Religion, the SPCK and the Westminster Workhouses: 'Re-enchanting' the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse

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Contents

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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis examines the role and importance of religion and religious reform in the Westminster workhouses and how it developed throughout the eighteenth century. Tim Hitchcock argued in 1992 that the SPCK, an Anglican reforming society, was largely responsible for the parochial workhouse movement in the early eighteenth century, viewing these institutions as a tool through which to reform society by instilling piety into the poor. Consequently, he concluded that these workhouses were established with the principal intention of religiously reforming paupers. This has yet to be substantially followed up. Significantly, apart from this work, very little of which has been published, religion has largely been omitted from histories of the workhouse and welfare more generally. However, if we accept J.C.D Clark's call for a re-enchantment of the eighteenth century and his argument that society remained deeply religious, the workhouse as a product of this society should not be viewed without religion. A number of historians now accept that workhouses began as reforming institutions, yet they continue to conclude that these ideals were abandoned relatively quickly in favour of a greater degree of pragmatism when it came to relieving the poor. This thesis argues in support of Hitchcock's theory that religion and the ideals of the SPCK played a major role in the foundation and operation of the Westminster workhouses from the 1720s, but most significantly that it continued to do so throughout the eighteenth century at least up to Gilbert's Act of 1782. The SPCK may well have lost interest in the workhouse movement during the mid-eighteenth century, but crucially these workhouses did not abandon its reforming agenda. Religion and religious reform remained central to these eighteenth-century institutions, re-enchanting our interpretation of the workhouse.

Abbreviations

COWAC: City of Westminster Archives Centre

SPCK: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge

SPCK.MS: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge Committee Minutes

SPG: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts

SRM: Society for the Reformation of Manners

NB All dates are shown in new style.

Introduction to Welfare and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Westminster

The study of welfare has flourished over the past twenty years, yet there are still significant gaps in our understanding of the intricate mechanisms that drove systems of relief; notably, the eighteenth-century workhouse as an institution, and arguably to a greater extent, the role of religious instruction, or the 'reformation' of the poor within it.[1] Yet we know the period was deeply religious. In terms of the more recent developments in religious history, historians such as J.C.D. Clark have sought to 're-enchant' our view of the 'long eighteenth-century' defining it as a period in which religion continued to be a central feature of contemporary life.[2] As a product of this deeply religious society, the historical interpretation of the eighteenth-century workhouse, and arguably welfare more generally, is also in need of 're-enchantment'.

The recent emphasis on the importance of regional diversity has also richly enhanced our understanding of the welfare system during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of some types of continuity of practice across regions during this period that needs to be incorporated into our view of eighteenth-century welfare.[3] It has been shown that during the eighteenth century there was a national movement that sought to apply a degree of uniformity to the experience of urban paupers. What Tim Hitchcock described as 'the parochial workhouse movement' over two decades ago, was not only coherent, but was highly successful in

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[1] See for example, S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A regional perspective,* (Manchester, 2000), A. Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, charity and credit,* (Manchester, 2006), and P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England,* (Oxford, 1999)

[2] See: J.C.D. Clark, 'The Re-enchantment of the world? Religion and Monarchy in Eighteenth-Century Europe', in M. Schaich (ed.), *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe,* (Oxford, 2007)

[3] See for example, King, *Poverty and Welfare.*

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terms of numbers of institutions erected and paupers relieved in them.[4] While the success of the old poor law workhouse on this measure is now relatively well known, Hitchcock pointed to the fact that the workhouse movement had its roots in a well-organized and successful campaign by a body of religious reformers under the umbrella of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge [hereafter SPCK]. Unlike the origins of such earlier institutions established between 1696 and 1713 by city corporations, which were initially concerned with reducing the financial burden of the poor, this new movement was predominantly and specifically concerned with religiously reforming the poor. According to Hitchcock 'at the heart of all the Society's activities was the belief that no one could be both devout and lazy'; hence the emphasis on workhouses, as places where the poor could be 'cured' of their lack of piety and consequent idleness.[5] His argument has yet to be explored further, for example by testing it against the records of specific institutions or examining how far it can be applied across the eighteenth century. Evidence from parochial workhouses established in Westminster parishes illustrates that religious reform was central to the daily operation of these institutions, and it remained so throughout the eighteenth century, until at least 1782 when Gilbert's Act altered this form of provision for the poor.[6]

Hitchcock concluded that the aim of the SPCK and the parochial workhouse movement in the early eighteenth century was the religious reformation of the poor,

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[4] See: T. Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse movement', in L. Davidson, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn, and R.B. Shoemaker, (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: the responses to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750*, (New York, 1992)

[5] Ibid, p.152

[6] Gilbert's Act explicitly excluded the able-bodied poor from workhouses. It stipulated that these institutions should only provide for the sick, weak and infirm. Other groups of paupers were to be provided for through outdoor relief in their own homes. Since religious reform was principally aimed at instilling the virtues of industry and piety into the able-bodied poor, thereby encouraging them to work rather than depend on relief it may have no longer have been necessary for a religious reforming agenda to be employed in workhouses. There is certainly a need for detailed analysis of the effects of Gilbert's Act on religion in the workhouse but it lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

rather than either curtailing the cost of the poor, or confinement and deterrence from the welfare system altogether, as is often assumed.[7] What remains to be established is how successful the SPCK and the institutions it inspired were in applying a religious agenda through detailed analysis of the records of parochial workhouses, thereby 're-enchanting' perceptions of these institutions. The predominant view among historians, taking their lead from a body of eighteenth-century opinion evident in pamphlets and other publications, assumes that urban workhouses were spectacularly unsuccessful in this endeavour. They argue that relatively quickly most workhouses abandoned the aim of reform in favour of simply providing a level of necessary care for the sick and infirm, and acting as a deterrent for the able-bodied poor.[8] Yet this view rests almost entirely on the published opinions of a body of contemporaries who did not feel the same way about moral reform as the SPCK. Hitchcock's extensive analysis of the SPCK's committee minutes and workhouse records enabled him to conclude that the SPCK, while not starting or entirely controlling the workhouse movement, was actively involved in the foundation of workhouses from 1718 to 1740.[9] More importantly in terms of influence it facilitated the national spread of the movement through advising correspondents and publishing information on successful institutions. As a result of its direction and guidance, the virtues of Christian piety were inculcated into the poor in these institutions through religious education.[10] The endeavours of the SPCK therefore encouraged a certain type of workhouse. Unlike earlier and larger Corporation institutions where religion would naturally play a role

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[7] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.149

[8] See for example, Tomkins, *Urban Poverty,* and D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Social and Administrative History,* (New York, 1926), both of whom argue that the eighteenth-century workhouse was a failure in terms of reducing the burden of the poor. See also Slack, *Reformation to Improvement,* in which he argues that the primary aim of the workhouse during this period was deterrence.

[9] T. Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties 1696-1750', (DPhil Thesis, Oxford University, 1988), p.3

[10] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.149

as part of eighteenth-century society, Hitchcock concluded that the SPCK ensured

religious and moral reform formed the core of workhouse life.[11] Most importantly,

Hitchcock argued that the period of the Society's greatest involvement in the

workhouse movement ended in the 1730s. He does note that the SPCK's activity in

this area did not come to a 'grinding halt', that parochial workhouses continued to be

established in the later eighteenth century, and that those institutions established in the

1720s and 1730s continued into the nineteenth century.[12] However, his findings

largely complement subsequent claims by historians that as a result of the SPCK's

dwindling interest, workhouses were no longer concerned with the religious reform of

the poor by 1750. This thesis seeks to establish if, and how, the SPCK's ideals were

implemented day to day, and most significantly how they developed over the course

of the eighteenth century. It will therefore take the form of a detailed analysis of both

the SPCK's committee minutes and workhouse records using institutions established

in Westminster parishes as a case study. This illustrates that Hitchcock was correct in

his assertions about the role and influence of the SPCK in this movement and that

indeed there is evidence of a decline in the SPCK's interest in workhouses from the

1730s and certainly after 1750. However, it will also show that what appeared to be a

loss of interest on the part of the SPCK did not affect religious practice and moral

reform in these institutions. The Westminster workhouses implemented a round of

religious observance for all inmates, religiously educated children and took particular

care over the religious future of its charges throughout the eighteenth century. As a

result, there was less need for the SPCK to be so actively involved in the movement.

In terms of the Westminster workhouses at least, the SPCK's programme had been

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[11] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.255
[12] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.161

successful and the eighteenth-century parochial workhouse consistently sought to reform the poor that it housed.

This thesis begins by assessing the role and importance of religion within the government and operation of corporation workhouses from 1696, which were the antecedents of the parochial institutions established in the 1720s. Institutions in London and Bristol are used as exemplars. The struggles of corporation workhouses in the first two decades of the eighteenth century over whether Dissenters should be allowed any role in the management of the poor pointed to what an important issue religion would become in later parochial institutions. The bulk of the analysis then focuses on the development of specific workhouses in Westminster and the role of religion and the influence of the SPCK in them. The analysis is framed by two important pieces of poor law legislation: the 1723 Knatchbull's or Workhouse Test Act and Gilbert's 1782 Act. Alannah Tomkins highlights that this was one of the most prolonged periods of government under the Old Poor Law, where there was no alteration in terms of the structure of relief offered.[13] The Workhouse Test Act enabled parishes to build a workhouse and compel the poor to enter it. Gilbert's Act marked a change by distinguishing between different types of poverty, since it provided that only the impotent poor should be housed in workhouses. These institutions were deemed only suitable therefore for children and the infirm after 1782. It was also decided that children under seven could only be sent into the house with parental consent.[14] The able-bodied were to be found work and if they refused sent to a house of correction.[15] This encouraged and indeed facilitated the growth of outdoor relief, but also changed the groups of paupers the workhouses were intended

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[13] Tomkins, *Urban Poverty,* p.6

[14] A. Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century England,* (Basingstoke, 2012), p.118

[15] E.D. Bebb, *Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life 1660-1800: Some problems of the present as they appeared in the past,* (London, 1935)*,* p.21

to house.[16] The 1780s were also something of a watershed in wider terms, since a period of substantial change that would affect concepts of both religion and welfare followed. According to William Gibson the French Revolution represented one of the greatest challenges to both Church and state.[17] Increasing urbanisation facilitated new types of employment and unemployment, particularly for women and children and demands on the Poor Law were again intensified leading to large-scale reform in 1834.[18] In light of these significant shifts, the role of religion in the workhouse requires consideration in far more detail within the post-1782 period than this thesis has the scope for. Consequently, analysis of the Westminster workhouses and the SPCK will be taken up to Gilbert's 1782 Act.

Thus, the present study proposes to fill a significant gap in our understanding of the eighteenth-century workhouse. Focusing on sources relating to workhouses in Westminster, it tests the traditional thesis that they began as reforming institutions, underpinned by the religious principles of the SPCK, but that they quickly abandoned this agenda in favour of a greater degree of economic pragmatism. This also illuminates as yet untested questions relating to the importance and form of direct religious instruction and observance within specific old poor law workhouses. This perspective is essential since while the SPCK certainly played an important role in the parochial workhouse movement and the emphasis on religious reform in these institutions, it was the parishes that implemented its policy on a daily basis. The evidence shows that vestries, churchwardens and workhouse committees were obviously convinced by the SPCK's argument. This thesis thus demonstrates that

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[16] J. Boulton and L. Schwarz, "The comforts of a private fireside'? The Workhouse, the Elderly and the Poor Law in Georgian Westminster: St. Martin-in-the-fields, 1725-1824', in J. McEwan, and P. Sharpe, (eds.), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English poor, c.1600-1850*, (New York, 2011), p.234

[17] W. Gibson, *Church, State and Society, 1760-1850,* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.48

[18] D.E. Payne, 'Children of the poor in London 1700-1780', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, Feb 2008), p.4

religion and ideals of religious reform were central to the workhouse throughout the

eighteenth century (at least until 1782), re-enchanting our understanding of these key

institutions.

This introduction outlines some of the key areas of historical context including

the existing historical consensus broadly surrounding religion and poverty in this

period and more specifically concerning religious reform and the workhouse. This

illustrates the need to review thinking both in terms of welfare and religious history. It

also introduces the social, religious and political context in which the parochial

workhouse movement was instigated and evolved throughout the eighteenth century.

Re-enchanting Perceptions of the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse

As a result of the recent 're-enchantment agenda' presented in the work of historians

such as Clark, the eighteenth century can no longer be thought of as a secular

period.[19] In his attempt to recreate the historical view of the eighteenth century as a

period of deep religious observance, Clark pays particular attention to the close

relationship between the monarchy, the aristocracy and the Church. He thus not only

argues that religion was an important aspect of this period, and deserves to be treated

as such by historians, but also places it at the very centre of social and intellectual life,

both because it was part of daily life and more overtly because it was connected with

the parish.[20] If we accept Clark's 're-enchantment' of the eighteenth century then the

workhouse cannot be viewed without taking into account religion; it must be

considered as a religious construct. As Gibson concludes, for instance: 'Anglicanism

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[19] See: J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832,* (Cambridge, 2000)
[20] Ibid.

was welded into the structure of the establishment'.[21] This refers to society generally and therefore more specifically the workhouse as part of it.

The eighteenth-century Church has also been at the centre of an intense historical debate for many years and any study of society of this period should be placed within the context of this discussion. Traditionally historians have seen the eighteenth century as an age of negligence in which the Church was simply unable to cope with the challenges it faced. However, the 1980s and 1990s brought a generation of more optimistic historians claiming that in fact the eighteenth-century Church was as vibrant as it ever had been, or would be. This introduced a division between what has been called optimists and pessimists among scholars of religious history, which has become one of the central characteristics of this period of historical enquiry.[22] Pessimists include historians such as Peter Virgin and much of the work published before Clark's *English Society* (1985). Clark began to revolutionize the way historians looked at the eighteenth century and was followed by a number of historians who offered a more positive interpretation. This more optimistic body of scholarship includes work by Gibson, Chamberlain, Haydon and Gregory.[23]

In line with the more pessimistic view, Viviane Barrie argues that the Church of England lost a significant proportion of its influence from the Restoration to the opening of the eighteenth century due to changes in patronage and policy. She argues that this was due to a combination of the exclusion of Dissenters, quarrels between Whigs and Tories and divisions between High and Low Church.[24] The decline of the

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[21] W. Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord,* (London, 2001), p.2
[22] M. Smith, 'Review of Michael Snape, *The Church of England in Industrialising Society. The Lancashire Parish of Walley in the eighteenth Century',* http:www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/444, (retrieved, 04/01/2011)
[23] See for example, J. Gregory, *Restoration Reformation and Reform 1660-1828 Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese,* (Oxford, 2000)*,* p.19
[24] V. Barrie, 'The Church of England in the diocese of London in the eighteenth century', in J. Gregory, and J.S. Chamberlain, (eds.), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800*, (Woodbridge, 2003), p.62

Church Courts after the Restoration also took the moral responsibility for the population away from the Church, although this did not sever the ties between morality and religion, which is important to note in terms of this study.[25] Furthermore, the Church courts did not entirely give up this role in the provinces until the late eighteenth century and remained responsible for the morals of marital behaviour until the mid-nineteenth century. Gibson suggests that there is a general assumption among historians that the eighteenth-century Church was 'irrevocably divided and fractured by controversy'.[26] For example, Donald Spaeth writes: 'there is no single entity that can be called the eighteenth-century church'.[27] Earlier generations of Marxist historians such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb and E.P. Thompson viewed religion and the Church as instruments of opposition to progress and change.[28] However, as Gibson argues, this is an assumption, and despite the many images presented of a weak and fragmented institution he is able to conclude that 'division was not the principle feature of the eighteenth-century Church; peace and unity were stronger forces in the minds of churchmen'.[29]

By 2000 Jeremy Gregory was able to persuasively assert that there is a 'growing body of evidence which suggests that the Church of England played a far more central role within English religious, social and political life than has sometimes been maintained'. He adds that the long eighteenth century did 'not reflect stagnation so much as comparatively successful conservatism'.[30] Lynn Hollen-Lees concludes that,

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[25] J. Innes, 'Prisons for the poor: English Bridewells, 1555-1800', in F. Snyder, and D. Hay, (eds.), *Labour Law and Crime: An Historical Perspective,* (London, 1987), p.85
[26] Gibson, *Church of England*, p.1
[27] D. Spaeth, "The enemy within': the failure of reform in the diocese of Salisbury in the eighteenth century', in J. Gregory, and J.S. Chamberlain, (eds.), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800*, (Woodbridge, 2003), p.11
[28] See S. Webb, and B. Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History: Part 1. The Old Poor Law,* (London, 1927) and E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class,* (London, 1963).
[29] Gibson, *The Church of England,* p.3
[30] Gregory, *Restoration*, p.293

'the Church must occupy a large place in any picture of eighteenth-century English society'.[31]

Notwithstanding this body of evidence to support the central role of the Church, it is important that any research concerning religion and/or society in the eighteenth century be put in the context of this division in historical thought. The more traditional pessimistic view of a fragmented and therefore weakened or slumbering Church could suggest that the emergence of the SPCK and organisations like it were the result of an effort to reawaken the Church and its role within society. In turn, this proposes that parochial workhouses were one of the products of the early eighteenth-century evangelical revival. In 1912, W.H. Hutton's history of religious and philanthropic societies in the first half of the eighteenth century appears to confirm the pessimistic view of the Church during this period.[32] These societies were a response to the decline of the Church: an attempt to revive religion and piety.

However, the optimistic view of the eighteenth-century Church paints a picture of a vibrant, stable and well-supported institution suggesting that no revival was needed. This approach conversely indicates that the importance of religious reform in the parochial workhouse movement, championed by the SPCK, had more to do with the natural relationship between religion and wider social concerns, than an effort to revive and reassert religious authority.[33] There is evidence of a determined struggle to restore the religion of England on the part of the laity as well as the Church itself: demonstrated by the emergence of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners [hereafter SRM] from the 1690s, and indeed the SPCK itself, as a result of a climate

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[31] L. Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English poor laws and the people 1700-1948,* (Cambridge, 1998), p.277
[32] W.H. Hutton, 'Introduction', in G.V. Portus, *Caritas Anglicana,* (London, 1912), p.vii
[33] For the 'optimistic view' see for example, Gibson, *Church of England*

of political disorder and religious unrest.[34] G.V. Portus also came to the conclusion that the eighteenth century in ecclesiastical terms should be regarded as a period of transition in men's spiritual attitude rather than one of spiritual deadness.[35]

However, Mark Goldie has criticized some aspects of the optimist/pessimist debate, and its contribution to historical research in this period. In 2003 he argued that the historiography of the eighteenth-century Church of England remains 'preoccupied with vindicating an institution from the condemnation heaped upon it by the Anglo-Catholics and evangelists in the nineteenth century'.[36] He describes it as the 'longest shadow in modern historiography'.[37] Goldie comes to the conclusion that there is a need to liberate religious history from the narrow confines of church history, suggesting that the voluntary associations which came to define the eighteenth century were stimulated by a piety which was both Christian and civic. Critically these voluntary endeavours within the public sphere, while unquestionably religious, were not part of the formal institutions of the state or the Church. He also suggests that the emergence and spread of organisations such as the SRM and the SPCK were a 'transmutation of puritanism; part of the long reformation to moralize the commonwealth; now simply flying under Anglican colours'.[38] This in turn strengthens the case for including the eighteenth century in England's 'long' reformation. As a result, he describes the eighteenth century as a world of 'voluntary Anglicans'; which should be considered separately from institutional religion.[39] In response, Michael Snape claims he is not sure that time has been called on this long running debate. He argues that the optimistic majority and pessimistic minority create

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[34] W.H. Hutton, 'Introduction', pp.vii-xiii
[35] Portus, *Caritas Anglicana,* p.172
[36] M. Goldie, 'Voluntary Anglicans', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 46, No.4, (Dec, 2003), p.977
[37] Ibid, p.988
[38] Ibid, pp.989-90
[39] Ibid, p.990

a 'dialogue that is crucial to locating the strengths and weaknesses of the Church of England on the ground'.[40] Nonetheless, alongside Clark's call for a 're-enchantment' of the eighteenth century, a study of the role of religion within the eighteenth-century workhouse in an attempt to begin to re-enchant welfare history should bear Goldie's argument in mind. His argument is particularly important since the religious history involved in the development of the workhouse is so distinctly socio-religious, and a product of the civic piety separate from the formal institutions of the Church he describes; the SPCK operated outside the formal structures of the Church. The parochial workhouse movement is an example of how both religion generally, and the Church of England, influenced eighteenth-century society. Groups such as the SPCK promoted religious reform but it was also the parishes and the workhouse committees that chose to implement and maintain these principals.

Religion and the eighteenth-century Church are therefore essential to our understanding of workhouses and the welfare system in general. Historians have, in great detail, analysed sickness, clothing, diet and a myriad of other key elements of the welfare process both inside and outside the workhouse, yet the role of religion has remained almost entirely neglected.[41] Hitchcock has been the only historian to address the issue of religion and the workhouse.[42] This is perhaps partly because some historians regard religion as totally different from these more practical concerns; a far more subtle underlying force ingrained in the makeup of society itself and thus not a priority in the move to uncover histories of welfare 'from below'. For example, in 1944 R.H. Tawney highlighted that it is difficult to appreciate in a modern context the

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[40] Smith, 'Review of Michel Snape'
[41] See for example K. Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals and the Urban Poor: London's "Foul Wards", 1600-1800,* (Rochester, 2004), and S. King, 'Reclothing the English Poor, 1750-1840', in, S. King, and C. Payne (eds.), *Textile History: special issue on the Dress of the Poor,* Vol.33, No. 1, (May, 2002)
[42] Very little of this has been published. See: Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers'

degree to which religion influenced contemporaries' views, suggesting perhaps why religion has been so overlooked in terms of welfare history.[43] While the role of religious instruction in the workhouse may not be quite as obvious in the records as food or discipline, when considered in the religious and political context of eighteenth-century society it is likely that religion and religious reform were central to the operation of these institutions. Although she has not considered the role of religion in the eighteenth-century workhouse, Mary Fissell notes that to overlook patterns of religious belief makes social reformers 'oddly one-dimensional.'[44] Similarly, in terms of welfare provision, Joanna Innes has pointed out that the relief system was so closely associated with the Church of England that Dissenting churches often sought to provide for their own poor.[45] Consequently it is necessary that religion be put back into histories of welfare in order to produce a full and accurate account of eighteenth-century poor relief.

Instead of these matters, welfare historians have been largely concerned with addressing the legacy of scholars like the Webbs and Dorothy Marshall who saw it as a 'uniform failure'.[46] Marshall argues for example that 'parishes acted with a lack of humanity and a blindness to all interests but their own, which is almost incredible'.[47] She contends that when it came to the eighteenth-century workhouse '[…] it is perhaps impossible to colour the canvas too darkly'.[48] The Webbs described 'the overcrowding, insanitation, filth and gross indecency of the workhouse during the

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[43] R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A historical study,* (London, 1944), p. xviii
[44] M.E. Fissell, 'Charity Universal? Institutions and Moral Reform in Eighteenth-Century Bristol', in L. Davidson, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn, and R.B. Shoemaker, (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: the responses to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750,* (New York, 1992), p.121
[45] J. Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus (c. 1683-1803)', in M. Daunton, (ed.), *Charity, Self-interest and Welfare in the English past,* (London, 1996)*,* p.145
[46] See: Webb and Webb, *English Local Government,* and Marshall, *The English Poor*
[47] Marshall, *The English Poor*, p.11
[48] Ibid, p.137

whole of the eighteenth century'.[49] This notion that eighteenth-century workhouses were 'grim bastilles for the poor' became 'a canon of poor law history'.[50] These discrete Marxist and Whiggish accounts, which dominated until the mid twentieth century, were part of a wider attempt to demonstrate a linear progression towards the modern welfare state (in which, of course, religion plays no overt part). Further to this, Whig history according to Hollen-Lees 'shows a marked disregard for so much that was normal and Anglican and so central to Hanoverian England- the Church in particular'.[51] It is perhaps then not surprising that the role of religion is such a neglected aspect of welfare history.

A number of subsequent historians have attempted to revise the bleak image of the workhouse, painting it in a more positive light; for example the optimistic interpretations of Mark Blaug in the 1960s.[52] However, the Marxist interpretation of historians such as Catherina Lis and Hugo Soly with their insistence upon the use of relief to control the poor obscures the use of provision by the poor for their own purposes, generating a one-sided view of relief.[53] It is only more recently with conclusions such as Keith Snell's, that the Poor Law during the eighteenth century resembled the welfare state in miniature, and that it could be generous and comprehensive, that some of the damning arguments presented by Whig historians have been reversed.[54] The growth of poor law research over the last decade in particular and the growing numbers of welfare histories more generally, have now embraced concepts such as regional variation, lifecycle poverty and the sheer variety

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[49] Webb and Webb, *English Local Government*, p.248
[50] J.S. Taylor, 'The unreformed workhouse 1776-1834', in E.W. Martin, (ed.), *Comparative Development in Social Welfare,* (London, 1972), p.57
[51] Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers,* p.9
[52] M. Blaug referenced in, Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers,* p.4
[53] C. Lis and H. Soly referenced in, Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p.4
[54] K. Snell in, S. King and A. Tomkins, *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An economy of makeshifts,* (Manchester, 2003) p.5

of assistance available to the poor. Steve King has been able to describe the operation of the Old Poor Law for example, as 'a rich patchwork of local practice', while on the part of the poor, it has been argued that they were able to, and indeed did, use the Poor Law as a part of their strategy for survival, particularly when certain points in the life cycle threw them into relative or absolute poverty.[55] However, despite the recent intensity of research into many of the intricacies of the relief system and its operation, religion continues to largely have been omitted from welfare histories, perhaps because historians have failed to appreciate its centrality to every aspect of eighteenth-century life. Therefore work on the role and importance of religion in the workhouse offers a new angle from which to view eighteenth-century poor relief as well as the pervasiveness of religious practice through society.

The Enlightenment idea that people could be reformed by institutions which accounted for the proliferation of asylums and other such facilities from the 1760s, has led some historians to suggest that the workhouse was simply part of the 'great confinement' of this period which sought to control the poor.[56] The bigger question here is whether profit or even self-reliance was ever the primary intention behind these institutions. While historians are beginning to re-evaluate the negative image of the workhouse presented by an earlier generation and indeed the intentions behind these institutions, the relative success of programmes of religious reform over the long eighteenth century remains in question. Analysis of the role of religion in the parochial workhouse movement offers invaluable insights into the aims behind, and achievements of the workhouse during this period. The traditional view of the eighteenth-century workhouse is one of failure, even if it was not as cruel as previously suggested, but this does depend on the criteria by which it is judged. We

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[55] For the quote see: King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p.39. See also Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, for evidence and arguments concerning the 'economy of makeshifts'.
[56] Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p.107

have seen that scholars like Marshall judged the workhouse to be a complete failure, and in terms of making the poor work to support themselves her interpretation may be largely correct.[57] The alleged 'great confinement' is said to have dated from the seventeenth century, and Michel Foucault argued that during the eighteenth century the growing movements of religious Dissent made it necessary to exert more systematic control over individuals leading to the growth of a disciplinary society.[58] The confinement theory suggests that religious activists may have sought to use the workhouse to control rather than reform, and that social welfare was subordinated to social control, supporting the traditional theories put forward by historians that the eighteenth-century workhouse was a repressive institution. However, Paul Slack argues that the workhouse was never a 'great confinement' of the poor, it was simply the exclusion of as many people as possible from the Poor Law altogether; the primary purpose of the workhouse was not profitability or moral reform but deterrence.[59] He concedes that there had always been an element of moral reform within institutions for the poor, particularly from the Bridewell onwards. While the Bridewell, first designed in 1555, was primarily a site of punishment, it too had a reforming quality. Innes observes that the Bridewell was unusual among penal institutions in having an explicitly socially specific mission.[60] Steve Hindle maintains that workhouses were never intended to produce an absolute profit, and that they were run more for the benefit of the inmates' souls than with a view to the pocket of the rate payer. He suggests that the benefit to the parish was a reduction in numbers and

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[57] K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: A Study of Poor-Law Buildings in England,* (Swindon, 1999), p.31
[58] See: M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison,* (London, 1977)
[59] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, pp.133-135
[60] Innes, 'Prisons for the Poor', p.46

the alleviating of some of the cost. Nevertheless, he remains convinced that this was more of an advantageous by-product than a primary aim.[61]

In terms of the success of the workhouse over the course of the long eighteenth century however, the theory of failure among historians remains prominent. While some historians such as Slack and Siena now accept Hitchcock's view that religious reform was the primary aim behind the workhouse movement, it has yet to be substantially followed up. Furthermore, Slack and Siena continue to maintain that these ideals were quickly abandoned in favour of a more pragmatic response to the needs of the poor. They ignore the idealism that the SPCK brought to the workhouse movement, which surely made it unlikely to abandon its socio-religious mission unless there was a fundamental change in its aims and intentions, or the workhouses' ability to meet its needs. The current analysis simply does not fit with these facts, suggesting there is much more to be uncovered about the development of the workhouse over the course of the eighteenth century. Corporation workhouses certainly aimed to make a profit at the beginning, but by the 1720s, when parochial workhouses began to be established, contemporaries had already generally accepted the failure of this ambition. Deterrence did play a prominent role in establishment and operation of parochial workhouses but it was not the central aim.

Thus, this thesis has two objectives. First, it seeks to test Hitchcock's thesis allowing for a wider acceptance of the role of the SPCK within both the establishment and most importantly the running of these institutions. Second, it takes issue with the idea that religious reform was quickly abandoned without any significant shift in the aims of the SPCK or the ability of the workhouses to meet its needs for the religious reform of the poor. The success of the parochial workhouse movement needs to be

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[61] S. Hindle, *On the Parish?: The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c.1550-1750,* (Oxford, 2004), p.188

judged against this new appreciation of its aims. This thesis will argue that religion was an important aspect of the workhouse movement throughout the eighteenth century and that these institutions were largely successful in terms of implementing a reforming agenda.

Eighteenth-Century Welfare: Religion, Deservingness, Industriousness and Benevolence

There were several elements of eighteenth-century welfare that were brought together in the parochial workhouse movement. One of the most significant and indeed under-appreciated features is the long-standing connection between religion and the administration of poor relief. At a practical level, the development of a tax-funded parish-based poor relief system contrasted markedly with most of continental Europe where charity and institutional relief played a much larger part. Consequently, whilst the parish was the unit of religious organisation throughout Europe, only in England was it also the unit of civil government, irrevocably bonding religion with the mechanisms of poor relief and indeed all civil administration.[62] Until 1835 the parish remained the main unit of government and its vestry responsible for administering poor relief. However, most welfare historians have failed to make the religious element in this period prominent, focusing more on the welfare side of the picture.

Poverty was also irrevocably bound to religion through deep-rooted tradition, custom and ideology. The Poor Law did not aim to eliminate poverty, which was seen as a normal God-ordained part of society; it was simply intended to alleviate its consequences. Some clergy taught that God designed poverty so that men could earn salvation, and Marshall adds that to give alms had long been established as a means of

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[62] M. Daunton, 'Introduction', in M. Daunton, (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past,* (London, 1996)*,* p.4

grace to the giver.[63] The poor and their relief had thus long been intertwined with concepts of duty, salvation and the body politic. The rich were obliged on religious grounds to contribute to those in need in order to save their own souls. The Bible taught that charity was a duty and there were often 'transactions' involved in the Catholic medieval operation of it. Fees were paid for masses for souls for example. One historical view is that Protestantism was much more individualistic than Catholicism, which brought a different perspective on the poor by promoting capitalism and individual reliance.[64] The poor could now be viewed as responsible for their own poverty and therefore should rely on themselves rather than society. Thus, contemporaries came to perceive a growing class of people who were not only economically destitute, but also morally destitute, dependant though idleness and sin rather than divine plan. The dependant poor were viewed not only as a danger to the prosperity of society but also its salvation; an immoral society was damned and likely to be punished by God. The poor therefore held a complex position in the mind of ratepayers as both an established means of salvation and a newly developing means of damnation, as well as a growing burden on their rates. This created a constant tension between humanitarian concern, moral responsibility and keeping costs down. It is not surprising therefore that religion was to play a central role in workhouses as part of a welfare system which had long been bound up with religious concepts and concerns.

This long-standing relationship between poverty and piety also precipitated a connection between religious and moral reform. Slack concludes that the moral reform of society was also an old theme and more specifically a distinctly religious one, all too familiar in medieval sermons.[65] Morality was derived from biblical

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[63] See: D.T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century,* (Princeton, 1989)*,* p.17, and Marshall, *The English Poor*, p.16
[64] See for example, Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*
[65] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.15

teaching. The Church had always been concerned with moral behaviour and conduct, linking morality to piety in the contemporary mind. The Church continued to condemn moral transgressions such as idleness and drinking for religious reasons in the eighteenth century. The moral failings that led to having a child out of wedlock for example broke both civil and religious law. By the eighteenth century contemporaries had also begun to view poverty as a moral as well as a social condition, forming a perceived relationship between religious observance and social behaviour.[66] Moral reformation was therefore part of an eighteenth-century preoccupation to try to get back to the purest form of Christianity. Hitchcock argues that religion provided the language for social change throughout this period; therefore only through religious reformation could most eighteenth-century social thinkers imagine social reformation.[67] Gregory goes as far as to suggest that religious and moral reform were 'twin aspects' of the concern to create a Christian commonwealth.[68] This irrefutably connected religion and morality for contemporaries. By making the poor more pious, in the eighteenth-century view, their immorality would also be reformed. Piety was not just about attending church and being seen to be devout and Anglican it meant inner religious feeling as well. Social reformers sought to inculcate piety in the workhouse so these inmates would lead a good life; by being genuinely pious good behaviour would follow. Religious reform can therefore be used as shorthand for the inculcation of piety and morality since contemporaries would not have made this distinction. Thus this approach is appropriate from the perspective of the eighteenth-century self.

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[66] S. Macfarlane, 'Social policy and the poor in the later seventeenth century' in, A.L. Beier, and R. Finlay, (eds.), *London 1500-1700: The making of the metropolis,* (Essex, 1986), p.263
[67] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.153
[68] J. Gregory, 'The Making of a Protestant Nation: "success" and "failure" in England's long reformation', in N. Tyacke, (ed.), *England's Long Reformation, 1500-1800,* (London, 1998), p.323

The SPCK was an Anglican-led religious reforming society, and thus it saw workhouses as a tool by which it could reform society by targeting those most in need of the Christian religion: the poor and most importantly their children. It was formed in 1698 in response to the perceived moral decay of society. The SPCK believed that by instilling piety into the poor in the workhouse the poor's morals would not only be reformed but they would be compelled to work, solving the problems of both immorality and idleness. The promotion of workhouses was one of many projects the SPCK facilitated through building up corresponding members in parishes across the country and collecting and disseminating information. These types of activities meant that it was able to 'propagate the ideology that drove the movement'; ensuring that industry went hand in hand with piety.[69] The SPCK first turned its attention to the charity school movement and from the mid 1710s onwards promoted the establishment of parochial workhouses.[70] Jeremy Black notes that besides charity schools the largest numbers of poor children were educated in workhouses, always the SPCK's primary concern.[71] The SPCK believed that the catechism, learned young, was the key to national reformation. It therefore focused on religiously educating the children of the poor throughout the eighteenth century. This at least partly explains its emphasis on these institutions.

The SPCK emerged as part of a much wider movement for moral reform at the end of the seventeenth century. Eamon Duffy demonstrates that the movement towards moral and religious reformation was present at not only a national level but also an international one. While there were differences in theological approach, the fundamental premise of these reforming organisations was that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was incomplete, the Catholic threat heightening their sense of the

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[69] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.188
[70] Hindle, *On the Parish*, p.186
[71] J. Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783,* (Basingstoke, 2008)*,* p.99

urgent need to reform.[72] Duffy concludes that the formation of the SPCK provided a

focus for the many sided activities of reformers in England.[73] It aimed to 'help people

to understand and to grow in the Christian faith'.[74] However, the primary concern of

the SPCK's founders in the eighteenth century was to 'counteract the growth of vice

and immorality', which was ascribed to a 'gross ignorance of the principles of the

Christian religion'.[75] The SRM were also active from the 1690s and sought

specifically to suppress profanity and immorality. Indeed in the early eighteenth

century there is evidence that the two organisations worked closely together. The

SPCK was able to bring together deeply ingrained elements of religion and moral

reform within eighteenth-century welfare and concentrate them in the parochial

workhouse. The SPCK and its relationship with the parochial workhouse movement

will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Two.

The issue of whether the poor deserved relief (and/or reform) inside or outside

the workhouse was made even more complicated by shifting definitions, both in

contemporary and historiographical terms, of what constituted 'the poor' in this

period. The eighteenth century witnessed the mobilization of the poor as a social

threat by the rate paying classes as a result of the emergence of the labouring poor and

because of their increasing number.[76] This new group of paupers posed serious

challenges for concepts of morality and deservingness attached to 'the poor' because

they were physically able to work.[77] Hindle notes the emergence of this third group of

poor in the sixteenth century whose poverty could not be explained by physical

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[72] E. Duffy, 'Correspondence Fraternelle; The SPCK, The SPG, and the churches of Switzerland in the war of Spanish succession', in D. Barker, (ed.), *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent, c.1500-1750,* (Oxford, 1979), p.252

[73] Ibid, p.279

[74] www.spck.org.uk, (retrieved, 23/09/2010)

[75] Ibid.

[76] The term 'labouring poor', was coined in 1701 by Daniel Defoe in *The True Born English Man.*

[77] D. Valenze, 'Charity, Custom and Humanity: Changing attitudes towards the poor in Eighteenth-Century England', in J. Garnett, and C. Matthew, (eds.), *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh,* (London, 1993), p.65

incapacity or an unwillingness to work. These paupers were simply unable to find work or earn enough to support their families when they did.[78] The development of a new class of able-bodied paupers following the economic problems and unemployment that accompanied the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions meant that for some 'the poor' as an entire class could now be perceived to be simply idle and feckless. Such paupers were growing in number and were viewed as able to work to support their family but unwilling to do so. Structural unemployment in this new economic context was not fully understood, and there were no figures on unemployment kept until the nineteenth century. It was this group of paupers in particular that sent previous ideas of what constituted 'the poor' and more significantly the deserving poor into absolute turmoil since the system was not structured to accommodate unemployment and insufficient wages as a reason for poverty.

Not only were 'the poor' now a varied group, composed of several different categories, but also the boundaries between these different sub-groups were generally permeable, and people moved regularly in and out of more specific classifications. This meant that there could be varying degrees of deserving and undeserving, with 'the poor' meriting different moral labels at different points in their life cycle. Similarly, social perceptions of these classifications, particularly in terms of deservingness, changed over the course of the long eighteenth century. It is important to always consider this when studying 'the poor'. In the context of the analysis of religion and the eighteenth-century workhouse, 'the poor' in this thesis are loosely defined by their dependence on communal relief at any point in the family life cycle; this included the able-bodied poor who were likely to move in and out of dependent

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[78] Hindle, *On the Parish,* p.2

poverty, and the impotent poor; those who were either too young, too old, or too sick to maintain themselves. A number of this traditional group of paupers (the impotent) might spend a large portion of their life, from sickness or misfortune to death, totally dependent on the parish. It was the impotent who were traditionally seen as deserving of relief since they were dependant through no fault of their own, but it was the able-bodied in the workhouse, perceived to be dependant through their own idleness who were deemed to be most in need of moral reform. In terms of religious reformation it is also important to consider the contemporary definition of the poor in the context of this thesis: the poor in the workhouse represented a group that reformers could target. The emergence of the able-bodied poor and growing numbers of dependant poor generated an atmosphere of crisis which precipitated the need to both morally and religiously reform groups of paupers in order to ease the burden on relief systems.

Contemporaries debated how best to provide for the growing and varying groups of paupers throughout the eighteenth century, in particular this new group of the able-bodied unemployed. At the centre of this debate surrounding provision for the poor was the overwhelming fear that the poor posed an increasing problem and were an ever-looming threat to society. However, beyond this principal thesis, views were irrevocably fragmented.[79] The ideal and actual place of the workhouse within eighteenth-century poor relief became one of the most intense points of this debate, steadily growing in significance as the century drew on.[80] These contemporary debates about the place and success of the workhouses has led some historians to suggest the workhouse fell out of favour with the SPCK after the initial period of foundation in the 1720s and 1730s.[81] This was the period when debates in pamphlet

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[79] Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, p.5
[80] Ibid, p.38
[81] See for example, Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', and P. Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782,* (Basingstoke, 1990)

literature were at their height. The closure of the Court of Star Chamber and its tight censorship in 1641 had led to an explosion in cheap print, which littered society with debates about the characteristics and treatment of the poor.[82] Similarly in 1695, licensing (censorship) of publications lapsed, pre-empting the proliferation of printing. As Slack highlights, between 1696, when Bristol founded its corporation in order to build a workhouse, and 1750 when both corporation and parochial institutions spanned the country, expenditure on poor relief doubled in real terms.[83] The workhouse appeared to be doing little to curb expenditure in terms of making the poor support themselves, provide deterrence, or reforming the poor, all of which were ultimately intended to reduce rates. Hollen-Lees argues that this resulted in a transformation in attitudes towards poverty, concluding that: 'in the public eye, the poor had lost their moral entitlement to what was seen as a free lunch'.[84] Changes in perceptions of the poor highlighted above, ultimately led to a change in the institutions that had been developed to support and reform them. By the 1782 Act for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor, or Gilbert's Act, it was clear that only the impotent poor were to be housed in these institutions. Guardians were to maintain the able-bodied outside of the house; reflecting the gradual swing of opinion against workhouses as institutions in which to relieve and reform the poor. [85] In order to achieve this, parishes were able to unite to create and maintain poor houses, changing the face of the earlier eighteenth-century workhouse movement.

During the seventeenth century an argument had also developed suggesting that on moral, no less than economic grounds, the lower classes must be kept poor in order

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[82] M.E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England,* (Oxford, 2004), p.4
[83] Slack, *The English Poor Law,* p.32
[84] Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p.111
[85] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.63

for them to be industrious.[86] Contemporary social ideology saw work as morally

reforming and idleness as sinful. William Berryman's sermon for the anniversary

meeting of the charity schools, *The Excellency and Reward of Charity,* published by

the SPCK in 1725 emphasised that the poor children in these institutions were not

only to be religiously educated but were also brought up to labour appropriate for

their station in life. Berryman stated that they endeavoured to '[…] bestow upon the

young and vigorous; not to nurture them in idleness […] [but] breed them to such

honest industry […]'.[87] This was connected with the SPCK's belief that no one could

be both devout and lazy. Thus, by making the poor more pious it would also make

them more industrious, removing some of the burden from the poor rates. In a society

where religion could not be separated from any single aspect of life, ideas

surrounding the poor, their behaviour and their industriousness were inextricably

linked and therefore came to be personified in the eighteenth-century workhouse. This

linked the concepts of poverty and work to the framework of morality and religion, as

well as the wellbeing and prosperity of the parish and the nation.

