

University of Richmond

UR Scholarship Repository

Honors Theses

Student Research

5-6-2021

Religious Tolerance and Anti-Trinitarianism: The Influence of Socinianism on English and American Leaders and the Separation of Church and State

Keeley Harris
University of Richmond

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Religion Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Harris, Keeley, "Religious Tolerance and Anti-Trinitarianism: The Influence of Socinianism on English and American Leaders and the Separation of Church and State" (2021). *Honors Theses*. 1577.
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses/1577>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

Religious Tolerance and Anti-Trinitarianism: The Influence of Socinianism on English and American Leaders and the Separation of Church and State

By
Keeley Harris

Honors Thesis
Submitted to:
Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond
Richmond, VA

May 6, 2021

Advisor: Dr. Kristin M. S. Bezio

Abstract

Religious Tolerance and Anti-Trinitarianism: The Influence of Socinianism on English and American Leaders and the Separation of Church and State

Keeley Harris

Committee members: Dr. Kristin M. S. Bezio, Dr. George R. Goethals and Dr. Douglas L. Winiarski

This research focuses on a sect of Christian thinkers who originated in mid-16th century Poland called Socinians. They had radical Christian views built upon ideas from humanism and the Protestant Reformation, including Anti-Trinitarianism and rejecting the divinity of Christ. Most importantly, they believed that in order to follow Christ's message, separation of church and state and religious toleration were necessary. Socinianism spread across Europe into England, first permeating subtly while England remained intolerant, but it came to the forefront during the English Civil War. Socinian ideas helped further political agendas of Royalists and ultimately influenced Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Joseph Priestley. Religious toleration ultimately spread into early American colonies via new religious modes, namely Unitarianism, and through political ideas via writings from important English and colonial thinkers. This led early American leaders, specifically Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, to have political and religious motivations for establishing the separation of church and state in America. The last part of this project focuses on implications of this legacy for present leaders and the political climate in current day America.

Signature Page for Leadership Studies Honors Thesis

**Religious Tolerance and Anti-Trinitarianism: The Influence of Socinianism on English
and American Leaders and the Separation of Church and State**

Thesis presented

by

Keeley Harris

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by *Keeley Harris* has been approved by her committee as satisfactory completion of the thesis requirement to earn honors in leadership studies.

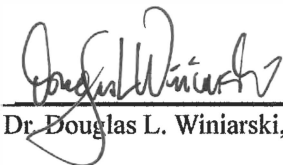
Approved as to style and content by:



Dr. Kristin M. S. Bezio, *Chair*



Dr. George R. Goethals, *Member*



Dr. Douglas L. Winiarski, *Member*



Dr. Crystal L. Hoyt, *Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*
Jepson School of Leadership Studies

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: A History of Socinianism	4
Introduction	4
The Protestant Reformation and Calvinism	7
Important figures in Socinianism	9
Poland and Religious Toleration	11
Socinian Theology	13
Socinian Christology	15
Socinian Anti-Trinitarianism	19
Socinian Atonement Theology	22
Socinian Pacifism	25
Getting to England	29
Chapter 2: The Role of Socinianism in Early Modern England through the Civil War	30
Religious atmosphere in England dating back to Henry VIII	31
Getting from Poland to England	33
Letter from Budney to Foxe	34
Socinianism as an Accusation of Heresy	37
Religious Atmosphere through Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns	38
Socinianism in the English Civil War	40
Toleration Act, 1689	44
Chapter 3: The English Enlightenment and Socinianism	47
Humanism and the Enlightenment	47
Significant People and Their Influences	50
John Biddle	50
Paul Best	52
Samuel Clarke	52
John Locke	53
Joseph Priestley	54
Getting to America	55
Chapter 4: Socinianism in early America	57
Introduction	57
Context of American Colonies	58
Religion and the Continental Congress	62
Theological Nationalism and the American Revolution	64
Joseph Priestley and American Unitarianism	67
Jefferson's religious beliefs and influences	70
John Adams's Religious Beliefs	73
Election of 1800 and Accusations	75

The Push for Separation of Church and State	77
From 1800 to Present Day	79
Chapter 5: Socinian Influence in Present Day America	81
Misconception of Religious Freedom, Religious Toleration, and Separation of Church and State	83
The Religious Right	84
History of The Religious Right	85
The Religious Right Today and Apocalyptic Politics	86
Court Cases	88
Televangelical Kenneth Copeland	91
The Religious Left and Possible Solutions	93
Increasing Secularism and Theological Nationalism	94
Conclusion	97
Works Cited	100

Chapter 1: A History of Socinianism

Introduction

In the mid-16th century, a few religious thinkers came together in Poland and formed a Christian sect they called the Polish Brethren. They subscribed to ideas that came to be known as Socinianism, named after one of the initial founders of the group, Faustus Socinus. The founders were originally Calvinist, and many of their doctrines were formulated in response to inconsistencies and contradictions within the Calvinist and emerging Protestant traditions. Some of the main tenets of their beliefs included doubts about the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Among other notable doctrines, Socinians did not believe in Hell and were pacifist. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, Socinian ideas and believers migrated across Europe, making their way to England and eventually across the Atlantic into the blossoming country of the United States of America. The spread of these ideas in conjunction with Italian Humanism in 16th century Poland influenced English thinkers like John Locke, and eventually early American leaders like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Adams. Understanding the influence of this branch of Christianity is important to understanding some current trends in American religious liberty, like for example, the ideas of the Religious Right and pro-life supporters. Because the Religious Right has voting power and a political agenda that is inspired by a religious ethic, in order to maintain the balance that religious freedom and separation of church and state was established with, there needs to be a counter on the left that has a cohesive ethic — this could be in the form of the Religious Left, or it could be a different kind of ethic that inspires and motivates those who have left leaning politics.

There is a reason why Socinianism is unknown to the general public, and there is a reason why modern thinkers typically consider Protestantism as “mainstream” or “normal.” In the

United States (and much of Europe), the mainline churches and belief systems won, so to speak, which is why those theologies have influenced modern culture and become normalized.

However, there is some evidence that ideas taken from Socinianism had immense influence on important thinkers and leaders in both England and America. Specifically, in the U.S., Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison were all impacted by ideas of the separation of church and state found in Socinianism, and they worked during the establishment of the U.S. to set up and ensure religious liberty using that concept. Matters of separation and toleration continue throughout the history of the U.S., exemplified by the politicization of the religious beliefs that presidential candidates have beginning with Jefferson in 1800, and following to John F. Kennedy in 1960 and Barack Obama in 2008. Additionally, there are important court cases throughout American history and into the present day that highlight some of the ways in which politics and religion are connected, like the Hobby Lobby and Masterpiece Cakeshop cases. That spread is why the belief systems and doctrines of Socinianism are important to understand, and why I will be looking further into the influence of Socinian ideas.

First, I will look at the specific tenets and theology that form the basis of Socinianism. It is important to understand the context and place of Poland, where this denomination first appeared and flourished, and to understand the character and beliefs of the namesake of the denomination, Faustus Socinus.¹ There are many different complicated theological ideas posited by Socinus, but I will be particularly focusing on the aspects of the theology that set Socinianism apart from mainstream Protestant denominations, as well as the aspects of Socinianism that ultimately played an important role in the doctrine of religious toleration and the ideas of the separation of church and state.

¹ In Italian, his native language, his name is Fausto Sozzini, but because he is more frequently referred to as Faustus Socinus in doctrinal texts, that is the name that I will use.

In order to understand the eventual influence of Socinianism on the formation of the United States, we must also turn to its influence in England. Socinianism played an important role in the English Civil War, and English thinkers were specifically drawn to Socinian doctrines because of the religious context of England. Many significant developments for Socinianism, and later Unitarianism, were made by certain influential figures, including John Biddle and Joseph Priestley. John Locke, as an important figure for the Enlightenment, was also accused of being a Socinian. Whether or not these men's theological beliefs fully aligned with those of Faustus Socinus, these thinkers still merit exploration, especially because of their wide-ranging influence on other leaders, including the United States' Founding Fathers.

One of the driving questions I want to answer in this thesis is as follows: how did this denomination of Christianity influence religious liberty as a principle set up by the founders of America, and how does that influence impact contemporary political affiliations? In this exploration, I will be focusing particularly on Thomas Jefferson for a few reasons. The first is the influence that Jefferson had over the foundation of the country, and, in particular, the founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment to the Constitution (particularly the clause on the separation of Church and State). These documents form the basis of current partisan debates about the founding of the country and the relationship between religion and politics. Additionally, Jefferson was by most accounts not a mainstream Protestant, unlike much of the budding country in the 18th century. He was influenced by Unitarian doctrine as well as Deist viewpoints. Unitarianism developed in large part from Socinianism and is important to understand as a movement within the U.S., especially as it influenced early American leaders, including John Adams and Jefferson. Therefore, comparing and contrasting Unitarian theology with Socinianism will be important. Another reason I will be

looking into Jefferson specifically is because of the election of 1800. This election heavily politicized Jefferson's personal religion and vilified him for his beliefs. This emphasis on the President's religion continued to impact elections for over 200 years, and Jefferson's role in the election of 1800 has significant implications for how we view the religious beliefs and practices of current leaders, particularly in the United States.

Finally, in order to understand modern implications of this religious influence, I will look into some current issues, like pro-life ideals and the invocation of the First Amendment by evangelical or religiously minded people. There are many possibilities of where to focus in order to look at the influence of the separation of church and state. One option is studying the influence of Christianity in public spheres, such as prayer in schools or preventing marriage rights for gay people. I am also interested in the number of tele-evangelicals and members of the Religious Right who were praying for the outcome of the election of 2020 to be in favor of Donald Trump, especially as Trump seems to have an ambiguous Christian identification, switching from Presbyterian to non-denominational while in office.² There seems to be a conception for these believers that, through their prayers, God will directly be involved in the outcome of a political election, which is antithetical to the traditional interpretation of the separation of church and state. It is first important to understand the historical developments of religious toleration and separation of church and state, beginning with a specific religious group — Socinians.

The Protestant Reformation and Calvinism

Before discussing Socinianism and its founders, I will articulate the mainstream doctrine from which Socinus emerged. Throughout the sixteenth century, there was religious upheaval

² Daniel Silliman, "Trump Becomes the First President Since Eisenhower to Change Faiths in Office," *Christianity Today*.

throughout Europe against the Catholic Church. Among these reformers, Martin Luther was the first to attack what he saw as the corruption and abuses of the Catholic Church, perhaps most famously the use of indulgences. After Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation, there were many others who followed in his footsteps, refuting Catholic doctrines as well as the tenets that Luther posited. John Calvin thought Luther did not go far enough, adapting some of Luther's doctrines in addition to introducing his own. The belief system of Calvinism, to which Lelio Sozini, Faustus Socinus's uncle, initially subscribed, can be complex in some of the theological justifications it puts forward. Like Luther, Calvin accepted justification by faith and salvation through Scripture alone.³ At its core, Calvinism is pessimistic about the state of man and believes that after the fall of Adam, all humans are sinful, which ultimately emphasizes the absolute and all-encompassing power of God.⁴ Calvin was trying to rid Christianity of its supernatural elements, like the divine descent — something that Calvinists and Socinians had in common.⁵ Additionally, Calvin upheld the priesthood of all believers — an idea that each practicing Christian could find out for themselves the key to eternal life through reading the Scriptures.⁶ The Socinians use interpretation of Scripture to uphold some of their main claims as well.

Calvin is most widely known for his doctrine of predestination. Predestination is fundamentally tied to God's power because the power of salvation is entirely in God's hands.⁷ Calvin's argument about predestination follows from God's sovereignty and power, but gets complicated when thinking about the "elect" who are to actually receive salvation versus the

³ Justification by faith is the idea that it is by faith alone that Christians receive righteousness rather than through good works, and salvation through Scripture is how one can achieve that righteousness, through interpreting the Scriptures.

⁴ Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 112-114.

⁵ J. H. S. Kent, "The Socinian Tradition," *Sage Journal* 78, no. 657 (1975): 132.

⁶ John R. Crawford, "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21, no. 2 (1968): 145.

⁷ John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, ed. J.K.S Reid, 11-12.

offer of salvation for everyone.⁸ Christ's death atoned for only some, which is how only the "elect" would achieve eternal life according to predestination.⁹ Ultimately, the most important part of Calvin's beliefs to this project are those claims that 1) that Jesus is fully divine and 2) that through Christ's death there is the offer of salvation, even if only a few may actually partake. Additionally, Calvin's belief that humankind is fundamentally sinful and there is no way that humans could be redeemed without the power of Jesus or God is refuted by Socinians due to the Humanist background from which they derive their ideals. Calvinism is important to this overall project because it would become mainstream in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and the U.S., and, due to the markedly different theologies of these two groups, Socinians advocated for the separation of church and state to ensure a measure of protection against these mainstream groups.

Important figures in Socinianism

Understanding what influenced the founders of this generally obscure religious belief system is crucial because I am analyzing how this religion influenced other leaders and thinkers. Faustus Socinus formed the Polish Brethren in 1562, as the first organization in the Anti-Trinitarian movement. There were specific influences on Socinus that led him to these beliefs, and his uncle was one of the most important. Socinus and his uncle, Lelio Sozini, were both raised in Italy, where the Renaissance and Humanism movements began.¹⁰ Sozini initially questioned a lot of the doctrine that was mainstream in his time, alongside concerns about Calvinism, including predestination, immortality of the soul, and how Jesus could be the true

⁸ Ibid, 14.

⁹ M. Charles Bell, "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement," *The Evangelical Quarterly* (n.d.): 117.

¹⁰ For the sake of this paper, I will be referring to Fausto as "Socinus" and his uncle Lelio as "Sozini."

Messiah if he told the disciples not to tell anyone that he was God on Earth.¹¹ Alx Gordon, writing in 1876, eloquently states Sozini's theological tendencies that ultimately influenced his nephew:

[Sozini] describes the manifestation of the Son of God and the glorification of the human nature in Christ as accomplished for its own sake, thus making it the exhibition of a perfection, and not simply the expedient of a repair. Above all, he treats the Atonement on an entirely new ground; maintains that Christ had merit, not by reason of his being God, but inasmuch as he was man; that his merit, insufficient and finite in itself, availed for the purposes of redemption because it was accepted as such by the Divine volition; and thus that a good angel, or a man begotten without sin, might have served as our Redeemer had God so pleased.¹²

Because Sozini treated “the Atonement on an entirely new ground,” he effectively refuted some of the Reformation ideas that had become very popular. Sozini blends Humanist ideals with the fact that Jesus had “merit” distinctly because he was a man — if Christ did not have this merit, he would not have been sent by God to take human form. This is a key aspect of questioning the status of Jesus's humanity and divinity by Sozini, and therefore also Socinus, that ultimately led them to reject Jesus's divinity in a controversial move at the time. These ideas about Christ and the Atonement went on to greatly influence the theology of the Polish Brethren as described by Socinus. Sozini provided Socinus with his Dissertation on the Sacraments and annotations on the Scriptures, so there was clearly an exchange of ideas between the two. The fact that the Atonement was a concept that later Socinus seems to adopt shows that Sozini had a great influence on his nephew.

The most consequential aspect of Sozini's upbringing is the influence of Italian Humanism. As Earl Morse Wilbur, one of the first scholars on Socinianism, describes the

¹¹ The verses where this happens include: Matthew 16:20, Mark 8:30, Luke 9:21
From Alx Gordon “The Sozzini and Their School” *The Theological Review*

¹² Alx Gordon, “The Sozzini and Their School,” *The Theological Review: a journal of religious thought and life*, (July 1876): 29.

doctrine of Socinianism, Socinian theology can be understood as a lay scholar's (in this case in particular, Socinus's) plain and straightforward interpretation of the Scriptures, overlaid onto the background of Italian Humanism, which was the renewal in European learning of the study of ancient Greco-Roman culture.¹³ Part of the Humanist movement relates to going back to the study of classical scholarship.¹⁴ However, some scholars today consider Humanism to be an entirely new philosophy specific to the Renaissance.¹⁵ Scholars of the time wrote on a variety of moral and religious issues that ultimately stressed the importance of *human* virtues, rather than divine virtues.¹⁶ This Humanist background led Sozini to refute mainstream atonement theology that Christians usually promoted in the 16th century. Rather, there is emphasis placed on the individual's ability to achieve salvation by following the Scriptures. Because Scriptures have the power to offer salvation, there is an added focus on the autonomy of an individual in Socinianism. The autonomy of individuals is important to the conception of early America because each individual has the opportunity to express their own belief system, rather than conform to a state religion. I am looking at the influence of the religious ideas of Socinus himself, so it is important to see his ideas were not posited in a vacuum.

Poland and Religious Toleration

Poland was the location where Socinus came together with those sympathetic to his ideas to found Socinianism – in fact, the founding *had* to occur in Poland because of the unusual religious toleration present in Poland. Although it might seem strange that someone with a

¹³ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its Antecedents*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), 416.

¹⁴ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Humanism*, 350.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 353.

¹⁶ Tony Davies, *Humanism*, Routledge (London: 1997), 28.

Humanist background from Italy landed in Poland to begin a subversive belief system based on Christianity, Poland served as a model for the relationship between religion and politics. Firstly, Italian influence was present in Poland already because King Sigismund I was wed to Bona Sforza, a daughter of the Duke of Milan.¹⁷ There had been a growing Anti-Trinitarian movement in Poland prior to Socinus's arrival, as well as problems within the Catholic Church in Poland.¹⁸ Sozini visited Poland in 1551 and befriended a government official under the tolerant government of Sigismund II (son of Sigismund I), and it was through this government connection that space in Poland for Socinians was secured. Religious freedom and toleration are important for Socinianism as a whole, especially in terms of the relationship between political life and religious life, so the toleration of radical religions in Poland was significant. It would follow that Socinianism could flourish in a country where the King was mostly unwilling to get involved in religious affairs and was inclined to allow religious freedom. Poland's political context allowed Socinianism to thrive and helped to foster the exchange of ideas between important figures who ultimately brought Socinian ideas into England and, later, America. The religious toleration that Poland upheld was a very substantial factor in the growth and spread of Socinian ideas.

Troubles began brewing in Poland related to the growing corruption and wealth of the Catholic Church, which coincided with new doctrines of Protestantism around the 1540s.¹⁹ After tolerant King Sigismund I opened the door for more radical groups of Christians to enter Poland, the Catholic church responded with excommunication and condemnation to death for

¹⁷ Wilbur, *Socinian and its Antecedents*, 268.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 270.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 271-272.

“heretics.”²⁰ This led the King to issue a decree that forbade the Catholic Church hierarchy from civil punishment, meaning that the Catholic Church could only rule on religious matters, rather than civil matters.²¹ A temporary arrangement led to religious freedom for commoners, so reformers who ventured into Poland were safe from persecution.²² After the King died in 1548, the Warsaw Convention enacted the *pax dissidentium* on January 28, which formally protected different religious groups in order to keep the internal peace in Poland, especially since the Catholic Church was vying for the throne and religious wars were being waged in Germany.²³ The *pax dissidentium* also had to be upheld by subsequent kings, so it ensured further protections for the more radical Christian groups that established themselves there.²⁴ This level of acceptance for religious groups allowed Socinianism to flourish and organize, and provided a civic model of religious toleration that made its way into Socinian thought.

Socinian Theology

A good place to begin an explanation of Socinian theology may be the Racovian Catechism, because it was the method or format that was the most responsible for the spread of Socinianism — and is part of the reason that these ideas were not exclusive to Poland. Though non-traditional, the Racovian Catechism defines each of the main tenets of Socinianism as all catechisms are structured, in a question and answer form.²⁵ Generally speaking, the Catechism is centered on “defining Christian religion as a divinely revealed way of attaining that [eternal]

²⁰ Marian Hillar, “Poland’s Contribution to the Reformation: Socinians and their Ideas on Religious Freedom,” *The Polish Review* 449.

²¹ *Ibid*, 450.

²² Wilbur, *Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 275-276.

²³ Hillar, “Poland’s Contributions,” 450.

²⁴ George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 737.

