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Conclusion

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Conclusion

It may come as a surprise to some that the closest and most enduring Anglo-German religious connections during the early eighteenth century were not between clergy of the established Church of England and either Hanover, where after 1702 the potential future English Sovereign lived, or Berlin, where the untiring Daniel E. Jablonski sought to further his proposals for Protestant union, but instead between Halle, where A.H. Francke was engaged in a programme aiming at the "universal betterment" of Church and society, and lay voluntary Anglicanism, as represented in the SPCK. These links were not really ecclesiastical but personal, resulting from the efforts of energetic, reform-minded, and irenic individuals.

The first contacts were brought about by H.W. Ludolf, through whose mediation two teachers from Halle were sent to erect charity schools in England and to offer guidance to the infant charity school movement. Though these Germans visited the Society on 11 May 1699, marking the first "official" contact between Halle and the SPCK, the red-letter day for these relations and the one with the most lasting impact on the Society was 7 September 1710, when, following the proposals of A.W. Boehm, it decided to offer its support to the East India mission. For the next three decades the Society was to become increasingly entwined in international operations which would in fact overshadow national and domestic concerns and demand a commitment considerably out of proportion to their relative significance. Through the first half of the 1720s the Society was entangled in the intricacies and debates surrounding the publication of the Arabic Psalter, New Testament, and catechism. Earlier involvement in lending aid to the Tranquebar mission eventually gave rise in 1728 to the establishment of its own mission station at Madras. Resettling Protestant refugees from Salzburg in the new colony of Georgia engaged the Society through a large part of the 1730s. All of these global pursuits, as has been frequently stressed, were inspired and laid before the Society by Halle Pietists.

One goal of this study has been to set forth a more complete picture of the SPCK during its first four decades. Scholars are beginning to recognize the important role played by the voluntary societies in post-1688 Anglicanism. Although the SPCK had clear links to the religious societies and the societies for the reformation of manners, and shared their concern for personal and national, moral and religious reformation, it chose education as its chief *modus operandi*. Adopting a coordinating and organizational role within the charity school and related workhouse movements and dispersing Christian literature

through its network of correspondents, the Society's major aim was "promoting Christian knowledge". Although during the 1710s it began to accept new opportunities for outreach beyond the borders of Britain – a change wrought in part by the influence of Hallensians, but also by the discomfort felt within the Society over Jacobite tendencies in the religious societies and charity schools – the Society nevertheless did not abandon its watchful eye over the charity schools or its interest in the dissemination of inexpensive Christian literature. Though temporarily eclipsed by these foreign ventures, the original occupations of the SPCK remained fundamental to its purpose. Through both its national and international work, the SPCK became the most important expression of Anglican charity, philanthropy, and moral reform in the early eighteenth century.

In its nature and its activities the SPCK was quite different from the SPG during the first four decades of the eighteenth century. Much of the SPCK's uniqueness resulted from the fact that it was *not* an officially-chartered Society. While the SPG drew the attention and involvement of the episcopate, the SPCK proceeded quietly and unassumingly, controlled for the most part by dedicated, pious, and reform-minded laymen. It allowed foreign Protestants to become subscribing members and to exercise a considerable influence in setting a course for the Society. Through its secretary, Henry Newman, the Society engaged in a correspondence with such New England Puritans – and opponents of the SPG – as Cotton Mather and Benjamin Colman. The SPCK was much more pragmatic and less theological than its sister Society, accepting for over one hundred years the validity of the ordinations of German Lutheran missionaries in India, something which the SPG repeatedly refused to do in America. The early Swiss correspondence regarding Church union and other ecclesiological matters was beyond the scope of the SPCK's practical purposes, so it handed these matters over to the SPG; yet it showed a keen interest in the educational reforms of Francke in Halle and pursued a correspondence with him which continued for many years. Its unrestricted nature as a (non-incorporated) voluntary Society and its openness to new opportunities made the SPCK the most enduring monument to lay Anglican voluntarism from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Among the Halle Pietists themselves, by far the most influential and significant in England was A.W. Boehm, although Ludolf was the initial mediator between Halle and London and recommended Boehm to Prince George for his vacant chaplaincy. In the year 1705 Boehm established himself in England through the publication of *Pietas Hallensis* and by means of his appointment at the German Lutheran Royal Chapel. The pastoral role which Boehm exercised led to an important ministry among Germans and English, but his most lasting effect was accomplished through his involvement in the SPCK and through his publications. More than any other single individual he dictated the change within the Society to a more international outlook. By means of his literary output he influenced the charity school movement, the

SPCK, and many Anglicans, Nonconformists, and evangelicals; he was one of the few "respectable" writers proclaiming neglected Reformation ideals in the "tunnel period" between Puritanism and the evangelical revival. Not to be forgotten in the midst of Boehm's English activity was the pastoral care which he and the other chaplains showed towards Germans in America. The unofficial mothering role adopted by both Halle and the German Lutheran Royal Chapel towards their "daughter congregations" in the new world was a decisive factor in the rise of the American Lutheran Church.

Thus, the legacy of those Halle Pietists who lived in England in the first decades of the eighteenth century can be best seen in the early years of the charity school movement, in Boehm's literary efforts, and in the development of an international perspective within the SPCK. The only sense of permanence resulting from SPCK-Halle cooperation was the continued support rendered by the Society for the Ebenezer pastors and for the East India mission. The interaction reached its peak during the lifetimes of the first-generational leaders: those who succeeded individuals like A.H. Francke, A.W. Boehm, Henry Newman, Sir John Philipps, and Frederick Slare, though competent and committed, did not have all the spirit, passion, influence, or creative genius of their predecessors. One is left wondering what might have happened if Boehm had lived to see the onset of the evangelical revival or if A.H. Francke had actually visited England, especially in the early years of the voluntary societies.

Is it accurate to see in the connection between the SPCK and Halle an early example of ecumenical cooperation? That there was an openness and desire to cooperate on the part of both Halle Pietists and the SPCK is unquestionable. If, however, toleration and a willingness to compromise are major aspects of ecumenism, then only within the SPCK and with people like Boehm and Ludolf – and not with A.H. Francke and in particular with second-generational Pietists – does one perceive traces of what could be called a genuine ecumenical spirit. The cooperation between Halle and the SPCK did not take place on a theological, doctrinal, ecclesiological, or liturgical plane, but rather on the level of mission: theirs was a pragmatic ecumenism.