The idea of setting the poor to work had been a constant theme in English social

and economic thought since the sixteenth century.[88] The earliest institutions for the

poor in the form of poor houses and houses of correction developed after the

dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. The Reformation destroyed much of the

institutional fabric that provided charity for the poor; at once indicating a connection

between religion and poverty, and more specifically the institutional care of the poor.

The population of England and Wales increased from 5.2 million in 1695 to 6.2

million in 1751, and by 1801 it stood at more than eight and a half million.[89] This put

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[86] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p.270
[87] W. Berryman, *The Excellency and Reward of Charity…,*(London, 1725), p.12
[88] Innes, 'Prisons for the Poor', p.81
[89] J. Black, *A Subject for Taste: Culture in Eighteenth-Century England,* (London, 2005), p.xvii

huge pressure on existing systems. Steve King and Geoffrey Timmins estimate that

while around thirty-five per cent of the population required help from the Poor Law at

some point in their life cycle, as a result of this population growth, it had increased to

at least fifty per cent by 1820.[90] People were falling into poverty more regularly and

for longer periods and looking to the parish for support at exactly the time when

ratepayers were also struggling, which hardened attitudes to the poor.[91] Increasing

dependency generated an atmosphere of crisis that brought both poor law reform and

moral reform to the forefront of social concerns by the early-eighteenth century. Innes

argues that this climate caused a resurgent interest in setting the poor to work

alongside a renewed enthusiasm for moral reform. Humphrey Mackworth, a founding

member of the SPCK, who probably brought the issue of workhouses to its attention,

had campaigned for 'factories in every parish' long before the SPCK aided the

passage of the Workhouse Test Act in 1723, which provided for the establishment of

parochial workhouses. He introduced bills in 1704 and 1707 in order to facilitate

them, but they had failed.[92]

However there was a model on which to build: in the late seventeenth century

purpose-built institutions had been developed.[93] Following the lead of John Cary and

the city of Bristol, thirteen corporations of the poor were established by groups of

parishes between 1696 and 1713. These institutions operated outside the parish

structure with a number of local parishes joining together in order to provide for their

collective poor by setting them to work in a workhouse. An Act of Parliament in 1696

provided for the unification of Bristol's seventeen city parishes into a corporation,

which could collect the poor rate, build a workhouse, and critically, compel the poor

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[90] S. King, and G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English economy and society 1700-1850,* (Manchester, 2001)*,* p.319
[91] Hollen-Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p.111
[92] Slack, *The English Poor Law,* p.41
[93] Morrison, *The Workhouse,* p.xi

to enter it. The influence of religion on Bristol's workhouse as well as its use as a model for the later Westminster workhouses will be a topic for further consideration in Chapter One. The Workhouse Test Act of 1723 (known as Knatchbull's Act) under which the Westminster workhouses (and many others nationally) were constructed, enabled mainly urban parishes to operate their own smaller institutions without an additional act for incorporation. This Act enabled parishes to build a workhouse and compel both impotent and the able bodied poor to enter or be refused relief. The idea was that only those most destitute would be prepared to enter, passing the 'test' of genuine entitlement to relief rather than just taking advantage of the dole system through idleness. The development of a number of workhouses in Westminster in the 1720s followed the Bristol model, though these larger urban parishes were able to sustain the single-parochial form of institution rather than multi-parish corporations. Thus, the SPCK did not start the workhouse movement, and the 1723 Workhouse Test Act they promoted simply codified existing practice, albeit with an emphasis on religious reform rather than profit or deterrence. While the SPCK promoted and aided the foundation of these institutions, local activists including those that were not necessarily members of the SPCK, were still required to establish a workhouse in any locality. Ultimately these institutions were run by the parish rather than directly by the SPCK. Corporation workhouses operated and were still being established alongside parochial ones. What was significant about the role of the SPCK is that it was able to unite ideals of industriousness with piety in the parochial workhouse movement and promote those ideas through its geographically widespread membership. Its key principal was that by making the poor more pious in the workhouse they would be inclined to work thereby reducing the burden on the poor rate.

It is misleading to present the attitude toward the lower classes as simply harsh and unsympathetic throughout this period in outlining the context in which the parochial workhouse movement and its aim of religious reform was established and developed. As already suggested through the connections between poverty and piety in this period and concepts of 'deservingness': the relationship between ratepayer and pauper was much more complex. In some ways the poor were increasingly seen as a social threat in this period, but as M.G. Jones pointed out, while the eighteenth century had been deemed the age of reason, in politics the age of Whig ascendancy, and in economic history the age of Industrial Revolution, it is sometimes forgotten that it was also 'the age of benevolence'.[94] Contemporaries certainly judged the eighteenth century to be an age of great benevolence.[95] Christian compassion for those in need was never quashed by any strand of reforming thought.[96] As highlighted above, it was perhaps the definition of those in need that changed. The rise of humanitarianism and generous philanthropy was associated with the middle classes.[97] Middle-class philanthropists oversaw missionaries abroad, the abolition of slavery, and the establishment of the London Foundling Hospital during this period. The eighteenth century also witnessed the formation of reforming charities such as the Lock Hospital and the Magdalene Asylum, which sought to save mothers as well as children. Slack argues that throughout the eighteenth century, benevolence, moral reform and economy marched together.[98] Because of the problematic place of the poor in eighteenth-century society, and indeed the very real fear that the rapidly increasing numbers of dependant poor were detrimental to the body politic, it is not

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[94] M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement,* (Cambridge, 1964), p.3
[95] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, p.11
[96] K. Siena, 'The Clean and the Foul: Paupers and the Pox in London Hospitals, c. 1550-1700', K. Siena, (ed.), *Sins of the Flesh: responding to sexual disease in Early Modern Europe,* (Toronto, 2005), p.262
[97] Jones, *Charity School Movement*, p.4
[98] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.44

surprising that the workhouses sought to reform inmates. These institutions were the product of a benevolent society. It is difficult to determine whether the pursuit of greater piety in the workhouse was a result of benevolence or simply self-interest on the part of the ratepayers since the two were not mutually exclusive and it is likely that contemporaries felt differently at different times. Reforming the poor was ultimately aimed at reducing their financial burden on society, but in the context of the eighteenth century more generally it is difficult to imagine that at least some contemporaries were not genuinely concerned about the plight of the poor and sought to instil piety in order give them a better life.

Thus, aspects of long established religious tradition and belief concerning poverty, concepts of deservingness and industriousness in contemporary debate and a genuine benevolence within eighteenth century welfare were all brought together in the eighteenth-century workhouse. In any study of welfare in this period it is worth noting that while these institutions were important, the workhouse never dominated eighteenth-century relief. When the English Poor Laws were formally codified in 1601, they required that in every parish churchwardens and several of the 'substantial householders' serve as overseers of the poor. The Act also proposed the construction of housing for the impotent poor (which included the elderly and the sick) but most assistance was to be provided in the form of outdoor relief. Therefore, the workhouse was, and indeed remained, even throughout its great expansion in the eighteenth-century, one part of the mixed economy of parish relief.[99] For example even in London only one or two per cent of the population were housed in workhouses in the

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[99] The phrase 'the economy of makeshifts' was coined by O. Huffton in her two chapters on the poor in France published in 1972, see also Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare", and Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*

eighteenth century.[100] Though for the poor the workhouse was very prominent. It was not until the nineteenth century with the advent of the New Poor Law in 1834 that the workhouse personified social policy. Still, Hitchcock notes the importance of the parochial workhouse, arguing 'the workhouse movement seems to have to done without central direction. And yet this movement was one of the most consistent, and best organized social policy reforms to be attempted before the nineteenth century'.[101] By the early eighteenth century, Industrial Revolution, population growth, prolonged war, huge military expenditure, and a number of bad harvests, inevitably brought an increase in poor law expenditure. A new and fast growing class of labouring poor coupled with perceived social moral and religious decay prompted a revised critique of the poor concerning immorality. This changed perceptions of what constituted a right to relief and put the old debate surrounding deservingness under new pressure. It thus became necessary to religiously reform at least a portion of these paupers. The workhouse offered the SPCK the best opportunity to target those most in need of its brand of reform. The large numbers of children that occupied these institutions presented the chance to create a pious future population free from the moral and religious degradation that had been perceived to plague early eighteenth-century society.

Westminster: A Case Study

The City of Westminster itself provides an evocative setting for the interplay between poverty and piety. It is situated on the north bank of the River Thames, west of the City of London. While the City of London is the economic centre, Westminster is London's political and cultural centre. It has been the seat of government for almost

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[100] 'London Lives 1690-1800- Crime, Poverty and Social Policy in the metropolis', www.londonlives.org/static/workhouses, (retrieved, 04/09/2013)
[101] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.146

1000 years, housing parliament and the array of wealthy officials and politicians that accompany it. Its Abbey is the venue for the coronation of monarchs, while its palace has been the principal royal residence since the Norman Conquest. By the eighteenth century, Westminster had around 130,000 inhabitants making it the largest provincial city in the country.[102] By the 1720s it was composed of nine parishes. The western parts of the city were increasingly dominated by the new fashionable squares inhabited by the elite, while the older parts in the east housed the slums.[103] The newly formed parishes of St. Anne's and St. James's in the 1720s became fashionable places to live, while the social character of the older parishes of St. Giles's, and Covent Garden started to decline as the wealthier inhabitants moved west and the poorer ones moved in.[104] This resulted in considerable social polarization, but perhaps to a lesser extent than today. Richard Burn wrote in 1764 of 'the utmost affluence and splendour, on the one hand; and the extremist wretchedness, on the other […]'.[105] Lynn Mackay claims that despite the important position it held, and the prominence of its affluent residents, the poverty in Westminster was equal to any in the city.[106] While historians tend to agree with this generalization, it is important to remember, however, that this division was not only between parishes but also within them. St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly were examples of newer, more fashionable parishes; nevertheless there was always a significant number of poor, enough to justify the establishment of a workhouse in each. Since domestic service was the largest source of employment for men and women in the capital, the nature of the

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[102] 'London Lives'
[103] Ibid.
[104] R.B. Shoemaker, 'Reforming the City: The Reformation of Manners Campaign in London, 1690-1738', in L. Davidson, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn, and R.B. Shoemaker, (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: the responses to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750*, (New York, 1992), p.109
[105] R. Burn, *The History of the Poor Laws: with observations*, (London, 1764), (reprinted 1973), p.225
[106] L. Mackay, 'A culture of poverty? The St-Martin-in-the-Fields workhouse, 1817', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* XXVI:2, (Autumn, 1995), p.213

London season meant the economic status of many of Westminster's residents was unstable. At the end of July the wealthy came to London, so increasing demand for labour, making the winter months leading up to the season the most difficult for workers.[107] Donna Andrew points out that London in general was perhaps the most visible area in the country in terms of both destitution and social experimentation; making it a significant starting point for a study of eighteenth-century welfare.[108]

In terms of eighteenth-century religion, Patricia Croot highlights that after the Act of Uniformity in 1662 Westminster offered Nonconformists not only the possibility of large congregations but also the 'anonymity of a numerous and fluctuating population'.[109] She goes on to conclude that meetings of Dissent were being held in Westminster by the mid-eighteenth century and presentments of non-attendance at Church in this period were generally higher than elsewhere in the county. There is also evidence of large numbers of Catholics in Westminster by 1780.[110] More broadly Michael Watts argues that Dissent tended to flourish in urban areas.[111] Thus, not only is Westminster a good example of eighteenth-century poverty but it also reflected the religious diversity that characterised this period and the challenges it posed for contemporaries.

Sources

This research uses new sources in order to open up fresh avenues of study, creating a starting point from which to begin putting religion back into histories of welfare. The thesis aims to differentiate intentions from practice and develop a better

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[107] Mackay, 'A culture of poverty, p.213
[108] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police,* p.3
[109] P.E.C. Croot, (ed.), *A History of the County of Middlesex,* Vol XIII, City of Westminster, Part 1*, (London, 2009), p.203
[110] Ibid.
[111] See: M. Watts, *The Dissenters: from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, (Oxford, 1985)

understanding of the role and importance of religion in the eighteenth-century workhouse. A vital part of this study will include a comparative examination of the wealth of workhouse committee minutes, vestry records and overseers' accounts from a number of parishes within Westminster. The City of Westminster Archives Centre provides some of the richest records of this kind with documents for a number of parishes spanning the eighteenth century and detailing the decisions, discussions and concerns of those running both the welfare system at a parish level and specific workhouses. An analysis of all nine Westminster parishes is beyond the scope and aims of this thesis. It focuses on the parishes of St. George's Hanover Square, St. James's Piccadilly and St. Margaret's Westminster since these parishes offer both a rich variety of records spanning the eighteenth century and social and economic inter-regional variation. This thesis principally uses two significant bodies of evidence in the form of SPCK committee minutes and workhouse records to identify the aims, ideals and policies of the SPCK and how they were implemented in the daily operation of specific Westminster institutions. These sets of records are supplemented as much as possible with contemporary commentary on character as well as religious and moral reform and the role of workhouses in the treatment of the poor. The evidence is used to analyse the role and importance of religion and religious reform within parochial workhouses and how this developed during the eighteenth century.

Several parochial workhouses were established in Westminster parishes during the 1720s, following the passage of the 1723 Workhouse Test Act that was supported by the SPCK. Particularly rich, detailed records concerning the daily running of these institutions survive for several of the workhouses established in these parishes. Many of these institutions were also directly managed by Matthew Marryott principal adviser to the SPCK on the subject of workhouses. The workhouse at St. George's

Hanover Square was built to a design commissioned by the SPCK. This makes the Westminster workhouses the ideal case study through which to begin to test Hitchcock's theory that parochial workhouses were established in order to reform their inmates, largely as a result of the influence of the SPCK. These records also span the period from the foundation of these institutions across the eighteenth century allowing the relative success and longevity of this reforming agenda to be analysed against existing historical interpretation.

This research will begin by focusing on the antecedents of the parochial workhouses: those set up by corporations in the first decades of the eighteenth century, using published material, the few published early records from the Bristol Corporation workhouse and Acts of Parliament. The London and Bristol Corporation workhouses in particular had close links to the Westminster workhouses in terms of geography, design and the interests of the SPCK. They also provide useful insights into the ways that religious concerns and affiliations interacted with the control and welfare of the poor. Jonathan Barry, for example, points out that Bristol's corporation in particular struck at two of the most significant power bases in English society.[112] It removed poor relief from the individual parish by incorporating a number of parishes, while the guardians were elected from among all ratepayers, regardless of religious affiliation.[113] Thus Bristol, in terms of both its welfare provision and religious background, provides a provocative point of reference from which to view Westminster's parochial institutions. Unfortunately the records of the early running of Bristol's corporation workhouse no longer exist making direct comparison of its daily

[112] J. Barry, 'Introduction', in J. Barry, and K. Morgan, (eds.), *Reformation and Revival in Eighteenth-Century Bristol,* (Bristol record Society, 1994), p.vii
[113] J. Barry, 'The Society for the Reformation of Manners 1700-5', in J. Barry, and K. Morgan, (eds.), *Reformation and Revival in Eighteenth-Century Bristol,* (Bristol Record Society, 1994), p.10

operation with that of parochial institutions impossible.[114] Secondary sources

published before 1940, and a few published primary sources, provide our only

glimpses at the original records for Bristol's corporation during this period. E.E.

Butcher for example presented evidence from *Common Council Proceedings of the*

Corporation of the Poor and *Court Books of the Corporation of the Poor*. These can

be used to build up a picture of religious observance and education in Bristol's

corporation workhouse alongside that in London's corporation institution.[115] This is

by no means intended to be a comprehensive comparison and there is certainly scope

for more work in this area but it illustrates that although as part of a deeply religious

eighteenth century society religion would naturally become part of workhouse life,

the SPCK elevated it to a more prominent position in parochial institutions in

Westminster.

Evidence from the SPCK's committee minutes throughout the eighteenth

century constitutes the other major source of evidence for this thesis. The detailed

record of the concerns and work of the SPCK allows the key intentions and policies of

the Society and how these developed throughout the eighteenth century to be

identified in the operation of specific workhouses. The parish of St. George's

Hanover Square has detailed surviving records in the form of workhouse committee

minutes from the establishment of the workhouse in 1726 through to 1756. Evidence

from St. George's is supplemented by vestry minutes from the parish of St. James's

Piccadilly, which had a similar socio-economic background in the eighteenth century.

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[114] St. Peters Hospital, the original workhouse for Bristol's corporation, became the administrative headquarters for the Bristol poor law authorities in the nineteenth century and all the records for the corporation from its creation were held there. The building was destroyed in an air raid on 24 November 1940 and along with it the poor law records from all the city parishes from 1696. While a few of these records happened to be stored elsewhere at the time and a few did survive, all the records for Bristol's corporation were destroyed.

[115] E.E. Butcher, (ed.), *Bristol Corporation of the Poor: Selected Records 1696-1834,* (Bristol, 1932), p.89

In order to contextualise this analysis, the evidence is compared with parishes that had a contrasting socio-economic composition. Workhouse committee minutes also survive for the parish of St. Margaret's for the first half of the eighteenth century and can be supplemented by accounts and daybooks of admissions and discharges from the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields. St. Margaret's and St. Martin's represent comparatively poorer parishes. These core records are supplemented as much as possible with those for other Westminster, and London institutions. A much wider set of sources including transcripts from the Old Bailey, Chelsea Settlement examinations and extracts from diarists are utilised alongside workhouse records in the discussion of the religious element of character in the eighteenth century (see Chapter Five).

The final part of the thesis assesses the relationship between the SPCK and the workhouse movement after 1750. In order to consider how the relationship between the SPCK, religion and the workhouses changed over the course of the eighteenth century, both the SPCK's committee minutes and parish records concerning Westminster institutions are used. Unfortunately specific workhouse committee minutes used in earlier chapters do not survive after 1750. However, vestry minutes for the parish of St. James's Piccadilly from 1750 to 1782 included the administration of the poor law and remarkable detail concerning the running of the parish workhouse. Each vestry meeting in St. James's started with the reading of the minutes from the workhouse committee and approving them, often discussing the workhouse and giving its committee direction. The workhouse committee minutes for St. George's Hanover Square only record up to 1753. However, the governors and directors of the poor's committee minutes proceed directly on from where the workhouse committee minutes end, and detail the daily running of the workhouse in much the same way. These sources illuminate both the devolvement of the work of

the SPCK and the daily operation of two Westminster institutions inspired by its reforming agenda, across the eighteenth century. These records, supplemented by some wider sources illuminating the concerns and ideals of eighteenth-century society, will be used to assess if in fact the SPCK did abandon the parochial workhouse movement after 1750, why it might have done so, and what effect this had on religion and ideals of religious reform in these institutions.

Chapter Overview

Chapter One introduces the underlying basis for analysis of the Westminster workhouses: the importance of religion in both the management and operation of workhouses in the eighteenth century. The contested position of Dissenters in the London and Bristol workhouses highlights the ambient anxieties over the control of workhouses that society, the SPCK and the parochial workhouse movement were dealing with in the 1720s. London and Bristol are particularly prominent examples of this since there was legislation narrating the argument backwards and forwards over whether Dissenters should be allowed any control over the poor. They also constitute the obvious comparison to the Westminster institutions. Parochial workhouses like those established in Westminster were modelled on the Bristol institution, and the London Corporation is the closest workhouse of its kind in terms of geographical proximity. The issue of religious influence over the poor was particularly important in the Westminster workhouses when it came to apprenticing pauper children and is returned to in Chapter Five. Analysis of the role and importance of religion in corporation institutions also reveals that although religion was an important factor in both types of institution, there was a greater and more consistent emphasis on religious instruction in parochial workhouses as a result of the influence of the SPCK.

Chapter Two provides background and analysis of the SPCK. It identifies its key aims and intentions and argues that the SPCK's focus on the children of the poor and their religious education throughout the eighteenth century drew it to the workhouse movement. For the SPCK the workhouse was a tool by which it could promote the religious reformation of society, principally, though not exclusively, through the religious education of the children of the poor, who were to make up a significant portion of the workhouse population. Analysis of the concerns and work of the SPCK across the first half of the eighteenth century using its committee minutes, demonstrates that although it certainly broadened its interests and took on a range of new projects, this did not lead to the abandonment of previous interests such as the charity school movement. This, coupled with evidence of the continued presence of children in the workhouse during the second half of the eighteenth century, and no statement pointing to a loss of interest in the workhouse movement, strongly suggests that parochial workhouses continued to be relevant to the work of the SPCK.

Once the aims and ideals of the SPCK have been established, Chapter Three uses detailed evidence from the parochial workhouses founded in the affluent parishes of St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly in the City of Westminster, in order to identify and analyse the role and importance of religion within the daily operation of these institutions. It also studies the development of religious observance over the first thirty years of their operation. This demonstrates that religion was central to daily life in these institutions. The workhouse committee spent a substantial proportion of the rates on maintaining religious observance including paying clergymen to attend to the poor in the workhouse, and a schoolmaster to instruct the young. It also bought religious works to facilitate religious education. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the original ideals of

religious reform having been abandoned or neglected in favour of an expansion in medical facilities or a more pragmatic approach to housing the poor during the first half of the eighteenth century as historians have suggested. Inmates continued to be required to attend church regularly as well as attend religious observance in the workhouse, and the committee persistently spent money on personal and materials in order to facilitate this.

It is of course possible, especially given recent historical evidence of regional and even inter-regional variation in practice under the Old Poor Law, that these new, rich and fashionable parishes were anomalies. Therefore Chapter Four extends the themes covered in Chapter Three to consider the role and importance of religion in two other Westminster institutions: the ancient and much poorer Westminster parishes of St. Margaret's Westminster and St. Martin's in the Fields. Despite variation even in small localities in terms of the delivery of poor relief and less overt evidence of the role and importance of religion in these institutions, the sources for these poorer parishes directly confirm the findings for the more affluent areas. Even within the commonplace practice of baptism, for example, a reforming agenda can be identified. The speed at which children were baptised after entering the house illustrates an importance that went beyond social tradition. It suggests that the emphasis was on entering these children into the Anglican Church and setting them onto the path to a pious future. Religion also occupied an important portion of life in these institutions: inmates were required to attend church; there was religious instruction within the house accompanied by specific provision for children, and moral failings such as illegitimacy were targeted. The parish was also willing to spend its constrained budget on this provision, which is perhaps even more significant than spending in the richer parishes. The role of religion was entirely comparable to that in St. George's and St.

James's. Most significantly, these practices were again maintained throughout the first half of the eighteenth century and across the mid-century watershed that a number of historians have identified.

Chapter Five examines the role and importance of religion within one of the most extensive and regular aspects of both the operation of the workhouses and the Poor Laws more generally: apprenticing pauper children. It demonstrates that religion was an essential part of this process, and at times could be decisive, solely dictating whether or not a child was apprenticed to a prospective master. The practice of establishing the 'character' of a potential master or mistress contained an important religious element. The stipulation that children should be apprenticed with religious materials illustrates that the committee was concerned with the spiritual future of these children, and their choice of manual, *The Whole Duty of Man,* supports this desire for ongoing learning and practice. Essentially, these institutions were prepared to spend additional sums on ensuring the piety instilled in the workhouse was maintained on leaving it. Most significantly, regardless of the economic benefits of apprenticing as many children as possible to anyone who would take them, these impressionable inmates were not to be influenced by Catholics or Protestant Dissenters. The religious future of these children took precedence over the choice to widen the pool of potential masters, which is testament to the importance and centrality of religion in these parochial workhouses. This also links directly back to the issue of religious Dissent in relation to control over the poor, and the poor themselves, highlighted in Chapter One. In the same way as there was alarm about Dissenters having control over the poor in government of the London and Bristol workhouses, there was anxiety about both Catholic and Protestant Dissenting masters having control over a pauper child.

Finally, Chapter Six examines the records of the SPCK and the Westminster workhouses after 1750 and up to Gilbert's 1782 Act. It returns to the institutions established at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly, and argues that while the Society may have gradually paid less attention to the workhouse movement, the workhouses did not abandon religious reform. Religion continued to form an important part of workhouse life from the foundation of these institutions until 1782 when Gilbert's Act changed the nature of the workhouse. The effect of this Act on the role of religion in the workhouse (if any) therefore warrants further study. It is possible that this divergence in these two sets of records (the SPCK committee minutes and workhouse records) suggests that the SPCK was not responsible for religious reform in these institutions. However, evidence from the preceding chapters strongly indicates that this was not the case. It is far more likely that once the SPCK's programme of religious reform had been set in motion, the slowing down of this movement in terms of the establishment of new institutions, meant that maintaining this project took little time and effort, especially on the part of the SPCK. This on-going focus on religious behaviour is also evidence of the ambient religious urges present within these parishes. Westminster parishes were committed practically and financially to the inculcation of religion in the workhouse. By 1750 the SPCK could examine these institutions and be satisfied that they were committed to following its model for reform. The SPCK was not solely responsible for the presence of religion in these institutions, but it certainly set the direction of it and the specific agenda that was implemented. Either way, religion constituted and maintained a noteworthy role in the operation of the eighteenth-century parochial workhouses in Westminster.

While evidence that religion was central to the operation of the Westminster workhouses throughout the eighteenth century cannot necessarily be applied

nationally, it certainly illustrates that further investigation in this area is required. There was still likely to be some regional and inter-regional differences in eighteenth-century workhouses despite the SPCK's more coherent underlying ideology.[116] Nonetheless, this thesis enhances understanding of an institution that was fiercely debated by both contemporaries and subsequent historians. Albeit in a markedly different form, the workhouse became the hallmark of nineteenth century social policy. While this research is by no means intended to produce a comprehensive analysis of the role of religion within the parochial workhouse movement, it does provide a refined and improved examination and therefore a solid starting point for putting religion back in to the histories of welfare. It seeks to provoke further work in this field, in order to build a fuller and more accurate interpretation of eighteenth-century society and the institutional care of their poor, so re-enchanting the historical view of the eighteenth-century workhouse.

Before we move on to the aims and agenda of the SPCK, it is important to reflect on why the SPCK regarded workhouses as so important by considering the experiences of corporation workhouses in terms of religion in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

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[116] Morrison, *The Workhouse*, p.132

Who Controlled the Workhouse? :
Religion in Corporation Workhouses, 1696-1718

This chapter concerns the management of urban corporation workhouses in relation to

the control of the religious environment within these institutions, a consideration that

was also to have an impact on later parochial workhouses, including those established

in Westminster.[117] The fight over the position of Dissenters in these institutions

illustrates the importance of religion in this period and the tensions the relatively

tolerant but Anglican SPCK would encounter in promoting parochial institutions from

the 1720s. It also presents a comparison of the importance and daily operation of

religion in this type of institution, in order to better highlight the influence of the

SPCK in the Westminster workhouses. Corporation workhouses established in

London and Bristol will be used as test cases concerning how religion shaped the

form of institutional welfare during the period immediately preceding the rise of the

parochial workhouse movement. These corporations removed power over the poor

from exclusively Anglican churchwardens and allowed Protestant Dissenters a hand

in their government. In 1713 as a result of a shift in the political administration

nationally, dissenting influence over the children of the poor was suppressed in the

London Corporation workhouse, reducing the institution to 'essentially a house of

correction'.[118] No longer was it to house those groups of paupers in which the SPCK

was so interested. In Bristol the position of Dissenters in the government of its

workhouse was so contested that a series of acts were introduced between 1696 and

1718, which effectively stipulated which religious groups could control the

workhouse. The 1714 Bristol Act barred Dissenters from governing the Corporation

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[117] This is addressed in greater detail in Chapter Five.
[118] See: Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.269. Houses of correction preceded and accompanied
workhouses in the eighteenth century. They catered for vagrants and beggars and set them to work as
opposed to paupers with a parish of settlement and an entitlement to relief.

at almost the same time as London's corporation and its dissenting governors had their influence reduced. Parochial workhouses such as the Westminster workhouses were administered by exclusively Anglican churchwardens and therefore sidestepped many of these tensions. Nevertheless, when it came to apprenticing pauper children from parochial workhouses the influence of Dissenters once again became a prominent concern and dictated the operation of these institutions beyond the usual pragmatic and economic concerns of governors. The struggles of corporation institutions from 1696 to 1718 were thus a microcosm of the political, social and religious ambient anxieties that the SPCK was dealing with when it took a more vigorous interest in parochial workhouses in the 1720s. The experiences of the London and Bristol Corporations addressed the fundamental question that plagued eighteenth century society: could Dissenters be allowed to play a role in civil government? Legislation directing the management of workhouses pointed to what an important issue the running of these institutions would become, particularly to organisations such as the SPCK. It also demonstrates how the Poor Law could become polarized and engulfed by the religious and political controversies of the first decades of the eighteenth century. Essentially workhouses became both civic and religious property.

Moreover, the comparison is especially relevant since as Hitchcock has noted, the SPCK modelled the parochial workhouses on corporation institutions, in particular the Bristol example.[119] What this chapter seeks to do is to illustrate that while religion was an important factor in both these types of institution (parochial and corporation workhouses) as part of a deeply religious eighteenth century society, the influence of the SPCK in parochial workhouses elevated religion and religious reform to an even

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[119] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.149

greater status. The influence of the SPCK in parochial institutions was not automatic, it was the churchwardens who opted to implement its ideals and put them into practice day to day in these institutions. Considering the position of religion in those early houses that were a model for those that followed during the first two decades of the eighteenth century highlights why the role of religion in the workhouse was so important. This sets the scene for analysis of the role of the SPCK and religion in the Westminster workhouses during the eighteenth century.

The Impact of Religion on the Government of the Poor in Corporation Workhouses

Religion, especially the role of Protestant Dissenters had a significant impact on the government of corporation workhouses. Anglicans were concerned that giving Dissenters any control over the poor would not only give them a foothold from which to attack the Anglican monopoly but would allow them to directly influence religious provision in the workhouse. This issue would also come to the fore in later parochial workhouses, such as those established in Westminster, when it came to apprenticing pauper children. Stephen Macfarlane has argued for example that 'late Stuart debates on the poor were […] as much about who ought to govern indigent or able-bodied paupers as how they should be governed'.[120] In an eighteenth-century context this 'who' included which religious groups were allowed influence over the poor, emphasizing the importance of religious and political divisions to the problems the workhouse faced. Macfarlane has considered the effects of religious divisions on the government of the London Corporation workhouse. Nevertheless, both welfare and religious historians have often overlooked the religious significance of amendments to the London Corporation's statutes and the Bristol Workhouse Acts, and in turn what

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[120] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.253

this might mean for the running of later institutions. Welfare historians have

mentioned the Bristol Acts in terms of their implications for increases in funding and

the addition of churchwardens to the board of guardians, but tend to overlook the

religious aspects of these acts.[121] Equally, religious historians have cited the Bristol

Acts as part of the reversals in religious policy experienced under successive Whig

and Tory governments in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. It has been

noted for example that if the 1718 Bristol Workhouse Bill had obtained widespread

support, it might have led to the wholesale repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.[122]

However, they continue to overlook the significance of the previous two acts. This

highlights the need for a more integrated approach to religion, politics and the Poor

Law and an appreciation of the impact of religious tensions on institutions such as

workhouses during this period.

In 1713 there was a decisive shift in the operation of London's Corporation for

the Poor which effectively ended its influence over those groups of paupers with

which the SPCK was most concerned; primarily children. In 1712 in response to a

request for more funding for the Corporation, the London workhouse had been forced

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[121] For example, the Bristol historian Butcher considered the Acts in terms of the problems churchwardens and overseers created for the Corporation, and confined discussion of the religious element of these acts to a single footnote: See E.E. Butcher, *Bristol Corporation of the Poor 1696-1898,* (1931), p.89. Paul Langford, meanwhile, considered the religious elements of the Bristol Acts, but viewed their significance in terms of political arguments rather than the importance of the Acts themselves: See P. Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798,* (Oxford, 1991), p.76. Fissell highlights their importance in terms of a much wider argument on the role religion played in social reformers' efforts to solve the problems of poverty, focusing on both the hospital and the workhouse in Bristol: See Fissell, 'Charity Universal'. Finally, Barry's extensive work on Bristol during this period considers the Acts and their religious significance principally from the perspective of John Cary, chief promoter of the original 1696 Act: See J. Barry, 'The 'Great Projector'; John Cary and the legacy of Puritan Reform in Bristol, 1647-1720', in M. Pelling and S. Mandelbrote, (eds.), *The Practice of Reform in Health Medicine and Science 1500-2000: essays for Charles Webster,* (Aldershot, 2005).
[122] W. Gibson, 'William Talbot and Church Parties 1688-1730', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol. 58, No. 1, (January, 2007), p.9. Similarly, Clyve Jones and Geoffrey Holmes regarded the 1718 Act as an attempt to break the Anglican monopoly on local government. See: C. Jones and G. Holmes, (eds.), *The London Diaries of William Nicholson Bishop of Carlisle 1702-1718,* (Oxford, 1985).

to change its by-laws, and was effectively reduced to a house of correction.[123]

Benefactors could still place a child in the workhouse to be educated and placed out apprentice for fifty pounds, but otherwise the Corporation confined itself to vagrants, beggars and the idle and disorderly. Charity schools were deemed a cheaper option for parish children, and more importantly they were firmly under the authority of the Anglican parishes.[124] The committee to enquire into the state of the London workhouse in 1791, reported:

> The London Workhouse […] made a receptacle for rogues and idle vagabonds, of course the industrious poor, the primary objects of the charity, were deterred from applying at the house for employment, through fear of incurring the discredit […] the care of poor deserted children, the importance of that appropriation of it has dwindled from a seminary of near 300 children, to an insignificant ordinary school of about 30 children […].[125]

Until 1713 the London workhouse specifically provided for poor children, like other corporation workhouses and the later parochial workhouses. It did however operate in a slightly different way and housed only particular groups of dependent poor. It was divided in two. One side housed the idle and disorderly poor and was principally a house of correction, and the other housed poor children sent from the parishes combined in the Corporation. Only children over the age of seven were admitted. They were employed from 6am to 7pm, with one hour off for dinner and play, and two hours for instruction in reading and writing.[126] By the Easter of 1703 the London Corporation for the Poor maintained 427 children. However, the 1732 *Account of the Several Workhouses* noted that there were just 129 children in the London workhouse

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[123] 'London Lives'
[124] MacFarlane, 'Social Policy', pp.265-270
[125] *Committee to enquire into the present state of the London workhouse, and what measures would be most expedient and right for the court of common council to adopt for the more effectual and extensive support of that charity,* (London, 1791)
[126] M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England,* (London, 1981)*,* p.27

and it was benefactors as opposed to the parish that supported these poor children.[127]

After 1713 the London workhouse was therefore a markedly different institution and

no longer met the interests of the SPCK. It was not a tool by which large numbers of

the children of the poor could be morally and religiously reformed. The later

parochial institutions, by housing both the able bodied poor and their children would

meet these needs, holding its attention. A year later the influence of Dissenters in

Bristol's workhouse was terminated altogether. In 1714, again in response to a request

for more funding, an Act was introduced in Bristol, which altered the composition of

governors for its corporation and specifically barred Dissenters from governing the

corporation and its workhouse. This signified a clear attack on the role of Dissenters

within these institutions following a political shift in national government.

The Influence of Dissenters in Corporation Workhouses

Bristol had established the first corporation for the poor in 1696. Significantly the

Bristol Corporation, and many of the thirteen other corporations established across the

country (including London) in its wake, permitted Protestant Dissenters to serve on

the governing body's. A defining feature of the 1696 Bristol Workhouse Act, which

provided for the establishment of a corporation of the poor and the building of a

workhouse, was the specific exemption of the elected guardians of the Poor from the

Test Act of 1672. The Bristol Workhouse Act laid down:

> That no officer or officers, who shall be elected […] shall be liable for or
> by reason of such office or execution, to any of the penalties mentioned in
> an Act made the five and twentieth year of the reign of King Charles the
> second, for the preventing the dangers which may happen from Popish
> recusants […].[128]

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[127] *An Account of the Several Workhouses in Great Britain in the year M, DCC, XXXII…* (Third Edition), (London, 1786)
[128] *Bristol Acts Etc. Concerning the Poor*, (1745), Bristol Central Library, Ref: B4580, p.24

This was a uniquely wide provision; despite the Revolution settlement and the Toleration Act of 1689, which allowed Dissenters to worship freely, the Test Act of 1672 continued to restrict eligibility for public offices, including guardian of the poor, to communicant members of the Church of England. Dissenters could not therefore hold public office. However, the Bristol Act meant Dissenters could act as Guardians in the Corporation with a specific exemption clause, and therefore have a hand in the direction and running of its workhouse, which included the implementation of its religious regimen. The Acts for workhouses with this exemption were passed in the heyday of Williamite toleration.

Like Bristol, the City of London Corporation of the Poor, established in 1698 had its own Bill introduced into the House of Commons in 1700 granting its assistants immunity from the Test Act.[129] Two days after the Bill was passed the Tories mounted a petition arguing it was too great a responsibility to give Dissenters, who could now simply buy their way onto a governing body. The petition failed but the strength of hostilities and the importance of religion in the management and control of corporations and their workhouses were evident.[130] The Whig Sir Robert Clayton was behind the revival of the London Corporation in 1698, and Macfarlane's work has demonstrated that it was strongly linked to Whig and dissenting interests.[131] Of the original fifty-two assistants in the London workhouse, twelve were associated with leading Whig institutions. A further fifteen Macfarlane has identified as Dissenters. In

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[129] The London Corporation for the Poor was first established in 1647 but its activities came to a halt following the restoration of Charles II when he took back his properties. The 1662 Settlement Act included provision for a corporation to be created in the City of London. However a shortage of funds owing to plague in 1666 and the Great Fire put an end to its activity. A further act revived the corporation in 1698. See also Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.267

[130] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.267

[131] Ibid.

fact the only Tory on the board of guardians was George Newland. He used his position to discourage parishes to pay the rate.[132]

Dissenters seized their opportunity to play a role in civil government and several corporations became dissenting strongholds.[133] In Hull, backers of the workhouse included several Presbyterians and possibly some of the city's Quakers. Similarly in Colchester Quakers and Dissenters supported the corporation formed in 1698.[134] The clause of the 1696 Act exempting Bristol corporation guardians from the Test Act, however, was not included in all corporations founded in this period. For example, neither those at King's Lynn, founded in 1701, nor at Gloucester, in 1702, contained the clause. However, in the dissenting strongholds of Sudbury (1702) and Plymouth (1707) the exemptions were included. Despite the strength of Dissent in Norwich, its 1712 Act, passed under the period of Tory Anglican resurgence, did not include the exemption. [135] This suggests that the granting of a Test Act exemption was not automatic and was subject to complex local and political forces. While the series of acts determining who could control Bristol's workhouse was unique to Bristol, it was also a sign of how religiously and politically divisive control of the workhouse could be. The corporation workhouses established in London and Bristol had a significant dissenting influence that would continue to impact the operation of these institutions.

Bristol had been a stronghold for Nonconformity since dissenting congregations broke away from the established Church in 1640.[136] Religious diversity flourished in the city, which was home to Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians,

[132] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', pp.265-266
[133] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.108
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] K. Morgan, 'The John Evans list of Dissenting congregations and ministers in Bristol 1715-29', in J. Barry, and K. Morgan, (eds.), *Reformation and Revival in Eighteenth-Century Bristol,* (Bristol Record Society, 1994), p.66

as well as the largest community of Quakers in the country.[137] John Evans's list of dissenting congregations and ministers, compiled between 1716 and 1717, suggests that there were between 3800 and 4300 Dissenters in Bristol at this time, with around 2000 Quakers.[138] Consequently Dissenters accounted for around twenty per cent of the population of Bristol; more than three times the average proportion nationally. The Bristol Tories and Anglicans were powerless to prevent the Corporation from becoming a dissenting stronghold in the city. The prime mover behind the creation of the Corporation and its workhouse was John Cary, a Bristol merchant who became increasingly concerned about the financial effects of poverty in the city. According to Kenneth Morgan, Cary was an 'active Anglican' and a churchwarden himself rather than a Dissenter but he was also a 'radical Whig opposed to the High-Church party'.[139] The Whigs as a group were generally far less concerned than the Tories about the dangers of allowing Protestant Dissenters any power in the city. Although one or two of Cary's supporters were undoubted Anglicans, the group that petitioned for the Act of 1696 was predominantly composed of Whigs and Dissenters. Of the first four treasurers of the Corporation, three were Quakers.[140] Fissell notes that while it is impossible to document the actual number of Dissenters admitted to the Corporation in Bristol the number 'seems to have been substantial'.[141]

In Bristol the potent Anglican-Dissenter split in the city affected its charitable position. Edward Colston, a Bristol merchant and MP, endowed Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and School and helped found Colston's Hospital, a boarding school, which opened in 1710. Colston also gave money to schools in Temple and other parts of Bristol. However, he was a strong Tory and High Churchman and sought to ensure

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[137] Fissell,'Charity Universal', p.122
[138] Morgan, 'John Evans List', p.66
[139] K. Morgan, 'Cary, John', *Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (retrieved, 04/09/2013)
[140] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.107
[141] Fissel, 'Charity Universal', p.137

that no Catholic or Dissenter would gain from his philanthropy. Any boys at the

schools he endowed whose parent attended a Dissenting meeting were to be expelled.

Furthermore, no boy was to be apprenticed from the school to a Dissenter.[142] Thus,

despite Bristol's strong dissenting character, as Madge Dresser asserts, it is important

to remember that Bristol's religious life was deeply Anglican.[143] Barry has also

pointed out that, although Bristol was one of the strongest centres of Dissent in the

country, the division between Anglicans and Dissenters presented a complex and

challenging climate in which to form a corporation for the poor.[144] Thus religion and

more specifically religious conflict would have a significant effect on welfare

provision.

Conflict Over Dissenting Control of the Workhouse

The exemption of the Guardians from the Test Act was a clear attack on the Anglican

monopoly. Corporations removed power over the poor from the hands of the Anglican

churchwardens who had traditionally administered poor law funds. This erosion of the

Anglican position was not well received. The guardians of the new Bristol

Corporation in their first meeting, 10 May 1696 stated: 'The churchwardens were

displeased in surrendering a power, which they had hitherto held, into the hands of the

guardians'.[145] The London Corporation was not given full power over the poor as in

Bristol, which may suggest why the conflict there was not so great. The London

Corporation ran the workhouse but did not administer the entire poor rate. The

outdoor poor continued to be maintained by their parish of settlement. What this did

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[142] Fissel, 'Charity Universal', p.138
[143] M. Dresser, 'Protestants, Catholics and Jews: Religious Difference and Political Status in Bristol', in M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw, (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol,* (Tiverton, 1996)
[144] J. Barry, 'Cultural Patronage and the Anglican Crisis', in J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor, *The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism,* (Cambridge, 1993).
[145] J. Johnson, *Transactions of the Corporation of the Poor in the City of Bristol,* (Bristol, 1826), p.11

mean however is that parishes were effectively faced with a double rate: payments to maintain both the outdoor poor and the corporation workhouse.[146] Anglican churchwardens would still have disliked supporting a dissenting stronghold in the city and permitting them control over the poor in the workhouse, but the double rate also caused practical problems. The London Corporation workhouse would become an easy target for Tories who opposed Dissent, particularly in light of the political shift preceding the death of Queen Anne. Simultaneously however, the long-term cost of a double rate was too much for the parishes to bear. While religion was certainly important here the implications of the cost of the London Corporation cannot be denied.