²⁵ Wilbur, *Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 410. Racovian refers to the doctrines that are Socinian.

life.”²⁶ The revelation that is made in the New Testament demonstrates that the founder of Christianity, Jesus, is authenticated by God — and this is how Christianity has its truth.²⁷ Because of this authentication of Jesus by God, the Scriptures contain all of the information necessary for any person to gain that eternal salvation.²⁸ Socinian Christology adopted the idea that despite that Jesus is not divine, he is still important to the Christian tradition. Christ shows people how to return to God by living without sin — Christ’s authority comes from the fact that God gave him the power to perform miracles.²⁹ This is, in short, how Socinians can call themselves Christian — because of the revelation to eternal life through Jesus as he was authenticated and given gifts by God.

Alongside this description of revelation in the Scriptures, the Catechism lays out other key Socinian doctrines. The Catechism refutes most other views of the Atonement: faith is not just believing, but living as close to how Jesus did as possible; man has free will; original sin is not proved; predestination is wrong.³⁰ The Racovian Catechism is remarkable because it was also used as a means to spread the Socinian ideas into England from their origin in Poland, as its first English translation was dedicated to the English King James I.³¹ Though this section will not delve into each of these facets, the remainder will dive mainly into the Christology and Anti-Trinitarianism as explained by Socinus.

²⁶ Ibid, 412.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 414.

³⁰ Ibid, 414-415.

³¹ McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, 35.

Socinian Christology

Moving into the specific doctrine of Socinianism, Socinus's views about the personhood of Christ were more significant and subversive than the Anti-Trinitarian beliefs he held. There are many antecedents to the Anti-Trinitarian belief system that sparked Socinus to form a cohesive group around those beliefs. It was not a new idea that Socinus and his uncle imagined, but, rather, it stemmed from work that prior theologians and philosophers had done in Europe through the Protestant Reformation. The Socinians did contribute to the Anti-Trinitarianism that already existed, mostly through their organization and the Racovian Catechism. The two ideas are related, but it is key to understand the Christology behind Socinianism in order to grasp why people at the time believed it to be heretical and dangerous.

With that being said, it follows to turn to how Socinians actually viewed Jesus the Christ. Within the realm of Christology, there are differences in beliefs about the personhood of Jesus depending on a certain denomination, certain time period, or even certain individual. Christology is generally, for mainstream Protestants and Catholics, "high" — where a high Christology means that the beliefs about Jesus are that he was fully divine and preexisted as Logos (the Word) as explained in John.³² John 1:1 describes "The Word" as being both with God and God Godself. This means that the entity of "The Word" is divine because it is a part of God, and ultimately, in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh."³³ This points to Jesus's divinity for mainstream Christians, and his preexistence is assumed because the timeline says that "[The Word] was with God in the beginning."³⁴ In order for "The Word" to exist with God in the beginning, that entity must be divine and exist prior to its Earthly incarnation, which is Jesus.

³² John 1 NIV

³³ John 1:14 NIV

³⁴ John 1:2 NIV

The beliefs presented by the first chapter of John sum up a high Christological belief system because, in it, Jesus is fully divine and existed with God and as God before he came to Earth as a human incarnation.

The alternative to a high Christology is a “low” Christology, which does not believe Jesus was fully divine. Socinians fall in the low Christological understanding, where the preexistence of Christ is denied, and Jesus’s divinity is rejected. Socinians claim there is no basis for Jesus’s divinity because that idea has no textual proof in the Scriptures. Rather, throughout the Scriptures, Jesus is portrayed as merely a man.³⁵ Simon Budney, one of Socinus’s main disciples, thoroughly studied the New Testament and ultimately revised the text to highlight inconsistencies and corruptions throughout the New Testament.³⁶ The argument for Christ’s full humanity from Budney is that Jesus was descended from the line of David:

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: ... David was the father of Solomon... and *Jacob the father of Joseph*, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.³⁷

This excerpt from Matthew is important because it traces Jesus’s bloodline through Joseph, his father. If this genealogy can be trusted, then the virgin birth must not be true because Jesus is the descendant of David through his father’s line, not Mary’s line. Because Joseph is cited within a genealogy of Jesus, there is a claim being made by the Scriptures that Jesus, like any other human, was born to a human mother and father. Socinians used this passage to advocate for Jesus’s humanity over his divinity, as well as to refute the immaculate conception.³⁸ Because

³⁵ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 562.

³⁶ Wilbur, *Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 369.

³⁷ Matthew 1:1-17 NIV Italics mine

³⁸ The immaculate conception is a dogma that states that Mary, Jesus’s mother, was conceived without sin so that Jesus could be born without Original Sin as inherited from his mother, as well as being born of a virgin.

there is a citation of the patrilineal descent of Jesus's birth, then Joseph must have been his father, and Mary conceived Jesus in the same way that all other women conceive.

In addition to promoting Scriptural evidence of Jesus's humanity, Socinus also rejected the preexistence of Christ.³⁹ The preexistence was presupposed especially in the first section of John, as stated above. The reason that this belief is vital for mainstream Protestants is because it is how they claim the Messianic tradition from the Jewish texts. If Christ always already existed in heaven, then he could easily be fulfilling the prophecies of the Messiah predicted by numerous prophets in the Hebrew Bible. However, because Socinians did not believe Christ was divine and rejected the Trinity, there is no reason for him to have preexisted, even if he is the Messiah. Additionally, denying Christ's preexistence also promotes ideas of Humanism, as it is a part of Christ's human nature that he did *not* exist specially before coming to Earth. If he had preexisted, then it would be plausible that he was in some way divine, which Socinians deny. Socinians reversed the *descent* of Jesus from heaven (as he preexisted) to an *ascent* of Jesus into heaven during the baptism described in John 3:13.⁴⁰ This new religious "myth" about Jesus's baptismal ascent was unique to Socinus, and ultimately faded with Unitarian doctrine — however, it is interesting to see the development of the idea of Christ's personhood. The denial of Christ's preexistence is another way in which Socinians differed from the mainstream Christian belief systems of the time. This is noteworthy because it again refutes ideas about Jesus's divinity and adds to the Socinian viewpoint that Jesus was not predetermined to be divine, but, rather, that the Christ was merely a man.

³⁹ Kent, "The Socinian Tradition," 5.

⁴⁰ Kent, "The Socinian Tradition," 5; also, John 3:13 reads "no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven."

For many mainstream Protestants from the 16th century forward, it can be difficult to understand based on Socinian Christology how Socinians still qualify as Christian. Accepting Jesus's humanity and rejecting his divinity does not prevent Jesus, in a Socinian understanding, from being a prophet or spiritually chosen by God.⁴¹ They believed that Jesus was still the Messiah but rejected that he was divine in any way (or, at least, no more divine than any other believer). The Messiah, as is understood in a first-century religious context, is the person promised by God to deliver the Hebrew nation to salvation. This definition does not necessitate that person to be divine, but implies, rather, that this person was chosen by God. The Socinians did claim that Jesus was chosen by God as evidenced by the Scriptural miracles he could perform, which still makes them Christians if one takes a broad view (although through the years many other denominations, including Calvinists, would align Socinianism with atheism).⁴² Jesus's miracles were not rejected by the Socinians, especially because of their understanding of the Scriptures as being entirely accessible to those who are willing to do the work to understand the message of the Scriptures. As mentioned in the Racovian Catechism, being faithful is trying to live like Jesus — as God's chosen — lived, not simply believing a set of nonsensical views like (in Socinians' opinion) the Trinity.

This understanding of the Christ is important as it relates to the Anti-Trinitarian views of Socinianism, but also because it distinguished Socinians from other Anti-Trinitarians. The focus on Jesus's full humanity and the rejection of his Satisfaction of God's "bloodlust" indicates in part the Socinian doubt of the Trinity.⁴³ If Jesus need not be fully divine to deliver a nation or be chosen as special by God, then the Trinity is unnecessary. This view of Jesus is also crucial

⁴¹ Kent, "The Socinian Tradition," 5.

⁴² Wilbur, *Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 415.

⁴³ For more, see "The Satisfaction of Christ" from Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (part 3, chapter 7)

because it separates the Socinians from the later American Unitarians — and what brings them together is their Anti-Trinitarian beliefs.⁴⁴ Their Christology is also what upset other Christians throughout Europe, even more so than their Anti-Trinitarianism, because it was mostly unique to Socinians, whereas Anti-Trinitarianism had been a movement for a number different groups.⁴⁵ Because their Christology was so different from the mainstream, Socinians essentially required some protection from the state to avoid persecution from more dominant Christian groups, so, for that reason, the separation of church and state became important to Socinian believers.

Socinian Anti-Trinitarianism

Wrapped in the belief that Christ is not divine is Anti-Trinitarianism. Significant to Socinian theology is the Anti-Trinitarianism that came before Socinus and took on many forms prior to the arrival of Socinianism in the sphere of Restorationist Christians. Restorationist Christians are those who want to “restore” Christianity to its earliest conception, and the reason that Anti-Trinitarians often fall into this category is based on the lack of textual evidence for the Trinity in the Bible. There are many antecedents to this belief, but for the sake of brevity, I will be focusing on only the Socinian understanding of the Trinity.⁴⁶ The reason I will concentrate

⁴⁴ J. D. Bowers, *Joseph Priestley and English Unitarianism in America*, (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press: 2007): 155.

⁴⁵ Some Anti-Trinitarian sects include Arianism, followers of Severtus, the Polish Minor Church, early Anabaptists and Mennonites, and later, Unitarians and Latter-Day Saints.

⁴⁶ Some of the antecedents to Anti-Trinitarianism include Arianism, which is consistently interchanged with Socinianism, which harkened back to Arius when he sparked the Arian Controversy in the 4th century. The controversy was against the Council of Nicaea, and it was Arius who challenged the idea of Jesus being divine rather than human. Closer to the time of Socinus, 16th century Anti-Trinitarians include the Followers of Severtus, and he began criticizing the doctrine of the Trinity in 1531. Additionally, some of the early Anabaptists had Anti-Trinitarian leanings when they rose in 1525, earlier than Socinus wrote. For more, see Wilbur, *Socinianism and Its Antecedents*.

specifically on Socinus is because he was the first to organize those who shared his beliefs into the Polish Brethren.⁴⁷

The argument for the Trinity from a Trinitarian point of view is that God is a single figure with three parts: The Father (Godself), the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. The idea is that the three exist as one “being,” but also that the one “being” exists in all three figures. From a Socinian point of view, these mental gymnastics are unnecessary and not based in Scripture, especially as one of the charges of a Christian is to love only God.⁴⁸

The emphasis on the Scriptures led Socinus to refute the doctrine of the Trinity because there is no mention of Jesus being divine in the Scriptures. Any evidence of Jesus’s divinity in Scripture is unclear, such as being called Emmanuel, or “God is with us.”⁴⁹ This could mean that the presence of God is with Jesus as well as those he influences. In Socinian theology, it is considered misleading to assume that this means that Christ is a literal incarnation of God, especially because mainstream theology believes God is with them in different capacities, despite Jesus no longer walking the Earth. Though God called Jesus his son frequently, this is also ambiguous, as all believers in Christ are also “children of God.”⁵⁰ There is not an inherent transfer of divinity through the claiming of parentage by God for humans. From a Christian point of view, there is plenty of reason for God to call all humans his children because he made every person. Alternatively, some of the verses where Jesus is more clearly portrayed as divine are usually due to translations or later additions to the text. As an example, the first chapter of John

⁴⁷ Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 139.

⁴⁸ Like, for example, Mark 12:33 “and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

⁴⁹ Matthew 1:23

⁵⁰ There are a lot of verses that reference this, but even looking into one of them, like 1 John 3:1 “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called *children of God!* And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

was likely added later to represent a higher Christology.⁵¹ So therefore, it follows from a Socinian perspective on the Christ that the doctrine of the Trinity is irrational because there is no proof in the original Scriptures that Jesus was in fact divine.

It also rationally does not make sense for there to be three-in-one or one-in-three if someone considers Jesus to be fully human and not divine. On top of the doubt about Jesus's divinity stemming from a Scriptural standpoint, it does not follow if one believes that Jesus was human for him to be a part of the complex, challenging theology of the Trinity. If, as discussed above, a group believes in a low Christology where Jesus is entirely human, then giving him reverence as God in the model of the Trinity makes no rational sense. Because of the emphasis on rationality for Socinus and his Brethren (thanks to the influence of Humanism), they would clearly be inclined to deny something that does not make sense from a rational standpoint. Jesus being in the Trinity is contingent on the Scriptural evidence of the Trinity or of his being divine — and there is no evidence for either contingency.

The unity of God is also stressed by Socinians, especially in terms of the monotheistic beliefs that Christians uphold.⁵² The Trinity on its face does not seem like an entirely monotheistic concept to Anti-Trinitarians — plainly, there are three gods, and Trinitarian Christians attempt to explain that away with an impossible personhood argument. Because the Trinity is simultaneously three-in-one and one-in-three, it may seem that there are polytheistic implications about who (or what) God is. It then takes a lot of rationalization to claim that the religion is still monotheistic with a god that is more than one in some ways. This is what Socinians wanted to avoid, so they ultimately stressed the importance of the “one-ness” of God

⁵¹ Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 185.

⁵² As an interesting aside, Muslims commonly refer to Christians as “polytheist” due to Trinitarian arguments.

and rejected the Trinity. Socinians' Anti-Trinitarianism is crucial to the doctrine of separation of church and state precisely because this is an unorthodox view of the Trinity that caused Socinians to be subject to persecution from states where religion had to be uniform. In order for them to peacefully live within a society without being persecuted, there had to be some toleration and religious freedom. Without separation, a non-mainstream religion would be subject to discipline from the state as a violation of law. In that time, the connection between separation of church and state and religious freedom was so key because if there was a state that was orthodox, any unorthodox view would be a threat, and religious groups were often persecuted for those beliefs.

Socinian Atonement Theology

For the sake of clarity and brevity, I will not be discussing all of the various aspects of the theology around Atonement for Socinians. Rather, this section will focus largely on the Socinian rejection of Hell. First however, it is critical to establish the focus for Socinians on the resurrection of Jesus, as it is related to both atonement theology (or perhaps the lack thereof in Socinianism) and the conception of Hell. It may seem that there is no use for a Socinian to focus on Jesus's death and resurrection because they do not believe in Christ's divinity. However, in a Socinian understanding, the crucifixion confirmed Jesus's status as a human being, but the resurrection demonstrated that he was God's chosen messenger, proving the existence of eternal life. This step is a necessary part of Socinian doctrine, because otherwise the religion would *only* focus on moral responsibility and natural reason, and therefore be separate from Christianity and be instead a kind of secularism.

While moral responsibility and natural reason are crucial in Socinian teachings, they are not enough to create a full religious doctrine — that is where the importance of Christ’s teachings and resurrection come into play.⁵³ The resurrection does not exemplify Christ’s atonement for the sins of humans, but rather the proof that there is something after death for the faithful to God. Sozini, who influenced Socinus, described Jesus’s death as follows:

the Savior’s death as the seal of his exemplary life, and more especially as the gate of his entrance to a heaven thus opened to his followers; when he removed the ground of the substitution theory by declaring that God asks not punishment, but only repentance, as the condition of His forgiveness; when finally, he destroyed the possibility of a pre-ordained selection of candidates for heaven, by maintaining that the conduct of responsible agents is incalculable by omniscience, does not ‘come within the scope of what may be known, even by an Infinite Being.’⁵⁴

Because “God asks not punishment, but only repentance,” there is an offering of eternal life for anyone who is willing to repent. This negates predestination, as Calvinism posits, and the entire threat of Hell, as most other Christians believe. There is no need for Hell in this schema, both because all “conduct” by all “responsible agents” cannot be known, and because God offers everyone forgiveness, so there is no need for eternal punishment. Relatedly, there is no predestination because agents’ conduct cannot be known, but also because of human responsibility and rationality — everyone can achieve salvation for themselves through the Scriptures. As Sozini claims, Jesus’s death leads to the opening of heaven’s gates for everyone on the condition of repentance. The fact that there is no punishment schema makes Socinianism stand out.

⁵³ Crimmins, *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought*, 46.

⁵⁴ Alx Gordon, “The Sozzini and Their School,” *The Theological Review: a journal of religious thought and life*, no. 2 (Oct 1879): 531.

Knowing that there is an afterlife for Socinians, it is markedly unusual for Christians at this time to reject the concept of Hell.⁵⁵ As has been mentioned above, Socinians heavily emphasized the importance of moral responsibility and rationality. With an emphasis on each individual's ability to come to Christianity using the Scriptures, there is no longer a purpose for the atonement in which Jesus died for the sins of humanity.⁵⁶ This might be of concern for mainstream Christian believers because it might raise issues with the notion of Hell in understanding — Jesus sacrificed himself in order to save humankind from the eternal damnation awaiting people in Hell. Socinians dealt with the problem of Hell by essentially eliminating it, insisting on and emphasizing God's justice. If God is just, there is no reason for people to suffer eternally; rather the souls of such sinners would be entirely eliminated.⁵⁷ The ultimate punishment for sins according to a Socinian would be to simply not exist any longer — eternal death. This doctrine and understanding of Hell also work to set Socinians apart from mainstream Christianity and add to the perceived threat of their religious beliefs.

The reason that Socinians' elimination of Hell would be a threat to the status quo — where if one does not confess their sins in a timely manner, they are subject to eternal damnation — is that this schema could draw people into the religion. It is reasonable to picture someone who lived in the 16th century being in constant fear of their soul being damned to Hell, as their priest or minister informed them. This is because, as mainstream Protestantism and Catholicism both posit, humans are by nature sinful, and all humans have inherited the original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden.⁵⁸ So a 16th century Christian would be worried about going to Hell either

⁵⁵ I am unaware of any other Christian denominations in this time period that reject Hell entirely.

⁵⁶ Crimmins, *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought*, 45.

⁵⁷ Crimmins, *Religion*, 45; Whiston 1740, *Eternity*, 49.

⁵⁸ Original sin is, briefly, based on the second chapter of Genesis when Adam and Eve disobeyed God to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and were subsequently banished from the Garden of Eden. Due to the fact that they were

because of their own sins or because of the original sin that all humans possess. This could conceivably be a difficult way to live — where every action of each individual is under scrutiny and most of those actions will ultimately lead to damnation rather than salvation. Even further, under Calvinism, one may go to Hell simply because God deems it so that only the few “elect” go to heaven. So, if this 16th century person were exposed to Socinianism, a theology where salvation is possible for everyone and the threat of Hell is eliminated, this doctrine might seem very appealing. Socinianism in this way might draw more followers away from the status quo and into a “heretical” belief system, according to mainstream denominations. This becomes a threat to those denominations, and thus there was a lot of work done to convince people of the heretical nature of Socinianism, which in part is how “heretic” and “Socinian” became nearly synonymous with each other leading up to the English Civil War. The Socinian understanding of Hell, Christology, and Anti-Trinitarianism are important for the separation of church and state because they might require some degree of separation in order to have the protection from persecution. If a mainstream belief system is allowed by the state to persecute “heretics,” then Socinians are in direct danger, so in order to have that protection, they would want to ensure a separation of religion and politics.

Socinian Pacifism

For Socinus, the more important reason for separation of church and state than protection from persecution was his pacifism. There are varying degrees of pacifism — some where self-defense may allow a pacifist to fight back, some where only defense is permissible, and some

tempted to eat from the Tree and did so, disobeying God, all humans are therefore sinful because this first sin was passed down into the children of Adam and Eve because they had the knowledge from the Tree of Knowledge.

where no action is permitted (where a pacifist must just suffer the attack).⁵⁹ The last degree is what Socinus advocated in his theology. The ideas come from the use of Jesus Christ as an example. Jesus gave a central commandment, to love everyone, and was generally pacifist in his lifetime.⁶⁰ Christ advocated obedience to the state, but he emphasized paying tribute rather than fighting for the affairs of the state.⁶¹ As he was being crucified for sedition, he did not fight back, even in his own defense. This is the basis of Socinus's pacifist movement — the example and personhood of Jesus. This extreme pacifism caused a major break between the Socinian and Anti-Trinitarian movements. Socinians were by no means the only pacifist Christian group — they were among a plethora of groups, ranging from well-known groups, like the Quakers and Amish, to lesser known groups, like the Dunkers.⁶² However, Socinus was so committed to the ideal of full pacifism that he became nearly fanatic, arguing that even self-defense should not be permitted.⁶³ Ultimately, this intense pacifism fizzled among the Polish Brethren once Socinus died, and they adopted a less intense version of pacifism, where self-defense was permissible and involvement in stately affairs is not necessarily condemned.

