering in the world.

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[635] See Bartle on Dunn in *ODNB*.
[636] Crosskey, Henry William (1826-93), Unitarian minister, social reformer, and geologist. One of the founders of the National Public School Association. On the executive of the National Education League (1869-71), joint secretary to the Central Nonconformist Committee (1870). Separated from Gladstone over plans for religious education in the 1870 Education Act. See Albert R. Vogeler in *ODNB*.
[637] Henry W. Crosskey, *Tracts Illustrative of Unsectarian Christianity* (London: E. T. Whitfield, 1851, 1852), p. 5.
[638] ibid., p. 10.
[639] ibid., p. 17.

BFSS agents' reports 1855-1875

One of the shibboleths about the BFSS is that denominational distinctions were of no significance. I do not wish to deny the force of the BFSS's fundamental guide for religious instruction as far as the admission of pupils is concerned. When, however, one looks at staffing, the picture is significantly more complex than other researchers have identified. Again, it is the detailed archival work which has enabled this judgment to be made here. So, for example, the BFSS archives contain reports from agents, who were at the cutting edge of liaising with individual communities and show how denominational distinctions certainly did arise when teachers were appointed.[640] Many BFSS schools were connected with a Christian church. Scrutiny of BFSS files suggests that denominational stipulation or guidelines in appointing teachers were made in a minority of cases, but the issue was nonetheless still present. For a Reformed Methodist[641] school in Preston BFSS Agent William Davis asked for a teacher who was likely to sympathise with or join that congregation.[642] There was, of course, some sense in a teacher fitting in with a community as a whole, but it was logically irrelevant to the teaching of religious instruction. In an extreme case the concern for a teacher's denominational affiliation could extend even to gradations within one denomination. So HMI Matthew Arnold inquired of BFSS Secretary Alfred Bourne whether a potential teacher for a school connected with Lady Salisbury were 'what is called Low-Church or Puritanical in her form of Anglicanism' since she and Lord Salisbury were High Church and opposed, for example, to boys playing cricket on Sundays.[643] She was very concerned to avoid a teacher with views different from her own.[644]

Sometimes the stipulation was more subtle in the sense that the agent was so well aware of the community's sensibilities that he tried to avoid placing the wrong kind of teacher in a particular school. So, for example, Davis again wrote that for the school at Hatherton, near Stockport, it was 'essential that the Master should be an Independent – not that the

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[640] Hazel Bagworth-Mann has covered the work of BFSS agents but without the focus in this thesis. 'The Role of Agents, Visitors and Inspectors in the development of elementary education, *c.* 1826 - *c.* 1870' (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Brunel University, 1998).

[641] This may be a reference to the Reformed Methodist societies which came together in the Wesleyan Reformed Union in 1859 having been unwilling to enter the new association of United Methodist Free Churches formed in 1857. See *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* ed. by Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, 4 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1978), II, p. 323.

[642] Davis to Wilkes, 10 November 1860, BU, BFSS archives file 302, Agents' Reports 1855-75.

[643] Lord Salisbury (1830-1908). Ennobled 1868. Conservative Prime Minister 1885-86, 1886-92, 1895-1902.

[644] Arnold to Bourne, 18 June 1869. BU, BFSS archives, file 024 Central Administration (HMI).

Committee make express stipulation of this kind.'[645] Another similar instance occurred with the New Jerusalem school at Heywood where Davis wrote that nothing had been said regarding the denominational affiliation of the new teacher, but he supposed that a New Jerusalemite[646] or Unitarian would, other things being equal, be the most suitable.[647] For Charlesworth School the master 'must be an Independent or at least one who will sympathize and work with Independents.'[648]

At Irwell Springs near Bacup the local committee indicated that they would give preference to a Baptist if they were presented with two 'equally efficient' teachers.[649] At Meltham, near Huddersfield, a group wanted to set up an undenominational school and needed 'a teacher not afraid of a little rough work, - used if possible to Yorkshire or Lancashire manners – and able to compete with a fairly efficient "Church" teacher.'[650]

Agent Salter took very seriously the desires of the local school committees, for example, regarding Darwen he wrote: 'They want an Independent or Baptist or Presbyterian.' In the same letter he mused that a teacher wished to leave his current post, but noted that he was a Wesleyan, possibly implying that this was a drawback in relation to the ethos of the BFSS.[651]

It is unclear whether a push for establishing BFSS schools might contribute to reducing sectarian rivalry. So, for example, Agent Salter wrote to the BFSS General Secretary, Edward D. J. Wilks, that he had heard from Rev. James Clough of Astley Bridge, near Bolton, that his Baptist congregation was very interested in the possibility of founding a mixed BFSS school.[652] Salter discovered that an official Anglican school was already operating. Many people attending this school, however, would have preferred to transfer to a BFSS school. Salter believed that the possibility of establishing a BFSS school needed prompt action because there was also an imminent possibility that the Wesleyans, who were establishing a community in the locality, would also seek to found a school. Many people in the locality did not feel it would be helpful if another sectarian school opened: they were obviously of the

[645] Davis to Wilks, 9 November 1861, BU, BFSS archives, file 302.
[646] This is equivalent to Swedenborgian.
[647] Davis to Wilks, 5 December 1861, BU, BFSS archives, file 302.
[648] Davis to (presumably) Wilks, 27 November 1862, BU, BFSS archives, file 302.
[649] Salter to Wilks, 6 November 1866, BU, BFSS archives, file 303, Agents' Reports: E. Salter, 1865-1870.
[650] Salter to Wilks, 3 December 1866, BU, BFSS archives, file 303.
[651] Salter to Wilks, 6 March 1868, BU, BFSS archives, file 303.
[652] Salter to Wilks, 20 July 1866, BU, BFSS archives, file 303.

opinion that a Wesleyan school posed the same kind of sectarian challenge as an Anglican school. A little over a year later on 23 August 1867 Salter wrote that the BFSS protagonists were keen to make progress because the Wesleyans were making rapid progress with building their chapel and had already marked out a foundation for a school room alongside their chapel.[653]

Shades of the reverse situation may, however, also be found. Edward B. Dawson of Lunecliffe, Lancaster wrote to Wilks in 1867 about the school at Warton saying that he would prefer a 'dissenter as the influence of the Church in Warton is altogether bad.'[654]

In this discussion the theoretical commitment to undenominationalism was not in question. Indeed this concept became well-understood by those familiar with the educational world of that time, but in local communities the reality was that some requests from school committees were entwined with ecclesiastical power politics. So the BFSS agents, as local officers, did not reject these requests immediately, but referred them faithfully and in detail to the central BFSS Secretary. The BFSS therefore was sensitive to the reality of local denominations, which, while running an undenominational school, wished to employ a teacher who was at the very least in sympathy with their tradition and who might support its activities.

The Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society

To demonstrate further the attempts to promote undenominationalism, but outside the orbit of the BFSS, I shall now consider the work of the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society [hereafter MEAS], which originated in 1864. This body was associated with Edward Brotherton, its Honorary Secretary, who died in 1866.[655] The National (formerly Lancashire) Public Schools' Association, which had also been centred on Manchester and the surrounding Lancashire towns, had ceased to function following the unsuccessful parliamentary education

[653] Salter to Wilks, 23 August 1867, BU, BFSS archives, file 303.
[654] Dawson to Wilks, 25 April 1867, BU, BFSS archives, file 303.
[655] Most of the material on the MEAS is taken from the Collection Scrapbook of Edward Brotherton (Honorary Secretary of the MEAS 1847-1870), Manchester Central Library Archives, M98. The years given are slightly misleading in that 1847 refers to a document from the Lancashire Public Schools' Association, whose proposed constitution is the first item in the scrapbook. This was seventeen years before the formation of the MEAS. Two other points should be noted; first much of the material dates from the period following Brotherton's death on 22 March 1866 and there is a small number of items after 1870 before the Society was finally wound up. Folio numbers relate to this collection.

Bills of the 1850s. By contrast the programme of the MEAS was more limited in its aims. The Society supported denominational schools and envisaged, if necessary, the creation of new non-denominational schools. But they lacked the seeming antipathy to the denominational school sector which had been shown by the NPSA. The MEAS closed down soon after the passing of the Education Act of 1870 as its work was then done.

The foundational policy of the Society can be seen in their document First draft of Rules for the Education–Aid Society for Manchester and Salford [n.d.]: [656]

> Rule 9. Provided the Committee be satisfied as to the efficiency and good character of a candidate, the master or mistress of any of these free schools shall not be required to be a member of any particular religious denomination.

There was a clear distinction here from the policy of the BFSS, for whom a reference from a member of the clergy was an essential part of the application process for admission to the training institution, and where appointment to a school was in practice typically linked with a consideration of not only belonging to a particular Christian denomination, but also trying to make a suitable match between the school and the denomination of the candidate.

> Rule 10. The free-schools shall be opened each morning by the singing of a suitable hymn, reading a portion of the Holy Scriptures, and a short prayer.
>
> Rule 11. No denominational creed, or controverted religious doctrine, shall be taught in the free-schools. The master or mistress shall recommend the scholars to attend some Sunday School, without indicating any one as preferable to another. The parents shall also be recommended to send their children to a Sunday School, on the occasion of their admission.[657]

Thus the MEAS was not indifferent to the denominational affiliation of the children in their schools. But their more liberal notion of recommending attendance at Sunday schools was clearly distinguishable from the more rigid policy of the BFSS's undenominationalism with compulsory attendance.

However, the MEAS decided to draw back from the specificity over the kind of undenominationalism which characterised the earlier NPSA, since the printed Rules omitted

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[656] Handwritten document, Brotherton Scrapbook, fol. 42.
[657] First draft of Rules for the Education–Aid Society for Manchester and Salford [n.d.] (handwritten document Brotherton Scrapbook, fol. 42).

the content of all of the draft of Rules 9, 10 and 11 above. Aside from the assertion that aid should be given on the same principle as from the government Committee of Council (that is, to a school which was either a denominational school, or to one in which the Holy Scriptures were read daily from the authorized version of the Bible) the only reference to religious instruction was in Rule 1: 'This Society shall have for its object the general education of the children of the poor, upon such principles as may unite members of all religious denominations in a common effort.'[658]

On 29 February 1864 the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser pointed out that some years had elapsed since the strife generated by the NPSA and objections from the Manchester Public Schools Association, which stressed the necessity of combining religious and secular instruction. The strife had ceased when the proposed parliamentary education Bills from these bodies were abandoned. The new MEAS contained some of the former NPSA activists. The new society's scheme was much more modest and set out very little that was new. The Society aimed at 'the education of children on principles common to all denominations of professing religionists.'[659] They aimed to assist some schools which did not receive government grants provided that they were connected to a denominational school or the Scriptures were read daily from the authorized version.

John Robertson,[660] described the provisions of Pakington's failed Bill of 1857 as far more acceptable to all the religious bodies in Manchester than any preceding measure. He hoped that it would be taken up again and applied to the whole country.[661] It was noted that the Guardians had established schools which 'are not characterised by any sectarian teaching, and are conducted with only such religious observances as are believed to be in harmony with the views of every Christian sect.....'[662]

The MEAS also made an appeal to the Churches to make more use of their Sunday school buildings because 'the education of the people is the work of the churches'.[663] The Society

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[658] Education-Aid Society for Manchester and Salford. Rules [n.d.], p. 1, Brotherton Scrapbook, fol. 77.
[659] ibid., fol. 63.
[660] Not listed in *ODNB*.
[661] John Robertson, *The Duty of England to provide a gratuitous compulsory education for the Children of her Poorer Classes* (Manchester, 1865) p. 12, Brotherton Scrapbook, fol. 170.
[662] Draft of letter from J. Harrod, Clerk to the Guardians, to E. Brotherton, 30 June 1864, ibid., fol. 95.
[663] *First Report of the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society*, 1865, p. 10, ibid., fol. 138.

wanted to affirm the claim of the Churches to educate, but they did not advocate making distinctive creeds and catechisms prominent within the schools.

The model provided by the United States of America was that of the common school which was not in connection with any religious denomination and no creed or denominational document could be taught. But the morning session was to begin with a Scripture reading and then the Lord's Prayer was read by the teacher alone. In Boston high schools on Monday mornings lessons had to begin with the 'evidences of Christianity'.[664]

Regarding the Manchester Free School in Jackson's Row, Deansgate, Manchester, formerly the Manchester Model Secular School, Brotherton considered that the religious teaching was very good: 'no creed was taught; but if the union of man with God, the relation of man to man, and the principles of justice were the foundation of religion, there was as much true religious teaching here as in any school in Manchester.'[665] Rev. Dr. McKerrow complained that Nonconformists as well as Church of England authorities were to blame for insisting on a 'combination of theological with elementary instruction'. He was anxious to show that his understanding of 'secular' did not imply any disparagement of the Bible. The scriptures were read in the school and, in order to include Roman Catholic pupils, the readings were based on selections where the Douay translation coincided with that of the Authorized King James version of the Bible favoured by Protestants.[666] This might represent the most successful attempt in England to draw Roman Catholics into a species of undenominational Christianity since the early days of the RLI/BFSS.

Brotherton set out statistics in which he was particularly critical of the very limited contribution to the education of children from the poorest strata of society made by some of the Nonconformist denominations in Manchester. He named the Wesleyans (*sc.* Methodists) and Independents as making a comparatively small contribution in relation to the number of churches they possessed and the Methodist Free Church, the Methodist New Connexion, Primitive Methodists and Baptists appeared to be making no contribution at all to the education of the poor.[667] Some seven hundred and sixty-nine Catholic children were being

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[664] Boston School Report for 1863, ibid., fol. 172.
[665] [Manchester] Examiner and Times, 22 December 1865, ibid., fol. 204.
[666] Examiner and Times, 22 December 1865, ibid., fol. 204.
[667] Letter, 1 June 1865, published in the Examiner and Courier for 2 June and in the [Manchester] Guardian for 3 June, ibid., fol. 155.

supported at that time compared to one hundred and forty-five Independents and one hundred and ninety-five Wesleyans, yet these latter two denominations had twice as many places of worship as the Catholics.[668]

The MEAS had in theory left open the possibility that, in addition to supporting children at existing, and generally denominational, schools, they would, if necessary, establish new schools. One example of this was the move to set up the Hulme Operatives' Day School.[669] The arrangements for religious instruction stipulated that:

> 3. The School shall not be connected with any religious denomination, and no denominational creed or catechism shall be taught therein, but each morning it shall be opened with the singing of a suitable hymn or psalm, and each day a portion of the Holy Scriptures shall be read therein, and a brief explanation of a practical nature given, of the passage selected. Occasionally also, at other times, a hymn, psalm, or moral song shall be sung.

With the growing pressure in the late 1860s for the extension of educational provision a group for preparing a Parliamentary Bill arose from the MEAS. But when an education Bill was in fact ready for submission, the group held back because of W. E. Forster's introduction of a government Bill in February 1870.[670]

After the 1870 Education Bill had successfully passed, some described Brotherton and the MEAS as precursors of Forster's undenominational Act of 1870.[671] The question of how far the Act of 1870 can be regarded *tout court* as undenominational will be considered in chapter 11 below. But, leaving that aside for the present, any undenominationalism was much attenuated by comparison with, for example, the 1847 plan of the LPSA discussed above. What can be admitted, however, is that Manchester provided a lead in galvanizing a wider campaign for extending educational provision nationally. George Dixon[672] wrote of how the Manchester group inspired Birmingham. It was also recognised that the MEAS had assisted

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[668] This broad picture may well have some validity, although without precise statistics of the named congregations for these denominations it is hard to substantiate Brotherton's argument.

[669] Following a meeting on 16 March 1865 details were given in a printed sheet in the Brotherton Scrapbook, fol. 149, headed Hulme Operatives' Day School. It should be noted that on this occasion there was no difference between the printed version of the rules of operation from the handwritten version at fol. 289.

[670] Manchester Examiner and Times, 21 June 1870.

[671] ibid., 6 October 1870.

[672] See chapter 8. George Dixon (1820-98), educational reformer and politician in Birmingham and from July 1867 Liberal MP for Birmingham. See further V. E. Chancellor in *ODNB*.

pressure for educational change in other cities, although it was itself small in comparison to the future National Education League and the National Education Union.[673]

The Newcastle Commission 1858-61

The appointment of the Commission, under the Duke of Newcastle as chair, was moved by Pakington on 11 February 1858, though its eventual outcome would have been a disappointment for him.[674] Some of his concerns would, however, eventually be vindicated by the Act of 1870. Palmerston's last government, which was in office when the Report was issued, was unwilling to face the challenges of the sectarian anguish on local rates. However it was not long before there was to be significant change in the political landscape with the Second Reform Act of 1867, which prepared a way for the successes of the 1870 Act.

The Report, whatever its defects and whatever the disappointment felt in some quarters about its eventual recommendations, revealed examples of undenominationalism outside the BFSS, but nonetheless closely approximating to it. Such religious instruction was provided by the private and compulsory system of employers. One such example was that of the London Lead Company. Their system provided for a framework based on the Bible 'and the several catechisms and other books in use have been selected with the intention of avoiding sectarian peculiarities, while giving to the children a knowledge of the fundamental doctrines and principles of our common Christianity.'[675] Compulsory attendance at Sunday school and public worship was also required, but the parents could exercise their discretion as to where they took the children. The attendance tickets issued gave no indication of the church or chapel at which they had been issued.

The Report argued that the religious difficulty was not felt by parents. For parents it was much more important that the school was efficient in providing secular knowledge as opposed to religious teaching. The reason underlying this, according to the judgement of Rev. J. Fraser, one of the Commissioners, was that parents themselves were unlikely to be clear about distinctive denominational differences. Furthermore, children did not depart from

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[673] See chapter 8.
[674] On the Newcastle Commission and the Revised Code in general see Selleck, pp. 314-32.
[675] Newcastle Commission Report, I, 218-19.

their parents' denomination because of school influences.[676] In general the Report noted a lack of denominational zeal.[677] Most rural schools were Church of England, while the BFSS was stronger in the towns.[678] Thus Commissioners such as Fraser and Cumin played down the existence of the Religious Difficulty. But the Report wisely noted that, even if it were agreed that the religious difficulty was not of any great moment amongst the *parents*, it was amongst the *sponsors* of schools that a real difficulty existed.

Summary

Nationally the Newcastle Commission was the most important official educational report for over twenty years. By essentially affirming the *status quo*, it had not advanced the cause of undenominationalism, although neither had it rejected this option. As will be seen in the final three main chapters of new material in this thesis, which cover the incoming Gladstone administration and the introduction of an education Bill, the judgments of the Newcastle Commission were soon out of date: a new surge of education endeavour was about to break out which would bring undenominationalism to the forefront of political debate.

In relation to undenominationalism itself, I have shown through the discussion of the Unitarian controversy how, despite the legal decisions in support of the Unitarians against the BFSS, in practice the BFSS further narrowed the permissible doctrinal range of undenominationalism by insisting on the inclusion of Trinitarian biblical material. The Unitarian controversy thus reiterates the ambiguity of undenominationalism while also highlighting something of the challenges made to it.[679]

By contrast with the unswerving, well-established and, under Dunn, highly-regimented commitment to a particular interpretation of undenominationalism by the BFSS for almost half a century, I have shown how the attempts of the NPSA and the MEAS to draw on undenominationalism waver between a form of undenominationalism and a secular approach. Both societies were short-lived by comparison with the longevity of the BFSS. That

[676] ibid., 37. Evidence of Mr. Foster.
[677] ibid., 53.
[678] ibid., 78.
[679] That will again be apparent both during and after the debates on the 1870 Bill.

oscillation between undenominationalism and secularism would later also be reflected in the 1870 Bill debates, particularly in the deliberations of the National Education League.

Chapter 8

The beginnings of Gladstone's administration and the genesis of an education Bill

Introduction

In the preceding chapters of this thesis I have shown how the religious difficulty had impeded the extension of schooling in England and Wales during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Using extensive primary source material I have set out how the BFSS's undenominationalism provided a solution, but noted also how this plan had not been incorporated into any system of schooling enacted by Parliament. As has been shown, the use of a conscience clause was another potential solution.[680] This option was widely encouraged by the Committee of Council, the government Education department, and extensively discussed in the 1860s. In the event, however, it failed to win sufficient support as a solution leading to successful legislation.

In this chapter I shall first discuss aspects of the BFSS at the time of the Bill. This discussion is important because it enables a proper recognition of the BFSS's continuing character as undenominationalism moved to the forefront of educational debate for the first time in thirty years.[681] In this chapter I shall also begin to examine the contribution of Gladstone's first ministry to this education question. This chapter should be read in close connection with the following two chapters, in which I shall show how a species of undenominationalism was eventually incorporated into the successful legislative proposals of the Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education, W. E. Forster. This chapter will therefore be devoted to an analysis of the preparation for, and initial progress of, the education Bill, anticipated in autumn 1869 by Forster and introduced into the Commons in February 1870 until the end of the second reading of the Bill.

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[680] See above chapter 7.
[681] On the BFSS see also below in chapter 11.

In developing this argument I shall analyse the background to some of the key protagonists in the debates on the 1870 Bill. This will set the more general context for the detailed work presented here. I shall also treat aspects of the parliamentary discussion relating to undenominationalism. Pressure groups such as the National Education League and its counterpart, the National Education Union, of which, importantly for this thesis, Cowper-Temple was a Vice-President, will also be considered. As is clear from the references given in the notes, significant archival material will again be used regularly throughout this chapter and indeed it is largely on the basis of this primary material that new insights into this important period in educational history can be gained.

The BFSS at the time of the 1870 Bill

To illustrate the character of the BFSS at this point I shall provide five glimpses from three different areas, three from archival sources and two from printed material.

First, notwithstanding the popular association of the BFSS with Nonconformity over previous decades, the BFSS continued to attract pupils from a wide range of denominations, including the Anglican Church. The BFSS school at Neath, for example, showed the proportion of pupils from a wide range of different denominations as: one hundred and forty-one Independents, ninety-five Calvinistic Methodists, ninety-one Baptists, seventy-one Wesleyan Methodists, sixty Anglicans, fourteen others, including Roman Catholics and Jews. Out of a total of four hundred and seventy-two scholars, therefore, three hundred and ninety-eight (84.32%) were Nonconformists, 12.71% were Anglicans, and others 2.7%.[682]

Second, information from Margate gives an insight into religious teaching in a BFSS school at this time: 'The great leading doctrines and facts of the Bible are taught, while parents have ample opportunities of enforcing at home their own peculiar points of doctrine or forms of worship, if they are so disposed.' In practice this meant: 'A passage is read, explained, and questioned upon, at the opening and close of each day. – Time, 15 or 20 minutes.'[683] So specific doctrinal teaching was not discouraged, but rather affirmed as the particular responsibility of the family. The information is broadly consistent with BFSS policy over the

[682] BFSS, *Annual Report*, 1870.
[683] ibid., p. 68.

preceding decades, although it is noteworthy that Sunday attendance at church was not mentioned as the place where distinctive denominational teaching could be expected.

Third, a special meeting of the London British Teachers' Association was held on Saturday 18 December 1869.[684] The aim of this meeting was to organise British teachers as a body to respond to educational issues. A leaflet invited response to resolutions which included:

> 5. That in any Bill for extending education no clause shall be inserted, the direct or indirect effect of which shall be to exclude the reading of the Bible in the case of state-aided schools; provision being made that the children of those parents who object to such reading shall be excused from attendance thereat.

The BFSS had originally been unsympathetic to a conscience clause because their commitment to unsectarianism implied that all children should be able to take part in religious lessons. But they now recognized that, in a national system which might reflect other positive aspects of the BFSS commitment to the Bible, there would need to be a compromise by including a conscience clause.

Fourth, individual BFSS schools may not have always been deeply committed to the official policy of the Society. Some BFSS teachers were sympathetic to a secular solution to the religious difficulty. BFSS Agent Salter described a meeting in a frank letter to the BFSS Secretary, Alfred Bourne. Salter had chaired a meeting to consider a Memorial from London teachers and he was aware that there would be a determined attempt to pass a resolution in favour of excluding by law the reading of the Bible from all state-aided schools. Some teachers were obviously already notorious for their radical views. The records show that a 'Mr. Reynolds' spoke for those who had a somewhat cynical approach to manipulating the government grants system: 'Mr. Reynolds of Bury particularly distinguished himself by his eagerness and partizanship, [*sic*] - as he always does, when he gets an opportunity of opposing what he thinks the Society is in favour of.'

There was a generational gap at this meeting with older teachers more sympathetic to the BFSS use of the Bible in schools. Reynolds, however, declared that he and others like him did not consider their schools 'British' and only read the Bible with pupils 'to get the [sc.

[684] BU, BFSS archives, file 325.

government] grant'.[685] They made no pretence of being committed BFSS supporters. Salter took care that both sides of the argument were given full expression. When a vote was taken on the resolution, it was evenly balanced, but with many abstentions. Salter used his casting vote to defeat the resolution.[686]

Fifth, some of the ideas of the now retired BFSS Secretary Henry Dunn in late 1869 were remarkably prescient of facets of the outcome of the 1870 deliberations.[687] He urged the Government to supplement the existing denominational school system. If, therefore, an inspector identified a district with insufficient school places, it should be required to remedy the deficiency. New schools should be governed by a board elected by ratepayers. The board should not have the power to direct any religious teaching in the new schools, though Holy Scripture should be read and rights of conscience should be respected.[688]

The pamphlet also harked back to Dunn's opposition to the 1843 Factory Education Bill.[689] He referred to his '*The Bill or the Alternative*', a letter to the Right Hon. Sir James Graham, in which he urged that the education of the people must be in harmony with 'public sentiment and existing institutions';[690] it should not interfere with what had already been established; government aid should be available to the National Society, the BFSS, the Unitarians, the Wesleyan Education Committee and the Roman Catholics. Dunn noted that this alternative which he proposed was accepted and became the denominational system.

