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Background: Ludolf and the Eastern World

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Chapter VI

"Jerusalem is being built": Expanding the SPCK's Work Beyond Britain

The decision of the SPCK in 1710 to support the East India mission was a momentous one. Not only did it initiate what would become over one hundred years of work in India, but it also set in motion the processes by which the Society gradually expanded its work beyond Britain to other parts of the globe. When a £200 legacy was left for the mission in 1715 Boehm enthusiastically declared:

> Thus the tiny mustard seed of the Kingdom of God is penetrating through all hindrances and Jerusalem is being built, although at a time of scarcity. The East and West Indies will at length be made fragrant with the blessed knowledge of Christ.[1]

Boehm's words proved prophetic for the SPCK, which within twenty years was involved in work that stretched literally from East to West. Our purpose in this chapter is to examine the Society's major endeavours of the 1720s and 1730s, which, though seemingly unconnected, including as they do such unrelated interests as the publication of books in Arabic, a mission to the Jews, and the resettlement of German-speaking Protestants, have one common cord which binds them together: they were inspired by Pietists. Even as these Germans turned the attention of the Society to India, so they pointed them to opportunities in such distant venues as the Levant and the newly established colony of Georgia in America.

1. The Arabic Psalter and New Testament

Background: Ludolf and the Eastern World

English interests in the near East were well established by the late seventeenth century, due largely to the flourishing Levant trade, exemplified by the Levant Company, which was experiencing its most prosperous period.[2] The lucrative

1 "So dringet sich das Senf-Körnlein des Reiches GOttes durch alle Hindernissen hindurch, und Jerusalem wird gebauet, wiewol zu einer kümmerlichen Zeit. Ost- und West-Indien wird endlich mit der seligen Erkenntnis Christi, wolriechend gemacht werden." (Boehm to Samuel Urlsperger, London, 6 Dec. 1715, printed in: *ErBrief*, pp. 468f)

2 See A.C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford, 1935).

nature of the Eastern market had made it a cause of bitter economic rivalry, as French and English merchants after the signing of peace at Ryswick struggled for the lion's share of the trade.[3] The mercantilist conflicts were given an added religious edge, for the English trading communities at Constantinople, Aleppo, and Smyrna felt insecure, surrounded as they were by the vast Muslim world and uneasy at the competition of Roman Catholicism. There was a certain interest in Anglican circles in an *entente* with the Eastern Church, which was perceived as a bastion against Roman expansionism. High Church and Nonjuring exponents of the "branch theory" of Catholicism saw in Orthodoxy a valid stem of the visible Church less militant and threatening than the Roman – perhaps because of its remoteness – and were interested in establishing relations with it. But doctrinal disparities especially over transubstantiation in the Holy Communion and Anglican suspicions of Orthodox mysticism and superstition meant that by the time of the arrival of two Orthodox dignitaries in 1714,[4] Anglican interest in Greek Orthodoxy had subsided. Despite their mutual rejection of papal authority and their common retention of the Apostolic Succession, the main characteristic which they held in common was a mutual fear of Rome, which was not enough to keep them close together.[5]

Interest in the Eastern Church proved to be a useful point of contact between Halle and the English Church. Here again the chief instigator was H.W. Ludolf, whose missionary passion for a "universal Church" coupled with his philological interest in the Eastern languages led to a particular concern for Russian and Greek Orthodoxy. In addition to an earlier lengthy visit to Russia, he had in 1699-1700 journeyed to the Levant. Ludolf's deep concern was for the inward renewal of the Greek Orthodox Church. His reform program was in essence a globalization of Spener's eschatological "hope for better times" for the Lutheran Church. Using *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* and encouraging contacts between reborn groups and individuals, Ludolf hoped to propagate a renewal of Christendom. His goal was not proselytism to a universal Church structure, but non-sectarian spiritual renewal.[6] Writing in 1699 to Dr. Charlett at University College, Oxford, from Constantinople,

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3 *Ibid.*, pp. 119ff.

4 G. Williams, *The Orthodox Church of the East in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1868), pp. xxvi-xxx. Cf. Boehm to Francke, London, 15 Oct. 1707 (ArFrSt C 826:11); to Canstein, London, 12 Sept. 1715, printed in: ErBrief, p. 459; Chamberlayne to Archbishop Tenison, Petty France, 13 June 1713 (Lambeth MSS 930:30).

5 See. J.C.S. Runciman, "The Church of England and the Orthodox Churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", in: *Anglican Initiatives in Christian Unity*, ed. E.G.W. Bill (London, 1967), pp. 1-18; *idem.*, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 289-319.

6 See H. Goltz, "Ecclesia Universa. Bemerkungen über die Beziehungen H.W. Ludolfs zu Rußland und zu den orientalischen Kirchen", in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* (Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe) 28/6 (1979), pp. 21f, 26f; J. Wallmann, "Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung bei Philipp Jakob Spener", *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 3 (1976), pp. 30f.

