

### **What Would Jesus Fund?: Financing Religious Enterprises in the Long Eighteenth Century**

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Who funded early modern religious enterprises? What was the relationship between commercial networks and religious operations? And, how (or how much) did religious expansion and migration depend upon economic considerations and market developments? The discussion of interdisciplinary questions like these drove the recent conference entitled „What Would Jesus Fund?: Financing Religious Enterprises in the Long Eighteenth Century.“ Historians working on diverse points of intersection between commercial economics and religious networks and migrations during the long eighteenth century gathered at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen. Their topics ranged in geographic scope from colonial Mexico to the western shores of India.

KRISTIAN MEJRUP (Copenhagen) examined the Halle Pietist network of interdependent religious and commercial „Anstalten“ (institutions) and public representations of economic value in German Pietist culture. Mejrup demonstrated how the university in Halle, the famous „Waisenhaus“ (orphanage), and Halle Pietist material culture operated as divine instruments of devotional compliance within the context of a highly rationalized commercial business strategy. August Hermann Francke himself even proffered the soil in Halle as evidence of God’s approbation of the Pietist’s expansionary projects and a religious incentive for capital investment in Halle institutions. Religious experience, divine providence, and moral administration drove a business model based on „disinterested trade“ designed to promote religious education, not merely the accumulation of money. Thus, cottage industries, such as the production of Bibles, utilized emerging European commercial markets to support the char-

itable foundations, educational institutions, and religious missions operating in and from Halle.

Looking east from Europe, ULRIKE GLEIXNER (Wolfenbüttel) analyzed public and private advertising and fund raising strategies employed by Halle Pietists in support of their fledgling mission in Tranquebar. The production and consumption of the „Hallische Berichte“ (Halle Reports) facilitated the acquisition of financial resources for the Tranquebar mission and advocated in favor of a larger millenarian expansion of the Kingdom of God in foreign lands. Correspondence networks, between the Franckes and European nobles, both male and female, members of the professional elite, and even women in convents, acted as a private supplement to the public fund raising power of these circulating reports. Gleixner styled this system of intertwined financial arrangements and religious motivations as an eschatological „economy of salvation“ because the donors who contributed financial resources to the Pietist causes of religious education and the establishment of mission stations in places like India did so with the expectation of attaining personal salvation in return.

Engaging philosophical discourses that spurred economic and religious convergence, MARK VALERI’s (Washington University) keynote lecture analyzed the long eighteenth century „push toward freedom“ in British America, where parallel secular and theological mandates nevertheless encouraged participation in free market exchange. Valeri demonstrated how various, often competing narratives of free will theology, Calvinist predestination, universal atonement, and moral liberty managed to bring members of Protestant groups as diverse as Methodists, Moravians, and Puritans together in the market. Calvinist predestination could not stifle a larger revivalist impulse that relied on a doctrine of choice. Puritan conversion, after all, implied a measure of free choice retained by believers to change their sinful ways. Meanwhile, progressions of foundational religious and secular thinkers, including John Locke, Jonathan Edwards, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith, who explored issues of free will,

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conscience, morals, benevolence, affections, and liberty, came to the conclusion that choice was essential to both moral life and commercial activities. Thus, evangelical notions of conversion and secular philosophies of moral sentiment promoted the emergence of a capitalist „free market“ in the eighteenth century.

Transitioning to the topic of the English Awakening, LIONEL LABORIE (Goldsmiths / Tübingen) exposed underground millenarian, commercial, and correspondence networks that sustained the Fetter Lane Society in mid-eighteenth century London. Co-founded by the Moravians and the Wesley brothers in 1738, the Fetter Lane Society was one of at least forty similar religious societies in Great Britain. It aimed to promote Christian discipleship and because of its ecumenical nature, it is generally regarded as the starting point of the English revival movement. The Society capitalized upon a growing readership of millenarian literature as well as commercial networks providing wealthy donors for their cause. Establishing contacts with earlier millenarian networks – the French Prophets, Huguenots, and German Pietists – through their connections in the Dutch port city of Rotterdam, also supplied them with direct access to wealthy European gentlemen, such as Francis Moulton, Charles Portalès, Francis Wynantz and Isaac Hollis, who directly or indirectly financed various aspects of early Moravian missionary activity and procured for themselves profits of a non-financial (i.e. religious) nature.

Taking a somewhat opposite approach, CLIVE NORRIS (Oxford) situated John Wesley and his evolving attitudes about money as the most significant influence upon the burgeoning financial bureaucracy established by the early Methodist movement in England. Cultivating what he considered a morally neutral stance consisting of austerity and discipline, Wesley believed that money should only be acquired as an expedient to facilitate God's work in the world and not an end in itself. Any money Wesley and the Methodists received was immediately spent on charitable religious causes. As a result, Methodist preachers in the 1750s had to rely on God's providence, not institutionally generated salaries, as their primary means of sup-

port. After the financial collapse of the Moravians in London in 1753, however, Wesley began to delegate Methodist financial management by hiring stewards, establishing a „Preachers Fund,“ and instituting „seat rents“ in the rapidly expanding network of over 1000 Methodist chapels in England by the late eighteenth century. Though Wesley himself died penniless, just as he had planned, these initiatives constituted a long-term shift in his monetary thinking away from purely religious motivations and toward prevailing notions of private property, which increasingly integrated the Methodists into emerging ecclesiastical and commercial markets.

