



# **The Dissenters: Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity: 3**

*Michael R. Watts*

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This third and final volume of Michael Watts's study of dissent examines the turbulent times of Victorian Nonconformity, a period of faith and of doubt. Watts assesses the impacts of the major Dissenting preachers and provides insights into the various movements, such as romanticism and the higher, often German, biblical criticism. He shows that the preaching of hell and eternal damnation was more effective in recruiting to the chapels than the gentler interpretations. A major feature of the volume is a thorough analysis of surviving records of attendance at Nonconformist services. He provides fascinating accounts of Spurgeon and the other key figures of Nonconformity, including of the Salvation Army.

Dr Watts also provides a fresh discussion of the contribution which Nonconformity made to the politics of mid- to late-Victorian Britain. He examines such issues of reform as Forster's Education Act of 1871, temperance, and Balfour's Education Act of 1902, and considers Nonconformist interventions in such controversies as the Bulgarian Agitation, Home Rule for Ireland, the Armenian massacres of the mid 1890s, and the Boer War. The volume concludes with the Liberal landslide in the 1906 general election, which saw probably more Nonconformists elected than any time since the era of Oliver Cromwell.

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