Ludolf encouraged "a correspondence with some well disposed people of the Eastern Church".[7] A few weeks later he described how he had met the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and attempted to speak with him about "essential and genuine Christianity" [*essentialis und realis Christianismus*], but had found the elderly Patriarch unresponsive and anxious always to turn the conversation back towards "his antiquities and patristic traditions" [*auf seine antiquitatem et patrum traditionem*].[8] This exchange convinced Ludolf that the renewal of the Greek Church would not come easily from its hierarchy, if all leaders were so tradition-bound: the way forward lay with the education of Greek youth in such a way that they would be freed from denominational narrowness of mind.

Such sentiments led to Ludolf's contacts with Benjamin Woodroffe, Principal of Gloucester Hall (now Worcester College), Oxford, who had a particular interest in Orthodox Christianity and in the late 1690s had actually brought into being a scheme to establish a college of boys belonging to the Greek Church at his Oxford college,[9] where they could be instructed in the fundamentals of religion to enable them more effectively to defend the faith on their return. Both Archbishop Tenison and Bishop Compton of London warmly recommended a petition to William III to gain his financial support for this project to reinforce "the true primitive religion" in the Greek Church in its struggle against "the pressure of the Mohametans and the Romish impostures".[10] The first youths arrived in 1699 from Smyrna. The recruitment had been carried out by Ludolf, who travelled to Smyrna and secured six Greek boys for Oxford. Archbishop Tenison himself wrote to Francke, seeking a teacher from Halle to work in Woodroffe's college.[11] In the end, Boehm was designated for this task, though as it transpired, he never worked at Oxford as hoped. Wigers, one of the first two teachers Francke had dispatched at Tenison's request, went to meet Woodroffe and passed on to him Francke's pedagogical method for the instruction of the youths.[12] Unfortunately, due to poor living conditions and lack of money Woodroffe's design ended in failure. However, Greek youths were later successfully incorporated in Francke's institutions, where he founded his *Collegium Orientale in* 1702; this was in part due once more to the influence of Ludolf,[13] who in 1701 had

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7 Ludolf to Charlett, Constantinople, 10 July 1699 (Bodl., *Ballard MSS* 26:83b).

8 Ludolf to Francke, Constantinople, 30 Aug. 1699 (ArFrSt D 71:20-21).

9 See undated printed broadsheet, "A Model of a College to be Settled In the University, For the Education of some Youths of the Greek Church" (Lambeth MSS 938:38); cf. E.D. Tappe, "The Greek College at Oxford, 1699-1705", *Oxoniensa* 19 (1954), pp. 92-111; C.H. Daniel and W.R. Barker, *Worcester College* (London, 1900), pp. 128-51.

10 Petition to the King, 20 May 1700, printed in: E. Bateson, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series* (London, 1737), pp. 41f.

11 Herrnschmid to his father, Halle, 20 July 1699, printed in: Nebe, pp. 53-54; see p. 74 above.

12 Wigers to Francke, London, 12 Dec. 1699 (*Nachlaß* 30.XI.428).

13 Ludolf to?, 30 Aug. 1699, cited in: E. Winter, *Halle als Ausgangspunkt der deutschen*

informed Francke of Woodroffe's carelessness.[14] The English chaplain at Smyrna, an acquaintance of Ludolf who visited Halle in 1702 or 1703, was helpful in sending the first recruits to the *Collegium Orientale*.[15]

In the Levant, Ludolf had been able to direct a number of English merchants towards Francke's work. One of these, Jacob Turner, an English businessman at Smyrna, sent his son to Halle,[16] where he himself had visited Francke and inspected the institutions. It was Francke's devout hope that Turner and other English merchants in the East might serve as patrons and correspondents for his ever increasing commercial ventures.[17]

On returning from the Levant in 1700 Ludolf began vigorously to promote his proposals for renewing the Greek Church. Already in 1698 he had expressed to Charlett in Oxford his wish for a seminary which would so train chaplains serving the Anglican Church in the Levant that "they might be enabled to serve Christs Universal Church all under one".[18] Next year he brought to the SPCK proposals for the "Propagating of Christian Knowledge amongst the Orientall Churches", in which he suggested a seminary for English chaplains in which Oriental languages would be taught, establishing a further college in the Levant for Greek youths, the election of a committee from within the Society which would make the Eastern Church its particular care, and the publication of a small catechism in modern Greek. The Society requested Ludolf to make extractions from seventeen catechisms which "would be most acceptable to the Orientall Christians, and likely to enlarge their Christian Knowledge".[19] A few months later Ludolf presented a scheme for a short Scriptural catechism; the Society asked Bishop Williams of Chichester to draw up a paper for Greek Christians, but, sadly, despite a reminder from the Society, the Bishop did not respond and the Society laid aside Ludolf's proposals.[20]

But Ludolf was not to be put off by the SPCK's inaction. In 1702 he and Papa [Lapas] Seraphim, a Greek priest who had come to England to help Ludolf, brought before the SPG a proposal for publishing the New Testament

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Russlandkunde im 18. Jahrhundert (Berlin, 1953), pp. 32f; E. Benz, "Die Beziehungen des August-Hermann-Francke-Kreises zu den Ostslaven", in: *Festschrift für Dmytro Cyzevskyj [Tschizewskij] zum 60. Geburtstag am 23. März 1954*, ed. M. Vasmer (Berlin, 1954), p. 79.

