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3. Analysis and Ramifications

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money from Halle, special gifts from the generous Isaac Hollis, and two earmarked legacies to meet the balance.[120]

3. Analysis and Ramifications

Reasons for SPCK Involvement

Why did the SPCK get involved in the East India Mission? It was unprecedented that an Anglican Society, which had hitherto focused almost exclusively on charity schools and the distribution of literature, should support Denmark's effort to send out Lutheran missionaries from Halle. One modern historian, at least, has depicted it as an act of tentative ecclesiastical imperialism by the Church of England. Because Archbishop Tenison expressed suspicion of sectarian Lutheranism, E.A. Lehmann, in his 1955 history of the Tranquebar mission, suggests the possibility that the SPCK became involved in order one day to bring the whole enterprise under Anglican control.[121] This is highly unlikely. Even though in the nineteenth century all mission stations except Tranquebar itself eventually came under Anglican authority, none of the early minutes or records of the SPCK give any evidence to support Lehmann's conjecture. Certainly the Society wished to send Anglican missionaries, but when none were forthcoming, the Society was large-hearted enough to feel (if Newman's description is accurate) "that the heathen should be Lutheran Christians rather than no Christians".[122]

Julius Richter, writing in the first decade of this century, suggested that the mission was "thrust" upon the SPCK which "had no real heart" for the work.[123] However, this is hardly compatible with the fact that the SPCK continued its support for over a century and from the beginning made a significant commitment both in time and money. There was a close correlation in aim between the work of the SPCK in Britain and the mission it subsidized in India. One can see strong similarities between Ziegenbalg's stress in Tranquebar on the need for Church extension by means of education and publication, and the emphases of the SPCK in Britain. In essence the SPCK diverted some of its educational and publishing activity from Britain to India.

Another possible reason for SPCK involvement is that in the colonialist spirit of the times the English Society did not want to be left behind the Danes in christianizing India. Boehm told the Missions College in Copenhagen in

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120 *An Account of the Origin and Designs of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1737), p. 6.

121 Lehmann, *It Began in Tranquebar*, p. 99.

122 Newman to Chamberlayne, 19 Dec. 1713 (ArSPCK, *Soc Lett* [CS2/3]).

123 J. Richter, *A History of Missions in India*, trans. S.H. Moore (Edinburgh/London, 1908), p. 164.

1714 that the English were seeking to emulate the Danish mission work.[124] Competition characterizes the situation more than emulation, evidenced by Boehm's suggestion to Ziegenbalg that he refer to the mission as "German" or "Protestant" rather than "Danish", because of the objection to Denmark in the East India Company.[125] This sense of rivalry certainly helped motivate the Society to establish a work in Madras in 1728, but until then it had only assisted Danish efforts in Tranquebar. Even after starting its own work at Madras the Society continued to send gifts and supplies to Tranquebar.[126]

Protestant Churches were united during the early eighteenth century in their common opposition to Roman Catholicism and fears of the global expansion of Roman missions. George Lewis, an early English chaplain in Madras, said that to "put out the smoaking Flax" of the early missionaries "would give our adversary's the Papists, who boast so much of their Congregation de Propaganda Fide too much cause to triumph over us".[127] Notwithstanding such sentiments, they can be overrated as a causative factor in this context. In the letters associated with the mission from the SPCK side anti-Rome attitudes are present, but not as a dominant force. It is equally justifiable to understand the main motives in the SPCK as charitable, philanthropic, and even evangelistic.

One is left with the conclusion that perhaps the main reason for SPCK involvement in the East India mission lay in the energetic idealism of a few strong-minded and well-positioned individuals rather than in any political grand strategy, secular or religious. On the German side the dominant person was Boehm. Through his publications and involvement in the Society Boehm inspired and initiated what was to become over a century of SPCK activity in India. But it is doubtful, given the prejudice against Lutheranism in some High Church circles, whether his initiatives could have succeeded without correspondingly strong support from within the Society itself. Here Henry Newman's role was vital. Boehm testified that Newman "has a great love for the missionaries at Tranquebar"[128] and that he "furthers this work with burning enthusiasm".[129] Since ships usually left for the East Indies around January, Newman was almost exclusively occupied for five to six weeks at the end of each year getting goods and letters onto the ships and negotiating with the East

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124 Boehm to W[endt] at Copenhagen, London, 30 Mar. 1714, printed in: *ErBrief*, pp. 340f.

