FRANCKESCHE STIFTUNGEN

DFG

7. Sekundärliteratur

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

Brunner, Daniel L.

Göttingen, 1993

1. Anglican Voluntary Societies

Nutzungsbedingungen
Die Digitalisate des Francke-Portals sind urheberrechtlich geschützt. Sie dürfen für wissenschaftliche und private Zwecke heruntergeladen und ausgedruckt werden. Vorhandene Herkunftsbezeichnungen dürfen dabei nicht entfernt werden.
Eine kommerzielle oder institutionelle Nutzung oder Veröffentlichung dieser Inhalte ist ohne vorheriges schriftliches Einverständnis des Studienzentrums August Hermann Francke der Franckeschen Stiftungen nicht gestattet, das ggf. auf weitere Institutionen als Rechteinhaber verweist. Für die Veröffentlichung der Digitalisate können gemäß der Gebührenordnung der Franckeschen Stiftungen Entgelte erhoben werden.
Zur Erteilung einer Veröffentlichungsgenehmigung wenden Sie sich bitte an die Leiterin des Studienzentrums, Frau Dr. Britta Klosterberg, Franckeplatz 1, Haus 22-24, 06110 Halle (studienzentrum@francke-halle.de)

Terms of use
All digital documents of the Francke-Portal are protected by copyright. They may be downloaded and printed only for non-commercial educational, research and private purposes. Attached provenance marks may not be removed.
Commercial or institutional use or publication of these digital documents in printed or digital form is not allowed without obtaining prior written permission by the Study Center August Hermann Francke of the Francke Foundations which can refer to other institutions as right holders. If digital documents are published, the Study Center is entitled to charge a fee in accordance with the scale of charges of the Francke Foundations.
For reproduction requests and permissions, please contact the head of the Study Center, Frau Dr. Britta Klosterberg, Franckeplatz 1, Haus 22-24, 06110 Halle (studienzentrum@francke-halle.de)

Visual Library

Chapter I

"Those hopeful means of reformation": Anglican Voluntary Societies and Halle Pietism

In the "Dedication" to the third edition of his account of the religious societies Josiah Woodward wrote:

> Since Irreligion is the greatest Calamity of any People, I conceive, that it will not be unuseful to you, my beloved Country-men, to lay before you those hopeful Means of Reformation which GOD hath lately pleas'd, in Infinite Mercy, to raise up amongst us.[1]

The religious societies, the societies for the reformation of manners, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), and other lesser known societies were all manifestations of a voluntary movement for "Reformation" in England at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Strikingly, the movement which sprang up in Germany in the last quarter of the seventeenth century called "Pietism" was also frequently referred to as a "new Reformation". Our purpose in this chapter is to explore the rise and origins of the English voluntary societies, and especially the SPCK, to analyze the first history of German Pietism in English, and to present the initial contacts between the Church of England and German Pietism.

1. Anglican Voluntary Societies

Anglican Piety in Restoration England

To understand the roots of the SPCK one must grasp the significance of the voluntary societies which arose at the end of the seventeenth century; these societies in turn can only be fully appreciated in the context of the piety prevalent in the Church of England after the Restoration. The politics of Restoration Anglicanism, especially the political manoeuvrings and comprehension debates which followed, have been much explored, but the devotion and

1 Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies*, 3rd edn. enl. (London, 1701), p. [A2].

piety of the Restoration churchman were for a long time largely ignored. Recently, however, scholars have examined Anglican spirituality in the period, and by and large have concurred in their description.[2]

After 1660, in reaction to the perceived dangers of Puritanism, Roman Catholicism, and atheism, the Church of England strove vigorously after a unity and uniformity based on the liturgy and the Sacraments.[3] The Church tried to extend its common worship into the daily lives of the laity by increasing the occasions for its use. Regular church attendance was urged, together with serious preparation for, and frequent reception of, the Holy Communion. The campaign to extend Anglican influence over the whole nation by exhortation and legal discipline (the Clarendon Code) was not very successful: Dr. Wallace has concluded that "the Restoration era was a time of nearly universal ecclesiastical disillusionment".[4] Too many of the laity seemed to keep the Church at a comfortable distance; the clergy still felt vulnerable to Nonconformity and anticlericalism and bewailed their inability to coerce evil-doers and force the laity into conformity.[5] However, coupled with this alleged decline in public religion and church going was a remarkable rise in the publication of popular religious literature and an extension of "introspective and private" religion.[6]

The religious writing of the period, both popular and apologetic, provides an insight into the piety propagated by the Anglican Church. The most popular work in Restoration England, reaching (it has been conjectured) into as many as one in ten homes, was *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), probably by Richard Allestree. As its title indicates, its stress was on religious obligation – on "duty". It placed weight on obedience, morality, and faithful attendance at worship and the Sacrament, since "the *benefits* purchased for us by *Christ* ... belong not to us, till we perform the *Condition* required of us".[7] Behind the spiritual advice proffered in this manual lay the theory of justification set out by Bishop Bull and other Caroline divines, which stressed that works, if not the meritorious cause of our acceptance by God, were certainly the condition for that acceptance. The fear evolving in the Anglican Church was that the Nonconformist doctrine of justification by faith alone and the conversionism associated with it, led inevitably to antinomianism. To counteract this danger

---

2 On what follows, see J. Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic and the Restoration Church" (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1985); C.J. Sommerville, *Popular Religion in Restoration England* (Gainsville, 1977); J.S. McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England* (New Haven/London, 1976); H.R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* (London, 1949), pp. 138-72; cf. D.D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. 158-90; C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism* (London, 1966).