For Anglicans in Bristol the new Corporation for the Poor represented a dual attack, in allowing Dissenters to govern the poor and by removing complete power over the poor from Anglican churchwardens. This did not mean that the poor were entirely in the hands of Dissenters in the city since Anglicans could also be elected guardians. But it was seen as a major wound to Anglican hegemony and thus generated fierce hostility among Anglican and Tory factions in Bristol. Letting Dissenters into the Corporation meant that the Church of England liturgy was not necessarily going to be instilled into the poor, worse still for Anglicans, this institution might actually increase numbers of Dissenters in the City.

Fissell noted that the Bristol Corporation was 'plagued by faction from its outset'.[147] John Batchelor, the mayor of Bristol in 1695, had helped found the Corporation. John Hine, mayor from 1696, was far less accommodating and refused to grant warrants raising poor rates for the Corporation. The governors were forced to

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[146] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.258
[147] Fissell, 'Charity Universal', p.136

use their own resources.[148] The first guardians of the poor recorded that the mayor had 'resolved to obstruct us all he could'. This would not be an end to the opposition the Corporation faced. Hine had set a precedent and, even after his retirement from office, the churchwardens and overseers continued to prove a 'similar spoke in the machinery'.[149] It took three years before the Bristol Corporation was able to raise the funds to establish a workhouse because of the obstruction of the mayor and the churchwardens. Once the workhouse had been established it took a further amendment act to compel the churchwardens to collect the general rate.[150] Clearly the Anglican churchwardens had been blocked in a campaign of non-cooperation with the new corporation in Bristol.

In 1710 in the wake of the Sacheverell trial, the Tories won a landslide election in Parliament and began an assault on Dissent that would last for the remaining four years of Queen Anne's reign.[151] Attacks on the London and Bristol Corporations were part of a much wider agenda to suppress Dissent. 1711 marked the passage of the Occasional Conformity Act, designed to prevent circumvention of the Test Act. The Occasional Conformity Act pointed the way to the repeal of the exemption clause in the 1696 Bristol Act.[152] Supported by a High Church faction in Convocation, the Tories' renewed attack on Dissenters in corporations began. In 1711 an anonymous pamphlet, entitled *Some Considerations Offer'd to the Citizens of Bristol Relating to the Corporation for the Poor*, represented a strong Anglican attack on the Bristol Corporation. It particularly drew attention to the complaint that 'our poor were taken out of the hands of the church-wardens and overseers of the respective parishes

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[148] Fissell, 'Charity Universal'p.137

[149] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.3

[150] Fissell, 'Charity Universal', p.137. See also Butcher, *Bristol Corporation,* p.5

[151] Barry, 'The 'Great Projector', p.200

[152] For more on the failed attempts to introduce earlier occasional conformity bills, see M. Grieg, 'Bishop Gilbert Burnet and Latitudinarian Episcopal Opposition to the Occasional Conformity Bills, 1702-1704', *Canadian Journal of History,* XLI, (Autumn, 2006), pp.247-262

[…]'.[153] While the author admitted that the 'Church Party' had originally supported

the Corporation, it claimed that the Bristol Corporation and 'all such new corporations

about the kingdom' had been the design of Whigs and Dissenters.[154] This highlights

the concern about Dissenters having control over the poor in the workhouse. The

author claimed that the Corporation had, from the start, been designed to create an

independent dissenting authority in the city, it was not the welfare of the poor they

were interested in it was power. It also suggested that the religious beliefs of

governors were the sole reason for the perceived failure of the Corporation,

illustrating the fierce hostility towards this group on exclusively religious grounds.[155]

By 1712 Bristol's corporation, like the London workhouse was beginning to

suffer from growing debts. This was a result of the cumulative effect of the growth of

population and the continued resistance of some churchwardens to collect the poor

rates.[156] The Corporation needed more money; but it was Parliament that sanctioned

the amount that could be raised from the poor rate. The decision to apply to

Parliament for new legal provision in 1711 was dangerous for Bristol's Dissenters.

The hard-line Tory majority in the Commons was unlikely to look favourably on the

Bristol Corporation for the Poor and its dissenting governors, and could be expected

to reject the petition, or exact a price for raising the poor rate.

Following the petition, a bill to effect it was introduced in 1713. This was

bitterly opposed by the Tories who alleged the Bristol Corporation for the Poor was a

Whig device to divert funds towards dissenting interests.[157] The implication was that

Dissenters could not be trusted to run public bodies or have any influence on society.

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[153] 'Some Considerations Offer'd to the Citizens of Bristol Relating to the Corporation for the Poor in the said city', (1711), in *Somerset Tracts,* vol.7, (1710-38), Bristol Central Library, Ref: B13552, p.1
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] It took until 1758 for parliament to agree that the growing volume of pauperism was not consistent with the poor rates and adjust the financial machinery set up.
[157] J. Latimer, *The Annuals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century,* (1893), p.103

The new Bristol Act was an opportunity for the Tory-Anglican alliance in Parliament to end the Bristol Corporation's exemption from the Test Act and prevent Dissenters from having a hand its operation. The thirty-four churchwardens of Bristol's parishes were made members of the Corporation flooding the government of the Bristol workhouse with Anglicans.[158] A clause explicitly removed the Dissenters' exemption from the Test Act, providing that:

> […] no person or persons shall be capable of being elected or chosen a Guardian for the poor, or have any office or employment in or under to aforesaid corporation, who shall not have taken the Sacrament according to the Rites of the Church of England […].[159]

By excluding Dissenters from the government of the Corporation, and admitting churchwardens as guardians, the Act returned power over the poor and their religious instruction in the workhouse to the hands of Bristol's Anglicans, reverting to the position prior to 1696. Whereas in London the Tory-Anglican alliance in Parliament had simply removed those paupers in need of religious education and reform from dissenting influence in the workhouse, in Bristol they barred Dissenters from its government. Either way the Dissenting influence in these institutions was squashed.

The 1714 Bristol Act however did not pass easily, illustrating the strength of the conflict surrounding religion in these institutions. Paul Langford noted that it 'attracted large divisions for a local bill', only going through by 138 to 83 votes on a third reading in the Commons.[160] He also claimed that 'the Bristol Act of 1714 gave a clear signal as to what would ensue under prolonged Tory Hegemony'.[161] Evidence of this anti-toleration agenda can also be seen in the Schism Act passed at the same time as the 1714 Bristol Act, which also attacked the privileges of Dissenters, despite an urgent petition by Dissenters in Bristol against it. The Schism Act required that every

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[158] Latimer, *The Annuals of Bristol*, p.103
[159] *Bristol Acts*, pp.48-9
[160] Langford, *Public Life*, p.76
[161] Ibid.

schoolmaster and private teacher should be subject to the religious test, effectively

extinguishing the dissenting academies.[162] Both laws were passed only days before

Queen Anne's death. The Schism Act was never fully applied, since the Whig regime

that followed the Hanoverian succession chose not to apply it; however Bristol's

magistrates chose to enforce their Workhouse Act.[163]

The political climate shifted again with the death of Queen Anne, which had

further implications for the running of Bristol's corporation and would precipitate the

political-religious climate in which later parochial workhouses would be established.

Whereas Anne had presided over Tory ministries from 1710, George I favoured the

Whigs and supported them in the following election, that of 1715, which guaranteed

their victory. Preoccupied by the 1715 Jacobite rising and securing the Whig regime,

the new government had a number of other priorities in reversing the Tory legislation

of 1710-14. Bristol's Dissenters were however keen to restore the provisions of the

1696 Act and regain their role in civil government. Finally, in 1718, a third Bristol

Workhouse Act effectively repealed the 1714 Act and allowed Dissenters to return to

membership of the Corporation. It stated that the clause that demanded that those who

have not 'taken the Sacrament according to the Rites of the Church of England' were

not eligible to be guardians was 'very detrimental to the said Corporation'. This was

because it made it 'very difficult to find out a sufficient number of proper and well

qualified persons of the said city' to act as guardians.[164] This religious tussle over the

management of the Corporation thus had a significant impact on its operation. The

Act therefore returned the Corporation of the Poor to the position of the 1696 Act,

permitting Dissenters to act as guardians of the Corporation giving them control the

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[162] Latimer, *Annuals of Bristol*, p.103
[163] There is some evidence of local application by JPs of the Schism Act, see W. Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton,* (Oxford, 2009), p.185, et seq.
[164] 'Bristol Act's', p.72

poor and their religious instruction in the workhouse. While it is certainly wrong to suggest religious conflict was the sole purpose of the Bristol workhouse acts, it was highly significant that the management of Bristol's poor should be the focus of such religious and political contest.

These Acts became the focus of national debate when brought to Parliament. The passage of the third Bristol Act in 1718 was also highly controversial and reflected a split in the Whigs nationally, illustrating just how important religion and the management of the poor were in the eighteenth century. The Bishops, who exercised twenty-four votes in the House of Lords, were also divided. Tory bishops and some cautious Whig bishops, including Archbishop Wake, were opposed to the change. Bishop William Nicholson of Carlisle was particularly concerned that the Bristol Bill should not pass but most Whig bishops supported it.[165] On the second reading, in March 1718, six bishops voted in favour and ten against, though the Bill passed in the Lords by twenty-three votes.[166] The Tory Bishop Trelawny of Winchester, who had held the diocese of Bristol thirty-three years earlier, hearing of the attempt to readmit Dissenters into the Bristol Corporation, and despite his sixty-eight years, travelled to Westminster specifically to oppose the Bill. He feared that Dissenters would eventually become elected to Parliament and would abolish the Church of England. This is likely to have been the central reason for such opposition to allowing Dissenters to hold office. It was the fear of giving them a foothold from which they could establish more power. Bishop Trelawny even entered a protest in the Lords Journal when the Act was passed.[167] Bishop George Smalridge of Bristol, another Tory and a staunch High Churchmen, strongly defended the Test and

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[165] N. Sykes, *William Wake,* (Cambridge, 1957), ii, pp.127-137, and Jones and Holmes, *Diaries of William Nicholson,* p.670
[166] Jones and Holmes, *Diaries of William Nicholson,* p.679
[167] M.G. Smith, *Fighting Joshua: A study of the Career of Sir Jonathan Trelawny…Bishop of Bristol, Exeter, & Winchester,* (Redruth, 1985), p.150

Corporation Acts, and put up strenuous resistance to the Bristol Bill in the House of Lords. He also signed the protest against the passage of the Bill.[168] The Act was subject to protests in the Lords by three other bishops, including the Jacobite Bishop Francis Atterbury, and nine Tory peers.[169] Thus, the government of Bristol's corporation became a focus for national Tory High Church and Whig Low Church conflict.

The Wider Implications of Dissenting Influence in the Workhouse

The 1718 Act was also part of a much wider Whig reversal of Tory anti-Dissent legislation. Langford claimed that the Act acquired more than local significance, since it stimulated Whig and Low-Churchmen to demand a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and seemed likely to lead to the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act. It should be noted that attempts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts failed, although moderate Whigs were sympathetic to Dissenters, there were few who sought wholesale toleration.[170] The Occasional Conformity Act was repealed however. The conflict surrounding these acts illustrates the concern that surrounded Dissenters having any political power, even over the poor, and the importance of religious politics in the running of workhouses.

Despite the significant presence of Dissenters within the government of London's corporation, and evidence of the conflict the presence of Dissenters within Bristol's board of guardians sparked, Macfarlane maintains that disputes were more about who controlled the funds rather than the control of the poor in the London Corporation. He argues it was the creation of a double rate which ultimately led to its

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[168] W. Gibson, 'Altitudinarian Equivocation: George Smalridge's Churchmanship', W. Gibson and R. Ingram (eds.) *Religion, Politics and Identity in Britain 1660-1832*, (Aldershot, 2005)
[169] Langford, *Public Life*, p.76
[170] Ibid.

failure in terms of providing for the able bodied poor.[171] The Bill that granted the London Corporation assistants an exemption from the penalties of the Test Act, that the Tories petitioned against, also ordered the parishes to pay the rates to the Corporation. This element of the Bill coupled with the parishes' inability to maintain a double rate in the long-term has led Macfarlane to argue for the primacy of financial constraints over religious tensions in the ultimate failure of the London Corporation.[172] However, taken in the context of the political-religious struggle over the Bristol workhouse and indeed the importance of religion in the later Westminster workhouses, the influence of religious concerns in these institutions cannot be underestimated. While Macfarlane is not necessarily mistaken, it is worth thinking in greater detail how the issue of religion shaped the form of institutional welfare in the period immediately preceding the rise of the parochial workhouse movement.

Religion shaped the management and operation of the London and Bristol Corporation workhouses from their inception and into the period that would see the establishment of parochial workhouses in Westminster. The repeal of the Bristol Act in 1718 clearly set the agenda for a tolerant atmosphere in the parochial workhouses promoted by the SPCK, as demonstrated by the allowances made for dissenting paupers in St. James's.[173] Nevertheless, the issue of dissenting power over the poor and their religious education could not simply be resolved by putting workhouses in the hands of churchwardens. When it came to spreading the burden of pauper children through apprenticeship, religion and more specifically concerns about Dissent would have a definitive effect on this process. Regardless of the economic benefits of apprenticing as many children as possible, the strength and depth of hostilities between Anglicans and Dissenters over the running of corporation workhouses in the

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[171] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', pp.265-266
[172] See: Macfarlane, 'Social Policy'
[173] For more on this see Chapter Three.

first decades of the eighteenth century pointed to how prominent the issue the religious affiliations of masters would become. The importance of the religious education and future of these young charges was such that the Anglican authorities simply could not risk dissenting influence.

The Distinctiveness of Religion in Parochial and Corporation Workhouses

Hitchcock maintains that corporations for the poor and the workhouses they established in England between 1696 and 1713 were created with the idea that they would be self-supporting (although this was usually abandoned fairly quickly). Parochial institutions created after these dates however were based more on reform and deterrence as a result of the influence of the SPCK.[174] Parish workhouses never aimed to make a profit; the work that was undertaken in them had a very different purpose.[175] They aimed to instil values of industry and piety rather than make the poor self-supporting. The combination of several parishes made the Bristol and London corporation workhouses much larger and fundamentally different types of institution to parochial workhouses in terms of aims and objectives. Ultimately however, Bristol's Corporation workhouse still became a blueprint for later provincial workhouses, albeit not in terms of aims and intentions.[176] The SPCK adopted several ideas from corporation workhouses and brought them into an Anglican environment. Many of the founders of the Bristol workhouse had strong ties to both the SRM and the SPCK, the latter having also taken a strong interest in the reformation of manners at this time.[177] Arthur Bedford, vicar of Temple in Bristol, was a correspondent for the

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[174] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.1
[175] Payne, 'Children of the Poor', p.40
[176] Barry, 'The 'Great Projector', p.188
[177] M.E. Fissell, *Patients, Power and the Poor in Eighteenth Century Bristol,* (Cambridge, 1991), p.81

SPCK from 1699.[178] He informed the SPCK of the Corporation's activity and the establishment of its workhouse. Sir John Duddlestone of Bristol wrote to the SPCK on 8 January 1701 with an account of the great benefit of the workhouse to the city of Bristol and in particular its influence 'upon the lives and manners of the vulgar'.[179] Thus, it was not just parochial foundations the SPCK was interested in as tools by which it could carry out its reforming agenda, but it was parochial workhouses that ultimately best met its needs, possibly as a result of solely Anglican governance.

The Bristol and City of London workhouses were not directed by the SPCK's programme for religious reform to the degree that parochial institutions were, however there is certainly evidence of genuine efforts to reform inmates as well as make them self-supporting. Both corporation and parochial workhouses were established in the same climate of religious and moral reform that gave birth to the SPCK itself, and a plethora of other reform movements in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

Religious instruction formed part of daily life in London's Corporation workhouse and there is evidence that the SPCK attempted to introduce its brand of religious reform. In 1702 the SPCK's committee minutes recorded that: 'Mr Hodges also mov'd that some of the societies Books & Papers may be distributed amongst the poor children in the workhouse in Bishopsgate Street.'[180] While the SPCK certainly took an interest in Bristol, and indeed even used many of the ideas implemented there, there is no evidence in the SPCK's committee minutes to suggest it attempted to introduce its programme of reform there. The London workhouse was situated in Bishopsgate Street and by 1714 it had its own chapel in Half Moon Alley. Prayers

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[178] Fissell, 'Charity Universal', p.131
[179] Partly reproduced in, W.O.B. Allen and E. McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898,* (London, 1898), p.80
[180] SPCK Committee Minutes [hereafter SPCK. MS] A1/1, (13 August, 1702)

were held in the chapel at 6am and 6pm, and catechising took place on Sundays for which the minister Mr. Barrett was paid twenty pounds per year. The inmates were to go to St. Helens Church twice on a Sunday unless the weather was bad in which case they would hear a sermon in the workhouse chapel.[181] Thus, although the overarching intentions behind corporation institutions may not have been reforming and religious this did not mean religion did not have a place within these workhouses. As part of a deeply religious eighteenth century society religion was part of the operation of corporation workhouses.

Religious observance, and even intentions for reform, are also evident in the Bristol Corporation workhouse. John Cary published an *Account of the proceedings of the corporation of Bristol* in 1700, four years after the Corporation had been established, but the workhouse itself had only been in operation for a year. In this publication he specifically noted that:

> […] our boys and girls are educated to sobriety, and brought up to delight
> in labour […] we have great reason to hope these young plants will produce
> a virtuous and laborious generation, with whom immorality and
> prophaneness [*sic*] […] there is neither cursing or swearing, nor prophane
> [*sic*] language, to be heard, though many of them were bread up in all
> manner of vices, which neither Bridewell nor whippings could fright them
> from.[182]

It was therefore at least intended that the children should be educated in the workhouse, and efforts were made to reform their morals. It is important to note that moral attributes such as sobriety, labour, and the absence of swearing among others were religious as much as moral principles since a moral life ensured salvation. According to Cary during the first year of its running, the workhouse was successful in this endeavour. Also, in line with what the SPCK tried to achieve in later parochial institutions his account stated that: 'Both old and young attend prayers twice a day

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[181] J. Paterson, *Pietas Londinensis; or, The Present State of London,* (London, 1714), p.140
[182] J. Cary, *An account of the proceedings of the corporation of Bristol, execution of the Act of Parliament for the better employment and maintaining the poor of that city*, (London, 1700), p.18

(except the Bedridden, for whom other care is taken) and go to Church twice on Sundays […]'.[183] This suggests that both religion and moral reform were part of daily life in the Bristol's workhouse. Barry notes that Cary's account of the Corporation was not entirely accurate. Whipping was used for example. He continues to maintain however that the surviving records demonstrate that the aim to reform manners was an institutional priority.[184] It is probable based on the period in which these workhouses were established (during the perceived moral crisis at the end of the seventeenth century), and the presence of the poor (the primary objects for reform) that there was a genuine intention to reform inmates. As the SPCK recognized, these institutions provided the perfect opportunity to reform the morals of the poor. Though whether it was ever the primary aim, as it was in the parochial institutions, and whether it was actually put into practice consistently across the eighteenth century remains in question. This also continues to be speculative since published accounts of the Bristol workhouse before the records of the workhouse were destroyed, remains our only source of information.

Barry highlights that while religion and religious education were to become part of life in the Bristol Corporation, it struggled with the liturgy of religious services and how to provide a religious education for the children.[185] This never became an issue in the Westminster workhouses since their strictly Anglican government automatically meant services and education would be those of the Church of England. In the Anglican pamphlet *Some Considerations Offer'd to the Citizens of Bristol Relating to the Corporation for the Poor*, which attacked the Corporation in 1711, the author noted that it took some time to agree the 'method' by which religion would be taught. The pamphlet also went on to state that: 'The publick [*sic*] form was offer'd by some,

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[183] Cary, *An account*, p.17
[184] Barry, 'The 'Great Projector', p.192
[185] Ibid, p.201

as us'd in the Establish'd Church' but it was 'thought unfit for a family […]'.[186] The diverse religious affiliations of the governors clearly meant that religious observance and instruction constituted a significant difficulty in the operation of the workhouse. Eventually a local clergyman devised a form of worship that suited the guardians. This was (at least until 1714) an institution that served Dissent. Butcher also highlighted that the 'hospital' (as the workhouse was often called), was adjacent to the Church and inmates attended on Sundays and there were prayers in the house.[187] The inmates would thus have attended Anglican services, but as Clive Field has pointed out, many Dissenters continued to attend their parish churches as well as dissenting meetings.[188] Thus, dissenting governors may not have viewed worship in the parish church as a problem. However, since the pamphlet also highlighted the form of liturgy used in the established church had been rejected in the workhouse, and a special one had been devised, the format of the service used in the house was likely to be different from that used in parochial workhouses. This was not the case for all corporations however. In the London workhouse it appears that, despite the presence of Dissenters on the governing body, there was no special service, and the children were 'religiously educated according to the Church of England'.[189] This may also have been another reason why London's corporation workhouse avoided the depth of conflict that surrounded Bristol's workhouse. The government of Dissenters and their control of the London workhouse did not result in the promotion of Dissent within its walls in terms of the religious instruction and education provided.

Despite the intention of implementing religious observance and education in the Bristol workhouse however James Johnson argued:

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[186] 'Family' was a term often used to refer to the workhouse population. 'Some Considerations', p.6
[187] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.8
[188] C.D. Field, 'Counting Religion in England and Wales: The Long Eighteenth Century, c.1680-1840', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol.63, 4, (October, 2012), p.695
[189] *An Account of the Several Workhouses,* (1732)

> […] it does not appear that any particular religious duties were performed
> in St. Peters Hospital […] before the year 1752 when Mr. John Wilson a
> stationer, was allowed twenty pound per ann. for such service, and
> instructing the children in the Hospital […].[190]

This suggests that religion in Bristol's workhouse was something of an afterthought rather than a priority. Nevertheless, just because there had been no record until this point does not necessarily mean these duties were not performed. In October 1753 *The Common Council Proceedings* for the workhouse noted:

> A motion having been made and agreed on that prayers and the common
> service may be of great use to assist the minds of out family […] [and]
> likewise taken in the proper Educating and Instructing the children […].[191]

The tone of this entry indicates however that this was a new idea altogether, rather than simply a renewal of previous orders concerning prayers and services for the inmates. Thus, even if originally regular prayers and attendance at church services had been implemented, the suggestion here is that this had been abandoned fairly early on. The entry also notes that it was 'the common service' that would be of use, suggesting that despite the 1718 Act allowing Dissenters to once again govern the Corporation, the special liturgy that had been devised had been abandoned by this point and it was now offering the Anglican form.

It took until 1767 for a specific clergyman to be employed as chaplain to the Bristol workhouse when the Reverend Thomas Rouquet was appointed, or at least this is the first record of a named chaplain being appointed.[192] This contrasts with the Westminster parish of St. George's Hanover Square, where a chaplain was appointed to the workhouse during the very first meeting of the governors.[193] Butcher concluded that until this point prayers in the workhouse were conducted by a layman as in the

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[190] Johnson, *Transactions*, p.50
[191] 'Common Council Proceedings, 11 October, 1753', partly reproduced in, Butcher, *Selected Records*
[192] See: Johnson, *Transactions*, p.50.
[193] For more on St. George's see Chapter Three.

case of John Wilson the stationer or perhaps even an inmate.[194] He also points out

however, that the workhouse was so close to St. Peter's Church there was little need

for separate services except for the sick.[195] Therefore the absence of an appointed

chaplain did not necessarily mean that there was no place for religion in the Bristol

workhouse, but it certainly did not hold the prominent position it did in the

Westminster workhouses.

It appears that education in these institutions was at least in part religious as in

the Westminster workhouses. A report on the London workhouse in 1707 stated that

the children '[…] are taught to read, and also their Catechisms […]' signifying that

not only was there a regular round of religious observance but specifically that the

children were catechised as in the later Westminster workhouses.[196] Morgan argues

that it was intended that the Bristol workhouse should have an educational and

disciplinary purpose rather than purely a financial one.[197] Similarly, Butcher confirms

that Cary made it clear that the main purpose of the workhouse was educational and

disciplinary not financial. This suggests a reforming quality. However, he continued

that in reality industry as a source of revenue alternated with industry as a means of

education throughout, and 'the balance of duration certainly lie with the former'.[198] In

parochial workhouses, while industry was an important part of these institutions

religious reform took precedence. Butcher concludes: 'The principal aim of the

founder guardians in establishing workhouses was to give the children a technical

training which would enable them to become independent.'[199] Bristol's workhouse

was principally aimed at directly reducing the poor rates rather than morally

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[194] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.20
[195] Ibid.
[196] *The London Workhouse. A True Report…,* (1707)
[197] Morgan, 'Cary, John'
[198] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.6-7
[199] Ibid.

reforming the poor. Religion and religious education was part of life in Corporation workhouses but it was never central. Cary claimed in his account that the children 'were taught their catechisms at home [in the workhouse] and had prayers twice every day [...]' and '[...] they [boys] are likewise taught to read, and we shall hereafter teach them to write'.[200] This suggests that children were to be educated in these institutions, and, as in the Westminster workhouses and the London Corporation, they were specifically to be catechised regularly. However, Butcher maintains that education was a luxury provided for the children only intermittently and sparingly in Bristol, and, in the selection of teachers, economy outweighed efficiency.[201] He resolves that the renewed orders for education implied that sometimes it lapsed altogether.[202] For example, in 1745 the *Common Council Proceedings of the Corporation of the Poor* ordered:

> [...] that the affair of having the children in this house instructed in reading be also referred to the committee who are desired to appoint a proper person for that purpose.[203]

This suggests that up to this point either the children had not been instructed in reading, or if they had, there was certainly no 'proper' person appointed to undertake this. In turn this indicates that it was not considered a priority.

As in the later parochial workhouses, apprenticeship was one of the principal means of pauper children leaving Bristol's Corporation workhouse. Butcher found evidence of some concern for the future of these children once they had left the workhouse, which included their religious future. Not only were workhouse children not to be apprenticed to chimney sweeps for example, proceedings were taken against masters for ill treatment. In terms of concern for the spiritual future of these charges,

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[200] Cary, *An account*, p.11 and p.16
[201] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.8
[202] Ibid, p.18
[203] 'Common Council Proceedings of the Corporation of the poor, 8 August 1745', partly reproduced in, Butcher, *Selected Records*, p.44

John Robinson, Bishop of Bristol, made a donation of fifty pounds in 1708 to the

Corporation specifically to be laid out on Bibles to give to children when

apprenticed.[204] Still, the fact that the Bishop had to make this very specific donation

suggests that this was not a practice undertaken by the Corporation itself.

Unfortunately these secondary conclusions and the few available primary

sources for Bristol are all we have to compare to religious experiences in the

Westminster institutions. While the natural instinct is always to question conclusions

of the past, this evidence taken together does appear to confirm the general consensus

that these two types of institution were fundamentally different. The ideals and aims

of the SPCK and its programme of religious reform are far more visible in the records

of the parochial institutions Hitchcock maintains they inspired. Bristol's workhouse

undeniably contained an element of religious reform but it was never a primary aim as

in the Westminster workhouses. The presence of such a religiously diverse group of

governors, and the political-religious struggle for control of the Bristol institution

from 1696 to 1718 certainly did not make implementing a regular round of religious

observance and education straightforward. Yet, evidence that they were able to

eventually generate a form that pleased everyone indicates that it was ultimately

difference in purpose that made the religious experience of paupers in the Bristol

Corporation workhouse distinct from, and less important than in the Westminster

workhouses. This however did not apply when it came to controlling the Corporation;

here religion took centre stage. It is interesting that the London Corporation did not

completely take control from the churchwardens, it implemented Anglican services

and education for children, it did not encounter the level of conflict that Bristol did,

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[204] Butcher, *Bristol Corporation*, p.23. This is surprising since Robinson is usually perceived as a hardline Tory. He was a Tory minister in a Tory Government. It is therefore interesting that he would give this benefaction to such a dissenting hotbed. This was before Dissenters were excluded from the government of the corporation in 1714. Perhaps this was simply about ensuring these children had religious works or perhaps he was not as hardline as previously assumed.

and the SPCK treated it differently. The SPCK took an interest in the London Corporation, but it was perhaps a change in its function that ended this in 1713 and drew the SPCK's attention to parochial style institutions.

Conclusions

Corporations for the poor established in the first two decades of the eighteenth century and their workhouses were one of the places where conflicts over religion can be seen to have had most direct impact upon both the management and organisation of the poor and the general populace. Most citizens were in some way connected to the Poor Law, either as recipients or ratepayers. The central question the Bristol Workhouse Acts addressed was whether Dissenters could be permitted to run the workhouse, and be admitted to a political role in the lowest tier of government and thereby exert influence over the poor. The management and operation of the London and Bristol Corporations reveal not only the depth of conflict but also that in the early eighteenth century at least, running a workhouse not a secular act; it was a deeply political and religious one. Therefore, to return to Macfarlane's point that debates about the poor were as much about who should govern the poor as how they should be governed, religiously who governed the poor certainly took precedence in these London and Bristol institutions in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Their experiences demonstrate the ferocity and complexity of the Anglican-Dissenter and Whig-Tory combat and the defining links between religion, politics and the Poor Law in this period.

        In terms of how religion operated inside these corporation workhouses, there is certainly a need and scope for more comprehensive analysis. Still, evidence presented by historians such as Butcher and Macfarlane demonstrates that although

there were efforts to religiously and morally reform the poor in these institutions it was never a priority. It is likely that religious instruction in the Bristol workhouse was of a different nature to that in parochial Anglican institutions. The presence of such a powerful group of Dissenters led to a specialised liturgy being produced for use in the house. This religious diversity made implementing religious observance and instruction more challenging than in parochial institutions where there was no question over the form. Yet, since a new form was eventually produced for Bristol's workhouse it is far more likely it was priority rather than complexity that led to religion having a less significant role in its operation than in parochial institutions. Conversely in the London workhouse, the Anglican liturgy was used to educate the children, which attracted less complaint from Tories and Anglicans. Nevertheless, as in Bristol after a period of prolonged Tory control in Parliament the influence of Dissenters over the children of the poor at least, was eventually culled when the role of the workhouse was altered. Thus, while the suggestion is that religion played a less significant role in the running of corporation institutions than later parochial workhouses, in terms of controlling the workhouse religion was central. Langford has pointed to the longevity of these issues, noting that in Manchester disputes about the share of power accorded to religious groups wrecked the campaign for a workhouse bill in 1731.[205] In the years after 1718, Tory Anglican churchwardens across the country were insistent on building parochial workhouses under their own government. This was enshrined in the 1723 Workhouse Test Act (Knatchbull's Act). Nevertheless, the prominent place of religion in the running and operation of these institutions would continue, and conflict would still play a decisive role. Workhouses could be politically and religiously divisive in the eighteenth century, as will be

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[205] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p.76

demonstrated through the aims and intentions of the SPCK and the operation of the

Westminster workhouses. The following chapters will consider the ways in which the

SPCK was able to take ideas from these institutions and along with its specific

reforming agenda, implement them in an Anglican environment. Yet these

workhouses continued to encounter and adapt policy in light of concern about

Dissenters both in terms of reliving the dissenting poor and dissenting control over the

poor.

Chapter Two:

The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement

At the first meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge [SPCK] on 8 March 1698 it was stated that its purpose was to counteract 'the growth of vice and immorality' which it ascribed to a 'gross ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion [...]'.[206] Throughout the eighteenth century the SPCK took on a variety of causes such as the charity school movement and the distribution of Bibles, and promoted a range of solutions for the perceived decay in moral and religious values that had taken hold by the end of the seventeenth century. One of the most neglected aspects of its particular brand of reform by historians is the parochial workhouse movement. Hitchcock has concluded that the SPCK was largely responsible for the establishment of parochial workhouses across the country during the first half of the eighteenth century.[207] He argues: 'The SPCK added energy, influence and a sense of direction to movements which had already taken off and were beginning to gather speed'.[208] Historians such as Dudley Bahlman, W.O.B. Allen and Edmund McClure, and Craig Rose have explored the history, origins and aims of the SPCK as a religious reforming society.[209] Nevertheless, Hitchcock remains the only historian to have investigated its role in the workhouse movement in any detail.

Welfare historians such as Slack and Siena have begun to incorporate Hitchcock's thesis that the SPCK was the main instigator of this movement in the

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[206] SPCK.MS A1/1 (8 March, 1698)
[207] See: Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers'
[208] Ibid, p.161
[209] See for example: D.W.R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688,* (New Haven, 1957); Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years;* C. Rose, 'The Origins and Ideals of the SPCK 1699-1726', in J. Walsh, C. Haydon, and S. Taylor, *The Church of England c. 1689-c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism,* (Cambridge, 1993)

1720s and instilled its ideals of moral reform into the operation of these institutions. They maintain however, that this reforming agenda was short-lived, and certainly by 1750 the SPCK and its programme of religious reform had abandoned the workhouse.[210] The SPCK's committee minutes throughout the eighteenth century suggest that Slack and Siena's conclusions about the SPCK's relationship with the workhouse movement are inadequate. Although some historians have examined these minutes, sustained analysis of this evidence across the first half of the eighteenth century has yet to be undertaken, particularly in terms of the workhouse movement (apart from in the work of Hitchcock). What a close reading of the minutes shows is that the SPCK did not exchange one method of reform for another; beginning with charity schools and only turning to the workhouse when these fell out of favour from 1715.[211] Instead it was able to broaden its interests while maintaining existing projects.

The SPCK minutes highlight that the overarching objective of the Society during this period was the reformation of the poor, with a particular emphasis on the religious education of children. The workhouse offered the SPCK the ideal opportunity to inculcate piety, especially since children made up a significant proportion of its population. Workhouses can thus be seen as forming part of the same drive for religious reformation as was played out in the earlier charity schools. This evidence also indicates that there was no abrupt break in the SPCK's overall aims when they turned their attention towards the workhouses in the 1720s. Finally, these minutes further reveal some of the connections between the SPCK and the

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[210] See for example: Slack, *The English Poor Law*, and Siena, *Venereal Disease*
[211] Jones and Tomkins argue that the SPCK turned to the workhouse from 1715 and in the 1720s when the charity schools became controversial, see: Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, and Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*. Slack argues that revelations of cruelty and mismanagement in workhouses from the mid-eighteenth century also caused a change in direction for the SPCK, see, *The English Poor Law*, p.44

Westminster parishes that established workhouses in this period, directly supporting Hitchcock's thesis that the SPCK played key role in the establishment of parochial workhouses in this period.

The SPCK and Early Eighteenth-Century Reform Movements

In 1957 Bahlman argued in his seminal book, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* that for contemporaries, the moral dimension of the 1688 Revolution was as important as its political and constitutional aspects. He explains that in the late seventeenth century moral improvement was a necessary companion to political change, which generated an unprecedented attempt to reform English morals and manners.[212] Societies for the Reformation of Manners [SRM] were formed across the country, policing the behaviour of the masses. The SPCK (which was founded in 1698) can be seen as part of this moral revolution. The debates about morality and welfare that this revolution sparked also led to the establishment of corporations for the poor such as those founded in Bristol and London in the same period. The latter connected moral and religious reform with the incarceration of the poor, a theme that would be further developed by the SPCK in the parochial workhouse movement. While Rose has described the SPCK as the 'foremost voluntary society within the Church of England', it is important to view its programme for reform and its relationship with the workhouse movement in the early eighteenth century as part of a much wider effort to reform society.[213]

Indeed in its early years the SPCK sought to encourage every kind of reform.[214] Within the first year of its operation the minutes noted:

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[212] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*
[213] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.172
[214] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.71

> […] it is the opinion of this society that a good correspondence be
> encouraged & maintained between this and the societies for the
> Reformation of manners & ye Religious societies.[215]

Between 1690 and 1738 a series of religious and reforming societies were founded.[216]

Dr. Woodward's account of the religious societies in 1712 stated that they were

intended '[…] to put a stop to our overflowing wickedness […]'.[217] He continued:

'[…] they have a means of reviving a great sense of religion in many of the

inhabitants […] and have begun a very hopeful reformation of manners among

them'.[218] This echoed the aim of the SPCK to inculcate piety. While religious

societies were predominantly Anglican, reforming societies were also open to

Nonconformists.[219] The religious societies worked for the benefit of their members,

they worked with the Church and had the support of many clergymen. In contrast, the

reforming societies- assuming their members were already virtuous- worked for the

benefit of others. Woodward reported in his account:

> […] the societies for reformation bent their utmost endeavours from the
> first to suppress public vice; whilst the religious societies endeavoured
> chiefly to promote a due sense of religion […].[220]

Thus, although the religious and reforming societies were part of the same movement,

they served different roles. The SPCK was strictly Anglican like most of the religious

societies, but its connection with the Societies for the Reformation of Manners was

close.[221] The SPCK sought to reform the whole of society by inculcating religion, not

just amongst its members. In its early years the SPCK acted as a central agency for

the other reforming societies as well as its own members and it also aided the

religious societies by disseminating religious literature and offering advice on

projects. The SPCK gradually turned its attention to the education of the poor as the

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[215] SPCK.MS A1/1, (2 May, 1700)
[216] T. Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700-1800,* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.70
[217] J. Woodward, *Religious Societies: Dr. Woodward's Account,* (1712), p.45
[218] Ibid, p.47
[219] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.67
[220] Woodward, *Dr. Woodward's Account,* p.58
[221] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, pp.69-70

reforming societies, and what they stood for, became increasingly unpopular in the 1710s and 1720s.[222] As Bahlman puts it: 'the SPCK were still interested in the reformation of manners but not the societies for the reformation of manners'.[223] Unlike the SRM, the SPCK favoured religious education as the best means by which to reform eighteenth-century society.[224] The SPCK's connection with wider reform movements and in particular the SRM would be seen in their attempts to reform the behaviour of the poor in the workhouse.

The Composition and Organisation of the SPCK

The SPCK operated outside the structure of the Church of England, but it was still tied to it through both membership and purpose.[225] It was able to draw together a broad range of religious, social and political ideologies. Its membership included a significant clerical contingent that represented most ranks. As a result, the SPCK was able to draw upon the vast machinery of the Church to promote its aims and broadcast its ideas-a significant strength when it came to promoting its projects nationally.[226] Members received annual reports and circular letters from the SPCK, along with published material and advice. Unlike the scattered SRM, the SPCK had a strong central organisation. Local groups kept in close contact with the headquarters in London through regular correspondence.[227]

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[222] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.79
[223] Ibid, pp.75-77
[224] The Societies for the Reformation of Manners encouraged neighbours and even children and parents to inform the Societies of moral transgressions such as neglecting the Sabbath amongst many others, for which people where then prosecuted as a means of reforming society, a method which became increasingly unpopular. They also supported private prosecutions against prostitutes and anyone else who committed any moral transgression.
[225] W.A. Bultmann, and P.W. Bultmann, 'The Roots of Anglican Humanitarianism: A Study of the Membership of the S.P.C.K and the S.P.G 1699-1720', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal History,* (33:1), (1964), pp.29-32
[226] Ibid, p.4
[227] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.72

Meetings for members in London were held weekly in the chambers at Lincoln's Inns, thanks to the membership of John Hooke, until 1722 when a house was rented specifically for the purpose at Holborn.[228] Minutes were taken at every meeting reporting those present, matters discussed and actions taken. Information received from letters and orders for replies were also noted, along with orders for publishing. The meetings were presided over by a rotating chair, who was elected by the senior colleagues from the most active members living in London. The only permanent positions were that of secretary and treasurer. John Chamberlayne, the Society's first secretary, left to join the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in Foreign Parts [SPG] (the SPCK's sister society also set up by Thomas Bray in 1701) along with a number of prominent members after just a year. Humphrey Wanley, who was generally considered rather inefficient, succeeded him. In 1708 the post was taken over by Henry Newman, who held the position until his death in 1743. He demonstrated just how influential the position could be. As secretary Newman was responsible for dealing with the vast quantity of correspondence that came from all areas of the country and even Europe. He promoted the SPCK's policies and interests and assisted members in developing the SPCK's programmes.[229] William and Phyllis Bultmann noted that not all members were as active as others, and it was the core members, who attended the meetings most regularly, who really drove the organisation.[230] Of the founding members it was Colonel Maynard Colchester who, having already founded and maintained charity schools, repeatedly urged the SPCK to intensify the programme of supplying libraries and schools in poor areas.[231] Another leading member was Sir George Wheeler, Canon of Durham, who was already a

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[228] J. Simon, 'From Charity School to Workhouse in the 1720s: The SPCK and Mr Marroitt's Solution', *History of Education,* (1988), Vol. 14, 2, p.119
[229] Bultmann and Bultmann, 'Anglican Humanitarianism', pp.29-32
[230] Ibid, p.38
[231] Ibid, p.6

champion of the Huguenots and a persuasive force for developing the SPCK's concerns. More generally it was merchant members who carried out the practical activity of the SPCK, arranging the delivery of funding and books to various projects. Members of the SPCK included clergymen, lawyers, physicians and merchants with a greater proportion of laymen than clergymen. Clerical members were drawn from across the country, but most of the clergy were influential London incumbents who formed a powerful voice within the SPCK. Membership was open to anyone 'well-disposed' towards the Church and approved by existing members. New members were usually proposed at one meeting and elected at the next, unless any objections were raised. On admission members were expected to make a financial donation and pledge an annual subscription.[232]

The SPCK's membership was politically and religiously complex. The founding members of the SPCK themselves included Humphrey Mackworth, a noted High-Church Tory, and a principal agitator for the Occasional Conformity Bills 1702-4, and the Tory Lord Gifford, alongside Colonel Colchester, a Whig MP.[233] According to Rose, Thomas Bray, the founder of the SPCK was not tolerant of Dissent, and was particularly hostile to Quakers, but in practice as founder of the SPCK he tolerated Presbyterians and Independents.[234] Hitchcock maintains that despite a plethora of reform movements that emerged at the beginning of the eighteenth century the 'SPCK was the only agent of reform able to maintain its vigour and influence over the course of the eighteenth century'.[235] Whereas the SPCK had an agenda and was technically strictly Anglican, it could still welcome members with a broad range of religious and political perspectives, including not only Anglicans but also Dissenters and Whigs

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[232] Bultmann and Bultmann, 'Anglican Humanitarianism', p.6
[233] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.172
[234] Ibid.
[235] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.150

and Tories alike. This meant that its agenda effectively 'sidestepped party political boundaries'.[236] Concern about irreligion and the morals of the poor could bring together the religiously and politically fragmented society of the eighteenth century. This allowed the SPCK to carry its religious reforming programme beyond the initial early eighteenth century explosion, influencing the devolvement of the workhouse as a space in which the poor could be reformed across the eighteenth century.