By 1869, however, this denominational system, which, in Dunn's judgement, had done such good work, needed to be supplemented in order to reach the children of the lowest social classes. It should no longer be the dominant sector of educational provision. Dunn recognized a substantial body of the population who objected to education being controlled by the Churches since the denominations did not represent the totality of the English people.[691]

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[685] Government regulations required that a school wishing to be in receipt of a grant must include in the curriculum the reading of the Bible. However, since 1862 there was no grant for this element. See Lingen to Melville, 22 November 1869, Melville Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, MSS 1995, fol. 65.
[686] Salter to Bourne, 9 February 1870. BU, BFSS archives, file 303.
[687] Note that Dunn was by this time no longer BFSS Secretary.
[688] Henry Dunn, *A Few Words on the Present State of the Education Question* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., page 10 of text dates as 1 December 1869) p. 6. Dunn's call for the reading of the Bible was not one of the points in which he correctly foresaw the outcome of the 1870 Bill.
[689] See above chapter 6.
[690] Dunn, *A Few Words*, p. 12.
[691] ibid., p. 13.

The Gladstone administration

Following the Liberal victory in the 1868 General Election Gladstone succeeded Disraeli as Prime Minister. The year 1868 is often seen as the beginning of modern party politics and it had raised the hopes of the Nonconformists.[692] Compulsory Church Rates had been abolished a few months earlier by a Conservative government and it was expected that there would be sweeping educational reforms of a kind desired by the Nonconformists. Furthermore Gladstone argued that the Liberals were the party of legislative innovation and rarely would a change of administration reverse that new legislation.[693] In 1852 Cobden, disappointed by previous failures to establish a national education system, had highlighted the relationship between extending the education system and the reform of the electorate.[694] But there were more pressing items on Gladstone's agenda: the Gladstone Papers in the British Library reveal how Gladstone was supremely preoccupied with the problems of Ireland, for example. Issues relating to education, therefore, might not be expected to feature prominently on Gladstone's agenda.

Gladstone's cabinet of December 1868 consisted of fifteen members.[695] Lord John Russell, despite his previous high office and close involvement in education stretching back to the 1830s, was not included in the Cabinet, though in fact Gladstone had praised Russell for his education speeches in 1839, which he (Gladstone) regarded as the proper basis of a national education policy. Russell gave his whole-hearted support for the Government's eventual education plan in 1870.[696] Almost all members of the Cabinet were nominally Anglicans[697] and Bruce, Forster and de Grey were keen supporters of popular education.[698] Haywood has

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[692] *The Gladstone Diaries*, VII, 1869-71, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. xxix.

[693] The outstanding example from earlier in the nineteenth century was the acceptance of the Great Reform Bill of 1832.

[694] Donald Read, *Cobden and Bright. A Victorian Political Partnership* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 179.

[695] These were made up of seven Whigs including Clarendon, Granville and Hartington; two Peelites: Gladstone and Cardwell (Roundell Palmer declined a position); one Radical quasi-Peelite: de Grey (from 1871 known as Ripon); two contrasting Radicals: Lowe and Bright; and three Liberals: Childers, Goschen and Bruce. Three Whigs including Sir George Grey and Russell, whom Gladstone thought might be less trouble in the government than outside it, declined to serve. On Russell see Prest, p. 418; H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 174.

[696] G. P. Gooch, ed., *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1925), II, p. 354.

[697] Bright was the first Nonconformist to sit in a Cabinet.

[698] H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1874*, p. 202. Note that de Grey's reception into the Roman Catholic Church was announced in 1874.

noted that there was no clear correlation between church affiliation and allegiance to political parties at the time of the 1870 Act.[699] He also argued, less convincingly, that the modern notion of a party was still fluid at this time.[700] Haywood also identified a middle group between the secularists and denominationalists.[701] This included Forster and the Government. I shall now briefly treat the background of the leading government ministers, namely Gladstone, Earl de Grey and Ripon and Forster, and others concerned with education to show the interplay of their ideas on the education question and its relation to their previous activity.

The background of Gladstone, de Grey and Forster

In his youth Gladstone had been influenced by Evangelicalism.[702] Although he later associated with the Tractarian leader E. B. Pusey, he was not necessarily a Tractarian in a Puseyite sense.[703] At the time of Graham's contentious 1843 Factory Education Bill,[704] Gladstone, as a young Tory MP who was moving from an Evangelical to a more High Church Anglican position, had raised questions about the proposed educational clauses.[705] His early attitude on educational questions was to follow the line of his friend Walter Hook, Vicar of Leeds.[706] In 1846, as the Voluntaryist movement in education was newly invigorated, Hook had by contrast published a pamphlet, arguing that only the State had the capacity to educate all children in the nation. Hook's solution to the problem posed by the fact that in reality England no longer had a common religion was to call for the separation of secular and religious education and for equal treatment of the different denominations.[707] This theme can still be seen in Gladstone's initial reaction to Forster's proposals in autumn

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[699] W. A. Haywood, 'M.P.s and the 1870 Education Act: A Study in Human Motivation', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 4, 1 (1971), 20-30 (pp. 22-23).

[700] John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power. A History of the Conservative Party since 1830* (London: HarperCollins, 1998) might take a slightly different line. Although the modern structure of local party associations was only just beginning at the time of the 1870 Bill, there were other indicators of party groupings: for example, following the famous meeting at Willis's Rooms in 1859, the Whigs, Radicals and Peelites had come together to form the Liberal Party; the Conservatives too had earlier roots as a party; and the whipping of MPs began in the aftermath of the 1867 Reform Act. Two other points are undoubtedly true: first, that the composition of the two main parties fluctuated and, second, in the specific case of the 1870 Bill, not all MPs voted in support of the leadership of the party to which they in theory belonged.

[701] Haywood, p. 24.

[702] Richard Shannon, *Gladstone Volume 1 1809-1865* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), p. 24.

[703] Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1874*, p. 45.

[704] See above chapter 6.

[705] Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1874*, p. 67.

[706] Vicar of Leeds, 1837-59.

[707] W. F. Hook, *On the Means of Rendering more efficient the Education of the People: a Letter to the Lord Bishop of St. David's* (London: 1846)

1869, which I shall discuss below. Subsequently Gladstone became closer to the Broad-church position. But anti-erastianism also loomed large in his later career.[708]

Soon after taking office, amidst all the other pressing concerns of the Gladstone administration, the Government intervened decisively to develop elementary education.[709] When Gladstone completed his Cabinet, he appointed Earl de Grey and Ripon[710] to the post of Lord President of the Council, well aware that de Grey was a Whig.[711] De Grey, who became a convert to Roman Catholicism in 1873,[712] would take responsibility for seeing an education Bill through the Cabinet and in the Lords.[713] De Grey and Forster worked extremely closely together. Surprisingly for an aristocrat, de Grey was inclined to the Radical position, as was Forster, and both shared political roots in the Manchester plans for a non-denominational system of religious education in the 1850s.[714]

The other key member of the Government with responsibility for education, but outside the Cabinet until July 1870, was W. E. Forster. As Vice-President of the Committee of Council, he was to take charge of the Bill in the Commons. Forster entered office with much goodwill and was the real Education minister. Forster had a Quaker background, but 'was not formally identified with any other [*sc.* denomination].'[715] But he also had a great sympathy for the Anglican Church.

Forster wished to preserve what was good in the existing system of voluntary schools. Although it might seem to cut across his Liberal parliamentary attachment, Forster was in some ways a man of independent, even irascible, temperament, who sometimes went against the views of his constituents.[716] Matthew Arnold's ideals influenced Forster away from the strident secularism of some of his fellow Liberals, whereat he 'retreated further to the centre

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[708] D. W. Bebbington, *The mind of Gladstone: religion, Homer, and politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 140.
[709] ibid., p. 272.
[710] Known as Ripon from 1871.
[711] Lucien Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1921), I, p. 224.
[712] Jenkins, *Dilke*, p. 56.
[713] Wolf, I, p. 234.
[714] Anthony Denholm, *Lord Ripon 1827-1909. A Political Biography* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 10.
[715] Roundell Palmer, Earl of Selborne, *Memorials. Part II Personal and Political 1865-1895*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1898), I, p. 157, which does not mention that his marriage outside the Quaker fold to Jane Arnold, the Anglican sister of Matthew Arnold, had caused him to be ostracized from that community.
[716] Jenkins, *Dilke*, p. 56.

of the Liberal Party'. This in turn offended many of the electorate in his Bradford seat, who thereupon elected Edward Miall as his companion MP in 1869.[717]

Forster's autumn 1869 memorandum

In autumn 1869 Forster was given permission to prepare an education Bill.[718] Accordingly, he first prepared a memorandum on which the Bill could be based.[719] While details of the memorandum are available in published material, Roper has pointed out that there were, in fact, two versions of this memorandum and only archival investigation brings out the full significance of the changes made in the second version.[720] Study of those changes in this memorandum is therefore crucial because it revealed Forster's initial hopes for a solution to the religious difficulty and the way that Gladstone forestalled his plans.

In the original version of the memorandum Forster outlined four different plans. First, the Birmingham plan for free schools:[721] 'such schools to teach no religious dogma.'[722] Existing schools would still receive State aid. Forster rejected this because the existing schools would still be needed, but the new plan would drive out them out because new schools would be free. The plan was thus too expensive. Second, Bruce's unsuccessful Bill of 1868: existing schools would receive rate-money provided there was a conscience clause. Education would become compulsory. Districts would be allowed to rate themselves for existing schools (this category included denominational schools) and the Government could ultimately compel districts to levy a rate. Forster attributed its failure to the denominational party. Forster had originally supported this Bill, but by 1869 believed it would be impossible to compel ratepayers to provide rate-aid for denominational schools. Third was Lowe's scheme, in which the Government surveyed provision and informed the public of the need. Time would then be allowed for voluntary societies to supply that need, after which districts would be

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[717] Armytage in Judges, ed., p. 211; D. W. Bebbington on Miall in *ODNB*.
[718] Dale, p. 674, following Wemyss Reid.
[719] See Gladstone Papers, British Library, Add MSS 44611, fols 99-102. This represents seven sides of print. The memorandum is also discussed in T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), I, pp. 463-70. The printed draft is entitled 'Memorandum by Mr. Forster of suggestions for consideration in framing the Education Bill for England'. Dated 21 October 1869.
[720] Henry Roper, 'W.E. Forster's Memorandum of 21 October, 1869: A Re-Examination,' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, xxi, 1 (February 1973), 64-75.
[721] Cf. on this the plans of the NEL below.
[722] Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44611, fol. 99^{r}.

compelled to provide schools. Existing schools would still get central government support, but not rate-support. This was Forster's current preference. Ratepayers would not be allowed to teach 'special forms of Christianity'. So Roman Catholics, for example, should not be taxed for the teaching of Methodism.

> Every school aided by public money would be so aided because part of a national system. Surely then it must be a school from which no one of the public is excluded. Dogmatic education imposed upon a child against the will of the parent may be considered exclusion, and it would therefore seem to be a necessary consequence of the incorporation of denominational schools into a national system that, as a condition of state aid to any school, whether for building or maintenance, there must be a conscience clause, so full that the state may expect and try to induce the parents of any denomination to send to it their children.[723]

Fourth, the plan of the National Education Union:[724] Forster rejected this, believing that voluntary efforts alone would never be enough.

Forster was optimistic about the religious difficulty.[725] His axioms were: first, that England was, and would remain, a Christian nation; second, that 'the Government shall not in future legislation attempt to teach any special form of Christian faith.' The Government would not establish any new denominational schools; but they would not decline to aid any type of school; third, 'we should include the Bible and the acknowledgment of Christianity in any schools for which the Government, either by rates or taxes is directly or solely responsible'[726]

The memorandum further proposed that, where there were gaps in provision of schools by voluntary bodies, school boards could be set up which could levy a rate to build new schools. Forster's proposal on the religion question was that religious instruction would be given in all Board schools set up as a result of the Act. However, Gladstone wrote to de Grey that he could not accept Forster's proposed system for religious instruction, that no special forms of Christianity could be taught, which was clearly based on BFSS undenominationalism:[727]

> the proposal to found the Rate schools on the system of the British and Foreign Society would I think hardly do. Why not adopt frankly the principle that the State or

[723] ibid., fol. 100^{v}.
[724] See below for more details of the plans of the NEU.
[725] Wemyss Reid, *Forster*, 1, p. 468.
[726] Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44611, fol. 101.
[727] Gladstone to de Grey, 4 November 1869, Ripon Papers, British Library, Add MSS 43513, fol. 282.

> the local community should provide the secular teaching, & either leave the option to the Ratepayer to go beyond this *sine quâ non*, if they think fit, within the limits of the conscience clause, or else simply leave the parties themselves to find Bible & other religious education from voluntary sources. [728]

Gladstone suggested that the matter could be left to the discretion of the individual School Boards. Gladstone's reaction caused a revised version of the memorandum to be drafted in which Forster and de Grey accepted Gladstone's suggestion, and this format was incorporated in the Bill to be published in February 1870.[729] The revised version omitted Forster's careful argumentation about the relationship between government financial aid and religious teaching, namely that it was not appropriate for rate-founded schools to teach distinctively denominational religion. These opposing views of Gladstone and Forster caused the confused formulation in the Bill when it was eventually published.[730]

This was therefore a species of latter-day *cuius regio, eius religio*. The Congregationalist R.W. Dale described the drafting of the Bill as representing the principles of the League but with excessive deference to the denominations.[731] No provision was made for the teaching of denominationally distinctive religion out of school hours, as in the NPSA and League plans and in line with the Irish system.[732]

The first reading of the Elementary Education Bill

Bill 33 was introduced by Forster in the Commons on 17 February 1870. Sections relevant to the religious difficulty read as follows:

> 7. Every public elementary school within the meaning of this Act shall be subject to the following regulations; namely,
> (1) The school shall be open at all times to the inspection of any of Her Majesty's inspectors; so, however that no such inspector, except with the permission of the Education Department, and on the request of the managers of the school, shall inquire into the religious instruction given at such school, or examine any scholar therein in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book:

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[728] Quoted in *The Gladstone Diaries, VII, 1869-1871*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew, p. 162. The continuing influence of Hook's 1846 pamphlet is clearly evident here.
[729] Roper has identified this modified version of the memorandum at the National Archives, Kew. PRO/NA Ed. 24/2.
[730] Roper, pp. 67-68.
[731] Dale, p. 674. On the National Education League see below.
[732] See below chapter 10 on the irony of Gladstone's later being forced to accept amendments.

[...]

(3) No scholar shall be required, as a condition of being admitted into or of attending or of enjoying all the benefits of the school, to attend or to abstain from attending any Sunday school, or any place of religious worship, or to learn any such catechism or religious formulary or be present at any such lesson or instruction or observance as may have been objected to on religious grounds by the parent or scholar sending his objection in writing to the managers or principal teacher of the school, or one of them.

Management and Maintenance of Schools by School Board.

14. Every school provided by a school board shall be a public elementary school and shall be conducted as such under the control and management of such board.

Subsection (3) of clause 7 above was designed to ensure that pupils were free of any influence from a church community connected with a school. While the BFSS did not require pupils to attend any *particular* church or chapel as a precondition of receiving education, there was nonetheless a requirement to attend on Sunday at a place of worship of the family's choosing. Such a legal prohibition would undermine the BFSS system.

The Government viewed Section 7 as the lynchpin of the Bill, although it proved to be clause 14 which was the focus of contention on the religious difficulty. In his speech introducing the Bill, Forster set out two key features with respect to religion:[733] first, a conscience clause for all schools in receipt of public money [Section 7 (3)];[734] second, denominational inspection would be replaced by inspection without denominational provision [Section 7 (1)].[735] The Government's object, said Forster in a famous phrase, was to 'fill up the gaps'.[736] On the character of religion in the new schools which would fill those gaps, Forster envisaged that there should be a good Christian training for the children: 'but children of these ages can hardly be supposed to require doctrinal or dogmatic teaching to any great extent'. It was not, said Forster, their intention to forbid any religious teaching. But nor did they intend to require that the Bible should be taught.[737]

[733] *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 438-66, 17 February 1870.
[734] ibid., 447-49.
[735] ibid., 446-47.
[736] ibid., 444.
[737] ibid., 458.

Initial reactions varied. Dixon welcomed the Bill, but had doubts over the religious difficulty. He believed that the idea that no conscience clause could be devised which would prove satisfactory to a large proportion of the population was becoming too strong to be resisted by even the most powerful government. He saw it as a great weakness that the desirable separation between religious and secular instruction should be left to the decision of 'an innumerable number of Boards throughout the country, into whose election religious feeling must necessarily enter, instead of being directly effected by Parliament'.[738]

A. J. Mundella said he had never regarded the religious difficulty as having any great significance because he believed that the population generally desired their children to receive religious teaching.[739] The proof of this conviction was the three million working class children who attended Sunday schools. He quoted a 'very able man from the working classes as saying that the religious difficulty was made for and not by the lower classes.'[740]

Cowper-Temple, by contrast, declared himself very gratified with the plan and praised the 'tolerance and comprehensiveness' of the Bill.[741] He saw it as an opportunity to satisfy Churchmen, Dissenters and Secularists, who could all work together in union because, whether one saw religion as the basis of morality, or believed religion was of less significance for moral development, one could still operate under this system. Cowper-Temple applauded freedom for voluntary school managers on religious education, but would have welcomed a similar freedom for 'those municipal bodies whose duty it would be to supply the deficiencies of voluntary communities.'[742] There was no public hint here that he would later propose any changes to enable the Bill to become law, although the Melville Papers reveal that he was organizing behind the scenes.[743] Nor did Pakington comment on the religious difficulty, but compared the Bill to his own of 1855: 'in many respects not dissimilar from that which has been proposed to-night.'[744] It was agreed to bring in the Bill.

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[738] ibid., 475, 17 February 1870.
[739] Cf. in chapter 10 the Memorial from BFSS teachers in Devon downplaying the religious difficulty. A. J. Mundella (1825-97) MP for Sheffield 1868-97. Vice-President of the Committee of Council 1880-85. Mundella's religious affiliation, if any, is unclear. His father was a Roman Catholic, but Mundella himself was brought up in an Anglican school, but later expressed his distaste for creeds and catechisms. See W. H. G. Armytage, *A. J. Mundella 1825-1897* (London: Ernest Benn, 1951), p. 16. He was, however, opposed to an education which sought to remove any religious dimension. See ibid., pp. 74-75.
[740] *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 477.
[741] ibid., 480-82. 17 February 1870.
[742] ibid., 480.
[743] Cowper-Temple to Melville, 27 December 1869, Melville Papers, LPL, MSS 1995, fols 74-75.
[744] *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 487, 17 February 1870.

Pressure groups, Nonconformist opposition and deputations to the Government

Much of the parliamentary debates on the Elementary Education Bill over the coming months related to the pressures brought to bear on the Government by extra-parliamentary groups. Hence it is essential to explore the role and views of three major pressure groups and their impact on the Government: the National Education League [hereafter NEL], the National Education Union [hereafter NEU] and the Central Nonconformist Committee.

The first group had its roots in a meeting held on 13 February 1867 at the Birmingham home of George Dixon to establish the Birmingham Education Society (BES). Birmingham thus took up the baton earlier held by the Lancashire industrialists through the LPSA/NPSA.[745] The Rules and Objects of the Society included two distinct funds, one for denominational and one for non-denominational schools. In respect of religion, the single requirement for inclusion on an approved list of schools was that 'the scriptures are read daily from the authorised version.'[746] It shared some of its officers and personnel with the later NEL: for example, George Dixon as President, and Jesse Collings as Honorary Secretary.[747] Joseph Chamberlain, not yet an MP, served on the Committee. The gathering also included Jesse Collings and Frederick Temple, Head Master of Rugby School.[748] This led to the formation of the National Education League.[749] Marcham, however, has stressed the difference between this and the more radical NEL, which caused some members of the BES to join the NEU.[750]

In 1867 Joseph Chamberlain drew up a plan for a 'National Society for the Promotion of Universal Compulsory Education.' Its programme included the principle that the right to education ought not to be restricted by any religious tests. The Society would seek unsectarian education where new schools were established or supported by the

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[745] See chapter 7 above on the MEAS.

[746] National Education Miscellaneous Papers, I, Birmingham Central Library. *First Annual Report of the Birmingham Education Society*, section XIII.

[747] Jesse Collings (1831-1920) Established Devon and Exeter Boys' Industrial School in 1862. Resident in Birmingham from 1864, in 1868 wrote *An Outline of the American School System*, which inspired the formation of the National Education League for the advocacy of free and non-sectarian elementary education. Originally a Liberal, from 1886 to 1918 MP for Bordesley, Birmingham, as a Liberal Unionist. See further A. W. Ashby in *ODNB*.

[748] Garvin, I, p. 89.

[749] Denis Judd, *Radical Joe. A Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), p. 43.

[750] A. J. Marcham, 'The Birmingham Education Society and the 1870 Education Act,' *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 8, 1 (1976), 11-16 (p. 14).

Government.[751] New schools should be unsectarian because the nation could not support schools which were partially devoted to the propagation of sectarian views. Some of Chamberlain's principles, such as compulsory attendance, caused a rift within the Society. When outvoted on this, he decided that a new grouping was needed. Thus was born the NEL in January 1869.

The NEL was a Radical organisation calling for unsectarian, free, compulsory and universal education. George Dixon was elected Chairman; Chamberlain became Vice-Chairman and Jesse Collings was Honorary Secretary. Chamberlain, however, was the driving force in this trio.[752] Its First General Meeting was held on Tuesday and Wednesday 12 and 13 October 1869 in Birmingham.[753] Chamberlain's aim as a founder of the NEL was to establish a political association independent of official party control.[754] It 'inherited Cobden's educational programme.'[755] However, difficulties arose about the NEL's policy on religious instruction. If religious teaching were left to Sunday schools, this cut across the Protestant belief that simple Bible teaching should form part of the education of all. Adamson described this as 'the Radical programme inherited from the France of the Revolution.'[756] But this was not completely accurate, for only in 1872 did the League declare for a *secular* system of education.

The NEL had denominational breadth: it might not be surprising to find the Congregationalist minister and theologian R. W. Dale among the NEL's most prominent supporters; more unexpected was John Sandford, the Anglican Archdeacon of Coventry.[757] After the formal inauguration of the League in October 1869 a draft Bill for national education was drawn up. The NEL's aim was 'the establishment of a system which shall secure the education of every child in the country.[758] The three main principles were: first, full school accommodation

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[751] Garvin, I, p. 92.
[752] See Adams, *Contest* for the NEL.
[753] W. H. G. Armytage, 'The 1870 Education Act', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, xviii, 2 (June 1870), 121-33 (p. 121).
[754] Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke,* 2 vols ([S.I.] John Murray, 1917), I, p. 95.
[755] Armytage in Judges, ed., p. 210.
[756] Adamson, p. 349.
[757] John Sandford (1801-73), Church of England clergyman, Rector of Alvechurch near Bromsgrove from 1854 until his death and Archdeacon of Coventry from 1851. Liberal in politics. See further G. Le G. Norgate, rev. Ellie Clewlow in *ODNB*.
[758] Garvin, I, p. 96.

provided by local rates;[759] second, all rate-aided schools to be unsectarian and free; and, third, powers compelling all children of suitable age to attend school.

In his speech at the inaugural meeting Chamberlain claimed the support of eighty to one hundred thousand working men: 'I prefer to believe with John Stuart Mill that the time is shortly coming when the working class will no longer be content to accept a religion of other people's prescribing.'[760] NEL branches were formed in Manchester, Bradford, Bristol, Leicester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Leeds, Huddersfield, Bath, Warrington, Devonport, Carlisle, Wednesbury and Merthyr Tydfil. Trade unions and other working men's societies also joined the League.

Similar to the NPSA Bill of 1850[761] was the NEL's stipulation on the religious difficulty:

> No creed, catechism, or tenet peculiar to any sect should be taught in any national Rate School; but the School Board shall have the power to grant the use of the School Rooms out of School hours for the giving of religious instruction.

This would allow either for a purely secular curriculum or the reading of the Bible without note or comment.[762] Politicians such as A. J. Mundella, who abominated creeds and catechisms, admitted to being a member, but at the same time was wary of some points of detail including the NEL's use of the term 'secular'.[763] He was present at a meeting on 12 and 13 October 1869 when there was a strong disagreement between Professor Fawcett,[764] who supported reading the Bible without comment, and Thorold Rogers,[765] who did not. Mundella in general was a supporter of Forster's efforts, opposing the secularists and arguing for undenominationalism.

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[759] On the significance of rates, see, for example, Ball, pp. 209-10.
[760] Garvin, I, p. 98.
[761] See above chapter 7.
[762] Farrar, p. 43.
[763] Armytage, *Mundella*, p. 16.
[764] Henry Fawcett (1833–84), professor of economics and politician, reputation of secular radical. MP for Brighton 1865-74, Hackney 1874-84. Disappointed by 1870 Act. See Lawrence Goldman in *ODNB*.
[765] James Edwin Thorold Rogers (1823-90), political economist and politician. Former Tractarian cleric. Friend and follower of Cobden. Elected Liberal MP for Southwark in 1880. See further W. A. S. Hewins, rev. Alon Kadish in *ODNB*.

The National Education Union

The second important pressure group was the National Education Union, which stemmed from a circular written by Colonel Akroyd, M.P., dated 1 October 1869.[766] This was a reaction to what was perceived as the 'aggressive policy' of the NEL[767] and was inaugurated at Manchester Town Hall on 3 and 4 November 1869.[768] J. H. Rigg from the Wesleyans and T. W. Allies from the Roman Catholics were also present at this meeting.[769] Thus NEU membership was drawn from a wide range of denominations. Membership also included Edward Baines, the leading Congregationalist, who had earlier forestalled Cobden's efforts to promote state aid to education. Baines had led the abandonment of the Voluntaryist position in 1867.[770] Baines was supported by Lord Harrowby and the Earl of Shaftesbury. Vice-Presidents from the Anglican clergy included both Archbishops and 18 diocesan bishops.[771] Of Vice- Presidents from the House of Commons, Cowper-Temple was listed until at least 1879. He was an active and prominent member of the Union in its early days. However, he was not present at the first annual meeting in Manchester Town Hall on 3 November 1870, no doubt on account of possible ill-feeling that the new Education Act had been passed because of his clause. He was one of the most generous subscribers to the Union's funds and, after the passing of the Elementary Education Act, continued to subscribe throughout the 1870s although at a lower rate.