3 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 210-42.

4 Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, p. 158.

5 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 126-64.

6 Sommerville, *Popular Religion*, pp. 4f.

7 [Richard Allestree,] *The Practice of Christian Graces. Or The Whole Duty of Man* (London, 1658), p. 1.

the established Church emphasized a moralism which portrayed obedience and repentance as inseparable from faith.[8]

To drive home this message Anglican clergy and writers spoke frequently of a God of judgment and Providence. They saw the Restoration and re-establishment of the Church of England as marks of divine action and approval, much as their opponents had seen God's providential work in the Civil War and the Interregnum. But divine Providence was seen as judgmental, as well as approbatory: it was now held to be provoked by the immorality and sin of the English people. The vials of God's wrath were only temporarily withheld in order that the English people might have the opportunity to repent and reform their ways. After each natural disaster or military setback, the clergy pounded home anew the theme of divine Providence and national corruption; providentialism became a focal point in the cries for a nationwide moral reformation.[9]

Reacting to the threat of Roman Catholicism on the right and Puritanism on the left, the Restored Church developed further its ecclesiology, and elaborated the claim that it was a true Church and the only true Church in England.[10] Fundamental to this belief was a heightened concept of episcopacy. Though episcopacy had always been asserted in the Church of England, the question of whether or not it was *jure divino* had not been unanimously resolved. Many Restoration Anglicans argued that since episcopacy had been eliminated by cruel historical necessity in the upheavals of the Continental Reformation, foreign Protestants could not be blamed for its absence. In England, however, no such situation existed; it was always available and so still essential for a true Church. Nonetheless, though the Restoration clergy believed their bishops to be *jure divino* and could not envisage the Church without episcopacy, there was reservation, disagreement, and uncertainty over the necessity of episcopacy for the *esse* of the Church.[11] This confusion continued into the eighteenth century and was to break out into open controversy at the accession of a German Lutheran to the throne of England in 1714.[12]

The ideal piety of the Anglican churchman was that of a national devotion based on the Book of Common Prayer, in which godliness and morality were united in the habitual use of the opportunities available for attendance at public worship and the Eucharist.[13] Devotion should be restrained and sober; a spirituality in which the heart was subordinate to the head; an Arminian piety of "sweet reasonableness" in sharp contradistinction to the "fanatical" piety of

8 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 189ff; Sommerville, *Popular Religion*, pp. 89,96,104.
9 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 147-64.
10 McGee, *The Godly Man*. p. 144.
11 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 276-304.
12 See pp. 210–216 below.
13 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 210ff.

the Nonconformists.[14] In the eyes of Restoration churchmen, the experiential piety of the Dissenter made religion far too easy and undermined the strenuosity necessary for authentic godliness. This mistrust of fanaticism or "enthusiasm" as elements of a Puritan piety, meant that spiritual or mystical components in Anglican devotional literature were less frequently to be found.[15] Anglicanism thus did not offer a broad range of spiritual sustenance; rather it sought to unify itself rather closely around the worship and the Sacraments as the means to live a sober and moral life.

Unfortunately, however, Holy Communion was still largely neglected by the laity. Yet in the 1680s attendance at the Sacrament (at least in London) began to increase; one reason for this surge – or at least a sign of it – was the stress within the religious societies on monthly reception of the Eucharist.[16] These societies were another energetic effort to extend the worship and moral discipline of the established Church over a sluggish nation.

The Advent of Voluntary Societies

Towards the end of the seventeenth century some members of the clergy and laity began to form themselves into voluntary associations outside the official aegis of the established Church for the purpose of personal and national, moral and religious reform. The maiden societies were the religious societies founded in 1678.[17] Aiming at the personal and devotional side of religion, they remained small-scale and private until after the Glorious Revolution, when they gave rise in 1691 to the societies for the reformation of manners[18] and

---

14 McAdoo, *Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, p. 139; Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, pp. 182f.