125 Boehm to Ziegenbalg, London, 31 Oct. 1715 (copy) (MArFrSt I C 7:77); cf. Newman to Boehm, Middle Temple, 27 Oct. 1715 (ArSPCK, *Soc Lett* [CS2/5]).

126 E.g. *Circular Letter* (1 May 1735), n.p.

127 Lewis to Newman, Oct. 1712, printed in: *PGE III* (1718), pp. 41f, and Clement, pp. 57-58.

128 "Der Societät Secretarius Hn. Newman so eine grosse Liebe zu denen Missionariis zu Tranquebar hat ... " (Boehm to A.H. Francke, London, 7 Oct. 1712 [ArFrSt C 229:39])

129 "Der gute Hn. Neumann, der mit brennendem Eiffer dieses Werck treibet, hat hiebey nicht wenig Kummer gehabt ... " (Boehm to Neubauer, London, 22 Jan. 1714 [ArFrSt C 229:29])

India House.[130] But Newman was not alone. Already in 1709, Henry Hoare, who became the SPCK's treasurer for the mission, sent his own "mite" to Halle for the missionaries,[131] and from Boehm we learn that he had also suggested sending one of the English lads at Halle to Tranquebar as a schoolmaster, to erect a school under their supervision.[132] Chamberlayne offered to go to the East India Company with a proposal for publishing the Portuguese New Testament:[133] he too identified himself closely with the Germans' enterprise. In 1712 he referred to Plutschau as "our Pious Missionary", noting, "I call him ours, because the Society to which I belong, and because I myself claim so great a share in him."[134] Both Sir John Philipps, whose father-in-law was a wealthy East India merchant, and Archbishop Wake, had, according to Newman, a "particular affection" for the East India mission.[135] Wake's concern for the mission was particularly significant after the difficulties with Tenison. Support also came from English citizens in India, of whom George Lewis[136] and William Stevenson[137], successive chaplains at Fort St. George in Madras, deserve special mention. The involvement and interest of these individuals was the chief reason why the SPCK became involved in the way it did.

Anglican-Lutheran Relations

Until 1825, when the SPCK handed its East India work over to the SPG, the Society only employed Lutherans as missionaries, most of them from Halle.[138] In this regard the question of episcopacy has drawn the attention of scholars, in particular Hans Cnattingius and Norman Sykes, who concur that though the SPCK desired episcopal orders for its missionaries, it nevertheless accepted Lutheran orders as valid, though irregular.[139] Our purpose is not to alter their

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130 Boehm to Neubauer, London, 8 Sept. 1719 (ArFrSt C 229:13); cf. Cowie, *Henry Newman*, pp. 108f.

131 Hoare to Francke, [London,] 25 Apr. 1709 (*Nachlaß* 30.XVIII.666).

132 Boehm to Francke, 29 May 1711 (ArFrSt C 229:47).

133 Boehm to Francke, London, 28 Mar. 1710 (ArFrSt C 229:61).

134 Chamberlayne to Francke, Westminster, 24 Nov. 1712 (*Nachlaß* 30.XXVI.855).

135 Newman to Dal, Bosse, Pressier, and Walther at Tranquebar, London, 8 Feb. 1737 (ArSPCK, *Letters to India* [ME/CS2]); cf. N. Sykes, *William Wake*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1957), ii.212-14.

136 Boehm was particularly impressed with Lewis, including two of his letters in *PGE III* (1718), pp. 41-42,55-59, and speaking highly of him in correspondence with the missionaries and the Mission College (Boehm to Ziegenbalg and Grundler, 31 Dec. 1714; to Mr. W[endt] at C[openhagen], 14 Feb. 1715, printed in: *ErBrief*, pp. 396,404ff). When Lewis returned to England, Boehm highly recommended him to the SPCK as a residing member. (Boehm to Newman, Strand, 7 July 1715 [Bodl., *Rawlinson MSS* C 743:34]; for the full text of the letter, see Appendix)

137 Boehm included four of Stevenson's letters in *PGE III* (1718), pp. 121-23,149-53,190-93,198-200, and published separately a 1716 letter to Newman, *A Letter from Fort St. George*.