The objects of the Union included:[772]

1. To secure the primary education of every child on principles of morality and religion, by initiating the proceedings for the election of School Boards.

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[766] Edward Akroyd, MP (Whig) for Huddersfield 1857-59, Halifax 1865-74, with later Conservative inclinations.
[767] Armytage, *Mundella*, p. 76.
[768] NEU, *First Annual Report*, p. 41.
[769] ibid., p. 71.
[770] In a speech to the Congregational Union in Manchester on 11 October 1867 Edward Baines had urged his co-religionists to accept that their twenty-year policy of refusing government aid for their schools had failed. See Selleck, p. 367. Following this decision, many, but not all, Nonconformists who had favoured government aid subsequently threw their weight behind the National Education League, founded in 1869.[770] The League's definition of unsectarian was, as we shall see, ambiguous. Baines, in fact, joined the National Education Union because he wanted aid not to be confined to religious schools. See Selleck, p. 368.
[771] London, Durham, Winchester, St. David's, Chichester, Llandaff, Ripon, Norwich, Bangor, Worcester, Gloucester and Bristol, Ely, Lichfield, Hereford, Peterborough, Salisbury, Carlisle and Bath and Wells. See National Education Union, *First Annual Report*, p. 4. Noteworthy absences from the list were Exeter (Temple) and Manchester (Fraser).
[772] These are taken from the Union's First Annual Report.

2. To counteract the efforts of the Birmingham League and others advocating secular training only and the secularization of our National Institutions.

3. To watch over and protect the interests of existing and future voluntary National Schools, and to thwart the attempts of those who have threatened continued action against the Annual Parliamentary Grant to existing Denominational Schools.

7. To secure the return as Members of Parliament of those who are friends of Religious Education, the maintenance of the Bible, and definite religious teaching.

The Report of the November 1869 Manchester meeting showed that they were also prepared to accept the conscience clause. Initial meetings were held at Manchester on 1 October and Leeds on 6 December 1869. The NEU's aim was 'judiciously supplementing the present denominational system.' Rate-aid would be available only for pauper children. Their programme was put forward in the form of a Bill to extend the work of the National Society and the BFSS. They enlisted the support of the Earl of Shaftesbury, who had twenty years previously lamented the threat that a scheme of national education would pose to 'the teaching of the evangelical religion.'[773] Cowper-Temple chaired a meeting in London on 7 March[774] and introduced the NEU deputation to Gladstone, de Grey and Forster on 11 March 1870.[775]

The NEU thrived on the NEL's determination to intensify its campaign. This kept the Union from going into suspended animation[776] and by the time of the First Annual Report the NEU claimed one hundred and eleven members of Parliament, two hundred and eighty branches and over fifty thousand members.[777]

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[773] Armytage, *Mundella*, p. 77.
[774] NEU, *First Annual Report*, p. 74.
[775] Southampton University, Broadlands Archive, BR45/6/1-6, Cowper-Temple Diaries, 1861-1870. However, Gladstone's notes of the meeting do not mention Cowper-Temple and do not especially illuminate whatever discussion took place, being in both cases barely legible and little developed. See Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44759, fol. 68 for the deputation from the NEL and fol. 75 for that from the NEU.
[776] NEU, *First Annual Report*, p. 55.
[777] ibid., p. 52.

Prelude to the second reading of the education Bill

Even as the education Bill was being prepared, there were mutterings about Forster. He had over the years acquired a reputation for arguing in support of State intervention in education, but it was being noised that he was 'not sound on disestablishment; and felt tenderness towards the Church of England.'[778] But the Nonconformists thought their position was impregnable. They had brought the Government to power and they had incontrovertible evidence of how far English education lagged behind that of other countries. Forster's proposals, however, provoked great disappointment among the Nonconformists. The ensuing row continued after the passing of the 1870 Bill and was among the factors which brought down the Gladstone government in 1874.[779]

Although on the surface it appeared that the Bill was initially well-received in Parliament, Forster now found himself ranged against many members of his own party. In the first draft of the Bill the Nonconformist opposition objected to the proposals that existing voluntary schools would be aided out of the rates, the non–elective character of the School Boards (to be appointed by the town councils and vestries), and the year of grace to the voluntary societies to fill up the gaps in provision.[780] Here Forster found his educational proposals tied up with the broader political struggle over the disestablishment of the Church of England. The so-called Liberationists feared that, through Forster's measure, the Anglican Church would be strengthened against Nonconformity.

On 24 February 1870 the NEL Executive Committee decided to petition Gladstone that sectarian teaching funded by rates was not acceptable. Thus was followed by a delegation to Downing Street on 9 March of over four hundred NEL delegates, including forty-six MPs.[781] Alongside the NEL campaign, which circularized every Nonconformist minister in the country, Chamberlain inspired the creation of the third pressure group which I shall consider. This was the Central Nonconformist Committee, which overlapped with the NEL,[782] to whose protest over the Bill two-thirds of Nonconformist ministers subscribed.[783]

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[778] Garvin, I, p. 103.
[779] Garvin, I, pp. 105-06.
[780] Armytage, '1870 Education Act', p. 125.
[781] Judd, pp. 48-49.
[782] Richard Jay, *Joseph Chamberlain. A Political Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 16.
[783] Garvin, I, p.110.

Chamberlain threatened that, if the Bill were not amended, it would lead to the disestablishment of the Church of England. Gladstone had probably never heard of Chamberlain, but the shock felt by the Nonconformists when they read the text of the Bill meant that he would not long remain in ignorance. The Central Nonconformist Committee played a significant role in maintaining opposition to the Government's initial proposals. There was considerable concern about the possibility of local Boards determining religious teaching in schools: thus one Board might choose denominational teaching, whereas another would choose undenominational religious instruction.[784]

At the deputation at Downing Street Chamberlain highlighted to Gladstone:

> But the strongest objections which we entertain are on the subject of the permissive compulsion and what I must be permitted to call the permissive sectarianism of the Bill [...] The Dissenters object to this measure, which they conceive will hand over the education of this country to the Church of England- entirely in many parts of the Kingdom, especially in agricultural districts...Any Conscience Clause will be absolutely unsatisfactory. Where it is most needed, there, Sir, it will be absolutely nugatory, because the parents will not dare to make use of it; they will be afraid of placing themselves, by signing such a document, under the ban of the squire and the parson. (Cheers.) Besides, Sir, we say that a Conscience Clause of any kind does not touch the hardships of which Dissenters complain - that the minority will in many districts be taxed to pay for the support of schools which are part of the machinery for perpetuating doctrines to which they have a conscientious objection.[785]

Second reading of the Elementary Education Bill

The first reading of the Bill on 17 February had for a few days brought great acclaim for Forster's efforts. But this was short-lived. When NEL members took stock of their concerns, by the time of the second reading a great controversy ensued. Soon after the deputations to Downing Street, the second reading of the Bill took place from 14-18 March 1870.[786]

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[784] In the event, when the Bill was passed, there was still a choice: Boards could opt for religious teaching, which must not be denominational, or they could exclude religious teaching altogether. This might not be a frequent choice, but it was allowed none the less.

[785] Garvin, I, p. 112.

[786] *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 1919-2067, omitting cols. 1954-62. The Bill was not debated on 16 and 17 March 1870.

At Chamberlain's instigation, Dixon moved an amendment against leaving a decision about the character of religious instruction to the local School Boards,[787] but Forster would not yield. The second reading was dominated by this amendment:

> This House is of opinion that no measure for the elementary education of the people will afford a satisfactory or permanent settlement, which leaves the question of religious instruction in schools supported by the public funds and rates, to be determined by local authorities.[788]

Although a Churchman, Dixon was greatly concerned to reduce denominationalism in the country. The NEL could not countenance an Act which excluded the Bible, but, out of deference to Roman Catholics, they wished the Bible taught out of school hours. Dixon's definition of the distinction between an unsectarian and a secular system was that 'in both you would exclude all Christian dogmas, but in an unsectarian system you would not have to exclude Christian precepts.'[789] As two decades earlier with the NPSA, this formulation showed the close alignment of unsectarian and secular approaches to a solution of the religious difficulty. Dixon further argued that an unsectarian system was unattainable because of the practical realities such as in Ulster. He was also sceptical of the protection from the conscience clause. All rate-aided schools should be unsectarian and other schools should have religious teaching separately, that is under a timetable[790] conscience clause.

Forster replied, indicating possible responses for deciding what kind of religion should be taught. He quickly dismissed the idea that the Government should determine what religion was taught in the schools.[791] This analysis was taken up in a long speech by Lord Robert Montagu on the following day, 15 March.[792] Montagu's argument was curious, having asked, if it were good for schools to have undenominational religious education, why did they not have it in churches on Sundays. He then averred that no government would be able to define a common Christianity until some theologian had written such a *Caput mortuum*.[793] To

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[787] ibid., 1919-28. 14 March 1870.
[788] Adams, p. 217.
[789] *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 1923.
[790] A *timetable* conscience clause was included in the 1870 Act. This required religious instruction in Board schools, if given, to be either at the beginning or the end of the day in order to make withdrawal easier. *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX, 1926, 14 March 1870.
[791] Forster's speech: ibid., 1931-39, 14 March 1870.
[792] Montagu, Lord Robert (1825-1902). Conservative MP for Huntingdonshire 1859-74. 1867-68 Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. See further G. Le G. Norgate, rev. H. C. G. Matthew in *ODNB*. ibid., 1980-2003, 15 March 1870.
[793] This Latin phrase, literally meaning 'dead head' conveys the idea of a residue, often in alchemy referring to the removal of other elements. It may suggest the notion that such residue was worthless. For an anti-

those who said denominational religion would cause strife, he argued it would be better to have strife in defence of deeply held convictions: 'The exacerbated antagonisms of religious tenets were far preferable to the lukewarm notions of a common Christianity.'[794]

Next, H. B. Samuelson[795] revealed that there was already talk at this stage of more support from the Conservative benches than from the Government side.[796] Edward Miall, in opposition to Forster, his Bradford colleague, declared himself pledged by his constituents to vote for unsectarian and undenominational education.[797] Rejecting the plan of giving money to denominational schools, he believed it would be a matter for great regret if such an important measure for education were to be endangered by such a false principle being embodied in the Bill.[798]

However, in Forster's view, the idea in this Bill of leaving the local authorities to decide the character of religious teaching was the least of various evils.[799] Unsectarian education, Forster believed, could be realized in practice, but it was difficult to define in an Act of Parliament.[800] It was a Radical principle that Parliament should trust the municipal bodies to address this issue. For Forster clause 7 was the linchpin of the Bill and, if this worked, the concerns about clause 14 would fall away. In the Act as passed, the local School Boards did in fact retain some responsibility for religious teaching, but it was to be constrained by the Cowper-Temple clause, which will be discussed in chapters 9 and 10. This outcome must have contributed to Dixon's declaration in the summer that he would seek to amend the Act in the following session.

Mundella's speech on 18 March brought in the grand sweep of educational concern.[801] He regretted that so much time was devoted to the religious difficulty, which he thought existed more in Parliament than in the outside world. Indeed Mundella's speech was brief on the

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undenominationalist, it could imply that any putative common Christianity was worthless. Montagu was presumably ignorant of Gastrell.

[794] ibid., 1987.

[795] (Sir) Bernhard Samuelson (1820-1905) manufacturer and engineer, Liberal MP for Banbury 1859, 1865-85, North Oxfordshire, 1885-95. Not to be confused with H. B. Samuelson, son of above, Liberal MP for Frome from 1876.

[796] ibid., 2003-08, 15 March 1870.

[797] Edward Miall (1809-81) Congregationalist minister. Virulently anti-Church of England. MP for Rochdale (1852-57) and Bradford (1869-74).

[798] ibid., 2026-31, 15 March 1870.

[799] ibid., 1934, 14 March 1870.

[800] ibid., 1937, 14 March 1870.

[801] *Hansard*, 3, CC, 236-44, 18 March 1870.

religious difficulty: he wished to rely on the conscience clause, separate religious and secular education and to strengthen it by having religious education at the start or close of the day. He hoped that any newly established schools would not use the Catechism, which he loathed from his unfortunate early experience of schooling.

Cowper-Temple defended the right of local areas to decide the character of religious teaching in their schools;[802] the alternative was secular education, as indicated by the logic of Harcourt who had spoken earlier. The Bill might be improved by an insertion that distinctive religious teaching might be at the start or the end of the school day. The State itself should be unsectarian, but Christian:

> The State ought to take care that in the non-denominational schools established under the Bill some religious instruction be given. The Bible should be read and explained, and the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer should be taught. To allow the Bible to be read without explanation would be unfair and cruel to the children.[803]

At the close of the second reading Gladstone intervened to avoid a damaging division and promised amendments. He referred to the admirable speech by Mundella earlier that evening.[804] Dixon in his closing remarks referred to the possibility that the Government would look with favour on the proposals from Mundella. Gladstone begged Dixon to withdraw his amendment: they should remember the great significance of what they were trying to do through this Bill for the education of the country. He would not at this stage predict what would be done for what he called the minority. He suggested that, where the schoolmaster gave instruction to the majority, it might be made compulsory for School Board to make the school buildings available to the minority for their distinctive teaching. Accordingly, Dixon agreed to withdraw his amendment, having received sufficient reassurance that in the committee stage of the Bill the religious issue would be carefully reconsidered.[805]

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[802] ibid., 287-89, 18 March 1870.
[803] ibid., 289, 18 March 1870.
[804] ibid., 292-303, 18 March 1870.
[805] ibid., 303, 18 March 1870.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how, in the first version of his autumn 1869 memorandum, Forster's early hopes for a Bill containing an undenominational solution to the religious difficulty in education were dashed by Gladstone's prime-ministerial authority. But, after Forster's acquiescence, the Bill which was then introduced in February 1870 was quickly attacked by some of the Government's own MPs for its perceived favouring of the denominationalists. Pressure outside Parliament then grew in importance between the first and second readings. In the second reading the hostility of the advocates of undenominationalism on the Liberal benches brought home to Gladstone that changes would be needed before the Bill returned for the committee stage. In the next chapter, again using extensive archival material, I shall analyse the negotiations between members of Gladstone's Cabinet to frame amendments to the Bill and examine how Gladstone was forced to return to something akin to an undenominational solution which he had rejected in late 1869.

Chapter 9

Negotiations behind the scenes:

after the second reading until the committee stage

Introduction

Thus far I have shown how undenominationalism as a solution to the religious difficulty had re-emerged into prominence in the preparation for and in the debates on the Elementary Education Bill until the close of the second reading. In this chapter I shall now examine the continuing discussions both inside and outside Parliament.

First, I shall analyse the protracted discussions within Government to prepare the way for the much-delayed committee stage of the Bill. Here I will show the role of undenominationalism in the decision-making process and the interplay between the draft amendments drawn up by Forster and de Grey on the one hand and Gladstone with his memorandum, still struggling to maintain his preference for a species of secular solution to the religious difficulty, on the other. The crucial pivot of this chapter will be the change in policy forced on Gladstone in Cabinet shortly before the start of the committee stage. In particular I shall here highlight the decisive role of Henry Austin Bruce. Although Bruce's importance can be readily documented from relevant sources, his importance to this debate has not been identified by previous writers. It is here argued that by taking fuller account of Bruce, a clearer understanding of the emergence of Cowper-Temple's form of undenominationalism can be gained.

Second, outside Parliament, the role and background of the Liberal M.P. for South Hampshire, William Francis Cowper-Temple, will be outlined and the origin of his amendment explored. In this connection I shall here devote considerable attention to the role of Canon David Melville of Worcester, who discussed the amendment on the character of

religious education with Cowper-Temple. In order to develop the analysis offered here this chapter again depends on the extensive use of archival materials, of which a significant proportion has not been utilized by previous scholars. It is noted only in passing that the use of such material is essential in the reconstruction of historical processes that, as in the case of the topic under consideration in this thesis, are by nature likely to give rise to spirited dispute and compromise. Dependence upon later published accounts can be misleading at least to the extent that, at best, they present only part of the story (and usually one told from the victor's perspective).

The situation after the second reading

By late March 1870 Gladstone was already clear where the greatest pressure on the Bill would lie: writing to Cardinal Manning in Rome, he identified the danger as coming from the secularists or, as he termed them, the unsectarians.[806] This ambiguity in the phraseology of the religious difficulty is unexpected from Gladstone, who elsewhere showed an acute understanding of the sometimes subtle distinctions between the different positions on this problem.[807]

During the unexpectedly long gap from the end of the second reading of the Bill to the start of the committee stage, Gladstone had to remain true to the undertaking in his speech at the close of the second reading on 18 March to allay the fears of the Nonconformists, yet without losing the support of the denominationalists. So great was the concern among some Nonconformists such as Miall that they pushed for secular education, arguing that the term 'godless' as an accusation against a secular solution was misunderstood.[808]

On 21 March Jesse Collings, NEL Honorary Secretary, wrote to Sir William Harcourt to say that Forster must by then have appreciated that there was an unavoidable difficulty and he identified this as one of control: 'I have always contended that the [*sc.* religious] difficulty is

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[806] Gladstone to Manning, 26 March 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44249, fol. 148. This was a curious amalgamation of what should be two different concepts.

[807] For example, see the analyses in Gladstone to Russell, 24 March 1870, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 16F, fols 152-55 and Gladstone's memorandum of 28/29 May 1870.

[808] *Life of Edward Miall*, p. 304. In repudiating the sense of a secular education, Miall asked what meaning could be attached to a godless *railway* directorate.

a clerical and not a religious one.'[809] While clerical control was certainly a factor in the religious difficulty, this was to over-simplify it. Gladstone's May memorandum on the religious difficulty, discussed in detail below, showed that financial issues and biblical interpretation were also significant. However, on 24 March Gladstone was still writing optimistically to Russell about the religious difficulty, expressing confidence that Forster's position was excellent, that both Dissenters and the Church were both represented by many reasonable men and that all except pure secularists would be loath to risk losing the Bill. Gladstone's analysis of the problem was that there were not two, but five possible solutions to the religious difficulty with the Bill. These options were: first, secularism;[810] second, Bible reading; third, Bible reading with unsectarian teaching (to be limited and defined by a new sort of Pope in the Privy Council Office);[811] fourth, Bible reading with unlimited exposition; and, fifth, Bible reading with unlimited exposition plus the use of distinctive catechisms and formularies.[812] Note that at this point there was no attempt to opt for selections from the Bible as a guarantee of undenominationalism, as in the earlier Irish system. Gladstone's response to this was acute. He recognized the problems in merely specifying the Bible as the basis of religious instruction. He foresaw that use of the Bible alone did not secure undenominational teaching, because a Quaker or Ritualist schoolmaster could teach denominationally from the Bible: indeed the Ritualist might 'carry the matter further than he could from the Catechism.'[813] He still argued that the State should avoid responsibility for dealing with religious differences.[814] It was ironic, therefore, that Gladstone feared that the State might seek to impose undenominational religious instruction on schools founded by the Anglican Church.[815] In a letter responding to a Memorial from Henry Richard,[816] Gladstone sought, first, to clarify whether the nature of unsectarian religious teaching, as sought by the Memorialists, would correspond, apart from the difference of opinion on Infant Baptism, with

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[809] Collings to Harcourt, 21 March 1870, University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Sir William Harcourt, General Correspondence, 1870-1872, MS Harcourt dep. 203, fols 5-6. This quotation evokes something of the anti-clericalism which motivated the NEL opponents of the Bill as at the time of the second reading. See Parry, p. 296.

[810] This was an option with which Gladstone had some sympathy, but was a minority view within the Liberal Party as whole. It was urged in deputations to Gladstone by Illingworth and Holyoake. See Parry, p. 302.

[811] That was, the *de facto* government Education department.

[812] Gladstone to Russell, 24 March 1870, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 16F, fols 152-55.

[813] Gladstone to Jacobson, 1 April 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44218, fol. 198.

[814] Gladstone to Russell, 24 March 1870, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 16F, fols 154-55.

[815] W. E. Gladstone, 'Place of heresy and schism in the modern Christian church' [1894], in *Later gleanings; a new series of Gleanings of past years: theological and ecclesiastical* (1897), p. 304.

[816] Henry Richard (1812-88), former Congregationalist minister, and Welsh MP for Merthyr Tydfil until his death. In 1847, with Miall and Samuel Morley, he established the Voluntary School Association. Richard opposed the arrangements for the conscience clause and resisted the use of public funds to pay for religious instruction, which he believed should be provided by voluntary effort.

what was generally taught in Nonconformist Churches; and, second, who would have the authority to decide how to distinguish between sectarian and unsectarian education for a teacher who had responsibility for teaching the Bible 'in the sense of the Sacramental doctrines of the Church Catechism.'[817]

Gladstone's earlier optimism had evaporated when he wrote to Russell on 12 April: 'We have great difficulties.'[818] Forster, too, had been optimistic, believing that when the Bill went into committee, the clauses on religious teaching would suit all reasonable men. He had been surprised by Dissenters such as Winterbotham, but was gratified that Baines had strongly supported the government line.[819] Forster wrote to Gladstone on 19 April indicating that he thought there was no point in troubling him about the religious difficulty 'until we are forced to frame our promised amendment.'[820] But Forster's confidence here was misplaced: Baines was not a typical Nonconformist representative. Baines's concern for religious instruction within the curriculum made him alarmed by the NEL programme. Consequently he had allied himself with the NEU, which was more disposed to favour the denominational schools and hence the Bill as introduced by Forster in February.[821] Other positive indications about the future of the Bill came from Anglicans such as the Bishop of Exeter, Frederick Temple, who, it was reported, would support religious instruction in rate-supported schools based on the Bible alone without religious formularies.[822]

On the amendments promised at the end of the second reading, Gladstone wanted to deal first with clause 7 before declaring the Government's course on clauses 14 and 22. Forster, by contrast, wanted to set out the whole scheme of how the Government planned to deal with the religious difficulty and wrote to de Grey on 18 May:

> There is a general expectation that we shall meet the <u>whole religious question</u> by our amendments and there will be a consequent disappointment if we do not [...]
>
> (3) There are very many indications on both sides of the House that if we do take the lead, we may now make a settlement by
> (a) a Time-table Conscience Clause for all public elementary schools

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[817] Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44538, fol. 112.
[818] Gladstone to Russell, 12 April 1870, PRO 30/22/16F, fol. 165.
[819] Forster to Russell, 25 March 1870, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 16F, fols 156-57.
[820] Forster to Gladstone, 19 April 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44157, fols 18-19.
[821] Dale, p. 673.
[822] Jacobson to Gladstone, 31 March 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44218, fol. 197. William Jacobson (1803-84) Bishop of Chester 1865-84. Old High Churchman.

(b) Exclusion of the Catechism from the schools provided and managed by the rate-payers
(c) Limitation of rate-aid to denominational schools to payment for secular results to such an amount as would oblige their managers to pay something for denominational management.

If these three things be proposed together I believe there will be a give and take feeling all around, but if we propose (a) without declaring our views as to (b) and (c) everybody will be suspicious – the Unionists[823] and Opposition will fear further concession to the Leaguers and the latter will think we are opposing them on the point on which they care most.

(4) The result of this suspicious feeling will be a detrimental effort on the part of the Leaguers and all our left wing and some of those behind us to exact much harder terms.

You will see by the amendments on the paper that they will try to pledge the House –
- to the Bible without note or comment
- to provide against all teaching offered[?] to peculiar tenets
- to put the rate-aided schools in the same position as the rate-provided

The first two of these propositions are absurd, and the last unfair, but their proposal would probably endanger the bill by consequent irritation[?], and certainly cause great delay.-

(5) One other reason – it seems to me that it has become plain that the great parliamentary objection to our Bill is the alleged temptation to the School Boards to quarrel in settling the religious management of the schools.

I have a strong belief that a large majority of the House will welcome the exclusion of the catechism as the exclusion of a flag for controversy and as a guide to a peaceful arrangement but I feel sure there will be a charge against us of weakness, if we do not say how we meet this quarrel-objection.

What the Conservatives dislike most is the Time-Table[824] and I should fear its discussion by a suspicious House, and I should therefore fear discussion of our amendment of Clause 7 by a House ignorant of what we meant doing with Clause 14.

On these grounds I venture to think that the immediate proposition of amendments somewhat as suggested by our papers is much the best chance of getting the Bill through, but I hardly need add that this is a matter in which I would, whatever my own opinion, do my utmost to meet Mr. Gladstone's wishes.

Of course our General must fix our line of battle.[825]

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[823] This refers to the NEU. See chapter 8 above.
[824] This refers to a timetable conscience clause
[825] Forster to de Grey, 18 May 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44157, fols 20-22 (extracts).

The Elementary Education Bill draft amendments

This is an important section of this thesis as it reveals the tortuous process by which the Cowper-Temple clause emerged as the preferred option for addressing the religious difficulty. Again, this account has been constructed mainly on the basis of archival sources largely unutilized by previous writers on this topic.[826] Again, as will be seen, the use of such material can give a rather more nuanced, and in places entirely new, perspective on what some may have assumed to be a well-ploughed field of enquiry.

De Grey and Forster were working closely together to prepare for the changes which had been promised at the close of the second reading in March. They drew up a printed document[827] containing possible changes to clause 14, which in Bill 33 had made no reference to the character of religious instruction in Board schools. I shall refer to this document with the short title of 'Draft Amendments'.