15 McAdoo, *Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, pp. 138f.

16 Spurr, "Anglican Apologetic", pp. 236-42.

17 On the religious societies, see Woodward, *Account of the Religious Societies*, 2nd edn. (1698); G.V. Portus, *Caritas Anglicana* (London, 1912); D. Pike, "The Religious Societies in the Church of England – 1678-1743. And their Influence on John Wesley and the Methodist Movement" (M.A. thesis, University of Leeds, 1960); F.W.B. Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies, 1520-1799* (Sussex, 1963), pp. 125-34; E. Duffy, "Primitive Christianity Revived; Religious Renewal in Augustan England", in: *Renaissance and Renewal in Church History*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1977), pp. 287-300. Helpful contemporary insights on the religious societies are found in: J.B. Wigers to A.H. Francke, Windsor, 10 July 1699 (ArFrSt B71a:103-09) and Samuel Wesley, "An Account of the Religious Society begun in Epworth, in the Isle of Axholm Lincolnshire, Feb: 1, An:Dom: 1701-2", printed in: McClure, pp. 178ffn2.

18 On the societies for the reformation of manners, see *An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners in London and Westminster &c.* (London, 1699); Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*; D.W.R. Bahlmann, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957); Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies*, pp. 135-49; T.C. Curtis and W.A. Speck, "The Societies for the Reformation of Manners", *Literature and History* 3 (1976), pp. 45-61; Duffy, "Primitive Christianity Revived", pp. 287-300; A.G. Craig, "The Movement for the Reformation of Manners, 1688-1715" (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1980); T. Isaacs, "The Anglican Hierarchy and the Reformation of Manners", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), pp. 391-411.

later to the SPCK (1699),[19] and the SPG (1701).[20] The movement to establish charity schools[21] was a part of this voluntarism through its integral association with the religious societies and the SPCK.

Why did this important cluster of voluntary societies appear at this particular period of English church history? Many contemporaries both before and after 1688 had denounced the deplorable moral state of England. We have already noted the frustration of the Restoration clergy with the low state of morality and religious practice among the laity; an official report of the High Church-dominated Lower House of one of the Convocations of Canterbury in 1711 echoed similar fears over the gloomy state of religion:

> We cannot, without unspeakable Grief, reflect on that Deluge of Impiety and Licentiousness, which hath broke in upon us, and over-spread the Face of this Church and Kingdom; eminent, in former times, for Purity of Faith, and Sobriety of Manners.[22]

This report placed the major blame for this grievous state on the removal of restraints on the press in 1695 when the Licensing Act lapsed, though, as J.C. Sommerville has pointed out, the printing of popular religious literature was still booming and religion still the dominant concern of the English reading public.[23] The collapse of the disciplinary powers of the ecclesiastical courts in the wake of the Toleration Act was also pointed to as a contributing factor; the societies for the reformation of manners aimed to help fill this void.[24]

But these perceptions do not in themselves account for the rise of voluntary associations at this time; church leaders in any age are prone to indulge in similar Jeremiads about the degeneracy of their own age in comparison with the virtues of a previous golden one. Other explanations for the appearance of these societies need to be considered. It has been suggested that following the Toleration Act of 1688 with its legal sanctioning of religious pluralism, Anglicanism found itself in what seemed to be a "market situation" and felt the need to fight actively for its pre-eminence as an inclusive national Church instead of relying on the strong arm of the State to support its claims. Though still officially established, the Church felt suddenly powerless now that England was no longer a fully confessional State, as of old.[25] Voluntary societies

---

19 On the SPCK, see W.O.B. Allen and E. McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the S.P.C.K., 1698-1898* (London, 1898); W.K.L. Clarke, *A History of the S.P.C.K.* (London, 1959).

20 On the SPG, see C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 2 vols. (London, 1901); H.P. Thompson, *Into All Lands: The History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London, 1951).

21 See M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action*, 2nd edn. (London, 1964 [1938]).

22 *A Representation of the Present State of Religion* (London, 1711), p. 4.

23 Sommerville, *Popular Religion*, pp. 30f.

24 G.V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State 1688-1730* (Oxford, 1975), p. 22; Isaacs, "Anglican Hierarchy", pp. 391-411.

25 Bennett, *Tory Crisis*, pp. 20-22; A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*

arose to fill the moral gap left by governmental inaction and to promote the Church.[26] This explanation is plausible insofar as it goes, but it is not wholly sufficient; it helps to explain the rapid growth of the voluntary societies after 1688, but not the origins of the religious societies ten years earlier.

The voluntary societies should be seen in the context of the anxieties and objectives of the Restoration Church. The same providential God who had re-established the Church of England in 1660 and assured the Church's victory over Roman Catholicism in 1688, was still waiting for the people of England to repent; Josiah Woodward's prophecy of judgment in 1698 could easily have been written twenty or thirty years earlier: "How long God has suffer'd our perverse Manners, even till both the Providences of GOD, and the Sins of Men, seem to be advanced to a full Crisis, either for our Reformation or Destruction."[27] The concern of the societies for the reformation of manners can be directly linked to the religious moralism of the previous decades; one of the clear aims of the religious societies was that of the Restoration Church: to provide further opportunities for worship and frequent reception of the Sacrament.[28]

Nevertheless, the religious societies offered something unique and fresh, outside the norm of the Anglican liturgical life: when reading Woodward's account of the societies in their early years one cannot escape the sense of spiritual renewal and revival. The spontaneous nature of the movement, the initiating and fundamental importance of preaching, the strong conviction of guilt and sin, the deep and shared emotional experiences of the participants, and their attraction to young lay people all point to a movement of renewal. It cannot be coincidental that the German Anthony Horneck (1641-1697),[29] preacher at the Savoy Chapel and founder of the religious societies, was unusual among Anglican churchmen during the Restoration in combining

---

(London, 1976), pp. 8-12, 18-19; John Walsh, "Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical 1738-1800", in: *Voluntary Religion*, ed. W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford, 1986), p. 279.

