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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

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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

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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.