

Reimagining the Dissenting Traditions: Empire, Complicity, and Resistance

We invite proposals for Reimagining the Dissenting Tradition(s): Empire, Complicity, and Resistance. The study of religious dissent is at a crossroads. Scholarship is increasingly sensitive to the need to move beyond a romantic view of oppositional religious movements. Attention to surrounding political context has aided initial steps toward destabilizing a heroic version of truth and justice seekers fighting oppressive religious authorities.

Across empires—past and present—religion has served both as a tool of control and as a catalyst for resistance. Prophetic voices, subaltern theologies, and practices of spiritual defiance have frequently unsettled dominant narratives, calling attention to suffering, inequality, and the possibilities of alternative social orders. This conference seeks to explore how individuals and communities have mobilized belief, ritual, and philosophical critique to confront oppression and reimagine collective life.

This international and interdisciplinary conference will investigate the transnational context of religious dissent by curating papers, presentations, and conversations that advance the exploration of how empires and surrounding political cultures provide inspiration for religious dissenters' distinctive ideas, practices, rituals, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Our call for research on the intertwining of dissent and empires challenges presenters to find creative ways to bring the study of religious dissent into conversation with emerging theoretical perspectives and contemporary social practices.

The conference will serve as the public launch of the Centre for Unitarian and Dissenting Studies at Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford. Harris Manchester began as a dissenting academy in 1756. Since its inception it has served as a focal point for connecting dissenting religious movements across the globe. With special attention to antitrinitarian and Unitarian movements, its library has one of the largest collections and archives of dissenting material in the world. Scholars are encouraged to make use of the college's unique archives in preparation of their papers.

We invite proposals on a wide-range topics, including but not limited to:

- The connection between anti-trinitarianism, Unitarianism, and other heterodox religious movements and empires;
- The relation between gender, sexuality, and religious dissent;
- Non-traditional forms of education and pedagogy that are rooted in or aligned with religious dissent;
- Transnational networks of religious dissent;
- The relationship between anticolonial movements and religious dissent, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere;
- Contemporary dissenting religious movements outside of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Europe;
- Non-Christian forms of religious dissent;
- Theoretical understandings of the nature of religious dissent;
- Archival practices that curate dissenting traditions across time;
- Aesthetics and community building beyond traditional religious institutions;
- The practices of religious dissent.

Proposals for papers and presentations (20 minutes in length) should include a title, an abstract of up to 300 words, and a short bio with contact information. Proposals for full panels of three to four papers are invited. Conference contributions that transcend the bounds of normative academic disciplines or that take the form of visual, sonic, or performative arts are especially welcome.

We aspire to use this conference to curate a conversation about the future of religious dissenting studies. Our conversation will unfold in a seminar style exchange. Because of this only those whose proposals have been accepted will be invited to participate. We are currently raising funds to make a limited number of subsidised rooms and conference day fees available to speakers on the basis of need. Cost of travel will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and applicants must make a case that no other funding is available to them.

Submissions should be sent to Rev. Dr. Colin Bossen, Harris Manchester College, at colin.bossen@hmc.ox.ac.uk.