

## 7. Sekundärliteratur

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

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#### The Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge

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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).<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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”;<sup>42</sup> 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”,<sup>43</sup> 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 differs from other Societies”.<sup>44</sup> 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".<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

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,<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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".<sup>51</sup> 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 fundamentals of our holy Religion".<sup>52</sup> 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."<sup>53</sup> 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,<sup>54</sup> 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,<sup>55</sup> Frederick Slare (1647?-1727), celebrated physician, member of the Royal Society, and supporter of charity schools,<sup>56</sup> 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,<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup>

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".<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> 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".<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> 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".<sup>66</sup>

However, notwithstanding the presence of High churchmen and Non-jurors 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 Salzburger nearly three decades later.<sup>67</sup> 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:<sup>68</sup> 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<sup>69</sup> as was Henry Newman, whose appointment as secretary in 1708 "marked the failure of the Tories to control the Society".<sup>70</sup> Newman and the SPCK tried to root Jacobite influence out of the charity schools and "to persuade those violent opposers of wiggish [*sic*] Charity to reason".<sup>71</sup> 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".<sup>72</sup>

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.<sup>73</sup>

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.