26 See Bahlmann, *Moral Revolution*, pp. 106f; A.F.C. Bourdillon, "Introductory", in: *Voluntary Social Services*, ed. A.F.C. Bourdillon (London, 1945), pp. 6-7.

27 Woodward, *Account of Religious Societies* (1698), p. vi. About ten years earlier Woodward expressed similar sentiments in a personal letter: "O Sad! how do the moral and natural causes of our Calamitys appear and encrease dayly. God grant, that we be not even as Sodom and Gomorrha [*sic*]; our Sins are too like theirs." (Woodward to John Archer, 24 Aug. [c.1688] [BL, Eg.1844.f.12])

28 John Chamberlayne, *Magnae Britanniae Notitia: The Present State of Great Britain* (London, 1708), Part I, Book III, chap. IX, p. 276; Robert Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England*, 4th edn. (London, 1707 [1704]), p. viii; James Paterson, *Pietas Londinensis* (London, 1714), p. 209; Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*, pp. 18f.

29 On Horneck, see *A Summary Account of the Life of the truly Pious and Reverend Dr. Anth. Horneck* (London, 1697); Richard Kidder, *The Life of the Reverend Anthony Horneck* (London, 1698); Thomas Burnet, of Kemney, to the Electress Sophia [of Hanover], London, 29 July 1697, printed in: *State Papers and Correspondence*, ed. J.M. Kemble (London, 1857), pp. 193-94,196; R.B. Hone, *Lives of Eminent Christians*, 4 vols., 2nd edn. (London, 1836), ii.289-346; M. Schmidt, "Anton Horneck (1640-1697) aus Bacharach als wegweisende Gestalt in der englischen Kirchengeschichte", *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 22 (1978), pp. 19-33; *DNB* (ix.1261f).

"careful teaching on the spiritual life with a fervent Evangelicalism".[30] Too little attention has been given to the spiritual renewal resulting from the religious societies and to the devotional motivation behind the voluntary societies as a whole. One modern historian has commented that "in a period of such apparent unassertiveness in religious matters" it is surprising that voluntary societies arose.[31] But it is not so startling if one grasps, as David Owen has rightly asserted, that within these societies a "Philanthropy of Piety" was operating which was the product of "a fervent personal religion and commitment to the service of others".[32] There were many other philanthropists active during this same period whose motives were plainly secular, aiming to assist or discipline the poor by political means or public subscription.[33] By contrast, the voluntary societies originated in the devotional piety of the religious societies at the end of the seventeenth century. Behind the activism of the SPG, the SPCK, and the societies for the reformation of manners lay the fervent spirituality of associations like those of Horneck and Woodward, in which an introspective, quasi-Puritan concern for the personal safety of the individual soul blended with the liturgical devotion of the Restoration Church. As time went on, the experiential element in the societies waned, their fervour relaxed to become more moralistic, and their philanthropic work became more of an end in itself.

The intense and private devotion of the religious societies aroused considerable suspicion among the dignitaries of the Church, even though they were for the most part officially countenanced and professed their passionate attachment to its public worship and Sacramental life. Their very existence seemed by implication to suggest that the liturgy and Holy Communion of the Church of England were insufficient of themselves to meet the spiritual needs of some of the laity. They had something of the appearance of separatistic "conventicles". It was feared that they might encourage spiritual pride among the laity, from which would result schism, dissension, and enthusiasm.[34] George Stanhope, later Dean of Canterbury, in a printed admonition to the

---

30 McAdoo, *Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, p. 157. On the debate over whether Horneck himself carried to England mystical propensities acquired from Anna Maria von Schurmann and Jean de Labadie, see G.A. Wauer, "Die Anfänge der Brüderkirche in England" ([Dr. theol.?] thesis, Leipzig, 1900), p. 41n2; Schmidt, "Anton Horneck", pp. 21f; *idem.*, "Ecumenical Activity on the Continent of Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in: *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, ed. R. Rouse and S.C. Neill, 2nd edn. (London, 1967 [1954]), p. 105; T. Funk, *Die Anfänge der Laienmitarbeit im Methodismus* (Bremen, 1941), pp. 15f; A.W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), p. 140; E.G. Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), p. 291.

31 Sommerville, *Popular Religion*, p. 129.

32 *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London, 1965), pp. 17-20.

33 S.M. Macfarlane, "Studies in Poverty and Poor Relief at the End of the Seventeenth Century" (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1982).