It was the SPCK's ability to form a network of correspondents throughout the country that allowed it to facilitate the parochial workhouse movement on a national level. People interested in the SPCK's activities but who lived too far from London to attend meetings could become corresponding members. They were unable to vote on policy but were informed of the SPCK's activities by letter and received book packets for sale and distribution in their area. Corresponding members were also expected to send news concerning local activities and collect funds towards the SPCK's projects. It was also anticipated that these members would petition for the SPCK's direct assistance with local religious projects.[237] This enabled the SPCK to draw on vast local knowledge and experience and promote its ideals on a truly national level. Corresponding members in particular were also able to exercise a degree of anonymity. There may have been two or three members in each county working alone and relatively unknown to each other.[238] The SPCK acted as a clearing-house for correspondents, tying local activists to a national movement for reforming the poor.[239] Susan Whyman demonstrates that, along with the development of reforming initiatives following the Restoration, came the rapid growth of the Post Office in

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[236] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.149
[237] Bultmann, and Bultmann, 'Anglican Humanitarianism', p.14
[238] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.151
[239] 'London Lives'

Britain.[240] She maintains that with improvements in transportation and

communication, and the growth of empire, the eighteenth century constituted 'the

golden age of letters'. By 1800 all ranks of society were participating in regular

correspondence.[241] The SPCK made great use of both developments; one (reforming

initiatives) facilitated its very creation and agenda; the other (the Post Office) ensured

it could be implemented and would endure on a national scale.

Hitchcock highlights that this national network of correspondents enabled the

SPCK to ensure that 'parishes up and down the country had the same intellectual

resources available to them'.[242] This allowed it to promote to its aims and ideals and

ensure consistency. This SPCK's minutes illustrate that this system of correspondence

was directly employed in guiding the workhouse movement. In 1724 for example,

following a letter to the SPCK from Mr. Parfect requesting a packet of books for the

workhouse, it was ordered that:

> […] a packet to the value of £20 out of the store be sent to the workhouse
> Stroud gratis, including a set of Ostervald's Argument's and Observations
> and the Old and New Testament.[243]

Evidently Mr. Parfect viewed the SPCK as a source for materials in order to support

religious education in the workhouse. Apart from simply providing set materials to

aid the establishment and running of these institutions, circular letters sent to

correspondents detailed the broader aims of the SPCK and gave practical advice on

achieving them. In 1733, it was 'agreed that it be recommended to the corresponding

members in the next circular letter to visit the workhouses in their respective

neighbourhoods [...]'.[244] They were to 'recommend to their daily use prayers collected

out of the Liturgy, together with the collect annexed to the last edition of the account

[240] S.E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English letter writers, 1660-1800,* (Oxford, 2009), p.219
[241] Ibid, p.5
[242] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.147
[243] SPCK.MS A1/11, (19 May, 1724)
[244] SPCK.MS A1/15, (16 October, 1733)

of workhouses'.[245] It was this network of correspondents that enabled the SPCK to promote and implement a daily religious regimen in the parochial workhouses established throughout the country. It also enabled people to ask for advice based on experience in other areas.

Perhaps the SPCK's most significant publication that was distributed in support of the parochial workhouse movement was *An Account of Several Workhouses.* After the passage of the 1723 Workhouse Test Act the SPCK sought to ensure that its provisions were implemented, and that the institutions established as a result operated in its image. It was 'ordered that a collection of advices given to the Society on the subject of workhouses be made, in order to be printed […]'.[246] Material was gathered through its network of correspondents and *An Account of Several Workhouses* was published by the SPCK in 1725. The *Account* was specifically intended to encourage the establishment of similar institutions throughout the country, propagating the SPCK's specific brand of moral reform. It detailed the management and establishment of over forty-four workhouses and working charity schools, and seventy-seven similar institutions established both prior to and after the Workhouse Test Act. This effectively ensured the provisions of the Workhouse Test Act would be adopted widely; by 1771 there were nearly 2,000 workhouses in the country mainly as a result of the SPCK's initiatives.[247] The most 'intense' period of workhouse foundation was in the decade after 1723.[248] The SPCK also provided a series of printed rules for the standard operation of workhouses, circulated accounting practices, and from 1720 it offered premiums for towns to set up workhouses as well as charity schools.[249]

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[245] SPCK.MS A1/15, (16 October, 1733)
[246] SPCK.MS A1/11, (2 October, 1724)
[247] Gibson, *The Church of England*, p.228
[248] Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, p.37
[249] Gibson, *The Church of England*, p.228

The *Account*, and the method of reform it promoted were clearly at the very centre of the SPCK's objectives in the early 1720s. Leading up to the publication of the *Account* there was a special meeting of the committee to assess its 'usefulness' and to 'consider the materials already sent to the Society'.[250] In the following meeting it was 'agreed that the secretary prepare an extract' of the information gathered concerning workhouses.[251] By May 1725 it was 'agreed that it be recommended to the Society to direct that 1500 copies of the account of workhouses be printed'.[252] This did not greatly exceed numbers of other works the SPCK printed, especially compared to Bibles and *The Whole Duty of Man*, but this number certainly matched the quantities of works it considered important. For example, in 1713 it printed 500 copies of *Bishop Williams's Catechism of Doctrines of Papists with a reply,* and in 1723 200 copies of the Bishop on London's sermon before the SPCK.[253] When it ordered the printing of the *Account,* the SPCK also ordered 1500 copies of *Dr. Berryman's Sermon for the Anniversary Meeting of the Charity Schools.*[254] The minutes also illustrate the close attention to detail the SPCK paid to this publication. In July 1725 'A title-page of the account of workhouses now in the press was agreed upon by the committee' and 'the draught [*sic*] of a preface to the account of workhouses was laid before the committee and read'.[255] It was also 'Agreed that Sir Daniel Dolins be desired to give his thoughts thereon and it then be sent to the press', and finally:

> […] that an index of the workhouses be added to the account, together
> with an abstract of the act of the 9th of King George, relating to houses for
> maintaining and employing the poor [...].[256]

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[250] SPCK.MS A1/11, (15 December, 1724)
[251] Ibid, (19 December, 1724)
[252] Ibid, (11 May, 1725)
[253] SPCK.MS A1/6, (4 February, 1713), and A1/11, (4 February, 1723)
[254] SPCK.MS A1/11, (3 June, 1725)
[255] Ibid, (27 July, 1725)
[256] Ibid.

In fact there were references to the publication in nearly every meeting from December 1724 to July 1725, representing a level of detailed attention unmatched by any other publication of this type in this period. It was:

> Agreed that a sufficient number of copies of the said account be sent to the correspondents in the country, with a desire that they present or send them to the neighbouring corporations, as well those that have workhouses and those that have not, for their perusal.[257]

This entry clearly illustrates that the *Account* was intended as a guide for parishes which had already established workhouses as much as those which had not, promoting consistent 'good practice'. It was even intended for institutions that had not been set up in the image of the SPCK's ideals in the hopes that they might adopt the Society's principals. The *Account* was designed to facilitate a national movement following on from the Workhouse Test Act and to cause workhouses aimed at reforming the morals of the poor to be established throughout the country.

The SPCK collected and disseminated information to an extent that no other voluntary organisation of the time could have achieved. It offered advice based on first-hand experience and tried and tested methods. This provided a degree of consistency despite the pronounced local diversity that has been highlighted by historians such as King in the operation of poor relief under the Old Poor Law.[258] In 1729, when a form of prayer devised by Dr. Knight for the workhouse in the parish of St. Sepulchre's was presented to the committee, it was 'agreed that Mr. Hodges be desir'd to wait on Dr. Knight for his leave to print the same for the use of the Workhouses.'[259] Approved tools and methods, specifically in terms of religious practice in the workhouse were promoted amongst all such institutions across the country. This was directly facilitated through the SPCK's growing membership and

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[257] SPCK.MS A1/11, (11 May, 1725)
[258] See for example, King, *Poverty and Welfare*
[259] SPCK.MS A1/13, (3 June, 1729)

correspondents. During the eighteenth century the SPCK was also the largest printer

of Christian literature in Britain, making it perfectly placed to promote a national

scheme for reforming the poor.

The SPCK and The Workhouse Movement

The parochial workhouse movement, inspired and facilitated by the SPCK during the

early eighteenth century, was also part of a much wider movement. The sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries had witnessed the establishment of a variety of institutions

intended to house the poor and make them work for their relief. As it became clear

that children would also enter these institutions, the SPCK demonstrated an initial

interest in the workhouse. More specifically, it made efforts to introduce religious

education into these institutions. As early as 1699 the minutes noted:

> Lord Guildford be desired to speak to the Archbishop that care may be
> taken that a clause be provided in the Bill for Employing the poor; to have
> the children taught to read and be instructed in the church catechism
> […].[260]

Some historians maintain that the SPCK became interested in the workhouse

movement following the decline in public support for the charity schools from 1715,

amid accusations of Jacobitism.[261] The SPCK's committee minutes however,

demonstrate a much earlier interest in workhouses, even if it was not yet on the scale

of later years when the majority of the SPCK's discussion at these meetings was

concerned with the project. As Chapter One illustrates these early workhouses were

distinctly different in both size, and most importantly, in intention, to the later

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[260] SPCK.MS A1/1, (8 March, 1699)
[261] For example, Slack states that the SPCK turned to workhouse after 1715 when the charity schools fell out of favour. See: 'Hospitals, workhouses and the relief of the poor in early modern London', in O.P. Grell, (ed.), *Healthcare and poor relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700,* (Routledge, 1997), p.245. Tomkins concludes that the rise of the workhouse movement gave the SPCK 'the new angle it required', withdrawing from the charity school movement to pay more attention to less controversial projects. See: *Urban Poverty*, p.167. W.M. Jacob remarks that from the late 1720s the SPCK ceased to give much time to charity schools. See: *Lay people and religion in the early eighteenth century, 1680-1840,* (Oxford, 2007), p.172

institutions that the SPCK would actively promote. Hitchcock maintains that while the SPCK did not found the workhouse movement, or ever entirely control it, it propagated the principles that drove the parochial workhouses ensuring that work went hand in hand with piety.[262] Its role centred on aiding local agitators and encouraging new foundations rather than actively establishing its own institutions. The workhouses that the SPCK inspired in the 1720s and 1730s were aimed at deterrence and moral reform rather than profit. As Chapter One also highlighted the SPCK did take an interest this earlier type of institution, such as those established in the City of London and Bristol. [263] These workhouses certainly informed its later work, demonstrating its overriding concern for the religious education of children and a much more complex relationship with the workhouse than has previously been allowed for. As early as 1704 for example it was ordered that 'Mr Jenner certified the society that he has drawn up a paper about workhouses which the Society did desire him to do'.[264] The SPCK viewed the workhouse as a space in which the poor and their children could be reformed long before the scandal emerged concerning the charity schools and it took a leading role in the parochial workhouse movement.

The proportion of the SPCK's time taken up with workhouses grew more rapidly between 1719 and 1723, at least as is reflected in the committee minutes. At nearly every meeting during this period there is at least one entry concerning workhouses, if not several. The SPCK began to see workhouses, or a particular type of workhouse, as a major tool in order to help implement its wider programme of reform. Gibson argues that for the SPCK, workhouses represented an opportunity to inculcate religion.[265] In these years it took a more vigorous role in encouraging the

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[262] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.161
[263] See for example SPCK.MS A1/1, (10 December, 1702)
[264] Ibid, (16 November, 1704)
[265] Gibson, *The Church of England,* p.228

foundation of these institutions rather than simply promoting religious education in corporation institutions designed principally to cut costs rather than reform inmates. The SPCK was ultimately dedicated to promoting a specific type of workhouse, advocating the necessity of inculcating habits of virtue and piety by exposing inmates to religious education.[266]

In 1723 the SPCK actively supported Sir Humphrey Knatchbull and John Comyn's Workhouse Test Act, which enabled parishes to build a workhouse and compel the poor to enter it without a separate act of parliament.[267] The SPCK's membership meant it was 'one of the most extensive and organised pressure groups in English politics', and helped to push the Workhouse Test Act through.[268] Between 1723 and 1750 at least 600 parish workhouses were built as a direct result of the Act.

The *Account of Several Workhouses* that the SPCK published and distributed two years later was one of the most important and significant ways in which the SPCK was able to facilitate and shape the workhouse movement, but it continued to publish a range of literature specifically concerning the workhouse. In 1726 for example, the minutes reported:

> The Reverend Mr Johnstone's sermon at Beverley about workhouses having been referred to 4 residing members, and their opinions reported all approving of it as a book proper for the society to disperse.
> Agreed that it be recommended to the society to cause an impression of 500 copies to be made, Mr Downing having estimated the charge of such an impression at £2-15-6.[269]

This aimed to ensure the workhouse movement would both be maintained and developed. In 1727 it was 'Agreed that an account be drawn up by the secretary, of the Workhouses erected since the publication of the late account of Workhouses.'[270] In 1729 the Secretary and Mr. Hodges were asked 'to visit the workhouses in and

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[266] Gibson, *The Church of England*, pp.255-6
[267] 'London Lives'
[268] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.153
[269] SPCK.MS A1/1, (29 March, 1726)
[270] SPCK.MS A1/12, (1 January, 1727)

about London; and to inform the society of their present state at their first convenience'.[271] Indeed the SPCK's interest in the workhouse as a tool for reform continued well beyond the initial enthusiasm of the early 1720s. By 1732 the SPCK felt the need to publish a second *Account* of the workhouses established since the first edition, to illustrate the success of the movement and to encourage further progress. Both the *Accounts of Several Workhouses* were a direct result of the extensive and high functioning network of correspondents that had been built up across the country. It was information gathered by these correspondents that generated a comprehensive national report. In 1731 it was 'Agreed that an abstract be made and refer'd to the committee for preparing the [second] account of workhouses for the Press.' [272]

As with the first edition, the SPCK dedicated a significant amount of time to this publication and '[…] 150 copies of the new Edition of the account of workhouses […] [was] bought for the society's store'.[273] This was a much lower number than the first issue and there was no order for it to be sent for distribution in parishes across the country. The new edition could be sent out from the store on request. Evidently the first *Account*, already in circulation, contained sufficient information needed to establish workhouses. The new publication aimed to illustrate the success of the SPCK's activities in this area, supplementing the earlier issue. Thus, the minutes of the SPCK demonstrate that the parochial workhouse movement was indeed central to the reforming activities of the SPCK during the early eighteenth century, supporting Hitchcock's thesis. In short, by the 1730s the SPCK appeared to be losing none of its zeal for promoting these institutions as essential tools for its programme of reform.

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[271] SPCK.MS A1/13, (3 June, 1729)
[272] SPCK.MS A1/14, (23 March, 1731)
[273] Ibid, (13 June, 1732)

The SPCK's Focus on the Children of the Poor

The SPCK was interested in a range of initiatives throughout the eighteenth century but it was their concern for the children of the poor that took precedence and directed them to the workhouse. Traditionally some historians have viewed the workhouse as increasingly the abode of the old, sick and infirm as the eighteenth century progressed. [274] More recently statistical work on admissions and discharge registers by historians such as Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwartz, Susanna Ottoway and Alysa Levene has demonstrated that children were both 'significant' and 'distinct' members of the workhouse population. They have further concluded that this remained the case throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. [275] Indeed, Levene has shown that workhouse inmates aged fourteen and under accounted for around one-third of the total workhouse population at any one time during the eighteenth century, making children a substantial presence. [276] If it was the presence of children in these institutions that drew the SPCK's interest as a tool through which it could implement its programme of reformation, the continued presence of children in workhouses throughout the eighteenth century suggests that a loss of interest would have been unlikely.

Almost from its outset the SPCK had identified children as a means to national moral reformation. [277] Joan Simons argues that there is no evidence to suggest that the education of poor children was the SPCK's primary objective. She concludes that its involvement with the charity school movement 'began with the catechism and ended

[274] See for example, Siena, *Venereal Disease.*
[275] For those who have demonstrated the presence of children see; Boulton and Schwarz, "The comforts of a private fireside'); S.R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England,* (Cambridge, 2004); A. Levene, "Honesty, Sobriety and diligence': Master-apprentice relations in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England', *Social History,* (May, 2009), 33:2, pp.183-200. Levene demonstrates that children were a significant presence in the workhouse in the second half of the eighteenth century, and Boulton and Schwartz, and Ottoway suggest that this only changed after 1790.
[276] See for example, Levene, *Childhood of the Poor*
[277] King and Tomkins, *The Poor in England,* p.123

with the spinning wheel'.[278] This suggests not only that the SPCK transferred its efforts from the charity schools to the workhouse, but that in the workhouse the catechism was abandoned. However, evidence of continued efforts to introduce religious education for children into workhouses as demonstrated early on in the minutes and in both publications of *An Account of Several Workhouses,* illustrates that it remained a top priority. Likewise, a consistent interest in the charity school movement suggests the education of poor children was part of its programme of reform during the eighteenth century, notwithstanding the development of other projects and interests.

In support of the primacy of the SPCK's concern for the religious education of children, Rose has concluded that although the SPCK's central concern was to reassert the religious and political primacy of the Church of England through a variety of means, 'the Christian education of poor children was given top priority'.[279] Allen and McClure, in their history of the SPCK, also highlight its 'long and consistent efforts on behalf of religious education'.[280] Bahlman goes as far as to assert; 'from the first the education of poor children had been a concern of the Society […] [but] by 1702 it was virtually the Society's sole concern'.[281] For the SPCK childhood provided the best opportunity to inculcate religion and piety before immorality and corruption took root. Levene makes the point that educating poor children was thought to be a means of resolving the twin problems of pauperism and moral dissolution.[282] In a sermon preached at the anniversary meeting of the charity schools in 1725, which was later published by the SPCK, Berryman highlighted that while the old and impotent should be relieved the greatest satisfaction was in '[…] what we bestow upon the

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[278] Simon, 'Charity School to Workhouse', pp.128-9
[279] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.181
[280] Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, p.165
[281] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.46
[282] Levene, *Children of the Poor,* p.111

young […]'. [283] He continued '[…] not to nurture them [children] in idleness, and breed them to such honest industry […] having our example for carrying on the same design […] enabling children to provide against future poverty' would reform society.[284] This sermon defined the work of the SPCK. It educated the young in the hopes '[…] religion and piety may be established among us for all generations […]'.[285] If children could be religiously educated and brought up in the habits of virtue and industry, they would not only have a better chance of getting work but they would also be more inclined to do so. Thus, for the SPCK, the catechism learned young would reform society. Furthermore, the publication and distribution of the Bible, another tool for reform promoted by the SPCK, was useless if the poor could not read it, thus at the very least poor children needed to be able to read.

The SPCK's committee minutes illustrate that Simon's argument that the Society's concern for children 'began with the catechism [in the charity school] and ended with the spinning wheel [when they turned to the workhouse]' is flawed in two ways.[286] Firstly the SPCK's efforts to educate poor children religiously in charity schools continued throughout the eighteenth century. They did not abandon these institutions in favour of workhouses, and the catechising of children in these institutions continued. As with the workhouses, the SPCK did not launch the charity school movement. It simply developed and promoted an existing institution.[287] From its outset the SPCK supported the charity school movement, and it continued to do so throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. There were however, a series of debates in the 1720s about the value of charity schools, which has led some historians to suggest that the SPCK abandoned these institutions in favour of the less

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[283] Berryman, *The Excellency and Reward of Charity*
[284] Ibid
[285] SPCK. MS, A1/1, (8 March, 1699)
[286] Simon, 'Charity School to Workhouse', pp.128-9
[287] Ibid, p.128

controversial (at the time) workhouses.[288] In 1723, the same year as the Workhouse

Test Act was passed with the support of the SPCK, Bernard De Mandeville renewed

the attack (previously led by the Whigs in 1715) on the Charity School Movement in

his damning essay *Charity and Charity Schools*.[289] Mandeville was a physician and

political philosopher born in Rotterdam, but spent most of his life in England. He

disagreed with the idea that education facilitated virtue, rejecting the theory that

immoral desires were confined to the lower orders and seeing the educated wealthy as

at least as big a threat to society, if not more so.[290] He opposed the education of the

poor arguing this would only increase their desire for material things and elevate them

above their destined station in society.[291] Slack argues however that the charity

schools fell out of favour with the SPCK earlier in 1715 when the SPCK first became

interested in workhouses following accusations that charity schools might become

potential nurseries for Jacobitism.[292] Bultmann and Bultmann suggest that there were

certainly some correspondents in the country averse to the Hanoverian succession,

and a genuine fear that the SPCK had been infiltrated by Jacobites, which caused

some members to distance themselves from it. This also however, coincided with the

death of some of the SPCK's most influential members such as Colonel Maynard who

had first directed its attention to the charity school movement resulting in a decline in

impetus, albeit a shorted lived one.[293] Hugh Cunningham maintains that until 'some

time' after the Hanoverian succession the charity schools were seen as Tory

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[288] See for example: Jones, *Charity School Movement*; Slack, 'Hospitals'; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*; Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*

[289] H. Cunningham, 'Introduction', in H. Cunningham and J. Innes, (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: From the 1690s to 1850,* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.22. The original attacks on these institutions had been instigated by Whig factions in 1715 who viewed charity schools as Tory strong holds. They accused these institutions of Jacobitism.

[290] M.M. Goldsmith, 'Mandeville, Bernard', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online,* (retrieved, 10/09/2013)

[291] Ibid.

[292] Slack, 'Hospitals', p.245

[293] Bultmann and Bultmann, 'Anglican Humanitarianism', p.26

institutions and were repeatedly attacked by the Whigs with accusations of Jacobite sympathies. He also proposes that there was some justification in this, highlighting that in 1715 charity school children were reported shouting Jacobite slogans in their uniforms.[294] The SPCK felt the need to introduce a 'Rule that […] [All members had to] take the oaths to the government'.[295] Nevertheless, it was the Whigs, who saw charity schools as Tory strongholds, during a period of acute religio-political tension, and principally generated this attack. Cunningham concludes that by the 1720s the SPCK had conformed to the Hanoverian succession and its Whig government, confining its political associations simply to the education of poor children.[296] While vulnerable to these accusations the charity schools, as institutions, and the SPCK itself, were never Jacobites.

Conversely, the SPCK's committee minutes demonstrate that during the period in which the workhouse supposedly supplanted the charity school movement, the charity school movement continued to hold the SPCK's attention. For example, the annual procession of uniformed poor school and workhouse children through the streets, in order to hear the annual sermon, continued to be a powerful symbol of the benefits of Christian charity. Similarly, as late as 1736, well after these institutions were supposed to have fallen out of favour with the SPCK, the minutes state: 'A motion was made for reviving a seminary for instructing candidate-masters for charity-schools'.[297] The SPCK was evidently still concerned about the running of these institutions. In 1737 there was an order for Bibles, primers, and catechisms to be distributed in the charity school at Whitchurch.[298] Furthermore, in 1738 the annual

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[294] Cunningham, 'Introduction', p.33
[295] SPCK.MS A1/10, (9 January, 1719)
[296] Cunningham, 'Introduction', p.33
[297] SPCK.MS A1/17, (14 September, 1736)
[298] Ibid, (24 May, 1737)

report contained an extract from a letter on employing charity children.[299] This report, along with other information on workhouses and charity schools, was also sent to the president of the charity school society in Switzerland. This was in response to a request as to how to respond to the objection that charity schools raised poor children above their station.[300] Thus, two decades after the SPCK is assumed to have turned its attention from the charity schools to the workhouse, the former were still considered important enough in terms of the SPCK's activities to be inserted into their annual report. The SPCK was still supporting the charity school movement, and defending the role of the charity schools in the face of one of the very criticisms that was supposed to have accounted for their loss of favour in the eyes of the SPCK.[301] A request for advice from the charity school society in Switzerland, suggests that the SPCK was still seen as a central source of information on, and closely linked to the movement. Moreover, the SPCK appeared to be connecting the charity schools with the workhouse movement through providing the Switzerland society with materials on both institutions. This illustrates that neither institution had been abandoned or indeed that one had supplanted the other.

Langford argues that the charity school movement was losing momentum by the 1730s; there were still annual festivals and the existing schools continued with the support of the SPCK but there was no 'boasting' of new foundations.[302] Nevertheless, the abstracts of proceedings at the end of the committee minute books noted in 1744: 'Two charity schools, newly erected, the one at Ely, the other at Orwell

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[299] SPCK.MS A1/18, (5 September, 1738)
[300] Ibid, (28 November, 1738)
[301] For example see the earlier reference to Bernard De Mandelville's essay.
[302] P. Langford, '*A Polite and Commercial People', England 1727-1783,* (Oxford, 1989), p.130

Cambridgeshire'.[303] The SPCK was clearly still interested in the establishment of new

foundations. In 1745 it was also:

> Ordered that as often as the Secretaries do write to the members in the
> country, it be a request to them to inform the society what is the present
> state of the of the charity school in their neighbourhood.[304]

In 1746 the abstracts of books and papers given out by the SPCK show '50 Childs

Christian Education to ye Trustees of ye Ch. Schools'.[305] The minutes also record:

> The proposals for Erecting of English Schools in all ye Parishes of
> England for the Benefit of the poor, were read by the commee [*sic*] & with
> some amendment approved.
> Agreed to recommend it to ye society, to Print & dispense ye said
> Proposal.[306]

In 1750 1500 copies of the 'Sermon preach'd by Mr. D Yardley at ye yearly meeting

of the Ch. children' were requested.[307] Throughout the first half of the eighteenth

century, and well past the supposed watersheds of the SPCK's interest in the charity

schools, it continued to support the anniversary sermons of the charity schools. It also

printed materials to aid and promote them, kept track of both schools which were

already established and newly erected institutions, sent books for their use and

defended their role.

Secondly, the SPCK introduced and maintained religious education, specifically

catechising, in workhouses. Catechising was to accompany work not be superseded

by it. *An Account of Several Workhouses* included mention of the Grey-Coat School

in Westminster established in 1701 as well as accounts of the charity schools and

other working schools. It noted that in the Grey Coat School for example, '130 poor

children of this parish are not only instructed in the principles and Duty's of

Christianity, but also the means of getting a livelihood by their own labour […]'.[308]

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[303] SPCK.MS A1/20, (6 December, 1744)
[304] Ibid, (11 June, 1745)
[305] SPCK. MS A1/21, (10 March, 1746)
[306] Ibid, (16 June, 1747)
[307] Ibid, (1 May, 1750)
[308] *An Account of Several work-houses for employing and maintaining the poor…,* (London, 1725), p.20

The inclusion of the charity schools and institutions like the Grey-Coat Hospital demonstrates that despite a keen interest in workhouses during this period, the objectives of the SPCK were always much broader than the institution itself. In support of the introduction of religious education in the workhouse, the preface to the 1732 edition of *An Account of Several Workhouses* contained a proposed list of general rules and orders to be observed in workhouses, one of which stated:

> That all friendless orphans, and other children of the poor, who by law become chargeable to any parish, be sent into the workhouses, and be therein religiously and carefully educated, and be taught and accustomed to work and labour […].[309]

Here the SPCK specifically highlighted that workhouses should house and religiously educate the children of the poor. The presence of rules concerning the religious education of poor children in the 1732 edition of the *Account* also indicates that the SPCK continued to view these institutions as places where pauper children should be religiously educated nearly a decade after the passage of the Workhouse Test Act.

The SPCK did not believe that piety and religious education alone would cure poverty, and these children were also to be 'taught and accustomed to work'. Work was to go hand in hand with piety in the workhouse. As early as 1700 the SPCK had made this connection and the minutes recorded that a 'motion [was] made that this Society may consider of some methods for setting to work the poor children in the charity schools.[310] Thus, the SPCK's interest in the relationship between children, religious education, and work preceded, certainly included, and went beyond, the workhouse. At no point however did the aims of the SPCK replace religious education with work. It was an overwhelming concern for religiously educating the children of the poor that primarily directed the SPCK's activities throughout the eighteenth century.

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[309]*An Account of the Workhouses…*(1732), p.10
[310] SPCK.MS A1/1, (14 March, 1700)

The SPCK's Wider Programme of Reform

The committee minutes of the SPCK demonstrate that at no point did it confine itself

to one method of reform. It is even possible to suggest that Thomas Bray and the

SPCK saw charity schools, workhouses, prisons and hospitals as all of a piece and

adopted a single reformatory approach to them. A similar template for daily religious

observance for example was implemented in many of these different types of

institutions. Thomas Bray, the founder of the SPCK in his *Preliminary Essay*

published in 1704 wrote that:

> The vast variety which the divines of our church have given us of short
> expositions on the Church catechism by way of question and answer […]
> does sufficiently speak the universal sense of the necessity of instilling
> into the minds of our youth the principles of our most holy religion.[311]

Both Bray, and as a result the SPCK, put particular stock in catechising as a central

means of reforming religious morality in society. Not only was regular catechising a

significant part of the daily round of religious observance implemented in parochial

workhouses, but Ian Green notes that the statutes of most charity schools made clear

that their purpose was to provide a 'Christian' as well as a useful education in which

catechising was central.[312] Similarly, Dianne Payne has found that charity school

parents who failed to send their children to church were summoned to give

explanations, and likewise paupers in the workhouses who failed to attend religious

education and observance were punished.[313] Watts adds that teaching in charity

schools was based on the Bible, the catechism of the Church of England and

devotional books, of which the *Whole Duty of Man* was the most widely used.[314] The

workhouse committee minutes for Westminster institutions illustrate that these works

were regularly purchased for use in the workhouse, and when children were

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[311] T. Bray, *Preliminary Essay,* Partly reproduced in, I. Green, *The Christians ABC: Catechisms and Catechising in England, c. 1530-1740*, (Oxford, 1996), p.276
[312] Green, *The Christians ABC,* p.172
[313] Payne, 'Children of the Poor', p.124
[314] Watts, *The Dissenters,* p.425

apprenticed they were provided with a copy of the Bible and the *New Whole Duty of Man* in order to continue their education.[315] It is possible this simply reflected the customs and practices of eighteenth-century society. However, evidence that the SPCK implemented the same methods for reform (principally religious education) simply via different tools (different institutions) suggests a wider programme of reform was employed simultaneously in these different institutions. In order to be conclusive, further comparative research into these institutions, their agendas for religious reform and their relationship with the SPCK would need to be undertaken. Nevertheless, it suggests that the workhouses were part of a much wider programme of reform, especially in terms of the activities of the SPCK than has sometimes been allowed for.

As part of its plan for reform the SPCK also took up the cause of the scandalous conditions in prisons in the first few decades of the eighteenth century alongside its promotion of both the charity schools and the workhouse. The first mention of prisons appears in the minutes in 1699:

> The Bishop of London recommended to the Society to consider some means for the better instructing & regulating the manners of the poor prisoners in the several prisons of this city.[316]

Clearly Bishop Henry Compton of London viewed the SPCK as working on much more than the charity school movement and publishing religious works even in its earliest years. Its interest in prisons was highlighted again 1715:

> The Society being informed of the miserable condition of the prisoners at the Marshalsea prison that they frequently perish there for want of even the meanest relief.
> Agreed that it be referred to the committee to consider of an Expedient to procure an Application in Parliament for erecting a workhouse in the said prison, that the same be put under such Regulations as may be of Advantage to the souls as well as the Boys of the numerous poor prisoners there confined.[317]

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[315] See Chapter Five.
[316] SPCK.MS A1/1, (25 January, 1699)
[317] SPCK.MS A1/8, (19 May, 1715)

This entry is particularly interesting since it also mentions the use of a workhouse for prisoners, and even suggests that the children of poor prisoners should be confined in such an institution. The SPCK evidently viewed workhouses and prisons as part of the same wider effort to reform the poor, and perhaps even derived from the same cause. Indeed workhouses were also regulatory institutions, and although reform took precedence there was undeniably a deterrent aspect to workhouses. Interestingly it is also the children of this particular group of the poor that the SPCK highlights as a priority and a target for incarceration in this type of institution.

In 1725 when scholars often assume that all the SPCK's efforts were focused on the workhouse, it was:

> Agreed that Mr [?] Frank be desired to prepare a scheme for reforming the
> abuses committed in prisons, and for better regulating the same with
> regard to the spiritual as well as civil state, and condition of the prisons,
> from these and other papers already in his hands to be laid before the
> society as soon as it may be his convenience.[318]

This statement not only highlights a concern to reform the abuses of these institutions but it specifically shows the 'spiritual' dimension to the SPCK's interest, hinting at the possibility of a daily regimen of religious observance similar to that of the workhouses being introduced under the instigation of the SPCK. Thus, while the minutes demonstrate that a greater proportion of the SPCK's time was devoted to particular schemes at certain times, it was never confined to a single tool for religious reform at any one time. It is therefore possible that the SPCK maintained its interest in the workhouse in the later eighteenth century, simply expanding its interests alongside this tool for reform rather than abandoning it.

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[318] SPCK.MS A1/11, (1 April, 1725)

The SPCK and the Westminster Workhouses

The workhouses established in the Westminster parishes in the 1720s were a product of the parochial workhouse movement that the SPCK facilitated and promoted. Charity schools had already been established in many of the Westminster parishes that went on to establish parochial workhouses. Matthew Marryott an advisor to the SPCK on workhouses, and used by it to promote these institutions was central to the early implementation of many of the Westminster workhouses.[319] The SPCK's 1725 edition of *An Account of Several Workhouses* also preceded the establishment of most of the Westminster institutions. Evidence of connections between the SPCK and the Westminster workhouses serves to support Hitchcock's thesis that the SPCK was largely responsible for the parochial workhouse movement and the reforming agenda they adopted during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Hitchcock found that forty per cent of the workhouses founded in the 1720s were in areas that already had a charity school. He maintains this was because schools provided the administrative framework on which workhouses could be established.[320] In 1699 the SPCK's minutes noted 'that Dr. Hane will promote a school for girls in St. James's parish'.[321] St. James's Westminster built its workhouse two decades later following the passage of the Workhouse Test Act. The minutes also record 'That the parishioners at St. Martins are very thankful for the school set up there, the children being much reformed […].'[322] St. Martin's in the Fields also built a workhouse in 1725. In fact most Westminster parishes had established charity schools in the first decades of the eighteenth century, which were followed by the establishment of workhouses after the SPCK provided them with the legislation (the 1723 Act).

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[319] The role of Marryott in the Westminster workhouses is considered in more detail on Chapters Three and Four.
[320] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.108
[321] SPCK.MS A1/1, (26 October, 1699)
[322] SPCK.MS A1/1, (26 October, 1699)

There is also evidence of a keen interest in the establishment of workhouses in these parishes in the SPCK's minutes. In September 1726 they reported for example:

> Mr. Railton reported that St. Margaret's Parish Westminster had lately purchas'd a large strong old house in the little almonry for £1150 and were now actually fitting it up for a Workhouse, to receive all the helpless poor in the parish.
> […] the Vestry in St. Clements Parish, in the Strand, had come to the a Resolution of Building or Hiring a House for the same Purpose […].[323]

Later the committee agreed:

> […] that Mr. Hodges and the secretary be desired to visit the workhouses in and about London; and to inform the Society of their present state at their first convenience.[324]

It was also added that:

> The Committee unanimously desired Mr. Hodges to accept the Thanks for the pains he has taken in visiting the said Houses and distributing the society's Books among the Poor therein maintained.[325]

These entries illustrate that the SPCK was both interested in the establishment of the workhouses in Westminster parishes and crucially sought to promote its specific brand of reform within them, through its tried and tested method of distributing religious literature.

Hitchcock uses Matthew Marryott to support his claim that the SPCK influenced the course of the development of the workhouse in the early eighteenth century.[326] Marryott was one of the biggest workhouse contractors in this period, either directly managing or subcontracting the management of several London institutions and many more besides. Most importantly however, he was also closely associated with the SPCK. Through the SPCK, Marryott was put in contact with parishes wishing to establish a workhouse, and acted as principal advisor on this new

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[323] SPCK.MS A1/12, (6 September, 1726)
[324] SPCK.MS A1/13, (8 April, 1729)
[325] Ibid, (3 June, 1729)
[326] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse'

tool for reform to the SPCK itself, unequivocally connecting it with the establishment

and running of these institutions in the 1720s.[327]

Jones notes that in 1724 the SPCK invited Marryott to discuss the benefits of

workhouse instruction over the charity schools with respect to their power to enforce

discipline.[328] This is supported by several entries in the committee minutes. They

noted for example:

> Copies of several contracts between different parishes and Mr. Matthew
> Marryott about several houses of maintenance for the poor which he has
> erected and also certificates of the success of those contracts, were laid
> before the committee and read.
> Agreed that Mr. Marryott be desired to give his company at the
> committee next Thursday, or with his first convenience.[329]

Clearly Marryott was directly responsible for erecting at least some of these

institutions. A further entry stated:

> Mr. Marryott […] was called in, and the committee desired him to
> acquaint them with the progress he had made in setting up several
> workhouses in the country: which he did; and also answered several
> objections lately made by Mr. Allen of Kettering to the design of the
> workhouse.
> Agreed that a packet to the value of £20 be given to Mr. Tillard consisting
> of such books as Mr. Marryott has desired for Luton workhouse.[330]

The tone of this entry suggests that Marryott was actually answering to the SPCK, or

at least working within its parameters for reform, reporting progress and answering

concerns. The last part of the entry also demonstrates the use of Marryott to directly

distribute the SPCK's literature within these institutions and therefore influence how

the poor were instructed. It was also:

> Agreed that the Rules and Orders relating to workhouses by Mr. Matth.
> Marryott, be recommended to the society to be reprinted & dispersed by
> the society with some alterations.[331]

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[327] T. Hitchcock, 'Marryott, Matthew', *Oxford Dictionary of National biography Online*, (retrieved, 10/09/2013)
[328] Jones, *Charity School Movement*, p.93
[329] SPCK.MS A1/11, (26 May, 1724)
[330] Ibid, (23 February, 1725)
[331] SPCK.MS A1/12, (31 May, 1726)

This statement confirms that, despite Marryott being responsible for the actual running of these institutions, it was the SPCK by approval of his methods, and printing and distributing them that introduced consistency on a national level.

What is most crucial about the connection between Marryott and the SPCK, in terms of the Westminster workhouses, is that amongst the London workhouses directly under Marryott's control were the Westminster institutions at St. Giles's in the Fields, St. George's Hanover Square, St. James's Piccadilly and St. Margaret's Westminster. The second meeting of the committee for the workhouse established at St. Margaret's Westminster ordered that 'Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] was desired to attend on Thursday next at 4 o'clock with proposals for the taking upon him the Governor of the house and care of the poor'.[332] The vestry at St. James's Piccadilly met to '[…] hear Mr. Marroitts [*sic*] proposals relating to the workhouse (after Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] have received the said house) […]'.[333] While the SPCK's minutes show 'Upon a motion made for a packet for the workhouse newly created in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields' that these works were to […] be put to the hands of Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] for the use of the said workhouse'.[334] Marryott, principal advisor to the SPCK on workhouses, directly ran a number of Westminster institutions and acted as a conduit through which the SPCK could implement its programme of reform.

Marryott's management of the Westminster workhouses strongly supports Hitchcock's thesis in terms of the establishment and early operation of these institutions. His influence however, was short lived. The vestry minutes for St. James's in 1728 'resolved the said Matthew Marroitt [*sic*] be discharged from the said office of governor of the said workhouse', following accusations of mismanagement

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[332] St. Margaret's Workhouse Committee Minutes [hereafter COWAC-E], E2633, Mf 1217, (8 September, 1726)
[333] St. James's Piccadilly Vestry Minutes [hereafter COWAC-D], D1759, Mf 857, (10 August, 1727)
[334] SPCK.MS A1/11, (6 May, 1725)

and scandal.[335] Workhouse committee minutes show that both St. Margaret's and St. George's had dismissed him the previous year.[336] Unfortunately the SPCK's committee minutes do not note its reaction to the fall of Marryott. What his dismissal suggests is that further evidence is required in order to definitely connect the SPCK to the operation of the Westminster workhouses, particularly the running of these institutions after 1728. Accusations of mismanagement also calls into question the degree of control the SPCK had over the way in which Marryott managed these workhouses. Alternatively, it is possible that the SPCK had a hand in his dismissal since they kept such a close eye on these institutions. Either way more evidence of its role is required.

Hitchcock also bases his argument that the SPCK played an important role in the establishment and running of parochial workhouses, such as those in Westminster on the SPCK's ability to publish and distribute information on a national scale. He concludes that the SPCK was able to, and did, actively encourage the foundation of workhouses through giving advice to correspondents and publishing information.[337] *The Account of Several Workhouses* reported that the Westminster parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, '[…] caus'd a workhouse, for employing the poor, to be erected on the Churchyard, near St. Martin's library […]' and St. James's Westminster had '[…] taken measures for erecting a work-house in the Burying-Ground near Poland Street […]'.[338] This account not only detailed the establishment and running of those institutions which had already been established in Westminster, but it is significant that those Westminster parishes, which had yet to establish such an institution, did so quickly afterwards. The SPCK's minutes note that in October 1725

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[335] COWAC-D, D1759, Mf 857, (27 December, 1728)
[336] See, COWAC-E, E2633, Mf 1217, (10 March, 1727) and St. George's Hanover Square Workhouse Committee Minutes, [hereafter COWAC-C], C869, Mf 563, (21 June, 1727)
[337] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.114
[338] *An Account of Several Workhouses…,* (1725), p.23

it was 'agreed that 6 accounts of workhouses be given to Mr. Tillard for Mr

Marryott', the manager of both existing Westminster institutions and the future

manager of some that ante-dated publication of the *Account*.[339] This strongly suggests

that certainly those institutions established after its publication were at least in part a

direct result of the SPCK's efforts.

After the publication of the first *Account of Several Workhouses,* the SPCK

published a second *Account* in 1732, which reported the founding of parochial

workhouses in all the Westminster parishes. It stated that in St. Giles's in the Fields

'[…] a large workhouse erected 1725 […] [which deserved] a particular Notice to be

taken of it, for the imitation of other places under the like circumstances'.[340] In St.