138 The only exception was the Englishman A.T. Clarke who served as a missionary of the SPCK in Calcutta from 1789-1791 before taking up a chaplaincy with the East India Company.

139 H. Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies* (London, 1952), pp. 38-54; N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 154-67.

conclusions but rather to enlarge upon some of the source material from the first decades of the SPCK's involvement and to balance the Anglican perspective by clarifying the Halle perception of Lutheran-Anglican relations in India.

The Society recognized quite clearly that it was assisting Lutheran missionaries in India. We have already noted the controversy raised when Archbishop Tenison was angered by the Portuguese catechism of the missionaries.[140] The members of the Society did not wish unnecessarily to dwell on the fact that "the missionaries were Lutherans or ministers not episcopally ordained".[141] But the Lutheran nature of the mission was not something they were allowed to forget. In 1716 Stevenson in Madras told the Society that one of the hindrances to the mission work in India was

> ... the mixing of disputable opinions with the plain and necessary Doctrines of the Gospell. It is Expected of the Danish Missionaryes that they plant not only a *Christian*, but a *Lutheran* Church: and make Proselytes not only to the Gospell, but to a particular *Sect*.[142]

Along with a copy of this letter Newman sent Archbishop Wake paragraphs transcribed both from a letter which the Society had dispatched to the missionaries earlier and from their reply, in order "to prevent any hard thoughts what that Paragraph in Mr. Stevenson's Letter might insinuate".[143] Ziegenhagen describes an uncomfortable occurrence at a meeting of the Society in 1725:

> As I was in the Society last Tuesday, a letter from the country was read, in which was found first news that a good friend has given five guineas to the East India mission, but afterwards a question addressed to the secretary: 'Would he report how it came about that the Society is supporting a mission in which it is recognizable even in the reports of the mission printed in English that the missionaries are Lutherans; it is well-known that they have a few erroneous principles upon which they stand rigid and firm.' Here the secretary stopped reading, so I do not know what else is in it [the letter]. However, no one in the Society answered one word to this letter, therefore I also kept quiet. The chairman at that time was an MP, Sir Daniel Dolins, a very reasonable and Christian man, for whom it was painful that the letter was read, as I could tell from his behaviour.[144]

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140 Scholars have incorrectly identified Chamberlayne as the instigator of this contention, but he was only the intermediary between Tenison and the SPCK.

141 Newman to Chamberlayne, 19 Dec. 1713 (ArSPCK, *Soc Lett* [CS2/3]).

142 Stevenson to Newman, Fort St. George, 27 Dec. 1716 (copy) (ChCh, *Wake MSS* 28:31); cf. Sykes, *Sheldon to Secker*, pp. 162-63.

143 Newman to Archbishop Wake, Middle Temple, 24 July 1717 (ChCh, *Wake MSS* 15:424).

144 "Wie ich am vergangen diens-tag in der Societät war so trug sich zu daß ein Brief, der aus dem lande geschickt war, gelesen ward, in demselben ward zu erst Nachricht gegeben daß ein guter Freünd 5 Guineas zur Ost-Indischen Mission gegeben, hinterher aber fand sich eine Frage, die an den Secretarium getahn ward, nemlich 'er mögte doch melden, wie das käme das die Societat sich dieser Mission annehme, indem man doch aus der Nachricht, so in englischer Sprache von dieser Mission gedruckt seÿ, erkenne, daß die Missionarii Lutheraner wären,von welchen

Whether out of consideration for Dolins[145] or solely for the good of the mission itself, the reaction of the Society is remarkable: no one said a word and the matter was dropped. A little over a year later the Society did not respond to further critical comments from Stevenson on the methods and theology of the Lutheran missionaries[146] and accepted Schultze into missionary service.