34 Woodward, *Account of the Religious Societies*, pp. 135-44, dedicates one chapter to answering some of these objections.

religious societies, expressed his anxiety about the opportunities for lay religious leadership which they offered, and the difficulty of maintaining close clerical supervision over their activities. Through this small inlet might pour the indiscipline of the Commonwealth, when there existed

> ... such wild Scruples, such fantastical Opinions, such monstrous Enthusiasm, such bold Invasions of the Priestly Office, such lamentable Confusions both in Church and State; from Men's taking upon them publickly to Exercise what they call'd their Gifts in Expounding Scripture and teaching the things of God, without the previous Qualifications of Education, and Learning, and a Lawful Call to fit and Authorize them for it.

This kind of supererogatory lay piety might threaten ecclesiastical and social stability, encouraging a restless dissatisfaction with the Church and with the obligations of young persons to pursue their work or "calling".[35] Stanhope's criticisms were outweighed by general approval for the societies as nodal points for Anglican revival. But they were not entirely absurd. His suspicion that lay power in the societies would expand, was often proved true; clerical influence in them waned over time as the lay stewards exercised more and more authority and lay leaders seized their opportunity to speak and even exhort.[36]

The extent of the religious society movement is not easy to establish. The momentum seems to have slackened by the end of Anne's reign, though new societies continued to be formed here and there for decades to come. Their main strength lay in metropolitan areas, like London and Bristol. In London there were thirty in 1718, according to Thomas Bray.[37] By the 1710s their respectability was somewhat compromised by the political partisanship so characteristic of the period. Though High Churchmen feared their potential for incipient Nonconformity, Low Churchmen and Whigs – with far more justification – saw them as hotbeds of Jacobitism, especially after 1715. Under George I they lost much of their official countenance and fell into slow decline, though some societies were still functioning at the onset of the evangelical revival.[38]

From the small but still significant devotional renewal of the religious societies stemmed not only the societies for the reformation of manners, but more importantly, the two chief monuments to Anglican voluntarism: the

---

35 George Stanhope, *The Duty of Rebuking. A Sermon Preach'd ... December the 28th. 1702 .... To which is added, a Post-Script to the Religious Societies* (London, 1703), pp. 21-27.

36 This development is perhaps most clearly seen by a careful comparison of Horneck's "Rules", published in 1698 by Kidder, *Anthony Horneck*, pp. 13-16, but certainly used with the earliest societies, and of the "Orders" (1698) in Woodward, *Account of the Religious Societies*, pp. 120-30.

37 Bray to Archbishop Wake, Aldgate, 21 Mar. 1718 (ChCh, *Wake MSS* 15:182-93).

38 Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*, pp. 80f, 194f. On the differences of opinion regarding the connection of the Anglican religious societies to Wesley's Methodist societies, see esp. Walsh, "Religious Societies", pp. 279-302, and H.D. Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987), pp. 582-95.

SPCK and the SPG. It was to the elder of these sister societies that Halle Pietists in London were drawn.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

The SPCK was the brain-child of the creative and far-sighted reformer Thomas Bray (1656-1730).[39] For many years he dreamed of forming an Anglican society similar to the Roman Catholic *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, which, since its founding in 1622, was the active arm of Catholicism in the spread of the faith around the world, possessing its own multi-lingual educational institutions and publication works.[40] Bray envied the missionary ardour and potent organization of the *Propaganda* and felt that Protestantism should have the same force. He wished his society to be officially chartered by the government and composed of two-thirds clergy and one-third laity.[41] This dream was eventually fulfilled in 1701 with the incorporation of the SPG; two years earlier, however, Bray had met with four friends and formed the SPCK, a voluntary society with no royal charter.

As a voluntary society the SPCK kept close connections with the religious societies and societies for the reformation of manners which preceded it; all the great church voluntary associations of this period had close links. The devotional piety of the religious societies, though apparent only in the prayers at the beginning and close of SPCK meetings, was, as C.K. Lowther Clarke has noted, "the indispensable foundation of their activities, too obvious to need mention";[42] the zeal for moral reformation manifest in the societies for the reformation of manners was also a motivating force in the SPCK. The SPCK always expressed support for the other two wings of voluntary action in England, desiring that "a good correspondence be encouraged and maintained",[43] and, in fact, became their patron; when clergy or laity around the country desired information on either religious societies or societies for the reformation of manners, they turned to the SPCK. The SPCK became the impulse and the clearinghouse for voluntaristic renewal and reformation in Britain.

Since the public was confused about the different functions of the various voluntary societies, the SPCK invited Justice Hooke, one of its founding members, "to draw up an account of the nature of this Society, and wherein it differr's from other Societys".[44] While praising the other voluntary societies,

---

39 On Bray, see H.P. Thompson, *Thomas Bray* (London, 1954).

40 On the *Propaganda*, see J. Schmidlin, "Die Gründung der Propaganda Kongregation (1622)", *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 12 (1922), 1-14; cf. K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids, 1970 [1938-45]), iii.33-35.