Leonard's Shoreditch '[…] The House was opened in 1726', and in St. Margaret's

'[…] In the year 1726, they hired an old large house […]'.[341] In St. Martin's in the

Fields, 'In the year 1725 The Churchwardens and Overseers of the poor in the parish

caused a large House to be built […]'.[342] Furthermore, this subsequent account (1732)

also notes that in the Westminster parish of St. George's Hanover Square:

> As soon as the Church of this new parish was finished, the first
> churchwardens […] in 1726, erected a large, plain, commodious Edifice,
> for the erection of several hundred persons, which being on a model
> worthy of imitation of other places a plan of it was afterwards engraven
> [*sic*] on copper, and printed for the service of the publick [*sic*] […].[343]

The SPCK's committee minutes show in 1725 that:

> A plan of a workhouse being laid before the committee
> Agreed that the opinion of Mr. Hawksmore one of the surveyors of the
> New Churches be asked; and likewise an estimate of the charge of
> engraving it be desired.[344]

Thus, not only was the workhouse built at St. George's Hanover Square erected

following the publication of the *Account,* it was built to a design by Nicholas

[339] SPCK.MS A1/11, (12 October, 1725)
[340] *An Account of Several Workhouses…,*(1732), p.45
[341] Ibid, pp.77-78
[342] Ibid, p.83
[343] Ibid, p.40
[344] SPCK.MS A1/11, (16 February, 1725)

Hawksmoor that was specifically commissioned by the SPCK and used as a model for other such institutions. This directly connects the SPCK and its programme for reform to the establishment of the workhouse at St. George's Hanover Square. The *Account* also reported that in the workhouse at St. George's:

> A clergyman attends to visit the sick, and read prayers twice a week, and all that are able go to Church every Lords-Day. The children are taught to read, write, and say their catechism certain Hours of the Day, beside being inured to labour, so as to prepare them for being good servants […].[345]

Evidently the SPCK was keen to publicise that the 'model worthy of the imitation of other places' implemented a round of religious observance. Provision for the sick and the able bodied was to be accompanied by regular attendance at public services, highlighting the primary aim of religious reform. In both St. James's and St. Margaret's it is reiterated that '[…] the children are taught to read and say their Catechism […]'.[346] Likewise, the rules and orders for both the servants and poor of the workhouse, which were published alongside the account of the workhouse in St. Giles's in the Fields stated:

> That all the poor who are in Health, go to Church, or to some other place of religious worship, every Sunday, Morning and Afternoon […] That prayers be read in the House twice a week viz. every Wednesday and Friday, at eight in the morning; and that all who are able, shall give their Attendance, or lose one of their meals […] That there be a school in the House […] And that the Master or Mistress, who shall teach them to work, or some other proper person, shall likewise instruct each of them in reading […] to write and cast accounts […] the better to qualify them for Apprenticeships or service.[347]

This demonstrates firstly, that the SPCK through both publications of *An Account of Several workhouses* can be viewed as directly responsible, at least in part, for the establishment of the parochial workhouses in Westminster during the early eighteenth century. In addition, the entries concerning these institutions further support the thesis that the SPCK intended that these institutions should provide for the religious

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[345] *An Account of Several Workhouses…*(1732), p.40
[346] Ibid, p.72, and p.78
[347] Ibid, p.53

reformation of the poor through a round of religious observance and the education of children. Nevertheless, there is often a marked difference between intentions and reality. What remains to be established is whether the SPCK's influence over these institutions during the first half of the eighteenth century was actually reflected in their daily running, beyond their creation and the specific influence of Matthew Marryott.

Conclusions

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge was formed as part of the religious revival at the end of the seventeenth century in response to the perceived moral decay of contemporary society. Surviving the decline of many of these other movements in the first few decades of the eighteenth century, the SPCK continued to endeavour to reform society with its own specific brand of reform: principally the religious education of poor children. The SPCK believed, by ensuring children were taught their catechism and brought up piously and industriously, that the twin problems of poverty and religious moral decay would be solved. It therefore employed a range of tools and initiatives in order to achieve this. Its specific brand of reform allowed it to rise above the religious and political divisions of the day, uniting a diverse range of people in terms of both ideologies and geography via fast developing networks of correspondents in a common objective. It was also the primacy of the SPCK's concern for the children of the poor that led to its interest in the workhouse movement. Children were a significant presence in these institutions throughout the eighteenth century. Despite an earlier interest in corporation workhouses the institutions the SPCK actively promoted in the 1720s and 1730s were created with a specific reforming agenda. Parochial workhouses were one of the many

tools the SPCK used throughout the eighteenth century in order to religiously reform the morals of the poor, and especially their children.

The SPCK used institutions such as charity schools, workhouses, and prisons to ensure its religious message reached an audience drawn from the poorest members of society. Despite the existing view that the SPCK abandoned one method of reform in favour of another throughout the eighteenth century, evidence from the SPCK's committee minutes reveals that its relationship with these institutions was far more complex. The charity school movement, which is supposed to have been usurped by the workhouse movement by the 1720s, continued to occupy a portion of the SPCK's time throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, beyond the annual anniversary celebrations. If in fact the SPCK did not abandon this earlier tool for reform in light of criticism and new initiatives it is possible the same can be said of the workhouse movement later in the eighteenth century.

Finally, in support of Hitchcock's thesis that the SPCK added 'energy', 'influence' and a 'sense of direction' to the parochial workhouse movement, there were several connections between the SPCK and the Westminster parishes that established these institutions in the 1720s. The next chapters will look closely at the daily operation of some of the Westminster institutions that the SPCK inspired, in order to determine whether these workhouses might actually have achieved some measure of success in terms of the intentions of the SPCK.

Chapter Three:

Religion in the Parish Workhouses at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

This chapter aims to identify and analyse the role and importance of religion and religious reform in the parochial workhouses established in two of Westminster's more affluent parishes. There are exceptionally rich surviving records for these parishes, the evidence from which can then be compared to similar material from poorer Westminster parishes (see Chapter Four). In order to determine the presence and success of the SPCK's programme of religious reform, and the importance of religion in parochial workhouses, the daily operation of these institutions needs to be considered. Hitchcock maintains 'it was with the goal of reforming the poor that most parishes started their houses'.[348] Arguments concerning deterrence from seeking help cannot be separated from the parochial workhouse movement, nevertheless, the idea that workhouses also, or even predominantly, sought to reform the poor, has not been overtly considered by subsequent historians. Religious reformation therefore deserves a far more prominent place in our understanding of the eighteenth-century workhouse.

Two years after the SPCK had supported the passage of the Workhouse Test Act (1723) the Westminster parish of St. James's Piccadilly established one of the first parochial workhouses. The following year another Westminster parish, St. George's Hanover Square, also built a workhouse in order to house its poor. The parish vestry administered these institutions. The churchwardens and the rector also sat on the workhouse committees, which answered to the vestry, linking these institutions to religious concerns. As was noted in Chapter Two, the workhouse at St. George's was built to a specific design commissioned by the SPCK that was then published and used

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[348] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.256

as a model for other institutions.[349] Both these workhouses were also managed by Matthew Marryott, the principal advisor to the SPCK on the subject of workhouses. A complete set of workhouse committee minutes for the parish of St. George's survives from the foundation of the workhouse in 1726 to 1756. These minutes provide documentation of the daily operation of the workhouse. Unfortunately, specific workhouse committee minutes do not survive for the parish of St. James's but the vestry minutes detailed the administration of the Poor Law in the parish. After 1725 the administration of the Poor Law included the management of the workhouse and the vestry minutes detailed its operation in much the same way as the workhouse committee minutes for St. George's did. In particular, St. James's vestry minutes also included a new set of rules and orders that were drawn up for the workhouse in 1736, more than a decade after its foundation. The rules show how the aims and intentions of both the parish and SPCK for these workhouses developed following the initial period of workhouse foundation (1720s). The implementation of a religious reforming agenda, in line with the aims of the SPCK, was not inevitable. It was the responsibility of the parish and those who ran these workhouses to introduce and maintain religious observance and education. By looking at the detailed orders in the workhouse records over the first half of the eighteenth century, a picture of the religious environment of paupers comes into focus. How orders were implemented and received helps to illuminate our understanding of the development of workhouse life. These records provide an insight that extends well into the supposed period of decline in terms of the SPCK's programme of religious reform within these institutions. This allows for the

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[349] See for example, SPCK.MS A1/12, (12 April, 1726 and 24 April, 1726)

construction of a picture of the religious environment of paupers within the workhouse across the first half of the eighteenth century.[350]

Gregory and Gibson, among others, have demonstrated that there is a 'growing body of evidence which suggests that the Church of England played a far more central and dynamic role within English religious, social, and political life than has sometimes been maintained.'[351] Welfare sources have yet to be included in this, therefore evidence of the role and importance of religion in the operation of the Westminster workhouses adds significantly to this body. It is clear that throughout the first half of the eighteenth century religion, and specifically the reforming aims and objectives of the SPCK, was an important part of the operation of these institutions.

In considering the role of religion in the workhouse and whether there was a reforming element involved, it is important to separate intention from practice. It is easy to look at the ideals of social reformers and administrators, but these did not always reflect the reality of life in the workhouse. Hitchcock noted 'there are of course discrepancies in the ideal workhouse conditions laid down by vestries, and the actual experiences of paupers within these institutions'.[352] *An Account of Several Workhouses* published in 1725 by the SPCK stated that in a well-regulated workhouse:

> The children of the poor instead of being brought up in irreligion and vice, to an idle, beggarly and vagabond life, will have the fear of God before their eyes, get the habits of virtue, be inured to labour, and thus become useful to their country [...].[353]

This statement illustrates what the SPCK intended for the operation of parochial workhouses. The focus was to be on the children of the poor, ensuring they were not

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[350] Some historians have suggested that by the mid-eighteenth century the SPCK had lost interest in these institutions and as a result religious reform ceased to be a priority. Around the mid-eighteenth century scandals began to emerge concerning workhouses and far fewer institutions were established than in the 1720s and 1730s. See: Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', and Slack, *The English Poor Law*
[351] For quotation see Gregory, *Restoration*, p.293. See also Gibson, *The Church of England.*
[352] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.1
[353] *An Account of the Several Workhouses...*(1725)

brought up to irreligion and vice, putting 'the fear of God before their eyes', instilling habits of virtue, and inuring them to labour in order that they would become useful members of society. These can all be identified in the operation of these Westminster institutions. Moreover, in contrast to the current historical position there is evidence that not only were reforming intentions put into practice but also that they continued to form an important part of workhouse life, despite medical expansion and increased financial pressures up to and beyond the suggested 1750 watershed.[354] Finally, signs of a remarkable degree of toleration towards dissenting paupers in these institutions indicates the nature of religious provision in the workhouse during this period. Workhouses cannot be viewed through a purely secular lens; religion was an important part of life in the Westminster workhouses, and it was still important by 1750.

The Parishes of St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly

The primary focus here is on the workhouses. Nevertheless, these institutions were parochial and therefore a direct product of the locality they served. The SPCK promoted and facilitated the parochial workhouse movement, but it was local incumbents that instigated the establishment of these institutions in a particular parish. Therefore, the unique social and religious composition of the parishes of St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly, as well as the complexities of eighteenth-century urban life, must be considered when examining the role and importance of religion in the workhouses they established.

The parish of St. George's Hanover Square was one of nine parishes in Westminster by the eighteenth century, lying to the west of the City of London. Carved out of St. Martin's in the Fields in 1724, St. George's was a comparatively rich parish

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[354] A number of historians including Slack, Siena and Hitchcock suggest that by 1750 the SPCK had abandoned the parochial workhouse movement and therefore these institutions were no longer concerned with the religious reformation of the poor.

with a large aristocratic population.[355] What George Hennessey later described as a 'grand church', and *The Commission for Fifty New Churches* (of which St. George's Hanover Square was one) as an 'important and fashionable church', was consecrated in 1724.[356] Andrew Trebeck was Rector of St. George's Hanover Square from 1 May 1725, until his death in 1759. He appears repeatedly in the workhouse committee minutes and regularly sat on the workhouse committee, demonstrating the continued role of the parish in administering poor relief, and more specifically the workhouse.

In terms of religion, Watts estimates that during the early eighteenth century Dissenters accounted for around six per cent of the population of England and Wales, and that it was in urban areas in particular, that Dissent flourished.[357] As suggested in Chapter One religious nonconformity would impact both the nature and operation of religion and religious provision in the workhouse. Croot confirms that by the mid-eighteenth century, meetings of Dissent were being held in Westminster. While it is likely there were both Dissenters and Catholics resident in the parish, Catholic worship was illegal in Britain until 1829, and Dissenters experienced a range of restrictions during the eighteenth century. In particular neither Catholics nor Dissenters could legally hold public office, and therefore could not influence the running of the parish or its workhouse. St. George's contained large numbers of Catholics as well as chapels and priests to minister them by 1780 according to Croot.[358] D. Butler highlights the existence of several embassies of foreign Catholic powers in London that were legally allowed to exercise their faith. Many Catholics in London used embassies to worship in

[355] www.stgeorgehanoversquare.org/parish.htm, (retrieved, 17/06/2011)
[356] G. Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense, or London Diocesan Clergy Succession from the Earliest Time to the Year 1898,* (London, 1898), p.164
[357] Watts, *The Dissenters,* p.3 and p.353
[358] Croot, *A History of the County of Middlesex,* p.197

these chapels.[359] This was an easy way to break the law, and a blind eye was often turned. Legislation from 1580 against Catholic worship and education remained in force, not being removed from the statute books until 1791.[360] The Sardinian Embassy was situated in Hanover Square and probably supported local Catholic residents. Aside from this presence, Butler notes that Catholics, as a persecuted group in eighteenth-century society, tended to look after their own.[361] Watts argues that the same can be said of Dissenters in this period, although provision varied considerably according to denomination.[362] Butler and Watt's findings imply that in St. George's the Catholic and Dissenting poor may never have needed to call on the parish and its Anglican workhouse, though there is little firm evidence to support this. Nonetheless, in such a prominent London parish with increasing numbers of paupers, and the breakdown of kinship networks as a result of urban migration, it is possible that there would have been at least some Dissenters, and perhaps even Catholics, who may have had to call on the workhouse.[363]

St. James's Piccadilly was another of the more affluent and fashionable newly formed parishes in eighteenth-century Westminster. It was slightly smaller than St. George's, created from part of St. Martin's in the Fields in 1685, and recorded as having a population of just over 16,000 in 1720.[364] Evidence of elements of tolerance of Dissent in this parish is reinforced by the presence of two dissenting meetings.[365] After the 1689 Toleration Act these were legal. There were also 'large numbers of Catholics, chapels, and priests by 1780'.[366] It was perhaps then among the richer

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[359] D. Butler, *Methodists and Papists: John Wesley and the Catholic Church in the Eighteenth Century,* (London, 1995)*,* p.13
[360] Ibid, p.48
[361] Ibid, p.19
[362] Watts, *The Dissenters,* p.353
[363] This will be addressed further in Chapter Six.
[364] 'London Lives'
[365] This is addressed in more detail later in the chapter.
[366] Croot, *A History of the County of Middlesex*, pp.197-204

parishes in Westminster that Dissent was more pronounced, although far more statistical work is required in order to definitively support this statement. Evidence that these workhouses in particular may have housed Protestant Dissenters and maybe even Catholics, suggests that the same religious tensions that had been present in the Bristol workhouse earlier in the eighteenth century, still had the potential to influence the running of the Westminster workhouses. However this was likely to be less marked since the proportion of Dissenters in Westminster was estimated at around six per cent of the population as opposed to twenty per cent in Bristol.

Children in Parochial Workhouses and the Influence of the SPCK

The SPCK were concerned that 'the children of the poor' were 'being brought up in irreligion and vice, to an idle, beggarly and vagabond life'.[367] It viewed parochial workhouses as a means of preventing this by parting children from morally corrupt parents and/or, instilling opposing virtues through incarceration so they would not become dependent on the parish as adults. As Chapter Two established, the SPCK was principally concerned with the education of the children of the poor. For the SPCK, childhood presented the best opportunity to inculcate religion and piety into the poor, before immorality and corruption passed down from their parents, took root. On a more practical level, the distribution of the Bible (another of the SPCK's central endeavours) was pointless if the young could not read and learn from it.[368] The SPCK also printed and distributed a range of religious material specifically for children. This placed the education of children, particularly poor children, at the centre of the SPCK's efforts. Since children, as some of the most vulnerable members of society, were to make up a

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[367] See earlier quote from the *Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725)
[368] Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, p.168

significant proportion of inmates in the workhouse, these institutions would naturally draw the interests of the SPCK.

The SPCK was able to influence the operation of the workhouse in a number of ways. Initially it could provide direction through the management of Matthew Marryott. It was also to influence them by connecting them with other institutions the SPCK had a role in promoting. Finally the use of information gathered and disseminated through its national network of correspondents enabled policies and ideals to be adopted widely. This placed the children of the poor in a prominent position in these institutions.

As noted in Chapter Two, Matthew Marryott, advisor to the SPCK on workhouses, subcontracted the management of both the workhouses at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly, among others. He had been involved in the establishment of some of the first parochial workhouses, and the SPCK sought him out as an expert on the subject, and as a means of introducing its religious reforming agenda into them. The vestry minutes for St. James's noted for example:

> […] that the gentleman present and as many other members of this board as please be a committee to meet and hear Mr. Marroitts [*sic*] proposals relating to the workhouse (after Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] have received the said house) and that the said committee do meet from time to time and that they have power to agree with the said Marroitt [*sic*] […].[369]

Later, between 1727 and 1728 however, Marryott was to lose the contract for the houses he managed in Westminster. In 1726 the SPCK had begun to complain about the excessive charges he was making. Then in 1731 the anonymous publication of *The Workhouse Cruelty, Workhouse Turn-d Gaols and Gaoler's Executioners,* accused Marryott of mistreating a series of inmates in the workhouse in St. Giles's in the Fields (another Westminster parish) and directly contributing to the death of one woman by confining her for long periods to a black hole without food or water. The subsequent

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[369] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (10 August, 1727)

investigation revealed no evidence of cruelty.[370] Nevertheless, when combined with

earlier accusations that he had allowed pauper bodies to be illegally used as anatomical

specimens (a very lucrative but highly offensive eighteenth-century practice) it was to

spell the end for Marryott and his workhouse career. He died shortly afterwards.[371]

The particular incident took place in the workhouse at St. Giles's in the Fields.

Without warning however, the minutes for St. George's stated that on 21 June 1727;

'Mr. Marryott have notice on Midsummer Day, that he be discharged his office at

Michaelmas'.[372] St. James's vestry minutes noted later in 1728:

> It appearing to this board that Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] in acting as governor of
> the workhouse belonging to this parish hath not kept up the full number
> of servants for the managing the said house according to agreement from
> other engagements he lies under hath not given the attendance necessary
> for the good govt. of the same […] Resolved the said Matthew Marroitt
> [*sic*] be discharged from the said office of governor of the said
> workhouse.[373]

Here it appears his dismissal was directly related to mismanagement and absenteeism

in the workhouse at St. James's and this is likely also to have been the case in St.

George's. Aside from the reasons for his dismissal, the connection of these institutions

to the influence of the SPCK through Marryott had therefore ended by 1728. Thus,

further evidence is needed in order to definitively connect these intuitions to the

influence and programme of the SPCK, especially in the years after 1728.

There is evidence of connections between the Westminster workhouses and other

institutions promoted by the SPCK. For example, in 1738 a boy, William Fletcher, was

discharged from the workhouse at St. George's 'in order to be provided for in a charity

school in Worcestershire […]'.[374] As Chapter Two shows, the SPCK promoted and

supported the charity school movement throughout the eighteenth century and viewed

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[370] Hitchcock, 'Marryott, Matthew'
[371] Ibid.
[372] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (21 June, 1727)
[373] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857 (27 December, 1728)
[374] COWAC-C, C 875, Mf 564, (27 June, 1738)

both types of institution as part of the same wider effort for reforming society, and most

importantly, the children of the poor.[375] In June 1746 the committee minutes

highlighted a more direct interaction through church attendance, requesting:

> Leave being given by the trustees of General Stewarts legacy for the
> children of the Charity School to sing in the Church provided the parish
> is at the expense of learning them.
> And it being our opinion that the said children will be more easily taught
> to sing than those belonging to the workhouse […].[376]

In terms of children these two institutions had a similar rhetoric concerning reform. The

statement also brings up an important point about how the poor were classified; clearly

the overseers thought that it would be easier to teach the children from the charity

school. It is possible that this was based on the assumption that the children in the

charity school were more easily reformed than pauper children, since they were the

children of the labouring poor as opposed to those dependant on the parish. Although

since the purpose of the charity schools was purely educational, it may simply have

been considered easier to teach these children in terms of practicality.

The connection between the workhouse and the charity school within the parish

of St. George's is reaffirmed in 1752, when the minutes stated:

> The board requests of Revd. Mr. Romaine that he will be pleased to
> suffer and permit the boys of his school to attend at the workhouse twice
> a week after five o'clock in the afternoon to join with some of the
> workhouse boys in learning to chant the psalms to begin next Friday.[377]

This illustrates that the charity school children were actually brought into the

workhouse house in order to undertake some of the religious instruction provided.

William Romaine was a well-known preacher whose sermons often attracted large

crowds at the Lock Hospital. His evangelical doctrines, however, sometimes provoked

complaint and consequently in 1755 Andrew Trebeck, the rector of St. George's, asked

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[375] See Chapter Two for more on this.
[376] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (10 June, 1746)
[377] COWAC-C, C 881, Mf 565, (15 January, 1752)

him to resign his lectureship in the parish.[378] This hints at tensions related to religious orthodoxy being present in the Westminster parishes to some degree.

There is also evidence of a relationship between the Westminster workhouses and the London Foundling Hospital. In September 1746, for example, Jane Sexton was 'offered to the foundling hospital for admittance'.[379] Significantly, the SPCK was also involved in the establishment of the Foundling Hospital in 1741, indicating its wider interest in welfare.[380] While the SPCK promoted the charity school movement, and the foundation of the London Foundling Hospital, as with the parochial workhouse movement, it was not solely responsible for it. The working relationship the workhouse at St. George's Hanover Square appeared to have with charity schools and the Foundling Hospital may simply have been a result of shared interests. All these institutions existed to support the children of the poor. Nevertheless, when taken alongside other evidence of the SPCK's role in the establishment and running of workhouses during the first half of the eighteenth century, it helps to illuminate its role within this movement.

The SPCK's was able to support the parochial workhouse movement, including those institutions established in Westminster, through its national network of correspondents and its ability to ensure that workhouses had access to all the information they needed to implement and sustain its reforming agenda.[381] In 1734 the workhouse committee at St. George's Hanover Square:

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[378] T. Shenton, *'An Iron Pillar': The Life and Times of William Romaine,* (Evangelical Press, 2004), p.129
[379] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (30 September, 1746)
[380] See for example, Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers'
[381] J. Gregory, and J.S. Chamberlain, 'National and Local Perspectives on the Church of England in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Jeremy Gregory, and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, (eds.), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800*, (Woodbridge, 2003), p.21

> Ordered that three shillings & three pence be paid for the carriage &
> expense of the copys [*sic*] of the Rules & Orders for the better
> government of the workhouse at Gloucester.[382]

The SPCK was able to collect and publish reports on institutions that were already established, and use them to promote 'good practice' in accordance with its aims and objectives. Evidently the committee at St. George's was keen to learn from what other institutions had done, taking advantage of the information the SPCK endeavoured to make available. The SPCK was able to publish and disseminate those principles it thought should be practised in workhouses, thereby promoting a particular focus on the children of the poor and bringing them up to be 'useful' pious members of society.

The focus on children in the workhouse can be clearly identified in the workhouse committee minutes for St. George's. For example, the entry for 12 November 1745 noted 'that Lucy Barnaby have one shilling and if she wants any further relief to come into the house with her children.'[383] Mackay points out that women, especially those with dependent children and unmarried mothers, were among those most at risk of having to depend on the workhouse, since they found it difficult to work.[384] Likewise, in January 1755 the overseers also concluded; 'That Sarah Francis have 5s for her bastard child'. It was then further ordered that she was 'not [to] have any further relief but [that] the child [was] to come into the house'.[385] This entry identified only the child for entry into the house to be provided for and reformed by the parish. On a practical level it appears that if the child was looked after by the parish, Sarah Francis would be able to support herself, thus generating one dependent rather than two. Nevertheless, the fact that the child was specifically recorded as a bastard suggests that there may have been a reforming element, especially as society in general

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[382] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (24 December, 1734)
[383] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (12 November, 1745)
[384] Mackay, 'A Culture of Poverty', p.212
[385] COWAC-C, C 881, Mf 565, (2 January, 1755)

was concerned with the idea of poverty breeding poverty through the inculcation of poor morals.[386] The child of Sarah Francis, who in the view of the overseers clearly had questionable morals having borne an illegitimate child, would have been an ideal candidate to be reformed through the inculcation of piety and labour in the workhouse. While this may not have been the sole motive for threatening to take the child into the house and there was obviously an element of deterrence here; it very well could have been a contributing factor. Reform is a factor that should not be overlooked, especially considering the ideals of social reformers and the SPCK at this time.

Once children were admitted into the workhouse the influence of the objectives and ideals of the SPCK are even more evident. The workhouse committee minutes for St. George's noted in 1727:

> That the children do goe to the Chappell twice of a Sunday […] That Thomas Dunn Beadle be allowed four Guineas […] in consideration of his constant walking to Church before the children and patients of the house […].[387]

In the minutes for St. George's, children are repeatedly mentioned separately from the other 'patients' in the house. This suggests firstly that there must have been a significant enough number to have treated them differently and secondly that they were separate in the minds of overseers.

The SPCK was interested in prevention rather than a cure for moral decline and irreligion. It believed that the catechism learned young would secure the country against atheism and vice.[388] This specific method for reform was also clearly demonstrated in the operation of the workhouse at St. George's. Early on in November 1727 the minutes stated:

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[386] King and Timmins, *Making Sense,* p.311
[387] COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (29 January, 1727)
[388] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, p.71

> It is the opinion of this committee that a school master and mistress are absolutely necessary to be taken into the workhouse to instruct the children in the catechism, reading, writing [...].[389]

Catechising the children in the workhouse was not just desirable it was considered 'absolutely necessary'. In 1733 it was noted that the schoolmaster's purpose was to teach the children to read and take them to church. It was ordered:

> […] that Bryan Skeats one of the school masters of this house in consideration of his pains in teaching the children to read be allowed ten shillings per quarter & that he and Francis Burton do attend the children to church in their turns.[390]

The education of the children in the workhouse at St. George's was at least in part, religious. In October 1737, it was ordered 'that thirty common prayer books be provided by Mr. Shropshire for the children when they go to church', so they could participate in the service.[391] Catechising prepared children for confirmation, while literacy would equip them to read religious works. There is no evidence of any other type of literature being purchased for the house indicating that teaching children to read would have meant teaching them to read religious material.

Preparing children for confirmation was considered important. The committee ordered:

> That Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays in every week from six until seven in the evening, be fix'd for the children being instructed in their catechism and that in case any of the said children should absent themselves from the house at times aforesaid, or misbehave during their being instructed the master do sconce them of their suppers.[392]

Three evenings a week were devoted to the catechism, one of the keystones of the SPCK's policy of education. Catechising and confirmation meant that the young would become full members of the Church of England and along with regularly taking communion, legally qualified for public duty in the eyes of the state. Most significantly however, the first mention of punishment of any kind accompanies the failure of

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[389] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (29 November, 1727)
[390] COWAC-C, C 872, Mf 564, (29 August, 1733)
[391] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (4 October, 1737)
[392] Ibid, (28 November, 1734)

children to attend religious education in the house. There were of course reprimands for moral transgressions for adults, but there is no other evidence, in these minutes at least, of punishments for children. This highlights its centrality to workhouse life.

Religious observance specifically for children in the house at St. George's did not end at church attendance and religious instruction. It appears children in particular and their religious devotions were presented as the public face of these institutions, which were always under scrutiny. In 1730 the committee drew attention to the practice of teaching the workhouse children to sing, recording 'that Mr. Warren Clerk of Mayfair Chappell have a crown for his trouble in teaching the children to sing'.[393] There were some early hymns at this time but singing in church was quite uncommon. A later entry in 1751 sheds more light on the nature of this singing. The committee stated that:

> Thomas Warner Attended & undertook to teach the children in the
> house as well as the grey coat boys to sing psalms upon the same terms
> as Mr. Jenkins lately taught them being £4.4.0 a year.[394]

The children were taught to sing or chant psalms in church, viewed by the entire parish, who could see the benefit of their contributions to the poor rate first hand. In 1746 the parish confirmed 'that the voices of the children in singing psalms is very agreeable to the congregation'.[395] The SPCK put a high priority on psalm singing as a means of instilling piety according to Green.[396] It was also noted in 1731 'that the Churchwardens be humbly desired to give leave for prayer seats to be made in ye church for the use of the children in the workhouse'.[397] The children were to have their own specific accommodation in the parish church, where their attendance and devotion could be seen. This mirrored the way in which charity school children were dressed in uniforms and paraded before the parish annually to hear the charity sermon, linking the

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[393] COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (6 January, 1730)
[394] COWAC-C, C 880, Mf 565, (25 September, 1751)
[395] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (10 June, 1746)
[396] I. Green, *Print and Protestants in Early Modern England,* (Oxford, 2000), p.526
[397] COWAC-C, C 871, Mf 563, (28 February, 1731)

practices in the workhouse back to the initiatives of the SPCK.[398] The SPCK clearly made children, and inculcating them with piety, central to life in St. George's workhouse, as part of its attempt to reform society through the education of the young.

The Baptism of Infants in the Workhouse

One of the ways in which workhouse officials sought to build up religious habits was to ensure that 'Instead of being brought up in irreligion and vice, to an idle, beggary and vagabond life' religious rites of passage such as baptism were enforced.[399] While baptism is a practice that historians might view as an expected part of everyday life, contemporaries viewed it as a means of salvation, thus a reforming element can also be identified. Baptism was thus the starting point for the religious reformation of the children of the poor. It was also important since the workhouse catered for large numbers of pregnant women who entered to give birth, and also single women with children. The sacrament of baptism therefore became a regular aspect of workhouse life.

Baptism was the sign of official entry into the Church and was therefore almost universally administered during childhood.[400] Popular belief in religious teachings of original sin, and high rates of infant mortality in the eighteenth century made baptism within a few weeks of birth a concern for most parents. It was also central to Church priorities in order to secure the nation against Dissent and the threat of Rome, as well as against atheism and vice. This was a prominent concern in the eighteenth century when it was felt that congregations were being lost to dissenting meetings and even

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[398] W.E Tate, 'The Charity Sermons, 1704-1732, as a Source for the History of Education', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol.9, 01, (April, 1958), p.55
[399] See earlier quote from the *Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725)
[400] C. Steadman, *Master and Servant: love and labour in the English industrial age,* (Cambridge, 2007), p.97

Catholicism.[401] Baptism put children on the path to a pious moral life, becoming the starting point for moral religious reform. The motives behind the regular baptism of infants in the workhouse were thus two-fold. In 1734 the minutes for St. George's recorded that: 'The Rev'd Mr. [?] applied to this board for the payment of one shilling appice [*sic*] as the usual fee for Baptizing the poor of the parish'.[402] This implied that it was established practice for the parish to pay for the children of the poor to be baptised. However, the entry went on to further order that: 'it is the opinion of this committee that no fees be paid for christening the poor of this parish except in cases of bastardy where the parish receives satisfaction.'[403] Thus after 1734, most likely due to increasing numbers of paupers and therefore tighter budgets, the parish was only prepared to pay for illegitimate children to be baptised. Clearly baptising bastard children, and bringing them into the Church, was important. Illegitimate children were also of course far more likely to become chargeable to the parish, since it was more difficult for their mothers to find work. But the stigma attached to bastardy and the moral failure of the mother would also have made these children more vulnerable to moral failings in the view of the parish, it was therefore particularly important to make sure they entered the Church as a preventative measure.

The importance of baptising morally vulnerable children was extended in 1747 when the minutes confirmed 'that for the future all children left in this parish be given the name St. George at their baptism if it does not appear they have before been baptised'.[404] This made it standardized practice that all abandoned children left in the care of the parish should be baptised, if it didn't appear they already had been. Abandoned babies were becoming a more frequent concern in the parish of St.

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[401] See: Field, 'Counting Religion'
[402] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (9 July, 1734)
[403] Ibid.
[404] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (16 February, 1747)

George's throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Valery Fildes has found that there were approximately one thousand foundlings a year abandoned in London in the later seventeenth century, but that this declined in the eighteenth century with the establishment of workhouses.[405] The problem, however, remained common, with numbers increasing in the winter months or at times when bread prices were high.[406] The child was always 'advertised in some of the daily papers […]' but very rarely was the mother ever found and prosecuted. [407] Most importantly for officials, these children became the responsibility of the parish. [408] In August 1741 the committee ordered 'that the master of the workhouse do admit all children that are dropt & left in the parish without a note from the overseers'.[409] These 'dropt' children were baptised by the parish, and given the name St. George, entering them into the Church and setting them on the path to a moral and pious life. Abandoned infants were probably either illegitimate, or from parents who were simply too poor to keep them.[410] These children also, however, represented everything that the programme of moral reform in the workhouse was trying to eradicate: the immorality of the poor and the increasing pressure this put on the poor rates.

The Role and Importance of Religion in the Westminster Workhouses

Religious observance was implemented early on in these workhouses, in order to put 'The Fear of God Put Before their [the children's] Eyes'.[411] The parish was willing to spend a significant portion of its limited budget in order to maintain religious

[405] V. Fields, 'Maternal feelings re-assessed: child abandonment and neglect in London and Westminster 1550-1800', in V. Fields, (ed.), *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England,* (London, 1990), p.143
[406] Ibid, p.157
[407] See for example, COWAC-C, C 875, Mf 564, (6 March, 1738)
[408] Fields, 'Maternal Feelings'*,* p.140
[409] COWAC-C, C 875, Mf 564, (11 August, 1741)
[410] Fields, 'Maternal Feelings'*,* p.140
[411] See earlier quote from *Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725)

observance and instruction illustrating its relative importance, and the overarching

reforming intentions of these institutions. The first entry in the workhouse committee

minutes for St. George's Hanover Square placed religion at the top of the agenda for

the overseers of the poor. It records:

> It is the opinion of this committee that a minister do read prayers twice
> a day and do instruct the poor in the workhouse in the grounds and
> principles of ye [*sic*] Christian Religion.[412]

In order to carry out these duties the clergyman was to be paid twenty pounds a year

'out of the poors [*sic*] rate'. It was requested that he 'expound to them the catechism

and also teach them prayers for their private devotions'.[413] This final statement

demonstrated that religious observance was not intended to be simply a passive

exercise; inmates were expected to be active in their devotion; reformed rather than

conforming. In 1739 a further entry in the minutes for St. George's ordered

specifically that:

> […] Francis Burton and Bryan Skeats the two schoolmasters in the
> workhouse do for the future constantly during the time of divine
> service at the church sit in the pews with the children to keep them in
> awe.[414]

These pauper children were to become God-fearing through regular church

attendance. It was to be more than a passive exercise since it explicitly specified that

these children were to be 'kept in awe'. The parish was also willing to pay for this

provision. This was particularly significant at a time when costs were at the forefront

of administrator's concerns, demonstrating the relative importance of religion in the

workhouse. Had the intentions behind the workhouse been simply pragmatic, and

based on deterrence, it is likely that ensuring the inmates attend the parish church on

Sunday, as the majority of those outside the workhouse did, would have sufficed.

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[412] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (31 October, 1726)
[413] Ibid.
[414] COWAC-C, C 875, Mf 564, (11 March, 1739)

References to religious practices and observance in the workhouse committee minutes for St. George's were numerous in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was not only the focus of the very first meeting of the workhouse committee, but continued to occupy the minds of administrators at the second meeting. Here religious observance was built in to the daily regimen of the house. The committee ordered that:

> […] the most proper hours for publick [*sic*] prayers to be observed in the workhouse of this parish be from Ladyday to Michaelmas day at seven o'clock in the morning and from Michaelmas day to Ladyday at eight o'clock in the morning and that the evening prayers be at the whole year at six o'clock.[415]

Room was also to be made for 'divine service' in the house, a school for the children, and religious literature was to be purchased.[416]

Similarly, it was not only a minster that the committee was willing to spend the rates on; there were repeated references to payments to maintain other religious observance in the house. For example, in 1730 the committee ordered: 'that Mr. Joseph Smith be paid one pound five shillings for a large Bible for the poor', and 'that Mr. Warren Clerk of Mayfair Chappell have a crown for his trouble in teaching the children to sing'.[417] In 1731 it was 'ordered that the expense of fitting up the two seats in the church for the children be paid by this committee'.[418] While in 1735 it was ordered, 'that six shillings be paid for six singing books for the use of the children in the house'. As late as 1754 it was ordered that 'a large Bible be provided for the use of the minister officiating at the workhouse.'[419] Thus, religion played a major role in workhouse life. It held a position that went beyond the piety that eighteenth-century society practiced, incorporating a distinctly reforming element

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[415] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563 (14 November, 1726)
[416] Ibid, (12 December, 1726)
[417] COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (6 January, 1730)
[418] COWAC-C, C 871, Mf 563, (8 March, 1731)
[419] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (18 September, 1754)

that is illustrative of the influence of the SPCK and its programme for religious reform.

Religion and Sickness in the Workhouse

Parochial workhouses were not only intended to instil piety to combat irreligion, but they also sought to ensure inmates were endowed with 'Habits of Virtue'.[420] Bastardy was not the only moral failing that workhouses targeted. The sick poor occupied another large portion of the workhouse population and some illnesses were accompanied by the same combination of cure, punishment and reformation in these institutions. Illness itself was not necessarily considered a moral failing but sexually transmitted diseases, for example, gave society cause for great concern. Kevin Siena argues in his analysis of sexual disease in early modern Europe that some outward signs of illness illuminated internal moral failure.[421] The repeated use of the word 'patient' to describe the inmates suggests that all those entering the house were considered either physically and or morally ill. In 1742, for example, Elizabeth Cox was 'admitted in order for her cure and afterwards punished for being a loose idle and disorderly person'.[422] In the house, physical and moral healing went hand in hand due to the perceived connection between the two. Katherine Frechleton, 'having the foul distemper', was sent to the hospital. At the same time however, application was made 'to the justices to send her to Bridewell when cured, having been before chargeable and cured of the said distemper'.[423] The 'foul distemper' being referred to here was venereal disease, usually syphilis, making it a clear sign of the moral failure of the sufferer. Obviously it was appreciated that married women could be the passive

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[420] See earlier quote form *Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725)
[421] K. Siena, 'Introduction', in K. Siena, (ed.), *Sins of the Flesh: responding to sexual disease in Early Modern Europe,* (Toronto, 2005), p.7
[422] COWAC-C, C 877, Mf 565, (10 August, 1742)
[423] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (19 August, 1746)

victims of their husbands, however for unwed women and men in particular, this was

an outward sign of inward moral degeneration. As a result of grey areas concerning

the classification and recording of venereal disease Siena has concluded that currently

'figures can only indicate its presence on a broad scale'.[424] Nevertheless its existence

and the moral implications attached to it made it a prominent concern in these

institutions.

Moral reformation also went beyond the obvious pragmatism of deterring

bastardy and sexually transmitted diseases that could be seen as a direct drain on the

poor rate. The minutes noted in 1742:

> That if Jane Ward one of the patients who misbehaves in the house by
> swearing as heretofore the master is hereby directed to confine her in the
> dark room without sustenance for one whole day.[425]

Swearing was one of the social vices about which early reforming societies like the

SRM, the SPCK as well as the Church were particularly concerned. For example,

Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, published *An Admonition Against Profane and

Common Swearing* addressed to the people of his diocese, which he described as a

'hearty concern for the good of your soul'. In it Gibson labelled 'vain-swearing' as a

'great sin'.[426] Such moral failings had religious implications as well. Swearing as a

moral or religious failing was of no direct financial cost to the parish. Nevertheless,

because of the link between moral decay and physical dependency, swearing was

considered detrimental, connecting the operation of the workhouse with ideals of

moral reform.

Tawney argued that during this period it was 'not even conceivable that there

might be another cause of poverty than the moral failings of the poor'.[427] Thus, it is

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[424] Siena, *Venereal Disease,* p.150
[425] COWAC-C, C 877, Mf 565, (28 December, 1742)
[426] E. Gibson, *An Admonition Against Profane and Common Swearing,* (London, 1753)
[427] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p.270

highly probable that these institutions in seeking to relieve poverty, intended to reform the morals of the poor. In 1752 the minutes for St. George's stated 'that Frances Mason be discharged on her promise to behave chastely and honestly for the future'.[428] This suggests that Frances Mason was taken into the house having been unchaste and dishonest, and was discharged on the condition that her character had been reformed. There is no statement about her now being able to support herself, suggesting that the predominant reason for her discharge was moral reformation. As the introduction stressed we must also allow for the fundamental fact that the English Poor Law never aimed to eliminate poverty, which was seen as a normal, and further more a God ordained part of the social order. While a cure for poverty was never sought, it did become necessary to manage it. This included an element of reforming a portion of the dependent poor, and preventing numbers increasing by reforming their multiplying offspring.

Work and Religion in Parochial Workhouses

The overarching intention behind the religious reform of paupers in the workhouse was that through becoming more pious, the poor would 'Be Inured to Labour, and Thus Become Useful to Their Country'.[429] Particularly in the case of the children of the poor, the idea was that this would ultimately reduce the burden of the poor on the rate-paying classes, and create a more religious, and therefore more productive future society. The SPCK believed that no one could be both devout and lazy. Therefore, by making the poor more pious in the workhouse, the SPCK would inure them work and contribute to society as opposed to depending on it. Labour was to be imparted through the introduction of work in the workhouse. In St. George's, in 1730, it was

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[428] COWAC-C, C 888, Mf 565, (6 May, 1752)
[429] See earlier quote from *Account of Several Workhouses...*(1725)

recorded 'that all persons not being sick or at work in the house be employed in carding'.[430] Thus, while parochial workhouses never intended to make paupers support themselves directly through labour as in corporation institutions, work remained important as a means of reformation. It was the children of the poor in particular that were to be 'inured to labour' and become useful members of society through the extensive practice of apprenticing out pauper children, an important part of workhouse life that will be discussed in Chapter Five. Unlike in Corporation institutions this 'work' was reforming as opposed to profitable. In contrast to the Bristol workhouse it is 'work' that appeared to be intermittent and take a back seat to religious observance and education.[431] While religious practices occupied the very first meetings of the committee in St. Georges and continued to hold a prominent position in discussion in the committee minutes throughout the eighteenth century, the first mention of work only appears in 1730.[432] There are a few subsequent references to employing the poor in the workhouse but it did not occupy the prominent position religious reform did.

The Continued Importance of Religious Reform in the Westminster Workhouses Throughout the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

Religion was thus an important part of daily life in these Westminster workhouses, and the reforming agenda of the SPCK is evident in its operation. While some historians now concede that reform was significant during the foundation of these institutions as a result of the efforts of the SPCK, they maintain that emphasis on religious reformation was quickly abandoned. However, both the workhouse committee minutes for St. George's Hanover Square and the vestry minutes for St.

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[430] COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (10 March, 1730)
[431] See Chapter One.
[432] See: COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (10 March, 1730)

James's Piccadilly illustrate that in these workhouses at least, the religious values and practices under which the workhouses began were sustained. The religious practices that were established during the foundation of these institutions existed well into the 1750s.

Early on in the historiography of the workhouse, the Webbs found that repeated attempts to make the poor 'self-supporting' were a failure. Marshall adds that it was clear to contemporaries by the mid-eighteenth century that the poor could not earn enough to support themselves; an argument with which a number of historians continue to agree.[433] This appeared to lay to rest the many arguments surrounding the primacy of making the poor support themselves in these institutions. In more recent work, Slack argues that the primary purpose of the workhouse was not profitability or moral reform, but deterrence. The aim of these institutions was not the 'great confinement of the poor but the exclusion of as many people as possible from the poor law altogether' (in terms of recipients at least).[434] Meanwhile Siena proposes that provision of care for the sick and infirm quickly became the function of most London workhouses and concludes that: 'once in place, these institutions originally erected for very different purposes evolved into important local medical institutions'.[435] None of these interpretations make allowance for the success of the SPCK's programme for religious reform, in terms of workhouses ensuring religious reform was part of their function, across the first half of the eighteenth century, and possibly beyond. Evidence from the operation of the workhouses at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly illustrates that the role and importance of religion in these

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[433] See: Webb and Webb, *English Local Government,* and Marshall, *The English Poor, and* Slack, *The English Poor Law,* and Siena, *Venereal Disease.*
[434] Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, pp.133-5
[435] Siena, *Venereal Disease*, p.138

institutions was maintained despite medical expansion and indeed increasing

pressures on systems of relief.

