

The Church of England in London in the Eighteenth Century

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY has had until recently a bad press¹ and particularly the Church in London. The capital city had some of the wealthiest benefices and was therefore assumed to be a breeding ground for nepotism and careerism among the clergy leading, inevitably, to a neglect of their duties. However, such generalisations are open to criticism both with regard to the wealth of the benefices and the true zeal of the incumbents. This chapter attempts to reassess the Church of England in the metropolis between 1700 and 1800. To do this, we will first look at the material position of the parishes and next at the number and status of London's clergymen. Finally, we will examine the way in which the clergy fulfilled their duties, clearly a more demanding task in London than in other parts of the country, given the enormous scale of the metropolitan population. London was the seat of a large diocese which stretched beyond the City and included the counties of Essex, Middlesex, a third of Hertfordshire and parts of Buckinghamshire. The City cannot be studied by itself because the metropolis, particularly after the Great Fire of London in 1665, came to cover a number of Middlesex parishes, as a growing portion of the better-off classes decamped to the West End and other suburbs. Thus London and Westminster need to be considered together. Of the 600 or so parishes in the diocese, ninety-nine were in the City: ninety-seven within the walls and two without the walls. Many of these City parishes merged after the Great Fire so that by the eighteenth century there were only seventy-two left. With Middlesex's London livings and the collegial church of Westminster, there were about 150 parishes which can be regarded as metropolitan.²

¹ P. Virgin, *The Church in an age of negligence: ecclesiastical structure and the problem of Church reform, 1700–1840* (Cambridge, 1989); V. Barrie-Curien, *Clergé et pastorale en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle; le Diocèse de Londres* (Paris, 1992), introduction.

² R. Newcourt, *Repertorium ecclesiasticum parochiale Londinense* (London, 1910); G.L. Hennessy, *Novum repertorium ecclesiasticum parochiale Londinense; or London diocesan clergy from the earliest time to the year 1898, with copious notes* (London, 1899).

I

The economic state of London's parishes can be deduced from several sources. Tanner Manuscript 142 in the Bodleian Library at Oxford contains details on City parishes for the ten years preceding the Great Fire.³ For the Restoration period we have the values of tithes in the City.⁴ For the early eighteenth century we can use Archdeacon Stanley's book on the visitation of the archdeaconry of London in 1711,⁵ and Bishop Gibson's diocese book for the 1720s and 1740s.⁶ In 1793 Bishop Osbaldstone ordered an inquiry, probably before his primary visitation, into 'the present improved value of the several livings'.⁷ The Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty compiled a series of valuations of benefices, in both manuscript and printed form in 1711, 1789 and 1809.⁸ The parliamentary report of 1835, on the ecclesiastical revenues of all dioceses in England and Wales, enables us to look at parish values in the 1830s.⁹ Several documents from the 1810s shed light on tithes after the Great Fire.¹⁰

Such sources provide evidence which can be used to piece together a description of changes in the economic position of London parishes during the period as well as in the diocese as a whole. For London itself (see Table 12.1) we can give the average value of livings from 1660 up until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Table 12.1. Average value of London parishes, 1660–1817.

| Year | Value | Source |
|-----------|-----------------------|--|
| 1660 | £156 | Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 142 |
| 1671–1685 | £120–140 ^a | GL, MS 9801 |
| 1711 | £146 | GL, MS 9248 |
| 1723 | £151 | GL, MS 9550 |
| 1748 | £152 | <i>Ibid.</i> |
| 1763 | £150 | GL, MS 9554 |
| 1788 | £173 | Lloyd, <i>Thesaurus ecclesiasticus</i> |
| 1804 | £243 ^b | Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers 157 |
| 1817 | £489 ^b | <i>Ibid.</i> |

^aValue of tithes. ^bAfter legislation on tithes.

³ Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 142, fo. 150.

⁴ GL, MS 9801, boxes 1, 2, 3.

⁵ GL, MS 9248.

⁶ GL, MS 9550.

⁷ GL, MS 9554.

⁸ GL, MS 11248; John Lloyd, *Thesaurus ecclesiasticus* (London, 1789); GL, MS 14198.

⁹ *Report of the commissioners appointed by his Majesty to inquire into the ecclesiastical revenues of England and Wales* . . . (London, 1835).

