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The Extent of Influence and Cooperation

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Chapter VII

"Animated by the Example of the great Professor Franck": The Rise and Decline of SPCK-Halle Relations

In a sermon preached in the last year of his life George Whitefield recalled the founding of his famous Bethesda orphanage in Georgia:

> Many orphans, whose parents had been taken from them by the distresses that naturally attend new settlements, were dispersed here and there in a very forlorn helpless condition; my bowels yearned towards them, and, animated by the example of the great Professor *Franck* ... I hired a house, furnished an infirmary, employed all that were capable of employment, and in a few weeks walked to the house of GOD with a large family of above sixty orphans, and others in as bad a condition.[1]

After the Salzburger emigration, Halle Pietists and the SPCK engaged in no new cooperative efforts, but the influence of Francke in England did not end, as the evangelical revival reawakened interest in his work. The upswing of Francke's status within the evangelical revival, however, seemed to coincide with the deterioration of Halle-SPCK links. Our purpose in this chapter is to examine why the SPCK and Halle Pietists were able to cooperate in a number of endeavours and why those links subsequently withered and no new enterprises were undertaken.

1. The Rise of SPCK-Halle Cooperation

The Extent of Influence and Cooperation

Before dealing with the reasons for SPCK-Halle cooperation it is important to place its significance into some kind of perspective. How significant was the SPCK itself within the Anglican religious community? The answer to this difficult question depends upon the criteria adopted to measure effectiveness. From an ecclesiastical and high political perspective the Society had a negligible impact; it remained aloof as much as possible from the controversies

1 "Sermon LVII. Preached before the Governor, and Council, and the House of Assembly, in Georgia, on January 28, 1770", in: George Whitefield, *Works*, [ed. John Gillies], 6 vols. (London, 1771-72), vi.381.

agitating the Anglican Church in the early eighteenth century. It was a lay-dominated body in which prelates, and to a certain extent clergy, provided a supportive and approving rather than a decision-making role. But at the level of ordinary religious life and in the realm of philanthropy the activity of the SPCK was important. During its first decade the Society took on a crucial coordinating role within the voluntary society movement itself. Since the SPG was so heavily engaged with the colonial Church in America, the SPCK became the parent Society to many of the religious societies and the societies for the reformation of manners in England. Though it had no official authority, it could and did advise and influence. Within the charity school and workhouse movements the Society also adopted a vital organizing role. In the former it had little direct control, for the individual schools frequently displayed their independence; nonetheless, through its coordinating work, thousands of children were offered their only opportunity for education and new methods of organization were introduced.[2] Nor should the enduring significance of the Society's work in distributing Christian literature be underestimated.[3] The quiet, yet often fervent devotion of the eighteenth century, with its emphasis on Christian "duty", on ethical obedience, liturgical regularity, and closet devotion, owed a huge amount to the books disseminated by the Society, often in a multitude of editions over many decades.[4]

As we have seen, the domestic work of the Society in disseminating "Christian Knowledge" in England was coupled with a vision of global influence. Its initiatives remained necessarily small scale, but possess deep symbolic significance: the East India mission, the publication and distribution of the Arabic Psalter and New Testament, and the superintendence of the Salzburger emigration to Georgia were ventures which diverted attention away from the domestic population to whom the Society's attentions were first addressed. It is noticeable, indeed, that the Society's fervour for domestic propaganda began to diminish coincidentally with its expanding commitment abroad, a shift in perspective which will be discussed below.

How extensive was Halle's influence within the SPCK? The evidence of the previous four chapters suggests that most of the major enterprises of the Society in the first half of the eighteenth century were either directly or indirectly influenced by Hallensians. But this having been said, a few qualifications must be made. With regard to the Society's domestic work, only within the charity school movement did Halle Pietists exercise a marked stimulus, through some of the chief figures associated with the schools and in

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2 Jones, *Charity School Movement*, pp. 343-46.

3 Sykes, *Edmund Gibson*, pp. 197f.

4 For some of the more popular works distributed by the SPCK in the eighteenth century, see Clarke, *Eighteenth Century Piety*, pp. 1-29. For example, Bishop Beveridge's *Sermon on the Common Prayer* went through its 38th edition in 1799, Woodward's *Instruction for those that come to be Confirmed* its 22nd edition in 1758, and *The Christian Soldier* its 42nd in 1818.

the publication of *Pietas Hallensis*. The German impulse remains diffuse and difficult to trace, since the schools were thoroughly anglicized; it is impossible to discern exactly where Halle instigated and where it merely reinforced what was already begun. The work of the Society in the distribution of Christian literature, though paralleled in Halle, was solidly Anglican. Although Boehm's own publishing achievements became one of the most significant legacies of Halle Pietism in England, only a few of those works were actually dispersed by the Society (though they were published by its publisher Downing).