Ultimately Socinus did relax some of his more intense pacifist beliefs. An opponent to Socinus on war included Palaeologus, who believed that the Racovians became deserters and cowards by refusing to go to war — especially as Christ advocated obedience and rendering to the state what is the state's.⁶⁴ Socinus responded to Palaeologus by drawing on Scripture,

⁵⁹ Brock, *Dilemmas of a Socinian pacifist*, 191

⁶⁰ I am unaware as of now how Socinus dealt with the un-pacifist incident where Jesus flipped a table in the synagogue (see Matthew 21:12-13 or Mark 11:15-18). Perhaps Socinus never fully explained it or explained it away as inconsistencies.

⁶¹ Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, 57.

⁶² Quaker pacifism generally looks like actively promoting peace and condemning all violence and war but are not completely withdrawn or separate from civil society. Amish pacifism stresses an even more intense separation of religious life from civil life as well as war. The Dunkers stressed pacifism, alongside full immersion during baptism, how they got their namesake, as well as total abstinence.

⁶³ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 735-736.

⁶⁴ Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, 55; Matthew 22:15-22

emphasizing the actual actions of Christ, as portrayed in the Bible, especially since Christ is infallible where state leaders and kings could be led astray.⁶⁵ For Socinus, one of Christ's strongest commandments is to love one's neighbor, and, for Socinus, that means that no Christian could go to war, no matter whether or not the war is just.⁶⁶ As for the concern of Christians withdrawing from the world by not involving themselves with stately affairs, Socinus actually holds that as long as the Christian is not putting themselves above Christ and the Christian is not asked to take part in bloodshed, then the Christian could in fact hold office.⁶⁷ However, this raises a key problem for Socinians — that holding office is always tied to bloodshed and related to obtaining and holding power that could corrupt even a devout Christian. The two conditions that Socinus puts forward for a Christian to hold office essentially prevent him from holding office almost entirely. There is not a direct prohibition on holding office or being involved in stately affairs, but because Socinus posits conditions that make it difficult, if not impossible, for Socinians to hold office, then they essentially cannot. This idea that involvement in the state is nearly prohibited for Socinians is important to the goal of this project because it shows that from a religious perspective, there is reason to avoid being involved in stately affairs. For a group to so discourage political activity shows that there is a major concern about the relationship between religion and politics, and that concern informed early American thinkers considering the need for the separation of the two disciplines in the new country.

Alongside the emphasis on pacifism, Socinian doctrine spread into a stance against involvement of any affairs within the state, because any involvement in the state could lead a person to reasonably need to raise arms for protection.⁶⁸ Though people should be obedient to the

⁶⁵ Ibid, 84-85.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 86.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 87.

⁶⁸ Brock, *Dilemmas of a Socinian Pacifist*, 191.

state, based on Christ's example, this does not mean that they must live *within* the state — rather, because these people are devoted to Christ, they can flourish without the state's authority over them.⁶⁹ It is within this stance against involvement in stately affairs that the separation of church and state becomes especially salient.⁷⁰ Where a complete separation was not possible, Anti-Trinitarians (among other groups) espoused at least “the freedom of conscience and the withholding of coercion in the realm of religion.”⁷¹ The involvement in state affairs leads people to act against the example that Jesus set, and in order to preserve liberty to do as Jesus did, the church and state must be separate. Because the state is not a Christian organization, stately motives are incompatible with true Christian motives — to uphold the Kingdom of God and realize Christ's teachings.⁷² Additionally, the doctrine of separation of church and state is necessary for Socinians to exist. Because Socinus advocates for obedience to the state and full pacifism, not even for self-defense, if a king demands his people convert to his religion, the Socinian must obey rather than “[fly] to arms” as Catholics and Calvinists do.⁷³ In order for there to be peace in a nation *and* for pacifists like Socinians to exist in a particular state, there must be a separation between church and state.

The separation of church and state would be unique to America in the eighteenth century, just as toleration was essentially unique to Poland in the sixteenth century. Most other countries in Europe were monarchies, but in essence were theocracies, especially when one considers England from the second half of the sixteenth century (following the Henrician Reformation) until now. Socinus was based out of Poland because the Polish ideas of religious toleration were

⁶⁹ Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, 59.

⁷⁰ Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 618.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, 91.

⁷³ Kot, *Socinianism in Poland*, 92.

as close to a nation with separation of church and state as the founders of Socinianism could be. However, the toleration of different religious sects that was displayed in Poland did influence many people across Europe, particularly in England, as it led to the English Civil War, to which I will turn in the next chapter. Clearly, this doctrine and practice of separation of church and state became especially important as these ideas influenced American leaders and thinkers as they considered the relationship between religion and politics in the building of the country of America.

Getting to England

Socinian beliefs and doctrines did not stay in Poland, however. Socinianism became influential in Holland, and later in England, as well. The transmission of these ideas happened subtly, through spy networks and individuals publishing works anonymously, as these ideas were generally perceived as dangerous and problematic. The first known introduction of Socinian ideas into England was in 1574, via a letter written by Simon Budney to John Foxe, carried by Ralph Rutter. However, due to the religious atmosphere at that time in England, these ideas stayed underground and spread mostly in educated and clandestine circles. It was not until the English Civil War that people began outright using the term Socinian. Most importantly, even as Anti-Trinitarianism spread subversively, the push for religious toleration and separation of church and state was crucial for English political thinkers. This is ultimately what came to the forefront during the Civil War, and what eventually influenced early American leaders as they established a new government.

Chapter 2: The Role of Socinianism in Early Modern England through the Civil War

This chapter will focus on the role of Socinianism through early modern English history. As we move away from the Polish Brethren, the line blurs between discussing real people who identify themselves as “Socinian” and those who were influenced by Socinian ideas, but would not claim Socinianism as a religious belief. This is because Socinians were considered heretics, and one known Socinian, Francis Kett, was burned for having these heretical ideas at the end of the sixteenth century. Throughout the seventeenth century in England, and later in the eighteenth century in early America, the ideas from Socinianism become more important for this project. While a few do claim Socinianism as a title for their religious beliefs, and others claim Unitarianism, it is more important now to consider Socinianism as a movement, or an ethos, rather than as groups of believers proselytizing specific Anti-Trinitarian doctrines. Some scholars refer to Socinianism throughout England as more of a “spectre” than a real sect of people.⁷⁴ The influence of the radical ideas is still very significant, and it is vital to understand the way in which these influence mainstream ideas and culture.

The goal of this chapter is to set up the context for how Socinianism spread in England and the methods of infiltration that initially brought it to Britain. The first known introduction of Socinianism to England happened in 1574, in the midst of Elizabeth’s reign. The English Reformation took place during Henry VIII’s reign, and his only son Edward VI ruled for six years with a push for more radical Protestantism, followed by a brief and bloody attempt to re-Catholicize the nation by Henry’s eldest daughter Mary. This ended with the reign of his second daughter Elizabeth, who restored England back to mainstream Protestantism. When Elizabeth I died, she did not have any heirs, and the throne went to James I, who was king of Scotland.

⁷⁴ I am thinking specifically of the scholars Sarah Mortimer and Herbert John McLachlan, both of whom were influential throughout this chapter.

James placed a growing emphasis on toleration, or at least attempts at toleration, but once the Gunpowder Plot was revealed in November of 1605, the push for toleration was weakened due to James I's concern for his own safety. Religious tensions throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns ultimately set the stage for the English Civil War, in which Royalists and Parliamentarians used Socinianism as an accusation of heresy towards the other side as a way to discredit the opposition.

The discourse surrounding Socinianism shifted through the English Civil War from specific theology to a way for people to structure arguments for toleration in political arguments. As it turned out, Royalists were able to use Socinian political arguments for separation of church and state. This caused Parliamentarian's concern about the danger of the "heretical" Socinians, which ultimately caused the term Socinianism to fall out of the lexicon in mid-seventeenth century England.

Religious atmosphere in England dating back to Henry VIII

Before understanding the relationship between politics and religion in the seventeenth century, it is important to understand the Reformation in England during the Tudor period, beginning with Henry VIII. Prior to Henry VIII, England was a Catholic country, like many other European nations. Henry VIII began his reign married to Catherine of Aragon, who had been previously married to his brother Arthur. Henry VIII fathered a daughter, Princess Mary, with Catherine of Aragon, but had no sons with her. His head was infamously turned by Anne Boleyn, and he then tried to annul the marriage with Catherine on the grounds that she had consummated the marriage with Arthur, and it was against the Bible — citing Leviticus⁷⁵ — for

⁷⁵ Leviticus 18:16: "Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother."

Henry VIII to have married her, which was why they had failed to produce a son. The Catholic church rejected the request by Henry VIII to annul the marriage, as Catherine was a devout Spanish Catholic and he'd already gotten papal dispensation to marry her in the first place. Therefore the Pope would have had to contradict an earlier edict to annul the marriage, which he did not want to do. This drove Henry VIII to split with the Catholic church, and he excommunicated the Pope as the Pope excommunicated Henry VIII. Henry VIII established the Church of England, in which the crown was both the head of state and the head of the church. The English Reformation was therefore related to Henry VIII's political motivations to both father a son and divorce Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn.

Once this split happened, at a similar time to when the Protestant Reformation was spreading across Europe, England was introduced to a more widespread Protestantism. These churches and believers were on the rise and began working in government and establishing religious diversity in England and, later, under Edward VI's and Elizabeth's reigns, persecuting Catholics. Once Henry VIII died, his only son, Edward, became king. Edward was young, and he and his Lord Protectors pushed more firmly for Protestantism, removing Catholic artifacts from churches and even whitewashing icons on church walls. When Edward VI died, Henry's oldest legitimate child, Mary, became Queen. Mary had remained a devout Catholic throughout her childhood and tried to reinstate Catholicism. Though she never officially reinstated the Pope, she did claim Catholicism to be the official religion of England once more, and it was under her reign that about 300 Protestants were martyred for their faith. This is why her five-year reign is most remembered for her "bloodiness." These persecutions meant that her half-sister, Elizabeth, was more inclined to turn a blind eye towards men's private religion, rather than directly burn people for heresy, so long as no one was openly Catholic. Because Elizabeth generally did not

inquire into private religious beliefs, this creates an opportunity for Socinianism to spread, albeit quietly, through England. Men could privately learn of Socinian doctrines and agree with them privately, so long as they publicly conformed religiously to mainstream beliefs.

Getting from Poland to England

The religious and political situation in England (and the Netherlands) made it possible for Socinianism and Socinian ideas to take root. One of the ways that this happened was through individuals who encountered Socinian ideas in Poland and returned to England inspired by those ideas. These were often English spies and merchants who may or may not have been instructed to go to Poland, including two men named Ralph Rutter and Thomas Glover, who were spies and members of the Muscovy Company trading with Russia. Not only were English citizens going into Poland in order to gain information and encountering Socinian ideas, but certain people were intentionally spreading Socinianism into England as it was poised to experience religious change. Henry VIII had opened the door for the Church of England and changed the way that religion was used in England for political purposes. His actions ultimately, during the reigns of his son and second daughter, caused widespread persecution of Catholics and made the relationship between Catholics and Protestants fraught so that toleration was difficult to achieve, but it was nevertheless an attractive idea to people who had experienced religious persecution on both the Catholic and Protestant sides from Edward to Mary to Elizabeth.

Another important role in the spread of Socinian ideas to England from Poland is the conception that English people had of Poland. Because of the treatment of religion in Poland, where it was tolerated by the state, it had become known around Europe as a site of religious plurality. Ultimately, Poland is also important insofar as it existed in the imagination of English

citizens, especially during the height of the English Civil War. Religious toleration in Poland played an important part of the cultural understanding of England, making Poland a nearly mythical place.⁷⁶ Poland had a long history of religious toleration, which is in part why Socinianism was founded there by Italian Humanists. However, this toleration also brought English and Scottish religious dissenters, which also likely fostered the exchange of ideas between Poland and England.⁷⁷ Due to both the perception of Poland in England and the individuals who brought Socinian ideas into the country, Socinianism was able to influence leaders and thinkers in terms of politics, religion, and the combination of both.

Letter from Budney to Foxe

In 1574, there was an crucial letter written by Simon Budney, a devout follower of Socinus, addressed to John Foxe and delivered by Ralph Rutter. Why this letter was written is unclear, though it was likely to disseminate Socinian ideas to a potentially receptive audience. Why Budney chose Foxe as the recipient of the letter is also unclear. John Foxe, most well-known for his work *Acts and Monuments*, which catalogued the burnings of Protestants in England under Queen Mary as she tried to re-Catholicize England, was a devout Puritan. Foxe was a martyrologist, meaning he dealt with the history of those who became martyrs.⁷⁸ He wrote *Acts and Monuments* in order to tell the “truth” of the world as he understood it, but also to help readers achieve some spiritual good by reading it.⁷⁹ In it, he constantly advocates theological

⁷⁶ Anita Gilman Sherman, “Poland in the Cultural Imaginary of Early Modern England,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15, no.1 (2015): 55.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 70.

⁷⁸ Thomas S. Freeman, “Foxe, John, Martyrologist,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10050>.

⁷⁹ I. Ross Bartlett, “John Foxe as Hagiographer: The Question Revisited,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 4 (1995): 771–89, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2543785>.

views that uphold Protestant martyrs as foundational to the church he believed in, and his theology is marked by scripture from the Reformation and, more notably perhaps, “the twin signs of persecution from established authorities and comfort from the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁰ This sign of “persecution” by Mary makes Foxe’s own theology more important in terms of the resistance against Mary that he promotes throughout *Acts and Monuments*. But just because Foxe was opposed to the re-Catholicization of England does not mean he was Socinian, or even open to Socinian ideas. He could have very well believed it was heresy, although the fact that he kept the letter suggests that he likely had some sympathy to Budney’s position, if not his doctrine.

Within this letter is an explanation of the Socinian viewpoint. Budney first discusses what he refers to as the “Homoiousian heresy.”⁸¹ This refers to the controversy in the 4th century when early church fathers were trying to determine the nature of the relationship between God the Father and Christ the Son, where *homoiousia* means that the Father and the Son are of a similar substance, but not the same substance.⁸² This relates to Socinian doctrine because it implies that because the Father and the Son are of *similar* substance and not the *same* substance, Christ is inferior to the Father. This is not to lessen the importance of Christ in the Christian worldview, but rather to emphasize the unity and singularity of the one God, which harkens back to Socinian theology. Budney then goes on to refute the idea that Christ pre-dated Jesus, as it is not contained in the Scriptures.⁸³ Budney then discusses the bloodline of Jesus, and the concern about who Jesus’s father was and whether or not Mary conceived as a virgin.⁸⁴ Budney criticizes

⁸⁰ Ibid, 772.

⁸¹ Letter from Simon Budney to John Foxe, 1574. Transcribed and translated by Dr. Kristin M.S. Bezio, with assistance from Drs. Erika Zimmerman and Robert Groves. This was also in alignment with Arius in the Arian controversy at Nicaea, and who later inspired Arianism (As discussed in the previous chapter). Letter MS Rawl. Lett. 107 WM/110887/863, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

⁸² Richard Norris, “Hypostasis,” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 552-553.

⁸³ Simon Budney to John Foxe, 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 5.

certain translations of the Bible that remove references to Joseph as Jesus’s father, which is in line with Socinian thought about the lineage, biblically speaking, of the person of Jesus. As with many other Socinians, he does not want to stray far from Scripture. Budney then discusses the matter of the Holy Spirit as being inseparable from God Godself.⁸⁵

Budney ends his letter with a plea for Foxe to understand how important it is that Budney has written this letter and to implore him to consider the theological matters Socinus promotes:

The matter is certainly serious, but it is also necessary to gain such knowledge, which is important to our salvation. Do not think of these things as coming from me for your approval. He [Socinus] has many other disciples here in Poland, Lithuania, Transylvania, Moravia, and more places. However, there are also countless opponents... You present a different viewpoint than most, praying to God for the opportunity (as indicated above) to not forget. As I consider these articles of faith presented for you to behold, if the truth seems to you otherwise, it is for God to prove or disprove, and if not [if you agree], I consider my purpose to be achieved.⁸⁶

This plea for Foxe to understand Budney is significant and is the best reason for why he chose Foxe to be the recipient of such potential heresy. Budney, by invoking the “[importance] to our salvation,” is imploring that Foxe understand that Socinians are both honest Christian believers and concerned with promoting the truth, which aligns with Foxe’s goal of promoting the truth. Budney also singles out Foxe for having a “different viewpoint than most,” calling attention to the fact that both believers are potentially outsiders and appealing to their similarities.

This letter is significant because it was the first known introduction of Socinianism in England. Although it did not surface to become mainstream, it is important that Foxe did not simply throw the letter away, nor did Foxe accuse Budney (or either of the Englishmen mentioned in the letter—Rutter and Glover) of heresy. Rather, Foxe kept the letter despite not

⁸⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 13-14.

outwardly subscribing to any typical Socinian ideas. This is an example of how Socinianism quietly penetrated the consciousness of England throughout the late sixteenth century. Foxe never outright claimed to believe any of the tenets of Socinianism that Budney communicated to him in the letter, but because of his actions in keeping the letter and protecting Budney, Rutter, and Glover after receiving it, there is reason to believe that Foxe might have found the contents of the letter compelling. Foxe himself, as a devout Puritan, would not have been a likely candidate for Socinian ideas, and yet he kept the letter.

Socinianism as an Accusation of Heresy

Socinianism, because of its more radical elements, quickly became synonymous with accusations of heresy in England. The term was used to condemn people and inspire fear towards those who had these radical ideas. The first person to die for being accused as a Socinian was Francis Kett in 1589. Kett's writing, titled *The Glorious and Beautiful Garland of Mans Glorification*, did not indicate any radical beliefs, and was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth herself.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Kett was convicted of heresy for Socinian beliefs: "According to the charges, he believed Jesus had suffered 'only as Jesus already, and shall suffer hereafter as Christ' (only then becoming divine); that 'Christ is now in his human nature gathering a church in Erthe in Judea'; and that 'this year of our Lord 1588 divers Jews shall be sent to divers countries to publish the new covenant' (Grosart, appx B1)."⁸⁸ The accusations regarding Kett's Christology are likely what sent him into the fire. In part, the fervor with which some people were hunting down heresies throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns is why Socinianism went

⁸⁷ Alexander Gordon, "Kett, Francis," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15483>

⁸⁸ Ibid.

underground. With Kett as a martyr, there would have been even more incentive to remain quiet as Socinianism became more and more dangerous. As the need for toleration was being more and more emphasized, alongside political unrest, a boiling point was about to be reached, which culminated in the English Civil War.

Religious Atmosphere through Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns

Returning to the religious atmosphere during Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603), it follows that Socinianism did not break into mainstream religious discourse. After seeing the religious turmoil her half-sister Mary caused, Elizabeth famously took the approach of not wanting to "open windows into men's souls."⁸⁹ She was rather more concerned with people, at least in public, committing to the Church of England, but privately people could practice any religious beliefs, Protestant or otherwise. This does not mean, though, that Elizabeth was tolerant outright. Her reign marked some of the most virulent Anti-Catholicism in England. For most of Elizabeth's reign, the English Catholic Church lacked organization, although at the very end of Elizabeth's reign, the Appellant Controversy was growing and argued for increased religious toleration.⁹⁰

In some ways, the Appellant Priests represent the beginning of the separation of nationalism and religion in England, which is the opposite of what happens in America, as discussed in a later section. In 1570, the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth and her constituents. This proved a problem for English Catholics, as they wanted to maintain status as loyal citizens of England *and* loyal followers of the Catholic Church. Through the 1590's, these priests wanted

⁸⁹ J. B. Black *Reign of Elizabeth 1558–1603* (1936).