¹⁰ Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers 157. On urban tithes, see C. Cross, 'The incomes of provincial urban clergy' in F. Heal and R. O'Day, eds, *Princes and paupers in the English Church, 1500–1800* (Leicester, 1981), pp. 65–6; M. Zell, 'Economic problems of the clergy in the sixteenth century' in *ibid.*, p. 35; also E.J. Evans, *The contentious tithe: the tithe problem and English agriculture, 1750–1850* (London, 1976).

It is possible to compare these values with those of the diocese as whole¹¹ (see Table 12.2). It is clear that the average value of the London parishes was always higher than the diocesan average. Middlesex, with its wealthy livings in the West End, such as St George's Hanover Square and St James Piccadilly, was better provided than the City itself. From the end of the seventeenth century to the 1760s, London's parishes became poorer compared to the rest of the diocese, but they recovered towards the end of the eighteenth century. During the Restoration period the average value of a parish living in London was £156. Between 1671 and 1685 their tithes, including those on built-up areas, varied between £120 and £140 a year. These figures do not include casual payments, the glebe or the value of the vicarage.

In 1711, Archdeacon Stanley's visitation book, on the basis of forty-six parishes, put the average value of a London parish at £146, and there were further small increases in subsequent decades. Tithes were revalued during the French Wars and when corn prices jumped at the beginning of the nineteenth century: the average value of London parishes rose to £243 in 1804 and had reached £489 by 1817. At constant prices, the value of parishes in the City rose by 140 per cent between 1723 and 1835, with a 187 per cent rise in Middlesex; the comparable increase in provincial towns was 168 per cent, and in villages as high as 213 per cent.¹² These disparities were probably related to the effects of Queen Anne's Bounty, which favoured rural livings, and to the advance in agricultural prices which generated more income in the countryside and so augmented the value of rural tithes. Of course, valuations of livings only tell part of the story about clerical incomes and do not take account of the many other jobs or posts the clergy could hold, such as being prebends, lecturers or readers, teaching in schools, or catechising in other churches. More of these employment opportunities were available in London than elsewhere.

Table 12.2. Average value of all parishes in London diocese, 1723–1835.

| Year | Current prices | Constant prices |
|------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1723 | £100 | £100 |
| 1748 | £105 | £106 |
| 1763 | £125 | £116 |
| 1788 | £148 | £117 |
| 1835 | £386 | £291 |

¹¹ The average value of all parishes in the diocese of London at constant prices has been calculated by using the cost-of-living index in B. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 346–7, 468–70; see also Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, p. 51.

¹² Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, p. 56.

II

We now turn to the social status of the clergy serving in the City of London, and to their careers. Work has been done on a random sample of five hundred, out of two thousand clergymen beneficed in the diocese of London between 1714 and 1800.¹³ In terms of their geographical origins, the largest group, 17 per cent, originated from London and 6 cent from Middlesex; by comparison other counties provided only small numbers each, despite the career advantages London diocese must have offered ambitious clergymen. In other words, nearly a quarter of the clergymen in the diocese came from the capital city or its vicinity. They were the sons of the gentry, or the ‘pseudo-gentry’,¹⁴ coming from professional families in law, medicine, the army and the navy;¹⁵ nearly two-thirds of the Londoners had fathers from this milieu. In London 42 per cent of the clergy were the sons of urban gentry while in Middlesex the figure was only 13 per cent. This compares to 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively who were the offspring of London clergymen, the network of ecclesiastical dynasties favouring more the other counties of the diocese, Essex and Hertfordshire. However, there were changes over time. Before 1721, over a quarter of all London clergymen were the sons of London gentry, and this rose to a third in 1761, before falling back markedly. In contrast, London clergymen of humble origins saw a steady decline, from about 35 per cent before 1721 to 11 per cent by 1761, and staying at about that figure thereafter; in Middlesex the figure dropped from 6 per cent to 2 per cent over the same period, and after 1761 almost disappeared. Over half of our sample of five hundred clergymen had an urban background, 163 coming from provincial towns and cities, 87 from London and 31 from Middlesex.

