

CONFERENCE REPORTS

LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY: RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION NETWORKS, 1680–1830

Conference at the GHI London, July 12–14, 2007. Co-organized by the GHI London and the GHI Washington. Conveners: Andreas Gestrich (GHI London), Alexander Pyrges (University of Trier), Gisela Mettele (GHI Washington). Participants: Elena Y. Apkarimova (University of Ekaterinburg), Luke Clossey (Simon Fraser University), Linda Frey (Montana State University), Marsha Frey (Kansas State University), Markus Friedrich (University of Frankfurt am Main), Richard Gawthrop (Franklin College), Jeremy Gregory (University of Manchester), Sunne Juterczenka (Max Planck Institute for History, Göttingen), Sergei Kizima (Academy of Public Administration, Minsk), Hartmut Lehmann (University of Göttingen), Robert D. Linder (Kansas State University), Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (Free University of Berlin), Benjamin Marschke (Humboldt State University), James van Horn Melton (Emory University), Regina Pörter (Swansea University), Astrid von Schlachta (University of Innsbruck), Alexander Schunka (University of Stuttgart).

This conference was a first step toward investigating the “long eighteenth century” as an era of religious communication networks that crossed denominational borders. The organization of the conference was based on the idea that communication networks represent one of the social forms on the basis of which old forms of Christian religiosity changed and new forms developed during the “long eighteenth century.” In addition, the production and distribution of the new religious semantics that developed around the mid-eighteenth century took place in networks of interaction as well as long-distance communication. The conference further assumed that comparable structures of communicative interweaving existed or developed in all of the European and North American Christian world. In order not to further perpetuate the traditional boundaries of research between church and secular history, conference themes encompassed the entire spectrum of Christian beliefs and denominations. This enabled interconnections at the local and communal level to be examined, along with cross-territorial movements, intercontinental religious missions, and international migration.

Alexander Pyrges led off the conference with a paper on “Circulating Knowledge and Connecting Instruments: Letters to Networks in the Prot-

estant Atlantic World, 1730–1770.” It focused on a case study of the network of the Ebenezer community that emerged in the early 1730s and comprised a number of Protestant institutions and numerous laypeople and clergymen in Britain and continental Europe. This community strove to help exiles from Salzburg settle in Georgia. Pyrges argues that the degree of involvement and the frequency and volume of interaction made the network not only a place of contact, exchange, and cooperation, but also a space of cultural production. By examining practices of forwarding and enclosing, as well as systems of intertextual references, he showed in some detail how letters cast interpersonal ties into the form of a network and how they secured the extensive circulation of knowledge inside the network. He ended his talk by noting that actual Salzburgers and migrants only constituted a very small minority within this network. They were not participants, but were rather the chief topic of the communication.

Robert D. Linder’s paper, “The Evangelical Triangle: The Connections of the Pietist Renewal, the Wesleyan Revival, and the First Great Awakening,” went beyond studying individual awakenings in isolation and investigated the connections and influences among the leaders of various evangelical groups during the era of the first awakening. Whereas earlier studies have focused on the transatlantic relationships between the North American Awakening and the English Wesleyan Movement, Linder advocated enlarging the scope of investigation to include the continental Pietist movements. His paper thus produced new insights into evangelical interrelationships and influences through literature, conversation, and example. Linder further suggested that the Moravians provided the nexus for these liaisons between evangelical leaders of the various awakenings in different parts of the Atlantic community.

In her paper “The *Gemeinnachrichten* as Medium of the International Communication of the Moravians in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” Gisela Mettele explored the question of how the Moravian Brethren, scattered across the globe in settlements and missionary outposts, succeeded in maintaining a communal identity at a time in which international communications were so irregular and uncertain. The sense of communal identity, according to Mettele, was maintained not only by close institutionalized links between the worldwide settlements and the group’s leadership in Herrnhut, Saxony, but also by shared rituals and festivities, commonly read magazines, or other devotional literature and the circulation of reports about various settlements’ activities. The global social arena of the Moravians thus consisted primarily of an “imaginary order.” Ultimately, it was not the actual connection that was decisive, but the feeling of unity. Mettele concluded that in the nineteenth century, shifting identities and the development of rival loyalties ultimately un-

dermined the determination of the Moravian settlements to maintain their identity as members of a global community.