⁹⁰ Patrick Martin and John Finnis, "The Secret Sharers: "Anthony Rivers" and the Appellant Controversy, 1601–2," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (2006): 195.

to reconcile their political position with their religion, teasing apart nationalism and religion because they saw them as unconnected.⁹¹ In other words, they believed they could be loyal to the Queen and maintain their Catholic leanings, and they had support from the Queen herself. The Appellant Priests set up an important position for the later Royalists in the English Civil War by making the argument that they could remain loyal to the crown while still being Catholic. The Appellant Controversy was the culmination of the Catholic traditionalist identity in England, though they were in the minority and that continued through the Protestant King James's reign.

Because Elizabeth never bore any children and had Mary Queen of Scots executed, there were many questions about who was to rule next. Both Catholics and Protestants struggled with the question of succession. James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Queen of Scots, was a Presbyterian, though he had been baptized Catholic.⁹² He successfully took the English throne peacefully, and though he was genuinely tolerant of certain ideals, he was worried about his own safety, which proved to be in danger during the Gunpowder Plot.⁹³ The Gunpowder Plot was orchestrated by some English Catholics who were upset because James did not grant immediate religious toleration or relax any penal laws against English Catholics, and they attempted to assassinate him.⁹⁴ The conspirators were found before they could be successful, and were executed for their involvement.⁹⁵ The outcome of the conspiracy was reduced toleration of Catholics in England, the opposite of its intended effect.

⁹¹ Thomas Ridgedell, "The Archpriest Controversy: The conservative Appellants against the progressive Jesuits," *British Catholic History* 33, no. 4 (2017): 576.

⁹² Antonia Fraser, *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1996): 16.

⁹³ *Ibid*; referring to the "feminine aberration" that James showed

⁹⁴ Mark Nicholls, "Strategy and Motivation in the Gunpowder Plot," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (Dec., 2007): 789.

⁹⁵ For more on the Gunpowder Plot, see Antonia Fraser *Faith and Treason*.

Socinians nevertheless chose to dedicate the English version of the Racovian Catechism to James I in 1609. His response to the Catechism's dedication was not a positive one; he had most of the copies burned in England, which is why the choice to make that dedication seems on the surface to be an odd one. However, it was actually a move to further their theological beliefs and continue to convince people of their position. Socinians used texts that justified the divine right of kings to make the argument that Christ was a "god" in the same way that kings were "gods." As James believed he was chosen by God and had a divine right to rule, the Socinians were attempting to call out the similarities between this kind of kingly divinity and Jesus's divinity. They were attempting to further their Christology and were calling attention to that by dedicating the Racovian Catechism to James. James I responded to the dedication by burning all the copies he could find in England to ensure that he had no relation to this heretical, subversive group. It is difficult to say whether or not the Socinians were successful in their attempt to further their Christology, but given that Socinianism was not rejected by the population in the same way that James rejected it, their point was likely received by those who were interested in Socinianism.

Socinianism in the English Civil War

Before discussing the role that Socinianism played in the English Civil War, I will briefly discuss the events that happened leading up to and during the War itself. In 1625, Charles I acceded to the throne of England, and Parliament immediately began trying to limit his power, as he began taking more power for himself. He grew frustrated and dissolved Parliament in 1629 and did not call another Parliament for eleven years. Throughout that time period, Charles I attempted to set up Anglican churches to strengthen the ecclesiastical hierarchy under his

Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud in both England and Scotland, which was traditionally under a separate church, the Presbyterian Kirk. This upset Scottish citizens and clerics, and they rioted against the religious imposition, resulting in a conflict called the Bishops' War that led Charles I to reconvene Parliament in order to raise more taxes to fund the war. Parliament and Charles I continued to quarrel, and in 1642, Charles I led an army at Edgehill in the first official battle of the English Civil War.

The major problem was that Charles acted as a tyrant after he took the throne. Charles grew up in Scotland, where kings were generally believed to have divine right. However, the divine right of kings was not widely accepted in England, as was pointed out in the dedication of the Racovian Catechism to James I and caused most of the conflicts between James and his Parliaments. Believing in his father's explanation of divine rule, Charles did not understand how to rule England, and this led to problems between the Royalist court, those who supported Parliament, and the commons. Puritans were getting more and more upset with the actions of the inner court, which was leaning Catholic, as well as becoming disgruntled with the Catholic Queen, the French Henrietta Maria. Because the majority of the population was Protestant, the conflict between the court and the general population increased, until different factions (somewhat tied to religion) emerged for the Civil War. Major concerns of the Puritans included the worry that the Church of England would turn Catholic under Charles's tyrannical, "divinely inspired" reign. The idea of divine right of kings also ultimately fed into Charles's trial for treason — Charles refused to defend himself in the trial because he believed he did not have to as he was a divine king, so he ended up being executed by Parliament in 1649.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ For more, see John Morrill's "The Religious Context of the English Civil War" and Ann Hughes's *The Causes of the English Civil War* to understand more of the complexities during and surrounding the Civil War that are not particularly related to this project.

The major conflict is between those who sided with Parliament, the Parliamentarians, and those who sided with the king, the Royalists. The religious background of the Royalists varied, including citizens whose beliefs ranged from low church Anglican to Catholic. The Parliamentarians, on the other hand, were staunchly Puritan. Both the Parliamentarians and the Royalists accused each other of being Socinian, although most often, neither side was truly Socinian in religious belief. Therefore, the ways in which Socinianism is used in the war is complicated, as Sarah Mortimer explains: “the distinction suggested by the Socinians between nature and the law of Christ was put to important use during the English Civil War... the notion of a separate, non-natural law of Christ became a crucial part of Royalist propaganda.”⁹⁷ Royalists were aiming to separate natural and Christian law while Parliamentarians wanted to meld them together.⁹⁸ This follows the Royalist argument that citizens could remain loyal to their country while also maintaining their own religious beliefs. Parliamentarians had long used language of natural law in their arguments, claiming that natural law ultimately *was* the law of God as well, as God created all things.⁹⁹

Royalists focused on using political ideas from Socinianism rather than religious ones. They were also able to use the language of pacifism from Socinianism to combat the Parliamentarian call to arms and violence.¹⁰⁰ It was the avid Parliamentarian Henry Parker who created the argument that natural law allowed for self-preservation, so therefore communities could decide against a government which would put members at harm.¹⁰¹ Two Royalists who wielded the power of Socinian thought against these ideas were Henry Hammond and Dudley

⁹⁷ Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution*, (New York, Cambridge University Press: 2010): 88-89.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 89.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 90.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 93.

Digges.¹⁰² These two pushed against Henry Parker using both Christian non-violence as well as obedience to the monarch, two ideas reinforced by Socinus and his teachings.¹⁰³ It is in these various approaches that Royalists used Socinianism as a building block for their argument against Parliamentarians.

This paved an easy path for Parliamentarians to accuse Royalists of Socinianism. Indeed, many Parliamentarians emphasized the danger of Socinianism.¹⁰⁴ Many of the accusations that Parliamentarians adapted came from André Rivet, a French Huguenot, who explained that Socinians were dangerous for England and claimed that “the Romane and Racovian Antichrist, are made friends here in England.”¹⁰⁵ An interesting element of the Royalist position using Socinian thought involves the separation of church and state. Royalists backed the monarchy, spearheaded by a King who was simultaneously head of state and head of the Church of England. However, at the same time, because Royalists were attempting to pull their religion and nationalism apart, the separation of church and state and religious tolerance were very important to Royalist beliefs to remain a loyal English citizen. Parliamentarians, however, wanted to overthrow the monarchy and set up a Puritan form of government that had no separation of church and state and no toleration. The Royalists ultimately attempted to reverse the Socinian accusations onto Parliamentarians by making them seem so radical they were actually Anti-Trinitarian. Ultimately, neither accusation from these two warring factions was very effective.

The English Civil War ended with a Parliamentary victory, and Oliver Cromwell became the Lord Protector of England. When Cromwell died, his son, Richard Cromwell, was

¹⁰² For more, see Sarah Mortimer’s book, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution*.

¹⁰³ Mortimer, 94-95.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 109-110.

¹⁰⁵ Andre Rivet, *Operum Theologicorum* vol. 111, p. 1124. Translation from Mortimer *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution*.

instated as the next Lord Protector. Because this choice was essentially a kingship under a different name, Richard Cromwell faced backlash from both Royalists and Parliamentarians. Richard Cromwell left England in 1660, and the monarchy was reinstated under Charles II, who had fled to France when his father was imprisoned (and then executed). However, Charles II had no heir, so the throne would go to his brother, James II, who was a Catholic. James was forced to agree to allow his subjects to worship as they pleased in order to assume the throne. This made legal toleration incredibly important, as citizens did not want to go back to the model of the Commonwealth, so there was a new emphasis on being religiously tolerant under a Catholic King.

Toleration Act, 1689

The Toleration Act was an important step for tolerationists in England and contributed significantly to the development of Enlightenment thinking. The efforts of the tolerationists ultimately culminated in this act, which influenced the later Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the First Amendment.¹⁰⁶ James II occupied the throne from 1685-1688, and he was the first openly Catholic monarch since Mary I over a century before. However, in an effort to quell anti-Catholic concern, Parliament passed laws that prevented Catholics from government and prevented James II from taking the throne if he were to try to convert the whole country back to Catholicism.¹⁰⁷ This separated the future monarch from the Church, which foreshadowed the coming separation of church and state elsewhere, such as in America. As James was attempting to repeal laws against Catholics to a largely unreceptive Parliament, he and his supporters turned

¹⁰⁶ John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689*, (Harlow, England, Pearson Education Limited: 2000): 208.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 185.

to the unlikely allies in the Dissenters.¹⁰⁸ Once James II had a son to be the heir, there was more pressure from opposing Anglicans for William of Orange, married to James's daughter Mary, to invade in order to prevent a line of Catholic despots.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, because James brought Catholics and Dissenters together, he inadvertently paved the way for the Toleration Act after his reign.

The Toleration Act both repealed penalties for Dissenters, and some other Nonconformists, and allowed them the freedom to worship in public on the grounds that they would take an oath of allegiance to the crown.¹¹⁰ Though this was an important step in religious toleration, the Toleration Act did not offer protections to Anti-Trinitarians or Catholics, and it did not stop religious prejudice. Additionally, during this time Anti-Trinitarianism and Deism were on the rise throughout England, and later there was a Blasphemy Act passed with penalties against those who denied the Trinity. Still, the Toleration Act marked a significant shift in the way in which religious freedom was thought of in England and which influenced much of the religious toleration in America.

The English Civil War marks a significant change in the language surrounding Socinianism, as well as the use of Socinianism as a tool to create a more religiously tolerant England. Both sides of the War used Socinian principles as a framework in their political arguments for separation of church and state while maintaining that the theology was heretical enough to throw sufficient doubt on the other faction. The effect of using Socinianism as both a framework to set up religious toleration and separation in a political setting but also rejecting the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 188. Dissenters are those Protestants who rejected the Church of England.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 190.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 199.

theology of Socinianism paved the way for thinkers and theologians to reject the term in favor of the term Unitarianism. It also is significant that Socinian ideas were used throughout the time in which England was establishing religious toleration because it is modelling political ideas from a radical religious basis, which is similar to what happens throughout early America.

Chapter 3: The English Enlightenment and Socinianism

Following the English Civil War and the Restoration of the monarchy, England had to grapple more fully with the ideas of toleration and the need to separate church and state. With the accession of the Catholic James II and the conflict that led to the throne passing to William and Mary, the English had to legalize toleration in the Toleration Acts. At the same time, because Socinianism was still seen as heretical, many thinkers who were drawn to it began to use a new term. This is the shift that introduced the term Unitarianism to be a replacement for important Socinian ideas as they traveled into early America, especially religious toleration and separation of church and state.

During this period, certain individuals are in part responsible for spreading Socinian ideas. Though there are many who had influence, for the purpose of this project I will focus on a few. The significant thinkers who contributed to Socinianism's penetration into the English imagination include John Biddle, Paul Best, Samuel Clarke, Joseph Priestley, and John Locke, among others. These men helped diffuse Socinian ideas into the psyche of England, and ultimately were responsible for the translation of those ideas into early America, as well.

Humanism and the Enlightenment

It is likely around this time that Socinianism as a term faded from popular discourse, as it had been used as an accusation against both factions in the Civil War. Because it was labelled as so dangerous and heretical and had ties to individuals who had been executed for believing it, it was necessary for those who found merit in Socinian thought to not use this confusing, potentially damning term. Around the second half of the seventeenth century, many thinkers began to call Socinianism by the term Unitarianism, which is the theology (and name) that traveled to America through individuals like Joseph Priestley. Though there are debates about

whether or not Unitarianism and Socinianism are exactly the same or slightly different, many of Socinianism's important theological doctrines translate to Unitarianism — including a low Christology, Anti-Trinitarianism, an emphasis on reason and individualism, focus on the Scriptures, as well as, crucially for this project, both the separation of church and state and religious toleration.

Another aspect of Socinianism/Unitarianism that was appealing to English thinkers was the Humanism that formed part of the basis of Socinianism. Throughout the English Enlightenment, reason and rationalism were at the forefront. With help from Socinianism, reason and rationalism were also very important in religion, which meant that it became a religious duty to inquire into the grounds of one's faith.¹¹¹ A part of this emphasis detracted from the mystery of religion at large and instead focused more pointedly on the ability of the human and the individual to achieve their own faith and rationality, which is how Humanism factored into the English Enlightenment. Humanism was very popular at the time in England, and it helped to play a role in networking the ideals of Socinianism to other people. Because Socinianism invited the role of reason and rationality in its doctrines and belief systems, and because of the nature of the English Enlightenment and the focus on the individual's ability to learn God's revealed knowledge, Socinian ideas were able to spread.

The Enlightenment featured a focus on individual liberties and freedoms alongside its emphasis on reason. As Enlightenment ideals developed over time, the emphasis on the individual became central to gaining human knowledge.¹¹² This branched off of Descartes's idea that the only source of knowledge that an individual can be sure of is himself.¹¹³ This concept

¹¹¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment*. (Course Book ed. Princeton University Press, 2014): 7.

¹¹² Albert D. Pionke, *Teaching Later British Literature*, (London, Anthem Press: 2019): 21.

¹¹³ Ibid.

was important to Socinian thinkers, as they also included this emphasis on individualism and the ability of individuals to find salvation through Scriptures for themselves. According to Socinians, this is a sure source of God's knowledge, and the individual has the power to attain that revelation. Because these ideas of individualism share similarities, English thinkers were more willing to accept Socinian thought. Not only that, but individual freedom and liberty is a later cornerstone of the foundation of America and her government. It is due in part to the focus on individualism that English thinkers were more amenable to Socinian ideas and philosophies.

The Enlightenment may seem anti-religious because of its focus on reason, individualism, and natural philosophy and science. However, there were note-worthy connections within mainstream Christianity, as well as the more "heretical" Socinian doctrines. There were many different thinkers across different denominations or sects — like Anglicans, Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans — who wanted to preserve religion by accommodating some of these Enlightenment ideas, like reason, toleration, and individualism.¹¹⁴ Because there was also an attempt in mainstream Christian sects to reconcile Christian thought with Enlightenment thought, this actually allowed for thinkers who had Socinian leanings to work from an established precedent. Though it may seem that the Enlightenment worked against ideas of religion, it helped to invigorate discussions about religion, and Socinianism gave Anti-Trinitarians a place in the debate because there were already connections between Socinianism and the Enlightenment in England.

¹¹⁴ Ritchie Robertson, Simon Dixon and Wendy Bracewell, "Enlightenment and Religion in the Orthodox World," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 95, no. 2 (April 2017): 322-323.

Significant People and Their Influences

As has been discussed above, there was motivation for those who agreed with Socinian ideals to remain behind the scenes and quiet. However, Socinianism and Unitarianism did emerge as a point of view that had significant influence over prominent Enlightenment thinkers. Many people who sympathized with or were influenced by Socinian thought would often remain anonymous in their writings on the subject or were “careful not to betray their religious affiliations.”¹¹⁵ Because of how radical Socinianism was in the seventeenth century in England, especially as ideas of toleration and religious freedom were being explored, many Socinians or Socinian sympathizers remained ambiguous about their religion. After the abolition of church courts in England, there was comparatively more religious freedom enjoyed by some Protestant groups, Socinianism was still too radical to be practiced in the open. However, there were still some people who openly wrote their ideas about Socinianism, which helped the spread of these ideas ultimately into America. There were many more people who had Socinian leanings or were accused of having such sympathies, but this project will focus on a few of the most important for translating Socinian ideas to America.

John Biddle

One of those important individuals is John Biddle. There is some controversy about how exactly Biddle was exposed to Socinianism — it could have been during his studies at Oxford or perhaps after he was already imprisoned with Paul Best for heretical leanings towards Anti-Trinitarianism. Biddle himself claims that he came to Anti-Trinitarianism on his own as he performed an “impartial search of the Scriptures.”¹¹⁶ Biddle’s theology was in fact slightly

¹¹⁵ MacLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, 75.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 167.

separate from the religion that Socinus organized due to Biddle's conception of the Holy Spirit, which posited that the Holy Spirit was a significant spirit, more so than other "heavenly host."¹¹⁷ However, in the Anti-Trinitarianism and Christology that Socinus championed, Biddle aligns with other Socinians. Additionally, the groundwork Biddle laid for spreading Socinian thought into England was critical. Biddle published a work entitled *Twelve Arguments*, referring to the way in which the Holy Spirit cannot be God — and argument that is inherently Anti-Trinitarian because if Biddle is denying one of the three persons of the Trinity, he is calling into question the structure of the entirety of the Trinity — under his own name, which is significant.¹¹⁸ Though he published other Anti-Trinitarian works anonymously, it is still significant that he claimed the writing for at least one of his works. This is because at this time, Socinian and Anti-Trinitarian beliefs are still dangerous and tied to accusations of heresy. Biddle publishing Anti-Trinitarian work under his own name laid claim to those ideas and helped further influence other thinkers. He also likely helped to translate a copy of the Racovian Catechism into English, as well as fully translating a work on the life of Faustus Socinus.¹¹⁹ It is because of his widespread influence through his writings and connections that he has earned the legacy of "Father of Unitarianism."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 173.

¹¹⁸ Stephen D. Snobelen, "Biddle, John," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published October 4, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2361>

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ MacLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, 217.

Paul Best

Alongside Biddle is Paul Best. Best traveled to the continent, where he came into contact with the Polish Brethren.¹²¹ His chamber-mate Roger Ley reported that Best, while traveling to Germany, Poland, and Transylvania, “disputed with some Antitrinitarians, and more adhering to carnal reason than the mystery of faith, was drawn to the dangerous opinion [of] the denial of our Saviour's divinity” (BL, Add. MS 24482). This is in line with Socinian theology, and Best spread the ideas he encountered across Europe upon his return.¹²² His heretical views led to his imprisonment, where he continued to write and possibly introduced Biddle to Socinianism.¹²³ His work, *Mysteries Discovered*, published in 1647, is the first Socinian work written in England by an Englishman, and it marks a turning point in Anti-Trinitarian doctrine in England, which ultimately led across the Atlantic to America.

Samuel Clarke

Samuel Clarke is among the thinkers who directly influenced Thomas Jefferson, as evidenced by the inclusion of Clarke's works in Jefferson's library.¹²⁴ Clarke was heavily questioned by his “Doctoral viva” about his view of the Trinity in 1711, and he later swore to abide by the 39 Articles to get his degree.¹²⁵ However, once he got his degree he renounced the oath he swore and began publishing about the Trinity, arousing controversy.¹²⁶ Clarke was inspired by Isaac Newton, who came to Anti-Trinitarianism by looking at Scriptures and natural,

¹²¹ Stephen D. Snobelen, “Best, Paul,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2291>

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ More on Jefferson's library and influences in the third chapter.