Proposed amended texts to add to clause 14, which could become 14. (2.), were as follows:

> The Bible alone shall be used as the text for the instruction in religious subjects given in the school, [unless the Education Department, upon the request of the school board, permit the use of any religious catechism or formulary.
>
> The Education Department shall cause to be laid before both Houses of Parliament in every year a report stating the cases in which they have been requested by any school board to permit the use of any religious catechism or formulary, and their reasons for giving or refusing such permission.]

It may be surmised that the short formulation with its specific reference to the Bible was the preferred version of de Grey and Forster, with the proviso that they would not hold out for the involvement of the Education Department. In effect Forster was here returning to the spirit of

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[826] An exception is Jonathan Parry's *Democracy and Religion. The Liberal Party 1867-1875*, but he does not examine the material in the detail given here.

[827] The document is entitled 'Elementary Education Bill. Draft Amendments.' It can be found at BL, Add MSS 44086, fols 146-47. BL, Add MSS 44086 of the Gladstone Papers is Correspondence with Lord Aberdare 1859-1870. Aberdare was the title of the ennobled Henry Austin Bruce (1815-95), Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil 1852-73 and Home Secretary 1868-73. The document appears to be undated, but it was in Gladstone's hands on Monday 16 May since he referred to it in a letter on that date to de Grey. He may have received it at a meeting with de Grey and Forster on Friday 13 May. See Gladstone to de Grey, 16 May 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 43514, fol. 10.

the *first* version of his October 1869 memorandum, which Gladstone would not at that time support. [828]

An alternative proposal for 14. (2.) was also included:

> No religious catechism or formulary shall be used as the text for the instruction in religious subjects given in the school, [except with the consent of the Education Department, upon the request of the school board.][829]

The second formulation clearly relates to Cowper-Temple as it is very similar to the content of what was subsequently included in the Act in his name. The term 'text' denoted limiting undenominationalism to written materials only and not to teachers' oral explanations.[830] This proposal did not therefore go as far as Jacob Bright's amendment rejected on 30 June, which aimed to prohibit denominational explanations in teaching, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 10.

But Gladstone was reluctant to see the Government put in an amendment at that stage. He did not consider a new proposal should be put forward without its being solicited or announced in advance.[831] Moreover, he did not think it would improve the chances of the Bill being passed. In sum, Gladstone believed, and thought that de Grey and Forster would agree, that the Government ought not to tender any new proposals restricting religious instruction. 'The particular method of adjustment, which is proposed on the printed sheet, is one for which no one has asked.'[832] It would be dangerous to do so at that stage of the Bill. Gladstone was unconvinced that the Bill would have any better chance of being passed with the printed amendments.

De Grey's reply to Gladstone referred to the draft amendments document, but made no reference to Cowper-Temple himself. De Grey indicated to Gladstone that he had

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[828] See chapter 8 above.
[829] The brackets in the two above quotations are in ink on the printed document: they are not my own explanatory glosses. Cf. this with the later resistance of the Government when faced on 30 June with Pakington's unsuccessful proposal to require the teaching of the Bible in the new Board Schools.
[830] Cowper-Temple put his amendment of negative undenominationalism on the Notice Paper in the Commons Order Book on 30 May 1870. Note that the tabling of this amendment is subsequent to the concept featuring as the second option in de Grey and Forster's Draft Amendments document cited above.
[831] Gladstone to de Grey, 16 May 1870, Ripon Papers, BL, Add MSS 43514, fols 10-11.
[832] ibid., fol. 10.

communicated the latter's letter of 16 May to Forster.[833] Neither Forster nor he was wedded to the point about the Education Department having the power to relax the prohibition of formularies. De Grey pushed Gladstone on the draft amendments. Against Gladstone's concern about the lack of notice for new proposals, de Grey argued it was, in fact, appropriate to put them forward. He denied that he and Forster had the amount of originality Gladstone attributed to them. The proposals were, he claimed, neither unsolicited nor unannounced. He referred to Baines,[834] Jacob Bright and [Mr. P.] Hughes as having put forward almost the same ideas.[835] De Grey argued that Gladstone's statement on clause 14 at the end of the second reading debate left open the possibility of a flexible response. Towards the end of his speech on 18 March Gladstone had indeed said:

> We do not anticipate any serious attempt to transform the Bill. If such efforts were made, we would not be parties to it. But we freely admit that some alterations may be made,...[836]

Gladstone, however, succeeded temporarily in resisting the pressure from de Grey and Forster, and the Cabinet on Saturday 21 May agreed only to amendments on the Timetable conscience clause and on the election of School Boards.[837]

Reactions to the draft amendments and Gladstone's memorandum

Gladstone's unease about new amendments at this point was different from his reaction to the first version of Forster's memorandum in October 1869. At that time he had written that the proposal to organize religious instruction on the pattern of the BFSS 'would [...] hardly do'.[838] But his objection in May 1870 appeared to be more concerned with parliamentary procedure than with the actual religious content of the draft amendment. That said, Gladstone continued to regard 'the colourless decoction of Biblical Deism' taught in BFSS schools as

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[833] De Grey to Gladstone, 19 May 1870, Ripon Papers, BL, Add MSS 43514, fols 12-14. This is de Grey's copy. The actual letter as received by Gladstone is at BL, Add MSS 44286 fols 88-91 in the Gladstone Papers. But at the end of the text in Gladstone's papers there is a note in pencil saying that the rest of the letter is missing. Recourse may therefore be made to the copy of the letter in the Ripon Papers.

[834] Baines subsequently referred to the need for Bible teaching in his speech in the committee stage of the Bill on 23 June 1870.

[835] This may have been based on private communications. The three named MPs were not cited in any parliamentary debates in *Hansard*, 3, CXCIX or CC.

[836] *Hansard*, 3, CC, 302, 18 March 1870.

[837] Matthew, *Diaries*, VII, p. 293.

[838] See above chapter 8.

abhorrent.[839] Haywood does not cite the source for this quotation, but it is consonant with what is known about Gladstone's attitude to the BFSS. But if Gladstone had reservations about the proposed draft amendments, did he differentiate between the two options? The first option, when the hand-written additions in brackets which have been noted above were included,[840] might have been more congenial to him, for there was still some, albeit small, potential allowance for denominational teaching in Board schools. It gave the School Boards some responsibility for the character of religious teaching in their own areas, if only in an attenuated form. This option therefore took no account of those who, in the Commons second reading, had deprecated the idea of each School Board being able to determine whether the religious teaching in their area was denominational or undenominational.

After Gladstone had met five Nonconformist deputations on 25 May,[841] he wrote to Granville[842] on 30 May 1870 enclosing a paper on the religious difficulty.[843] This was the Memorandum on Religious Instruction in rate-provided schools dated 28 May.[844] The memorandum was Gladstone's most explicit and detailed analysis of the religious difficulty. Much longer than the summary of options set out in his March letter to Russell, its structure was somewhat different from that earlier letter. Gladstone set out the options in three broad plans. In Plan I, Gladstone recognized the fundamental problem that the Bill, as introduced by Forster and forced into that mould by Gladstone himself, 'provided religious instruction for *some* at the expense of *all.* '

Because of this objection, Plan II proposed a structure whereby:

> Public authority should not attempt by its own direct action, to provide religious instruction, but should be content with giving freedom and facility to private persons, or to the religious bodies to which they belong.

Thus no part of the rates would be used for providing religious instruction, but School Boards could have discretion to arrange for denominational teaching, subject to a conscience clause.

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[839] Haywood, p. 23.
[840] See note 827 above.
[841] Matthew, *Diaries*, p. 295.
[842] Granville George Leveson-Gower, second Earl Granville 1815-91. Former Lord President of the Council and therefore experienced in education, although without enthusiasm, according to Muriel Chamberlain in *ODNB*. Colonial Secretary under Gladstone until July 1870.
[843] Ramm, pp. 99-100.
[844] Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44759, fol. 104. Matthew, *Diaries*, p. 297 comments that it was apparently written on 29 May.

There would be an option to use the Bible while excluding creeds and formularies.[845] Gladstone recognized that some, including both Anglicans and Nonconformists, were not content with this option as it appeared too much like secularism: they believed that there should be a direct connection between popular education and religion. Plan II required a double compromise under which Anglicans gave up creeds and catechisms and the Nonconformists gave up their principle of not using the taxes of all to teach the religion of some. Some Nonconformists looked to Gladstone's Plan III, under which the Bible would be used, but without creeds and catechisms. Gladstone was not persuaded of the attractiveness of Plan III. The objections he raised included a subtle argument that, with creeds and formularies, there were in fact then limits in the exposition and explanation of scripture. Without such a guide, Gladstone was unclear how one could ensure that the teaching was, in fact, undenominational. In modern terms, it might be said that the use of a catechism as a framework for interpretation could function as a kind of hermeneutical control in explaining biblical passages.

A further argument was Gladstone's doubt about the wisdom of setting up a book which was beginning to be widely questioned as a foundation for religious teaching. But it could be argued that an ancient creed would not necessarily serve better: was it not also liable to the same objection? This was not, therefore, a strong argument. Gladstone also expressed concern for the Roman Catholics, who, tending to be concentrated in certain geographical areas, could rely only on the conscience clause. To the objection that the Bill as introduced would produce dissension in the School Boards, Gladstone countered that this would not be removed by an attempt to introduce undenominational teaching, and in this he proved prescient, given the wrangles between the denominations in the elections for School Boards. Finally, England, said Gladstone, had no experience of this type of undenominational system: the BFSS system which, admittedly, was similar, was voluntary and, hence, different from what would be required by Act of Parliament.

This memorandum by Gladstone was probably one of the most detailed, wide-ranging and closely-argued pieces of writing on the Elementary Education Bill. Perhaps its weakness was

[845] Matthew's explanation of this term is 'an understanding of the dogma, structure and teaching of the apostolic church'. Matthew, *Diaries*, VII, p. lxvi. Matthew here is misleading, because his definition lacks a sense of the chronology necessary to bring out the distinctive character of post-Reformation Anglican teaching. I suggest, therefore, that this might be improved for the Church of England by specifying the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty Nine Articles, the Ordinal and the Homilies. But the education of poor children would be unlikely to be touched by the Articles, the Ordinal and the Homilies.

that it simply saw too much and tended to be overwhelming in its battery of arguments. In replying to Gladstone, Grey wrote that Gladstone enjoyed much Nonconformist support as a direct result of the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869. The Nonconformists wished the disestablishment of the Church of England as well. But they recognized that this was not possible. So their minimum expectation was for the Elementary Education Bill to express religious equality. To rely mainly on the conscience clause would not have met this expectation since it would have left the Nonconformists in an inferior position.

It was widely believed that there should be a connection between religious and secular instruction, so they desired unsectarian religious education through the unsectarian reading of Bible (though without the same degree of unanimity), instruction in its historical facts and the great leading truths of Christianity without the addition of any supplementary creeds. But Grey was aware of Gladstone's objections to this in his memorandum.[846]

'Of course' (*sic*) any such restriction to unsectarian religious education would have to be augmented by out-of-school lessons from representatives of the various denominations coming into the schools to give religious instruction. But this, wrote Grey, might mean that most of the very poor children from the most deprived class of society whom the Bill aimed to draw in would probably not take advantage of the provision.

At the end of his letter Grey therefore proposed his own formulation for clause 14:

> In a public elementary school which is wholly or in part provided or supported out of a local rate no denominational creed, catechism or formulary shall be taught or used in school hours; but instruction may be given in the Bible either immediately after the beginning or before the end of the school hours, provided such instruction is not directed against, or to the support of any religious denomination.[847]

This matched the eventual outcome in the Bill as passed in some, but not all, points. First, religious instruction was to be at the beginning or the end of the school day; second, no distinctive denominational catechisms or formularies were to be used. These elements were

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[846] Sir George Grey to Gladstone. Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44162, fol. 322. Grey had been Home Secretary from 1861 to 1866 and thus a predecessor of Bruce, who held this office at the time of the 1870 Bill debates. Grey had declined office under Gladstone's administration. He should not be confused with Earl de Grey and Ripon, who was in charge of overseeing the Bill in the Lords. Both Pakington and Grey specified Bible reading, but Pakington's amendment required *compulsory* reading. Grey's proposal, however, was *permissive* ('instruction may be given').

[847] Grey to Gladstone, 7 June 1870, BL, Add MSS 44162, fols 326-27.

incorporated in the Act. But its specific references to the Bible and to the intentions of the teacher recall Pakington's and Bright's later unsuccessful amendments on 30 June.[848]

Granville replied to Gladstone on 31 May:

> I have read with great attention your memo and like your plan, always subject to its being acceptable to your house (i.e. the Commons). The unsectarian explanation of the bill appears to me to be an absurdity, as a legal enactment, however successful it may be under the patronage of the British and Foreign Society.[849]

On 6 June Forster reported to Gladstone the attitude of the NEL in the Bradford area:

> Not only in my own borough but throughout our districts the enormous majority are <u>for</u> Bible teaching and <u>against</u> what they call sectarian teaching in the rate schools, but I am well aware Yorkshire is not England, though in this matter I believe England would agree.

Forster was anxious to deal in the Commons with 'the quarrel difficulty.' 'I think we must see how we can limit the discretion of the school boards, but how to do this is not easy.'[850] Here Forster put forward proposals which were the same as he had made in the first version of his autumn 1869 memorandum.[851]

Bruce wrote that of the two alternative amendments in the document 'Elementary Education Bill. Draft Amendments' he favoured, first, 'the exclusion of catechisms and formularies – without reference to the Education Department'. Second, he recommended that religious teaching should not be limited except with the conscience clause.[852] Bruce therefore deserves some acknowledgment for recommending the inclusion of Cowper-Temple's proposal in the Bill. Thus I argue, contrary to previous scholarship in this area, that it was Bruce who ultimately secured the safe passage of the Bill rather than Forster or de Grey. The literature

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[848] Grey to Gladstone, 7 June 1870, BL, Add MSS 44162, fols 320-27.
[849] Granville to Gladstone, 31 May 1870, BL, Add MSS 44167, fol. 42.
[850] Forster to Gladstone, 6 June 1870, BL, Add MSS 44157, fols 24-25.
[851] See discussion of Forster's memorandum in chapter 8 above. Text at Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44611, fols 99-102.
[852] Bruce to Gladstone, [n.d.], but there is a pencil annotation on the manuscript: 'probably May 1870'. This must certainly be correct. See Gladstone Papers. Correspondence with Lord Aberdare 1859-1870, BL, Add MSS 44086, fol. 145. D.W. Sylvester, *Robert Lowe and Education* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 129, erroneously gives a precise date of 13 May 1870 for Bruce's letter and, by describing it as fol. 146, confuses the letter with the printed draft of proposed amendments to the religious clauses of the Bill (fols 146-47).

does not, however, credit Bruce with this achievement.[853] There was also a divergence between what Bruce wrote in his letter to Gladstone and what he later said in a speech in the Commons on 23 June during the committee stage of the Bill (which again highlights the importance of accessing the relevant primary material, particularly that which went unpublished). After rejecting the accusation that the Bill was pure and undiluted denominationalism, he spoke approvingly of the value of Bible narratives, which he thought were more likely to have a formative impact on children than abstruse doctrinal teaching. He also commended the BFSS system, but did not see it as an undenominational system. The speech is thus somewhat at variance with the tone of his response to Gladstone on the draft amendments document.

Parry gives an alternative view, citing Wemyss Reid's 1888 biography, that Forster urged the Cowper-Temple solution on Gladstone:[854]

> After discussing the various amendments, Mr. Forster declared himself in favour of one proposed by Mr. Cowper-Temple, which was virtually identical with his own suggestion to Lord Ripon in the letter of May 18th. By this amendment it was ordered that no catechism or religious formulary, distinctive of any particular denomination, should be taught in the Public schools.[855]

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[853] David Roland in his thesis referred to the undated letter from Bruce to Gladstone in May 1870. However, in discussing the printed Draft Amendments document of mid-May 1870 for the solution to the 'religious difficulty' on which Bruce was writing to Gladstone, Roland says in a footnote merely that Bruce presumably supported it [*sic*]. It is unclear why Roland ambiguously wrote 'it', since there were *two* alternative and very different formulations proposed for the additional subsection 2 of clause 14 in the Draft Amendments. Roland does not make clear which of these alternatives Bruce supported. But the letter from Bruce to Gladstone in fact plainly expressed Bruce's support for the *second* alternative: that is, the formulation of *negative* undenominationalism (which has become known as the Cowper-Temple clause) rather than for the positive undenominationalism of the first option in the Draft Amendments document (involving Bible reading), and presumably the preferred formulation of de Grey and Forster. Neither Jonathan Parry's magisterial archivally-based *Democracy and Religion*, nor Patrick Jackson's relatively recent biography of Forster mentions Bruce's letter to Gladstone. Jackson on p. 170 attributes the Cabinet decision on 14 June to adopt the Cowper-Temple amendment to pressure on Gladstone from Forster, for which he [Jackson] gives no evidence. But one has to see Bruce's declaration in the context of what I have in the thesis differentiated as positive and negative undenominationalism. Roland does not do this. Furthermore, on the basis of Bruce's letter, I also disagree with the view of W. A. Hayward, who attributes the decision to incorporate the Cowper-Temple amendment into a revised version of the Bill to the combined pressure of de Grey and Forster.

[854] Parry, p. 304, citing Wemyss Reid, I, pp. 501-03.

[855] This passage must have been significant for Cowper-Temple's wife, Georgina, since she copied it out into a notebook preserved in the Cowper-Temple archives at Southampton University at BR 45/18/4. James Gregory in his *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists. The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England*, p. 300 erroneously gives the reference BR 45/18/1 for this passage in the notebook.

Parry may be correct, but if so it is certainly not apparent from the relevant primary sources and his dependence upon one secondary reference does not bolster his case. I have not seen any independent evidence that Forster, or indeed de Grey, had changed their minds from an apparent preference for the first option in the 'Draft Amendments' printed document. There are difficulties in such an argument *ex silentio*. But, whatever the truth of that might be, the Cabinet on 14 June, by choosing the second option, presumably from Cowper-Temple, and no doubt encouraged by Bruce, set its face against making any positive statement in the Bill about the nature of religious instruction.[856] It is noteworthy that government ministers had earlier set out an option with specific reference to the Bible's inclusion in religious teaching in the Board schools, whereas Cowper-Temple's proposal did not. Cowper-Temple's proposal is ironic, given that his papers indicate that he preferred to insist on the use of the Bible.[857] This desire was congruent with his negotiations with Canon David Melville, who also sought a positive formulation for Board school religious instruction.[858]

Despite his memorandum, a majority of the Cabinet was ranged against Gladstone, who was forced by a majority of his Cabinet to a decision about which he was profoundly uneasy and continued to resent in the years to come.[859] That so very soon after setting out his arguments in the memorandum, Gladstone was a part of the Cabinet which accepted the Cowper-Temple compromise was a defeat for him, although it could be argued that he had never invested as much personal influence on this topic as on some others such as Irish questions. He had not been involved in the minutiae of the progress of the Bill, although he had intervened at key moments.

Haywood has commented that it was strange that Gladstone did not fight more keenly for his view at this stage. He posits several reasons why Gladstone might have accepted the adoption of the Cowper-Temple proposal:[860] first, the demands on his time from the Irish Land Bill; second, he lacked sufficient interest in Board schools; third, that he was afraid de Grey and Forster might resign over the issue; fourth, that the Cabinet was too much against him. The evidence suggests that there is some truth in the first suggestion: Gladstone devoted an enormous amount of time to this issue. On the second suggestion, as I argue in detail in

[856] 14 June 1870. See Gladstone Diary.
[857] See the reference below to Cowper-Temple's notebook in the Southampton University archives.
[858] See below for the discussion of the Melville Papers as they relate to the Cowper-Temple clause.
[859] Granville appeared to be sympathetic. See above his letter of 31 May to Gladstone.
[860] Haywood, p. 25.

Chapter 10, the idea that Gladstone was uninterested or uninformed on education simply does not fit with the evidence of his reading; this is shown particularly in his diaries over many years. It does not fit either with his ability to set out his own detailed analysis of options on the education issue.[861] When it came to education issues, then, Gladstone was demonstrably very interested, highly informed, and able to argue a well-articulated case. On the third suggestion there is contradictory evidence. Lathbury, it is true, does refer to the possibility that Forster could have resigned, but provided no evidence.[862] On the other hand, Forster had written to de Grey indicating that he looked for Gladstone to take a lead and that he (Forster) would follow, hardly suggestive of an intention to resign.[863] The most likely explanation, therefore, is simply that Gladstone was well aware that other members of his Cabinet, such as de Grey, Grey, Bruce, and Forster espoused different views from his. It was a personal defeat for Gladstone on this point and, in later years, he made no bones about expressing his disappointment: hence his later designation of Cowper-Templeism as a 'moral monster' (see note 11 above).

Extra-parliamentary influences - 1: Frederick Temple

Before discussing the return of the Bill to Parliament at the committee stage, I shall mention two possible influences on the Bill from outside Parliament, the first one briefly, and the second in more detail. This unequal treatment reflects the extent and nature of the archival material available.

According to Hinchliff, Frederick Temple, by now transferred from Rugby School to the bishopric of Exeter in 1869, had an important hand in the 1870 Act.[864] 'Forster may actually have consulted Temple about some of the provisions of the bill.'[865] Benjamin Jowett certainly

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[861] See, for example, his lengthy memorandum of 28/29 May 1870.
[862] *Correspondence on church and religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ed. by D. C. Lathbury, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1910), II, p. 129. Support for Lathbury's view is contained in a letter to The Times from Dr. J. H. Rigg many years later: 'he [Forster] intimated that it would be a question of resignation of office so far as he was concerned.' The Times, 5 October 1895, p. 7. However, Forster's possible resignation related to pressure for a secular system of education such as Plan II in Gladstone's May 1870 memorandum and not to the Cowper-Temple amendment.
[863] See above Forster to de Grey, 18 May 1870: the 'our General' letter.
[864] Hinchliff, p. 242.
[865] ibid., p. 150.

believed so.[866] Temple had moved from the position in his essay on *National Education* of 1856, in which he was critical of the supporters of denominational schools. But, by the time of the Forster Bill, Temple, as a bishop, encouraged his clergy to extract the maximum benefit for Church schools from the provisions of the Act. However, Hinchliff gives no evidence to support this assertion.

Extra-parliamentary influences - 2: the origin of the Cowper-Temple clause and Canon David Melville

The second possible influence can be treated in far more detail because of the amount of archival material available. A possible insight into the formulation of the Cowper-Temple clause can be found in the claim about a Worcestershire clergyman, Canon Dr. David Melville.[867] Melville was an Oxford classics scholar who had taught at Durham and trained clergy. He was described as a Churchman of the broad Evangelical school and a Liberal of the old Whig type.[868] He was a personal friend of Gladstone from Oxford days, but is reported to have broken with him over Home Rule for Ireland. He was also a great friend of Lord Sherbrooke, formerly Robert Lowe. He was a prominent figure in the educational debates of the second half of the nineteenth century, both before and after the 1870 Act. After the 1870 Act he was involved in the discussions about how to improve the legislation by amending the law on religious instruction.

The claims about Melville's involvement with the Cowper-Temple clause are located in two types of source. First, there are printed obituaries of Melville and, second, archival material in the Melville Papers at Lambeth Palace Library. The only other writer to have identified the relevance of the Melville Papers is James Gregory in his recent monograph on Cowper-Temple and his wife. Gregory's work is useful as a general survey, though the nature of his

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[866] E. V. Quinn and J. M. Prest, eds., *Dear Miss Nightingale: A Selection of Benjamin Jowett's Letters, 1860-1893* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 165.

[867] Rev. David Melville (1813-1904) first Principal of Hatfield College, Durham, which opened in October 1846, until 1851. 1881 a Residentiary Canon of Worcester Cathedral. Published on the conscience clause in 1865 and on Board School religious instruction in 1871. See website of Hatfield College for further information.

[868] The World, 15 March 1904.

task does not require that he subject the material specific to this issue to the level of critical analysis which I shall adopt in this thesis.[869]

Of the printed obituaries the Birmingham Daily Post reported Melville's involvement with the Cowper-Temple clause as follows:

> We are told on the best authority that he was largely responsible for the drafting of the celebrated Cowper-Temple clause. Of the wisdom of that clause he always boasted, maintaining that it was intended by its authors to allow of the teaching of the Apostles' Creed as not being distinctive of any special Christian body.[870]

The Standard also reported that he was '*instrumental*' in formulating the clause.[871] By contrast, the obituary in *The Times* noted that his capacity in the field of education led to his being *consulted* about the provisions of the 1870 Act and in particular about the Cowper-Temple clause.[872] The obituaries themselves gave no evidence for these assertions, but correspondence with Cowper-Temple in the Melville Papers at Lambeth Palace Library shows that he was indeed involved in discussions about a form of words designed to solve the religious difficulty.[873]

The second type of source is the archival material '*Recollections of Melville*' drawn up by R. W. Forrest, Dean of Worcester,[874] for Canon Melville's daughter, Mrs. Gaskell. The material, marked as private and not for publication, stated:

> ...he [Melville] was really the creator of the so-called "Cowper-Temple clause" in the Education Act. Cowper-Temple submitted to M. a draft of the Clause which he (M) found to be so totally inadequate that he composed, in a few minutes, another edition, and this C-T at once adopted.[875]

But are these obituaries and Forrest's *Recollections* reliable? Melville's reported pride in formulating the Cowper-Temple clause does not match the tributes and appreciation of

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[869] See James Gregory, *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists. The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England.*
[870] *The Guardian*, 16 March 1904, quoting Birmingham Daily Post, Melville Papers, fol. 116.
[871] 10 March 1904. The italics are mine.
[872] *The Times*, 10 March 1904. The italics in the quotation are mine.
[873] Lambeth Palace Library, MSS 1995. For description of the Papers see *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Lambeth Palace Library*, ed. by E.G.W. Bill (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976).
[874] Dean 1891-1908. See Who was Who.
[875] Melville Papers, LPL, MSS 1995, fol. 126.