The clearest evidence of Hallensian instigation lies in the Society's foreign ventures, the East India mission and the decision to print the Arabic Psalter and New Testament. SPCK interest in both these projects was initiated and encouraged by Boehm, to which Newman bore witness:

> He [Boehm] was the first promoter of those two Excellent Designs the Protestant Mission to the East Indies and the Impression of the New Testament etc. in Arabick having by his good offices with the Society prevail'd with them to espouse the furthering of them.[5]

Both the plan and the practical details of the Society's support for the East India mission were, as we have seen, principally dictated by Boehm. The task of seeing the Arabic impressions into print was handed over to Negri and at the suggestion of Rodde, a catechism was also printed. Initial SPCK interest in Callenberg's mission to the Jews could not be pursued because of the Salzburger emigration to Georgia, in which the Pietists again first prompted SPCK action. This Georgia settlement could not have happened without the efforts of Ziegenhagen and especially Urlsperger, even though the decision to resettle these emigrants in Georgia was wholly an English one.

These projects were by no means marginal in the work of the SPCK. The Society itself in its published accounts lists as its major activities during this period charity schools, book distribution, the East India mission, the Arabic publications, the Salzburger emigration, and its recommendation of workhouses.[6] The foreign ventures were not just an incidental appendage to the Society's domestic activity. An examination of the special donations made to the SPCK between 1710 and 1735 indicates that almost fifty per cent both of the number of gifts and of the amounts given was earmarked for the East India mission or the Arabic Psalter and New Testament.[7] Indeed, these two endeavours so drained the Society's resources that by 1730 it was in debt.[8] In 1743 an extraordinary meeting had to be called because the East India mission

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5 Newman to Cotton Mather, Middle Temple, 3 Aug. 1722, printed in: Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, p. 232.

6 E.g. *An Account of the Origin and Design of the SPCK* (1733); An Account of the SPCK (1756); *A General Account of the SPCK* (1813).

7 *General Account of the SPCK* (1813), pp. 210-15. Note: the Salzburger emigration had its own fund and was not included in these statistics.

8 Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, p. 496.

fund was depleted.[9] The work load of Henry Newman provides further proof of the extent of SPCK involvement in these international projects; when Newman received an increase in salary it was inevitably because of extra work associated with one of them.[10]

Reasons for SPCK-Halle Involvement

But why did the Halle Pietists take such an interest in the SPCK and why did the Society respond so favourably to its overtures? Did the initiative come from A.H. Francke himself? In his "Great Essay", written in 1704 in which he spelled out his dreams and laid out the reforming goals of the Pietist movement, Francke expressed the hope that the work begun at Halle would spread

> ... so that *every fitting preparation will be made for a general betterment of all classes not only in Germany and Europe but also in the remaining parts of the world*, and that in a short time the whole earth will be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as with a stream of living water.[11]

In this same essay Francke noted (with pride) the divine blessing attending the work of Wigers, Mehder, and Boehm in England and the presence of Michael Belke at Halle, who had come to be trained in Halle's pedagogical method before returning to work in English charity schools.[12] In spite of these lofty sentiments, it would be misleading to assume that Francke initiated contact with England. The key figure in the Francke-Tenison correspondence was undoubtedly Ludolf, the vital go-between, who both turned Tenison's attention to Halle and encouraged Francke not only to send Wigers and Mehder but also to improve upon the idea of Woodroffe's failed Greek college with his own *Collegium Orientale*.

Apart from dispatching his three envoys to England, Francke remained surprisingly aloof from the British scene. Even though he had the honour to be elected the first foreign corresponding member of the SPCK, and though Wigers and Ludolf sent him frequent reminders about the potential importance of the Society, Francke did not make much use of his opportunity. In the very year that the "Great Essay" was written, Boehm had to remind Francke that he had not written to the Society for a long time and that the least he could do was keep up a correspondence with Slare.[13] Although there was frequent

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9 In spite of the financial burden, the Society decided "Nemine Contradicente" to continue. See SPCK *Minutes*, 1 & 15 Feb. 1743 (xix.222,226); cf. Cowie, *Henry Newman*, pp. 129-31.

10 Cowie, *Henry Newman*, pp. 30-32.

11 "... damit zu einer *allgemeinen Verbeßerung in allen Ständen nicht allein in Teutschland und in Europa, sondern auch in den übrigen Theilen der Welt alle gehörige Zubereitung gemacht* und in kurtzer Zeit die gantze Erde mit Erkentniß der Herrn als mit einem Strom lebendiger Waßer bedecket werde." (Podczeck, ed., *Francke ... Der grosse Aufsatz*, p. 154)

12 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

13 Boehm to Francke, London, 24 Sept. 1704, printed in: Sames, p. 180.