But the problem still smouldered and was fanned to flame again when one of the English chaplains at Fort St. George questioned the validity of the ordination by the Lutheran missionaries in Tranquebar of a native Indian named Aaron to a preaching and sacramental ministry. Ziegenhagen was instructed by the Society to learn from G.A. Francke

> ... what Powers the Missionaries at Tranquebar are invested with by the Ecclesiastical constitution in Germany and by the appointment of the College at Copenhagen, particularly whether they are impowered to ordain others, and to give the Persons so ordained Authority as well of administring the Sacraments as of instructing in the Principles of Christianity.[147]

On receiving Francke's assurances on the regularity of what the missionaries had done, Newman told him that the Society had "unanimously express'd their entire satisfaction at the Account you gave" and would seek to prevent any disputes which may arise in India "upon a supposition of the Holy Orders confer'd in India not being valid".[148] Writing privately to an associate of the chaplain in Madras who had raised the issue of Aaron's ordination, Newman said that it was

> ... a tender point for the Society to engage themselves in, to make a comparison of the validity of Episcopal with foreign Ordination, which could yeild [*sic*] no Service to the Mission but might do abundance of mischeif [*sic*].

Newman stated that Archbishop Wake was "in favour of ordinations in India" and added, "If the Primitive Christians had been as scrupulous on this head as some well meaning persons now adays are, how much would it have obstructed the progress of Christianity."[149]

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bekannt wäre, daß sie einige irrige Lehrsätze hatten, darauf sie sehr steif und fest bestünden'. hier hörete der Secretarius mit lesen auf, daß ich also nicht weiß was weiter darin gestanden. es andwortete aber kein Mensch in der Societät ein Wort auf diesen Brief, deswegen schwieg ich auch stille. der Praeses war eben das mahl ein Parlaments Herr Sir Daniel Dolings, ein sehr vernünftiger und christlicher Mann. welchem es empfindlich war, daß der Brief war gelesen worden, wie ich aus seinen geberden abnehmen konnte." (Ziegenhagen to Francke, London, 8 Oct. 1725 [*Nachlaß* 30.FMZ.ii/32])

145 Sir Daniel Dolins was an active supporter of Francke and someone Ziegenhagen held in high esteem. Both Dolins and Sir John Philipps expressed considerable excitement when Ziegenhagen mentioned to them that Francke himself might come to England. (Ziegenhagen to Francke, London, 26 Oct. and 16 Nov. 1725 [*Nachlaß* 30.FMZ.ii/33,35])

146 See pp. 117 above.

147 SPCK *Minutes*, 19 Apr. 1735 (xvi.99).

148 Newman to G.A. Francke, London, 6 June 1735 (ArSPCK, *Misc. Letters* [CN2/1:1]).

149 Newman to Rev. Mr. Wynch, London, 4 Feb. 1736 (ArSPCK, *Misc. Letters* [CN2/2:11-12]).

All these examples show that the members of the SPCK chose to ignore or play down the obvious: they were assisting in Tranquebar and propagating in Madras a thoroughly Lutheran enterprise. Though from the outset the Society was uncomfortable with Lutheran orders and would have preferred episcopal ordination, as late as the 1730s it explicitly – not tacitly as is sometimes assumed[150] – and unanimously accepted the validity of Lutheran orders. Why did the SPCK accept these orders? If it wished to have any mission in India the Society was forced to use Lutherans, because, in spite of all their efforts, no members of the Church of England were available. Many Anglicans distinguished continental Protestants from English Dissenters,[151] a perception prevalent in the SPCK itself, though we have noted the fear Boehm had that some High Churchmen would insist on Anglican (re)ordination for the Lutheran missionaries. Some of the leading members of the SPCK were strongly latitudinarian or at least pragmatic on this question, especially Newman, who told an Independent correspondent in New England:

> But where inveterate customs have established themselves, as episcopacy is, with the addition of temporalities, blended with the constitution in England, and presbyteriasism in Scotland, it would be turning the world upside down to oblige people to alter an establishment that implies no idolatry nor deviation from the fundamentals of Christianity, and with which they may go to heaven, let them be on which side of the question they may please.[152]