Social and geographical factors had a crucial impact on clerical careers, as one can see from an analysis of the backgrounds of the higher clergy (canons, deans, archdeacons, bishops and archbishops), in London diocese and other dioceses of England and Wales. The parental backgrounds which ensured the highest chance of reaching the upper ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were the rural gentry or the clergy. Most clerics born in the provincial towns and cities stayed at the level of parochial clergy, and those from Middlesex did only marginally better. But the highest ranks of the Church were often London-born: 30 per cent of bishops and the majority of archdeacons (although not of deans or canons). Among the bishops

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59 *et seq.* The 2000-odd clergy beneficed in the diocese from 1714 to 1800 have been traced through the PRO, London, Exchequer MSS, Institution Books, series B and C; the careers of a random sample of 500 clergymen were found in J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses from the earliest times to 1900* (Cambridge, 1922-54); J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses* (Oxford, 1886-92).

¹⁴ Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, pp. 81-2, 86 *et seq.*

¹⁵ Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: professions, state and society* (London, 1982); Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, p. 115.

born in London were: Edward Waddington, son of a gentleman, who became bishop of Chichester; John Botham, son of a baronet, and nominated for three Irish bishoprics; and William Barnard, son of an 'esquire' from Clapham, who became dean of Rochester, then of Derry, and eventually bishop of Raphoe. From the end of the seventeenth century up until 1740, the future high clergy originated from the most urban areas and from clerical families; from 1740 the pattern varied, but after 1800 the upper ranks were again filled by clergymen originating from London or Middlesex.¹⁶

Given the nature of pastoral work, the clergy were more numerous in London and the towns than in the countryside. Most country parishes had only one clergyman, whereas in the City and Middlesex the majority of parishes had two. Many parishes in London and Westminster had no vicarage and one might suppose this would lead to non-residence, but in reality clergymen often lived in adjacent benefices, so they were quite able to carry out their duties.¹⁷ Incumbents of London parishes were often helped by assistant curates, lecturers or readers, which was less common in the countryside. The metropolitan visitation of 1693 paints a picture of the situation.¹⁸ In only about 6.6 per cent of parishes was there an incumbent alone. In 1.6 per cent we find an incumbent and curate, in 20 per cent a curate and lecturer, in 23.3 per cent an incumbent and lecturer; and in another 16.2 per cent of parishes the incumbent was assisted by two or three persons. The position was again surveyed in the archidiaconal visitation of 1711 with similar results.¹⁹ The bishop's questionnaire of 1714–15 is less detailed on the deployment of the clergy,²⁰ but it would seem that in only 4.7 per cent of parishes was there an incumbent alone, and in only 11.9 per cent of cases a lecturer by himself. In 64.2 per cent of parishes, the incumbent had a lecturer to help him, and in 11.9 per cent a curate and lecturer.

These figures demonstrate that almost every London and Westminster church had at least two clergymen and frequently more, and that the curate was, in most cases, an active assistant to the incumbent and not simply a replacement when he was an absentee, which was often the case in rural parishes. In addition to the Sunday sermon, the lecturers read passages from the scriptures and commented on them on Saturdays or weekdays. The reader read from the Bible, both during the week and on Sundays, for the edification of the parishioners. Lists of the curates and lecturers from the visitations of 1769 and 1770 show that there were 264 curates and 68 lecturers in the diocese;²¹ in fact, 40 per cent of the diocese's curates

¹⁶ Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, pp. 92 *et seq.*, 107.

¹⁷ The shortage of vicarages in the City of London was pointed out by Bishop Porteus in a letter in 1805. Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers, box 452: 'Abstracts presented to the House of Commons of returns relative to the clergy, also further papers concerning non-residence, 1804–1807, 1808'.

¹⁸ GL, MS 9538.

¹⁹ GL, MS 9348.

²⁰ GL, MS 9581.

²¹ GL, MS 9555.

and all of the lecturers were employed in London or Westminster parishes. Lectureships remained linked to foundations set up by pious benefactors to ensure that the parishioners heard as many homilies as possible, aside from the Sunday sermon. Another return in 1815 confirmed that these ‘subaltern’ clergy were heavily concentrated in the metropolitan parishes of the diocese.²²

In fact, the curates and lecturers in London were in no way ‘subaltern’, unlike the curates in rural parishes. They often acted as incumbents in their own right in neighbouring benefices, performing services in several churches. There was a whole network of clergymen who were in no sense unbeneficed and who worked together to tend to the spiritual needs of a large urban population. At the end of the seventeenth century, public prayers were being said every day in 65 churches in London, and by 1714 London and Westminster had 72 churches or chapels with public prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as daily services. There had been a ‘eucharistic revival’ at St Giles Cripplegate as early as 1694.²³ In fact the frequency of services, sermons and sacraments was higher in London and Westminster than anywhere else in England, chiefly because of the number of curates and lecturers working alongside the incumbents.²⁴ However, towards the end of the eighteenth century some fragmentation can be observed, when more people began to spend the weekend in their villas on the outskirts of the capital and therefore did not go to the Sunday sermon or communion.²⁵