Melville written for Mrs. Gaskell by W. Griffiths in Torquay after his [Melville's] death. This correspondence indicated that she had already burned some material relating to the Cowper-Temple clause.[876] Cowper-Temple was portrayed very unfavourably in Griffiths' material and Griffiths encouraged her to continue this process as the Cowper-Temple clause was a thing of the past.

I shall shortly examine the evidence for the claim about Melville's involvement and consider what meaning might be attached to the claim that Melville was either the author of or a contributor to the clause, but first I shall consider the evidence of both Cowper-Temple's and Melville's views on the desirable character of religious education in the new Board schools.

From the beginning of the Bill's passage Cowper-Temple was heavily committed to discussions on its provisions: his small pocket diary for 1870 indicates that during the winter he was involved regularly in NEU meetings.[877] An insight into Cowper-Temple's personal thoughts on the religious question is contained in a notebook with the following reflection, listed in a timeline of educational events, before noting that on 24 November 1869 the Cabinet agreed to the preparation of an education Bill:[878]

> We must remain a Christian people. And Government shall not attempt to teach any special form of Christian faith – Government must include bible and acknowledgement of Christianity in any schools for which Government is directly and solely responsible by rates or taxes.[879]

It must be stressed that Cowper-Temple in that extract set out a positive legal formulation for religious education. For his part, Melville also set out a positive construction, arguing that the Apostles' Creed seemed to supply:

> exactly the kind and the degree of divine truth which is required for informing faith and sanctioning duty in the young. The Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer

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[876] ibid., fol. 128.

[877] University of Southampton, Broadlands Archive, BR45/6/1-6, Diaries, 1861-1870. For example, Friday 11 March listed the deputation of the Union and Friday 18 March the second reading of the Education Bill. Cowper-Temple spoke in the Commons on the latter date.

[878] It may be necessary to be cautious here about reliance on this record of Cowper-Temple's thoughts as the Broadlands Archive catalogue dates these notebooks as 1884-88, many years after the events themselves.

[879] University of Southampton, Broadlands Archive, BR45/18/1. The detailed catalogue of the papers indicates that the notebooks comprising 18/1 to 18/4 are in the hands of Cowper-Temple and his wife. Comparison of handwriting styles suggests that this passage has been written by Cowper-Temple. For the sake of clarity abbreviated forms of words have been spelled out in the transcription of this passage from Cowper-Temple.

> would be included as the practical exponents both of the faith and duty thereby taught.[880]

To the objection that certain clauses in the Creed might be interpreted in a denominational manner, Melville felt that this could also be true of some statements in the Lord's Prayer or even the simplest statements of religious belief. According to Church direction, then, the sacramental part of the Catechism was no proper part of primary education, but was reserved for advanced Church membership.[881]

Support for Melville's positive formulation for religious education came from James Fraser,[882] who wrote to Melville that he would be quite content to accept positive religious teaching, but that it would need to be defined in advance.[883] He wished there could be a conference between representatives of churchmen and Nonconformity. He felt sure that a 'Catechism'[884] to which all would subscribe could be constructed out of the present Church catechism, only it would not be termed a Church catechism. Such was his optimism that he believed such a document could be constructed in half an hour.[885] Fraser had suggested a conference to the Bishop of London, John Jackson, a month previously, but Jackson considered that the time was not yet come.[886] Fraser wistfully noted that, when the time was come, it would be found to be too late, as had been the case for the previous twenty-five years.

A different view, from an administrator, can be found in a letter from Ralph Lingen, who was highly sceptical about the possibility of a positive general religious education, as advocated by Melville:

> As regards Religious Instruction, I prefer an efficient Conscience Clause without any limitation of the subject matter of instruction. In fact, so much may almost be taken to

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[880] Compare the Cowper-Temple letter above.
[881] Printed sheet drawn up by Melville, dated June 1870. LPL, Tait Papers, 219, fol. 170.
[882] James Fraser (1818-85), Bishop of Manchester. Assistant Commissioner on Royal (Newcastle) Commission on Education in 1858. In 1865 appointed a commissioner to report on education in North America. On 3 January 1870, Gladstone offered him the bishopric of Manchester, which he accepted, because of his educational expertise. More an old high-churchman than a Tractarian. Known for sympathy towards non-Anglicans. See J. A. Hamilton, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, in *ODNB*. On Fraser as someone whose ideas on education resonated with the ethos of the 1870 Act and therefore a factor in Gladstone's nominating him to Manchester see Bowen, *Idea*, pp. 274-75. But cf. also Fraser's absence from the list in chapter 8 of bishops supporting the NEU.
[883] Fraser to Melville, 20 June, presumably 1870, Melville Papers, LPL, MS 1995, fols 80-81.
[884] Apostrophized in Fraser's letter.
[885] In a letter of 7 November (fols 92-93) the time had extended to three hours.
[886] (1811-85). Bishop of London 1869-85.

have been settled by the Endowed Schools Act of last session. I believe general religious instruction to be worse than secularism; for the latter confesses a void, which the former only pretends to fill.

The 10 Commandments taken alone are simply a moral theism.

If you are to include the Lord's Prayer – what is "our daily bread"? If the Apostles' Creed – which (as far as I know) no Protestant Dissenters, except the Wesleyans, regard as authoritative – what is "Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins?" What one [underlined in original] meaning can be assigned to these words, that will so far satisfy everyone, as to warrant ramming it down the spiritual throats *nolentium volentium*? And, if everyone may teach his own meaning, what have you taken by [?] your limitation?

[...]

I believe general Religion to be in practice impossible and it is not to be thought of that any public officer should examine in a creed* not his own. I don't see how any man who respected himself could consent to do so.

You know the story of mixed education in the Irish school.
Master "Where will ye go to, if ye tell lies, Mike?" (Catholic)
Mike "To Purgatory, please, Sir."

Interloquitur Tim (Protestant and next boy)
"To hell, ye bloody Papist."
Hits him on the nose and fights accordingly.

- Those who hold and those who do not hold, extreme sacramental views can have no real community of practical religious teaching.[887]

Melville was undoubtedly committed to the preservation of the existing denominational schools, both in Worcester diocese, where he lived, and nationally.[888] But, as can be seen in his desire to use, for example, the Apostles' Creed in the Board school curriculum, he was also concerned about ensuring religious education of the highest quality in the new Board schools and about bringing the religious education in the denominational schools and in the Board schools closer together.

Cowper-Temple's pilgrimage was a remarkable one. By the end of the 1860s, he had distanced himself somewhat from the National Society and by that stage was identified as an active NEU supporter. Cowper-Temple's correspondence with Melville showed that he was

[887] Lingen to Melville, 22 November 1869, Melville Papers, LPL, MSS 1995, fol. 65.
[888] For example, he spoke at a meeting of the NEU in London on 7 February 1870. National Education Union, *First Annual Report*, p. 73.

thinking about religious education from about the same time as the NEU was inaugurated in the autumn of 1869. In late December 1869 he wrote to Melville encouraging him to pursue his ideas after Melville's publication of a Memorial on the teaching of religion. He wrote:

> I have long felt that the best and almost the only chance of preserving permanently the teaching of religion in the Primary schools is to adopt some form of teaching in which the bulk of dissenters can agree with the Church;
>
> Public opinion will soon demand that Primary schools shall be universal and if there cannot be an equally universal mode of religious instruction it will have to be omitted from the authorized programme.
>
> Your memorandum must be useful and I think we ought to get up some meeting on the subject in London after the meeting of Parliament. It seems clear that Irish questions must occupy the earliest part of the session and that the Government will not introduce a Bill on Education sooner than they can help, so there will be plenty of time to ascertain the views of those who are likely to be favourable to this scheme.[889]

At the end of this letter from Cowper-Temple, Melville wrote:

> In consequence I visited Mr. Cowper-Temple and we drew [*sc.* 'up'] an explanatory clause - asserting that the C.T. Clause in the Act of 1870 - always was meant to include the Apostles' Creed. Lord Sandon agreed to insert it in his Act of 1876 - but the end of the session shut it out. In the House of Lords it was independently moved for insertion and practically admitted - the Archbishop of Canterbury asserting that its admission was beyond controversy.

This annotation, judging by the reference to the Act of 1876, was added some considerable time after the meeting with Cowper-Temple. Any meeting following soon after a letter in December 1869 could not possibly have foreseen the likely developments in the debates on the Bill. It may be a *post eventum* rationalization of the hopes Melville might have had for the religious education provision in the Bill. Furthermore, no weight can in law be attributed to an assumption about what individuals, even Cowper-Temple himself, may have intended by their clause. There was, in fact, no mention of the Apostles' Creed in the text of the Act as passed.

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[889] Cowper-Temple to Melville, 27 December 1869, LPL, Melville Papers, MSS 1995, fols 74-75. Regarding Melville's annotation about a subsequent meeting, there is no reference in Cowper-Temple's pocket diary for 1870 of any meeting between the two men. See University of Southampton, Broadlands Archive, BR45/6/1-6, Diaries 1861-1870. It is possible that a meeting could have taken place in the final days of 1869 immediately after receipt of Cowper-Temple's letter, but the archives do not contain Cowper-Temple's diary for 1869. Material relating to the 1870 Bill in the Cowper-Temple archives at Southampton University is limited, though the small amount which survives is revealing.

Correspondence between Cowper-Temple and Melville resumed shortly before the committee stage of the Bill. In early June 1870 Cowper-Temple wrote to Melville:

> I shall be much obliged to receive anything from you bearing upon and explaining your view of what can be done to improve the Education Bill - it is not to be discussed on the 12th [*sc.* June] as stated at first but probably a week or two later. [890]

In a subsequent letter to Melville in the same month Cowper-Temple weighed the benefits of a positive, as opposed to a negative, legal definition of religious teaching:

> Positive commands are good for willing pupils but negative ones seem necessary when penalties are to come.
>
> I don't see how an Act of Parliament could define the religious instruction which a teacher is compelled to give under penalties and I can sense that in the present state of political feeling our only chance is to get freedom for the teachers and the School Boards to teach religion as they think best [...]
>
> The best compromise to be got is to secure such freedom and to sacrifice the Catechism.[891]

But Cowper-Temple's negative formulation of religious teaching here departed from the positive sentiments expressed in his private notebook; his conception must have been uncongenial to Melville, for whom, as has been seen, a positive statement about religious teaching was always paramount.

The dating of the correspondence between members of the Government discussed above makes problematical the claim in the Melville Papers about his role in the formulation of what became the Cowper-Temple clause. Given that a version of Cowper-Temple's formulation was printed and was being circulated for discussion among members of the Government in mid-May, the idea that in early June 1870 Cowper-Temple was still looking for support in formulating an amendment does not fit with the fact that he had obviously already submitted his proposals, probably to Forster or de Grey.[892] The conclusions must therefore be, first, that the claim that Melville formulated the Cowper-Temple clause is at least exaggerated, and possibly erroneous, and, second, given the fact that in June 1870

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[890] Cowper-Temple to Melville, 3 June [1870], LPL, Melville Papers, MSS 1995, fol. 76.

[891] Cowper-Temple to Melville, June 1870 [no day indicated], LPL, Melville Papers, MSS 1995, fols 78-79.

[892] It is, of course, possible, but by no means certain, that in early June Cowper-Temple did not know what had happened to his proposal and therefore, prior to the resumption of the Commons debates at the committee stage on 16 June, continued to explore with Melville possible solutions for the character of religious teaching.

Cowper-Temple was arguing against a positive description of religious teaching, the suggestion that Melville inspired or influenced the clause in some way does not fit the evidence either.

My argument is that Melville, with his plan for a positive formulation about a minimum content of religious instruction for the new Board schools, was at one with Cowper-Temple's thoughts at some point. However, as practical politics, it was not possible to include Melville's ideas without putting the whole Bill at risk; hence the opposition of Cowper-Temple himself to Pakington's unsuccessful amendment on 30 June. My proposal is therefore as follows: Melville submitted to Cowper-Temple a proposal for a positive construction of general religious instruction for the new Board schools. Melville had consistently argued over the years that a positive type of undenominationalism with specific doctrinal references could be delineated and he was keen to get Cowper-Temple to adopt that. This would explain Cowper-Temple's references to positive and negative commands. What Cowper-Temple realized is that, practical politician that he was, and, aware as Melville probably could not be to the same degree, of the mood in the House of Commons that Melville's positive format would not be accepted and that therefore the Bill was at risk. If this is correct, Melville was rebuffed, and perhaps this might explain the reference in the correspondence of Griffiths with his daughter after Melville's death about burning anything to do with the Cowper-Temple clause. Although the evidence to support this conclusion is not extensive, that which does exist certainly points in this direction.

Furthermore, people are not necessarily consistent in their views: that is, Cowper-Temple genuinely supported BFSS undenominationalism, for example, but had recognized by mid-1870 that simply 'giving up the Catechism' - to use his own words - was the political strategy needed to ensure that educational progress was made at that time. But this must not be represented as the adoption of BFSS undenominationalism by the State. Cowper-Temple, as an M.P. who had held executive office, would have had far more experience of being involved in the preparation of legislation. Melville may well have been an adroit ecclesiastical 'operator' whether in Worcestershire or in the counsels of the National Society in London, but he lacked experience of Parliament itself. It must be clear from the discussion so far that Melville could not have invented the concept, but did he delineate that negative undenominationalism which reached the statute book as the Cowper-Temple clause? The

verdict must be unlikely given Melville's concern for some ***positive*** character to potential Board school religious instruction.

When the Cabinet met on 14 June, it approved the adoption of the amendment proposed by Cowper-Temple. However, to judge by Gladstone's notes of the meeting, he continued mentally to suppress this change: 'Amendments on the Education Bill. Much debated. Accepted. C. of E. objected strongly. Goschen[893] approved but anticipated serious party mischief. Other saw difficulties but approved.'[894] It fell to de Grey to provide the specific written evidence of what the Cabinet had agreed with reference to Cowper-Temple's amendment: 'shown to Mr. Gladstone after the Cabinet 14 June 1870. 1. To accept Cowper-Temple's amendment.' [895]

Summary

In this chapter, using predominantly archival sources to offer new insights, I have shown that after the second reading undenominational religious teaching became a focus of the discussions aimed at changing the character of the Elementary Education Bill. The impetus towards undenominationalism came from outside Parliament in particular, with Nonconformist leaders closely involved in the pressure brought to bear on the politicians in Parliament. The challenge posed by this pressure accounted for the long delay before the committee stage of the Bill could begin. I have argued that, despite this pressure for a positive conception of undenominational teaching to be included in the Bill, what would be brought to the committee stage of the Bill was Cowper-Temple's negative formulation that no denominationally distinctive catechisms or formularies would be taught in Board schools.

I have discussed the possible origins of the formulation of the Cowper-Temple clause in the Bill and offer as a new interpretation of the archival evidence the idea that, despite material pointing towards the decisive role of David Melville, it was in fact Henry Austin Bruce in Gladstone's Cabinet who provided the fillip for the Cabinet's adoption of the Cowper-

[893] George Joachim Goschen, 1st Viscount (1831-1907) President of the Poor Law Board, 1868-71.
[894] BL, Add MSS 44638, fol. 83. This rather truncated summary of the meeting matches some of Gladstone's letters to the Queen, breath-taking in their brevity and in their potential to give a misleading impression of the discussions in Parliament.
[895] BL, Add MSS 43514, fol. 33.

Temple clause. What has been presented comprises substantially new insights into an important development in the history of education in England. As noted previously, some other scholars have worked in this area and made some important contributions to our understanding. The nature of that work, however, has not allowed or required the level of detail that has been put forward here. In places existing scholarship has been directly challenged in its conclusions, while in others it has been added to in important ways. Hence it is claimed that this thesis in general, and this chapter in particular, adds very significantly to our understanding. It has been largely on the basis of the use of previously unresearched primary material that this contribution has been made.

In the following chapter I shall show how, in the committee stage of the Bill, the Government resisted attempts to remove, or indeed strengthen, the clause.

Chapter 10

The emergence of Gladstone's 'moral monster':

the committee stage of the Elementary Education Bill

Introduction

In chapter 9 I demonstrated that undenominationalism had become a prominent feature among the possible solutions to the religious difficulty as it affected Forster's Elementary Education Bill. Drawing upon extensive archival sources, I argued that Henry Austin Bruce played a crucial role in leading the Cabinet, against the judgment of Gladstone himself, to incorporate the Cowper-Temple amendment as part of a revised version of the Bill brought back for the committee stage. However, in referring to the Melville Papers, I have also shown how archival sources may mislead in the attempt to elucidate the origins of the Cowper-Temple compromise.

In this chapter I shall show how the Elementary Education Bill evolved from its initial conception of a denominationally-biased piece of legislation to one which, through the acceptance of Cowper-Temple's amendment, *permitted*, but did not *require*, the new School Boards to adopt a particular form of undenominational religious education as a partial solution to the religious difficulty in education. Having explored Northcote's unsuccessful attempt to remove the Cowper-Temple amendment proposed by the Cabinet, I shall also compare and contrast the unsuccessful alternative amendments in the 1870 Bill which sought to refine or enhance the regulations for religious teaching. I shall devote particular attention to those put forward by Vernon Harcourt, Sir John Pakington and Jacob Bright, since these rarely earn more than the briefest of mentions in the standard secondary sources on this topic. Cumulatively, by demonstrating the failure of these further amendments put forward in respect of Cowper-Temple's proposal, and that the system proposed by the Government was

not identical with that of the BFSS, I shall lay the foundations for showing in chapter 11 the uniqueness of the undenominationalism which resulted from the 1870 Act.

Much of the basic detail relating to this issue has not heretofore been brought to the surface and placed in the public domain. This chapter will hence adopt something of a narrative style as the underlying story of this important chapter in the history of education is unearthed and pieced together into a continuous account. This chapter hence contains significant original work in that it contains new information and, importantly, it places that information within the overall framework of the thesis that is here being developed.

The publication of Bill 167 and the committee stage of the Bill

After the withdrawal of Dixon's amendment at the end of the Commons second reading, the next parliamentary development was Gladstone's speech on 16 June at the start of a full Parliamentary debate on the day when the Bill first went into committee.[896] This committee stage of the Bill lasted from 16 June to 30 June 1870. At this point the sections of the revised Bill relevant to the religious difficulty read as follows:

> 7. (1) No child shall be required, as a condition of being admitted into or continuing in the school, to attend or to abstain from attending any Sunday school, or any place of religious worship, or any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects in the school or elsewhere: [...]
>
> (2) The time or times during which any religious observance is practised or instruction in religious subjects is given at any meeting of the school shall be either at the beginning or at the end or at the beginning and the end of such meeting, and shall be inserted in a time table [*sic*] to be approved by the Education Department, and to be kept permanently and conspicuously affixed in every school-room; and any scholar may be withdrawn by his parent from such observance or instruction without forfeiting any of the other benefits of the school: [...]
>
> (3) The school shall be open at all times to the inspection of any of Her Majesty's inspectors, so, however, that it shall be no part of the duties of such inspector to inquire into any instruction in religious subjects given at such school, or to examine any scholar therein in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book:

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[896] The committee stage of the education Bill was originally arranged for 1 April 1870, but postponed to 27 April, then 16 May, then to 23 May and finally to 16 June. Cf. note on the Cabinet meeting of 14 June 1870, BL, Add. MS 44638, fol. 83. *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 266-85, 16 June 1870.

14. Every school provided by a school board shall be conducted under the control and management of such board in accordance with the following regulations:
(1) the school shall be a public elementary school within the meaning of this Act:
(2) no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school.

In his speech on 16 June Gladstone noted three main points of concern arising from the debates in the second reading: first, the conscience clause gave insufficient protection to minorities; second, Nonconformists complained that it was not right that 'any funds which proceed from taxation, whether general or local, should be made applicable to purposes of religious instruction'[897]; third, what Gladstone himself saw as the greatest objection, namely that the free choice which the Government wished to give to the local School Boards was likely to cause discord, and that the very discussion of potential discord could result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Government therefore intended to address these concerns as follows: first, the conscience clause would have the addition of the timetable limiting religious teaching to fixed hours; second, public rates would be applied only to secular instruction, for, although the Privy Council system was based on the principle of giving aid for secular instruction alone, some considered that this principle was to a degree compromised by allowing inspection of religious instruction.[898] The third concern must be explored in some detail.

Gladstone discussed some of the proposed solutions put forward for the religious difficulty on the content of religious teaching.[899] First, some people saw the reading of the Bible as nothing other than a secular exercise, though Gladstone himself did not see how it could be so regarded if it were properly carried out.[900] Second, referring to the Irish situation in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, he noted that the plan of basing teaching on *extracts* from the Bible had fallen into disuse and there seemed to be little support for it at that time. Third, a further possible system was 'the plan of [*sc.* undenominational] Bible reading, with a faculty[901] for expounding the Bible' as proposed by Vernon Harcourt. Gladstone said he had

[897] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 271.
[898] ibid., 272-73.
[899] Much of this will be familiar from Gladstone's letter to Russell on 24 March and from his memorandum of 28/29 May. But these documents, of course, were not in the public domain.
[900] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 274.
[901] By this term is meant a power or right.

already stated earlier in his speech why this could not be adopted:[902] it would not be possible to define in legal terms what would be meant by undenominational or sectarian instruction. The Government, therefore, said Gladstone, could not accept Harcourt's motion:

> We know perfectly well that practical judgement and the spirit of Christianity, combined with common sense, may succeed, and does succeed in a vast number of cases – probably in the enormous majority of cases – in averting the thorny paths of controversy in the work of communicating religious instruction to children. But the whole essence of that process lies in its voluntary character. If you lay down rules, you must provide those who administer the law with the means of compulsion. You must do one of two things - either constitute a new religious code by the authority of Parliament, by a process of excision or amputation, or you must do that which appears to me to be more objectionable, though perhaps not quite so difficult – you must set up, as seems to be the fashion "elsewhere," a living authority which, with the sanction and in the name of Parliament, will from time to time, when appealed to, draw the lines and definitions of Divine truth on behalf of the children. Now, we are not prepared to enter into this thorny and tangled wilderness...[903]

Fourth, there was the Cowper-Temple's proposition, whereby in schools 'hereafter established by means of local rates no catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught.'[904] Gladstone supposed Cowper-Temple was motivated by two concerns: first, to make the new Board schools as accessible as possible and not to frighten people away by 'the ostentatious exhibition of any particular symbol' and, second, 'to maintain in its essence and in its substance the power of a religious education, without attempting any of those interferences with the mode of handling Scripture, no practicable mode of effecting which has yet been discussed or suggested.' Gladstone commented that this option would allow discretion to the School Boards to limit themselves to secular instruction.[905]

Gladstone noted here that all the proposals involved limiting the discretion of the Boards; but no suggestion had been made to remove that discretion entirely. He assumed that it would not be possible to get rid of such discretion because, even with Richard's proposal, there would still be the question of whether religious teaching could be permitted in the school buildings at times other than those fixed for secular instruction, whether, if religion were taught, the master might or might not give it, and whether, if he did, he would be acting as the servant of the Board or at the request of the parents.

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[902] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 268.
[903] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 268.
[904] ibid., 275.
[905] ibid., 276.

After consideration of the range of options above, Gladstone announced just before going into committee that the Cabinet had accepted Cowper-Temple's amendment.[906] Like Mundella, who would one day occupy his post, Forster was convinced of the need for religion in education. But the consequences of this decision to accept Cowper-Temple's amendment meant that denominational schools would be financially disadvantaged and that government grants had therefore to be increased. Gladstone therefore determined that the Government would accordingly pay not one third, but one half, of the total annual cost for the denominational schools.[907] That was as far as the Government was prepared to move. Forster yielded on *ad hoc* School Boards, which would now be elected by ballot. The year of grace for the denominational schools was shortened to six months and inspectors would no longer deal with religious instruction. But he stood firm and refused to concede a full secular programme.[908] These concessions, however, were far from meeting the concerns of the Nonconformists.

The Government's intention had been for the State to fund only secular teaching from central government. Local Boards were to be free to 'introduce schools of a strictly secular character' or it would also be permitted to introduce 'such shades, such degrees, and such development of religious teaching as they might, in their judgement, find best suited to the wants of the particular districts which they happened to represent.'[909] Gladstone defined local discretion as a key feature of the Bill as originally introduced. The question at this point was how far this principle should extend or how far it should be contracted in any revision of the Bill.

Disraeli was so struck by Forster's important concessions that in his speech of response he described it as akin to a new measure, with the Cowper-Temple clause as the leading principle of the Bill.[910] He had supported the original government Bill and accepted the general feeling that there should be a national education which was religious. He did not, however, see how the proposals now made would secure such a religious education.[911] He stated: 'The country demands a "national education" which will be a 'religious education.'

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[906] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 281.
[907] Gladstone's removal of the voluntary schools from all rate-aid was modified in the Education Act of 1902.
[908] Adams, p. 223.
[909] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 269-70, 16 June 1870.
[910] ibid., 288, 16 June 1870. Disraeli's speech begins in col. 285.
[911] ibid., 286.