It may have been helpful that the first missionaries were ordained by a Danish Lutheran Bishop, though Boehm felt this would mean little to High Churchmen; it was of little consequence anyway, since most missionaries had no Danish bishop present at their ordination. The fact that the missionaries were serving in remote India also made it easier to accept their Lutheran ordination; a somewhat imperialist (and racist?) attitude which in effect implied that what would not be legal at home to English men and women was tolerable for distant natives.[153] Furthermore, the SPCK feared losing the financial support from Halle and Germany if it refused to accept the Lutheran ordination of the missionaries. Finally, as Newman's correspondence makes clear, the Society refused to make ordination an issue because it did not wish to harm the mission. Even if there was a growing uncertainty concerning Lutheran ordinations in the SPCK as the century progressed,[154] it never changed its practice: for over one hundred years mission took priority over confessional rigidity.

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150 Neill, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 117.

151 See pp. 212–16 below.

152 Newman to B. Colman, Bartlet's Buildings, 24 Sept. 1736 (ArSPCK, *New England Letters* [CN3/5:8]).

153 On a somewhat similar assumption, Anglican bishops later ordained low-born ex-Methodist preachers for colonial service.

154 Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies*, pp. 46-54; Sykes, *Old Priest*, pp. 159-64.

How was the involvement of the SPCK in the East India mission perceived from the Halle side? Here, too, there were some ecclesiological anxieties. We have seen that Boehm was wary of German Lutheran missionaries serving under an Anglican Society because of High Church sensitivities. When in 1729 the SPCK was considering sending an Englishman, James Christian, to work with Schultze, G.A. Francke expressed fears similar to Boehm's: "Should the Society send you [Schultze] a Reformed colleague, you would certainly come into difficult circumstances and under pressure."[155] He suggested that with all love and friendliness Schultze should let the Anglican missionary begin an Anglican enterprise while he went about his own work, for "it is better that in such a way there would be two missions in Madras rather than that one is a mixture of two religions".[156] Halle considered the Church of England to be Reformed and distinct from Lutheranism in the important doctrines of predestination and the Holy Communion;[157] therefore, it did not desire any intermingling on the mission field.

Because of this antagonistic attitude to Reformed doctrine Halle opposed any efforts to introduce Anglican elements into either of the SPCK's missions at Madras or Cuddalore. In the early 1740s Geister, the SPCK's missionary at Madras, wrote to the SPCK about introducing the Anglican catechism and the Book of Common Prayer into the English missions.[158] The Society in 1744 "particularly consider'd whether it may not be proper to take care, that in their [the missionaries'] Administration of the Two Sacraments the form of the Church of England be used".[159] Later, it ordered that the Anglican catechism be translated into the native tongues and recommended "to the Missionaries at Madras and Cudalore to continue the use of the Church of England Catechism in Instructing the Heathen, and when they Baptize to use the Form in the Book of Common Prayer".[160] J.P. Fabricius, Geister's colleague at Madras, told Francke that when Geister received these orders he quickly set about introducing the Anglican catechism in the Portuguese and Tamil schools, resulting in an open quarrel and break with Fabricius.[161] He hints that the purpose of implanting the Anglican catechism was to "unify the evangelical Lutheran Church and the reformed English Church with each other, at least

155 "Sollte Ihnen die Societät einen reformirten Collegen schicken, würden Sie freilich in schwere Umstände und in ein Gedränge kommen."

156 "Es ist besser, daß solchergestalt zwei Missionen in Madras seien als daß Eine ist aus zwei Religionen vermenget." (G.A. Francke to Schultze, [Halle], [c.1729-30], quoted in: Germann, *Fabricius*, p. 135)

157 See pp. 208–09 below.

158 J.P. Fabricius to G.A. Francke, [Madras,] 31 Jan. 1746, quoted in: Germann, *Fabricius*, pp. 137-39.

159 SPCK *Minutes*, 6 Mar. 1744 (xx.61).

160 *Ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1744 (xx.132f).