At first the development of St. George's workhouse appears to support Siena's

argument; within a month of its opening an infirmary was under construction. Yet, the

committee minutes demonstrate that this development was not so straightforward. By

1734 the minutes concluded that 'there are constantly several aged lame & sick poor

in the workhouse'. However, it was the fact that these inmates were 'not able to attend

religious worship at the church' that was the main concern of the officials. The entry

stated:

> Whereas there are constantly several aged lame & sick poor in the
> workhouse not able to attend religious worship at the church & whereas
> the Rev. Mr. Clarke does once a week read prayers to the said poor […]
> [it] is not thought often enough & that ye aged & sick poor therein are
> not daily attended in the time of their illness by a Devine.[436]

The committee was particularly concerned that while a clergyman read prayers in the

house once a week, this was not enough, and the sick were not religiously attended

every day during their illness. The committee therefore agreed that prayers should be

more frequent and 'of more zeal'.[437] It laid down that:

> […] prayers should be read to the poor in the house at fixed hours on
> every Wednesday and said as also twice on every Sunday once in the
> morning & once in the evening & that a psalm be read at the same time
> out of the Duty of Man and also that the children be catechised once every
> month […].[438]

The sick were also to be visited and attended during their illness by a clergyman.[439]

Thus, while it does appear that the workhouse was taking care of an increasing

number of sick paupers by 1734, as medical provision was expanding, so too was

religious provision for these inmates. The parish was also willing to pay for this

increased religious provision, adding the sum of ten pounds per annum (an increase in

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[436] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (25 June, 1734)
[437] Ibid.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Ibid.

salary of fifty per cent) to the clergyman who attended the workhouse, which is testament to its importance.[440]

A later entry in 1734 confirms that this request was put into practice. It was:

> Resolved […] that for the better instruction & consolation of those poor sick & infirm persons who are not able to attend the service of the Church, that the prayers of the Church be read in this house every Wednesday & Friday & on Sunday in the forenoon and afternoon, with a chapter out of the whole Duty of Man, or some other pious Book […].[441]

It was also added that 'visiting the sick and catechizing the children of this house may be carefully attended'.[442] More detail was added to the specific round of religious observance provided for the sick in the house. This included the involvement of Mr. Trebeck, rector of the parish.[443] Clearly religion was not to retreat in the face of medical expansion in the workhouse at St. George's, it increased alongside these developments.

It is clear throughout the minutes for St. George's that, while pressures were increasing in terms of numbers of paupers and tightening budgets, religion and reforming ideals were maintained and were actually increased rather than superseded. As already noted, religious provision increased as numbers of poor swelled. King and Timmins remark that over the course of the eighteenth century dependence on poor law authorities became more frequent and more prolonged.[444] This put considerable pressure on the mechanisms of poor relief and has led to arguments by Slack and Siena that these institutions had to become more pragmatic and focused on deterrence and providing a level of necessary care, rather than ideals of reform. The parish could no longer afford to reform inmates in terms of both time and money. St. George's Hanover Square was by no means exempt from these pressures despite being one of

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[440] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (25 June, 1734)
[441] Ibid, (1 October, 1734)
[442] Ibid.
[443] Ibid.
[444] King and Timmins, *Making Sense*, p.319

the more affluent parishes. The house was enlarged in 1743; 'It appearing to this

board that by the great increase of the poor of this parish the workhouse is become too

small'.[445] In 1737 the minutes also noted:

> […] it appearing that the number of poor have increased forty this year
> more than heretofore that hence have some extraordinary expenses
> occurred for these reasons.[446]

This is the first sign of anxiety over the increasing numbers of poor in the parish. By

1753 the committee was concerned that 'there is room wanted in the house for

patients the beds being all full'.[447] In 1754 it was:

> Resolved unanimously that for the future the governor and directors of the
> poor together with the churchwardens and overseers shall meet once a
> week at the workhouse of this parish […].[448]

Before this, meetings had been fortnightly, suggesting that the increasing number of

dependent poor in the parish had led to the need for more regular meetings. In the

months leading up to this entry, the minutes for each meeting were becoming

significantly longer, implying there was a greater number of dependant poor to

discuss. However, these pressures did not lead to the precedence of pragmatism over

religious reform in St. George's. The same meeting in 1746 which noted: 'It

appearing to this board that there is a great increase in inmates in the parish who

frequently become a charge […]' also confirmed 'that Mr. Jenkins be employed to

learn the said children [charity school children] to sing in the terms he formerly taught

the workhouse children.'[449] Thus, while there were clearly increasing numbers of

paupers in St George's Hanover Square, the presence of poor children in church was

simultaneously being increased. The charity school children accompanied the

workhouse children in chanting psalms. Likewise, in 1748 it was confirmed that Mr.

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[445] COWAC-C, C 877, Mf 564, (2 May, 1743)
[446] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (15 January, 1737)
[447] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (26 December, 1753)
[448] Ibid, (16 May, 1754)
[449] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (10 June, 1746)

Lunn was to 'assist the school master in the house'.[450] While presenting more pious poor children in church may have been an exercise to justify the increasing poor rate, extra help for the schoolmaster clearly suggests that there were more children in the house and their means of religious education was expanded accordingly. Thus, throughout the first half of the eighteenth century religion in the workhouse at St George's Hanover Square did not retreat in the face of medical expansion or pressure for a more pragmatic response due to growing numbers of dependant poor as has been suggested by previous historians.

The individuals administering religious observance changed over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century but these workhouses continued to operate in the same way in terms of religious practices. For instance, in St George's in 1736 the Reverend Mr. Brookes was 'employ'd to visit & attend the poor in this house in the same manner & upon the same terms as Mr. Frazer did.'[451] Similarly, in 1735 Mr. Jenkins the deputy parish clerk was 'desired to learn the children of this house to sing upon the same footing & allowance as the late Mr. Warner did'.[452] In 1746 the records noted 'that Owen Porter be employed to assist the children in writing & reading in the room of Francis Burton deceased'.[453]

Likewise in St. James's Piccadilly in 1728 the vestry recorded that the Reverend Mr. Jones was claiming money due to him for visiting and attending the poor in the workhouse.[454] This demonstrates that when the workhouse in St. James's was established under the management of Marryott and the influence of the SPCK a clergyman was regularly attending the poor in the house, and paid for his services. In 1729 however, following Marryott's dismissal, it was ordered 'that the Rev. Mr. John

[450] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (8 January, 1748)
[451] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (30 March, 1736)
[452] Ibid, (24 June, 1735)
[453] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (1 April, 1746)
[454] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 March, 1728)

Hyle be continued till further orders to visit and attend the poor in the workhouse of this parish & that he be paid by the overseers of the poor'.[455] Therefore, following the dismissal of Marryott, the practice of paying a cleric to attend the poor in the house was maintained. In 1729 the Reverend John Hyle was replaced, and it was resolved that the:

> […] church wardens and overseers of the poor of this parish shall pay
> the salary of £15 per annum to such clergyman as the Rev. Dr. Tyrrwhit
> Rector of this parish shall for the future appoint to visit and attend the
> poor of the said workhouse.[456]

Despite changes in personnel and the dismissal of Marryott the workhouse at St. James's was not left without religious provision.

Towards the end of the surviving minutes in St. George's in July 1752 there remains evidence of sustained religious provision. The committee noted:

> That the persons attending the children to the church be more careful in
> their keeping them in good order during the time of divine service.
> That the children do not make their responses, the renters of pews
> complain of their great irregularity and noise therein.[457]

It was still important for children to be religiously educated and inured to piety in these institutions, both for ratepayers and overseers. Children did not just have to attend church, but they were required to participate and display due piety. This was the SPCK's central objective; the religious reformation of the children of the poor, and it was still being put into practice in the workhouse at St. George's in 1752, nearly three decades after the SPCK had first inspired its creation.

There is also evidence of the continued role of the Church as a traditional form of charity in the workhouse at St. George's. The committee requested: '[…] the Reverend Dr. Trebeck rector of this parish to admit of two charity sermons to be preached at the church to raise a sum of money for placing out apprentice the boys

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[455] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (18 July, 1729)
[456] Ibid, (1 December, 1729)
[457] COWAC-C, C 881, Mf 565, (29 July, 1752)

[…]'.[458] Religion was still being used to raise money for these institutions and the services they were providing. Philanthropy had been a long-established feature of Christianity, and charity sermons in particular were increasing in number and importance during the eighteenth century. Their aim was to attract, and continue to attract donors to specific causes. These sermons emphasized that charity was part of a Christian life; giving had positive consequences for the donors, and that this particular form of charity was the best use of funds.[459] Workhouses and their role in society were still seen in terms of religious concerns, and continued to be promoted as places in which the poor could be religiously reformed.

The overseers unrelentingly spent their strained budget on religious observance and education. In 1750 the minutes noted:

> It appearing to this board that the curates for reading prayers at the
> workhouse have hitherto been paid out of the refectory money.
> Resolved that it is our opinion that for the time to come the sum of £20
> be the curates of this parish for doing the usual duty at the workhouse
> out of the poors [sic] rate.
> And that it be recommended to our successors to follow this
> resolution.[460]

This statement indicated that, until this point, a clergyman had administered religious instruction in the workhouse, but that it had not been provided by poor-law funds. The parish was however, even at this later stage, prepared to take on this additional burden in order to maintain this provision. Thus, even by the mid-eighteenth century, the parish was willing to increase the proportion of the budget they were prepared to spend on religious observance, in order to maintain this part of workhouse life. The role of religion in the workhouse did not retreat in light of other developments nor was it stagnant.

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[458] COWAC-C, C 880, Mf 565, (2 January, 1750)
[459] D.T. Andrew, 'On Reading Charity Sermons: Eighteenth-Century Anglican Solicitation and Exhortation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol.43, (1992), p.581
[460] COWAC-C, C 880, Mf 565, (2 January, 1750)

Consistency, especially in terms of the intentions behind these institutions, is illustrated most clearly when a new set of rules and orders were drawn up for the workhouse at St. James's. In 1736 the vestry had (upon checking if the rules of the house were being complied with) found 'almost total neglect in the governor'.[461] It was therefore ordered that the 'workhouse committee [be] discharged and for the future to consist of members of the vestry churchwardens and overseers'.[462] Following this, a new set of rules and orders were drawn up detailing the objectives of the vestry, a decade after the initial foundation of the workhouse and in the absence of Marryott's influence. The preceding description of the workhouse makes reference to 'all sick persons and children'; suggesting children were still regarded as a separate group in the house.[463] The rules and orders stated: 'That the nurses of children upwards of four years old and under six […] bring them clean to morning prayers and take care of them at their morals […]'.[464] Ten years after the workhouse was established the religious and the moral condition of children was still a prominent concern for the vestry. They also stated 'that all the men rise dress for work and clean themselves every morning and come to prayers […]' illustrating that adults as well as children were required to undertake daily religious observance.[465]

These rules and orders further required:

> That the school mistress shall in the day time take care to keep all the children in the workhouse under six years old in decent order and teach them to read and shall also teach such other boys and girls to read […].[466]

As in St. George's the children of the poor were to be religiously educated. They were required to be able to read the Bible, while 'decent order' suggests that their behaviour and therefore their morality was also the concern of their teachers.

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[461] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 April, 1736)
[462] Ibid.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.

The rector was also to appoint the appropriate prayers for the governor to read

and provide a fit cleric to be chaplain to the workhouse. This chaplain was:

> […] every Sunday and Christmas day and Good Friday [to] read the
> public liturgy of the Church and make a short and plain sermon
> explanation or exposition of some portion of scripture or catechism to the
> poor in the workhouse and shall administer the holy sacrament to them
> […].[467]

The rector nominated the chaplain to the workhouse, but he also had to be approved

by the committee, suggesting its relative importance in the view of the vestry.[468] This

order also demonstrates that the poor in the house were to be regularly catechised. As

rector of St. James's from 1733 until 1750 Thomas Secker put this order into practice,

and took his catechising responsibilities in the parish seriously, he wrote in his

autobiography:

> Besides the lecture on the catechism one of week-days, which I continued
> through Lent, though former rectors did not, & so went through the
> whole, being 39 lectures 8 times […] I went through them also on Sunday
> evenings 4 times at St. James's church & twice at the king street chapel.
> None of my predecessors gave this Sunday evening lecture.[469]

The rules and orders also specifically stated that the chaplain to the house was

required to '[…] instruct the poor both in the workhouse and infirmary and shall visit

the sick as occasion shall require […]'[470] As in the workhouse at St. George's,

religious provision expanded alongside medical facilities in the workhouse.

The arguments of historians such as Slack who advocates the precedence of

deterrence over reformation, Tomkins who argues earlier intentions were abandoned

in favour of pragmatism, and Taylor who maintains that the operation of workhouses

was primarily pragmatic, suggest that by 1750 religious reform would no longer have

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[467] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 April, 1736)
[468] Ibid.
[469] T. Secker, *Autobiography*, p29, referenced in, R.G. Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England*, (Woodbridge, 2007), p.82
[470] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 April, 1736)

been considered important.[471] Evidence of the role of religion in the eighteenth-century workhouse suggests however that none of these interpretations fully represents these eighteenth-century institutions, and the religious reformation of these inmates deserves a far more prominent place.

Dissenting Paupers in the Workhouse

Parochial workhouses were established and governed by the parish, and were therefore inherently Anglican establishments. However, despite the Anglican nature of religious provision, which was so central to workhouse life, there is evidence of a remarkable degree of toleration towards the dissenting poor housed in these institutions. This contrasts with some of the private charities instigated by Anglicans such as that of Edward Colston, who expelled boys whose parents attended a dissenting meeting from the schools he endowed in Bristol.[472] The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, following Catholic emancipation in 1829, actually contained a clause that gave workhouse inmates the right to attend worship where they pleased, but previous Poor Law Acts had no such clause. In fact, even though the Dissenting Deputies persuaded the Poor Law Commissioners to allow dissenting burials and consider the admission of dissenting teachers into workhouses in 1844, they continued to refuse to exempt any children from the Church of England catechism.[473] This suggests that perhaps the New Poor Law was in practice less tolerant even though there was greater provision for it via the law.

The new rules and orders that were drawn up for St. James's workhouse in 1736 included an interesting dispensation. They noted:

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[471] See: Slack, *The English Poor Law,* Tomkins, *Urban Poverty,* and Taylor, 'The Unreformed Workhouse'.
[472] J. Millar, *Cities Divided: politics and religion in English provincial towns, 1660-1722,* (Oxford, 2007), p.296
[473] B. Manning, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies,* (Cambridge, 1952), p.477

> […] that the governor shall take care that the officers of the workhouse
> and likewise the poor not being Dissenters from the Church do attend
> constantly and reverently on divine service […].[474]

This suggests that Dissenters in the workhouse at St. James's were allowed to attend their own services, or at least absent themselves from Anglican worship. As already suggested, during the eighteenth century Dissent tended to flourish in urban areas, therefore there were likely to be at least some Dissenters in the Westminster workhouses.[475] It is likely though that Dissenting churches would at least try and look after their own poor, since not doing so would look badly on the church itself and potentially reduce congregations. The Quakers for example, were very reluctant to allow their poor to fall into parish hands and even established their own workhouses in Bristol and Clerkenwell at the end of the seventeenth century. Quakers in particular also appear to be the only Protestant dissenting denomination that the SPCK were particularly concerned about converting. In March 1699 for example, the SPCK's minutes recorded:

> […] that Collonell Colchester and Doctor Bray go and discourse
> George Keith, in order to be satisfied what progress he has hitherto
> made towards the instruction and conversion of Quakers, and to know
> what he designs further to attempt […].[476]

Conversely, Presbyterians made no provision for their poor, and therefore must have depended on parish relief.[477] Aside from the responses of different dissenting groups towards parish relief, there is no reason why Dissenters could not be admitted to the workhouse. The conflict surrounding the exclusion of Dissenters from the Bristol workhouse discussed in Chapter One concerned government and influence over the poor as opposed to the spiritual beliefs of the poor themselves. The insistence on regular church attendance and regular catechising would certainly have made it

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[474] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 April, 1736)
[475] Watts, *The Dissenters*, p.353
[476] SPCK MS A1/1, (8 March, 1699)
[477] Watts, *The Dissenters*, p.336

uncomfortable for the dissenting poor in the workhouse, but it also offered the possibility of generating converts, which might even suggest it was encouraged. The concession to let Dissenters attend their own meetings demonstrates a level of religious toleration in this institution, which is testament to the importance of religion more generally within workhouses. If religion had not been an important part of the operation of these institutions it would not have been necessary or relevant to make concessions for Dissenters. It also offers insights into the nature of religious provision in these institutions. Of course Protestant Dissenters were much better than godlessness or Catholicism, and they were legally tolerated under the 1689 Toleration Act. Allowing Dissenters to attend their own meetings and worship in a manner that was comfortable for them further indicates attempts to instil a genuine and personal piety.

It is possible that St. James's Piccadilly was an exception, and that not all parishes were so lenient towards Dissenters. In terms of religious leadership St. James's had a legacy of tolerance. It was a prestigious parish that was administered by a number of particularly tolerant rectors. William Wake, a noted Whig and future Archbishop of Canterbury, served there between 1694 and 1708 when he was promoted; in 1710 he gave a speech defending toleration during the Sacheverell trial.[478] Charles Trimnel, who became Bishop of Norwich, followed him. Trimnel was also a Whig and a noted supporter of the SPCK.[479] From 1708 until his death in 1729 Samuel Clarke was rector of St. James's, a heterodox clergyman particularly tolerant of Dissent. He endeavoured throughout his career to bring Dissenters back to the Anglican Church through toleration, creating a legacy of forbearance in the parish. Robert Tyrrwhit succeeded him. On this appointment the Bishop of London, Edmund

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[478] S. Taylor, 'Wake, William', *Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (retrieved, 04/09/2013)
[479] W.M. Jacob, 'Trimnel, Charles', *Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (retrieved, 04/09/2013)

Gibson, congratulated himself that he had 'brushed aside' the claims of the Tory

Jermyn family to nominate the incumbent of St. James's Piccadilly and appoint Dr.

Tyrwhitt. Gibson commented that 'it was very happy for ye publick [*sic*] that they had

it not in their power to plant an eager Tory in so large a parish and so near the King's

palace'.[480] Thus, the parish of St. James's Piccadilly not only had connections to the

SPCK but a heritage of religious toleration, and one that was reflected in small

measure in the operation of its workhouse.

Thomas Secker replaced Tyrrwhit in 1733 and was rector at the time the new

rules and orders for the workhouse were drawn up. He was another orthodox

clergyman who as Robert Ingram notes was a 'noted friend of the Protestant cause'.[481]

Secker, despite being another future Archbishop of Canterbury, had previously been a

Dissenter.[482] He sought reform from within the Church, and while obviously tolerant

of Dissent, like many Dissenters he was opposed to nearly everything about Roman

Catholicism.[483] Thus, from the time the workhouse in St. James's was established and

up to the mid-eighteenth century, notably tolerant clergy administered the parish.

The SPCK was also remarkably tolerant in a period that was characterized by

religious division. It allowed high and low churchmen and even Dissenters alike to be

members, united for a common purpose. Katherine Carte Engel describes the SPCK

as an 'internationally minded voluntary association rooted in Anglicanism but able to

unite different Protestant groups'.[484] If the SPCK was prepared to maintain a degree

of toleration, there is reason to suggest the institutions they inspired would follow

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[480] Quoted in, W. Gibson, 'Edward Weston's Ecclesiastical Correspondence 1729-62', *Archives*, Vol 37, 125, (April, 2012)
[481] R. Ingram, 'Archbishop Thomas Secker (1693-1768), Anglican Identity and Relations with Foreign Protestants in the mid-18th Century', in R. Vigne and C. Littleton, (eds.), *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America 1550-1750,* (London, 2001), p.528
[482] J. Gregory, 'Secker, Thomas', *Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (retrieved, 04/09/2013)
[483] Ingram, 'Thomas Secker,' p.10 and p.149
[484] K. Carte Engel, 'The SPCK and the American Revolution: The limits of international Protestantism', *Church History,* 81:1, (March, 2012), p.77

suit. Therefore, as an institution, despite the apparent focus on Anglican reformation it is not surprising that the Westminster workhouses, or at least St. James's workhouse, were tolerant of Dissent.

There is evidence of a similar degree of religious toleration in other parochial Westminster and London workhouses. The rules and orders for the workhouse established in the Westminster parish of St. Giles's in the Fields published by the SPCK in the second *Account of Several Workhouses* stated: '[…] That all the poor who are in Health, go to Church, or to some other place of religious worship, every Sunday, Morning and Afternoon […]'.[485] This was even more explicit than the rules for St. James's, since it specified that the poor could go to 'some other place of religious worship' meaning a dissenting meeting, since to practice Catholicism remained illegal.

The earlier 1725 *Account of Several Workhouses* shows that the parochial workhouse at St. Giles's Cripplegate ordered that:

> […] on Wednesdays and Fridays after Breakfast, the master cause the
> proper Psalms for the Day, a Chapter in the Old and New Testament,
> the litany, with other prayers for the Day, to be read: And that every
> Sunday at 9 in the forenoon, the same be read […].[486]

This illustrated that the religious observance undertaken within the workhouse at St. Giles's Cripplegate was, as in St. James's and other parochial institutions, Anglican. However, the order continued that: 'such as are able to go to Church, or other place of worship […]' as in St. Giles's.[487] This begins to build a case for the presence of Dissenters in the workhouse, and even more significantly it shows a remarkable degree of toleration towards their presence that is illustrative of the importance of

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[485] *An Account of the Several Workhouses…*(1732), p.53
[486] *An Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725), p.7
[487] Ibid.

religion generally within these institutions.[488] Had religion not remained important it would have been unnecessary to make special provision for Dissenters. This contrasts markedly with the attitude towards non-pauper Dissenters connected to the workhouse, as demonstrated in the Bristol and London Corporation workhouses earlier in the eighteenth century, an indeed the position of these institutions when it came to apprenticing out pauper children which will be addressed in Chapter Five.

Conclusions

The committee and vestry minutes from the workhouses established at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly in the mid-1720s reveal a substantial amount about the operation of these institutions. More specifically, these records clearly identify the importance of religion and the influence of the SPCK within both the initial setup and the daily operation of these workhouses. The daily running of these institutions echoed the SPCK's ideals of reforming the young and instilling values of virtue, industriousness and piety. This supports Hitchcock's theory that the SPCK was a significant dynamic in the creation of parochial workhouses during this era. Furthermore, the period that these records cover, demonstrates that religious reformation remained central to both the intentions and operation of these institutions throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Most significantly, as the workhouse itself adapted to cater for the specific needs of its inmates, so did its religious regimen. This evidence suggests that a range of historical arguments and conclusions surrounding the workhouse need to be reviewed and considered in the light of religious practice in order for a fuller, and more accurate picture of these institutions to be established.

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[488] There is a lot more work to be done here in order to definitively support these conclusions but the point is taken up again in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four:

Religion in the Parish Workhouses at St. Margaret's and St. Martin in the Fields During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

Detailed evidence from the committee minutes for the workhouse at St. George's Hanover Square and the vestry minutes concerning the workhouse established in St. James's Piccadilly during the first three decades of their operation, demonstrates that religious observance occupied an important part of daily life in these institutions. The governors and officers spent time, energy and money implementing and maintaining religious observance and training, aimed at reforming and educating the inmates. However, this was not necessarily the case for all institutions, not even in other Westminster parishes. King has demonstrated that there were 'substantial spatial differences in motifs of entitlement, generosity and sentiment within the English Poor Law'.[489] He describes it as a series of systems rather than a single uniform system. Additionally, King argues that there was not only regional variation, but also intra-regional diversity, which included the religious ethos in workhouses.[490] It is possible that the more affluent Westminster parishes of St. George's and St. James's were anomalies, and that the role of religion was not so significant in other Westminster institutions. Therefore, in order to place religion back into the history of the workhouse, evidence from St. George's and St. James's must at least be placed in the context of other parochial workhouses in Westminster, in particular since the parishes of St. George's and St. James's with their particularly rich records happen to have been amongst the more wealthy Westminster parishes. This chapter will therefore compare these particular records with those from two poorer parishes: St. Margaret's and St. Martin's in the Fields.

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[489] King, *Poverty and Welfare,* p.269
[490] Ibid.

The parish of St. Martin's in the Fields established a parochial workhouse in the same year as St. James's, 1725 and St. Margaret's Westminster established one the same year as St. George's, 1726. In contrast to St. George's and St. James's however, these were among the older and much poorer Westminster parishes, making them the ideal local comparison. St. Margaret's and St. Martin's workhouses were, also, either managed or sub-contracted by Matthew Marryott, at least during their foundation and the first years of their operation.[491] There are surviving workhouse committee minutes for St. Margaret's that cover the same period as St. George's (1726-1749). There are also rules and orders for the workhouse at St. Margaret's, which set out the initial intentions for the institution. 'Daybooks' from St. Martin's in the Fields dating from 1737 to 1741, while not as detailed as committee minutes, enable patterns of baptism for children entering, and born in the workhouse, to be established, supplementing the evidence from St. Margaret's. These workhouses also have surviving accounts for this period, providing evidence of payments in order to facilitate religious reformation within these institutions.

The workhouse committee at St. Margaret's held weekly meetings as opposed to the fortnightly meetings at St. George's, where meetings were only increased in 1754. The entries in St. Margaret's minutes are however shorter. Both of these institutions housed around 300 inmates when they were first established in the 1720s, although by the mid-eighteenth century, St. George's had to be enlarged. The committee minutes for St. Margaret's are complete from the foundation of the workhouse in 1726 until 1736. Unfortunately, after the entry for 8 July 1736, the minutes are either damaged or missing until 1 January 1742.[492] The last date in the

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[491] For more on this see Chapter Two on the SPCK and Chapter Three on St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly.

[492] In St. Margaret's, when the records resume in 1742, they were much shorter. Whereas previously the records were comparable in terms of layout to St. George's (discussion was recorded in detailed

surviving minutes for St. Margaret's is for 5 June 1749. This is seven years short of the records for St. George's, but still touches the assumed mid-century watershed in workhouse development that has been suggested by historians, who argue that, by this point, these institutions had surrendered ideals of religious reformation to pragmatism.[493] In comparison to St. George's, there are fewer direct references to religious practices and observance. However, the minutes for St. Margaret's mention religious observance and education, as well as number of indirect references. For example, the workhouse chaplain regularly baptised children, which as has already been suggested, was a practice with a reforming element to it. This is supported by evidence from St. Martin's in the Fields, which demonstrates how quickly these children were baptised after birth or entering the house. The minutes for St. Margaret's, also display regular spending on religious materials and provision as well as the religious nature of the education of children within these institutions. As in the more affluent parishes of St. George's and St. James's these practices continued throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Finally, in contrast to evidence of a degree of toleration exercised towards Protestant Dissenters in the workhouse at St. James's, there is evidence that if in fact there were Catholics in the workhouse at St. Margaret's efforts were made to make their spiritual experience of the workhouse uncomfortable. Protestant Dissenters may have been tolerated as their Protestant brothers but Catholics remained a threat.

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continuous prose in no particular order) after 1742 they appear more in note form to a greater degree than in St. George's.
[493] See for example, Siena, 'Introduction', and Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*

<u>The Parishes of St. Margaret's and St. Martin's in the Fields</u>

St. Margaret's Westminster was one of the ancient Westminster parishes, with a population of over 17,000 in 1720.[494] It was also the poorest; in 1664 almost half its households were exempt from hearth tax.[495] St. Margaret's also had a charity school and the Grey Coat Hospital, which was established in 1704. It was the fourth Westminster parish whose workhouse was sub-contracted to Marryott. Built in 1726, it had space for over 300 inmates.[496]

St. Martin's in the Fields was one of Westminster's largest parishes, particularly affected by population growth in the late seventeenth century. A population of 18,000 in 1660 had grown to around 45,000 by 1715.[497] St. Martin's had grown so big that the newer parishes of St. James's Piccadilly and St. George's Hanover Square were carved out of part of the parish in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries respectively. Even following this reduction in size it still housed more than 22,000 residents in the 1720's.[498] As a result, St. Martin's possessed one of London's largest parish workhouses, built in 1725. By 1776 it was recorded as holding over 700 inmates.[499] As in St. George's and St. Margaret's it was expanded in 1736 to include wards for the sick, smallpox sufferers and lying-in patients.[500] The parish also had a charity school which, like St. Margaret's, connected it to the work of the SPCK early on.

St. Martin's was not only Westminster's largest parish, but with St. Margaret's, it housed many of Westminster's poorer residents. In 1664 twenty per cent of the

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[494] 'London Lives'
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid.
[497] J. Boulton, "It is Extreme Necessity That Makes Me Do This': Some 'Survival Strategies' of Pauper Household's in London's West End During the Early Eighteenth Century', *International Review of Social History,* 45, (2000), p.49
[498] 'London Lives'
[499] Ibid.
[500] Ibid.

population was already exempt from hearth tax.[501] In terms of the religious demography of the parish, in 1714 it had more Anglican chapels than any other London parish.[502] Though the presence of Independents and Baptists is noted, by 1780 there were no ministers recorded, although this does not mean that they were not present.[503] This supports Watts' assertion that Dissent was much less pronounced among the poor and therefore poorer parishes.[504]

Religion and the Influence SPCK in the Poorer Parish Workhouses

The first orders concerning St. Margaret's workhouse appear entirely pragmatic, unlike St. George's, where religious instruction was at the forefront of the committee's concerns.[505] This is not surprising; although these institutions were established with the aim of reforming inmates there were still practical considerations, especially when setting them up. The first entry, dated 23 August 1726, concerned the building itself and getting it ready to receive paupers, including room for an infirmary and lunatics.[506] In place of the specific mention of religious observance, 'work' also appears far earlier than in St. George's, where it was not mentioned until the early 1730s.[507] In January 1727, the committee recorded that it was: 'Ord. that Mr. Marroitt [*sic*] have notice to consider of proposed materials for setting the poor on work.'[508] This also clearly indicated the active role of Marryott within the establishment of the workhouse. Prior to this, in September 1726, the minutes had reported:

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[501] 'London Lives'
[502] Croot, *A History of the County of Middlesex*, p.129
[503] Ibid, p.204
[504] Watts, *The Dissenters,* p.348
[505] For more on this see Chapter Three.
[506] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (23 August, 1726)
[507] See: COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (10 March, 1730)
[508] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (3 January, 1727)

> On Mr. Marroitt's [*sic*] proposing to take upon himself the government of
> the workhouse for the consideration of £150 per ann. for himself and seven
> servants or £100 per ann. for himself and four servants.[509]

Marryott directly managed St. Margaret's workhouse and therefore was able to influence its daily operation on behalf of the SPCK, which closely monitored his work. However, as was the case in St. George's and St. James's, he was dismissed in 1727 following scandal and his fall from favour with the SPCK. It was 'ord. that notice be give to the gentlemen of this commit [*sic*] to meet on Thursday next for ye choice of a master to succeed Mr. Marroitt [*sic*]'.[510]

Notwithstanding Marryott's government of this institution and his direct connection to the SPCK, the first meetings of the workhouse committee and their initial concerns omit religion, religious observance, arrangements with the parish church and reforming the poor through religion. When the rules and orders were drawn up for the house in September 1727, none of the ten points mentioned religious observance.[511] This contrasted sharply with those from St. James's drawn up in 1736, where religion directly occupied at least two orders.[512] In fact, there is no mention of religion at all at committee meetings in St. Margaret's until 1727, when the minutes stated:

> The Revd. Mr. Brown having proposed for our consideration to read prayers
> to ye poor of this house viz. at nine of the clock every Sunday morning and
> at twelve a clock every other day.
> Ord. That ye said Mr. Brown be allowd [*sic*] for that service twelve pounds
> per ann. to commence from michmas [*sic*] next.[513]

It is possible that this simply represented a change in provision, namely that the minister was now coming in to the house. It is likely that the poor had previously been attending church on Sundays. Attendance at the parish church would have been expected since the majority of the parish in this period would regularly have attended

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[509] COWAC-E, E2633, Mf 1217, (22 September, 1726)
[510] Ibid, (10 March, 1727)
[511] Ibid, (7 September, 1727)
[512] COWAC-D, D 1759, Mf 857, (17 April, 1736)
[513] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (7 September, 1727)

church on Sundays. Provision beyond this illustrates the introduction of a religious

reforming agenda in the workhouse. Still, it appears that it was Mr. Brown, rather

than the committee, who initiated changes in the programme of religious observance

in the workhouse. However, the committee was willing to pay for this provision,

suggesting that they were in full support of the introduction of an element of religious

reform into the workhouse at St. Margaret's.

This contrasts with the situation in St. George's where provision for both

regular church attendance and religious instruction in the house was a priority for the

committee from its foundation. It is interesting nonetheless that, as in St. George's,

this increase in overt religious provision occurred at the same time as the expansion of

medical care. The minutes also recorded in 1727:

> The committee appointed the last meeting for fixing a ward or wards for the
> sick reported to the board that the rooms over the laundry are very fit for that
> purpose.
> Ord. That the said churchwardens do cause the said rooms or wards be made
> into an infirmary […].[514]

Thus, in 1727, as well as the introduction of regular religious worship in the

workhouse, perhaps alongside previous and on-going attendance at the parish church,

six rooms were converted into a ward for the sick. It is possible that this re-ordering

of space prompted an overhaul of procedures more generally. This may have been

coincidental, but it is interesting that when medical care in the workhouse at St.

George's expanded, so did religious observance, while in St. Margaret's, religious

provision in the house was introduced at the same time as the expansion of medical

facilities. It was perhaps due to the fact that these sick inmates, many of whom were

considered most in need of reform, could not attend the parish church that triggered

this introduction. Either way, this illustrates that in St. Margaret's, as in St. George's,

religious observance adapted to changes within these institutions. This supports

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[514] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (9 November, 1727)

Siena's evidence for medical expansion within these institutions, but not his subsequent conclusion that religious reform was abandoned in favour of these developments.[515]

Aside from the apparent lack of reference to religion and religious reform in the creation of St. Margaret's workhouse, there were a number of indirect references to religious observance in the daily running of the institution. In a recent welfare study based on the Welsh reaction to the New Poor Law, Peter Jones and Megan Evans demonstrate the importance of looking beyond the current historiography, and identifying the evidence that other historians have overlooked. Their illumination of the rather subtle, but nonetheless effective, resistance in Wales to the New Poor Law, suggests that the current assumption that the north of England posed the strongest and most successful resistance to the new legislation needs revision.[516] Similarly, historians such as Boulton and Schwartz, Green, and Levene have extensively used the huge body of administrative workhouse records, including those for Westminster workhouses. Yet, religion in these institutions has been continually overlooked.[517] The role and impact of religion in the workhouse was sometimes subtle, but it still exerted a significant influence on the operation of these institutions.

In 1733 the committee minutes for St. Margaret's workhouse presented a list of 'persons discharged the house […] [which included] Anne Burridge, taken away from Church by her Brothers'.[518] This demonstrates that, at least by 1733, paupers were attending church, although it was never stated in the minutes or the rules and orders that they were required to do so, as it was in St. George's. Likewise, in 1748 it was

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[515] See: Siena, *Venereal Disease.*
[516] M. Evans and P. Jones, "A Stubborn Intractable Body': Resistance to the Workhouse in Wales, 1834-1877', (In preparation)
[517] See for example: Boulton and Schwatz, 'The Comforts of a Private Fireside', D.R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the poor law, 1790-1870,* (Surrey, 2010), A. Levene, 'Children, Childhood and the Workhouse: St. Marylebone, 1767-1781', *The London Journal,* Vol.33, no.1, (2008), pp.41-59
[518] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1217, (7 June, 1733)

'ord. that Mr. Edward Harris do provide the coffins and shrouds for the dead poor of this house, and St. Margaret's parish, at the usual price'.[519] This illustrates that the workhouse was regularly providing for their dead poor, in the proper Christian manner. Steve King and Elizabeth Hurren have noted that a woollen shroud and a basic wooden coffin for paupers who died in the workhouse were customary rights as well as religious ones.[520] The parish had no choice but to spend on this provision since law demanded that bodies had to be buried in woollens.[521] Yet the law only demanded that bodies were buried in a woollen shroud, and did not stipulate that a coffin also had to be provided, although these may have been reused. The regular purchase of both shrouds and coffins indicates a level of religious respect and observance that went beyond what was necessary for these paupers. As in the parish workhouses at St. George's and St. James's, religion certainly played a role in the operation of this institution.

As in the more affluent Westminster parishes, there is evidence in St. Margaret's and St. Martin's of a focus on the children of the poor and setting them on the path to a more pious and moral future, through inducting them into the Anglican Church. Baptism in St. Margaret's was particularly significant since there was such a high rate of infant mortality. Generally, rates of infant mortality were much higher in London than in the rest of the country, but it was so high in St. Margaret's, that the parish sent all infant inmates to nurses in the country, even though law did not require this until 1767.[523] Of the 106 children born in the house or admitted before the age of twenty months between 1746 and 1750, only seven were alive and still in the house

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[519] COWAC-E, E 2636, Mf 1218, (5 May, 1748)
[520] E. Hurren, and S. King, "Begging for a burial': form, function and conflict in nineteenth-century pauper burial', *Social History,* 30, (2005), p.326
[521] R. Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute,* (London, 1987), p.20
[523] A. Levene, *Childcare, Heath and Mortality in the London Foundling Hospital, 1741-1800,* (Manchester, 2007), p.76, See also, Levene, *The childhood of the poor*

by 1750. While sixteen had been discharged, an alarming eighty-three had died, a mortality rate of nearly ninety per cent.[524] Baptism ensured salvation, and in this environment of high infant mortality, it took on a greater religious significance that went beyond social traditions.

In 1728 the minutes showed 'that when a child is to be Baptised in the house, one shilling be allowed the Gossaps [*sic*] as encouragement'.[525] 'Gossaps' was an eighteenth-century colloquial term for godparents. Baptism was an occasion that demonstrated the participatory quality of religion practiced in the workhouse. It also indicates that children in the house were regularly baptised, signifying their entry into the Anglican Church. Most significantly however, there was a cost involved. The parish was willing to pay in order to induct children into the Anglican Church, illustrating a concern for the moral and religious welfare of the child, rather than simply maintaining it in the cheapest manner possible. In 1733 there is a further reference to baptism in St. Margaret's workhouse, demonstrating that the practice was continued, when it was 'ord. That cupid an Indian (in this house) be baptised'.[526] These mentions of the regular practice of an important religious observance in the house only occurred when there was a change or a problem. R.K. McClure makes an important point concerning this in relation to religious and moral instruction in the London Foundling Hospital. McClure concludes that 'caring for the foundlings bodies took up far more of the committee's time and thought, than attending to their minds and souls, not because the governors believed education and religious instruction unimportant, but because they could plan and carry out this part of their work quite

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[524] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.178
[525] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (30 January, 1728)
[526] Ibid, (25 October, 1733)

easily, and once in motion, few problems arose'.[527] Her argument must also be considered when reading accounts of the daily running of workhouses. The lack of direct reference to religion and religious practice in the committee minutes does not diminish its importance in these institutions, or the likelihood that religious reformation was being carried out. Indeed, as the previous chapter illustrates, there could be an impressive amount of time in meetings devoted to religious concerns. Clearly baptising an 'Indian' raised certain questions for the board, which had to be addressed. Baptising workhouse infants is likely to have occurred far more frequently than these two mentions. The nature of the records meant that they only dealt with changes and problems, sometimes obscuring or omitting significant aspects of daily life in the workhouse.

Evidence of the regular practice of baptising children can also be found in St. Martin's in the Fields, one of London's largest parish workhouses. While workhouse daybooks for this parish generally contain little or no direct evidence of religious observance, they do list who left and entered the house, and most importantly when, and if, infants were baptised. The date of baptism was often written in later, next to the date of entrance in a separate hand. This allows a picture of how quickly infants were baptised after entering the workhouse and thus the importance of, and intentions behind, this practice to be built up.

For example, in June 1739 Elizabeth Bowen was born in the house, and next to the record of her entry into the workhouse there is a note stating 'Baptised 16th'. The same entry occurs for Hannah Howard, who was 'Baptised 15th'. However, for John Harrison and John Witten who were born the same month there is no mention of

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[527] R.K. McClure, *Coram's Children: The Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth-Century,* (New Haven, 1981)*,* p.219

baptism.[528] Similarly, in July 1739, while Sarah London and Elizabeth Henderson were born in the house, no record was made of Sarah's baptism while Elizabeth's was noted to have taken place on the 14th of the same month.[529] This suggests that not all babies born in the house were baptised. There are a number of possible reasons for this. It is most likely that these children were baptised outside of the house. The majority of infants who were admitted or born in the house were baptised, thus it could simply be an error in the record keeping; some baptisms were missed from the records. After 1740, all babies born in the house were recorded as baptised. This was either the result of a change in practice, or better record keeping. Alternatively, a number of women entered the workhouse simply to give birth since they could not afford a midwife outside of the house. These children would be taken out of the house soon after birth, and the mother would have been responsible for their spiritual upbringing, and therefore baptism. Nevertheless, what it does show is that baptism was regularly monitored and practiced in the workhouse, and further to this, it was conducted soon after the birth of the child.

Most children were baptised within a few days, but no longer than a couple of weeks after being admitted. B.M. Berry and R.S. Schofield's study of the intervals between birth and baptism in eleven London parishes found that, regardless of wealth, this range was growing steadily over the course of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, London parishes were among the latest at baptising their children. During the second half of the seventeenth century, baptism had usually taken place within two weeks.[530] Thus, it would not be surprising if, in the Westminster workhouses, there were relatively long birth-baptism

[528] St. Martin in the Fields Workhouse Day Books [hereafter COWAC-F], F 4003, Mf 1834, (June, 1739)
[529] Ibid, (July, 1739)
[530] P. Razzell, 'Infant Mortality in London, 1538-1850: a methodological study', *Local Population studies,* no.87, (Autumn, 2011), p.54

intervals of two weeks or more. However, the daybooks from St. Martin's illustrate that most children who had been born in the workhouse were baptised in the same month that they were born, and usually within a week of their birth. The danger of children dying before they became members of the Church pushed religious concerns to the forefront, as in St. George's.