Hartmut Lehmann delivered the keynote lecture. His talk, "Pietism Research at a Crossroad," pleaded for a reevaluation of the revival movements of the nineteenth century and a chronological extension of the term pietism to apply to the religious awakening movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including contemporary evangelicalism. Theology remains at the core of the study of Pietism, according to Lehmann. Nevertheless, secular historians, too, must better incorporate themes of pietism research and integrate the longing for salvation into the larger discussion about the role of religion in the process of secularization. Lehmann declared the investigation of the role of communication and networks to be central to reconceptualizing the study of pietism.

The second day started with a paper by Astrid von Schlachta, "Confessional-Political Networks and Dissenting Subjects: Toleration and Expulsion," in which she pointed to theories about confessionalization. To support her thesis that confessionalization in the Reich was not finished by 1648, she examined smaller dissenting groups that were still excluded from regulations of the "Reichsrecht" in the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. She especially focused on persecuted Anabaptist groups in Switzerland and their communications that evolved along "lines of relation" built up in the wake of the persecutions of the late seventeenth century. She convincingly argued that the communication that emerged between confessional dissenters, government officials, and different scholars generated a field of communication that transported ideas apart from the "big thinkers." Instead, merchants discussed side by side with scholars and farmers, generating an opinion-forming discourse on toleration and freedom of conscience on various political and social levels.

Giving a fresh perspective on the large amount of scholarship on the relationship between Pietism and the Prussian state, Benjamin Marschke's paper, "Lutheran Jesuits: Halle Pietist Communication Networks at the Court of Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia," discussed some especially explicit but not, as he pointed out, atypical examples of Pietists reaching out to the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm I. Though Pietists often conducted their affairs in meetings that produced no written records, Marschke was able to track down the informal channels through which Pietists regularly reached Friedrich Wilhelm. Networks, as Marschke pointed out, were paramount because of the many pitfalls and intricacies involved in maneuvering at court. Uninitiated outsiders could not be successful without the aid of knowledgeable insiders. The paper also discussed the reasons for the decline of Pietism's influence at Friedrich Wilhelm's court. The death of August Hermann Francke itself,

as is often assumed, was not the decisive event that triggered the king's change of heart. According to Marschke, it was instead the subsequent failure to enforce solidarity and suppress conflicts within the Pietist movement that resulted in their exposure as "Lutheran Jesuits."

Alexander Schunka's paper, "The Anglo-Prussian Communication Network: Toward an Ecclesiastical Union in the Early Eighteenth Century," investigated the Prussian-Protestant connections from a different angle, and explored Friedrich Wilhelm's interest in English culture that derived from the influences of a certain ecclesiastical connection between Prussia and England. In his paper, Schunka analyzed the way these ecclesiastical links were set up in order to promote an ecclesiastical union between the Protestant denominations on the continent with the help of the Church of England. Distinguishing between people, infrastructure, and the quality and quantity of different ways of communication, Schunka stated that a very influential line of communication went through the charitable societies in London, notably the Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). Even though the attempt at church unification eventually failed, Schunka argued that it significantly added to a new awareness of English religion and culture in Prussia.

Luke Clossey's paper, "Jesus and the Jesuits: Notes on the Structure and Content of the Early Modern Global Catholic Network," presented an ongoing research project that seeks to describe how Jesus has been understood, by believers and nonbelievers alike, in cultural history. Instead of considering a single, regional instance of Jesus entering a new culture, it pursues a holistic analysis to present a global view of migration of the idea of Jesus throughout the world. According to Clossey, this global historical strategy points directly to the Early Modern period, which witnesses the development of global empires, global trading networks, and global missionary enterprises, each contributing to a moment of early globalization that spread ideas of Jesus worldwide. In his fascinating presentation, Clossey emphasized the special strength of the project that examines global history in a collaborative effort of a team of researchers coming from different cultural and scholarly backgrounds.