161 Fabricius to G.A. Francke, 31 Jan. 1746, quoted in: Germann, *Fabricius*, p. 139.

here in India".[162] However, Boehm and others had warned explicitly against such controversial actions, which were not only disruptive but also unnecessary, since the SPCK had not initiated the idea but had only responded to a proposal from Geister. Should Geister succeed, pure Lutheran doctrine would be revoked, the congregations in Madras would be separated from Tranquebar, bad reports would spread throughout Germany, and only English missionaries would be able to serve Madras in the future.[163] G.A. Francke concurred with these sentiments and told Ziegenhagen that both his father and Boehm were of the same opinion; therefore,

> ... it is indeed certain that in the matter of the catechism we can concede nothing to Geister and the Society ... .Should this affair not quietly be rescinded or the Society not be amenable to our suggestions, then one must clarify that the Danish missionaries would be withdrawn to Tranquebar and I could not be responsible for benefactors bestowing anything further on the English missions.[164]

With such an uncompromising attitude both in Europe and in India on the part of the German Pietists, it is fortunate that the conflict in Madras resolved itself when Geister soon left. The Anglican catechism was abolished and everything reestablished on a Lutheran foundation.[165] No one in the SPCK – except Ziegenhagen – was aware of these developments; the Society passively acquiesced to the Lutheran nature of the mission, though it would have preferred an Anglican one.

The "ecumenical" attitude of the SPCK, in relation to that of Copenhagen and Halle, has not been fully appreciated by historians of the East India mission.[166] There was in fact little mutual cooperation between Halle and the SPCK, since the Society basically only offered aid to Halle's work. Halle was from the beginning strongly opposed to any anglicization of the India mission; it welcomed material and administrative assistance from England but fought any theological or doctrinal interference. Even when the mission spread to English territories, Halle would make no theological or doctrinal compromises. The true ecumenical spirit – if we can call it that – of toleration and

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162 "... Daß die evangelische-lutherische und die reformirte englische Kirche mit einander vereinigt werden, wenigstens hier in Indien."

163 Fabricius to Kiernander, Madras, 23 Dec. 1745, printed in: Germann, *Fabricius*, pp. 140-42.

164 "Es ist wohl gewiß, daß wir in der Catechismussache dem H. Geister und der Societät nichts einräumen können ... Sollte sich nun die Sache nicht in der Stille rückgängig machen lassen, oder die Societät unsern Vorstellungen nicht zugänglich sein, so müßte man erklären, daß die dänischen Missionare nach Trankebar zurückgehen würden und ichs bei den Wohlthätern nicht verantworten könne, ferner den englischen Missionen etwas zufließen zu lassen." (G.A. Francke to Ziegenhagen, [Halle, c.1746,] quoted in: Germann, *Fabricius*, pp. 144f)

165 For more details on the whole affair, see Germann, *Fabricius*, pp. 136-46.

166 Though he recognizes the tensions between London, Halle, and Copenhagen, Beyreuther, *Francke und Anfänge*, pp. 245-47, fails to recognize the unique ecumenical contribution of the Society.

understanding is seen not in Halle but in the SPCK and in Boehm, who inspired Anglican interest in the mission and urged compromise and discretion with regard to the omitted Commandment, though even he was unwilling to forgo the Lutheran Pietist nature of the East Indian work. Among the members of the Society the opportunity for mission came to appear more important than precise doctrinal agreement.

Our focus in this chapter has been on the formative years of Anglican involvement in the East India mission.[167] The Society took up support of the work whole-heartedly and upheld its financial and administrative commitment throughout the eighteenth century, despite frequent anxiety over insufficient funds. Though seldom emphasized, the SPCK was active in India over three-quarters of a century before William Carey's historic landing. The Society's missionary endeavour may not have been Anglican theologically, but it was the first English outreach to India. The key figure in soliciting and motivating the interest of the Society was Boehm. The East India mission is the most enduring result of his personal influence within the SPCK.

167 By the end of the eighteenth century the mission had been served by over fifty missionaries, ordained twelve native pastors, baptized over 36,000 converts, and was located in six centres in southern India.