The country, he said, would not entrust that education to the Church, but had agreed to entrust it to the community.[912] He agreed with Gladstone that reading the Bible without comment was unsatisfactory even for educated adults, so it would indeed be unfair for Parliament to inflict such an experience on children. Disraeli's concluding comments below about a new sacerdotal class which would be needed to educate children under the proposals have been frequently quoted in part.[913] It will, however, be helpful to cite the relevant part of his speech in full to grasp the movement of his argument at this point:

> The new scheme would be this - that, although no creed nor catechism of any denomination is to be introduced, yet the schoolmaster would have the power and opportunity of teaching, enforcing and explaining the Holy Scripture when he reads. Now he cannot do that without drawing some conclusions, and what will those inferences and conclusions be but dogmas? They may not be the opinions of the rector, nor of the Presbyterian minister, nor of the Nonconformist minister, but they are the opinions of the schoolmaster. You are contemplating the establishment of a class who must be endowed with great abilities, and who certainly will have to perform most important functions and to exercise great powers, and I want to know in the present state of affairs where these schoolmasters are to be found? You will not entrust the priest or presbyter with the privilege of expounding the Holy Scripture to the scholars; but for that purpose you are inventing and establishing a new sacerdotal class. The schoolmaster who will exercise these functions [...] will in the future exercise an extraordinary influence upon the history of England and upon the conduct of Englishmen.[914]

Reading those remarks in Disraeli's speech, one wonders how far, if at all, Disraeli was aware of the BFSS system of dealing with the Scriptures. Be that as it may, the Conservatives in the Commons were divided over the provisions proposed in the Bill. Conservatives in the younger age range, including W. H. Smith, Cross and Lord Sandon advocated voluntary religious instruction [that is, not including it within the normal curriculum], but Disraeli and Gathorne-Hardy supported full Church of England teaching.[915] A third group, described as an 'advanced section' of the Conservative party, helped to pass the Bill by their support for the government-led plan.[916]

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[912] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 287.
[913] See, for example, Cruickshank, p. 31.
[914] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 288-89, 16 June 1870.
[915] Hardy, Gathorne Gathorne-, first earl of Cranbrook (1814–1906). Conservative. Staunchly opposed to Romanism, but devout high-churchman and tolerant of differing views within Anglicanism. MP for Leominster 1856-65. Under-secretary at Home Office 1858–59. Conservative MP for Oxford University 1865-78. Home Secretary 1867-68. See Jonathan Parry in *ODNB*.
[916] Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life and Times of Rt. Hon. W.H. Smith*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1893), I, pp. 179-80.

Opposition to Cowper-Temple's amendment from Harcourt

Following the speeches of Gladstone and Disraeli on 16 June, Harcourt noted that the problems attributed by Gladstone to his [Harcourt's] amendment[917] applied equally to the suggestion from Cowper-Temple which the Government proposed to adopt, namely, how one could define formularies.[918] There ought, he said, to be some tribunal to decide. The New Testament was a formulary of Christians as distinguished from those who were not Christians. It is argued here, however, that the point at issue was between the different Christian *denominations*. Harcourt had evidently misunderstood what Gladstone said about undenominationalism. He said he regretted that Gladstone professed not to understand these terms. Gladstone interrupted him at this point to deny that he had said such a thing, which was technically correct, for what Gladstone had been doing in his earlier statement was to argue that it would be difficult or impossible to define *in law* what these terms meant. So a common-sense everyday understanding of the concept was possible, but that did not imply that it would be easy or feasible to turn it into that degree of linguistic precision required in an Act of Parliament.

Harcourt was undoubtedly dissatisfied with Cowper-Temple's amendment, but there was a public controversy centred on what Harcourt meant in his speech in the Commons. In debate Gladstone said that Harcourt had described the Cowper-Temple amendment as 'exhibiting pure and undiluted denominationalism'[919] Harcourt denied that he said that the Cowper-Temple amendment was 'pure and undiluted denominationalism:'

> What I did say was something which I conceive was very different. I expressed an opinion that Mr. C. Temple's amendment was an ineffectual counterpoise and safeguard against the denominationalism of the rest of the Bill, and especially of the new proposal to increase the Parliamentary grants [*sc.* to denominational schools]

Therefore the Bill remained a scheme of 'pure and undiluted denominationalism.' He went on:

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[917] For Gladstone's comments on Harcourt's amendment, see above in this chapter.
[918] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 291-93, 16 June 1870.
[919] Gardiner, I, p. 217; *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 934, 24 June 1870. On 24 June Gladstone later defined two facets of denominationalism: in a positive sense, it was the ability to teach freely the fullness of the Christian religion; but there was also a pejorative sense, in which it conveyed a narrow attempt to proselytize, to downplay the practical lessons of Christianity and force dogmatic teaching upon children. *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 935-36.

> I feel sorry that in maintaining to the best of my power what I have long held to be a principle of the first importance, *viz.* that of unsectarian religious instruction, I should have been forced in some degree into opposition to the policy of the Government, as well as to that of my friends in the League.[920]

Harcourt had accused the Government of proposing to adopt a very vague idea. The clause would only prevent the teaching of the actual denominational *formularies*, but the substance of those same formularies could still be taught. 'He would be no party to a proposal which forbade the form and yet permitted the thing to be done.'[921] Harcourt at first tried to adjourn the debate. However, having been assured by the Speaker that, when the House went into committee and the amendments therefore fell, he would have the right to speak, Harcourt withdrew his call for adjournment.[922]

On 28 June, the day on which he declared his intention to support Jacob Bright's amendment, Harcourt wrote to Gladstone on 28 June:

> As you gave me an opportunity this day in the House of expressing the pleasure with which I learned that I had mistaken the intended application of your reference to pure and undiluted undenominationalism, I need only thank you for your letter and join very sincerely in your expressions of regret, while most fully admitting the permanent title of conviction to guide conduct, and assuring you that I never felt even tempted to impute to you the slightest trespass against the bounds of public duty.[923]

For his part Harcourt did not believe that biblical exposition could ever be 'neutral and colourless.' Unsectarian exposition, he said, simply did not exist. Harcourt further argued that it was unfair to allow unlimited discretion in exposition to those sects which did not rely on formularies. This created a prejudice against those denominations such as the Churches of England and Rome, which relied on such devices.

On 28 June Harcourt did indeed withdraw his amendment.[924] It was this amendment, says Armytage, which had inspired Cowper-Temple's proposal. But this statement is questionable in that negotiations, as we have seen with the Melville Papers and the draft amendments

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[920] Harcourt to Gladstone, 25 June 1870, Gladstone Papers, BL, Add MSS 44196, fol. 16.
[921] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 293, 16 June 1870.
[922] ibid., 299, 16 June 1870.
[923] Gladstone to Harcourt, 28 June 1870, University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Harcourt, dep. 8, Correspondence with W.E. Gladstone 1870-1872, fol. 1.
[924] Armytage, 'The 1870 Education Act', p. 126.

document prepared by Forster and de Grey, were already well in progress before Harcourt's proposal. It is noteworthy that Harcourt, abandoning an amendment on the *content* of religious teaching, transferred his allegiance to Jacob Bright's amendment, reflecting *intention* in teaching, rather than to Pakington's formulation, which was also concerned with content.

Opposition to Cowper-Temple's amendment from Henry Richard[925]

The committee stage debate continued on 20 June when the Welsh Nonconformist MP Henry Richard spoke first.[926] He confessed himself disappointed with the proposed changes, stating that 'The present scheme might be described as a measure for making the education of the people of England universally and for ever denominational.'[927] This judgment arose from the decision to avoid the problems of local rating for voluntary schools. However, in an attempt to be fair to the denominational sector, a new problem arose because of the increase of government funding for Church schools. Richard still doubted whether it was the function of the State to educate the children of the nation. He took his stand on the Nonconformist principle 'that it was not right to take money received from the general taxation of the country, and apply it to purposes of religious instruction and worship.'[928] He recalled a comment from Richard Cobden twenty years before to the effect that it was a proposal by which everybody would be taxed to pay for the religious teaching of everyone else. Hence Richard tabled his amendment that grants to existing denominational schools should not be increased, and 'the religious instruction should be supplied by voluntary effort and not out of Public Funds,'[929] When this amendment was put to the vote on Friday 24 June it was defeated by 421 votes to 60. Although it was unsuccessful, it split the Liberal Party: many Liberals (including Candlish, Dixon, Illingworth, Miall, Samuelson and Winterbotham) voted against the Government.

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[925] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 291-93, 16 June 1870.
[926] ibid., 495-510, 20 June 1870.
[927] ibid., 497.
[928] ibid., 498.
[929] ibid., 518, 20 June 1870.

Cowper-Temple's defence of his amendment

Cowper-Temple spoke to his own amendment in the Commons on 21 June. Although an NEU member, he was careful to stress that he did not represent the views of that Union. Cowper-Temple agreed with those such as Gladstone who contended that the word 'sectarian' could not be defined in legal language. In setting out a rationale for his amendment, Cowper-Temple made four points. First, he rejected Harcourt's theoretical notion of what unsectarianism meant and played down the reality of any practical religious difficulty in the actual schools. He maintained that disputed points of sectarian controversy did not affect elementary school-children. Second, he sought to blend the NEU principle of freedom of religious teaching, with that of the NEL's call that teaching should not be sectarian. What Harcourt wanted would bind the schoolmaster when he explained Bible passages which he [the schoolmaster] considered unsectarian, but which others might regard differently. Third, religion must be taught in the schools because this was the vehicle for moral training and also because, if religion were excluded, there was no conscience clause for those who desired it. It was unthinkable that schools should be established without moral training and such training must be based either on Divine law or self-interest. Fourth, compromise was essential: a national system of education was impossible unless the minority gave way to the majority.

Cowper-Temple comes across in the relevant primary sources as a generous-hearted person; in his speeches he praised the NEL for what he could share of their concerns. No doubt Cowper-Temple was sincere in his approval of the NEU's policy of support for the voluntary schools. But he was also able to support the BFSS principle, for that too was right for a particular constituency. Moreover, the BFSS was itself part of the voluntary sector of schools, albeit not denominational. So if Cowper-Temple sometimes appeared to be trying to be 'all things to all people', one should remember that individuals, as distinct from lobbying organizations, need not be entirely consistent in the causes they support: it was possible for some individuals on occasion to support more than one position, although this could, as has been demonstrated, dismay one party or the other.

The NEU was shocked that Cowper-Temple's amendment was somewhat removed from the official policy of the Union. It was emphasized that the Union knew nothing of Cowper-Temple's amendment before it appeared on the order paper in the Commons:

> The Executive Committee desire it to be distinctly understood that the Union as a body is not responsible for the clause known as the Cowper-Temple Clause in the Act, seeing that when the same was placed upon the notice paper of the House of Commons they were entirely ignorant of it. It ought to be added that Mr. Cowper-Temple at the request of the Executive Committee, stated this fact in the House.[930]

Gladstone, fundamentally concerned to protect the denominational schools and their definite religious teaching, may have suspected that it would be easier to have some semblance of denominational teaching under Cowper-Temple rather than with Bright's amendment, which was more restrictive about what was excluded in religious teaching.

Joseph Chamberlain's rejection of the Cowper-Temple clause

The Cowper-Temple clause did not satisfy Chamberlain's vision for religious education. His call for unsectarian education meant that, out of official hours, there would be full opportunities for all denominations to give what was then called definite religious teaching to their own adherents. So he was not seeking the minimum type of teaching provided under Cowper-Temple.[931] Chamberlain wrote with a touch of sarcasm to Harcourt:

> The present position is very unsatisfactory but we are powerless in the House and I doubt if anything short of a general election will give us what we want.
>
> The Bill ought to have been talked out in my opinion, and the country would have supported our members in that course.
>
> As it is, the Govt has beaten all sections in detail and remains master of the situation for the present (underlined in original).
>
> It is a measure of which any Conservative Government might well be proud and it is consequently very creditable to the radical Vice President of the Council who is so soon to be our first Minister of Education.[932]

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[930] NEU, *First Annual Report*, p. 45.
[931] Garvin, I, pp. 118-19.
[932] Chamberlain to Harcourt, 2 July 1870, Bodleian Library, MS Harcourt, dep. 59, Correspondence of Harcourt and Joseph Chamberlain, fols 2-3 [extracts only].

The BFSS and the education Bill

Given the importance over many decades of the BFSS in providing undenominational religious teaching in its schools, it is relevant to the development of this thesis to examine the attitudes of the BFSS at this time. This will help set the education Bill in the wider context of this debate and also demonstrate the influence (or otherwise) of some of the longer-term developments that have been traced in the chapters above. The BFSS Committee indicated that they were generally highly approving of the Forster/Bruce measure, and did not wish to take any other action but to refer the matter to local committees, who could make use of Dunn's pamphlet as they wished.[933]

In March 1870 Dunn had written:

> All instruction of a dogmatic character beyond the reading of the Bible should be [...] forbidden. In *every* school established by a School Board the clause proposed by the Manchester Union *ought* to be enforced, viz. that 'no religious catechisms or formularies shall be used in such schools, nor shall anything in support of, or in opposition to the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination, be taught therein: Provided that nothing herein contained shall be held to exclude the reading of the Holy Scriptures in such schools.' Nothing short of this will give permanent satisfaction.[934]

Dunn saw it as likely that many BFSS schools would be transferred to the School Boards and that this would be no loss to the cause of education. Some schools would likely become more denominational.[935] Dunn also made a remarkable statement: it was unquestionable that, during the last ten years in particular, there had been a general and most lamentable lowering of the moral and spiritual tone of BFSS schools. Scripture had largely ceased to be impressed upon the attention of the young. Dunn's explanations for this state of affairs were several and, according to him, included the fact that younger and less experienced teachers, who were frequently less decided about their own religious standing, had entered the system. He also pointed to the fact that teachers were less controlled by their committees and the bond that in

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[933] The conclusion to the thesis (chapter 11) will touch on the extent to which the new system of religious teaching for Board schools under the Cowper-Temple clause resembled the BFSS system. During the era of the School Boards there was a continuing issue about the relationship between the BFSS schools and Cowper-Templeism.

[934] Henry Dunn, '*Elementary Education Bill*', paper submitted to the Committee of the BFSS, March 1870, p. 15. BU, BFSS archives, file 918.

[935] ibid., p. 6.

early years united the Parent Society with the various local committees had been greatly weakened and in some cases snapped.[936] Dunn therefore appealed to local committees to recognize that religious teaching was under their control and that such control should be exercised.[937] Thus this archival evidence gives an honest picture, not idealized, for 'internal consumption' within BFSS circles. If this kind of evidence had been made public, one could have sympathized with Gladstone's jaundiced view of the religious teaching under the BFSS system.

By contrast the London and other Associations of British Teachers sent a Memorial to de Grey including the assertion that these teachers:

> feel deeply the value of scriptural instruction in the training of the young. They therefore trust that no Bill will be enacted containing any clause which shall, directly or indirectly, exclude the reading of the Bible in State-aided schools; but that such Bible reading, or other scriptural instruction shall be left to the discretion of the local school authorities; provision, however, being made that the children of parents who object to such religious reading or teaching shall be excused from attendance thereof.[938]

At a conference of BFSS teachers in Devon and Cornwall more than one speaker stated that they experienced no religious difficulty.[939]

The Board schools would be open to secular and sectarian influence from which it was hoped British schools could be kept free. They certainly recognized what had been said in some quarters, namely that 'A teacher may if the Board chooses give sectarian instruction without using a textbook. The British and Foreign School Society aims to avoid both contingencies.'[940]

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[936] ibid., p. 9.
[937] ibid., p. 11.
[938] A Memorial to the Right Honourable the Earl de Grey and Ripon K.G. Lord President of the Council from the London and other Associations of British Teachers, BU, BFSS archives, file 917.
[939] BU, BFSS archives, file 917. The Education Question.
[940] BFSS, *The Educational Record*, 90, VIII (1870), p.131.

The attempt to remove the Cowper-Temple clause on 30 June 1870

At the end of the committee stage in the discussion of clause 14 in Bill 167, Sir Stafford Northcote[941] spoke to oppose the inclusion of Cowper-Temple's amendment, which had been accepted by the Government.[942] He proposed his own amendment which would omit the second sub-section of clause 14 (Cowper-Temple's clause) and so restore the character of the Bill as first introduced by Forster in February.[943]

Northcote argued that Cowper-Temple's proposal was unnecessary. The Bill's original principle had been freedom of religious teaching and freedom to withdraw from denominational teaching. The imposition of a conscience clause should, he argued, have been enough. But this was a sudden great sacrifice for the Church party to have prohibition of formularies in the rate-supported schools [later known as Board schools]. If Winterbotham were dissatisfied with the stringency of the conscience clause, let him bring forward measures to improve it. Northcote's argument was about consistency: if it were to be conceded that rate-payers should have their conscience respected and not have distinctive denominational teaching, then what about the conscience of taxpayers [*sc.* who supported denominational teaching]? How far could citizens take the principle of not paying taxes for things which they did not support? Could this apply to alcohol? In that sense he sympathized with those on the Liberal side of the House who therefore rejected *all* religious teaching in schools. It had been argued that the Cowper-Temple clause would reduce strife in School Boards. Northcote doubted this. It was difficult to understand the clause, he said, and this would of itself create strife. What, for example, was a formulary and what was a formulary which was distinctive of any particular denomination? He considered a hymn as a formulary, giving the example of a hymn with a strong Calvinist flavour: some denominations expressed their theology through their hymns. But here Northcote was muddled, since such distinctive teaching crossed

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[941] Northcote, Stafford Henry (1818–87) first Earl of Iddesleigh from 1885. Former private secretary to Gladstone and later deputy to Disraeli. Conservative MP for North Devonshire. Chancellor of the Exchequer 1874. Joint leader of Conservatives after Disraeli's death.

[942] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1236-44, 30 June 1870.

[943] In his frequently cited detailed account of the path to the passing of the 1870 Bill *History of the Elementary School Contest in England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1882), p. 226, Francis Adams misleadingly treated the fate of Jacob Bright's amendment before mentioning that of Northcote. The logic in the timing here is important. Northcote wished to remove Cowper-Temple's amendment, but failed in the division. Once the Cowper-Temple principle remained in the Bill, it was appropriate that further amendments such as those by Pakington and Bright (on which see further below), which would have further tightened the character of religious instruction, were considered.

denominational boundaries (although he did not spell out such a point of detail), and it was not that which was at issue in the present discussion.

The response of Forster and Gladstone to Northcote

In his speech Forster[944] stated that he believed the original form of the Bill would have worked.[945] But the immediate task of imposing the arrangements would be better with the latest amendment from Cowper-Temple. The Government had been influenced by, for example, a deputation from Manchester Town Council, which did not want absolute discretion in deciding the character of the religious teaching for their future schools.[946] The Government did not want to follow the course proposed by Pakington because this would greatly damage the cause of religion. But neither did the Government want to create secular schools, because secularism was contrary to the spirit of the country. The country, he asserted, wanted unsectarian education. Dogmatic [that is, denominationally distinctive teaching] theological teaching was not suitable for children. Forster argued that the stumbling block was not so much the words themselves in any catechism or formulary as the implicit claim that children belonged to a particular denomination. Deputations had said it would be better if distinctive catechisms and formularies were not allowed, but Bible reading was accepted. 'These were the grounds on which the Government had proposed the change.'[947]

Gladstone stated that it was the argument in the country rather than in the House which had led to this change of heart on the part of the Government.[948] But time was pressing: this was the ninth night devoted to the religious difficulty. He appreciated the theoretical soundness of what Northcote had argued. But the change in the Bill was practicable, although he accepted it limited the liberty of the teacher.

The next section of Gladstone's speech at this stage of the debates on the Bill was extremely important. One of the options available for the character of religious teaching was what

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[944] This stage of the debate covering the responses of Forster and Gladstone was covered in *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1248-59, 30 June 1870.
[945] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1249.
[946] Armytage, '1870 Education Act', p. 126 interpreted the submission of Cowper-Temple's amendment as a reaction to Harcourt's amendment.
[947] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1251.
[948] ibid., 1253.

Gladstone called the use of the Bible 'with a limited faculty of exposition.'[949] Gladstone said some, for example Lord John Manners,[950] saw the Government's acceptance of the Cowper-Temple proposal as the adoption of the BFSS system which, they believed, the Government intended to introduce into the new rate schools. They were thus being invited to pass a Bill which provided for unsectarian exposition of the Bible in the new rate schools. Forster, he said, had already indicated that the Government sympathized with this desire and he was prepared to endorse that concept in the sense that:

> it is our wish that the exposition of the Bible in schools should take its natural course; that it should be confined to the simple and devout method of handling which is adapted to the understanding and characters of children; but we do not admit that that simple and devout character of teaching can be secured by an attempt to exclude all reference to tenets and doctrines.[951]

Gladstone referred to Baines explaining why Bible reading could not be made compulsory.[952] But the BFSS system, said Gladstone, did not reflect Jacob Bright's proposed amendment. The BFSS had not found it possible to go beyond two assertions: first, that the Bible should be read and taught daily and, second, that no catechism or distinctive formulary should be taught during the usual hours of school instruction. Thus the BFSS did not go beyond what the Government wished to legislate: to provide for reading the Scriptures and to prohibit distinctive denominational catechisms and formularies.

Now this may well have been the Government's underlying intention, but it was not reflected in the words of the proposed legislation. Gladstone here, oddly, was speaking as if the Bill were to include Pakington's amendment; but the provision for reading the Scriptures was permissive, not compulsory. In sum, the Government appreciated the concessions made by the Opposition and considered that this approach reflected in the new version of the Bill was the one best fitted to secure the greatest possible assent. Northcote's attempt to remove the Cowper-Temple clause ended in his defeat, with 252 against and 95 in favour: a majority of 157.[953]

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[949] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1255. Cf. above Gladstone's speech on 16 June.
[950] Conservative MP for North Leicestershire 1857-85. Strong supporter of Disraeli. Cabinet member in every Conservative government 1852-92. See Jonathan Parry in *ODNB*.
[951] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1256.
[952] ibid., 1258.
[953] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1263, 30 June 1870. Haywood, p. 25, has suggested that it was odd that there was no vote in favour of the Cowper-Temple clause. I argue, however, that the vote on Northcote's amendment was effectively a vote on the clause.

The attempt to enhance the Cowper-Temple clause on 30 June 1870 – 1: Sir John Pakington's amendment

Sir John Pakington put forward an amendment which was also discussed on 30 June:

> The Holy Scriptures shall form part of the daily reading and teaching in such school, but no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught therein.[954]

Pakington reluctantly supported the Cowper-Temple clause with its negative character, but he was also concerned to press for a more positive formulation for religious teaching in the legislation.[955] Pakington's amendment with its compulsory element could be seen as an expression of his consistent Christian commitment or a belated recognition of the contradictions in his earlier policies.[956] Pakington was very conscious of the role of Dissent in society and, although a Churchman, believed that the Church alone was inadequate for supplying the religious needs of the people.[957] He approved of the system in District Pauper schools where the representatives of different churches could enter schools to give instruction.[958] His attempt to transform the Cowper-Temple clause was given a hostile reception and immediately greeted by cries of 'Withdraw!' Pakington was aware, then, that there was very little support for his proposal in the Commons.[959]

Gladstone had already indicated that he would oppose it, but wanted to test the principle involved. He further acknowledged that it had been a great concession on the Conservative side to accept that in rate-aided schools no distinctive catechisms or formularies should be used. He had reluctantly come to the conclusion that in rate-supported schools no distinctive

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[954] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1265-67. In the context of Pakington's failed amendment, note Hinchliff's error that religious instruction in the new Board schools was not 'to consist of anything other than teaching the scriptures.' Peter Hinchliff, *Frederick Temple Archbishop of Canterbury. A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 152.

[955] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1266.

[956] Richard Aldrich, *Sir John Pakington and National Education* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1979), p. 19. Cf. here the contrast with Pakington's provisions in his own 1855 Bill, where he was criticized for not requiring the daily reading of the scriptures and thus guarding against secularism in schools. Aldrich, p. 25. Pakington made a slight change of policy after 1857, at least until the Select Committee of 1865-66, concentrating instead on securing a conscience clause in all schools.

[957] Aldrich, *Pakington*, p. 24.

[958] Aldrich, *Pakington*, p. 25.

[959] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1265. However, on 23 June Mr. E. S. Gordon, a Nonconformist, Conservative MP for Thetford 1867-68 and for Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities 1869-76, had spoken in support of Pakington's amendment. See *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 827-31, 23 June 1870.

catechism or formulary should be insisted upon.[960] He rejected the view of some Nonconformists that this was not a significant concession on the part of the Anglican Church. Pakington based his argument on the belief that in the country as a whole there was a desire for the teaching in the new Board schools to be religious and this would be achieved by ensuring that the Scriptures were read in schools. Pakington appealed to the 1862 Revised Code, in which it was clearly laid down that every school aided by government grant must either be connected with some religious denomination or be one in which the Holy Scriptures were read on a daily basis. Pakington wanted some positive statement in the law as opposed to the negative requirement against catechisms and formularies as expressed in Cowper-Temple's amendment. He argued that this question should be settled at national level rather than left to individual School Boards.

Little time was devoted to discussion of Pakington's amendment. There were only three speeches in response. First, Mr T. Collins[961] noted that he was not generally in favour of a secular system of schools, but would not wish to foreclose that option from school managers. He was in favour of a liberty which would allow school mangers to decide. The effect of Pakington's amendment would be to rule out a secular option.

When, second, Forster rose to speak on Pakington's amendment, he acknowledged the pain with which the Government felt it must oppose the idea:

> He [Forster] believed that by attempting to force their way of thinking on a municipality, whether it liked it or not, they would not be helping the cause of religious teaching. His earnest desire throughout the Bill had been, while obtaining the blessings of secular education for all children, to do nothing which could disparage religious education; but he could not think that the cause of religious education would be served by attempting to force municipalities in the matter.[962]

The Government's approach was a minimalist policy. The great aim was to secure *secular* education for all children. They did not wish to jeopardize that by pushing the religious issue too hard.

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[960] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1266.
[961] MP for Boston. Not listed in *ODNB*.
[962] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1268.

Thirdly and finally, although Gathorne Hardy had supported the freedom of religious teaching in the division on Sir Stafford Northcote's amendment, he presumed Pakington meant a system similar to the BFSS and he did not believe that would be acceptable to Roman Catholics. He preferred a system which took account of the religious geography of different districts. Thus a Roman Catholic majority area such as Moorfields should have support, and another Anglican school, or even an unsectarian school, should be provided nearby. He did not wish to vote against the freedom of denominations other than his own.