¹²⁵ John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1976): 168.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

human reason, so therefore Clarke was persuaded by the method of discovery that Socinus himself advocated.¹²⁷ Clarke is important to this project specifically because of his influence on Jefferson. Jefferson had many of the sermons that Clarke preached in his library, and Clarke wrote on his wariness about the Trinity. This means that Jefferson, too, was introduced to subversive thought about the Trinity that aroused conflict in Clarke's time.

John Locke

When speaking of influence on Thomas Jefferson, it is crucial to mention John Locke. It should be noted that although John Locke was accused by his contemporaries of having Socinian leanings, Locke is not identified as a Socinian, or Unitarian, directly. There is no evidence in either his public writings or his private papers that he was an outright Socinian.¹²⁸ This is possibly due to the fact that if Locke had claimed Socinianism, he would not have been able to publish his work or reach a widespread audience for fear of heresy, but that is largely speculation. However, though he never wrote about Socinianism directly, he did come into contact with Socinian ideas and writings, as they were in his library.¹²⁹ With that being said, Socinianism as an ethos, or movement of ideas, can be represented by Locke because of his role in the English Enlightenment and the way in which he investigates Christianity.

Locke, throughout his work *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, long accused of being a Socinian work, focuses on the importance of reason, revelation, and justification in

¹²⁷ Ibid, 171

¹²⁸ John Higgins-Biddle, Introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, by John Locke, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1999): lxxvi.

¹²⁹ John Marshall, " 'Socinianism' as an accusation and John Locke," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (1998).

Christianity.¹³⁰ The reason that *Reasonableness* is accused of Socinianism is the emphasis that Locke placed on the individual power to understand Christianity and the removal of mystery.¹³¹ In it, Locke inquires about the nature of revealed knowledge, which follows from his exploration of natural rights.¹³² It is exactly because of these emphases, on reason and revealed knowledge, that *Reasonableness* reminds others of Socinianism. There is a claim inherent in Socinianism that humans have the capacity to understand salvation for themselves and can find it in the Scriptures — an argument that Locke mimics throughout *Reasonableness*. Locke also believed that faith was an act of affirmation from an intellectual standpoint for different doctrinal propositions, which are *separate* acts.¹³³ This is in contrast to John Calvin, and Locke’s idea of justification is in opposition to the idea of justification by faith in the Protestant Reformation. For all these reasons — the similarities between Socinian ideas and Lockean arguments, as well as the counter against mainstream Protestantism — Locke maintains the thread of Socinianism in his work.

Joseph Priestley

Finally, Joseph Priestley is another Englishman who was influential in spreading Socinian ideas to early America and who influenced Thomas Jefferson alongside Locke. Priestley led several different congregations before landing at Mill Hill in Leeds, England, which encouraged his transition into full Anti-Trinitarianism.¹³⁴ In his endeavor to find the truth, he wrote many different tracts, for which he received backlash — and he responded to each one in

¹³⁰ Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., “Socinianism, Justification by Faith, and The Sources of John Locke’s The Reasonableness of Christianity,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 1, (1984): 49.

¹³¹ Higgins-Biddle, Introduction to *Reasonableness*, xx.

¹³² Wallace, “Socinianism, Justification,” 56.

¹³³ Higgins-Biddle, Introduction to *Reasonableness*, xvii-xviii.

¹³⁴ Robert E. Schofield, “Priestley, Joseph,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published October 3, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22788>

turn for the search of truth and the enjoyment of discourse.¹³⁵ Priestley also wrote about the history of the early church, attempting to claim that early churchmen were Unitarian, and he believed that Anti-Trinitarianism was a compromise between the monotheism of Judaism (and various sects of the early Christian church) and the polytheism of Gnosticism.¹³⁶ Priestley seemed to believe that early churchmen were Unitarian because they did not have the Trinity as a doctrine, and they had a low Christology, as well. An example of these early Christians include the Jewish-Christian adoptionists, who believe that Jesus was “adopted” by God but not himself divine as God was.¹³⁷ Due to widespread concern about his political views and potential heresies, he ultimately resolved to flee to the American colonies in 1794.¹³⁸ Priestley would ultimately spread Unitarian and Socinian theology in early America, alongside Theophilus Lindsey and James Freeman.¹³⁹

Getting to America

It is the work of some of the individuals mentioned above, specifically Priestley and Freeman, as well as the sphere of influence of ideas that transports Socinian thought and structure from England across the pond. By the time these ideas entered America, the religious belief system was referred to as Unitarianism, and this shift had started earlier in England, likely to distance the ideas from the heretical Socinian title. For the purposes of this project, Unitarianism and Socinianism are in alignment on enough ideas to function similarly in how they influence thought about the relationship between religion and politics in America. There are

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ For more, see Bart Ehrman *Lost Christianities*.

¹³⁸ Bowers, *Joseph Priestley*, 2.

¹³⁹ For more, see the fourth chapter of this project.

scholars who push these two groups of believers to merge, like Wilbur, and others who pull them further apart, but ultimately for this project, these two ideas are similar enough in their influence that they act synonymously. They are both fundamentally Anti-Trinitarian, and both groups of ideas reject Christ's divinity. There is emphasis on the individual ability to learn of God's revealed knowledge through Scriptures, and there is the distinction between natural law and Christ's law. Perhaps most importantly, Unitarianism and Socinianism both emphasize the importance of religious toleration and the separation of church and state. These two ideas become fundamental to the way in which the relationship between religion and politics is constructed in the founding of America.

Chapter 4: Socinianism in early America

Introduction

This chapter is about early America and the religious motivations for the separation of church and state. Through both ideas and individuals, Socinianism travelled across the Atlantic from England into America, and helped to shape the ideas of religious toleration and separation of church and state in the budding nation. By the time Socinian ideas reached early America, they were under the theological framework of Unitarianism.¹⁴⁰ Unitarianism helps to explain some of the religious motivations and influences on leaders who introduced the legal separation of church and state into the United States. However, in order to understand Unitarianism in early America, one must first understand the context of the American colonies in a religious setting. This project will focus mostly on Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, as those were significant colonies for Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and ideas of religious freedom in the budding country. The Continental Congress and their push for Revolution is also important, as it helps to both develop the religious identity of America and establishes certain individuals' religious beliefs in a political and public setting.

Equally important to the religious identity and ideas of religious freedom of early America is Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had unconventional personal religious beliefs, as can be seen through his library and his edits of the Bible, now known as the Jefferson Bible. He helped establish the separation of church and state, as well as religious tolerance in his colony, Virginia, and ultimately throughout the colonies as they formed the United States. Jefferson was also vilified for his unconventional religious beliefs in the election of 1800, which I will examine as a

¹⁴⁰ Once again, these are two distinct bodies of thought, but for the purposes of this essay, they are related enough in their ideas of toleration and separation that I will not be distinguishing them too much.

turning point for the understanding of how perceptions of religious belief impact views of presidential leadership in the US.

Jefferson's work to achieve the separation of church and state is influenced by Socinian thought, even though Jefferson would not have called himself a Socinian. There is evidence that Jefferson was influenced by Socinians directly, as well as certain English thinkers who were also influenced by Anti-Trinitarianism and the Polish Brethren — specifically John Biddle, Paul Best, Samuel Clarke, Joseph Priestley, and John Locke. There is part of the American ethos around religious diversity and religious freedom that was also inspired by Socinian thought, which was not mainstream and was considered radical for the time. The undercurrent of this radical thought in the founding of America should be understood alongside the Protestant overtones of the nation and her government because it helps to establish the balance between more conservative religious views and liberal ones, which continues into the twenty-first century.

Context of American Colonies

First, it is important to establish the religious context in America at the time when ideas of separation of church and state were being first discussed. Contrary to popular misconception, many of the early colonists were not coming to America to establish religious liberty, but rather to preserve their specific system of belief.¹⁴¹ The Chesapeake and New England colonies did practice religious toleration after the Act of Toleration that England passed in 1689, but it only extended so far and did not include Unitarians or Catholics.¹⁴² The fact that most of the religious settlers in the early American colonies were not interested in religious liberty (for anyone other than themselves) or separation of church and state is significant because it implies that it was the

¹⁴¹ Derek H. Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27-28.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 28.

work of only a few to bring our country to the place it is today. Unsurprisingly, those few include Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, among others of the founding fathers. It is largely due to their religious beliefs and influences that Socinianism has a place in the early United States in terms of ideas about religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Now, I will turn to focus on more specifically the states of Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania in order to establish the context for these ideas and beliefs. Virginia is an important colony because of Jefferson's involvement in the government and the religion there. Virginia is the oldest English colony, founded in 1607 as an Anglican colony. The goal of this colony, based on the Oath of Supremacy, was to convert indigenous Americans to Christianity, presumably Anglicanism.¹⁴³ Virginia was also a mercantile colony that primarily sold tobacco. It should be noted that it was in Virginia, alongside other colonies, where persecution of small sects of Christianity, like Baptists, Presbyterians, and Catholics, began the push for separation of church and state from a religious perspective.¹⁴⁴ Because Virginia was initially an Anglican state, persecution against minority sects had already begun, which gave cause for Jefferson to write his materials about religious freedom for Virginia specifically. Virginia, despite the early troubles, ultimately became a forerunner for the religious freedom clause that is now in our Constitution because of Jefferson's influence over the state.

Massachusetts is significant for this project because of its relation to early Unitarianism and John Adams. Massachusetts is the colony that first homed the Pilgrims, who were one group of Puritans who specifically denied that the Church of England was the true church.¹⁴⁵ The

¹⁴³ Ibid, 29.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Frank Humphrey, *Nationalism and Religion in America, 1774-1789* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 362.

¹⁴⁵ John G. Turner, "Introduction." In *They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2020), 3-4.

priority for Pilgrims in the 1630s was to practice their religion, a strict Puritanism, freely. However, freedom to practice their religion did not include tolerating other religious beliefs. This meant that some in the colony of Massachusetts would be hard pressed to tolerate the Anglican church, which caused conflict in the early years of the colony, like the fact that only Puritans were allowed to vote and hold office.¹⁴⁶ Massachusetts was not a religiously tolerant colony when it first began, and was famously meant to be like a “city upon a hill,” according to John Winthrop.¹⁴⁷ This indicated that Massachusetts was meant to be a model for religious purity and furthered the idea that the colonies were God-ordained. All of this being said, it is very significant that it ended up being Massachusetts to have the first established Unitarian church instead of one of the more tolerant colonies like Rhode Island. The King’s Chapel in Boston was ultimately established as an Anglican foothold, but in 1787 it was converted into the first Unitarian church under the Reverend James Freeman, who introduced Anti-Trinitarian theology to its congregation. Part of the reason that Massachusetts in particular attracted so many Dissenters and non-traditional congregations was because there was a tax exemption for some members who lived near their private churches, so they did not have to pay for their local Congregationalist church *and* their own private church.¹⁴⁸ This is why more and more dissenting churches were popping up in Massachusetts, despite the lack of toleration from Puritans.

Pennsylvania was set up in 1681 as a “holy experiment” in order to create a haven for religious freedom, and ultimately attracted a lot of Quaker settlers.¹⁴⁹ Because of William Penn’s

¹⁴⁶ William Warren Sweet, *Religion in colonial America* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965) 46; Ralph E. Pyle & James D. Davidson, “The Origins of Religious Stratification in Colonial America,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42, no. 1 (March, 2003): 62.

¹⁴⁷ John Winthrop, “City Upon a Hill,” 1630, accessed from The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History www.gilderlehrman.org.

¹⁴⁸ Kelly Olds, “Privatizing the Church: Disestablishment in Connecticut and Massachusetts,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 102, no. 2 (April, 1994): 278.

¹⁴⁹ R. Scott Hanson, “Teaching the Religious History of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 139, no. 1, (January 2015): 52.

emphasis on religious freedom and tolerance, Pennsylvania became a colony with wide religious diversity. Pennsylvania is a good example of the way that America would ultimately develop in terms of the importance of religious freedom. Penn's religious views became central to the colonial government he was establishing in Pennsylvania, in part due to the legacy of English religious turmoil.¹⁵⁰ One major aspect of Penn's theological views as a Quaker was the belief that all humans had something "of God" within them, which helped to transform the tolerant approach to the colony of Pennsylvania that he took.¹⁵¹ As a Quaker, Penn did not believe in typical hierarchies like some of the other colonies in early America, and, with the ultimate goal of religious toleration, Penn did set up Pennsylvania to become a place of religious diversity and freedom. Penn enshrined in the Pennsylvania constitution a protection for liberty of conscience.¹⁵² This protection would be ultimately preserved in the Constitution for the entire U.S. through the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. However, Penn was often absent from the colony, and ultimately not everyone in Pennsylvania had the same commitment to the goal that Penn did, and he wrote often chastising the colony for not being consistent with his vision of a holy experiment.¹⁵³

The colonies each had their own religious establishments and majorities, but because they had a direct example of how not to handle religious disagreement from the English Civil War, they were *de facto* more religiously tolerant. Despite the variation in religious opinion and how the colonies ought to navigate the relationship between religion and politics, they ultimately

¹⁵⁰ Andrew R. Murphy, *Liberty, Conscience, and Toleration: The Political Thought of William Penn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3-4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁵² Christie L. Maloyed, "A Liberal Civil Religion: William Penn's Holy Experiment," *Journal of Church and State* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2013): 674.

¹⁵³ Murphy, *Liberty, Conscience, and Toleration*, 9-10.

ended up prioritizing religious liberty and toleration as a means to promote unity in the face of tyranny before the Revolution, as well as to maintain stability afterwards.

Religion and the Continental Congress

When discussing the state of the relationship between religion and politics in early America, we must also discuss the beliefs of the founding members of the country. The Continental Congress was a governing body formed with the purpose of leading the colonies as tensions with England were rising and pointing to a need for a war of independence.¹⁵⁴ Though the colonies had long had a positive relationship with Britain at that point, there began in 1763 a series of antagonizing acts that interfered with the colonies' view of themselves and their religious identity.¹⁵⁵ There was significant disagreement about the goal of the Congress, whether it was to find a resolution with Britain or establish colonial rights.¹⁵⁶ There was also disagreement about what role religion should play in the Congress and the forming government at large.

The best example of how members of the Congress felt about the role of religion is the difference of opinions about both legislative and military chaplaincies as decided on by the Congress. Thomas Cushing from Massachusetts, who was Congregationalist, moved for a daily prayer to begin the Congress, which was seconded by another Congregationalist, Samuel Adams.¹⁵⁷ This was opposed by John Jay of New York and John Rutledge of South Carolina, who thought it would cloud the goal of the Congress because there was much religious diversity,

¹⁵⁴ Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress*, 39.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 39-40.

¹⁵⁶ "The First Continental Congress," *Independence Hall Association*.

¹⁵⁷ Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress*, 73-74.

even though they both agreed with the sentiment.¹⁵⁸ Samuel Adams's ultimate response was recognizing the importance of God's sovereignty over human affairs and governments, and the final vote passed. Jacob Duche was to lead the prayer as an Episcopalian, but he was later replaced by William White, another Episcopalian, and George Duffield, a Presbyterian pastor.¹⁵⁹ James Madison represented the side of the Congress that was displeased with the presence of chaplains at government meetings, believing that it was inconsistent with religious freedom, as he believed religion should be voluntary rather than compulsory.¹⁶⁰ George Washington was a Congress member who supported chaplaincies for military regiments to increase the morale of soldiers throughout the Revolutionary War.¹⁶¹ This was ultimately passed by the Congress, though, again, James Madison was against military chaplaincies. Despite the disagreement within the Congress about the presence of chaplains for the government and the military, this conflict still represent the fundamental Christian worldview that early American leaders had, and the value placed on Christianity.

The Continental Congress represented many of the ideologies present in the colonies as independence was being discussed. It is important to remember that the leaders in the Continental Congress were part of the intellectual elite of the country, but the principles they instilled in the founding documents of this country are influential still today. America, now leaning more secular than spiritual, cannot be separated from its deeply religious core. The fact that Socinianism had influence over the foundation of America, even with the deep religiosity at the core of American culture, is significant. Because some of these leaders were influenced by

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 74.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 74, 76.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 78.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 80-81.

rationalism and Socinianism, Socinian ideas are equally fundamental to the founding of America as the religious and pietistic ideas of Puritanism and other uniquely American sects.

Theological Nationalism and the American Revolution

The Continental Congress was deeply involved in the Revolution and revolutionary ideas. It should be noted here that there is (and historically has been) a persistent view of America as God-ordained, and any interference in the activities of the colonies that would form America was directly against God Godself. It is because of this religious identity and religious imperative that the role of religion in the Continental Congress is crucial. It became a quasi-religious duty for these leaders to decide to separate from England.¹⁶² Not only that, but political leaders saw the benefit of using religion as a tool for structure and unity in the early, fractured colonies. But, due to the religious diversity of the colonies, there is not a dominant religious sect that could become the unifying belief. Therefore, as early America became both God-ordained and religiously diverse, the unifier in the Revolutionary efforts became nationalism for America herself, and America became a God-like figure. For the sake of this project, I will call this idea theological nationalism.

Within the Revolution, there are two categories of religious thought: pietistic thought and rational thought. Essentially, there were deeply religious members of the Continental Congress who worked alongside those who leaned more into rationalism and reason — namely, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and James Madison. Both of these groups upheld the need for independence from England. The religious or pietistic influence came as an extension of the First Great Awakening. The First Great Awakening was a religious response to the

¹⁶² Ibid, 40.

Enlightenment and helped to solidify the American ideal of religious freedom while maintaining that America was destined by God.¹⁶³ The First Great Awakening was a largely evangelical movement, stemming from the fact that rationality began to play an increasingly important role in Protestant theology.¹⁶⁴ However, the push for revolution could not have been sustained without Puritanism also supporting the movement.¹⁶⁵ Puritans saw life as fundamentally connected; in other words, there would be no reason to separate religious, social, or political life because it was all intertwined.¹⁶⁶ The Puritans' biblical orthodoxy actually supported the independence efforts because they saw themselves as God's chosen ones, as the Hebrews were in Exodus.¹⁶⁷ They had to escape tyranny, as the Hebrew people did when they escaped Egypt, except in the case of the Puritans, the tyrant was England rather than pharaoh. The support for the revolution from both the Puritans and the evangelicals helped sustain it and make American independence a reality. Yet despite this unity, the Great Awakening also helped to establish how fractured and sectarian religion in early colonial America was, as each sect came into conflict with the others over matters of doctrine and practice.¹⁶⁸

The rational influences on the Revolution are slightly more secular; however, there are important religious manifestations of rationalism that are key for this project. These religious manifestations are Deism and Unitarianism, and it can be argued that Socinianism helped to establish the religious aspects of rationalism that were central to the development of both Deism and Unitarianism. Because Socinus so emphasized the individual human reason allowing for

¹⁶³ John Howard Smith, *The First Great Awakening : Redefining Religion in British America, 1725-1775* (NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), 49.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶⁵ Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress*, 44.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 45.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, *The First Great Awakening*, 8.

salvation and understanding of the Scriptures, this contributed to the role of rationalism in the deeply religious countries of England and America. Though it is hard to determine exactly what the direct influence was on the Enlightenment because there were many eclectic influences on the entire movement, there are significant Socinian strands throughout the Enlightenment and the American Revolution, including religious toleration and separation of church and state. In part, due to the rationalism present in America, there was a conception that the American Revolution was the culmination of these influences that would ultimately propel the entire human race forward.

A note here about pacifism should be made. As is apparent, the American Revolution was not a pacifist endeavor, nor were any of the people who supported it adherents of pacifism. There were the Quakers in the colonies who were pacifist, but Quakers were not, as far as we know, (directly) influenced by Socinianism. Clearly, the Puritans did not hold pacifism as a doctrine, as they viewed themselves as the chosen ones who needed to be liberated from the oppression of England. Even those leaders who were influenced by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and ultimately therefore Socinianism, were *not* focused on pacifism in any way in regards to gaining independence. The intense pacifism of Socinus did not translate after his death, but there was a general sense of pacifism in terms of not actively shedding blood in order to follow Christ among those who claimed Socinianism as their religious belief. Pacifism is not an important part of Unitarianism, and ultimately fell away once Socinian ideas entered into early America. The colonial population struggled to decide how to go about gaining independence from England, and Unitarians decided to support the Revolution because they saw a message of justice in it. Because of this, Unitarians rejected pacifism in order to preserve justice, though they held peace in high regard.

