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Halle Pietists in England. Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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Preface

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Preface

During the last quarter of the seventeenth century there arose similar movements for national and ecclesiastical, moral and spiritual reform on the Continent and in Old and New England. In Switzerland this movement revolved around Jean F. Ostervald, Reformed pastor at Neuchatel and leader of the liberal Swiss divines; in the Lutheran territories of Germany around the Pietists Philipp J. Spener and August H. Francke with his institutions at Halle; in New England around the Puritan minister Cotton Mather; and in Great Britain around the voluntary societies, including the religious societies, the societies for the reformation of manners, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). Though these movements operated independently and within their own ecclesiastical boundaries, they soon became aware of each other and an extensive correspondence developed.

In the case of Halle Pietism and the SPCK in England there was more than a literary exchange, as Halle representatives found their way to London. One such envoy, Anthony William Boehm (1673-1722), arrived in London in 1701, having studied theology at the Pietist centre of Halle under A.H. Francke. His early years were ones of poverty, but from these mean beginnings developed a twenty-year ministry in England of pastoral care, publishing, and involvement in the SPCK. His influence and that of other Pietists within early eighteenth-century Anglican voluntarism, especially as represented by the SPCK, forms the subject of this study.

The aims of this essay are four-fold: one goal is to contextualize fundamental German research into the religious situation of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain, to expand on it, and thereby hopefully to integrate the work of German and English ecclesiastical historians into a more complete picture. Secondly, our desire is to bring a greater recognition – especially among English historians – of the influence of Halle Pietism in England and especially that of Anthony W. Boehm. This monograph offers the most thorough and accurate account of the English activity of probably the most influential and significant Halle Pietist outside Germany. Through Boehm one receives clear insight into the major themes and dreams of Halle Pietism as well as a fresh non-Anglican and non-English perspective on the state of ecclesiastical affairs in England.

Thirdly, though scholars are increasingly acknowledging the key charitable and philanthropic role of the SPCK in early eighteenth-century Britain, seldom have the influences which shaped it been analyzed or the reasons for its

development been given; this study, therefore, attempts a broader, deeper, and more inclusive evaluation and perspective of the first four decades of the Society, re-interpreting its nature, its prime-movers, its domestic and international roles, and its place within Anglicanism. Finally, within this work we will briefly compare Lutheran and Anglican piety, theology, and ecclesiology. It is interesting and not insignificant that many of the issues raised in modern Lutheran-Anglican/Episcopal dialogues, including episcopacy and the role of confessional theology, were also brought out in the context of Halle-SPCK relations.

The story which follows is at times hard to piece together because it is based on cryptic correspondence and administrative details which do not always lend themselves to colourful history and narrative. Nonetheless, it is a story which deserves telling and one which fills a gap in our understanding of German Pietists in London, of the SPCK, and of early eighteenth-century Anglo-German ecclesiastical relations.

This monograph was first written as a thesis to fulfill the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.) degree at the University of Oxford; the degree was awarded in July 1988. Only minor changes have been made to the original dissertation.

With regard to the text: in quotations from manuscript and printed sources common abbreviations have been expanded, but otherwise spelling and emphasis have been unaltered. Literal English translations of German and Latin quotations have been provided to make the text flow more easily, though the originals are supplied in footnotes. The dates of correspondence have not been adjusted, though the year in Britain is taken to begin on 1 January. Germany changed to the new calendar in 1700 and Britain in 1752; during the first half of the eighteenth century the difference between the styles was approximately eleven days, but for our purposes this makes little difference.

With deep appreciation I extend my gratitude to the Historische Kommission zur Erforschung des Pietismus and its co-workers for their advice, their editorial expertise, and especially their willingness to risk reaching out to the English-speaking world with this monograph; to the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle/Saale for permission to cite from documents in the Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen and to the archivist Jürgen Storz and his staff for the kindnesses shown to me during my visits there; to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for the permission to quote from manuscripts in its archive and to the archivist Dr. G. Heulin and his predecessor Mr. A.E. Barker; to the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for permission to use its archive; to the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin for supplying me with microfilm of pertinent manuscript material; and to the helpful and understanding staffs at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, at the University Library in Tübingen, at the Cambridge University Library, at the British Library, the India Office Library and Records, the Lambeth Palace Library, and the Public Record Office in

London, at Christ Church Library, Rhodes House library, and especially the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Grants to further my research have come from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, the University of Oxford, Balliol College, the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, the Lutheran Church in America, and friends at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fresno, California, Bethesda Lutheran Church in Eugene, Oregon, and St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Oregon.

Finally, I express personal thanks to Gary Sattler, who first suggested to me the subject matter of this work, to Jan Womer and Peter Hinchliff for their useful supervision and theological insights, to Alf March for his translation expertise, and in particular to John Walsh, whose counsel and time-consuming editorial assistance were invaluable in getting this study into its final form. It goes without saying – yet nonetheless must be said – that apart from the support and patience of one's family such an undertaking as this would have been nigh impossible, which is why this work is lovingly dedicated to my wife, Signe, and our children, Philip and Rachel.

Beaverton, Oregon, U.S.A. Daniel L. Brunner
18 May 1992