Put to the vote, Pakington's amendment was lost by 81 to 250, a majority of 169.[963] Forster, in reply to a question from Mr. Newdigate, clarified that the Government was emphatically not intending to use the majority against Pakington's amendment to oversee the exclusion of the Bible from the new schools. The presence of the Bible would depend on the wishes of the School Boards.[964] In the light of Pakington's unsuccessful amendment, I therefore disagree with the commentary of Riley, Sadler and Jackson on the 1870 Education Act that, although religious instruction is nowhere prescribed in the Act, it was 'pre-supposed.'[965]

The attempt to enhance the Cowper-Temple clause on 30 June 1870 – 2: Jacob Bright's amendment

Following the failure of Pakington's amendment to secure Bible reading as prescribed content in religious teaching in schools, the next attempt to enhance the law on religious teaching beyond the Cowper-Temple clause was Jacob Bright's amendment considered on the same day:[966]

> In any such school in which the Holy Scriptures shall be read and taught the teaching shall not be used or directed in favour of or against the distinctive tenets of any religious denomination.[967]

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[963] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1269.
[964] ibid.
[965] Athelstan Riley, Michael Sadler and Cyril Jackson, *The Religious Question in Public Education* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911), p. 288.
[966] Liberal MP for Manchester from November 1867. Younger brother of John Bright, who at that time was *hors de combat* through illness. Jacob Bright's amendment and its consequent effect on the character of religious education under many School Boards are not mentioned in his *ODNB* entry.
[967] For the debate on Bright's amendment see *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1270-82.

Haywood described Bright's amendment as the crucial test for the Cowper-Temple clause.[968] But I argue, by contrast, that Cowper-Temple was about the *content* of religious teaching and I disagree with Haywood because Bright's amendment was about *intention* in teaching. Haywood makes no mention of the Pakington amendment, which one can cogently argue was the crucial proposal. This is because Pakington's amendment was, like the Cowper-Temple clause, about the content of religious teaching, albeit that Cowper-Temple was negative regarding content (that is, no denominationally distinctive catechism or formulary should be used), while Pakington's amendment was positive (the Bible should be read in Board schools).

Particular attention should be given to Bright's proposal because of the subsequent influence of the amendment, which was significant. This is a point that appears to be significantly underplayed in the standard secondary literature dealing with this subject or indeed simply noticeable only by its absence. For example, Cruickshank fails to draw attention to it, while Murphy's book on the 1870 Education Act has only three sentences and those on two different pages so not in connected narrative.[969] The paucity of the treatment may suggest that the amendment was insignificant. In fact, as fuller attention to the relevant primary material clearly demonstrates, the issue became very significant because of the London School Board by-law and other Boards who followed London's lead. Indeed the London Board specification laid down that:

> That in Schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given therefrom such explanations and such instruction in the principles of religion and morality as are suited to the capacities of children, provided always,
> That in such instruction the provisions of the Act in Section VII. and in Section XIV. ('No religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school') be strictly observed, both in letter and spirit, and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination.
> That in regard of any particular school, the Board shall consider and determine upon any application, by managers, parents, or ratepayers of the district, who may show special cause for exception of the school from the operation of this resolution, in whole or in part.[970]

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[968] Haywood, p. 25.
[969] Murphy, *The Education Act 1870*, pp. 62 and 70.
[970] Article 91 of the London School Board Code, cited in letter from the Board to Head Masters and Head Mistresses, 22 March 1878.

Thus, although Bright failed to gain approval for his amendment as part of *national* legislation, his aims were realized through the decisions of many of the *local* School Boards who followed London's lead.

Bright's proposal was given a more extended discussion than Pakington's amendment and did not meet the same hostility. With its reference to religious tenets, Jacob Bright's amendment stood in the tradition of the earlier NPSA. Catechisms and formularies were essentially written documents and it would, if necessary, be clear-cut to identify whether such documents were being used. By contrast the term 'tenets' could more readily be linked to oral communication and this was Bright's particular concern.

As with Pakington's recently rejected amendment, Bright admitted that, having heard Gladstone's speech, he was not hopeful that his own amendment would pass. He believed that, while there was a general desire that the Bible should not be excluded from the schools and a general mood in favour of some reasonable room for manoeuvre in explaining the Bible, there was also an equally strong desire that 'the Bible should not be made in the schools a text-book for theological and sectarian teaching.'[971] Bright here clarified his understanding of the Cowper-Temple clause, namely, that, as matters stood on that day, there was no provision to prevent the teaching of any religion or creed. Bright was unwilling to accept the view that there was no middle way: that everything must be either admitted or excluded.

> If they were to exclude from the teaching everything of a sectarian character there would still remain all that was necessary to impress the minds of children with reverence for sacred things, and to give them a broad and simple faith on which to rest.[972]

Bright was concerned about how individual School Boards or teachers might otherwise act. His amendment would ensure that no one would wish or dare to evade the principle of unsectarianism. His proposal, he believed, would have made the Bill more acceptable to Nonconformists and to supporters of the National Education League such as George Dixon. He also imagined that the Conservatives in the Commons would not have opposed it. In Lancashire, he stated, Conservatives believed that there was such a concept as unsectarian

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[971] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1270.
[972] ibid., 1271.

religious instruction and the Manchester and Salford District School Association had recently passed resolutions to that effect. But were those Lancashire Conservatives typical? Bright probably gave too little weight to the attitudes of Conservatives in other parts of England who would certainly have been further antagonized by the inclusion of his amendment.

Bright's argument accepted that teachers needed reasonable room for manoeuvre in explaining the Bible to children. But the Bible should not be used for sectarian [that is, denominational] teaching. Bright's amendment assumed a particular understanding of the Cowper-Temple clause: that under the clause denominational teaching could still occur orally.

Seven speakers responded to Bright. Five were backbenchers, including Cowper-Temple himself. All were from the government (Liberal) side: three expressed direct opposition to Bright, one was sympathetic and one supported the amendment. Forster and Gladstone also spoke on behalf of the Government.

Bright's opponents argued that teachers should have as much freedom in teaching religion as possible; that Bright's proposal, if adopted, would be difficult to enforce legally; and that Cowper-Temple's amendment was sufficient as a symbol of what to avoid in teaching. Cowper-Temple himself argued that Bright's proposal would exacerbate local tensions between denominations and that it was therefore sufficient to ban ***books*** which were clearly denominational.

In discussion of Bright's amendment Sir Roundell Palmer[973] absolutely rejected the validity of the idea that, in any Board school in which the Holy Scriptures were read and taught, the teaching 'should not be used or directed in favour of or against the tenets of any religious denomination.' This Palmer condemned as impossible and unreal, and would lead to secularism. 'The exclusion of denominational formularies would tend to remind the teacher that he was not to constitute himself the organ of any particular denomination, though at liberty to teach freely and without fetters.'[974] Unlike Pakington's proposal above, this did not alter the wording of the Cowper-Temple clause about the content of religious teaching, but added to it a dimension concerned with aims. He had voted in support of the Cowper-Temple

[973] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1281. Sir Roundell Palmer (1812-95) Liberal MP for Richmond and Government law officer. First Earl of Selborne. See David Steele in *ODNB*.
[974] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1274.

clause, wanting to preserve as much freedom as possible for religious teaching in schools. He did not believe that principle was compromised by acceptance of Cowper-Temple's amendment which prevented rate-aided schools from having a 'formal denominational character'[975] He had foreseen that the Government needed to make this concession and accept Cowper-Temple's suggestion, otherwise secularism might advance.

However, he viewed Bright's amendment as completely different. To accept it would have implications, first, for keeping the Law and, second, for community peace. It would bind teachers in a straitjacket. Palmer believed that a teacher could teach only as he himself believed. It was also a fundamental flaw that there was no legal sanction envisaged to underpin such an amendment. 'Religious teaching must be specific; but it need not be sectarian or denominational.'[976] The exclusion of denominational formularies would act as a symbol of the teacher's need to avoid being the mouthpiece of any particular denomination and would provide sufficient security against denominationalism.

Samuel Whitbread argued that the country was opposed to the thrust of the secularists: it desired religious instruction in the school, but there would be a problem if it were distasteful to a large body of people.[977] He supported Palmer and went on to say that it was not a real difficulty in the schools themselves (yet) but was so in Parliament. He stated that, after Gladstone's speech that evening, he now understood the Prime Minister to be saying that the teacher could teach only the doctrines he himself had been brought up to believe. Gladstone at this point interjected to say that he was being misrepresented. Whitbread wanted to see the amendment passed but was critical of those who said that if they could not pass this amendment, then it would be preferable if the Bill were thrown out. But the urgent needs of children were paramount.

In a very brief speech Cowper-Temple suggested that Whitbread's support for unsectarian education did not show why Bright's amendment was preferable to his (Cowper-Temple's) own. He objected to the amendment because he believed it would draw attention at local level to points of disagreement between denominations. 'The exclusion of catechisms and formularies left the opinions and faith of the teacher untouched, and dealt only with lesson

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[975] ibid., 1272.
[976] ibid., 1274.
[977] ibid., 1274-76. (1830-1915) Liberal MP for Bedford 1852-1915.

books which bore upon their title page plain indications of their origin.'[978] Under Cowper-Temple's plan it was clear how the issue could be monitored: this would not be true for Bright's proposal and this would excite controversy.

Sir George Grey agreed completely with Whitbread, who wanted the amendment passed. He was concerned that, despite Cowper-Temple's amendment, 'narrowest sectarianism might still be taught'. He did not agree with Gladstone that a teacher could not teach without instructing children in the differences between denominations. He believed that teachers could easily operate under this proposed regime.[979]

Dr. Lyon Playfair sympathized with the thrust of Bright's proposal but did not see how it could have the force of law. What authority could determine whether teaching was in favour of or against the tenets of a particular denomination? If the (government) Education Department were to take on this role, it mixed Government up with the religious education of the people.[980] Playfair could understand the amendment only as a moral warning to teachers. He would therefore vote *against* (thus theoretical support, but in practice against). It would be a new kind of religious (*sc.* denominational) test and would echo the denominational inspection which had just been removed.[981] The speeches from supporters sympathetic to Bright argued that the Cowper-Temple amendment would not exclude narrow sectarianism.

Forster and Gladstone were opposed to Bright. Forster wished to draw 'a line in the sand' on religious teaching: the Government, he argued, had already moved a good way from the Bill as originally introduced in February 1870, and the Cowper-Temple amendment now expressed a general rejection of sectarian teaching. But the debate had now reached a decisive stage. Moreover, agreeing here with Whitbread above, he did not think Bright's amendment would make much difference to the actual teaching. But he believed it affected the [*sc.* freedom of the] teachers.[982] However, he made the extraordinary statement that the kind of religious instruction which the Government was proposing was what was generally taught at that time, even in denominational schools.[983]

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[978] ibid., 1276-77.
[979] ibid., 1277-78. Liberal MP for Morpeth, former Home Secretary (d. 1882).
[980] Subsequently there were occasions when the interpretation of the Cowper-Temple clause itself was referred to the central government, but they did not welcome such referrals.
[981] *Hansard*, 3, CCII, 1278-79. (1818-98) Liberal MP for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities, elected 1868.
[982] ibid., 1279-80.
[983] ibid., 1279.

If the amendment passed, it would put teachers in chains: they would, if conscientious, be forever asking themselves if they were directing their teaching against the distinctive tenets of some creed. The Government had already agreed in a general way that religious instruction was not to be sectarian. Would Bright really risk the entire Bill by pushing for an unproductive amendment?

Gladstone put forward a number of different arguments; first, a *mollifying* argument: he had no problem with Bright's intention, but 'the effect of his amendment would be to introduce a new kind of State religion.'[984] Second, Gladstone also advanced a *political* argument: the Conservative opposition had accepted that the government concessions had been suitable. Here the Government stood, he said, even though not all Liberals were supportive of the government position. Third, Gladstone's *legal* argument was that judges would not support the amendment and would say that, if Parliament made unintelligible laws, it must be expected that they would be disobeyed.

He also countered Bright by saying that the Bill simply introduced the BFSS system. But this was a misunderstanding, albeit partial, of the complete BFSS programme. Gladstone then corrected Whitbread: 'On the contrary the natural course of instruction was freed from denominational peculiarities but what they understood might not be suitable for legislation.'[985] He noted that the Opposition had accepted that the government concessions had been suitable. The Government here took its stand, even though the Bill might not have suited all on the government side.[986] When Bright's amendment was put to the vote, it was defeated, 130 voting in favour and 251 against.[987]

The final stages of the education Bill in the Commons and Lords

The Bill passed its Commons third reading without a division on 22 July,[988] but this should not obscure the fact that there was increasing bitterness between the Government and militant

[984] ibid., 1281. Disraeli had made a similar statement about the Cowper-Temple clause on 16 June. See above in this chapter.
[985] ibid., 1280.
[986] ibid., 1280-82. This section included a short interpolation by Whitbread.
[987] ibid., 1282.
[988] ibid., 762.

Nonconformists. In the standard accounts of the 1870 Bill, the Lords' discussions are never mentioned. However, there was, in fact, a final attempt in the committee stage on 29 July to alter the Cowper-Temple clause and such is reflected in the relevant primary material adding further to our understanding of the wider reception of this Bill and the difficulties its supporters had in seeing it onto the books. There was no lengthy discussion of the clause, but Lord Colchester, concerned that an attempt was being made to establish an undenominational ascendancy in areas where there was a majority in favour of denominational teaching, introduced an amendment to modify the clause by inserting the words: 'Unless a majority of ratepayers of the school district petition the Education Department in favour of such teaching.' But de Grey would not accept the amendment.[989] There were only three speakers with questions of clarification asking, for example, whether the teaching of duty to God and neighbour was forbidden because they were to be found in the Church catechism. De Grey replied that it was the Church catechism as such which was excluded. The Marquess of Salisbury complained about a lack of precise definitions, that no- one was clear what the clause would mean, and feared that this would open the gates to many questions of legitimacy being referred to the Committee of Council. However, the Lord Chancellor put an end to the discussion and the amendment was dismissed. [990] The Bill thus became law on 9 August 1870. 174 MPs in the Commons, and eight bishops and twenty-six temporal peers in the Lords, had spoken in the debates on the Bill.[991] The Bill eventually passed despite the opposition from three sources: first, the earlier Conservative criticism led by Lord Robert Montague; second, from Nonconformists such as Winterbotham; and third from 'freelance' MPs such as the Liberal Harcourt. But the financial cost of the adoption of Cowper-Temple's clause was that the total cost of education payable from central funds was raised from one third to one half.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how undenominationalism was a focus of the debates during the committee stage of the Elementary Education Bill. The Government, having been taken aback by the opposition which had grown by the end of the second reading in March 1870,

[989] ibid., 1179-82.
[990] Lord Hatherley. William Page Wood (1801-81). Devout Anglican.
[991] Armytage, '1870 Education Act', p. 124.

was now resolved to stand its ground. Although the Bill still had to pass through the formalities of the Lords, where objections were indeed raised, the defeat of the amendments on 30 June meant that, for practical purposes, the Bill was secure. Gladstone's Diary certainly shows this was the case.[992] A further sign of Gladstone's approval of and gratitude to the one who had overseen the Bill's passage through the Commons was that Forster was elevated to Cabinet rank at the beginning of July, some weeks before the Bill received the Royal Assent on 9 August.

What had been achieved in the committee stage? The Government had seen off attempts from both the Conservative benches and from Liberal rebels. It is not possible to see the arguments in strict party terms: this was a Bill which did not fit strictly aligned party positions. From the Conservative benches Northcote's attempt to retain a stronger opportunity for denominational teaching by removing completely the Cowper-Temple clause can be set against his fellow-Conservative, Sir John Pakington, who was attempting to build upon the Cowper-Temple clause to strengthen the undenominational religious teaching to be provided under Cowper-Temple. I have shown how both these attempts were unsuccessful.

This divergence within the Opposition was matched by the Liberals also. Liberal opposition to the Cowper-Temple clause, predominantly from Dixon, Richard and Harcourt, caused significant problems for the Government's management of the Bill over a period of over four months. Although the concerns of these Liberal MPs were by no means fulfilled by the Cowper-Temple clause, they opened the way for a partial solution, albeit temporary, to the religious difficulty: sufficient at least to achieve what had not been possible in attempts in the previous seventy years, to lay the foundations for a national system of education.

I have also highlighted here the problem faced by those who favoured a more positive incarnation of the undenominational principle: they were divided and so could not speak with one voice. With the withdrawal of Harcourt's amendment, this left, on the Liberal side, Jacob Bright's amendment to address the acknowledged weakness in the type of undenominationalism which the Cowper-Temple clause provided: that oral explanatory glosses which were distinctive of a particular denomination could be given on Bible reading even though no books of that type were allowed in the school.

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[992] 'The Bill I hope is now clear of shoals.' *The Gladstone Diaries*, VII, 1869-1871, 30 June 1870, p. 317.

The significance of this for the general thesis which is being argued for here is that the failure of the attempts to remove the Cowper-Temple clause has shown how a species of undenominationalism was formally included in the Elementary Education Act as passed. However, equally important for the thesis which I am putting forward about the character of undenominationalism is the implication which flows from the unsuccessful amendments. Specifically, the failure of amendments from Pakington and Bright is crucial in sustaining my thesis that the type of undenominationalism created by the Act was new. In the concluding chapter which follows there will be a reflection on the implications of the inclusion of the Cowper-Temple clause in the Bill and a demonstration of the uniqueness of Cowper-Temple's type of undenominationalism.

Chapter 11

The compromise of the Elementary Education Act of 1870: interpretation and misinterpretation

Introduction

In this thesis I have set out in a level of detail that has not heretofore been done how educational progress had been held back by disagreement about the religious difficulty, by the concerns from Nonconformist denominations about Anglican control of education and doubts about the value of educating children from the poorest classes to a higher standard. This thesis has been based on the judgement that the religious difficulty in English education was not, despite the claims of those who sought to minimize this issue, a chimera. It was indeed a reality. I have concentrated on aspects of undenominational religious teaching as a potential solution to this difficulty and shown how a form of this undenominationalism made possible a successful Bill in 1870. Throughout I have argued that this unsectarian principle arose as an attempt to provide for children from the poorer classes an education which was not compromised by denominational divisions. Unsectarianism survived over a period of almost seventy years, despite the changes in government policy and the objections made against it. I have shown something of the diversity of interpretation of the concept of unsectarianism, whereby sometimes Christian doctrines claimed as the shared heritage of different Christian denominations were emphasized, while at other times a more limited practical emphasis on Christian living was paramount. I have also shown that this conceptual fluidity could lead towards assimilation to secularism, though in the nineteenth century this concept too was understood variously by its proponents. The level of detail that I have been able to supply to the previous briefer outlines of this important development in educational history has been possible only to the extent that largely unexplored primary sources, including substantial manuscript material, has here been analysed. It is claimed that the telling of this detailed story is itself an important and original contribution to learning, though, as has been apparent throughout, I have also been able to bring new insights to bear

on the significance of the developments here described. My treatment is not, however, merely theoretical since I have, for example, described how unsectarianism was maintained in practice in schools, especially, but not exclusively, through the agency of the BFSS and, also how the debates about how to solve the religious difficulty in English education regularly brought unsectarianism to the forefront of educational discussion.

In chapters eight, nine and ten above, which, covering the debates on the 1870 Bill, should be seen as a unity, I have demonstrated that undenominationalism played a prominent part in the debates about how to secure the passage of an Elementary Education Bill. There I have charted the process by which Cowper-Temple's proposal emerged as the Government's preferred option to address the objections to the first version of the Bill. I have shown how attempts during the committee stage of the Bill either to abolish, or to enhance, the Government's adoption of Cowper-Temple's proposal did not succeed. In this final concluding chapter, after discussing why the Bill succeeded, I shall explore the beginnings of the controversy about the interpretation of the Cowper-Temple clause and the extent to which the clause was actually legislating for undenominationalism. In this way I shall clarify what type of alleged undenominationalism it was which passed on to the Statute book.

The argument in this chapter will be sustained by devoting substantial attention to putative misunderstandings about the precise meaning of the incorporation of the Cowper-Temple clause in the 1870 Act and to evaluations of the contribution of Forster, who oversaw the Bill in the Commons. The purpose of this methodology is to show that certain interpretations of undenominationalism were not, in fact, adopted by the Act of 1870. This preparatory procedure is essential in order to demonstrate the validity of my thesis that the undenominationalism of the Cowper-Temple clause was unique.

To construct this conclusion I shall draw on a variety of printed sources in addition to archival material. The originality in this chapter is derived from challenging the judgments and correcting the interpretative errors of other writers, leading to my own formulation that the Cowper-Temple clause was a *sui generis* interpretation.

Why was a successful educational Bill achieved in 1870?

This question must initially be explored by considering both the general political context of the period and also the specific progress of the Bill itself. First, the political climate had changed over the preceding ten years in a number of ways. Three features are worth noting: the formation of the Liberal Party from the Whigs, Peelites and Radicals in 1859; the opportunity for political change after the death of Palmerston;[993] and the increasing strength of the Conservatives after more than twenty years in the doldrums following the defection of the Peelites in 1846.

A fundamental question in this investigation is why, at this point in history, it was possible to arrive at some sort of solution, albeit contested and partial, to the religious difficulty which was sufficient to move towards a national system of education. Geoffrey Best has drawn attention to the collapse of Voluntaryism in education in 1867 and a lessening of tensions between competing Christian denominations as creating a fertile ground for the success of the education Bill in 1870.[994] It is noteworthy that, following the convening of the Reformed Parliament in 1832, the State made the first financial contribution to the two voluntary education societies, the National Society and the BFSS. Richard Cobden had prophesied that a national system of education would eventually come only with the extension of the franchise; thus Best has also drawn attention to a possible relationship between the next great reform of the political system with the enlargement of the franchise through the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the extended provision of elementary education in 1870. It is, however, debatable whether a proven link between the events of 1867 and the passing of the 1870 Bill can be made: one must be wary of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* argument. The most that might be ventured is that, by the time Gladstone's ministry began in 1868, the ground for educational change was fertile. But there should be a caveat against any kind of historical determinism whereby the advent of a reforming Liberal government was bound to succeed in education when so many earlier attempts had failed. The 1870 Education Bill, like so many of its predecessors, was very nearly lost and it is arguable that, as Matthew has noted,[995] Gladstone himself did not come into power with any clear agenda for reform. He

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[993] Ramsden, p. 91.
[994] Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Fontana Press, 1979), pp. 176-77.
[995] Matthew, *Diaries*, VII, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

was not greatly involved in education outside the Cabinet discussions, and, while he did from time to time intervene in debate, he nearly caused the loss of the Bill. In fact, despite the passing of the Bill, its ramifications continued to haunt him and contributed decisively to the Liberals' loss of power in the 1874 general election.[996]

Misinterpretations of the Cowper-Temple clause in contemporary primary sources

The following section, which begins the examination of misunderstandings in the interpretation of the Cowper-Temple clause, sets out three examples of commentaries on the clause in obituaries of Cowper-Temple:

> His [Cowper-Temple's] name will always be associated with the liberty of conscience which he gained for Nonconformists by the so-called "Cowper-Temple clause", which, while dispensing with the obligatory teaching of the Church Catechism, emphasized the reading and teaching of the Bible in schools, issue being taken for or against the Bible instead of for or against formularies. [997] [This ignores the dissatisfaction of Nonconformists such as Harcourt, Chamberlain and Dixon, and implies Pakington's amendment had been passed.]
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> His name will ever be remembered in connexion with the "Cowper-Temple clause" in the Education Act whereby he virtually [a nuanced word, but still misleading: see my comment on the previous extract] secured the reading of the Bible in Board Schools by removing any supposed grievances by the conscience clause.[998]
>
> In 1870, when the Elementary Education Bill was under consideration, Mr. Cowper-Temple brought forward a proposal to exclude from all rate-built schools every catechism and formulary distinctive of denominational creed, and to sever altogether the relation between the local School Boards and the denominational schools, leaving the latter to look solely to the central grants for help. On June 30, 1870, by a majority of 252 to 95 votes, the Commons rejected Sir S. Northcote's proposal to eliminate from the Education Bill Mr. Cowper-Temple's proviso against distinctive religious catechisms or formularies, and to leave the whole question of religious teaching to the

[996] Matthew, perhaps unfairly, has asserted that Gladstone, like many highly-educated classicists, was never particularly interested in education. See *Diaries*, VII, p. lxiv. However, those same Gladstone diaries, edited by Matthew, in fact show that, over many years prior to the 1870 Education Act, Gladstone had read widely on education in general and on the religious difficulty in particular. This reading was used to good effect, as shown in his May memorandum, discussed in chapter 9 above.

[997] University of Southampton, Broadlands archive, BR44/19/1-10. Obituaries. Fol. 10. The Christian, No. 844, Thursday 1 April 1886, p. 2.

[998] University of Southampton, Broadlands archive, BR44/19/1-10. Obituaries. Memoir. Fol. 8. *In Memoriam. William Francis, Baron Mount-Temple. A Brief Sketch by Canon Wilberforce. Supplement to the St. Mary's, Southampton, Parish Magazine*, p. 4 of document.

> discretion of each School Board. [To write 'the whole question' is misleading, since the incorporation of Cowper-Temple's clause restricted the discretion of School Boards.] Subsequently the Government accepted the amendment, which was added to the Bill. The *Daily News* says:- "The acceptance of the Cowper-Temple Clause in 1870 was by no means satisfying to either party to the controversy of that day, but it has historic importance, as making up the middle ground which the Government took up between two bodies of eager combatants. By excluding formularies and catechisms from State school instruction, it served both sectarians and unsectarians as the half loaf which is better than no bread, and it has proved, if not a solution of the religious difficulty, a more effective compromise than was originally anticipated.[999] [With the proviso included above, this extract more faithfully reflected a sound and comprehensive judgment on the clause.]

Some of the misleading or erroneous comments in these obituaries may have arisen because by the time of Cowper-Temple's death the extended application of the clause was already so well-established that people came to read into the original legislation implications which were not strictly included in the letter of the actual law as passed in 1870.