Joseph Priestley and American Unitarianism

Joseph Priestley was a prominent figure in American Unitarianism, and specifically for this project, a close friend of Thomas Jefferson. Upon coming to America from England in 1794, he began preaching Unitarian beliefs and helping to set up Unitarian footholds across the colonies.¹⁶⁹ Priestley began his doctrine as loosely related to Socinianism but disagreed with some Socinian tenets. Priestley was especially wary of Socinus's "rationalistic justifications of faith."¹⁷⁰ However, the influence that Socinianism had on Unitarianism and Priestley himself was significant. Though Biddle, the "father of English Unitarianism," claims that he would have reached the conclusions he did without the influence of Socinianism, it may be argued that Socinianism was a key component of both Biddle's and Priestley's thought.¹⁷¹ Socinianism at the very least introduced the questions to ask for some of the fathers of Unitarianism.

It is also important here to mention James Freeman. He helped introduce Unitarian and Socinian ideas into America, alongside Priestley, and he was the first Unitarian minister at King's Chapel in Boston, which John Adams would later attend. Freeman often read Priestley's work and came to doubt more and more the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁷² It was through Freeman's power and thought that the Anglican church became the first Unitarian church in America.¹⁷³ Freeman first altered the Book of Common Prayer to become more Anti-Trinitarian, especially as Freeman was influenced by Priestley and Clarke.¹⁷⁴ Due to Freeman's leadership, he helped to

¹⁶⁹ Bowers, *Joseph Priestley*, 2-3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁷¹ MacLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, 195.

¹⁷² Henry Wilder Foote, *James Freeman and King's Chapel, 1782-87: A Chapter in the Early History of the Unitarian Movement in New England* (Boston: Leonard C. Bowles, 1873), 10.

¹⁷³ For more on how this happened, see Foote's *James Freeman and King's Chapel* for specific correspondence relating to this shift.

¹⁷⁴ Foote, *James Freeman and King's Chapel*, 13.

usher a more Unitarian Book of Common Prayer to King's, which ultimately influenced the congregation to stray from Anglicanism.

American Unitarianism has many of the same theological tenets as has been discussed in the first chapter of this project. It was, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, different from the Unitarian Universalism that is more popular today. These early Unitarians were still loosely Christian, though they stressed the unity of God and rejected the Trinity.¹⁷⁵ They also rejected the divinity of Christ, as we have seen with the Socinians who came before them. The work of some Unitarian scholars claims Socinianism as Unitarianism itself, as they are one and the same.¹⁷⁶ For this project, the distinction between Socinianism and Unitarianism is not as important as the fact that their shared beliefs offered a religious framework for the separation of church and state.

Interestingly, there is some debate about where, exactly, Unitarianism originated. Some scholars emphasize the importance of English theologians, like Biddle, on the group of thought that became Unitarianism. Other scholars are more inclined to the claim that Unitarianism is unique to America, given that America is perhaps more predisposed to Unitarian ideas. Members of King's Chapel claim a direct line back to the Diet of Torda in 1568, where King Sigismund II proclaimed religious tolerance and divided state affairs from ecclesiastical affairs.¹⁷⁷ Where Unitarianism came from, or, for that matter, how it differed exactly from Socinianism, is less key

¹⁷⁵ This remains the theology of King's Chapel even in 2021.

¹⁷⁶ I'm thinking specifically of the Unitarian scholar Earl Morse Wilbur.

¹⁷⁷ Emily Mace, "The Diet of Torda," *Harvard Square Library*, <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/congregational-polity/the-diet-of-torda/>. The Diet of Torda has a few translations, but one of them is as follows: "Preachers everywhere are to preach the gospel according to their understanding of it; if the parish willingly receives it good: but if not, let there be no compulsion on it to do so, since that would not ease any man's soul; but let each parish keep a minister whose teaching is acceptable to it. Let no superintendent or anyone else act violently or abusively to a preacher. No one may threaten another, on account of his teaching, with imprisonment or deprivation of office: for faith is a gift of God; it comes from listening, and listening is through God's word."

for this project. The salient idea from American Unitarianism is that it gained a foothold in the colonies and influenced many of the leaders who were responsible for founding the United States and establishing its laws and Constitution. Unitarianism contributed to the emphasis of rationalism in the colonies, while also supporting the theistic framework through which leaders thought about the budding country and the revolution. The chain of Unitarian thought in America seems to originate from Joseph Priestley, to Theophilus Lindsay, to James Freeman, and from them to important political figures like Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin.¹⁷⁸

J. D. Bowers claims in his work on Joseph Priestley that “English Unitarianism offered a theology that fit well with the democratic orientations of American Christianity at the time, especially the claim that it simplified key aspects of religious beliefs and returned to the original tenets of Christianity.”¹⁷⁹ Not only did Unitarianism offer a more simple, straightforward version of Christianity, but America was itself predisposed to lean towards Unitarian ideas, such as religious toleration and separation of church and state. Because of the emphasis on individual liberty and natural rights that were embedded in the founding of this country, Unitarianism appealed to some early Americans because it placed the individual at the center of their own salvation. Unitarianism was a religious manifestation of rationalism, which helped to found the country and its principles about religious toleration.¹⁸⁰ Unitarianism and its Deistic counterpart helped establish American “democratic orientations,” as influenced by the Socinianism that came before.

¹⁷⁸ Both Adams and Franklin are known to have attended King’s Chapel in Boston.

¹⁷⁹ Bowers, *Joseph Priestley*, 65.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress*, 51.

Jefferson's religious beliefs and influences

Thomas Jefferson is one of the most important figures in American history when it comes to the separation of church and state. Before understanding how and why Jefferson came to insist upon a distinction between religion and politics, it is important to understand Jefferson's personal beliefs about religion. There has already been a lot of scholarship on this topic, so I will be focusing largely on his specific connections to Socinianism and Unitarianism, as that set of beliefs is called in America by this time. Jefferson was raised as an Episcopalian, but after going to college at William and Mary, he became interested in ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, in particular the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers.¹⁸¹ Jefferson's interest in philosophy is likely how he became acquainted with Priestley's work *Socrates and Jesus Compared*.¹⁸² On April 9th, 1803 Jefferson wrote to Priestley regarding this work.¹⁸³ It was through Priestley that he likely became re-interested in the Gospels. This, ultimately, led Jefferson to compose his version of the Bible — focused solely on the ethics and morals that Jesus taught.

The Jefferson Bible has sparked a lot of debate and scholarship. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus briefly on the removal of the mysterious and supernatural elements of the Jesus story and the Socinian influences that might have led Jefferson to compose a Bible in this manner. Jefferson first wrote to Joseph Priestley to write this version of the Bible, which indicates that his view of a Bible of the ethics of Jesus aligns with the Unitarian ethos.¹⁸⁴ Unitarians have the same Christology that Socinians do — they follow a low Christology and do not emphasize the supernatural elements of Jesus's story. This was Jefferson's goal as he was

¹⁸¹ O. I. A. Roche ed., *Jefferson Bible* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1964), 16.

¹⁸² Roche ed., *Jefferson Bible*, 18

¹⁸³ "From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 9 April 1803," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-40-02-0124>.

¹⁸⁴ Roche ed., *Jefferson Bible*, 10.; "From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 29 January 1804," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-42-02-0322>.

editing the Bible. Jefferson focused solely on the ethics and morals that Jesus taught, rather than his miracles or divinity, which reflects a low Christology. The Christology Jefferson appears to subscribe to based on his edits of the Bible is likely why he initially requested Priestley, a prominent Unitarian and a friend, to help him make these edits to the Bible. Priestley at the time was aging, and his work in America for Unitarianism was largely over.

Additionally, Jefferson read and requested direct Socinian sources. Jefferson carefully documented the books in his library, where it is clear that Jefferson read and enjoyed many of Priestley's ideas as many of Priestley's work as an outspoken Unitarian minister were found in Jefferson's library.¹⁸⁵ He owned and read many other sermons from Samuel Clarke, a noted English philosopher, and one who was accused of being Socinian due to his view of the Trinity.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, Jefferson owned books penned by Locke, most notably *Toleration*.¹⁸⁷ From these sermons and books in his library, there can be a line drawn to Jefferson from Socinian sources and influences. In addition to the items in his library, he did once directly request Socinian sources. On July 12, 1789, Jefferson wrote to a man named Richard Price and requested some Socinian sources to study.¹⁸⁸ The work that Price later recommended to him was *Two Schemes of a Trinity Considered*, which also appears in Jefferson's catalog of religious texts.¹⁸⁹ It is significant that Jefferson wrote to request specifically Socinian sources; this indicates that Jefferson knew the term and some of the implications of the ideas. While he was

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Jefferson, 1783 Catalog of Books, circa 1775-1812, *Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive* (Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2003).

<http://www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/catalog1783> (accessed February 9, 2021)

¹⁸⁶ Timothy Yenter and Ezio Vailati, "Samuel Clarke", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/clarke>; Jefferson, 1783 Catalog of Books.

¹⁸⁷ Jefferson, 1783 Catalog of Books.

¹⁸⁸ "From Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, 12 July 1789," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-15-02-0261>.

¹⁸⁹ Jefferson, 1783 Catalog of Books

less fearful of terms like Deist and Unitarian, and he only ever used “Socinian” once, it is still significant that Jefferson knew of and about the ideas. This shows that, even if only subtly, there were influences on Jefferson from the Polish Brethren.

On September 10th, 1824, James Madison wrote to Jefferson to request many books, including the Racovian Catechism, or as he called it, the *Bibliotheca fratrum Polonorum* (“the library of the Polish Brethren”).¹⁹⁰ This indicates that Madison wanted to read the catechism, or at least own it, and that he thought Jefferson was the best person to help him procure it. This leaves up for debate whether Jefferson had actually ever read it himself, but that Madison requested the catechism directly from Jefferson is significant. However, Jefferson was still the person whom Madison asked to obtain the book, which indicates an ability or interest on Jefferson’s part to have connection to it. The significance of this is that Madison assumed that Jefferson had ties to someone who could deliver him this subversive, controversial text.

Finally, in terms of influences on Jefferson, I would be remiss to not discuss John Locke. As was mentioned in the second chapter, many thought Locke had Socinian tendencies in England as he was writing, and his *Reasonableness of Christianity* in particular received Socinian accusations.¹⁹¹ While neither Locke nor Jefferson personally would have claimed Socinianism as a title of his faith, Socinian principles about toleration greatly influenced Locke. Because toleration was so emphasized by Socinian doctrine, Locke used some of that to inform his beliefs about toleration for religion in England.¹⁹² As mentioned above, Jefferson owned a copy of *Toleration* in his library, and therefore likely read and digested many of Locke’s

¹⁹⁰ “From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 10 September 1824,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-03-02-0369>.

¹⁹¹ John C. Higgins-Biddle, introduction to *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, by John Locke, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

thoughts on the subject. Therefore, as Jefferson read Locke and began to form his own ideas about toleration, there was a Socinian thread between the two thinkers. This is not to overstate Locke's importance and influence on Jefferson — certainly, Jefferson drew from many scholars and thinkers other than Locke in order to arrive at the place of separation of church and state. However, Locke's ideas are significant and helped Jefferson establish the religious freedom we have in America today and show a clear thread of Socinianism connecting the two men.

With this being said, there may have been plausible reason for Jefferson to push for the separation of church and state, simply because he himself was dabbling in unpopular, potentially heretical ideas. The “wall of separation of church and state” is likely due at least in part to Jefferson's religious influences and beliefs. Though he never self-identified as a Socinian, he read Socinian sources and was greatly influenced by John Locke. These sources and influences push for a separation of church and state, and, ultimately, so did Jefferson. What matters is not what sect of Christianity Jefferson nominally followed, but how he incorporated that which influenced him into the establishment of this country and the religion clauses *we* follow. Equally important is how people viewed Jefferson's religious beliefs and politicization of his religion, as will be explored in a coming section.

John Adams's Religious Beliefs

As this project has focused largely on Thomas Jefferson thus far, it is important to look at John Adams briefly, especially as Adams is the counterpart to Jefferson in the election of 1800 and was influential in separation of church and state, as well. In addition, Adams shared Jefferson's deistic Unitarian beliefs, and they frequently corresponded, especially late in life,

about matters of theology. Yet although the pair shared religious beliefs, Adams was heralded as someone who did not have questionable religious leanings in the election of 1800.

Adams was sent to college by his parents in order to become a minister of the local Puritan Congregational Church.¹⁹³ As a Puritan in upbringing, Adams did not see the pursuit of law or politics to be separate from a religious endeavor, even though he was continually growing away from his Puritan background.¹⁹⁴ Adams identified himself in the 1750s and 1760s as more of a general Christian, particular to no one sect, which is what might have drawn Adams to the Unitarian message. Ultimately, as Adams grew older, he more faithfully attended the Unitarian church in Boston, King's Chapel.

Adams did, however, emphasize that every society needed a common morality, something that would bind each member of that society to good.¹⁹⁵ This could have contributed to the rising American nationalism that ultimately functioned as a central religion because America did not have one.¹⁹⁶ Adams did not believe that the common morals of a society had to necessarily come from religion, as everyone also had the right to practice their own religion, though everyone was educated in “the general Principles of Christianity: and the general Principles of English and American liberty.”¹⁹⁷ This indicates that Adams understood America to be a Christian nation. Whether or not he expected America to continue in this way is another matter, especially given that Adams generally promoted religious toleration, at least for different sects of Christians. Additionally, it is clear that all the founding fathers held American liberty in

¹⁹³ John Witte, “One Public Religion, Many Private Religions: John Adams and the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution,” in *The Founders on God and Government*, ed. Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark D. Hall, and Jeffery R. Morrison (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 23-52, 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁹⁶ More on this in the epilogue

¹⁹⁷ Letter to Thomas Jefferson (Jun 28, 1813), in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 338-340, at 339-340.

high regard, and this perhaps also contributed to the growing nationalism experienced in America.

Election of 1800 and Accusations

While Jefferson did assist in writing the documents that established religious freedom in America, it is important to return to the view of the people at large in the country. In the year 1800, Jefferson and Adams ran against each other in the presidential election. Though similarly aligned in terms of their private theology, Jefferson was ultimately villainized for his religious beliefs, being called a Deist and, worse, an atheist, while Adams was not. It should be noted that Deism itself is an amorphous term — there is little consensus about what it meant at the time.¹⁹⁸ Typically, some scholars define Deism as it refers to an aversion to the supernatural elements of Christianity and a focus on the ethics and teachings of religion. As discussed in an earlier section, Jefferson certainly would fall into this category. However, Deism is better understood as a phase of religious thought, or a catch-all term for the way that rationalism and human reason and religion intersected.¹⁹⁹ The public being fearful of Jefferson running the country as a Deist stems mostly from concern that Jefferson would not hold the country to a high moral standard and would allow morally corrupt government decisions. It was, as the public believed at the time, likely that America being a God-ordained nation was tied to the leader of the country being a morally sound Christian.

The media was a key player in passing judgement on Jefferson's beliefs, and this sparked a public outcry against Jefferson based on his beliefs.²⁰⁰ Federalists, who backed Adams against

¹⁹⁸ S.G. Hefelbower, "Deism Historically Defined," *The American Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (April, 1920), 217.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 222.

²⁰⁰ Edward J. Larson, *A Magnificent Catastrophe: the Tumultuous Election of 1800, America's First Presidential Campaign* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 172-173.

Jefferson, claimed that Jefferson's religious toleration was a sign of his insidious end goal to destroy Christianity and the family, and his sympathies to the French Revolution exposed Jefferson's desire for mass violence.²⁰¹ While Adams privately held many of the same unconventional beliefs as a Unitarian, he publicly portrayed himself quite differently. Because of the public's negative opinion of the more radical religions in America, Jefferson was vilified for his beliefs. As one newspaper claimed, "murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest will be openly taught and practiced, the air will be rent with the cries of the distressed, the soil will be soaked with blood, and the nation black with crimes."²⁰² Some focused more directly on his religion, claiming Jefferson "writes aghast the truths of God's words; who makes not even a profession of Christianity; who is without Sabbaths; without the sanctuary, and without so much as a decent external respect for the faith and worship of Christians."²⁰³

The election of 1800 was significant for other political reasons, but it marks a turning point in the public perception of the religion of presidential candidates. That Jefferson's religious beliefs were so focused on and those beliefs were being used to sway the public not to vote for him is different from the past elections but has influenced all of the presidential elections since. This was the precedent for the concern about John F. Kennedy being Catholic, and any accusations regarding Barack Obama being Muslim (which is blatantly false). People in 1800 went after Jefferson with vitriol because his religious beliefs were uncommon and unconventional, even though he was still a follower of Christ. This shows the drive of people then to elect a president who had a mainstream, Protestant background. That Jefferson was

²⁰¹ Jeffery L. Pasley, "Politics and the Misadventures of Thomas Jefferson's Modern Reputation: A Review Essay," *Journal of Southern History* 72 no. 4 (Nov, 2006), 880.

²⁰² Peter Onuf, "Thomas Jefferson: Campaigns and Elections," UVA Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/president/jefferson/campaigns-and-elections>

²⁰³ Ibid.

attacked for his religious beliefs shows that many people in the budding country in 1800 did not want church and state to separate, but rather have a Protestant president to guide them in the way of God.

Of course, the concerns of the people were not strong enough to prevent Jefferson from being president, and he became our third president from 1800 to 1808. However, the lasting impact of politicizing Jefferson's unconventional religious beliefs has had an interesting effect on the vision of America and Jefferson's own "wall of separation." The concern about the religious beliefs of recent presidents shows that America, though moving more and more towards secularism, is still indicative of an emphasis on religious tradition, and concern about the "other." The other in this case would include any president that does not follow a mainstream Protestant belief system, which is a line of thought that goes all the way back to Jefferson himself.

The Push for Separation of Church and State

Thomas Jefferson drafted many of the documents that helped the founding of America, and these documents are significant because they are the first instance of implementation of these ideas of toleration and liberty as influenced by Socinianism. These documents codify these Socinian ideas and put them in direct writing. Perhaps the most famous document Jefferson wrote was the Declaration of Independence. This document does not have a lot of religious jargon, as has been studied before, and, though it is more or less an argument from silence, it is important that Jefferson chose not to include religious language in the Declaration. This could be to reinforce his idea of a "wall of separation" between religion and politics, and he did not feel that including religious language would add to the purpose or goal of the document. However, in

terms of the American ethos, the Declaration of Independence is a critical document, and it does not include religious language, which contributes to the idea that America is not committed to one particular religion.

The first document I will be focusing on is the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (VSRF), which was drafted in 1776 and adopted in 1786. As discussed above, it is significant that Virginia was ultimately a place where separation was first instated because it was an Anglican colony and a site of persecution of religious minorities. This persecution was usually on a small scale and was typically social rather than political, but the VSRF was meant to ensure that the persecution even on a small scale would never get into statute law. Jefferson begins the document by appealing to human free will, stating that “the Almighty God hath created the mind free.”²⁰⁴ Jefferson also writes that God only proves God’s power by providing humans with reason, and this emphasis on human reason aligns with Socinian ideas. Jefferson recognizes the fallibility of rulers and the ecclesia, and therefore any beliefs that would be imposed on others by these people would be equally fallible. He also states clearly that “our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions,” so therefore to impose religion on others would be to deny their natural rights.²⁰⁵ The document ends with the declaration that Virginia will prioritize the natural rights of men and not enforce a religious doctrine on Virginians.