Lecturers were crucial to the organisation of worship and the delivery of sermons in London. Lecturers were not always beneficed but could make a career or build a reputation for themselves by speaking on a passage from the Scriptures on Saturday evening, Sunday afternoon or a weekday, if the lectureship was funded by the parishioners. Many lecturers were evangelical such as William Romaine, of Huguenot descent, who made his name as an assistant morning preacher at St George’s Hanover Square as well as a lecturer at St Dunstan in the West, in Fleet Street, and also at St Botolph Billingsgate. His only preferment was the curacy of St Olave’s, Southwark. His election as the rector of St Andrew’s by the Wardrobe was much opposed, as it was feared that he would turn it into a rallying point for evangelicals in London. Evangelicals were well known for accepting livings in town, whilst more worldly clergymen sought country benefices where they could lead the life of a gentleman.

²² Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers 552.

²³ J.H. Overton, *Life in the English Church, 1660–1714* (London, 1885); concerning the ‘Eucharistic revival’ of St Giles Cripplegate, see J. Wickham Legg, *English Church life from the Restoration to the Tractarian movement* (London, 1914), pp. 28–9; also V. Barrie, ‘Recherches sur la vie religieuse en Angleterre au XVIII^e siècle’, *Revue Historique*, 266 (1981), 339–79.

²⁴ See tables in Wickham Legg, *English Church life*.

²⁵ Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers, boxes 81, 85, 86, 87: ‘Visitation returns, 1790’, for instances of such weekends spent in the country.

Networking played a vital role in the deployment of the clergy. Parishes did not operate as nuclear units in the towns, the metropolis or the countryside, but were knitted together through an intricate web of incumbents, curates, readers and lecturers. There were strong contrasts between those parishes with two or more clerics (resident in or near the parish) and those with only an incumbent — or, if he were an absentee, a stand-in curate.

Another striking contrast was that between ‘neglectful’ and ‘zealous’ churches. The bishops’ injunctions for services were minimal indeed: two services every Sunday, with a sermon at least at one, preferably in the morning; and the administration of communion at the most important religious festivals of the year—Easter, Whitsun, Christmas and perhaps Michaelmas (the latter was required by Archbishop Thomas Secker). Visitation returns reveal that more than half the churches in the diocese of London did not meet these requirements, but also that a limited number did more than was demanded. From the visitation returns of 1723 and 1790 we can see that the country parishes were more ‘neglectful’ and the London parishes were more ‘zealous’ with regard to weekday services, special celebrations such as the feast of King Charles ‘the Martyr’, the Restoration of Charles II, the king’s accession day, saints’ days and so on. Table 12.3 shows the changes between 1723²⁶ and 1790.²⁷

In 1790, nearly a quarter of the parishes had more services than were required by episcopal injunction, compared with fewer than 10 per cent in 1723, but in the later year

Table 12.3. Parishes meeting the episcopal requirements for church services, London diocese.²⁸

| Year | More than prescribed % | As prescribed % | Less than prescribed % |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1723 | 7.8 | 47.8 | 44.3 |
| 1790 | 24.3 | 20.7 | 55.0 |

over half of the parishes still did not meet this requirement. This was mainly due to the ‘neglectful’ rural parishes where the incumbent or his curate held only one service in the week and two on Sunday, one with a sermon. Another survey dated 1763 shows the particular zeal of London and Middlesex parishes;²⁹ all London and many Middlesex parishes had more than two services during the week, as for example at St Clement Danes, Christ Church Spitalfields, Enfield, Hammersmith, Hillingdon, Great Stanmore, Kensington, St Matthew Bethnal Green, Fulham, St Martin in the

²⁶ GL, MS 25750, episcopal visitations.

²⁷ Lambeth PL, Fulham Papers, boxes 81, 85, 86, 87.

²⁸ Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, p. 430.

²⁹ Lambeth PL, London; Fulham Papers, box 170, returns and statistics of Church work.