41 Thompson, *Thomas Bray*, p. 36.

42 *History SPCK*, p. 3.

43 SPCK *Minutes*, 2 May 1700, printed in: McClure, pp. 62f.

44 *Ibid.*, 3 Feb. 1700, printed in: McClure, p. 44.

Hooke noted that beyond them something else was needed "for the lasting Establishment of our holy Faith, and the spreading of it in the World".[45] Though all voluntary societies agreed on the goal of Christian and moral reformation, they differed in their methods; whereas the religious societies focused on devotional, liturgical, and Sacramental means and the societies for the reformation of manners on legal prosecution of moral offenders, the SPCK chose a new and different method: education.[46] The original purpose of the Society is set out in the Preamble of the statement which each of the founding members signed:

> Whereas the growth of vice and immorality is greatly owing to gross ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion, wee whose names are underwritten do agree to meet together, as often as we can conveniently, to consult (under the conduct of the Divine Providence and assistance) how we may be able by due and lawfull methods to promote Christian Knowledge.[47]

The post-Restoration stress on personal and national immorality and the need for reformation plainly underlies what is here expressed, but the identification of the cause of this malady as the "gross ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion" brings a fresh perspective.

This belief in the need to promote "Christian Knowledge" to combat "gross ignorance" implied that the early work of the Society was to be concentrated on education. The SPCK supported the efforts of Bray, above all a teacher,[48] to establish libraries for the use of the poor clergy in the West Indies and in the outlying counties of England and Wales, though the American work was handed over to the SPG and its British operations centred predominantly on Wales.[49] Following his friend John Rawlett and what was perhaps an imitation of the tract distribution common to post-Restoration Nonconformity, Thomas Bray began to see the philanthropic possibilities of the distribution of Christian literature among the poor.[50] But supremely, as one of the Society's key members explained, the "Darling Employment" of the SPCK was the business of charity schools because "it tends directly to a General-Reformation of all the Poor children throughout the Nation".[51] Whatever the means used, education was the dominant activity in the Society's early years.

The SPCK also had other interests. In an early Circular Letter to correspondents one branch of the Society's work was stated to be the "reclaiming of

---

45 [Justice Hooke,] *A Short Account of the Several Kinds of Societies* ([London], [1700]), p. 3.

46 See Clarke, *History SPCK*, pp. 2-3; Bahlmann, *Moral Reformation*, p. 106; Henry Newman to John Strype, London, 25 July 1709 (Camb., *Baumgartner Papers* III.II.No.153).

47 Printed in: McClure, p. 1.

48 Thompson, *Thomas Bray*, pp. 10f.

49 See T. Kelly, *Early Public Libraries* (London, 1966), pp. 104-12.

50 Sommerville, *Popular Religion*, pp. 22f; E. Duffy, "The Godly and the Multitude in Stuart England", *The Seventeenth Century* 1 (1986), pp. 31-55.

51 John Chamberlayne to A.H. Francke, Westminster, 29 July 1701 (*Nachlaß* 30.XXVI.847).

those among us who entertain opinions inconsistent with the fundamentalls of our holy Religion".[52] This reclamation work, though, was not directed towards Dissent as a whole and, despite early short-lived support for George Keith's efforts to convert Quakers, was seldom more than a minor occupation of the Society. Another SPCK enterprise, which remained close to its heart for many years, was first recommended by Bishop Compton of London: "to consider of some means for the better Instructing and Regulating the manners of the poor Prisoners in the severall Prisons of this City."[53] Thus the primary concerns of the SPCK were educational, philanthropic, and evangelistic: it was founded for essentially practical purposes.

The minutes and correspondence from the Society's early years offer a useful insight into its organization. It was made up of subscribing (or, residing) members living locally, who agreed to donate a certain amount of money each year, and of corresponding members, who did not have to contribute financially but dispersed SPCK literature and ideas throughout England and the world. One became a member only through personal recommendation and the vote of the Society. Since only residing members could vote in meetings (though corresponding members were allowed to attend), the Society was London-dominated.

A look at some of the important and most active members of the Society reveals an interesting picture. Prominent laymen included the well-known writer and translator John Chamberlayne (1666-1723), the sixth member of the Society, who became its first secretary and translated most of its foreign correspondence,[54] Sir John Philipps (1662?-1737) of Pembrokeshire, the son of a staunch Puritan defender of Parliament, one of the "greatest benefactors of the Welsh nation in the eighteenth century", and probably the most influential member in the early decades of the Society,[55] Frederick Slare (1647?-1727), celebrated physician, member of the Royal Society, and supporter of charity schools,[56] Robert Nelson (1656-1715), the Nonjuror and renowned Anglican

52 "The Second Circular Letter to the Clergy Correspondents" (8 Feb. 1700), printed in: McClure, p. 45n1.

53 SPCK *Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1700, printed in: McClure, p. 43.

54 Chamberlayne, who studied for a short time on the Continent, translated a number of historical and religious works and continued publishing for some years his father's *The Present State of Great-Britain*.