Even more significantly, dropped children (babies abandoned by their parents), were viewed as particularly vulnerable, and were always baptised within a few days of being found and entering the workhouse. These children were usually, but not always, bastards, abandoned by their mothers because they could not afford to keep them either socially, and/or financially.[531] The percentage of illegitimate children who were born generally increased three-fold over the course of the eighteenth century.[532] In July 1740, a male child aged about two months old, was found on the 26 July and baptised on the 30 July. On the 2 August a female child aged eight days old was dropped and baptised on the 5 August, and on the 22 August another female child was dropped aged six weeks and baptised on the 27 August.[533] These children were baptised especially quickly by eighteenth-century standards, within just a few days of discovery, illustrating a concern that went beyond social tradition. Dropped children had been abandoned by their parents, therefore it was assumed to be unlikely they had already been baptised, or were going to leave the house in the foreseeable future; their spiritual upbringing was now the responsibility of the parish. There was also the practical concern that if the mother was not found, the child would have settlement in the parish and thus an accurate record of the baptism was an important means of proving it later on. The parish was not willing to assume that these older dropped

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[531] See: Fildes, 'Maternal Feelings'
[532] T. Hitchcock, 'Redefining Sex in Eighteenth-Century England', *History Workshop Journal,* 41, (Spring, 1996), p.74
[533] COWAC-F, F 4003, Mf 1834, (July-August, 1740)

children had already been baptised and risked doubling up to ensure these children were entered into the Church. However, on the 19 December 1740, a female child of nine months was dropped, but there was no mention of her baptism.[534] This could once again have simply been missed from the records, but it is more likely that, due to her age, it would either have been assumed or known (since governors tended to know members of their parish) that she had already been baptised. For instance, it was also recorded that on the 2 April 'Thos. Murray dropt a bastard child of Margaret Murray 5 weeks.'[535] The child was also not recorded as baptised, despite only being five weeks old, however, the workhouse committee evidently knew the parents of the child. They were therefore likely to have known if the child was baptised. In the Foundling Hospital prior baptism was the one thing officials were allowed to ask of people leaving a child, highlighting its overarching importance.[536] Fildes has also highlighted that many of these infants had notes attached to them stating their name and age and whether they had been baptised.[537] Thus, it is also possible that these particular children came with a note.

The prevalence of lay-baptism is also a consideration here. Ruth Richardson has highlighted that, until the seventeenth century, the Church had allowed the baptism of weak infants by midwives, although this remained controversial.[538] While this practice was less prominent in the eighteenth century, it is possible that many of these children had already been baptised at birth. The reference to abandoned infants in St. George's suggests that the parish was likely to know if a child had been baptised and if they did not categorically know so, the child would be baptised.[539] In the case of

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[534] COWAC-F, F 4003, Mf 1834, (December, 1740)
[535] Ibid, (April, 1740)
[536] See McClure, *Coram's Children*
[537] Fildes, 'Maternal Feelings', p.153
[538] Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute,* p.19
[539] See: COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (16 February, 1747)

dropped infants, baptism was obviously deemed essential. Thus, it is clear that baptism in the Westminster workhouses was not only practiced on a regular basis, but that it was driven at least in part by reforming principles.

As in St. George's bastardy represents another instance in which moral and religious ideals took priority in the workhouse at St. Margaret's. In 1729 the minutes for St. Margaret's stated 'that Eliz. Colling's bastard child be admitted she being now sent to Bridewell.'[540] While families were still considered to be the first port of call, since there was no father and Elizabeth Collings was to be sent to the Bridewell, her child would have to be looked after by the parish. However, there may have also been a reforming consideration here, since clearly the mother had displayed immorality and neglect for religious ideals. Levene, Nutt and Williams make the point that illegitimacy was a moral transgression condemned by the Church, thus parents broke both civil, and ecclesiastical law, by having a child out of wedlock.[541] Bastard children were therefore seen as particularly vulnerable since their parents clearly had questionable morals. If these children were taken into the house away from the infectious moral influence of their parents, they could be brought up to the ideals of religion and virtue, and contribute to society, as opposed to depending on it. In 1728 it was 'ord. that Henry Kennedy a bastard child be admitted into the house.'[542] The officers evidently felt the need to state that Henry was born a bastard. The title was used as shorthand meaning there was no father to support him, but it also suggested that his morality was already compromised. It was also 'ord. that Mary Makine a bastard child age five months or thereabouts be admitted whenever the mother thinks

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[540] COWAC-E, E 2633, Mf 1217, (12 June, 1729)
[541] A. Levene, T. Nutt and S. Williams, 'Introduction', in A. Levene, T. Nutt, and S. Williams, (eds.), *Illegitimacy in Britain 1700-1920,* (Basingstoke, 2005), p.14
[542] COWAC-E, E 2633, MF 1217, (7 April, 1728)

fit.'[543] This mother did have discretion over when and whether the child would be

admitted and the parish supported hundreds of mothers with their children in the

workhouse. Nonetheless, admitting only the child would have had the dual benefit of

releasing the child from its compromised parent, preventing the impending spread of

irreligion and immorality, while allowing the mother to work. St. Margaret's, despite

being a much poorer parish, also to some degree sought to prevent the children of the

poor from being brought up to irreligion and vice.

Not only was the workhouse prepared to take responsibility for the upbringing

of bastard children, as in St. George's, but in 1731 it was also 'ord. that such women

who lye inn of bastard children be examined to the father of them […]'.[544] This was

standard practice, since it established who the parish should look for to get

maintenance payments, but it would also have required these women to take an oath.

Oath-taking was a distinctly religious act that further connected bastardy to religious

practice in the workhouse. Oaths were a powerful religious component of eighteenth-

century life, beyond the confines of the workhouse and even the Poor Law, which

become so well ingrained, that poor law historians have easily overlooked it. Clark

has described society during this period as a 'polity defined by oaths'.[545] He argues

that there was a culture of oaths, which was at least as old as feudal ties but developed

and intensified, following the Reformation and the political problems of the

seventeenth century. The government saw conscience, rather than coercion, as the

best means to ensure loyalty and identify enemies.[546] Clark also maintains that this

culture of oaths was a reflection of the importance of religion within society. Clark

uses the example of John Tillotson, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury. He

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[543] COWAC-E, E 2633, MF 1217, (30 May, 1728)
[544] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1217, (20 January, 1731)
[545] J. Clark, 'Religion and Political Identity: Samuel Johnson as a Nonjuror', in J. Clark and H. Erskine, (eds.), *Samuel Johnson in Historical Context,* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.80
[546] Ibid, pp.81-83

argued in the late seventeenth century that oaths were 'merely instances of a wider dependence on God […] [since] religion was the necessary support of humane society'.[547] When people took an oath, they were making a promise directly to God, and breaking this would compromise their salvation. Thus, in cases of both bastardy and settlement (where oaths were also widely used) two of the most significant aspects of the Poor Law within the workhouse, the religious practices and values of eighteenth-century society were reflected. This shows Clark's plea for historians to re-enchant their approach to the eighteenth century is correct and can be directly applied to the Poor Law and workhouses. These institutions were part of a deeply religious society and it therefore played in important role in their operation.

So far, the argument for the importance of religion that went beyond the life cycle and 'civic' religion that was expected in this period, appears weaker in the workhouse belonging to St. Margaret's than in St. George's and St. James's. However, alongside these indirect references, there is also more direct evidence, which demonstrates the importance of religion and builds a case for the centrality of both religion and religious reform within the poorer Westminster workhouses.

Payments to Facilitate Religious Observance and Education

The committee minutes for St. Margaret's, as in St. George's, demonstrate that religious regimen and the religious education of children in these institutions were both an important part of workhouse life. A distinctly reforming agenda can also be identified within this provision that can be linked back to the aims of the SPCK. Moreover, the parish was prepared to pay for religious observance and education, and it continued to do so over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century. That

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[547] See: Clark, 'Religion and Political Identity', p.81

these poorer Westminster parishes were prepared to spend in order to put the ideals of the SPCK into practice is perhaps even more significant than spending of this nature in St. George's. In a poorer parish payments to facilitate religious observance and education were proportionally more expensive making it a much bigger choice for the parish. The maintenance of these payments further illustrates that religion and moral reform remained important, even in the face of the mounting pragmatic economic concerns gathering pace by 1750.

Marshall concluded that: 'the whole history of the administration of parish relief during this period of parish domination is the history of a long struggle between their moral and financial responsibility for the poor- a struggle in which the desire to keep rates low was the victor.'[548] However, the workhouse committee minutes and accounts for St. Margaret's present a very different picture of workhouse life. Between 1696 and 1750 poor relief expenditure doubled, yet like St. George's, St. Margaret's was still spending its tightening, and heavily scrutinised budget on religious provision, particularly to facilitate the religious education of children. For instance, in November 1745 the minutes show 'that 3 dozn. of copy books be provided for the use of the school in this house,' and in 1746 it was 'ord. that Mr. Stagg do provide two dozen of primmers [*sic*] two dozen of psalters and two dozen copy books for the school in this house'.[549] Primers were brief manuals of selected psalms and approved prayers, along with some elementary instruction designed for use at 'home' as well as in church.[550] These were obviously intended to aid the education of children within the workhouse, illustrating the distinctly religious nature of instruction for children within these institutions. The purchase of psalters here is

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[548] Marshall, *The English Poor,* pp.11-12
[549] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1218, (20 November, 1745), and COWAC-E, E 2638, Mf 1218, (1 May, 1746)
[550] Green, *Print and Protestants,* p.244

also particularly significant, since they were used for catechising: preparation for confirmation. Evidence of catechising within the workhouse demonstrates that children were not only being baptised on entering the house, but were required to reaffirm their commitment to the Church of England. Confirmation occurred later, usually before the age of sixteen. Green argues that catechising during this period instructed the ignorant and reinforced the learned, but required the lessons to be understood as well as learnt; it was not to be a passive exercise.[551] Catechising was especially important in the face of a turbulent religious climate following the Toleration Act of 1689, where there were various denominations to choose from; the catechism would enable individuals to know official Anglican teaching.[552] H.P. Thompson argues in his biography of Thomas Bray, the founder of the SPCK, that 'the catechetical teaching of the young was indeed Bray's first enthusiasm', linking the ideals of the SPCK to the daily operation of the workhouse, even in the absence of Marryott, and well into the supposed period of decline in terms of its influence.[553]

The workhouse was also willing to spend on materials, in order to implement this religious education for children as in St. George's. The minutes also show in 1732; 'that Anne Garbutt a girl have two shifts two aprons and pair of stockings & a Bible provided by Mr. Withers […]'.[554] Not only was Anne Garbutt, a child, to have essentials to keep her clean and decent in the form of shifts and stockings, but also a Bible which was essential for her moral and religious welfare. Similarly, in 1733 it was:

> Ordered that two dozen of primer [*sic*] two dozen of Testaments and two dozen psalters for the use of the children in the workhouse be forthwith provided by the churchwardens.[555]

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[551] Green, *The Christians ABC,* p. 31
[552] Ibid, p.38
[553] H.P.Thompson, *Thomas Bray,* (London, SPCK, 1954), p.40
[554] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1217, (3 August, 1732)
[555] Ibid, (17 May, 1733)

The accounts for St. Margaret's show that in 1740, Bibles, psalters, ink and paper cost the parish five pounds sixteen shillings and eight pence. Unfortunately there is no price per unit included or exact numbers of how many of each were purchased, but the sum exceeded the quarterly salaries of the rector for attending the house, and the matron.[556] These works were specifically for children and their education in the workhouse, which was further maintained in 1743, when it was:

> Ord. that Mr. Church warden Stagg be advised to provide ten Bibles, six Testaments, and dozen of psalters and dozen of primmers [*sic*] and three hand books for the use of the school in this house.[557]

Bibles, depending on binding, cost an average of four shillings in the mid-eighteenth century. The order would, therefore, have amounted to at least two pounds for the Bibles alone.[558] Thus, by the mid-eighteenth century St. Margaret's like St. George's was still willing to spend on provision for the religious education of children, alongside basic handbooks.

Evidence from the accounts for St. Margaret's workhouse for this period further supports this picture. Salaries of three pounds and one pound ten shillings were paid every quarter to the rector Mr. Holt for reading prayers, and Mr. Warren the schoolmaster, respectively from 1740 to 1751.[559] This was the equivalent of around £255 and £127 in today's money. Clearly they couldn't live on this, and must have had other jobs outside the workhouse. Compared to the salary of five pounds for the clerk during this period, and three pounds fifteen shillings for the matron, this does however signify the importance of their roles in the workhouse.[560] Sixty to seventy pounds was spent monthly on food and around one pound and twenty-five shillings on

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[556] COWAC-E, E 2152, Mf 1140, (1740)
[557] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1218, (16 June, 1743)
[558] This is an average based on prices of printed Bibles in the mid-eighteenth century retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
[559] COWAC-E, E 2153, MF 1140
[560] Ibid.

coals in the months of September and October.[561] The workhouse account books for the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, from 1725 to 1751, also demonstrate a regular quarterly payment of a salary of three pounds fifteen shillings to Mr. Taylor, for reading prayers; a slightly higher salary than in St. Margaret's, which corresponded to the larger number of inmates in St. Martin's.[562]

In 1740 the accounts also demonstrated that 'Mr. Corble for Bibles and psalters pens ink and paper' was paid five pounds sixteen shillings and eight pence. It was the equivalent of around £500 in today's money, a substantial sum that exceeded the quarterly salary of the clerk.[563] However, these one-off payments for religious materials varied. In 1742 'a workhouse minute book, testaments etc.' cost the parish one pound nine shillings and nine pence.[564] In 1743 two shillings two pence was paid to 'Mr. Stagg for primmers [*sic*]'. Finally, in 1744 a prayer book cost the parish five shillings six pence, and they paid 'Mr. Stagg for bibles and testaments &c.' six pounds eighteen shillings and six pence. In addition, in 1745 the schoolmaster's salary was increased to two pounds ten shillings, suggesting, either an increase in his role, or an appreciation of his importance to the institution.[565] These payments were entirely comparable to those in St. George's suggesting that the role and importance of religion in these institutions demanded a standardised proportion of the overall budget. However, in a poorer parish this proportion was likely to be greater since the budget was less signifying that the importance of religion went beyond the relative wealth of the parish.

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[561] COWAC-E, E 2153, MF 1140
[562] COWAC-F, F 2212 and F 2213, Mf 2143
[563] These conversions are based on prices from 1750 via the National Archives converter, nationalarchivs.gov.uk, (retrieved, 05/09/2013)
[564] COWAC-E, E 2153, MF 1140
[565] Ibid.

Nevertheless, in spite of these regular payments, from 1746 the accounts reveal fewer one-off payments for Bibles and other religious materials. Until this point the parish had generally purchased materials every quarter.[566] A reduction in payments could suggest a change in the nature and extent of religious provision in St. Margaret's workhouse, supporting claims that the workhouse was less concerned about reforming inmates. At the same time however, as these entries tail off in the accounts, more references to these purchases appear in the minutes. This suggests a change in the record keeping rather than religious provision in the workhouse. In 1748 the workhouse committee minutes recorded '[…] that Mr. Foe do provide one Doz. of psalters three Doz. of primmers [sic] four Doz. of workbooks […] for the use of the school.'[567] If the children did not take these books away with them when they left the workhouse, the committee would perhaps not need to keep buying quite so many after the first few years. The fact that they did continue to make purchases, suggests one of two things. Either that children were taking these materials with them when they left the workhouse and it was therefore providing for their spiritual future, which in turn demonstrates a reforming quality. Or, that there were growing numbers of children in need of religious education, and the workhouse was expanding its provision alongside its population.

Finally, while there is no direct evidence of the presence of either Catholics or Protestant Dissenters in these poorer parish institutions, it is clear the tolerant attitude practiced towards Protestant dissenting inmates in St. James's did not extend to Catholic inmates in St. Margaret's. If there were any Catholics in the workhouse at St. Margaret's there is evidence that their experience would have been particularly uncomfortable, spiritually at least, from 1747 when the committee purchased 'six of

[566] COWAC-E, E 2153, MF 1140
[567] COWAC-E, E 2638, Mf 1218, (28 March, 1748)

Dr. Williams's exposition of the church catechism for use in the workhouse'.[568] Dr. John Williams wrote extensively against Catholicism. His *A Catechism Truly Representing the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome with an Answer Thereunto* was first published in 1713 and went through twenty-seven editions. The use of this particular catechism, which specifically corrects 'the teaching of Rome', indicates that there might have been Catholics in the workhouse that needed to be corrected. The parish was certainly determined to correct Roman Catholic ideas. Whether this catechism was purchased due to the presence of Catholics or not, it signifies the distinctly anti-Catholic position of these institutions in terms of both its government and its inmates. This reflected the position of the SPCK, which led a sustained attack on Catholicism throughout the eighteenth century, and illustrates the importance of religious concerns in the operation of the Westminster workhouses during the first half of the eighteenth century.[569]

Of all the denominations it is most likely that Catholics would have tried to look after their own poor, especially since their religious observance remained illegal throughout the eighteenth century. The distinctly Anglican and anti-Catholic nature of the religious teaching in these institutions would have 'perverted' their young members to a greater degree than those of the Protestant denominations. Anti-Catholic catechisms specifically taught children the errors of Catholic theology. Nevertheless, in a city like London with growing numbers of migrants and immigrants and a religion which could not be practiced openly, it is easy to see how relief from within Catholicism and through kinship networks might be difficult to obtain. Bishop Challoner Vicar Apostolic of London reported to Rome in 1744 that there were nearly 25,000 Catholics in the London district served by sixty priests. The

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[568] COWAC-E, E 2638, Mf 1218, (16 July, 1747)
[569] This is explored further in Chapters Five and Six.

same figure was given by his successor Dr. Talbot.[570] Although Catholics were permitted to enter the workhouse and obtain relief, religion and more specifically Anglicanism, was such an important part of workhouse life that the governors sought to ensure that it was the only doctrine practiced inside its walls. These institutions were tools by which the SPCK and the parish sought to religiously reform the poor by making them pious Anglicans.

Thus, the workhouses in Westminster, during the first half of the eighteenth century, regularly paid for the services of a cleric alongside further payments for materials to support the daily round of religious observance and the religious education of children. Andrew concludes that, 'although writers on charity employed the language of religion their vision was entirely practical'.[571] Yet evidence from these institutions during the first half of the eighteenth century, demonstrates that the language of religion was implemented on a physical basis within the daily running of the workhouse. In the Westminster workhouses the vision was more than 'entirely practical'.

The Continued importance of Religion and Religious Reform

Religion and the religious education of the children of the poor were central features of workhouse life in St. Margaret's, and they continued to occupy this position throughout the first half of the eighteenth century as in the more affluent parishes of St. George's and St. James's. Katherine Morrison in her extensive study of the English workhouse stated: 'every parish workhouse in London contained a large number of children.'[572] As previous chapters have highlighted, children, and more specifically, their religious education were not only the central focus of the SPCK

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[570] See: B. Hemphill, *The Early Vicars Apostolic of England, 1685-1750,* (London, 1954)
[571] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police,* p.23
[572] Morrison, *The Workhouse,* p.16

throughout the eighteenth century, but also represented a significant group within the workhouse in need of moral reform and religious education. In 1734 in St. Margaret's it was:

> Ord. That Mrs. Stephens the school mistress do for the future go and
> return to and from Church with the girls belonging to this house and that
> Mary Whinyard do assist her therein […].[573]

As in St. George's, the responsibilities of teachers in the workhouse included religious observance, and this was directly connected to education in the workhouse. Moreover, the entry illustrates that by 1734, regular and orderly church attendance by girls was at the forefront of the committee's concerns. In 1735 it was 'ord. that Alexander Smart's salary as schoolmaster be augmented to six pounds per ann. […]' further supporting the significance of his function, and mirroring the role and significance of religion in St. George's. [574]

Not only was the religious education of children still important a decade after the foundation of the workhouse in St. Margaret's as in St. James's, it was expanding, most likely as a result of the growing workhouse population. In 1747 it was also 'ordered that [?] Beal be admitted and employed under Mr. Buradbridge the schoolmaster of this house'.[575] In 1736 the minutes had also stated that it was 'ord. that [?] Crossland (one of the poor in the house) do assist Mrs. Smart in teaching the children to write and read.'[576] Literacy of course was particularly important since it enabled children to read the Bible. Even those Tory writers, such as Bernard de Mandeville who questioned whether poor children should be educated, through fear they might be elevated above their station, and who disapproved of children being taught to write and do arithmetic, conceded that they should have religious instruction

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[573] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1217, (17 October, 1734)
[574] Ibid, (3 April, 1735)
[575] COWAC-E, E 2638, Mf 1218, (1 October, 1747)
[576] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1218, (8 July, 1736)

and be taught to read.[577] By 1744 the workhouse did not share this opinion since it was:

> Ord. that an advertisement be inserted in the daily Advertiser purporting that there is wanting a master to teach the children in this house to write […] and if any person that understands arithmetic will apply himself to the Churchwardens and Overseers of these parishes he will be treated with upon the same.[578]

Therefore, the education provided by these institutions for poor children, not only required regular church attendance and the ability to read the Bible, but was also expanding throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, as in the richer Westminster parishes.

The continued importance, expansion and religious nature of educational provision for children in the workhouse is significant, since it is generally assumed by historians that the workhouse gradually become a home for the sick and the elderly; certainly this was the accepted picture by the mid-eighteenth century. Siena notes for example; 'by the second half of the eighteenth-century it was an accepted reality that workhouses were not primarily for the able-bodied, as intended, but rather for sick, weak, old and infirm […] [A] vision of the workhouse radically altered from the one put forth by the SPCK'.[579] Boulton and Schwartz conclude, through their analysis of the population of the workhouse at St. Martin's in the Fields, that 'the proportion of elderly residents increased over time'.[580] While statistically this is accurate, their further work demonstrates that, while the elderly tended to stay longer in the workhouse than younger groups, they only ever made up twenty-five to thirty per cent of the total inmate population throughout the eighteenth century.[581] In St. James's they also found that an average of thirty-one point six per cent of inmates were over

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[577] McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.219-220
[578] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1218, (19 July, 1744)
[579] Siena, *Venereal Disease,* pp.146-7
[580] Boulton and Schwartz, 'The Comforts of a Private Fireside', p.239
[581] Ibid, p.228

sixty. Thus, Boulton and Schwartz argue that in Westminster during the eighteenth century the workhouse was not just becoming a hospice for the elderly even though numbers were increasing.[582] Likewise, Ottaway in her comparative study of two local workhouses, has found that between 1740 and 1770 Terling's vestry used the workhouse primarily for children and some adults.[583] Levene has also demonstrated that in St. Marylebone, another parochial London workhouse, children continued to be 'significant' and 'distinctive' users of the workhouse during the second half of the eighteenth century.[584] Evidence from St. Margaret's, which is consistent with the earlier conclusions drawn from St. George's, illustrates that, by the mid-eighteenth century the education of children, which was distinctly religious in nature, maintained its importance. Moreover, it expanded alongside the institutions it operated within. Children and their religious reformation still occupied an important portion of workhouse life in Westminster by 1750.

Conclusions

Evidence from the first three decades of the operation of the workhouses at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly, demonstrated that religion was an important part of the operation of these institutions throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. The records for the workhouses established in St. Margaret's Westminster and St. Martin's in the Fields support these conclusions. The regular and rapid baptisms in St. Margaret's and St. Martin's illustrate that this practice was about more than social convention. There is also evidence of sustained payments for religious materials and observance, the religious education of children, and anti-Catholicism. Religious references within the records of these institutions were often

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[582] Boulton and Schwartz, 'The Comforts of a Private Fireside',, pp.228-230
[583] Ottaway, *The Decline of Life,* pp.249-250
[584] Levene, 'Children, Childhood and the Workhouse', p.56

subtle and are easily overlooked. In the case of baptism and oath-making, which had become so ingrained in eighteenth-century society, it has been easy for historians to underestimate their religious significance. Generally the committee minutes only mentioned religious practice at points of change or when problems occurred. Similarly, the nature of the records in both St. George's and St. Margaret's suggest there was some change over time, however it appeared that religion in these institutions survived and adapted without ever losing significance. The influence of the SPCK, initially through the management of Matthew Marryott, and continually through the reforming emphasis behind baptism (especially of illegitimate and abandoned children), the focus on the religious education of children, and attacks on Catholic theology, are also evident. This supports Hitchcock's theory that the SPCK was central to the establishment of these institutions. The continuing emphasis on formal religious teaching and training, based on the increase in personnel and the amount spent on psalters, Bibles and other religious material represents a continued commitment to religious instruction for at least the first thirty years of workhouse life. Spending was even more significant in the poorer parishes where budgets were inevitably tighter, and in fact there is more evidence to suggest religion expanded rather than retreated. While these institutions had to be practical, this was not at the expense of religion, which consistently commanded an important role in the experience of the Westminster workhouses. Thus, despite regional diversity and the socio-economic composition of the parish, it remains clear the SPCK was able to generate some form of consistency 'within this rich patchwork of local practice'.[585] Religion and more specifically religious reform formed the core of workhouse life in Westminster institutions throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.

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[585] See King, *Poverty and Welfare,* p.39

Chapter Five:

Religion and Character:
Apprenticing Children from the Westminster Workhouses During the Eighteenth Century

The SPCK's *Account of Several Workhouses*, which both inspired and directed the

parochial workhouse movement, stated that:

> […] all friendless orphans, and other children of the poor, who by law
> become chargeable to any parish, be sent into the workhouse, and be
> therein religiously and carefully educated […].[586]

It specifically provided that this training should continue '[…] till the Girls are age 12

and the Boys 13 years of age, when the trustees should have power to put them out

apprentices or servants […]'.[587] The practice of apprenticing out pauper children was

not exclusive to these institutions, but it formed an important and regular part of

workhouse life throughout the eighteenth century. Most importantly, the workhouse

paid great attention to the religious environment into which these children would be

placed. Regular investigations into the 'character' of prospective masters and

mistresses, orders that children should not be apprenticed to Catholics or Protestant

Dissenters, and the practice of providing religious material for these apprentices on

leaving the workhouse demonstrates that religion formed a central and at times

decisive part of this process. The hope was that a religious education in the

workhouse, and apprenticeship to a pious master with the help of religious literature,

would result in an industrious and pious adulthood. More specific was the intention

that it would lead to confirmation (since many children reached the appropriate age

during their apprenticeship) and active membership of the Church of England.

Direction in the workhouse was to be continued firstly via the master or mistress, but

also through self-guidance with the literature provided. Thus, religion, and more

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[586] *An Account of Several Workhouses…*(1725), p.10
[587] Ibid.

specifically religious practice, not only formed an important part of life in the workhouse, but in the case of a large number of children, their exit from it.

The following discussion has two main parts. The chapter begins by highlighting the important presence of children in the workhouse as addressed in the previous two chapters, and outlining the nature of apprenticeship generally, and also specifically in terms of pauper children during this period. It will then go on to examine the idea of 'character' in an eighteenth century context to identify what drove the appraisal of character in this period, and if, and how important religion was as part of this. The second part of the chapter then goes on to consider that while generally in eighteenth-century society the religious component of 'good character' simply meant piety, in the context of the parochial workhouse movement this may have been more specifically membership of the Church of England. The exclusion of Roman Catholics and even Protestant Dissenters (despite an otherwise tolerant attitude towards Dissenting inmates) from the role of master, not only highlights the continued concern about the control over the poor evident in the operation of corporation workhouses, but also the importance of religion to workhouse life. In these cases religion was a definitive part of this process, which itself was central to life in these institutions. This serves to support evidence from the previous two chapters that religion was an important aspect of life in the Westminster workhouses and that these institutions, in line with the intentions of the SPCK, sought to religiously reform their inmates. Finally, evidence that the parish also provided religious literature in order to help facilitate religious education and a pious future on leaving the workhouse helps build a case that illustrates the concern of the committee for the religious reformation of these children. This supports the argument for a

religious and more specifically Anglican dimension to 'good character' in the view of the parish.

Apprenticing Children from the Westminster Workhouses

As the previous chapters have illustrated, children, who have been largely overlooked as recipients of welfare, were in fact both significant and distinct members of the workhouse population. The eighteenth-century workhouse was not just a space for adults.[588] Children accounted for around thirty per cent of admissions to several London workhouses during the eighteenth century, making them a great presence in the population of metropolitan institutions.[589] This proportion remained consistent across the eighteenth century, with numbers of children increasing with the growth of these institutions.[590] Levene has demonstrated however that despite the high rate of admissions, these children did not all necessarily stay in the workhouse for long periods. If they did not enter and then leave with a parent or family member, the younger children were sent out to nurses.[591] This is supported by evidence from the Westminster workhouses. The vestry minutes for St. James's Piccadilly, for example, which detailed the operation of the parish workhouse, noted 'that the poor children at nurse in the country be put to the school as soon as they arrive at the age of four years'.[592] Therefore five and six year olds were one of the most common age groups resident in the workhouse, having returned from nurses to be educated until they could be apprenticed. Levene also notes that the term 'child' in this instance generally meant those aged thirteen and under since this was the average age at which a child

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[588] A. Levene and S. Ottoway,'Dependency, the workhouse and family ties in later eighteenth-century England', (In preparation), p.26
[589] Levene, *Childhood of the Poor,* p.107
[590] Ibid.
[591] Ibid, p.183
[592] COWAC-D, D1867, Mf 889, (26 March, 1773)

was bound out as an apprentice in London in the mid-eighteenth century. She notes however that concepts of childhood varied considerably during this period according to context, and for contemporaries it could be over as young as seven, although childhood was generally connected to some degree of dependency.[593] Apprenticeship was for many children their usual avenue of exit from these institutions. In many cases it marked the end of their childhood, at the very least it appears to have represented a transitory stage between childhood and adulthood, since the provision made for apprentices indicates that they were still in need of some form of guidance.

As a number of historians have noted, generally as the eighteenth century progressed attitudes towards poverty and the dependant poor were hardening.[594] However, the concept of the poor being less deserving of relief did not apply to children because childhood was increasingly seen as a time of innocence in this period. Children were among those deemed most deserving of support since they were not responsible for their own poverty.[595] The process of apprenticing out these deserving children as productive members of society was viewed as a legitimate way of spending the rates. Nevertheless, these hardening attitudes meant that while children were viewed as innocent, they were also vulnerable and viewed as a potential threat to society if they were not well trained, making apprenticeship to masters who would provide the appropriate guidance essential. Clearly children held a complex position in the contemporary mind. Levene argues for example that for eighteenth-century reformers 'children promised not only a strong future but the potential for a

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[593] See for example Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor,* p.1
[594] For hardening attitudes towards the poor see for example; Green, *Pauper Capital,* p.5, Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', T. Hitchcock, P. King, and P. Sharpe, 'Introduction: Chronicling poverty- The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840', in T. Hitchcock, P. King, and P. Sharpe, (eds.), *Chronicling Poverty- The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840,* (Basingstoke, 1997), and Tomkins, *Urban Poverty,* p.6.
[595] For hardening attitudes in terms of the innocence of children see; Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor,* p.1

certain type of future' stressing their positive potential.[596] Conversely, Alexandra

Shepard concludes that 'youth was the most dangerous age', emphasising the negative

side of childhood for society.[597] What both these statements illustrate is that children,

especially the children of the poor, were viewed as both vulnerable and important in

the eighteenth century. The life these children would lead as adults would impact on

society and ideals of reformation. This is why the Westminster workhouses,

underpinned by the agenda of the SPCK with its particular focus on catechising the

young, were so concerned about the 'character' of prospective masters and mistresses

for pauper children. It was the potential future and chance at reform that these

particular paupers offered.

While children were seen as 'deserving' recipients of relief, they were also

expensive for the parish to look after. Cunningham has suggested the premium paid to

a master for taking an apprentice often amounted to the cost of keeping that child in

the workhouse for a year. Thus, it was more economical to apprentice children out

than keep them in the house, even in the medium term.[598] Therefore, despite the more

general decline in apprenticeships during the 1720s and 1730s, for those concerned

with managing the poor the practice became associated with national productivity and

reducing the burden on the poor rate and continued to form a significant part of the

welfare system.[599] Under the terms of the Elizabethan Poor Laws churchwardens and

overseers and two justices of the peace were empowered to apprentice any child under

sixteen whose parents were judged not able to maintain them.[600] Apprenticeship

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[596] Levene, 'Children, Childhood and the Workhouse', p.41
[597] A. Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England,* (Oxford, 2003)
p.23
[598] H. Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: representations of childhood since the seventeenth century,* (Oxford, 1991), p.30
[599] C. Brookes, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1500-1800', in J. Barry and C. Brookes, *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800,* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.65
[600] T.V.H Fitzhugh, *The Dictionary of Genealogy*, (5th Edition; London, 1998), p.53

therefore reduced poor relief expenditure by redistributing the burden of housing, clothing and feeding children from poor parents or parish officers to masters. It was also argued by contemporaries that compulsory pauper apprenticeship would inculcate the virtues of industry and thrift, and alleviate inherited and life cycle poverty (children both inheriting the poverty of their parents and falling into poverty at certain points in the life cycle, for example just after marriage when they were likely to have young children or during old age).[601] There was also a concern about the risk of moral contagion both through keeping them in the workhouse and from poor parents. Hindle argues that magistrates had a common conviction about removing children from the influence of their parents from the seventeenth century.[602] Similarly, during the eighteenth century apprenticing a child in another parish was also a good way of getting rid of dependants since a completed apprenticeship conferred settlement and the right to poor relief in that parish.[603] Alternatively if children were to be apprenticed in their parish of birth the master legally had to take them and could be fined if he refused.[604] Based on the important presence of children in the workhouse and the economic cost of maintaining them, it is clear that the process of apprenticing out pauper children formed a substantial part of the operation of parochial workhouses during this period.

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[601] Hindle, *On the Parish*, pp.194-198

[602] Ibid, p.217

[603] C. Minns and P. Wallis, 'Rules and Reality: Quantifying the practice of apprenticeship in early modern Europe', Economic working papers, 118/09. Department of Economic History, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, p.4. Completion rates of parish apprenticeships were not particularly high.

[604] See C.L. Nixon, *The Orphan in Eighteenth-Century Law and Literature: Estate, Blood and Body*, (Surry, 2011), p.69

<u>Eighteenth-Century 'Character'</u>

It was of direct economic benefit to the parish to apprentice as many pauper children as possible. Yet, the vulnerable nature of these paupers and the potential they presented meant that the long-term benefit of this process was dependent on the master or mistress they were placed with. More specifically, it was based on the ability of a master to provide the essential training and guidance required by the parish, in order to continue the efforts of the workhouse in producing pious and industrious members of society. It was therefore imperative for the parish to establish the character of guardians in relation to their ability to guide these important charges. Through interrogating the meaning of 'character' in this period there is evidence that religion, and more specifically piety, was an important consideration. The stipulation that a prospective master or mistress should have 'good character' also meant that overseers and governors were insisting they should be pious Anglicans. Specific orders that children should not be apprenticed to Catholics and Protestant Dissenters demonstrate that in some cases religion was the principal reason why a child was not being apprenticed to a particular master or mistress, irrespective of the economic benefit. Thus apprenticeship illustrates another instance in which religion formed an influential part of workhouse life that should no longer be overlooked.

The committee minutes for the Westminster workhouses contained regular entries concerning apprenticing out pauper children, demonstrating the large portion of workhouse life it occupied. What is especially interesting about these entries is that they regularly had specific conditions attached to them. For example, on 16 May 1733 it was ordered:

> That Jane Doe goe upon liking to James Gibson of Drury Lane facing
> Shorts Gardens in the parish of St. Giles in the fields Glover for a fortnight

> That the messenger do enquire in to the character of the said James
> Gibson.[605]

The inquiry into the 'character' of the prospective master or mistress went beyond the economic or even social pragmatism of alleviating the burden of children and removing them from the influence of poor parents. Langford has defined 'character' in this period as the identity an individual was granted by his community.[606] Despite economic pressures, the parish was not prepared to apprentice these children, who had been brought up to piety and industry in the workhouse, to anyone who would take them. There was a specific set of criteria prospective masters had to meet concerning their 'character'. Despite the financially attractive prospect of offloading an expensive charge to another parish, it was only after confirmation of 'good character' that it was:

> Ord. That Elizabeth Blackwell be bound apprentice to one Andy Laws
> shoemaker in Cranborne Ally St. Ann's Mr. Overseer Rees having
> reported that the master bears a good character.[607]

The need for the masters and mistresses of pauper children to have a 'good character' underpinned the whole system which itself was at the very centre of the operation of these institutions. As late as 1754 the minutes for St. George's recorded:

> That an advertisement be inserted in the Daily Advertiser for three days
> successively to report the following, St. George Hanover Square
> Several poor children of both sexes now in the workhouse of this parish
> will be bound out by churchwardens and overseers of the poor thereof
> To such persons of character as shall apply for them.[608]

Evidently at this time the parish had a large number of children to apprentice out. Nevertheless, despite this pressure, 'character' remained an important factor. These orders for enquiry were followed up, and there is evidence of prospective masters being rejected on the basis of their character. In St. Margaret's when it was ordered that:

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[605] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (16 May, 1733)
[606] P. Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850,* (Oxford, 2000), p.297
[607] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (13 June, 1734)
[608] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (12 June, 1754)

> […] John Gray & Ann Yates goe upon liking to one Mr. John Seale Ribbon
> Weaver at the lower end of Long Lane near the Dog & Duck in Southwark
> and that Mr. Simmy and Mr. Slapp do examine into his character […][609]

'Good Character' was written in the margin next to the entry in a separate hand, illustrating that the Mr. Simmy and Mr. Slapp had reported back to the parish and the child had remained with Mr. Seale since his character was found to be 'good' in the eyes of the parish.[610] In 1754 the minutes for St. George's noted:

> That Eliz. Rottenbury do go upon liking to Jessie Byron of Thrail Street
> Brick Lane Bethnell Green weaver the person she was upon liking with
> John Rose of St. Saviours not having a good character.[611]

Thus, the sole reason for Elizabeth Rottenbury not being apprenticed to John Rose was his character, more specifically his not having a 'good character' in terms of the criteria of the parish at least.

The appraisal of 'character' was also an important and influential aspect of eighteenth-century society more generally. Both R.B Outhwaite and Shepard have found that sexual reputation, 'credit' and 'honesty' had considerable and growing importance in the early modern period, and increasingly people were prepared to go to court in order to defend their reputation or 'character'.[612] There was an explosion of litigation over defamation and slander cases concerning character in the mid-sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth century it was a regular and important part of the church courts' work.[613] In law having, or more importantly being reported to have, 'good' or 'bad' character could even be the difference between a guilty and a not-guilty verdict. In the trial of Elizabeth Blunt for bigamy at the Old Bailey in 1707 it was confirmed that since:

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[609] COWAC-E, E 2632, Mf 1217, (2 May, 1734)
[610] Ibid.
[611] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (17 July, 1754)
[612] R.B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860,* (Cambridge, 2006), p.43 and Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood,* p.16
[613] Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall*, p.41

> No sufficient proof could be could be produced […] [and] the prisoner in
> her Defence, call'd divers, who gave her the character of a very Honest
> and Industrious Women; the Jury acquitted her.[614]

This demonstrates that it was her character, which was that of an 'honest' and

'industrious' women, alongside the absence of sufficient proof that led the jury to

acquit her. These were common descriptions in this period, nevertheless evidently her

'good' character or at least the desirable characteristics of being 'honest' and

'industrious' were considered important here. In the trial of Robert Lander for rape

and sexual offences in 1725:

> Several Gentlemen appeared on the Prisoner's Behalf […] [who said] he
> always bore a very good Character and they never knew him guilty of an
> immodest Behaviour. The Jury acquitted him of Felony, but found him
> guilty of Misdemeanour.[615]

While Robert Lander was found guilty of the misdemeanour, it is likely that his 'good

character' allowed him the benefit of the doubt for the felony. Langford suggests that

although the law drew heavily on 'character', increasingly it influenced the mitigation

of the sentence rather than the determination of guilt.[616] In the case of Lander, the

reference to immodest behaviour is singled out due to the nature of the crime, but it

also suggests that there was a moral element to the criteria for 'good character' in the

eighteenth century. As a result, although this was part of a wider package which

included economic standing, it is reasonable to suggest that the stipulation of 'good

character' for the masters and mistresses of pauper children by the parish is yet

another fundamental aspect of workhouse life which was governed, at least in some

part, by moral concerns.

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[614] 'January 1707, trial of Elizabeth Blunt, alias Blunden, alias Hilliard, alias Matter', (t17070115-15), www.oldbaileyonline.org, (retrieved, 01/02/2012)
[615] 'August 1725, trial of Robert Lander', (t17250827-84).www.oldbaileyonline.org, (retrieved, 01/02/2012)
[616] Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p.297

Naomi Tadmor contends that there were obvious links between irregularity, wickedness and irreligion in eighteenth-century concepts of character.[617] Therefore if the parish concluded that someone did not have a 'good character' it is likely they were considered irreligious, even if this was not specifically stated. The parish required good Christian, and more specifically good Protestant masters and mistresses. Piety and morality were part of the criteria that constituted 'good character' in the eighteenth century, particularly in terms of the specific characteristics that were required by the parish. Economic status, among other elements, was also important, but all these characteristics formed one whole in which piety and morality may have played a bigger part than is usually emphasised. Thus, as part of the criteria for good character in masters and mistresses, religion, and more specifically piety, played a key role in this aspect of workhouse life.

Dror Wahrman has concluded that for at least the first three quarters of the eighteenth century characterisation was associated with certain 'types' of character rather than individuals.[618] Her argument suggests that when attributing 'good' or 'bad' character to an individual in this period the overseers were not necessarily considering the individual nature of a potential master, but looking for a particular set of criteria. During the trial of Thomas Saunderson for murder at the Old Bailey in 1727 it was recorded that:

> Several appear'd and gave the Deceased a very indifferent Character; that he was much addicted to mobbing, &c. and on the contrary, several Gentlemen of Honour and Reputation appear'd on behalf of the Prisoner, giving him the Character of a sober, mild, and discreet Gentleman: Upon the whole, the Jury found him guilty of Manslaughter.[619]

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[617] N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage,* (Cambridge, 2001), p.66

[618] D. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and culture in eighteenth-century England,* (New Haven, 2006), p.183

[619] 'October 1727, trial of Thomas Saunderson', (t17271017-17).www.oldbaileyonline.org, (retrieved, 01/02/2012)

This demonstrates some of the criteria for both 'good' and 'bad' character in the first half of the eighteenth century, albeit probably idealistic characteristics. It is reasonable to assume that the parish was looking for an, 'honest', 'industrious', and 'sober', master or mistress. There was a genuine concern for the future of the children on the part of the parish that went beyond purely the economic and pragmatic. Frequently when an apprenticed child was returned to the workhouse the entry simply stated for example; 'That Sarah Dickenson be readmitted having been upon liking and the master not approving of her' indicating that the child did not possess a 'good character' and needed to be returned for further training.[620] However, in some cases the 'character' of the master or mistress was also the reason behind a child being returned to the house. For example, in 1754 it was also noted 'that Eliz. Laut be readmitted the board not liking the character of the mistress she was upon liking with […] [and] That Anne Hodgson be readmitted on the like occasion.'[621] These were not isolated cases; similar entries appear regularly through the minutes. Obviously the workhouse committee continued to take an interest in the welfare of pauper apprentices. They were even prepared to take these children back into the workhouse until they could find a more suitable master or mistress, despite the costs involved. This could suggest that initial investigations into the character of prospective masters and mistresses were not very thorough, however the particular characteristics that the committee were looking for may have been difficult to assess prior to a child being placed. The format of these entries suggests that these investigations were undertaken while the child was with the master on a two-week trial period or 'on liking'.