Until 1870 any school which received a government grant was either connected to a Christian denomination or was one in which the Bible was read daily from the Authorized Version; this latter stipulation allowed for BFSS schools to receive grant. The comment above that the clause guaranteed the reading of the Bible in schools must be rejected. This is because, in the actual wording of the Act itself, there was no reference in the Cowper-Temple clause to the use of the Bible in religious instruction, even that which was undenominational. The Government, for example, through Gladstone's speeches, clearly indicated that they *wished* the Bible to be read, and Cowper-Temple's notebook in the Broadlands archives showed that he too hoped that the place of the Bible would be safeguarded. However, this is not sufficient evidence to prove that the clause *guaranteed* that religious teaching would perforce include Bible reading in Board schools.

This is because it was Cowper-Temple's amendment that was passed, and not those of Pakington or Jacob Bright. Pakington put forward a *positive* proposal that the content of religious education should include the reading of the Bible, whereas Cowper-Temple's amendment was in *negative* terms and, moreover, did not ensure that *all* Boards adopted a species of even Cowper-Temple undenominational religious teaching. Therefore, in strict legal terms, the outcome of the Act was worse for the provision of Bible reading than before 1870, because, after the passing of the 1870 Act, it was theoretically open to the new School

[999] *Hampshire Independent*, 20 October 1888, fol. 9. The original as printed in the newspaper has 'auticipated'.

Boards to decide *not* to include religious instruction in their curriculum, thus, by definition, excluding the Bible. Hence the disquiet of Nonconformists such as Harcourt or Dixon can be understood, given the interpretation of the limited and negative undenominationalism which the 1870 Act requires. So, in considering undenominationalism, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between what was enacted nationally in the 1870 Act and what the local School Boards subsequently decided about religious instruction in their localities.

I referred in the previous chapter to Gladstone's condemnation of the concept of the Cowper-Temple clause as a moral monster. While it is true that Gladstone probably did not achieve his ideal solution in the 1870 Elementary Education Bill, nevertheless the outcome for him personally was less disastrous than would have been the case if other possible ways of dealing with the religious difficulty had been adopted. He was consistent in rejecting the positive and compulsory undenominationalism of the BFSS, for example, because of the legal minefield he foresaw in trying to define the limits of undenominationalism in a national system. It was acknowledged in the parliamentary debates that the Cowper-Temple clause prevented only the strict use of books which were distinctive of a particular denomination; oral explanations which might be denominationally distinctive were therefore permissible. However, many School Boards subsequently used to the full the discretion which Gladstone and others had been so keen to retain in the Bill by introducing their own regulations whereby religious teaching reflected the intentions of either Bright or Pakington or both.

Critiques of Forster's role in the 1870 Act

For John Morley, the anti-clerical 'Nonconformist' unbeliever, in his role in passing the 1870 Act, Forster was strengthening the privileges of the established Anglican Church. 'The Act had virtually handed over elementary education to the Church.'[1000] Morley maintained that, in compensation for the earlier disestablishment of the Irish Church, Forster had handed the elementary education of England to the Anglican Church. But Morley's verdict on Forster was unfair. It is now possible to see from the first version of Forster's Autumn 1869 memorandum that he was far from wishing to strengthen denominational education.

[1000] See D. A. Hamer, *John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 96 *et seq.*

The School Board Chronicle, in looking back to 1870, criticized Forster for his failure to introduce a more satisfactory solution to the religious difficulty in education at that time. 'Might not the Government of 1870 have contrived a way to do then very much that which seems to be coming now, in the matter of placing National secular education under the control of School Boards?' The Chronicle alleged that Forster did not, in fact, do so because of a personal bias towards denominational teaching and clerical influence in schools. 'The thing which from the beginning stood in the way of a better scheme than the Act of 1870 was Mr. Forster's Bill of 1870'. The Chronicle saw the Bill as a prelude to the establishment of denominational Board schools wherever there was a deficiency of school accommodation. The Bill had proposed to allow School Boards to choose whether their schools should be Church of England, Wesleyan, Roman Catholic or other denomination. Forster hung on to this.

> It is not on official record to what extent Mr. Forster battled among his ministerial colleagues for his pet provision, but when the secret struggle was over other men announced the great concession, and to all appearances one of the least happy members of the Government was Mr. Forster.
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> [...]
>
> The Cowper-Temple clause was neither the child nor the adopted child of Mr. Forster.[1001]

The School Guardian's estimate of Forster's contribution through the Act of 1870 was that it was 'not without its grave defects and positive mistakes', but it was an honest effort to meet a great public necessity on principles that recognized freedom of conscience and at the same time protected the thousands of schools voluntarily built and maintained.[1002] Nonconformist reactions varied from disappointment to taking offence. Though not a Churchman himself, Forster won respect for seeking to place a high value on the educational work of the Anglican Church. Forster in his initial planning for the Bill had believed that a conscience clause would be adequate protection without anything like the Cowper-Temple amendment. He was perhaps naïve here. But many Nonconformists believed that this was not sufficient protection, since determined clergy or school managers who wished to evade the force of such a

[1001] *School Board Chronicle*, 24 December 1887, p. 684.
[1002] *School Guardian*, XI, 10 April 1886, p. 237.

conscience clause would find ways of rendering it lifeless. Forster enjoyed sufficient of a reputation of one opposed to secularism that he was able to carry the support of Conservative Churchmen and, without that, the Bill could not have been passed. However, he never recovered his former reputation amongst his Nonconformist contacts.

Misinterpretations of the Cowper-Temple clause in contemporary sources: the BFSS and the 1870 Act

It has been argued that the religious settlement embodied in the Elementary Education Act of 1870, specifically clause 14(2), represented the incorporation of the British unsectarian principle into the embryonic national system of elementary education.[1003] The relationship of the Cowper-Temple clause to the BFSS must therefore be analysed. The BFSS itself saw the 1870 settlement as the successful incarnation of its religious principle. There is a partial truth here, but it is only at the expense of ignoring what must originally have been a vital part of the total BFSS system - namely that children should take part in Sunday religious observances. So the School Board system might partially resemble the BFSS principle where a School Board chose to make religious instruction compulsory. Thus the BFSS system in a sense resembled the pattern of 'definite' religious teaching advocates (who might later be called the denominationalists) by regarding its own unsectarian system as incomplete without further 'topping up' with denominational teaching. The BFSS system institutionalized compulsory Sunday worship as an integral part of education by arranging for children to be escorted to the place of worship chosen by the parents. This is crucially at variance with the stipulation under the 1870 Act and the School Boards. The Lancasterian/British nexus between unsectarian weekday instruction and Sunday worship was broken. Not only did the School Boards lack any connection with the pupils' worship on Sundays (or, in general, any religious observances outside the hours of school instruction), but the Act also enshrined the principle that there must be no conditions of attendance at any place of worship in connection with admission to a particular school.

Given the significance of the BFSS in relation to the principle of undenominationalism, I argue, contrary to the view above of the BFSS committee, that the religious education

[1003] See, for example, Binns, p. 186, citing the claim of the BFSS committee that, 'In accordance with this Act the Education Department has become entirely undenominational.'

settlement of 1870 was not the incorporation into a national system of education of a carbon copy of the BFSS's undenominational system; rather the undenominationalism so permitted was a phenomenon *sui generis*.

Another reason for rejecting the notion that it was the BFSS system which was enshrined in the 1870 Act, and which links to Bright's unsuccessful amendment, is to recall the BFSS principle that, where the teaching involved explanations of biblical passages, it should not be directed for or against the tenets of any particular denomination. No matter that the BFSS representatives at the Select Committees of the 1830s appeared to get themselves into a tangle about how that might be achieved in practice, it was nonetheless their goal that unsectarianism should be confined not merely to the written material but also to the teacher's oral explanations. But it was generally agreed that the national legislation as passed in the 1870 Act confined undenominationalism to the written class books. There was nothing in this understanding, therefore, to prevent a teacher giving denominational teaching through oral explanation: the result would be a qualified or partial undenominationalism. The fact that individual *local* School Boards later strengthened the undenominationalism of the Cowper-Temple clause by passing by-laws which referred to the oral teaching is not relevant to the strict interpretation of the 1870 *national* legislation.

To sum up thus far: the Cowper-Temple amendment was not synonymous with the BFSS system for two reasons: first, any link between weekday religious instruction with Sunday worship or participation in Sunday Schools was illegal in Board schools and, second, the 1870 Act took no account of any oral teaching which might explain biblical passages in a denominational way.

But the BFSS themselves were not coherent: a judgement that the Cowper-Temple clause as passed by the Act of 1870 did *not* represent the system of the BFSS surely follows logically from a BFSS leaflet from over 30 years after the 1870 Act.[1004] The cardinal principles of the BFSS were reiterated as, first, that the Scriptures were read; second, no catechism was to be used 'during the usual hours of school instruction'; and, third, 'Every child attending the day school shall be expected to attend the particular place of worship or Sunday school which its parents prefer.' The continuing importance of the first and third principles attests to the

[1004] BFSS Leaflet II (1903). BU, BFSS archives, file 012.

distinction which must be maintained between the new School Board system established under the 1870 Act and the continuing BFSS practice.

Misinterpretations of the Cowper-Temple clause in secondary sources

It is argued here in the context of the wider study carried out in this thesis that Salmon completely misrepresented the relationship between the BFSS system and the Cowper-Temple clause and in particular gave a misleading impression of Gladstone's attitude to the BFSS:[1005] 'What was proposed was not only theoretically possible, but the experience of the British and Foreign School Society, extending over some sixty years, showed that it offered no practical difficulty.' In a footnote to the account of Gladstone just given, Salmon juxtaposed two statements in such a way as to suggest that they were synonymous: first, the BFSS requirement that the Scriptures should be read in the school and, second, the words of the Cowper-Temple clause. This ignored the fact, as demonstrated above, that the BFSS principle that the Bible be read was not included in the 1870 Education Act.

It is apparent too that Gwynn and Tuckwell also completely misunderstand the Cowper-Temple clause: 'Each school was to give or not give such religious teaching as it thought well, so long as no *Board* school was used to attach a child to a particular denomination.'[1006] This is completely garbled since Gwynn and Tuckwell commit a triple error by speaking of the Cowper-Temple clause as if it were Jacob Bright's amendment, as if that amendment had been successful, and as if the decision about the inclusion of religious instruction in the curriculum was made by individual schools rather than by School Boards.

McGarry also misrepresents the relationship between the BFSS and the solution of the 1870 Act.[1007] Admittedly, he follows Gladstone by citing his (Gladstone's) reference to the BFSS system being what the Government was proposing. But this omits the positive aspect of the BFSS's undenominationalism, namely Bible reading, which was not in the 1870 Bill, notwithstanding what actually happened in practice when the Act was later interpreted by local School Boards.

[1005] Salmon, p. 15.
[1006] Gwynn and Tuckwell, p. 97.
[1007] McGarry, p. 407.

Murphy has also suggested that some School Boards ignored the decisive rejection in Parliament of Jacob Bright's amendment on 30 June 1870 when they introduced by-laws requiring that the religious teaching should not be directed either for or against the tenets of any particular denomination. However, I argue that the adoption by School Boards of such by-laws is all of a piece with the decision in Parliament not to enforce nationally the teaching of religion for all School Boards. The effect of what Parliament did when it rejected Bright's amendment was merely to decline to impose this as 'blanket provision'; the same could also be said of Pakington's unsuccessful proposed amendment. The Government made much play of the discretion which they wished to be available to the School Boards.

A more accurate understanding of the Cowper-Temple clause

One person who set out a more nuanced analysis of the BFSS and its relation to the Cowper-Temple clause, challenging the account of the historical background of the Society given in a document which was not available to me, was Sir Joshua Fitch:

> The writer assumes that the Society has always been mainly supported by Dissenters, in opposition to the Church. He says, and perhaps knows, nothing of the large and powerful support it received from Liberal Churchmen like Sydney Smith and Bishop Stanley, from Whig Statesmen like Brougham and Russell and the Duke of Sussex; and from others, who without being dissenters, did not wish to see the whole of the education of the people turned into a propaganda for the English Church. The remark about the 'unsectarian character 'of the religious instruction being "unacceptable to the bulk of the people" is to say the least curious, in face of the fact that the principle of an undogmatic but reverent and intelligent teaching of the Bible, [not deciphered] has long characterized the Schools of the Society, was *practically adopted* [my emphasis] in the Act of 1870 and at this moment dominates the school-boards of London and of nearly every town in the land.[1008]

Fitch, it can be argued, was rather closer to the truth than other commentators. He did not, however, develop this understanding in any detail. In this thesis that detail and a more nuanced interpretation thereof has been supplied.

[1008] Fitch to Bourne, 30 September 1883, BU, BFSS archives, file 024, Central Administration. Joshua Fitch (1824-1903) Former elementary school teacher, Principal of Borough Road College and Inspector.

The triumph of undenominationalism?

So, finally, did the 1870 Elementary Education Act represent the triumph of undenominational religious instruction in the English educational system? In the previous chapter it was made clear that Nonconformists such as Chamberlain and Dixon were not reconciled to the Act. Although the issue is beyond the strict scope of this thesis, I argue that the triumph of undenominationalism came not so much with the passing of clause 14 (2) of the 1870 Act, the Cowper-Temple clause, but with the later decisions of many individual School Boards which often adopted a stronger undenominational interpretation of the clause. The clause, perhaps understandably in the light of past discussion of the religious difficulty in English education, was ambiguous in its meaning and implications. Despite the declarations of intention that the clause was meant to apply only to written lesson books which might indicate their denominational origin, the wording of the clause in the Act does not make it clear whether it is written or oral. There was a significant distinction between teaching which was allowed through printed creeds and other denominationally distinctive books on the one hand, and oral exposition of the Bible in such a way as to link selected biblical texts with denominational doctrines on the other. In any event is the avowed declaration of intent relevant in law, or only the actual wording of the legislation? If the latter, an interpretation which *includes* a ban on oral denominational teaching is appropriate. I also argue that the interpretation of the Cowper-Temple clause must be made in the light of an exegesis of all the references to religious instruction in the Act. It would be a strange kind of denominational religious instruction in which all links with worshipping communities were broken, as required by section 7 (1) of the Act. Therefore it is not possible to interpret the religious teaching envisaged by the Cowper-Temple clause as full-blooded denominationalism.

It is ironic that the clause, the interpretation of which caused so much difficulty in the years immediately after the passing of the Act over the following seventy years became the symbolic Ark of the Covenant for a Nonconformist commitment to undenominational religious instruction. But this, I argue, and believe I have demonstrated, resulted from Cowper-Temple*ism*, as I have defined it above, rather than from the letter of the law itself.

Appendix 1

Summary of types of undenominationalism

In this Appendix the term undenominationalism will be treated as a synonym for unsectarianism as used by Joseph Lancaster. Note that there is an overlap between the types of undenominationalism described below. Joseph Lancaster's scheme, for example, relates both to positive undenominationalism and to mixed, separated undenominationalism.

Positive undenominationalism

I have employed this term to describe three instances of a type of undenominationalism in which the content of religious instruction is defined in positive terms.

First, there was the original undenominational system of the Royal Lancasterian Institution, dating back to Joseph Lancaster at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in which it was prescribed that the Bible should be read.

Second, Sir John Pakington, faced with the implications of the permissive, negative undenominationalism of Cowper-Temple's amendment in the 1870 Elementary Education Bill, tabled his unsuccessful amendment to provide positive content for religious instruction through compulsory Bible reading:

> The Holy Scriptures shall form part of the daily reading and teaching in such school, but no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught therein

Third, I have also placed Jacob Bright's failed amendment to the 1870 Bill in the category of positive undenominationalism alongside Lancaster's scheme and Pakington's amendment. However, there is a difficulty here since the thrust of Bright's amendment is, in fact, negative: that 'the teaching [in religious instruction] should not be used or directed in favour of or against the distinctive tenets of any religious denomination.' Bright's amendment was designed to forestall teaching which followed Cowper-Temple's principle in eschewing the use of printed catechisms or formularies distinctive of any particular denomination, but left

open the possibility of teachers giving denominationally distinctive oral explanations of Bible passages.

In this context, Bright's amendment might fairly be classified as a type of negative undenominationalism. However, Bright's amendment is linked with a positive element, viz., 'In any such [board] school in which the Holy Scriptures shall be read and taught [...].' Bright's reference to the reading of the Bible echoes the positive thrust of Pakington's amendment and so justifies its classification as positive undenominationalism. But, overall, Bright's amendment is something of a hybrid for this typology.

Negative undenominationalism

This term expresses the uniqueness of the Cowper-Temple clause as a type of undenominationalism which did not prescribe what, if any, religious instruction should be taught in the new board schools (for example, the Bible or generally agreed Christian doctrines), but only that it should not include formularies or catechisms which were distinctive of any particular denomination:

> no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school.

It was made clear that such formularies or catechisms were envisaged as printed. This formulation was in no way a new concept in 1870: it was rooted in Joseph Lancaster's scheme. What made the Cowper-Temple amendment unique, however, was that the negative undenominationalism was unqualified, with no other positive indication of what the content of religious instruction might be.

Furthermore, in the context of the Bill, the Cowper-Temple clause reflected *permissive*, negative and unmixed undenominationalism in that it was open to school boards to prescribe, or not, religious instruction for their schools. If prescribed, the instruction was to be undenominational in the sense of Cowper-Temple's amendment. In the wider context of the Bill his amendment was unmixed in that it could not be compulsorily supplemented by any further denominational teaching in a Sunday school or other place of worship. This was precluded by the provision of section 7 (1) of the Bill. In this respect it differed from Joseph

Lancaster's original scheme of compulsory, mixed and separated undenominationalism (see immediately below).

Compulsory, mixed and separated undenominationalism

Lancaster's scheme was for compulsory, mixed and separated undenominationalism. This is categorized as compulsory, because children were theoretically required on Sundays to attend a church or chapel of their family's choice and to furnish evidence at their day-school that they had done so; as mixed, because the undenominational teaching in the weekday-school was complemented by compulsory denominational teaching on Sundays; and as separated, because the additional denominational teaching took place on different premises from the day school.

Mixed, unseparated undenominationalism

This can be subdivided into two categories:

a) The first type of mixed, unseparated undenominational teaching is designated as mixed because it combined undenominationalism in the schools during the normal hours of teaching with after-hours instruction in the same location, where church representatives could teach their distinctive denominational doctrines. I classify this as unseparated undenominationalism, because there was no separation into different buildings for the additional denominational teaching.

(b) A variation of this pattern is reflected in the distinction made by the Government between general and special religious instruction in its unsuccessful 1839 proposals for a Normal and a Model school. General religious instruction in the Model School envisaged that the teaching of religion was 'to be combined with the whole matter of instruction, and to regulate the entire system of discipline.' Special religious instruction was defined as 'periods to be set aside for such peculiar doctrinal instruction as may be required for the religious training of the children.'[1009] General religious instruction was to be undenominational, while special religious teaching would be denominationally distinctive and taught by a chaplain for the Anglican students, and by licensed ministers for non-Anglicans. What distinguished this type

[1009] *Minutes*, Committee of the Privy Council on Education, 13 April 1839.

of teaching from the first form of mixed unseparated undenominationalism above is that in this second pattern both general and special religious teaching would not only be taught in the same building, but would also be part of the same curriculum. In a speech in the House of Lords on 5 July 1839 the Marquess of Lansdowne[1010] traced this distinction between general and special religious instruction to a speech by Sir Robert Peel on grants to Irish schools.

[1010] 3rd Marquess. (1780-1863). Lord President of the Council 1830-34, 1835-41 and 1846-52. Declined premiership in 1852 and 1855. See further C. J. Wright in *ODNB*.

Appendix 2

The character of religious instruction in board schools

Amendments and proposed formulations during the debates on the 1870 Elementary Education Bill

Appendix 2 covers some of the most significant formulations of the concept of unsectarian or undenominational religious education and important related proposals during the debates on the Elementary Education Bill of 1870. There has been no attempt to include similar formulations from the period before the 1870 Bill. The Appendix concludes, however, with the formulation of undenominationalism prescribed by the influential London School Board after the passing of the Act. Not all of the formulations below were formally published in a Bill: de Grey and Forster's options 1 and 2, for example, were discussed in private correspondence with selected members of the Cabinet.

All references to a Bill below are to versions of the Elementary Education Bill, either Bill 33 of 17 February 1870 or Bill 167 of 16 June 1870. Page and line numbers refer to the printed texts of the Bills.

Elementary Education Bill 33, Commons, introduced 17 February 1870

[Note that this is the version of clause 14 before the addition of the Cowper-Temple amendment.]

> 14. Every school provided by a school board shall be a public elementary school and shall be conducted as such under the control and management of such board.

Policy of the National Education League, cited by Mr. Forster in Commons, 14 March 1870

> No creed, catechism, or tenet peculiar to any sect shall be taught in any national-rate school, but the school board shall have power to grant the use of the school-rooms out of school hours for the purpose of giving religious instruction, provided that no undue preference be given to one or more sects, to the exclusion of others.

George Dixon's amendment, debated 14-18 March 1870, Commons, first night of second reading

> This House is of opinion that no measure for the elementary education of the people will afford a satisfactory or permanent settlement which leaves the question of religious instruction in schools supported by public funds and rates to be determined by local authorities.

Withdrawn 18 March 1870 (third night of second reading)

BFSS declaration, March 1870

> All instruction of a dogmatic character beyond the reading of the Bible should be [...] forbidden. In *every* school established by a School Board the clause proposed by the Manchester Union *ought* to be enforced, viz. that 'no religious catechisms or formularies shall be used in such schools, nor shall anything in support of, or in opposition to the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination, be taught therein: Provided that nothing herein contained shall be held to exclude the reading of the Holy Scriptures in such schools.' Nothing short of this will give permanent satisfaction.

Henry Winterbotham's amendment, cited by Sir Roundell Palmer on 15 March 1870, Commons, second night of second reading

> In any school maintained wholly or in part out of local rates under this Act no religious instruction shall be given or religious observances practised other than the reading of the Scriptures.

Withdrawn in debate during Committee stage on 30 June 1870.

de Grey and Forster: option 1 for amendment at committee stage

> The Bible alone shall be used as the text for the instruction in religious subjects given in the school, [unless the Education Department, upon the request of the school board, permit the use of any religious catechism or formulary.
>
> The Education Department shall cause to be laid before both Houses of Parliament in every year a report stating the cases in which they have been requested by any school board to permit the use of any religious catechism or formulary, and their reasons for giving or refusing such permission.]

de Grey and Forster: option 2 for amendment at committee stage

No religious catechism or formulary shall be used as the text for the instruction in religious subjects given in the school, [except with the consent of the Education Department, upon the request of the school board.]

Sir George Grey's proposal by letter to Gladstone, 7 June 1870

In a public elementary school which is wholly or in part provided or supported out of a local rate no denominational creed, catechism or formulary shall be taught or used in school hours; but instruction may be given in the Bible either immediately after the beginning or before the end of the school hours, provided such instruction is not directed against, or to the support of any religious denomination.

Elementary Education, Bill 167, William Cowper-Temple's amended Clause 14, announced by Gladstone, 16 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

14. Every school provided by a school board shall be conducted under the control and management of such board in accordance with the following regulations:
(1) the school shall be a public elementary school within the meaning of this Act:
(2) no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school.

Vernon Harcourt's amendment, outlined in debate 16 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

In any school assisted from public rates the religious instruction which may be given therein shall be confined to unsectarian instruction in the Bible.

Withdrawn in debate 28 June 1870.

Henry Richard's amendment, first outlined 20 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

the grants to existing denominational schools should not be increased; and that, in any national system of elementary education, the attendance should be everywhere compulsory, and the religious instruction should be supplied by voluntary effort and not out of public funds.

On Friday 24 June this was defeated by 421 votes to 60.

Sir Stafford Northcote's amendment, debated 30 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

Northcote proposed his own amendment which would omit the second sub-section of Clause 14 (Cowper-Temple's proposal) in Bill 167 above and so, in this aspect, restore the character of the Bill as first introduced by Forster on 17 February 1870.

This attempt to remove the Cowper-Temple clause ended in Northcote's defeat, with 252 against and 95 in favour: a majority of 157.

Sir John Pakington's amendment, debated 30 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

In page 5, line 24, to leave out sub-section 2, and insert –

> '2. The Holy Scriptures shall form part of the daily reading and teaching in such school, but no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught therein.'

Amendment lost by 81 to 250, a majority of 169.

J. T. Hibbert's amendment, 30 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

Page 5, line 24, to leave out the words 'which is distinctive of any particular denomination'.

Amendment withdrawn that day.

Jacob Bright's amendment, debated 30 June 1870, Commons, committee stage

At the end of Clause 14 to add:

> In any such school in which the Holy Scriptures shall be read and taught the teaching shall not be used or directed in favour of or against the distinctive tenets of any religious denomination.

Amendment defeated by 251 against, 130 in favour, 30 June 1870.

Elementary Education, Bill 218, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe's amendment, debated 29 July 1870, Lords, committee stage

He declared his aim of indicating, through his amendment, that religious teaching should be compulsory.

Page 6 line 7 omit 'no religious catechism or formulary,' and insert 'at whatever time religious teaching may take place therein no catechism or formulary.'

Amendment negatived.

Lord Colchester's amendment, debated 29 July 1870, Lords, committee stage

Page 6, line 14 [the line number in the original source appears wrong here] insert: 'Unless a majority of ratepayers of the school district petition the Education Department in favour of such teaching.'

Amendment dismissed.

London School Board by-law on religious instruction

> That in Schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given therefrom such explanations and such instruction in the principles of religion and morality as are suited to the capacities of children, provided always,
>
> That in such instruction the provisions of the Act in Section VII. and in Section XIV. ('No religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school') be strictly observed, both in letter and spirit, and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination.
>
> That in regard of any particular school, the Board shall consider and determine upon any application, by managers, parents, or ratepayers of the district, who may show special cause for exception of the school from the operation of this resolution, in whole or in part.

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