55 T. Shankland, "Sir John Philipps; the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; and the Charity-School Movement in Wales, 1699-1737", *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1904-05), pp. 74-216; Sir John Lloyd and R.T. Jenkins, ed., *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (London, 1959), pp. 753,755. Sir John's father, Sir Erasmus Philipps, had a major role in Welsh affairs during the Commonwealth, serving as a commissioner under the "Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales" (1650-53). On Sir John's apparent involvement in the societies for the reformation of manners, see N. Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1857), 12 & 15 Mar. [1697/98], 21 Dec. [1699], 25 Jan. [1699/1700] (iv.354,355,596,607).

56 The *DNB* (xviii.369f) mentions Slare's unique contributions in medicine but says nothing of his philanthropy and religious involvements. His roots are rather unclear: they are traced to

devotional writer,[57] and Henry Newman (1670-1743), the American secretary of the Society from 1708 until his death, whose low-key presence in the SPCK belies his influence.[58] Active clergy included Bray, Richard Mayo, rector of St. Michael's, Crooked Lane, and the son of an ejected Puritan divine, Henry Shute, Lecturer of St. Mary's, Whitechapel, and White Kennett, minister at St. Botolph's, Aldgate, and later Bishop of Peterborough. The moral reformer Josiah Woodward was an early corresponding member.[59]

A large number of bishops were subscribing members of the SPCK, among whom were Richard Kidder (Bath and Wells), Edward Fowler (Gloucester), John Williams (Chichester), Nicholas Stratford (Chester), William Lloyd (Worcester), John Hall (Bristol), and Thomas Wilson (Sodor and Man). Clergy who held membership in the Society and later became prelates included Edmund Gibson (London), Richard Willis (Gloucester, Salisbury, Winchester), and William Wake (Lincoln and Canterbury). Sir William Dawes, later Archbishop of York, was a corresponding member and once wrote that "tho' he can't attend the Society, he will always joyn with, and assist them".[60] While this list of dignitaries is impressive, it can give an inaccurate picture. During its first four decades bishops seldom attended SPCK meetings and were relatively inactive in its decisions; by contrast, the episcopate was quite active in the decision-making of the SPG because of its official status as a chartered Society. Dr. E.A. Duffy has shown that the SPG, with its bevy of prelates, was a better official representative of the Church of England than the SPCK.[61] It should not be assumed, though their membership lists were similar and foreign correspondents often mixed up the two Societies, that the two

---

Northamptonshire, but J. Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1891-92), iv.1365 (entry under "Slear"), describes him as "Palatino Germanus", he was introduced to the Royal Society by the German Theodore Haak, and the German Pietists found in him their closest friend. Nonetheless, all of his extant correspondence – even with Germans – is in English or Latin, so there is no reason to doubt his English heritage. Cf. W. Munk, ed., *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians in London*, 2 vols. (London, 1861), i.405.

57 C.F. Secretan, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Pious Robert Nelson* (London, 1860).

58 L. Cowie, *Henry Newman: An American in London, 1708-43* (London, 1956).

59 J. Woodward to Henry Newman, Poplar, 30 Sept. 1710 (BL, *Add. MSS.* 4276:209). Surprisingly, Woodward has no entry in the *DNB*. It would appear that he came naturally by his interest in the voluntary societies – and especially the religious societies. E. Calamy, *An Account of the Ministers ... Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration*, 2 vols., 2nd edn. (London, 1713 [1702]), ii.321, writes that Josiah's father, Joseph Woodward of Dursley, was a Puritan minister who used to meet with godly professors at Wooton-under-Edge and together pray, sing, and repeat sermons, "which edifying Society he found so beneficial, that he us'd to say, Tho' Oxford made him a Scholar, the Professors at Wooton, fitted him for the Ministry". Cf. Duffy, "The Godly and the Multitude", p. 55n94.

60 Sir William Dawes to Chamberlayne, Bocking in Essex, 16 Apr. 1701, printed in: McClure, p. 330.

61 E. Duffy, "*Correspondence Fraternelle*; the SPCK, the SPG, and the Churches of Switzerland in the War of Spanish Succession", in: *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent c.1500-c.1750. Dedicated and presented to Prof. C.W. Dugmore*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1979), pp. 260f.

organizations were mirror reflections of each other with only different spheres of activity. Unlike the SPG, which fulfilled Bray's dream of a clergy-dominated Society, the SPCK in its early decades was managed largely by pious and charitable laymen, although deference was always paid to the episcopate.

Although the total number of members in these early years is uncertain, a count in 1712 gave the number of subscribing members as 80 and corresponding as 370.[62] But these figures can be misleading if one supposes that SPCK meetings were quite large. Even general meetings were seldom attended by more than a dozen members and special committee meetings, at which most decisions were made for individual projects, frequently consisted of less than six people. Writing in 1711, Sir John Philipps, the most active and powerful member of the Society when in London, expressed his concern that the special committee was "so little frequented".[63] To say, then, that certain members, like those laymen listed above, were able by their regular attendance to dominate the Society, is not an overstatement.