14 Ludolf to Francke, London, 10 Mar. 1701, printed in: Nebe, pp. 82f.

15 Ludolf to Francke, Constantinople, 1 May 1699, and London, 27 Feb. 1703 (ArFrSt D 71:16, D 23:126); Francke to Chishull, Halle, 24 Dec. 1703 (draft), printed in: Winter, *Halle als Ausgangspunkt*, p. 339; cf. Aland, ed., "Die Annales Hallenses ecclesiastici", p. 393; Benz, "Beziehungen des August-Hermann-Francke-Kreises", pp. 92f.

16 See pp. 89f above.

17 *Francke* to Chishull, 24 Dec. 1703, printed in: Winter, *Halle als Ausgangspunkt*, p. 340.

18 Ludolf to Charlett, Halle, 17 Feb. 1698 (Bodl., *Ballard MSS* 26:81f); cf. Ludolf to Charlett, 10 July 1699 (Bodl., *Ballard MSS* 26:83f).

19 SPCK *Minutes*, 23 & 30 Dec. 1700, printed in: McClure, pp. 99-103.

20 *Ibid.*, 17 & 24 Feb., 17 & 31 Mar. 1701, printed in: McClure, pp. 113-15,118,124,126.

in "Vulgar Greek".[21] The SPG's Committee for Receiving Proposals took up this request but rendered the cautious opinion that such a publication might appear provocative and

> ... that no Private Person is fitt to be Entrusted with the Care of such a Translation which shall afterwards be sent from the Society to the Gracian *[sic]* Churches, and that no such Translation be sent unless it be approv'd of by the Governour of the said Churches.[22]

Ludolf remained unperturbed and began raising money to publish the New Testament. In a handwritten account he listed some of the contributors to his project: they numbered not only Anglicans – Charles Bridges, Woodward, Thomas Bray, J.E. Grabe, Dr. Slare, and Archbishop Sharp of York – but also Edmund Calamy, the most celebrated Nonconformist leader.[23] Archbishop Tenison also gave his blessing to the project.[24] In 1703 the New Testament was finished at a total cost of about £150[25] and Ludolf set about the difficult task of propagation.[26] His New Testament was poorly received in the Levant and ordered to be burnt by the Patriarch of Constantinople, apparently because of a Preface written by Seraphim, Ludolf's friend, who was an unfrocked Greek priest; a new edition was published in 1705 without the scandalous Preface, the contents of which are unknown.[27]

Though in this initiative Ludolf was unsuccessful in eliciting a response from either the SPCK or the SPG, he had nonetheless planted a seed which would bear fruit two decades later.

The Arabic Psalter and New Testament

In 1720 Boehm returned to the theme, laying before the Society

> ... a proposal for printing the New-Testament in Arabick for the use of the Christians in the Eastern Countries, where Arabick is used, but for want of *printing*, Books of any sort and especially of the Holy Scriptures cannot be obtained but at such prices as very few can reach to.[28]

This time the project had a very different response. In the interim, knowledge of Halle's work with the *Collegium Orientale* and Bible distribution, coupled

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21 SPG *Journals* 1, 1 May 1702 (p. 60) (ArUSPG).

22 SPG *Journal of the Committee for Receiving Proposals* 1, 5 May 1702 (p. 20) (ArUSPG).

23 "Account of the Moneys received and disbursed about printing the New Testament in Vulgar Greek", n.p., n.d. (ArFrSt D 23:8-9).

24 Ludolf to Francke, London, 8 July 1702 (ArFrSt D 71:109-10).

25 T.H. Darlow and H.F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture*, 2 vols. (London, 1911), ii.680, incorrectly state that this edition was printed at the expense of the SPG.

26 Ludolf to Mr. de Lente, n.p., 6 Feb. 1703; to Mr. Williams at Constantinople, London, 16 Apr. 1703; to Mr. Clutterbock, [Rotterdam,] 15 June 1703 (ArFrSt D 23:121f,9-10,139).

27 Darlow and Moule, *Historical Catalogue*, ii.680.

28 SPCK *Minutes*, 24 Mar. 1720 (ix.92).