Fields and St James Westminster.³⁰ Needless to say, the provision of extra services, homilies and sermons was facilitated by the large numbers of clergymen in the capital. No less important, the capital city was much more densely populated, with wealthier parishes that could afford a greater intensity of religious practice. This divergence between the capital city and the countryside was not new; it dated back to the Middle Ages.

III

The great appetite for sermons can be seen during the quarter-century after the Glorious Revolution. Under William III and Anne, more religious tracts and sermons went into print to satisfy the public than at any other time except during the 1640s. One famous sermon delivered in 1709 is believed to have sold at least 100,000 copies, which means it must have been read by at least half a million men and women, many no doubt Londoners. Furthermore, the controversy it inaugurated spawned another 575 titles in the following twelve months. Religious controversy was greatly appreciated by post-Revolution Englishmen, and was particularly heated in the capital. Debate reached a peak in Anne's reign and did not abate under the Hanoverians. In 1717, a sermon by Benjamin Hoadly, the bishop of Bangor, sparked off yet another furious debate and alarmed politicians as much as it shook churchmen. In the 1720s and 1730s the intellectual climate still favoured sermons and religious literature, but the market for them was devotional and academic and the readership increasingly inbred.³¹

Sunday service and communion was only one side of religious life in England in the eighteenth century; religious societies, often founded by the laity, were another.³² These societies flourished from the 1670s, apparently begun by Antony Horneck, a learned theologian from the Rhenish Palatinate. Horneck became the pastor of the Savoy Chapel in London in 1671 and delivered sermons which drew huge congregations. He undertook the organization of a society which gathered in the parish of St Giles Cripplegate and which attracted devout young men from humble families, the sons of skilled workers and others with professional backgrounds. Horneck set down the rules of this society whose members were laypeople in search of a spiritual revival. Only confirmed members of the Church of England could attend and it was to be run, as its many sister societies would be, by Church of England priests who were required to use

³⁰ Barrie, 'Recherches'; Barrie-Curien, *Le Diocèse de Londres*, pp. 311–12.

³¹ G. Holmes, *The making of a great power: late Stuart and early Georgian Britain, 1660–1722* (London, 1993), pp. 350–1.

³² D.W.R. Bahlman, *The moral revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957); T.C. Curtis and W.A. Speck, 'The Societies for the Reformation of Manners', *Literature and History*, 1 (1976), 45–64; E.G. Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688–1971* (Oxford, 1986); J. Spurr, 'The Church, the societies and the moral revolution in England, 1688', in J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor, eds, *The Church of England, c.1688–c.1833: from toleration to tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 127–42.

the official liturgy. By 1694, Horneck had founded sixteen such societies in London and Westminster. They met with a mixed reception. The High-Church party dreaded anything remotely reminiscent of Dissenting chapels and would have preferred a renewal of traditional discipline. On the other hand, these societies drew followers, thanks to the regularity of their services, the monthly communions and the attraction they held for individuals in their quest for personal piety. Their members were known for their self-discipline and belief in the power of private prayer and group discussions and, because of their visits to the sick and those in prison, they were also noted for their social conscience.

One must mention here William Smythies, assistant to the incumbent at St Giles from 1673 to 1704, who founded a 'club' in Ave Mary Lane in the parish of St Michael Cornhill, where young men met once a month to pray, read and collect alms for the poor. In 1681, a conventicle, drawing on the same inspiration and also for the benefit of young men, was set up in St Martin in the Fields with the approval of the rector, Thomas Tenison. It met at five o'clock every third Sunday of the month under the direction of a 'monitor'. The same kind of society could also be found at St Lawrence Jewry and at St Clement Danes. This sort of devotional meeting was especially common in the capital city, so that by 1701 there were already forty of them in and around London.³³ John Wesley experienced his quasi-illuminist 'conversion' in May 1738, while listening to a reading of Luther's preface to St Paul's Epistle to the Romans given at a religious society set up by young High-Church laymen at St Mary Aldersgate in London.³⁴ He always maintained that the "first rise of Methodism" had taken place in November 1729, when he and his brother Charles, together with George Whitefield, founded the Holy Club at Oxford which was given approval by the anonymous author of the treatise, *The Oxford Methodists*, published in London in 1733. But his father, Samuel Wesley, the High-Church rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, had already founded such a club which corresponded with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in London in 1698.³⁵

³³ G. Holmes and D. Szechi, *The age of oligarchy; pre-industrial Britain, 1722–1783* (London, 1993), p. 117; V. Barrie, in J.-M. Mayeur *et al.*, eds, *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours, tome IX: L'Age de raison, 1620/30–1750* (Tournai, 1997), p. 450; Josiah Woodward, *An account of the rise and progress of the religious societies in the City of London* (London, 1698); the rector of St Giles Cripplegate allowed in 1694 a small group of devout laymen, apparently without links to Horneck's societies, to use the church to celebrate a daily eucharist, under the guidance of Edward Stephen; this experiment lasted for four years.