One of the reasons for the success of the SPCK lay in its ability to develop comparatively free of party labels, in which it differed from both the religious societies and the societies for the reformation of manners, which were stained by party conflicts in the 1710s. There are signs, however, that the Society was not entirely free from party influences. A number of scholars have adduced evidence to support High Church and Tory inclinations in the Society. It has been pointed out that Nelson helped to see through the 1702 appointment of Humphrey Wanley, a friend of the Nonjuror George Hickes, as the Society's secretary.[64] A large section of the Society has been described as Jacobite, including (on doubtful evidence) the group to which Sir John Philipps belonged, and the percolation of Jacobitism through the religious societies and charity schools has been attributed to the SPCK.[65] C.K. Lowther Clarke has asserted that the literature published by the SPCK was "uniformly High Church", adding that "the tone of S.P.C.K. Churchmanship had from the first been set by Ken and Nelson, the Non-jurors".[66]

However, notwithstanding the presence of High churchmen and Nonjurors in the SPCK, the evidence indicates that as time went on the Society became more Whiggish – or at least more moderate. Evidence for this moderate tone can be found in relation to the influx of over 10,000 German Palatine Protestants to England in 1709. Attitudes to the "Poor Palatines" were

---

62 Clarke, *History SPCK*, p. 89. In 1713 Henry Newman said the Society consisted "of about 500 gentlemen living in almost all parts of the Kingdom". (Newman to Princess Sophia, 3 Aug. 1713, printed in: W.K.L. Clarke, *Eighteenth Century Piety* [London, 1944], p. 77)

63 Sir John Philipps to SPCK, Picton Castle, 28 Nov. 1711, printed in: Clement, p. 44.

64 Secretan, *Memoirs of Robert Nelson*, pp. 104f.

65 D.E. Jenkins, Introduction to *Religious Societies (Dr. Woodward's "Account")* (Liverpool, 1935), pp. 14f. The Jacobite proclivity of Philipps is questionable. See P.D.G. Thomas, "Jacobitism in Wales", *The Welsh History Review* 1 (1962), p. 290.

66 *History SPCK*, pp. 81f.

something of a party test at the time, for the refugees were objects of Tory suspicion and Whiggish approval. The absence of any mention of the Palatines in the SPCK minutes might suggest a lack of sympathy for these foreign Protestants – in contrast to the help afforded to the Salzburgers nearly three decades later.[67] But this silence gives a misleading impression of the Society's sentiments. Among the Trade Papers relating to the Palatine emigration there is a letter from John Chamberlayne describing the efforts of a group of men that met regularly on their own to give aid to the refugees. The list of names included Bray, Philipps, Slare, Shute, Nelson, Hooke, and Newman:[68] almost a roll-call for a general meeting of the SPCK.

Another indicator of moderate leanings is the aggressive advocacy of the Society for the Hanoverian succession. Bray was an out-spoken Hanoverian[69] as was Henry Newman, whose appointment as secretary in 1708 "marked the failure of the Tories to control the Society".[70] Newman and the SPCK tried to root Jacobite influence out of the charity schools and "to perswade those violent opposers of wiggish [*sic*] Charity to reason".[71] After the accession of George I and the Jacobite uprising of 1715, the Society broke correspondence with all members who refused "to take the oaths to his Majesty appointed by Law" and resolved "to admit no man for the future into their body, til they are Satisfied in his good affection to the Government".[72]

In spite of these pro-Hanoverian inclinations one must not make the SPCK out to be a handmaid of party politics: it was by and large able to rise above the issues that polarized the Church of its day and amalgamated members from different, and at times opposing, theological and political views. In Society meetings Low Churchmen, High Churchmen, Whigs, Tories, foreign Protestants, and Nonjurors sat side-by-side, united in their zeal for reform. The Society was the main expression of Anglican voluntaristic, religious, and philanthropic work in Britain during this period.[73]

---

67 E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfänge der ökumenischen Bewegung* (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), p. 173.

68 Trade Papers (D.61), printed in: *Ecclesiastical Records, State of New York*, 7 vols., ed. H. Hastings (Albany, 1901-16), iii.1739f.

69 See William Whiston, *Memoirs ... Written by Himself*, 2nd edn. (London, 1753 [1749]), p. 134.

70 Cowie, *Henry Newman*, pp. 27,84.

71 Newman to Mr. Chancellor Lloyd, n.p., 26 May 1713 (ArSPCK, *Soc Lett* [CS2/3]).

72 Newman to Mr. Harvey, Middle Temple, 1 Nov. 1716 (ArSPCK, *Soc Lett* [CS2/6]).

73 E. Duffy, "The Society of [*sic*] Promoting Christian Knowledge and Europe: The Background to the Founding of the Christentumsgesellschaft", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1981), pp. 30-32.