The other important document to examine is the First Amendment. The First Amendment is a part of a larger whole of the Bill of Rights, which was ratified in 1791 and written by another proponent of religious freedom and toleration, James Madison. The language of the First Amendment’s religion clause is as follows: “Congress shall make no law respecting an

²⁰⁴ Thomas Jefferson, “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom,” accessed from Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/virginia-statute-religious-freedom>

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”²⁰⁶ There are two parts of the first amendment regarding religion. The first is the establishment clause, and the second is the free exercise clause. The second part regarding free exercise has not had much controversy surrounding it. The first part, however, is generally less clear. There are two different interpretations of the establishment clause; the first interpretation is a separationist viewpoint, which indicates that the government cannot make any laws regarding religion whatsoever.²⁰⁷ The second interpretation is that the government cannot favor any one religion over another.²⁰⁸ Because there is room for different interpretations, the first clause has sparked some debate about what the intention of the founding fathers was. Of course, we could never truly know, and likely each founding father would have a slightly different point of view. Jefferson would almost certainly fall on the side of separationists due to his Socinian influence.

From 1800 to Present Day

One reason that examining documents like the VSRF and the First Amendment is important is because they have sparked various interpretations in modern day. Clearly, there is still debate about separation of church and state and religious freedom today, especially related to what the intent of the founding fathers was as they wrote the documents that established freedom and independence. This contributes to some ongoing debates about government involvement in religion, as well as religious involvement in government. Specifically, the Religious Right has an impact on these interpretations, as they typically promote more religious involvement in governmental affairs. Some recent court cases exhibit these debates, like *Burwell*

²⁰⁶ US Congress, “Bill of Rights,” <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.

²⁰⁷ Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress*, 10-11.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

v. Hobby Lobby Corporation and *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*. Because the Religious Right has political sway through their votes, these debates are important to understand, especially the way in which they may conflict with religious toleration, religious freedom, or separation of church and state.

Chapter 5: Socinian Influence in Present Day America

So, what does this all mean for the present? How do the beliefs of a strange group of Christian Anti-Trinitarians living in mid-16th century Poland still impact us today? As is apparent, there are still, and probably always will be, battles over separation of church and state in America. *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* and *Masterpiece Cakeshop, LTD v. Colorado Rights Commission* are well-known examples of court cases where the practice of religion is still a factor in our political and secular lives. There are also examples of certain evangelical doctrines promoting certain political candidates, as is the case with the Moral Majority. Because of the nature of religion and politics, I do not believe they will ever truly be separate in the sense that people will cease to make decisions (legal or otherwise) based on religion — people often make difficult, ethical decisions based on their religious beliefs or lack thereof. Because of this influence, the balance of just how separate religion and politics can be, at least in the way in which some people argue it should be, may not be fully achievable. However, this does not mean we should passively accept the modern merging of church and state. Understanding the history of the separation clause and its ties to the historical persecution of Protestant sects can help us to better recognize why toleration and separation were important to begin with — and why it is necessary to do our best to maintain them.

The political and leadership implications of the relationship of church and state is that religion will be a factor in how some make decisions. As people become less invested in church institutions, they may lean more on theological nationalism or their specific party beliefs. Throughout the U.S. today, the lack of bipartisanship continues to prevent meaningful connection across different party lines, and religion functions in this. For a political candidate to condemn one side or the other for supporting the other candidate can actually condemn their

religious beliefs.²⁰⁹ If the goal is to unite the country, then different religious beliefs should be respected, especially when considering the way in which Jefferson was able to promote religious diversity under the influence of Socinianism. Because of the Socinian and Unitarian influences on this country that pushed for religious tolerance, a multitude of religious beliefs have been able to coexist under one government, and this idea should continue the effort to diminish the partisan present.

The counter push toward intolerance, against these Socinian ideals, is tied to the rise of the Religious Right. As the Religious Right gains traction among different denominations in which this group promotes a political agenda that aligns with their religious beliefs, the Religious Right should not be condemned or written off for these ideas. Rather, the impulse to condemn this group because they do not separate church and state is not based in an effort to achieve historical accuracy, but because there is no substantive counter to the Religious Right. As more people who identify as liberal move away from mainstream Christianity, there is an imbalance of religiosity in political action, and the left could actually benefit from a group like the Religious Left as a counterpoint. Because the Religious Right traces their history back to Puritan influences, it would be prudent to bring Unitarian influences back for the Religious Left and understand the balance in order to restore some common ground for the sake of religious toleration. This would require that the Religious Left be taken seriously by other liberal forces in the US. The most important thing is to have something as a balance for the Religious Right, whether or not that is necessarily the Religious Left does not matter. If there is another power to maintain the balance against the Religious Right, then separation of church and state can be maintained as it was in the founding of the US.

²⁰⁹ I am making a reference to Hilary Clinton's statement where she called those who supported Donald Trump a "basket of deplorables" in the 2016 election.

Misconception of Religious Freedom, Religious Toleration, and Separation of Church and State

An interesting aspect of my research thus far has included the way that three phrases, “religious freedom,” “religious toleration,” and “separation of church and state,” intersect and overlap in the founding of America and across sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. In the time of the Polish Brethren, it was necessary to have separation of church and state in order to have the freedom to practice whatever religion an individual chose, as theocratic nations throughout Europe had the practice of persecuting heretics. Because there were theologically-based governments, religious toleration was necessary. The persecution that religious minorities and dissenters faced necessitated religious toleration for religious freedom because of the close relationship of religion and politics. Today in America, there is not a theologically-based government in order to allow for the express purpose of religious freedom. Separation seems to be a subset of religious freedom, but in America, instead of courts promoting the *absence* of religion, they often favor a *multiplicity* of religion. A multiplicity of religion means that the courts do not favor any one religion, but allow for all religions to coexist. If the courts did not favor multiplicity, but instead called for the absence of religion, then there could be more persecution as people attempt to practice but are prevented from doing so publicly, as we can see in modern day France.²¹⁰ This is not always perfect, and religious minorities are often discriminated against, alongside those who mainstream Christianity does not accept, like the LGBTQ+ community. The multiplicity of religion functions alongside the debate happening regarding the First Amendment, and whether the intent of the founding fathers was a freedom *of*

²¹⁰ I’m thinking specifically of the ban on the hijab for women under 16 and the way that this decision actually harms more women than it helps.

religion, which would invite multiplicities of religions, or a freedom *from* religion, which would imply the absence of religion. In my opinion, the U.S will most likely always favor a multiplicity, even as it may oppress religious minorities now, in the future, there is a possibility of the multiplicity actually succeeding in its inclusion efforts. The oppression of religious minorities stems from a lack of understanding and a societal expectation for minorities to conform to the norm, and this oppression does not need to continue as it has. As people begin to understand the importance of diversity in education and in representation across fields and careers, there is more potential for people to be educated about different religions in a respectful manner. Once people learn about different religions, we can more appropriately celebrate religious diversity.

The Religious Right

It is important to first cover the Religious Right in American because this group has a significant impact on church and state issues today. This is unique in that at a certain point, some evangelical Christian Americans began wanting *more* government involvement with religion — or perhaps more accurately, they wanted more religion in politics in order to “save” the morality of the nation. Things like requiring prayers in schools and having religious symbols or documents in government buildings are arguments that have been made by the Religious Right. Over the past twenty or thirty years, the fight has turned to gay marriage rights and reproductive rights for women, as can be seen in the *Hobby Lobby* and *Masterpiece Cakeshop* cases. The way in which this has unfolded has interesting implications for politics, especially as conservatism is equated to tradition and fundamentalism, and people are using religion and religious matters to inform how they make decisions. Additionally, the Religious Right is a voting bloc, and different

politicians have used appeals to their beliefs to be elected or inspire change, Donald Trump most recently. Trump, for example, appealed to the Religious Right's desire to restore the Christian nation America "once was," which is why Make America Great Again was an effective slogan in the 2016 elections.

History of The Religious Right

There were different periods of time that the Religious Right was not involved in politics, although there is a legacy of conservative Christianity all the way back to the Puritans who settled early America. During the American Civil War, Protestant denominations split internally over disagreements about slavery, and an increase in immigration led to an influx of Jews and Catholics, which weakened Protestant social control and cohesion.²¹¹ Other threats to Protestant churches throughout the nineteenth century include Darwinism and his theory of evolution and a focus on historical criticism of the Bible.²¹² Darwin challenged the Biblical narrative of creation, which in turn disputed the idea that the Bible is entirely true. This Biblical literalism is also challenged by the historical criticism of Scriptures and causes concern for literalists as more people doubt the historical accuracy of the Bible.

However, it was the turmoil of the early twentieth century that really contributed to the rise of the Religious Right. Messages of modernism causing Germany to start World War I, the rise of Prohibition and the cultural movement in the 1920's, the Great Depression, and a second global war caused a deep concern for the welfare of youth in America.²¹³ Following World War II came the Cold War and the Red Scare. Communists in the USSR were typically atheist, which

²¹¹ William Martin, *With God on Our Side* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 6.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid, 25.

likely contributed to the concern about Communism corrupting the youth of America. This started a renewed focus on fundamentalism and evangelicalism, in which conservative Christians grew increasingly concerned about their children turning away from God. This, over time, transformed into groups like the Moral Majority and Jerry Farwell founding the New Christian Right. The Moral Majority was a group specifically focused on achieving political goals based on a religious agenda. This is problematic in terms of how this country was established because it is not the goal of separation or religious freedom to have a political group be motivated to have religion *more* involved in government because it may lead to the exclusion of other religious groups. All of these foundations led to the establishment of socially conservative Christians today, who battle over many different “moral” issues, including pornography, gay rights, sexual education, and abortion.

The Religious Right Today and Apocalyptic Politics

Not only does the Religious Right oppose certain social movements, but it also includes the phenomenon of apocalyptic politics and the promotion of Anti-Semitism. The Religious Right supports Israel as a nation because some believe that gathering all Jewish people in one place will usher in the apocalypse. This idea is based on an interpretation of the Book of Revelation, in which in order to begin the “Great Tribulation,” those “144,000 from all the tribes of Israel” need to gather as one nation.²¹⁴ This plays into the partisan issues of foreign affairs related to Israel and Palestine. There is an organization called Christians United for Israel, whose mission is as follows:

As the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States, with over 10 million members, Christians United for Israel (CUFI) is the foremost Christian organization educating and

²¹⁴ Revelation 7:4;9.

empowering millions of Americans to speak and act with one voice in defense of Israel and the Jewish people. CUFI's diversity across political, ethnic, generational and denominational lines maximizes our impact in communities, the media, on campus, and in our nation's capital. CUFI is committed to confronting indifference and combating anti-Semitism in all its forms wherever it may be found.²¹⁵

While this mission seems to be pro-Judaism, there are actually some ulterior motives to Christian support of Judaism and Israel. The Protestant Reformation actually reinforced ideas of the role that Jews played in bringing about the second coming of Jesus, including, crucially, the idea that Jewish people need to return to their homeland after centuries of exile in order to follow the Scriptural prophecy. This translated into American pulpits, and has influenced the way in which people vote. Just as it is not inherently Anti-Semitic to be against the existence of Israel in favor of Palestinians who lived in the country before the creation of Israel, the Christian impulse to support Israel is not necessarily *pro*-Jewish either. Christians who believe in an imminent apocalypse do not have any goal for peace in Israel or Palestine — this means that there are Christians who predict both Jews and Muslims will die in order for the apocalypse to begin.²¹⁶ This is likely an implicit belief and not an explicit belief, but the main point is that while Christians are pro-Israel, they are not necessarily supporting a peaceful Israel.

The Religious Right (and their views) is important to this project because they are a religiously-focused voting bloc, which means that separation from government or politics does not exist for this group. Because they have clear political goals and motivations, their votes are able to be used based on promises from one candidate. The Religious Right also might be influencing political leaders to make more specifically religious decisions, like Trump favoring

²¹⁵ "Mission," *Christians United For Israel*, <https://cufi.org/about/mission/>

²¹⁶ Zachary Davis, "Apocalyptic Politics," *Ministry of Ideas Podcast*, posted May 25th, 2018.

Israel, to further their specific agenda. Because the Religious Right might be influencing specific leaders, alongside the fact that the Religious Right typically wants more religious influence on government, this goes against Socinian ideology and an aspect of how our country was founded. This is directly involving religion and politics, and going against the “wall of separation” that Jefferson envisioned. While religion and politics may always be subtly connected, this explicit involvement is worrisome if we are to ensure religious diversity and religious toleration in this country.

Court Cases

There are two recent court cases that I want to highlight that illustrate some of the issues that the Religious Right are focused on today — specifically, reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ rights. While neither of these two cases, the *Hobby Lobby* case and the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, definitively condemn birth control or gay marriage, those are the central issues at stake. These are cases in which the Religious Right has a moral stake, and they see the outcome of these cases as a victory for their mission in this country — that is, to “save” the morality of Americans. Because the court decided with the religiously-minded side in these cases, it shows that church and state are not as separate as we may think. As Andrew Murphy explains, “twenty-first century issues of religious freedom emerge out of, yet differ profoundly from, the sorts of claims that mobilized earlier generations of advocates for toleration and liberty of conscience at the American founding and for much of its history.”²¹⁷ The *Hobby Lobby* and *Masterpiece Cakeshop* cases are recent developments in these debates that show the complexities of how separation and toleration have changed over time in this country.

²¹⁷ Andrew Murphy, essay, 3.

The central issue in the *Hobby Lobby* case was women's reproductive rights and whether or not Hobby Lobby's insurance was obligated to cover birth control for female employees, which is often covered at least in part by corporate health insurance policies. For religious reasons, Hobby Lobby chose not to cover birth control. Religious denominations that argue against birth control believe that by interrupting natural processes to procreate, humans are making sex into a non-marital act, which goes against some Christian denominations' beliefs and practices, like those of Catholics and evangelicals. This case ended up going to the Supreme Court in 2014, and the Supreme Court favored Hobby Lobby 5-4. The decision included linking the corporation of Hobby Lobby to the Green family who founded it, and linked their rights to religious liberty to the entire corporation: "Protecting the free-exercise rights of closely held corporations thus protects the religious liberty of the humans who own and control them."²¹⁸ Additionally, it was stated that the Greens run their corporation consistent with Biblical principles, like closing on Sundays, and that to impose the mandate on Hobby Lobby would "burden their exercise of religion."²¹⁹ This has interesting implications for the separation of church and state because the Court decided with those who had the religious impulse. This is a good example of the difference between complete religious freedom and separation, as well as an example of the way in which religious freedom in this country typically means a multiplicity rather than an absence of religion. If we were to have a framework of freedom of religion where the courts banned religious-based decisions by corporations, Hobby Lobby would have lost. They did not, which indicates that the Court does not want to enforce an absence or lack of religion, but rather allow for a multiplicity of religion. This also shows that as a country, at least in the court system, America favors freedom *of* religion, rather than freedom *from* religion.

²¹⁸ *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. 682 (2014) at 3.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, at 2.

The court case involving Masterpiece Cakeshop is another example of the way this works in the actual system. In this case, a gay couple requested a cake be made for their wedding by a specific cakeshop, who refused because same-sex marriage was against their religious beliefs. The Court sided with the Cakeshop with a 7-2 vote. Specifically, what the Supreme Court ruled on was the ability of Colorado to force the cakeshop to bake the wedding cake of a gay couple in order to protect people against discrimination. The issue at stake is that the Supreme Court claimed that Colorado was not protecting all rights involved, which is why they prevented Colorado from making Masterpiece Cakeshop produce the cake. The language the court used specifically is as follows: “The laws and the Constitution can, and in some instances must, protect gay persons and gay couples in the exercise of their civil rights, but religious and philosophical objections to gay marriage are protected views and in some instances protected forms of expression”²²⁰ This also shows that the Court cannot favor any one religion, but also wants to protect individuals who are committed to their religious beliefs, while recognizing the protection that is sometimes necessary for groups like LGBTQ+. This relates to the idea of a free market, as well, as the couple requesting the cake had many different cakeshops from which to choose, but it is still an important decision to consider when thinking about separation of church and state. It actually exemplifies the idea that America follows a policy of freedom of religion, or, perhaps most accurately here, freedom of conscience and the ability of individuals to make their own decisions about morality and how they live their lives.

These court cases are important to this project because they represent the way in which battles regarding separation of church and state still play out today. Because the religiously minded corporations and business ended up being protected by the court, it shows that there is

²²⁰ Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, 584 U.S. ____ (2018) at 1.

still major sway in policy for Christian believers. Not only is there voting sway, but also the principles of the Supreme Court that support the free exercise of religion over, in these cases, access to reproductive healthcare and discrimination based on sexual orientation. While Socinian ideas do promote the free exercise of religion, as set up in this country, there cannot be a favoring of one religion over another. The religious beliefs of the other parties were not mentioned in either of these court cases, but if the government were to favor a mainstream Christian sect in a case over another religious group, explicitly relating to freedom of religious exercise, then there would be a major concern for the separation of church and state. These cases prove that religious issues are still presently a concern, and is why Socinian ideas should be studied to manage best practices for leaders when thinking about separation.

Televangelical Kenneth Copeland

The 2020 election represented how divided the nation is on a wide variety of issues — as many of these issues do not pertain to this project, I will not be getting into many details; however, it is important to mention how divided America is in this political climate. On November 8th, 2020, a video circulated through news sources of Kenneth Copeland, a televangelist, preaching to a large audience about the importance of laughter and joy as ways to drive pain away.²²¹ By this time, Joe Biden had been called as president-elect by all major media outlets, which typically happens before any official ruling is made by the electors (in early December) and Congress (in early January). On the video, Copeland says the following: “The media says Joe Biden is President,” and laughs manically for a minute straight, making the point that it is painful to Copeland and other conservatives to think that Biden could be president-elect

²²¹ The Independent, “Pro-Trump evangelical Kenneth Copeland laughs manically over media calling Biden's win,” filmed November 9, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBkegy4aDvk>.

over Trump.²²² This video has interesting implications about the separation of church and state, especially regarding the far right and conspiracy theorists like QAnon.²²³

However, the rhetoric Copeland uses does stem from groups like the alt-right and QAnon as he makes claims about Joe Biden, who won enough Electoral College votes to be president-elect.²²⁴ The use of fake news rhetoric casting doubt upon the integrity of the 2020 election was a conservative tactic throughout November and into the present. Fake news helps to suppress social conflict and prevents any justice or change for the better, and, used in a church, it is a dangerous tool. Fake news can minimize real problems because these issues might be labelled as fake, so people are less inclined to respond at all. By labelling any media as fake if someone disagrees with it, then it is difficult to have any productive dialogue around those issues, and this is perhaps especially true if used in a church. The use of this rhetoric in a religious setting is harmful for spreading even more conspiracy and hate speech. It is concerning that Copeland uses this in a blatantly religious setting, because not only does it suggest the intimate connection to politics that conservative Christians have, but it also makes that rhetoric seem acceptable or appropriate. This could lead to further harmful speech by people who may not intend to harm, but, because this kind of language is all around them, they may think they are supposed to behave in this way because of their religious beliefs. This can lead to a further imbalance of the Religious Right because of the political influence and lead to more oppression of religious minorities, which works against those ideas from Socinianism and Unitarianism that maintain religious diversity and separation.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ This is *not* to make any claims about Kenneth Copeland himself — I am not trying to group Copeland into far right extremists or conspiracy theorists.

²²⁴ Biden won 306 of electoral votes with 81,283,786 of the popular vote, where Trump won 232 of electoral votes and 74,222,552 of the popular vote. Data from <https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/results/president>

The Religious Left and Possible Solutions

A possible solution to ensure religious toleration and separation of church and state stay intact is to have a counter to the Religious Right in the form of the Religious Left. An example of a leader in the Religious Left today is Reverend Raphael Warnock, who was elected in Georgia in 2021 to be senator, and it will be important to examine his influence thus far on American politics. Warnock is an example of an individual who can use his faith to counter those like Copeland by living his faith in government without invoking extreme views. In the early US, the Religious Left (though they were not called such) included groups like the Unitarians, who were in support of the separation of church and state for religious and political reasons. Unitarians, as influenced by Socinians, had religious motivations to keep religion and politics separate, and this belief was also upheld by Jefferson. As this project has discussed, the Socinian influences on political thought has contributed to the separation and religious freedom in the US. As we are already working within this “religious left” framework, then there is a possible solution to balance with the Religious Right.