³⁴ Barrie, *L'Age de raison*, p. 450; V. Barrie, in J.-M. Mayeur *et al.*, eds, *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours, tome X: Les Défis de la modernité, 1750–1840* (Tournai, 1997), p. 223; E. Duffy, 'Wesley and the Counter Reformation', in J. Garnet and C. Matthew, eds, *Revival and religion since 1700: essays for John Walsh* (London, 1993); J. Walsh, 'John Wesley, 1703–1791; a bicentennial tribute', *Friends of Dr Williams's Library* (London, 1993), pp. 9–10; H.D. Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast: John Wesley and the rise of Methodism* (London, 1989), pp. 121–35.

³⁵ Barrie, *Les Défis de la modernité*, p. 222; Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast*; Barrie, *L'Age de raison*, p. 450.

Not only religious societies were founded, but also societies ‘for the reformation of manners’.³⁶ ‘Vice’ and ‘licence’ had been denounced in every quarter since the reign of Charles II and royal proclamations had been issued but without effect, especially as far as London was concerned. As early as February 1690, William III wrote to the bishop of London, Henry Compton, about the problem and in July 1691 Queen Mary sent a letter to the justices of the peace in Middlesex demanding stricter enforcement of the law. Sermons at Court stressed the role of divine providence, arguing that a national Church would be able to restore the morality of the country. The moral reform societies needed lawyers to advise them and members were often from higher classes than in the religious societies. Although the two kinds of society worked together,³⁷ the moral reformers were more concerned with the denunciation and prosecution of abuses such as sexual immorality, alcoholism, gambling and swearing, and the kind of disorder spawned by an ever expanding metropolis. Again, the spread of new working practices, encouraged by the rise of new consumer demands in the capital, prompted a major attack on non-observance of the Sabbath in London. A proclamation issued by Queen Anne ruled that on Sundays there was to be no sale of bread and that barbers, shoemakers, tailors and hatters were not to exercise their trade. Bishops Compton, Tenison and Wake upheld these efforts to bring about the reformation of manners and many Anglican and nonconformist preachers in the capital published sermons on this theme.

As well as these religious and moral reform associations heavily concentrated in the capital, one must also note the role of the two national missionary societies both founded in London: the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Overseas (SPG) in 1701. The first, the SPCK, was chiefly concerned with the creation of charity schools and the distribution of Bibles and devotional tracts in England and abroad. The second, the SPG, aimed at spreading these evangelising intentions to the colonies and converting the heathen. Setting up charity schools and distributing catechisms among the population were the SPCK’s greatest achievements, with a major impact in the capital.³⁸ Even if

³⁶ J. Woodward, *An account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners* (London, 1699); Barrie, *L’Age de raison*, pp. 450–1; Spurr, ‘The Church’, p. 135; John Walsh, ‘Religious societies: Methodist and Evangelical, 1738–1800’, in W.J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds, *Studies in Church History: xxxiii* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 279–302; Rupp, *Religion*, pp. 309–32; F. Deconinck-Brossard, ‘Sermons sur les Oeuvres Charitables au XVIIIe siècle’, in *Le sermon anglais* (Groupe de Recherche sur la Pensée Religieuse Anglaise, Université de Paris XII-Val-de-Marne: Paris, 1982), pp. 91–121.

³⁷ Spurr, ‘The Church’, p. 135; Barrie, *L’Age de raison*, p. 451.