Stepping into the Atlantic world, CHRISTINA PETTERSON (Gerda Henkel Stiftung / ANU) reinterpreted Moravian choir houses as fundamental sites of production for financing religious settlements and mission stations in Denmark, Greenland, and Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth century. Structured for commercial production, Moravian choir houses in places like Christiansfeld, Denmark and Herrnhut, Germany represented a credible challenge to the European guild system because of their deliberate separation of masters and apprentices. The earliest Moravian choir houses in Greenland began to reflect native Greenlandic living arrangements because the missionaries came to depend upon the dictates of local markets and the acquisition of necessary survival skills, such as trapping and killing seals, from local Inuit groups. In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the official transition to a private economy after 1760 tempered the initial success and egalitarian ethos of the communal choirs by limiting the occupational possibilities of female Moravians who were forced to undertake domestic tasks that British colonial society had deemed appropriate for women at the time, such as baking and knitting. Much more than gendered religious advisement groups, the Moravian choir houses developed into regionally dependent centers of manufacturing that competed in local markets beginning in 1740.

THOMAS DORFNER (Aachen) scrutinized the establishment of the Moravian global mission program from the inside out by looking

at parallel developments in Moravian manufacturing and trade after Zinzendorf's death in 1760 and the founding of the Moravian Missions Diacony, a centralized administrative and oversight committee that assumed control over financial matters pertaining to the increasingly global Moravian mission. Initially funded through inexpensive loans from the Netherlands, the Moravian missionary enterprise faced financial collapse beginning in 1750 due, in part, to Zinzendorf's outspoken aversion to manufacturing. Dorfner showed how the establishment and initial success of commercial ventures like the Abraham Dürninger Company in 1747 as well as profits from plantations purchased by Moravian missionaries in places like the Danish and English Caribbean and Dutch Surinam sustained the operations of the Moravian Atlantic world mission and prevented financial collapse in 1760. The disparate nature of these funding schemes eventually contributed to the formation of the Moravian Missions Diacony. The establishment of managerial councils like the Diacony effectively initiated an official separation of Moravian religious endeavors from the business ventures that supported them.

Considering the regulation of church finances in early modern Latin America, LAURA DIERKSMEIER (Tübingen) investigated the decline of voluntary, self-financed religious community organizations, „cofradías“ (confraternities), in Mexico in the eighteenth century. Even though indigenous confraternities used their funds to sponsor charitable works and Catholic religious festivals, church officials in Mexico City, together with the Spanish Crown, began closing hundreds of confraternities in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The Spanish officials, citing (often spurious) inefficiencies in indigenous administration, closed confraternities due to inadequate management, illegitimate charters, and lapses in record keeping. Spanish officials, through their unsystematic and inconsistent restriction of Mexican confraternities, reveal growing imperial concerns over the finances of indigenous groups in the name of the Catholic Church.

Addressing the problem of financing mass migrations in the Atlantic world, ALEXAN-

DER SCHUNKA (Berlin) compared diverse strategies employed by German religious refugees to meet the most immediate costs associated with migratory expeditions. The Lutheran minister Joshua Kocherthal supported the migration of Palatinate Germans to New York beginning in 1708 through the production of pamphlet literature in addition to personally securing substantial provisions for the consumption of the migrants themselves. Financial infrastructures utilized by the Salzburger migrants to colonial Georgia in 1734 included institutional support from charities run by the Halle Pietists and the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Taking a much different approach, the German „Neulander“ financed their journeys to Pennsylvania in the late eighteenth century by relying on individual commissions provided by the immigrants and their collective ability to secure provisions and housing while in transit through the telling of stories, petitioning local town councils for funds, and begging in the countryside. The varied nature of these divergent financing schemes demonstrates that early modern migrations of religious refugees depended upon the collective efforts of both institutions and individuals.

In her concluding remarks, SUSANNE LACHENICHT (Bayreuth) provided helpful connective tissue for the diversity of issues raised over the course of the conference by offering historiographic strategies for bridging the traditionally disconnected scholarly literatures concerned with early modern economics, imperialism, and religion. She proposed that scholars should ask new research questions about the morality of profit, the religious influences upon emerging markets and economic trends (and vice versa), the effects of de-territorialized commercial and patronage networks, and imperial rationalizations of these issues. Lachenicht argued that continued interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars could yield more meaningful insight into the processes early modern peoples devised to better their human condition and the fate of those with whom they were interconnected, either through their beliefs, their commercial transactions, their intellectual networks, or a combination thereof. Integrating the histories of religion and eco-

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nomics, in others words, represents an essential step forward toward a more holistic understanding of emergent modernities.

**Conference Overview:**

*Session 1 - Halle Pietism*

Kristian Mejrur: Religious and Economic Migrations in Halle Pietism in the Early 18th Century

Ulrike Gleixner: Funding of Missionary Activities: Supporters and Donators of the Halle Mission to India

Tobias Graf: Commentary

*Keynote*

Mark Valeri: Free Conscience, Conversion, and Social Realities in Eighteenth-Century America

*Session 2 - The English Awakening*

Lionel Laborie: From Profits to Prophets: How Capitalism Financed the Great Awakening

Clive Norris: Methodists and Money in the Long Eighteenth Century

Daniel Menning: Commentary

*Session 3 - The Moravian Brethren*

Christina Petterson: Communal Economy and Economic Community

Thomas Dorfner: „...denn der Heiland hat unsere vielen Fabriken gesegnet.“ The Moravian Church as a Global Economic and Mission Enterprise (1760–1825)

Renate Dürr: Commentary

*Session 4 - The Atlantic World*

Laura Dierksmeier: Too Successful for their own Good: Indigenous Confraternities in Eighteenth-Century Mexico

Alexander Schunka: Who Will Pay for the Refugees?: Financing Eighteenth-century Migrations in a Transatlantic Context

Georg Schild: Commentary

*Conclusion and General Discussion*

Susanne Lachenicht: Final commentary

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