One of the ways that the Religious Left could form is by using Socinianism and Unitarianism as a guide to establish group identity. As of right now, liberal Protestant churches lack a central, strong message, which is what Unitarianism could potentially provide. Having a clear, strong message to give to congregations could help retain members in the church and help form group identity. Though the Religious Left does not need to be distinctly Unitarian, there are many principles of Unitarianism that appeal to more liberal ideas, like individual liberties and freedoms, and the emphasis on unity in the central tenets of Unitarianism could help provide a unifying central message. Because the Religious Right has stemmed from a traditionally more

conservative understanding of Christianity, so too could the Religious Left stem from a more radical, liberal understanding of Christianity in Socinianism and Unitarianism. Using Socinianism and its connection to the Enlightenment, the Religious Left could promote policy and political action that counters the Religious Right by being pro-science and advocate for policy that addresses climate change, as well as pro-life and pro-LGBTQ+ because of the focus on the natural sciences and individualism.

The Religious Left is not the only possible solution, for example something like Secular Humanism could be used as a unifying force on the left, but there are some benefits to having an equally religious counterpoint to the Right. Because the Religious Left is also based in largely Christian doctrine and beliefs, neither group could rationally claim a moral high ground. An argument that is made for some of the Religious Right's stances, like those on abortion, is that, morally speaking, they could have the upper hand because they have religious reasons for believing what they do — specifically the conception of the soul. Because the Religious Left would also be using Christian beliefs to bolster their arguments, there would be a counter to the Religious Right's argument from a similar moral standard. Additionally, there would be more possibility for discourse because there could be some common understanding. However, if there was a different group that could promote balance against the Religious Right, then that would be a viable solution, as well. It is important to have this balance in order to maintain our pluralistic separation of church and state.

Increasing Secularism and Theological Nationalism

However, there is also an increasing secularism in America today. Almost all religious institutions are seeing attendance numbers and interest drop, and we are seeing more and more

people declare themselves either agnostic or atheist, or consider themselves “spiritual but not religious.”²²⁵ From 2007 to 2017, the number of people who identified as spiritual-but-not-religious increased from about 15% to 27%, while those who identified as religious and spiritual dropped to 48% in 2017 from 59% in 2012.²²⁶ These statistics show that interest in organized religion is dwindling (although, as the spiritual-but-not-religious moniker gains interest, there are more organized, formal groups that have meeting spaces and leaders — much like a church). Overall, people who claim this religious identity do not claim to have a moral or ethical leader in traditional terms (such as how we conceive of spiritual leaders like priests or ministers). Therefore, in order to find guidance about what to believe about hard questions, they are turning more and more to political views rather than sacred texts or doctrine in order to determine what they think is right. People also might be leaning more on role models and important leaders in their lives, but when they might not know what to think about a topic, like kneeling for the National Anthem, say, they will turn to what their political “side” believes about these topics. As American politics become more polarized, it will become harder for these people to find an identity outside of the partisan system we have, which means that polarization will continue and potentially increase. The level of polarization that we see can stunt any change or movement forward in politics. If there were more of a common ground for people to find identity or community — like a religious institution, school, or even neighborhood — then perhaps the

²²⁵ Jeffery M. Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades,” *Gallup*, April 18, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>. This poll shows the declining numbers in the church.

²²⁶ Michael Lipka and Claire Gecewicz, “More Americans now say they’re spiritual but not religious,” *Pew Research Center*, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/>, Cary Funk and Greg Smith, “‘Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation,” *Pew Research Center*, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/10/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf>.

dedication to political allegiances for the sake of having the “right” opinion might fade, and more progress could be made in terms of policy.

Not only are individuals drifting away from religious institutions, but these institutions themselves are becoming more and more ambiguous in order to get more people to attend church. Liberal Protestant churches are increasingly preaching the message to their congregants that they can believe whatever they want, but they should come to church simply to figure it out with other people who may or may not believe the same things. This amorphous message from liberal churches of acceptance of all beliefs means that these churches preach no specific beliefs whatsoever, and people can continue to lean on their politics to give them a clear answer about what is right and wrong. From my experience at a liberal Presbyterian church, we were told to live our lives with kindness and love. This is a good message, and one that perhaps everyone should hear, but it did not teach me many specific lessons about God or Jesus or the Christian faith as a whole. On a larger scale, the lack of central messaging and emphasis on acceptance makes it difficult to form group cohesion. If there is not an “out” group, it can be very difficult to form an “in” group in the same way. This does not mean that it is impossible for liberal churches to form group cohesion, but a stronger motivation to have people join and stay in the church might be necessary for longevity. Generally, the message of acceptance is a good one, but churches should also focus on something that might inspire more retention or stronger group identity.

Both of these factors, individuals becoming disinterested in church institutions and liberal Protestant churches preaching no central message, lead back to the same theological nationalism that was present in the founding of the country. When America was establishing itself, everyone had religious affiliations, as it was seen as ultimately heretical to be an atheist. Due to the

diversity of Christianities present, there could not have been a unifying *religious* doctrine to motivate the colonies to overthrow British rule and establish a free nation. This is why America itself became the unifying force behind the Revolution, a God-ordained nation meant to be free. This theological nationalism has translated itself into present day beliefs about America, and the way that many Americans believe America is the greatest nation in the world.²²⁷ This allows for an excuse of all of the beliefs that come from within America, which could lead to this country taking less responsibility. People map their own beliefs onto America because of theological nationalism and therefore identify with the country as a whole, so when America does something unethical, it is hard for Americans to take responsibility for those actions or decisions.

Conclusion

The first instance of Socinian ideas occurred in the religiously tolerant Poland, which became a model of separation of church and state and religious toleration from a political perspective. Socinus was influenced by Italian Humanism and other Anti-Trinitarian thought, and sprouted in opposition to a lot of Calvinist doctrines. Some of the most important doctrines that Socinus posits include the rejection of the divinity of Christ, preferring the full humanity of Jesus, the rejection of Hell, and the emphasis on pacifism, and therefore a separation of church and state for religious reasons. Simon Budney, a disciple of Socinus, wrote a letter explaining these ideas to John Foxe in 1574, which is the first known introduction of Socinianism in England. Because of the religious context under Elizabeth, Socinianism did not become widespread until later, and gained political traction under the English Civil War.

²²⁷ Laura Thorsett and Jocelyn Kiley, "Most Americans say the U.S. is among the greatest countries in the world," *Pew Research Center*, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/30/most-americans-say-the-u-s-is-among-the-greatest-countries-in-the-world/>.

The term itself — “Socinian” — became an accusation of heresy throughout this time, and following the earlier burning of Francis Kett, the term fell out of favor in the mid-seventeenth century. Thinkers then began to favor the term “Unitarianism” to express similar doctrines and theological beliefs. It was under Unitarianism that many leaders were influenced, including John Biddle, Paul Best, Samuel Clarke, and John Locke. It is the ideas that these thinkers posited that influenced Thomas Jefferson, alongside Unitarian theology, through individuals like Joseph Priestley and James Freeman. Jefferson, as he was drafting the documents that helped establish the United States, was influenced both politically and religiously to create a wall of separation between church and state. However, it is also because of his more radical religious beliefs that he was vilified in the election of 1800 against John Adams. The politicization of specific leaders’ religious beliefs translates into the present day, as well, and leads to interesting implications for what religious freedom and separation mean.

The separation of church and state is important for future leaders as partisanship continues and theological nationalism persists. Conservative Christians using rhetoric from the far right is a concerning confluence of religion and politics, especially because there is no other reason for Copeland or similar televangelicals to make claims about politics. Additionally, separation issues persist today, and as America becomes more partisan, more religious people will be exposed to harmful rhetoric and either buy in or reject the institution, preventing change. The trajectory of the U.S. politically seems to be more and more partisan and divided. I would predict something similar to happen with religion, as well, where those who attend liberal churches that do not promote a substantive message will continue to fall into agnosticism or “spiritual but not religious” groups, and conservative Christians will continue to defend their fundamental faith by using politics. The Religious Left could help bridge the gap, but there is a

question of whether or not they are taken seriously, and whether or not they are truly able to make change in an increasingly polarized and secularized twenty-first century United States.

Works Cited

- Anonymous. 1652. *The Racovian Catechisme Vwherein You Have the Substance of the Confession of Those Churches, Which in the Kingdom of Poland, and Great Dukedome of Lithuania, and Other Provinces Appertaining to That Kingdom, Do Affirm, That No Other Save the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Is That One God of Israel, and That the Man Jesus of Nazareth, Who Was Born of the Virgin, and No Other besides, or before Him, Is the Onely Begotten Sonne of God.* Amsterdam, Netherlands.
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/2248533629/citation/9F89B48D951A4B61PQ/1>.
- Bainton, Roland Herbert. 1985. *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.* Beacon Press.
- Bartlett, I. Ross. 1995. "John Foxe as Hagiographer: The Question Revisited." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (4): 771-89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2543785>.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 1996. *The Sovereignty of Reason.* First American Edition. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Bell, M. Charles. "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement." *The Evangelical Quarterly* (1983): 114-123.
- Black, J. B. 1959. *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603.* Clarendon Press.
- Bowers, J. D. 2010. *Joseph Priestley and English Unitarianism in America.* Penn State Press.
- Brock, Peter. 1994. "Dilemmas of a Socinian Pacifist in Seventeenth-Century Poland." *Church History* 63 (2): 190-200. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3168587>.
- Buranelli, Vincent. 1959. "William Penn and the Socinians." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography.* <https://journals.psu.edu/pmhb/article/view/41514/41235>.
- Calvin, Jean. 1997. *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God.* Westminster John Knox Press.
- Coffey, John. 2000. *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689.* Longman.
- Crawford, John R. "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers," *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 145-156.
- Crimmins, James E. 2013. *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought: Thomas Hobbes to J. S. Mill.* Routledge.
- Davies, Tony. *Humanism.* Routledge, 1997.
- Davis, Derek H. 2000. *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774-1789: Contributions to Original Intent.* Oxford University Press.
- Davis, Zachary. 2018. "Apocalyptic Politics," *Ministry of Ideas Podcast.*
- Doran, Susan. 2000. *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603.* Routledge Press.
- Dreisbach, Daniel L. *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Erhman, Bart. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Foote, Henry Wilder. 1873. *James Freeman and King's Chapel, 1782-87: A Chapter in the Early History of the Unitarian Movement in New England*. Leonard C. Bowles.
- "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 10 September 1824," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-03-02-0369>. [Original source: *The Papers of James Madison*, Retirement Series, vol. 3, 1 March 1823–24 February 1826, ed. David B. Mattern, J. C. A. Stagg, Mary Parke Johnson, and Katherine E. Harbury. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016, pp. 373–383.]
- "From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 9 April 1803," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-40-02-0124>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 40, 4 March–10 July 1803, ed. Barbara B. Oberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 157–159.]
- "From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 29 January 1804," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-42-02-0322>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 42, 16 November 1803–10 March 1804, ed. James P. McClure. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 368–370.]
- "From Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, 12 July 1789," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-15-02-0261>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 15, 27 March 1789–30 November 1789, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, pp. 271–272.]
- Freeman, Thomas F. 2008. "Fuxe, John (1516/17–1587)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10050>.
- Fraser, Antonia. 2014. *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Funk, Cary and Greg Smith. 2012. "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation." *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/10/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf>.
- Gaustad, Edwin S. and Leigh Eric. Schmidt. *The Religious History of America* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.
- Gomes, Alan W. 2008. "Some Observations on the Theological Method of Faustus Socinus (1539-1604)." *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (1): 49–71.
- Gordon, Alexander. 2009. "Lardner, Nathaniel." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16069>.
- Gordon, Alx. 1876. "The Sozzini and Their School." *The Theological Review: a journal of religious thought and life*.
- Hanson, R. Scott. 2015. "Teaching the Religious History of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 139 (1): 52-64.
- Hefelbower, S. G. 1920. "Deism Historically Defined." *The American Journal of Theology* 24 (2): 217–23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/480111>.

- Hillar, Marian. 1993. "Poland's Contribution to the Reformation: Socinians and their Ideas on Religious Freedom." *The Polish Review* 38 (4): 447–68.
- Holmes, David L. 2006. *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hudson, Wayne. 2009 *The English Deists : Studies in Early Enlightenment*. London: Pickering & Chatto.
- Humphrey, Edward Frank. 1965. *Nationalism and Religion in America, 1774-1789*. New York: Russell & Russell.
- The Independent. 2020. "Pro-Trump evangelical Kenneth Copeland laughs manically over media calling Biden's win." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBkegy4aDvk>.
- Jefferson, Thomas. 1964. *The Jefferson Bible, With the annotated commentaries on religion of Thomas Jefferson, Introd. by Henry Wilder Foote; Forward by Donald S. Harrington; Edited by O. I. A. Roche*. New York: C. N. Potter.
- Jefferson, Thomas. 2003. 1783 Catalog of Books, circa 1775-1812, *Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive* Massachusetts Historical Society.
<http://www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/catalog1783>
- Jefferson, Thomas. "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom." accessed from Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia. <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/virginia-statute-religious-freedom>
- Jones, Jeffrey M. 2019 "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades." *Gallup*.
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.
- Kent, J. H. S. 1975. "The Socinian Tradition." *Theology* 78 (657): 131–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X7507800304>.
- Kot, Stanislaw. 1957. *Socinianism in Poland: The Social and Political Ideas of the Polish Antitrinitarians in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Starr King Press.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. 1944. "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance." *Byzantion* 17: 346–74.
- Lardner, Nathaniel. 1793. *Two Schemes of a Trinity Considered, and the Divine Unity Asserted: Four Discourses Upon Philip. Ii. 5. . . 11*. printed in the year.
- Larson, Edward J. *A Magnificent Catastrophe : the Tumultuous Election of 1800, America's First Presidential Campaign*. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- "Letter from Simon Budney to John Foxe, 1574." Transcribed and translated by Dr. Kristin M.S. Bezio, with assistance from Drs. Erika Zimmerman and Robert Groves. Letter MS Rawl. Lett. 107 WM/110887/863, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
- Lipka, Michale and Claire Gecewicz. 2017. "More Americans now say they're spiritual but not religious." *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/>
- Mace, Emily. n.d. "The Diet of Torda | Harvard Square Library." Accessed March 31, 2021.
<https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/congregational-polity/the-diet-of-torda/>.

- Maloyed, Christie L. 2013. "A Liberal Civil Religion: William Penn's Holy Experiment." *Journal of Church and State* 55 (4): 669-689.
- Marshall, John. 1998. "'Socinianism' as an accusation and John Locke," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Martin, Patrick, and John Finnis. 2006. "The Secret Sharers: 'Anthony Rivers' and the Appellant Controversy, 1601–2." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 (2): 195–238.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2006.69.2.195>.
- Martin, William. 1996. *With God on Our Side*. Broadway Books.
- McLachlan, Herbert John. 1951. *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford University Press.
- "Mission." *Christians United For Israel*. <https://cufi.org/about/mission/>.
- Mortimer, Sarah. 2009. "Human Liberty and Human Nature in the Works of Faustus Socinus and His Readers." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2): 191–211.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhi.0.0034>.
- . 2010. *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Murphy, Andrew R. 2016. *Liberty, Conscience, and Toleration: The Political Thought of William Penn*. Oxford University Press.
- Mulso, Martin. 2005. "The 'New Socinians': Intertextuality and Cultural Exchange in Late Socinianism." In , 49–78. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047416098_003.
- Nicholls, Mark. 2007. "Strategy and Motivation in the Gunpowder Plot." *The Historical Journal* 50 (4): 787–807.
- Olds, Kelly. 1994. "Privatizing the Church: Disestablishment in Connecticut and Massachusetts." *Journal of Political Economy* 102 (2): 277–97.
- Onuf, Peter. "Thomas Jefferson: Campaigns and Elections." UVA Miller Center.
<https://millercenter.org/president/jefferson/campaigns-and-elections>.
- Pasley, Jeffrey L. 2006. "Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800." *Journal of Southern History* 72 (4): 871–908. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27649235>.
- Pionke, Albert D. 2019. *Teaching Later British Literature. A Thematic Approach*. Anthem Press.
- Priestley, Joseph. 1788. *Defences of Unitarianism for the Year 1786-*. Birmingham [Eng.].
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433070797760>.
- Pyle, Ralph E. & James D. Davidson. 2003. "The Origins of Religious Stratification in Colonial America," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 42 (1): 57-76.
- Redwood, John. 1976. *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

- Ridgedell, Thomas. 2017. "The Archpriest Controversy: The Conservative Appellants against the Progressive Jesuits." *British Catholic History* 33 (4): 561–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/bch.2017.25>.
- Robertson, Ritchie, Simon Dixon, and Wendy Bracewell. 2017. "Enlightenment and Religion in the Orthodox World." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 95 (2): 320–40.
<https://doi.org/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.95.2.0320>.
- Rohls, Jan. "Calvinism, Arminianism and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort" *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists, and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* 134, (2005): 1-48.
- Schofield, Robert E. 2013. "Priestley, Joseph." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22788>.
- Schulz, Constance B. "'Of Bigotry in Politics and Religion': Jefferson's Religion, the Federalist Press, and the Syllabus." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 91, no. 1 (1983): 73-91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4248611>.
- Sherman, Anita Gilman. 2015. "Poland in the Cultural Imaginary of Early Modern England." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15 (1): 55–89.
- Silliman, Daniel. 2020. "Trump Becomes the First President Since Eisenhower to Change Faiths in Office." *Christianity Today*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/october/trump-nondenominational-presbyterian-religious-eisenhower.html>
- Smith, John Howard. 2015. *The First Great Awakening: Redefining Religion in British America, 1725-1775*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Smith, Leonard. 2001. "Truth in a Heresy? 5. Socinianism." *The Expository Times* 112 (7): 221–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001452460111200702>.
- Snobelen, Stephen D. 2004. "Best, Paul." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2291>.
- . 2007 "Biddle, John." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2361>.
- . 2005. "Isaac Newton, Socinianism and 'the One Supreme God.'" In *Socinianism and Arminianism*, edited by Martin Mulsow and Jan Rohls, 241–98. BRILL.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047416098_012.
- Sweet, William Warren. 1965. *Religion in colonial America*. Cooper Square Publishers.
- "Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803, with Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus." *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.
http://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.028_0191_0199.
- Thorsett, Laura and Jocelyn Kiley. 2017. "Most Americans say the U.S. is among the greatest countries in the world." *Pew Research Center*.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/30/most-americans-say-the-u-s-is-among-the-greatest-countries-in-the-world/>.

Turner, John G. 2020. "Introduction." In *They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty*. Yale University Press.

US Congress. "Bill of Rights." <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.

Wallace, Dewey D. 1984. "Socinianism, Justification by Faith, and The Sources of John Locke's The Reasonableness of Christianity." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1): 49–66.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2709330>.

Whiston, William. 1752. *The Eternity of Hell-Torments Considered: Or, A Collection of Texts of Scripture, and Testimonies of the Three First Centuries Relating to Them. Together with Notes through the Whole, and Observations at the End. The Second Edition, Improved, by Will. Whiston, M. A.* London: printed for John Whiston, and Ben. White, at Boyle's Head in Fleet-Street.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0119044831/GDCS?u=vic_uor&sid=zotero&xid=37542e37.

Wilbur, Earl Morse. 1945. *A History of Unitarianism: In Transylvania, England, and America*. Beacon Press.

———. 1977. *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and Its Antecedents*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Williams, George H. 1992. *The Radical Reformation*. Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers.

Witte, John. 2005. "One Public Religion, Many Private Religions: John Adams and the 1780 Massachusetts Constitution." SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 753566. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=753566>.

Yenter, Timothy and Ezio Vailati. 2020. "Samuel Clarke." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/clarke>.