³⁸ M.G. Jones, *The charity school movement* (Cambridge, 1938); C. Rose, ‘The origins and ideals of the SPCK’, in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor, eds, *The Church of England*, pp. 172–91; Rupp, *Religion*, pp. 300–9; J. Gregory, ‘The eighteenth century Reformation; the pastoral task of Anglican clergy after 1689’, in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor, eds, *The Church of England*, pp. 75–9; M. Brosseau, ‘L’Evangelisation des jeunes en Angleterre, 1670–1750; à propos de quelques catéchismes populaires’, in *Evangelisation et missions en Grande-Bretagne* (Groupe de Recherches sur l’Histoire et la Pensée Religieuse Anglaise, Université de Paris-Val-de-Marne: Paris, 1986), pp. 69–90.

ecclesiastical authorities were careful to draw a distinction between the ‘deserving poor’ and the rest, they did agree that all children were to be brought together and educated, if only with a view to acquiring religious instruction and preventing them from falling victim to the snares of heresy and dissent.

So the laity were active and instrumental in creating their own Church from the time of the Glorious Revolution to the end of the eighteenth century. Charity schools had emerged before the foundation of the SPCK, financed by rich lay philanthropists and by wealthy London parishes such as St Margaret Westminster and St James Piccadilly. Often the initiative came from the rector or the vicar who despaired of existing schools. Lists after 1712 show that there were 117 schools in London. At least some arranged apprenticeships after the end of the period of schooling. By 1725, it was claimed that the total number of schools in England had risen to 1,356, educating nearly 33,000 boys and girls in that year alone. The movement lost impetus in England after 1730, but by then its contribution to literacy, self-education and, later, the success of popular evangelism was established, although this has often been under-estimated.³⁹ Even so, many children now were decently clothed and fed, and attended strict religious-education classes.

These schools met with the approval of the High Church but the Whigs suspected them of sheltering Jacobites.⁴⁰ In 1736, the Mortmain Act forbade legacies bequeathed on the testator’s death-bed and this resulted in fewer foundations being set up. Towards 1740, subscriptions to the SPCK decreased and the Society for the Reformation of Manners disappeared.⁴¹ But the clergy went on appealing to the goodwill of wealthy laymen. And from the 1780s there was a major revival of voluntaristic activity with the establishment in the capital of many Sunday and charity schools, social surveillance, philanthropic, missionary, moral reform and other societies. Once again the principal impetus came from London and had its greatest impact there.⁴²

To conclude, in this chapter we have seen that the Church of England was active and important in religious and cultural life in the metropolis from the late seventeenth century into the eighteenth. Despite all the pressures created by metropolitan growth, the high mobility of London inhabitants (and the measure of religious tourism which accompanied it), and the competitive forces of nonconformity and new secular entertainments, the overall level of clerical provision was surprisingly good—encouraged, in part at least, by the greater career opportunities in the metropolis. At the same time, the Church could also rely on the support of lay benefactors and activists, many of whom increasingly organised their activity through associations. Yet there were significant variations across the metropolis, with wealthier districts in the West End better provided for than poorer ones. Here, as in other areas, London was not one world but many.

³⁹ Holmes and Szechi, *Age of oligarchy*, pp. 112, 190–1; Barrie, *L’Age de raison*, pp. 451–2.

⁴⁰ Walsh, ‘Religious societies’, pp. 282–3; Barrie, *L’Age de raison*, p. 452.

⁴¹ Barrie, *L’Age de raison*, p. 452; J. Walsh and S. Taylor, ‘Introduction’ in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor, eds, *The Church of England*, p. 18.

⁴² P. Clark, *British clubs and societies: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 96, 102–9.

List of Abbreviations

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| <i>APC</i> | <i>Acts of the Privy Council</i> |
| BL | British Library |
| <i>CARD</i> | <i>Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin</i> , ed. J.T. and R.M. Gilbert, 19 vols (Dublin, 1889–1944) |
| CLRO | Corporation of London Record Office |
| <i>CJ</i> | <i>House of Common Journals, England</i> |
| <i>CSP</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers</i> |
| <i>Ec.HR</i> | <i>Economic History Review</i> |
| <i>HCJI</i> | <i>Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland</i> |
| GL | Guildhall Library |
| <i>HMC</i> | <i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i> |
| Lambeth PL | Lambeth Palace Library |
| LMA | London Metropolitan Archives |
| NAI | National Archives of Ireland |
| NLI | National Library of Ireland |
| PP | Parliamentary Papers |
| PRO | Public Record Office, Kew |
| PRONI | Public Record Office, Northern Ireland |
| RCB | Representative Church Body Library, Dublin |
| RIA | Royal Irish Academy |
| WAC | Westminster Archives Centre |