Jeremy Gregory's paper, "Transatlantic Anglican Networks, c. 1680–c. 1770: Transplanting, Translating, and Transforming the Church of England," looked at the ways in which differing religious, political, social, and geographical circumstances could mean that members of a network living in one context had a totally different experience from those in other milieus. In his talk, Gregory contended that a religious network by its very nature must have some shared set of assumptions, but in his case study of transatlantic Anglicanism, he argued that mutations and the sea changes made the experience of Anglicanism in New England very dif-

ferent from that at home. Still massively dependent on English Anglican print culture, the dependency on personnel from Britain and Ireland decreased over time, and the extent of lay initiative was far greater than in Old England. In large measure, Gregory concludes, this would be a defining difference between the Episcopal and the Anglican churches during the next centuries.

Rebekka von Mallinckrodt's contribution, "Between Neighborhood and Community of All Christians: Research on Religious Brotherhoods as Research on Social Networks," offered a comparative presentation of how group cohesion was created and religious knowledge disseminated in these pre-modern associations. She asked what effects the religious profile and membership structure had on the ratio of socio-political motives on the one hand and religious/spiritual motives on the other. With membership numbers ranging from twenty members to five thousand and catchment areas ranging from the immediate neighborhood to all of Catholic Europe, sweeping statements about network building in Catholic brotherhoods are not possible, Mallinckrodt pointed out. Fraternities were the medium for anyone to express belonging to a group, with as much as 90 percent of the adult male residents of Cologne belonging to a fraternity. Mallinckrodt therefore concluded that brotherhoods were in social terms far more open than the societies, clubs, and salons of the Enlightenment, which are generally associated with the development of a political public sphere.

James van Horn Melton assessed the relationship between the Salzburg emigrants and the Pietist movement prior to their expulsion. His rich paper focused on the extent to which Salzburg Protestants were in fact exposed to Pietist writing on the eve of expulsion. Seasonal migration, Melton pointed out, brought them into contact with co-religionists outside the territory, either personally or, more importantly, through books. Melton's talk provided a revealing window into the clandestine print culture that encapsulated the experience of persecuted Protestants in Salzburg and throughout the alpine regions of the Habsburg monarchy. Especially the absence of radical separatism, Melton argues, made the Salzburg brethren a cause célèbre. To Pietist publicists, Salzburg Protestants were the living embodiment of Luther's priesthood of all believers. Despite the absence of clergy, they had kept their faith alive for almost two centuries with seemingly little more than the printed word to sustain them. The Salzbergers were thus Pietists *avant la lettre*.

Sunne Juterzenka's paper explored the networking activities of a geographically highly mobile denomination, as well as the ways in which these activities are reflected in spatial imagination and representation. In her talk, she presented different modes in which seventeenth-century Quaker missionaries expressed the spatial quality of their missionary

field. Missionary work, Juterczenka contended, depended first and foremost on communication, and one important goal of Quaker networking activities on the continent was to establish communication channels in order to deliver the missionary message. Informal networks became especially crucial in stabilizing the new continental branch of Quakerism. Juterczenka ended her talk with an overview of the imagery that Quakers employed when referring to the countries and places that they intended to visit or actually visited, thus demonstrating how missionary methods and success were reflected in spatial representations.

Markus Friedrich summed up the discussions of the conference by raising some fundamental questions that led to a general discussion on networks: Can networks be conceptualized without at least having a certain range of content in mind? How do content and structure of networks interact? For instance, did the scientific aspect of the Jesuit network follow the same rules that organized the purely administrative correspondence? Another point of general interest was the question of how to find the appropriate criteria to evaluate the efficiency (or inefficiency) of a network. How did people in the early modern period deal with infrastructural impasses, and how did this affect their understanding of communication and social organization? Intensity and extensity of networks differed, as did the aims behind them. Networks are not all the same; hence our methodologies must be diverse as well. Understanding networks requires investigations on several scales, since networks have different functions on the local, regional, and global levels. Finally, Friedrich raised the question of the specific religious aspect of the networking discussed in the conference. Are the networks under discussion here comparable to trading companies and artisan fraternities? Is there a religious dimension to the networking? Is there an “angelic” dimension of communication in a religious context? If there was, when and how did it get lost on the way to modernity?

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