The parish maintained an interest in the welfare of these children even after they ceased to be a direct financial burden. In 1742:

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[620] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (24 December, 1745)
[621] Ibid, (15 May, 1754)

> […] A petition of Mary Hall widow was read complaining that her son
> John Hall was bound apprentice to William Woolfe cord winder that he
> neglects and refuses to learn him his trade or provide baths for him & now
> keeps an alehouse.
> That Mr. Parry do apply to the said William Woolfe for to get the said
> complaint redressed.[622]

Masters were not only expected to teach their apprentices but keep them clean, while maintaining their own character. Cleanliness was considered as next to godliness during this period and the desire to be clean and washed was emblematic of piety. A clean body represented a clean soul. The specific mention of keeping an alehouse in the mother's complaint suggests that this was not considered appropriate for the master of a young impressionable child. The Foundling Hospital for example, specifically forbade children to be apprenticed to masters who owned an alehouse.[623] The parish was even willing to take the time and effort to take action against neglectful masters. In 1746 the minutes recorded:

> Complaint being made that the master of James Almore of the Strand on the
> Green fisherman uses him very cruelly.
> That the Clerk do write to the said master that unless he treats his apprentice
> with kindness this parish will prosecute him.[624]

Evidently complaints were taken seriously and efforts were made to ensure the welfare of these children. Earlier in 1743 the committee had ordered 'that a warrant be applied for to apprehend Richard Badham for neglecting to provide for Mary Kennedy his apprentice'.[625] This also shows some potential power on the part of pauper child that has rarely been highlighted, especially in this context. Continued concern by the parish, to the point at which they were willing to re-admit a child and apprentice them out again, and take action against masters despite the costs, illustrates that the system of apprenticing out parish children was about far more than simply

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[622] COWAC-C, C 874, Mf 563, (29 June, 1742)
[623] McClure, *Coram's Children,* p.228
[624] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (15 April, 1746)
[625] COWAC-C, C 874, Mf 565, (13 September, 1743)

relieving the burden. The parish was seeking to reform society through the education of the young.

In 1746 the minutes for St. George's also concluded 'that Anne Oakley be admitted her intended master having a very indifferent character'.[626] The term 'indifferent' is noteworthy here since it indicates that the standard for masters and mistresses of pauper apprentices was relatively high. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* defines it as 'freedom from motives on either side' or 'having mediocrity'.[627] It could suggest that the master was not necessarily considered to have a 'bad character' but nevertheless his character was not deemed appropriate to bringing up an impressionable child; in any other situation his character might not be a problem. In his evidence at the trial of a highway robber in August 1727 Mr. Sells clearly connected an 'indifferent' character to an irreligious life. The ordinary of Newgate's account of the 'behaviour, confession, and dying words of the malefactors who were Executed on Friday the 11 August, 1727, at Tyburn' stated that Thomas Perry convicted for 'robbing on the Highway'; 'about a year ago […] gave himself to a more loose and irregular life than formally, never going to church, as he had been formerly used to'. During the trial; 'Mr Sells swore that, while the other two robb'd him, he, viz. Perry, held a truncheon over his head'. Mr Sells also went on to say he knew Mr Parry:

> […] For he had frequently drunk at his house, for it is a publick [*sic*] one at Windsor, and he added, of a very indifferent Character. He confest [*sic*] that he had not liv'd conformable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, having been too much guilty of accompanying lewd Women, altho' he had a Wife and several Children of his own; of drinking to Excess; Swearing and keeping idle company.[628]

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[626] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (11November, 1746)
[627] S. Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language…*, (1768, Third Edition)
[628] 'Ordinary of Newgate's Account, August 1727', (OA17270811).www.oldbaileyonline.org, (retrieved, 01/02/2012)

Although 'indifferent' could simply mean not good enough, in the context of the eighteenth century (as highlighted by Mr. Sell's evidence) this could also be directly connected to someone who had 'not liv'd comfortable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ' directly linking this particular characteristic with immoral behaviour resulting from a lack or lapse in piety. Thus, someone who possessed an 'indifferent' character was unsuitable to continue the work of these institutions in bringing up pauper children to be pious and moral as well as industrious. 'Indifferent' here clearly meant a 'bad' character.

The choice of language seems to have been deliberate; or at least could vary from case to case. For example, in 1754 the parish also mentioned; 'that Alice King be admitted the master not being approved of.'[629] The use of a different word here (approved) suggests that the meaning of 'good character' generally in eighteenth-century society may not be specifically what is being questioned by the parish. The board itself had its own set of criteria that it 'approved' of for prospective masters and mistresses. There was a concern for these children that went beyond their cost to the parish; a concern for their souls.

The workhouse committee minutes for St. George's workhouse give further indication of a religious element to the label of 'good character'. In 1750 the committee ordered:

> That next committee the goods & wearing apparel of Anne Hutchins deceased be disposed of & sold. The ordinary clothes be given to some of the better sort of patients and then silk to be sold to the best bidder for the use of the parish. It appearing that the charge of her maintenance in the house and burial exceeds the value of the said goods.[630]

At the following meeting, 'the committee proceeded to dispose of the wearing apparel of Anne Hutchins deced. As follows […] To Mary Fredrick a Nurse & attendant on

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[629] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (24 July, 1754)
[630] COWAC-C, C 880, Mf 565, (10 October, 1750)

the children to Church a satin gown'.[631] The first entry stressed that the clothes of

Anne Hutchins were to go to the 'better sort of patients'. Being a nurse and 'attending

the children to church' are the two characteristics that are specifically mentioned in

relation to Mary Fredrick getting the satin gown. These could simply have been

distinguishing features used to describe her, nevertheless the stipulation that there was

a particular criteria for a patient being awarded this clothing implies that it was these

characteristics that qualified her for it. In turn suggesting that it was these attributes

that constituted a 'better sort' of character. The workhouse committee at St. George's

viewed attending church, and more specifically organising the children to do so, as

constituting a 'better sort' of character. Church attendance was a particularly

important aspect of workhouse life since it was a very public display of the good that

the workhouse did, and what the rates that the parish paid to support it were

achieving. It was therefore likely that only an adult pauper with good religious

character would be permitted to perform this duty. Furthermore, aside from

denomination, the parish could not judge faith, but it could judge behaviour, and

attending church was a clear sign of piety. When the parish recorded that 'Charles

Poultney be bound apprentice to the Revd. Richard Mason Chaplin [*sic*] of the

Maidstone man of war capt. Kapel', there is no mention of the character of the

clergyman being enquired into by the parish.[632] While this may have been

coincidental, it implies that being a clergyman automatically met parish requirements.

The religious character of a parson could be assumed but not that of the laity.

Similarly, in her settlement examination during the mid-eighteenth century, Eleanor

Denman also felt it was necessary to state that her husband had been 'bound

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[631] COWAC-C, C 880, Mf 565, (24 October, 1750)
[632] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (01 April, 1746)

apprentice to the worshipful Charles Medlycott esq'.[633] 'Worshipful' here means that Charles Medlycott was, or had been, either the mayor or an alderman, meaning he would have had to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles under the Test Act making his religious character reliable.

Tadmor's analysis of the diary of an eighteenth-century shopkeeper of the 'middling sort', Thomas Turner, illustrates that he spent the majority of it, amongst discussion of his business and family, documenting his regular churchgoing. He evidently considered these the most important aspects of his life.[634] Regular church attendance was an essential aspect of life for a respectable eighteenth-century businessman. Turner not only discussed his piety, but also made regular references to the religious observance of his maid. For example, he noted on Sunday 10 October 1756 '[…] only our maid at church in the afternoon who stayed [for] the communion […]'.[635] Turner was obviously keen to make sure his maid attended Church on Sundays even if he didn't. The previous year he had also recorded: 'This day the parish was confirmed at Lewes by the Rev. Mr. William Ashburnham, Bishop of Chichester: My maid went.'[636] Thus, not only was Turner's maid attending Church regularly, he also ensured she became confirmed as a member of the Anglican Church. Confirmation and active membership of the Church of England would have been the expectation of the Westminster poor law guardians for the paupers they apprenticed, as a result of stringent investigations into the 'character' of masters. While Thomas Turner was not a Westminster resident or the master of a pauper from a Westminster workhouse, the importance he placed on piety and especially the piety

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[633] T. Hitchcock and J. Black, (eds.), *Chelsea Poor Law Examinations, 1733-66,* (London, 1999), p.5 (14)
[634] Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p.11
[635] D. Vaisey, (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765: An eighteenth-century shopkeeper's unique chronicle of village life,* (Oxford, 1984), p.65
[636] Ibid, p.11

of his maid, is illustrative of the importance of religion for both masters and servants in eighteenth-century society.

The *Memoir of Robert Blincoe*, a pauper child brought up in the workhouse at St. Pancras, London, and apprenticed out at the very early age of seven to a cotton mill in Nottingham, further demonstrates the piety that was expected of masters taking parish apprentices. On his first morning at Lowdham Cotton Mill he recalled being woken before five and told to dress with speed for breakfast or be flogged. His first thought was that they must have an early church service and he says to his bedfellow 'Bless me, have you a Church-Service so soon?'[637] Unfortunately for Blencoe this was just the start of a long hard day. While he goes on to describe his horrific experience in the mill, he does note that all the children went 'pretty regularly' to Lowdham Church on Sundays.[638] Although Blincoe had a ghastly life as a parish apprentice, the overseers and guardians had at least chosen masters that ensured the children attended church on Sundays. Moreover, Blincoe's expectation of a church service is testament to the religious upbringing he received in the workhouse and the life he expected as a parish apprentice. Collectively these examples present a strong argument that regular church attendance and a devout and pious reputation were a vital part of the parishes' criteria for prospective masters and mistresses of pauper children. As one of the key elements of 'good character', religion exerted a significant influence on the process of apprenticeship from the workhouse.

Piety was undoubtedly part of the criteria that constituted 'good character' in the eighteenth century. Still, in an era of shortage of actual coinage, business relationships were also based heavily on reputation and economic 'credit'. Shepard

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[637] J. Brown, (ed.), *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe, An Orphan Boy; sent from the Workhouse of St. Pancras, London, at Seven Years of Age to Endure the Horrors of a Cotton-Mill, through his Infancy and Youth, with Minute Detail of his Sufferings, being the First Memoir of the Kind Published*, First Published Manchester, 1832, (Sussex, 1977), p.27
[638] Ibid, p.41

has concluded that appraisals of manhood in early modern England were rooted in economic independence; heading and maintaining a household, and social 'credit' was based on honest dealing.[639] Thus, a master's economic character was also under investigation by the parish, exerting an undeniable influence on the process of apprenticing out these children.

Apprenticing pauper children was only of benefit to the parish, economic or otherwise if it was permanent, there was no point paying to apprentice out a dependent child for them to return and continue to depend on relief. On a practical level, therefore, this appraisal of 'character' had to include the ability of the master or mistress to support the child financially for the whole term of their training. In 1741, for example, the minutes for St. George's workhouse stated that 'Sarah Younghusband who went out upon liking be admitted the master not being thought of ability to provide for her.'[640] The overseers were obviously keen not to have to re-admit children because masters could not provide for them and in 1748 it was finally concluded; 'That none of the children in the house be bound to any person in the parish unless they appear to be substantial householders'.[641] Therefore it must also be considered that being a 'substantial householder' (head of a household and of the economic capacity to take an apprentice) was almost certainly a significant and even decisive part of the parish's criteria for 'good character'. The economic basis for 'good character' was confirmed in the minutes for St. George's in 1754, which stated:

> Anne Harding upon liking to Jon Martin be admitted the messenger
> reporting that he had made strict enquiry after his character and found that
> he was no housekeeper.[642]

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[639] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood,* p.16 and p.188
[640] COWAC-C, C 874, Mf 563, (30 June, 1741)
[641] COWAC-C, C 879, Mf 565, (30 August, 1748)
[642] COWAC-C, C 882, Mf 566, (17 July, 1754)

Clearly being a 'housekeeper' was not only part of the enquiry into the 'character' of perspective masters and mistresses but it was also part of the parish's essential criteria for 'good character' and could be the difference between a child being apprenticed, or not in this case. Being a 'housekeeper' was also a criterion for gaining a settlement and holding parish office so generally an indicator of status in this period. Similarly, in 1733 it was:

> Ordered that Mr. Alfred and Mr. Bullock be desired to enquire into the condition and circumstances of James Stock at the [?] in Gravel Lane a pin maker who proposes take [?] Watts apprentice and likewise into the character of Susanna Woodnott wife of Thomas Woodnott who lives in Bennetts Street near Gravel Lane in the parish of Christchurch and a band box maker & who proposes to take Mantha Millner and report the same at the next board.[643]

Technically, based on social standing, Jack Stock could be described as a master, but the mention of circumstances relates more specifically to his economic situation, which may have been reduced despite his social standing in the community. Master did not necessarily mean a member of a guild for example. The use of the term 'likewise' before the mention of the inquiry into the 'character' of Susanna Woodnott suggests that the 'condition' and 'circumstances' of a master or mistress was synonymous with 'character' and the appraisal of good and bad character in the eighteenth century. What is also significant here however is that it was Susanna Woodnott rather than her husband whose character was of concern. This was most likely since she was to be directly responsible for the child and therefore his or her upbringing, even though she would not have been head of the household, and reinforces the point about the importance of personal character. Furthermore, while the economic element of 'character' was largely pragmatic, heading a household was also a religious concept. The King's relationship to God was replicated in the master of a household's relationship to the King.

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[643] COWAC-E, E 2634, Mf 1217, (24 May, 1733)

Craig Muldrew has pointed out that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'credit' became synonymous with reputation and householders sought to construct and preserve their reputations. Crucially for our purposes, religious virtue and honesty played an important part in bolstering this 'credit'. The result was a competitive piety: 'householders sought to construct and preserve their reputations for religious virtue, belief and honesty in order to bolster the credit of their household'.[644] People needed to be able to trust that the individual they were advancing credit to would pay them. A reputation for piety as well as thrift and honesty had the power to both generate and maintain the family's wealth. Muldrew therefore concludes, 'to have credit in a community meant that your character was respected'.[645] Thus, if to have 'credit' one needed to be pious, 'good character' in an economic sense also meant 'good character' in a religious sense, since it was a pious honest and moral 'character' that facilitated business dealings. Religious character created and maintained the family's ability to support itself, and a potential apprentice.

Character as Piety and Membership of the Church of England

It was not just religion but also the specific character of eighteenth century religion that was an essential and even defining aspect of workhouse life. Religious denomination dictated the pauper's experience of an institution based on theology as well as politics. It also reflected the agenda of the SPCK. When religious concerns were at their height in St. George's Hanover Square in 1745 following the Jacobite uprising, the workhouse committee 'resolved that none of the children be bound

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[644] C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England,* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.149
[645] Ibid*,* pp.149-152

apprentice to any person that is Roman Catholic.'[646] Regardless of whether they were

a 'good housekeeper' or a 'substantial householder', and despite the benefit to the

parish of apprenticing out as many children as possible, these impressionable children

were not to be 'perverted', as the SPCK described it, by Catholics.[647] Although in this

period Catholics only made up a small minority of the population, according to Colin

Haydon, the political distrust that accompanied theological differences, precipitated a

popular fear.[648] The SPCK and the workhouses they inspired may have been tolerant

of the dissenting poor but this was confined to Protestant Dissenters and did not

extend to Catholics as Chapter Four highlighted. The SPCK was especially active in

dispensing Anti-Catholic manuals and even formed a watching brief during the first

year of its foundation agreeing '[…] that the members of this society will endeavor to

inform themselves of the practices of the priests to pervert his majesties subjects to

popery'.[649] Details of conversions to popery were obtained, especially if they

concerned men of rank who had the potential to influence others.[650] Rose argues that

although the SPCK was hostile to Catholicism, anti-popery was not of central

importance and only came to the fore at moments of acute danger to the Protestant

succession.[651] It appears however that fear of Catholicism did not disappear with the

political threat in 1745-1746. As late as 1768 for example the SPCK was still

interested in printing and distributing *Proposals for preventing the growth of*

Popery.[652] Haydon asserts that it is wrong to assume that anti-Catholicism was in

decline throughout the eighteenth century. While after the mid-eighteenth century it

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[646] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 565, (24 November, 1745)
[647] See for example, SPCK.MS A1/1, (26 October, 1699)
[648] C. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1714-80: A political and social study,* (Manchester, 1993), p.3
[649] SPCK MS A1/1, (26 October, 1699)
[650] Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, p.58
[651] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.186
[652] SPCK. MS A1/25, (8 March, 1768)

ceased to be a political force, the popular fear continued.[653] It was the theological

threat that the SPCK was concerned about. Thomas Bray, wrote to Archbishop

Thomas Secker from Exeter College, 21 May 1753:

> My Lord
>
> Mr Forrester desired me to enquire who was the proper person in Wheatly
> to take care of the children whose schooling your lordship is so good as to
> pay for […] There is one Biggs who has begun to teach school lately, but
> his wife is a Roman Catholic & his character not such as deserves
> encouragement [...] [Mrs Russell] had the misfortune to marry an idle
> fellow […] but the women is industrious & deserves well […] Mrs Russell
> is a proper person to teach them all […].[654]

Mrs. Russell was married to an idle man, one of the most popular characteristics that

constituted 'bad character', and a moral failing that was certainly considered perilous

to expose children to. However, the character of the current schoolteacher, Mr. Biggs,

and specifically his marriage to a Roman Catholic, was clearly considered far more

dangerous. In this case, religion, and more precisely the threat of Roman Catholicism,

was the overriding consideration in the education of these children in the mid-

eighteenth century. The religious nature of education for children in this period meant

that the presence of a Catholic, or indeed any non-member of the Church of England,

could potentially expose these impressionable minds to false doctrine. The dangers of

Catholic doctrine also had a political agenda since all Catholics were assumed to be

Jacobites. Catholics were therefore both theologically and politically dangerous- a

concern which was to define the apprenticeship of pauper children from the

workhouse above and beyond economics or even moral fears. In 1745 popular fear

about Catholicism was at its height following the rebellion. This wasn't finally

defeated until early 1746. During the rebellion London was in crisis, and the barristers

of London formed a makeshift royal bodyguard. Yet fourteen years later the

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[653] Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, pp.255-256
[654] A.P. Jenkins, *The Correspondence of Bishop Secker,* (The Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol.57, 1991), p.236

governors and directors of the poor in St. George's, in line with the attitude of the SPCK, ordered again; 'That the Churchwardens & Overseers be desired not to bind any children to Roman Catholicks'.[655] After 1745 Catholicism ceased to be a political threat, but for those apprenticing out the children of the poor, its theological perils continued to influence life in the workhouse.

Apprenticing out pauper children and concerns about the religious character of those bringing up these children returns to MacFarlane's argument that 'debates on the poor were as much about who ought to govern indigent or able-bodied paupers as how they should be governed' and also to the earlier experience of the London and Bristol Corporations for the Poor addressed in Chapter One.[656] By taking a parish apprentice, a master or mistress was able to 'govern' a poor child. The control of a single child as opposed to a hand in the government of the entire poor of a particular locality could be viewed as much less of a threat to the Anglican monopoly. Nevertheless, the important position children held, in terms of reforming society, meant that exposing even a single child to a Catholic and even a Protestant Dissenter was a risk the parish was unwilling to take. The passage of the Toleration Act in 1689 allowed Protestant Dissenters to have their own preachers and places of worship providing a sufficiently tolerant atmosphere in England.[657] While Dissenters were still subject to a range of social constraints and were unable to hold public office without specific exemption, unlike Catholicism, Protestant Dissent was not illegal. Dissenters were regarded by many Anglicans as their Protestant brothers; in 1714 Britain even had a Lutheran King (albeit one who conformed to the Church of England), but there

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[655] COWAC-C, C 886, Mf 566, (23 May, 1759)
[656] Macfarlane, 'Social Policy', p.253
[657] L. Davidson, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn, and R.B. Shoemaker, 'Introduction: The Reactive State: English Governance and society, 1689-1750', in L. Davidson, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn, and R.B. Shoemaker, (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: the responses to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750*, (New York, 1992), p.xxxix

remained a fear about any non-Anglican government of the poor. Parochial workhouses, like those established in Westminster parishes, placed the government of the poor firmly in the hands of the Anglican Churchwardens. An independent board of guardians did not administer them, as in Corporation institutions; therefore regardless of an exemption clause Dissenters could not govern the poor in the Westminster workhouses as they could in the City of London and Bristol workhouses.[658] However, there was still a danger that a pauper child could be apprenticed to a Dissenter and thereby be lured away from the Anglican Church. The governors and overseers of St. George's were so concerned about this that in 1768 it was 'ordered that for the future none of the children of this parish be bound to any person but those of the established Church of England'.[659] Thus religious affiliation and practice, beyond the traditional Catholic/Protestant divide as well as piety, played a significant role in the process of apprenticing pauper children from the Westminster workhouses, and thus the lives of those housed within them, or at least their children.

There is evidence of a much wider enforcement of strictly Anglican guidance for parish apprentices in the eighteenth century. The orders to be observed in the workhouse in the parish of Northwood, in the Isle of Wight published in 1729 specifically stated that when children were apprenticed '[…] the Master and Mistress be sober and orderly persons, [and] members of the Church of England […]'.[660] Thus, it is reasonable to assume that when the parish was considering whether a master or mistress had 'good character' they were not only assessing their economic ability to maintain the child and instil piety, but that they were active members of the Church of England and would therefore impart the correct doctrine. For eighteenth-century

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[658] For more detail on Dissenters and the Bristol London Corporation workhouses see Chapter One.
[659] COWAC-C, C 895, Mf 568, (30 March, 1768)
[660] T. Troughear, *The best way of making our charity truly beneficial to the poor. Or the excellency of work-houses in country parishes, to prevent the evil effects of idleness in a sermon preached Northwood in the Isle of Wight Sept. 7th 1729,* (London), p.20

appraisals of character more generally, and perhaps even the SPCK in alternative circumstances, piety may have sufficed. However, fears about non-Anglicans gaining any kind of influence or control, even over the poor, as demonstrated in some Corporation workhouses at the beginning of the eighteenth century, meant that in the context of the Westminster workhouses 'good character' in terms of the apprenticeship of pauper children was dependent upon active membership of the Anglican Church.

The Provision of Religious Literature for Parish Apprentices

As Butcher has noted, poor law authorities in this period are often accused of apprenticing children regardless of their future prospects.[661] However evidence from the operation of the Westminster workhouses demonstrates that the parish not only ensured children were apprenticed to pious masters who would continue their religious training and reformation, but it also afforded religious materials to assist them. These provisions show a continued concern for the religious education of these children, and support the argument that there was a genuine reforming quality to these institutions that endured. If parish apprentices continued their religious education on leaving the workhouse, confirmed their membership of the Anglican Church, and led a pious life, society could be reformed. The Westminster workhouses not only ensured that children apprenticed from these institutions went into the care and schooling of pious Anglicans, but the parish of St. George's was also prepared to pay for religious literature in order to facilitate this Anglican education. It was ordered in 1737 'that a Bible and Duty of Man, plain bound, be given to every child bound out

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[661] Butcher, *Selected Records,* p.21

apprentice at the charge of this parish'.[662] At the regular apprentice age of eleven to thirteen, children were too young to be confirmed, which explains the absence of evidence of confirmation in the workhouse despite the prominence of baptism and catechising. By the 1790s children from the Foundling Hospital were generally not apprenticed until the age of thirteen to fifteen, which meant that children of the proper age were being placed out unconfirmed.[663] Confirmation was clearly seen as important since following this discovery, the Bishop of London confirmed every four years those children as were 'fit' and not under the age of thirteen in the Foundling Hospital. Confirmation tracts were printed in order to prepare the children.[664] Therefore during the earlier eighteenth century at least, a pauper child was likely to be confirmed whilst in their master or mistresses' care, making materials to prepare them for this essential.

Instructions given to children when they were apprenticed from the Foundling Hospital stressed churchgoing along with obedience.[665] These guidelines included instructions such as; 'you have been taught to fear God and to love him […] [and] Be constant in your prayers and going to church […]' which show that these children had a religious education, were reformed and expected to continue to behave in the pious manner in which they had been brought up.[666] The Foundling Hospital is well documented, and known to have taken significant interest in their charges throughout apprenticeship. Governors regularly visited apprenticed foundlings, and took care to examine potential masters and mistresses. It appears the parish was no less interested in the religious future of the children that came into their care, a concern that has

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[662] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (04 October, 1737)
[663] McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.228
[664] Ibid.
[665] Levene, 'Honesty', p.184
[666] A. Levene, (ed.), *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth Century Britain, Vol. 3, Institutional Responses: The London Foundling Hospital,* (London, 2006), pp.23-4

rarely been highlighted.[667] Katrina Honeyman in her study of child workers in England in the later eighteenth century found that parishes could be quite concerned about the welfare of children apprenticed from workhouses. She looked at a large range of parishes and used instances of prior investigations into potential employers and evidence of visitations to check on the welfare of the children, among a list of other criteria, to construct comparative lists of neglectful and protective parishes.[668] Among those found to be the most protective was the Foundling Hospital, which we know took a great interest in the welfare of its charges, and also St. James's Piccadilly where religion formed an important part of workhouse life. Bristol was among the most neglectful parishes, where as Chapter One demonstrated religion was much less of a priority. The parishes of St. Margaret's and St. George's where there were regular references to the requirement of 'good character' for prospective masters, which included the stipulation that they should be pious Anglicans, Honeyman found to be 'moderately neglectful' compared to other parishes.[669] This makes the fact that there was such concern over the religious character of employers in these parishes even more significant. In those most protective parishes stringent investigations in all necessary areas would be expected. However in those parishes where the general level of concern did not appear to have been so high, the fact that religion was such a prominent concern is testament to its overarching importance to this process.

The provision of a Bible and the *Whole Duty of Man* must have been considered of great importance if the parish, even a more affluent parish, was prepared to spare some of its notoriously limited resources. With large numbers of children being apprenticed, each of whom required a fee, only necessity would have pushed the

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[667] Levene, 'Honesty', p.185
[668] Katrina Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labour Force,* (Ashgate, 2007), p.218
[669] Ibid, p.221

parish to spend more. For example, while prices varied and it is likely they would have bought in bulk for these purposes, in St. George's in 1730 a large Bible for the poor in the house cost one pound five shillings.[670] In the same period a *Book of Common Prayer* and a *Whole Duty of Man* for the use of the house cost eleven shillings.[671] On average during the mid-eighteenth century a Bible cost around four shillings and *The Whole Duty of Man* cost six shillings.[672] Thus, the parish was likely to have been spending around an extra ten shillings per child on providing for spiritual future of these charges.

David Cressy has illustrated through probate inventories that by the seventeenth century Bibles were 'everywhere', regardless of rank, and some households had more than one even if the owner was not literate. David Vincent has found that during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries in St. George's Hanover Square eighty-nine per cent of houses either owned a Bible, Testament or Prayer Book*,* and sixty-eight per cent had all three.[673] The power of the Bible was enormous; oaths were sworn on it, family births recorded in it, and its presence was even believed to ward off evil spirits. The possession of a Bible was an inducement to literacy and private study, but it also enabled a literate guest or family member to read aloud at home and thereby provide religious instruction for the household.[674] Thus, providing an apprentice with this work, even if they could not read, had the potential to provide religious instruction, outside of the walls of the Church, for an entire household.

The provision of *The Whole Duty of Man* is also illustrative of the future the parish intended for these charges on leaving the workhouse. It was a catechetical

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[670] COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (06 January, 1730)
[671] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (17 September, 1734)
[672] This average is taken from prices of these materials during the mid-eighteenth century from copies available on Eighteenth Century Collections On-line.
[673] D. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914,* (Cambridge, 1989), p.174
[674] D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England,* (Cambridge, 1980), p.51

work that helped to define the Anglican tradition. First published anonymously in 1658 and frequently reprinted, *The Whole Duty of Man* is generally thought to be the work of Richard Allestree who fought on the royalist side in the civil war and as such has often been associated with Tory and High Church views. In spite of this, it was as popular with Low Churchmen because of its strong moral teaching; it was seen as a deeply important work for maintaining the social order. Furthermore, while catechisms were generally highly formulaic, *The Whole Duty of Man* was much more developed. It was a practical guide directly related to the lives of the labouring poor. This made it particularly attractive to workhouse committees, since it could mould and guide apprentices in the Anglican tradition after they had left the guard of the workhouse. Thus *The Whole Duty of Man,* which was given out with parish apprentices, was a guide for a religious life, and more specifically an Anglican life. It was intended '[…] to be a short and plain direction to the very meanest readers to behave themselves so in this world that they may be happy for ever in the next.'[675] It provided over four hundred pages of advice about trusting God, observing the Lord's day, honouring God's word, reverencing the sacraments, praying and fasting, being humble, sober and temperate, avoiding time wasting recreation and immodesty in apparel, performing duties towards ones neighbour, and abstaining from adultery and fornication. It particularly stressed that failure to obey God would end in misery. There were also directions for prayers in the morning and evening, and specific prayers for the sick, Holy Communion, and instructions for the more profitable reading of the Holy Scriptures. It specifically observed:

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[675] *The New Whole Duty of Man, containing The Faith as well as practice of the Present Age, As the Old Whole Duty of Man was design'd for those unhappy Times in which it was written; And supplying the Articles of The Christian Faith which are anting in that Book, The Essentially necessary to salvation. Necessary for All families, and Authorized by the King's most Excellent Majesty. With Devotions proper for Several Occasions.* The Thirteenth Edition, Published by Edward Wichsteed, (London, 1734), p.vii

> This should be a warning to all parents […] that they improve their minds with sound principles of religion and good morality, and bring them up to learning, or in some honest trade or employment, that when they are grown up, they may be able by their own skill and industry to provide a competent maintenance for themselves, and to afford some supply and relief to the real wants and unavoidable necessities of their neighbours […].[676]

Thus, it also directly reflected the ideas and principles of the SPCK; that catechising the young was the key to reforming society. These children, who had been brought up to piety and industry, should make sure that they were careful to bring up their own children in the same way. The intention being that it would then bring about a total and lasting reformation. It also contained specific direction for children and servants. The author stated that the work, 'I hope, by GOD's blessing, will greatly benefit at least their *children* [*sic*] and servants […] [by providing] necessary directions for their Christian conduct in this life.' It stressed that Sundays should be kept holy, as they were in the workhouses, and added that '[…] at hearing the word preached, we should give our attention with great reverence […]'.[677] This echoed precisely what the SPCK and the parish were trying to inculcate in the workhouse at St. George's when it was ordered that the school masters sit in the pews with the children 'to keep them in awe'.[678] There was also specific mention of catechizing, which was such an important part of the daily routine for children in the workhouse. *The Whole Duty of Man* stated:

> CATECHISING is a peculiar method of teaching the ignorant by question and answer; adapted to the meanest capabilities I would recommend this way of instruction to parents and masters of families, with respect to their children and servants […] you must do your part at home.[679]

The mention of masters instructing servants in this way was particularly important since it affirmed that the master's character had to be both pious and Anglican. It was accompanied by instructions on what should be expected from the master-servant relationship. It ordered that:

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[676] *The New Whole Duty of Man*, p.364
[677] Ibid, p.58
[678] See: COWAC-C, C 876, Mf 564, (11 March, 1739)
[679] *The New Whole Duty of Man*, p.57

> The servant must submit to and do all his master's lawful commands: for, though he owes his master no obedience against the laws of God, or the laws of his country.[680]

As well as promoting obedience, *The Whole Duty of Man* encouraged apprentices to put their religion first. It was the master's duty to the servant to 'cause them to attend church' and set a good example.[681] Thus, this particular devotional work mirrored much of what was being instilled in the workhouse, and constituted a tool through which it could be continued. It set out what was expected of both the master and the apprentice.

The choice of *The Whole Duty of Man* further implies a high level of education on the part of these children; it was certainly theologically complex for eleven to thirteen year olds. As a result, its use is also a good indication of the level of catechising undertaken in the workhouse; it is also distinctly Protestant highlighting the nature of education in these institutions. Historians have noted the theological complexity of eighteenth-century sermons, which was also clearly a testament to the success of catechising.[682] Green concludes that *The Whole Duty of Man* was a work that people, particularly children, were taught to read on a regular basis as a guide for life, and it was popularly respected as such. He argues that by the mid-seventeenth century owning a Bible and to a lesser extent regularly reading it had become a firmly established habit.[683] Moreover, children were expected to understand it. Historians have identified a move from the intensive reading of a small number of works such as the Bible and *The Whole Duty of Man* to more extensive reading of a greater number and variety of works but in less detail during this period. The clear intention on the part of the parish was that these 'few' works should be read intensely and repeatedly

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[680] *The New Whole Duty of Man,* p.326
[681] Ibid, p.242
[682] W. Gibson, 'The British Sermon 1689-1901: Quantities, Performance and Material Culture', in W. Gibson and K. Francis, (eds.), *Oxford Handbook to the British Sermon 1689-1901,* (Oxford, 2012)
[683] Green, *Print and Protestants*, p.99

throughout the life of these apprentices. Intensive reading was evidently still regarded as important to poor law officials. *The Whole Duty of Man* also appeared regularly in the SPCK's catalogue making it not only a book that the SPCK approved of, but also one that was inexpensively available to members and subscribers.[684] It was also a work that was regularly distributed by the society alongside the Bible and Book of Common Prayer. In 1706 for example, it was agreed 'Mr. Sheake have half a dozen Bibles, & as many Duties of Man, as proper opportunities happen for his distributing them in such poor families as want them'.[685] Thus, the literature was clearly intended to continue the efforts of the workhouse following apprenticeship. It was a guide for a religious life, not just a religious education, and reflects the religious reforming intentions of these institutions.

Following the order for these Protestant religious works to be sent out with apprentices, the minutes for St. George's noted in 1737:

> That Mr. Robin be bound apprentice to John Streker of Croydon in Surrey
> & that forty shillings be paid the said John Streker in six weeks time & the
> apprentice to have clothes as usual, a Bible & Duty of man.[686]

Such instances were regularly recorded.[687] These entries reveal that the order to provide religious material for apprentices was regularly put into practice during the eighteenth century, making it at least as significant as providing clothes for pauper apprentices during this period. It was also further stipulated in 1743 'That the new clothes & books given with apprentices be not delivered out until the masters receive the money six weeks after their binding'.[688] Only after the parish was satisfied the binding was successful were they prepared to spend, highlighting both the cost and importance of this practice. *The Whole Duty of Man* was also used for religious

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[684] Carte Engel, 'The SPCK', p.85
[685] SPCK.MS A1/1, (27 June, 1706)
[686] COWAC-C, C 869, Mf 563, (29 November, 1737)
[687] See for example, COWAC-C, C 874, Mf 563, (07 September, 1742)
[688] COWAC-C, C 878, Mf 563, (25 October, 1743)

instruction within the workhouse. In St. George in 1734 when religious observance was increased it included that '[…] a psalm be read at the same time out of the Duty of Man […]'.[689]

Giving religious works to apprentices was not a practice that was confined to the workhouse. McClure has demonstrated that when a child was apprenticed from the Foundling Hospital they were given a Bible and a Book of Common Prayer, and each child's master was provided with a set of instructions as to their religious duty to their apprentice.[690] The Book of Common Prayer was first compiled in the sixteenth century and revised in 1662. Unlike *The Whole Duty of Man* however it contained the liturgy of the services of the Church of England, including prayers to be read. It was not a 'conduct guide' containing advice on how to live a pious life as the *Duty of Man* was, demonstrating that there were specific lessons the overseers and guardians wanted to teach pauper children in the workhouse. There is evidence that the Book of Common Prayer was used in the workhouse, but it was the practical guide for a religious life that the overseers deemed most appropriate for apprentices.[691] The workhouse committee was dedicated to reforming pauper children and sought to ensure both the values of piety and industry that were instilled in the workhouse were maintained on their exit from it. They sought to accomplish this by not only ensuring prospective masters were economically stable but also pious Anglicans, and by providing the tools in the form of specific religious literature to continue their religious training.

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[689] COWAC-C, C 873, Mf 564, (25 June, 1734)
[690] McClure, *Coram's Children,* p.228
[691] See for example, COWAC-C, C 870, Mf 563, (30 December, 1730)

The apprenticeship of pauper children formed a crucial part of daily life in the Westminster workhouses. Religion, or more specifically the practice of religion, exerted an important, and at times definitive, influence on this process. While apprenticing out children was an economically pragmatic exercise, concern about the 'character' of prospective masters and mistresses undoubtedly contained a religious dimension. The provision of religious books for children being apprenticed, which the parish was prepared to pay for, gave specific direction for a continued religious education and facilitated an Anglican religious life. This highlights a distinctly reforming quality that echoed the aims and intentions that the SPCK had for these institutions. The specific exclusion of Roman Catholics and even Dissenting Protestants, despite an otherwise tolerant attitude, and the provision of specific Anglican literature demonstrates that concerns over religious practice were central. This was about who should govern and influence the poor, and it was to be kept firmly in the hands of the Anglicans. The criteria for 'good character', particularly the parish's criteria, stipulated that a master should be both moral, pious, and most crucially, Anglican. Religious character thus had several dimensions depending on context. Overseers and guardians were prepared to find alternative masters, take children back into the workhouse for a time, and even take action if a master's character did not meet their criteria, regardless of the cost. As in the Foundling Hospital, there was a continued concern for the welfare of these charges. Under no circumstances was a child under the care of the workhouse to be 'perverted' by a Roman Catholic, reflecting both the fears of society and the specific agenda of the SPCK. In these cases, religion was the definitive factor in the process of apprenticing out pauper children, a practice which itself was at the very centre of the operation of

the Westminster workhouses. Thus, religion was not only an important part of daily life in the workhouse, but in the case of apprenticed children; an important part of leaving it, since apprenticing children from the Westminster workhouse had a religious dimension. Further to this, the fact that apprenticing the children of the poor was not confined to the parochial workhouses, or even the workhouse as an institution, strongly hints at the key influence religion may have exerted on the welfare system as a whole during the eighteenth century. While the chapters so far have focused on the first half of the eighteenth century, it is now necessary to take account of the period after 1750. The following chapter will consider if and why the SPCK abandoned these institutions in the second half of the eighteenth century and how this impacted the role and importance of religion in the Westminster workhouses.

Chapter Six:

Maintaining the Parochial Workhouse Movement: The SPCK, Religion and the Westminster Workhouses 1750-1782

In 1776, a parliamentary enquiry was able to identify 1,916 workhouses in England, largely as a result of the SPCK's energy, influence, and direction.[692] Most of these institutions had been established in the 1720s and 1730s and Hitchcock concluded that the SPCK's greatest interest in the workhouse movement ended after the publication of the second *Account of Several Workhouses* in 1732. He attributes the SPCK's declining activity in this area to the death of Matthew Marryott in 1732 and the series of workhouse scandals that began to come to light, although he does note that its involvement did not come to a 'grinding halt'.[693] The SPCK was also beginning to spend an increasing amount of time and money on foreign projects such as the Georgia mission by this point.[694] A number of historians have come to a similar conclusion and argue that by 1750 the SPCK was no longer interested in the workhouse movement. Most importantly, they resolve that the absence of the SPCK's influence meant that these institutions were no longer concerned with the religious reformation of the poor.[695] The second half of the eighteenth century ushered in a range of social and political changes, which had an impact on the ideas about the administration of poor relief and workhouses as part of this system. By 1750 arguments had also developed that suggested that workhouses had failed, both in terms of reducing costs and reforming inmates. In fact some contemporaries viewed workhouses as vehicles for instilling the very values they were trying to reform. As Chapters Three and Four noted, Slack suggested that by the mid-eighteenth century officials had simply become more pragmatic about what these institutions could

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[692] Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, p.104
[693] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.161
[694] Ibid.
[695] See for example: Slack, *The English Poor Law*; Siena, *Venereal Disease*; Marshal, *English Poor*

achieve, and they essentially become hospitals and hospices.[696] Siena has also argued

that these institutions had been transformed into important medical institutions early

on, and this took precedence over ideals of reform.[697] Jonas Hanway's discoveries of

the high infant mortality rates in London workhouses encouraged children to be sent

to the country to be nursed, prompting a change in the age composition of workhouse

inmates. If in fact workhouses no longer housed the children of the poor, it is

possible, since the young were the SPCK's primary focus for reform throughout the

eighteenth century, that the SPCK abandoned the workhouses since it no longer met

its needs. However, recent work by historians such as Levene and Ottoway has

demonstrated that children continued to maintain a significant presence in these

institutions throughout the second half of the eighteenth century.[698] Thus, for the

SPCK, workhouses continued to present a means of reforming the poor and most

importantly their children, giving little reason for it to abandon these institutions. This

chapter will therefore consider both the influence of the SPCK and evidence of

religious reform in the workhouse during the second half of the eighteenth century. It

will also suggest that a continued emphasis on religious reform is not incompatible

with the loss of the interest and influence of the SPCK, and present evidence of the

continuation of a religious reforming agenda in these Westminster institutions at least

up to 1782.

     The committee minutes from 1730 are analysed to show that while the SPCK

broadened its commitments over the course of the eighteenth century this ran

alongside a continued emphasis on children. Assessment of the workhouses

established at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly reveals that

children persisted as a presence in these institutions and that their education and

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[696] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, pp.42-44
[697] Siena, *Venereal Disease*, p.138
[698] See for example, Levene, *Childhood of the Poor*, and Ottoway, *Decline of Life*.

apprenticeship were considered important and had a religious component. The threat of Catholicism remained significant, even after the demise of Jacobitism in 1746, and thus, as this chapter demonstrates, workhouses sustained their belief in the importance of religion and religious reform into the later eighteenth century. Finally, an investigation of contemporary concerns about workhouses reveals that moral reform through religious instruction continued to be an essential element of these institutions.

The SPCK's committee minutes demonstrate, in line with previous arguments, that its interest in workhouses began to decline after the 1730s and dropped away altogether after 1750. Conversely, records concerning the running of the Westminster parish workhouses illustrate that religious observances and practices, following the SPCK's objectives, were maintained in these institutions, at least until 1782 when Gilbert's Act introduced a shift in what workhouses could offer.[699] There were certainly increases in medical provision, and more children were sent out of the workhouse to nurses outside London. Nevertheless, a regular round of religious observance was maintained, and children continued to be catechised and apprenticed based on religious concerns. The SPCK developed institutionally and structurally over the course of the eighteenth century. It now had the ability in terms of numbers and organisational structure to broaden its interests. The SPCK may indeed have abandoned the workhouse, or at least stopped taking such an active role in it after 1750; however the parochial workhouses in Westminster did not abandon its ideals for religious reform, which in turn suggests the SPCK simply no longer needed to maintain such a vigorous role in the movement.

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[699] Tomkins highlights that from the Workhouse Act in 1723 to the Gilberts Act of 1782 there was no change in what poor relief could offer. After 1782 however the intentions behind workhouses and the categories of poor they could provide for altered. See: *Urban Poverty*, p.6

The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement 1730-1782

The workhouse movement was certainly beginning to slow down in terms of new foundations following the initial enthusiasm of the 1720s and 1730s and the publication of the second *Account of Several Workhouses* in 1732. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean that the SPCK lost interest in those institutions it had already inspired. There was perhaps simply less need for the Society to be so actively involved, resulting in less discussion at committee meetings. Furthermore, while there is a noticeable decline there is no mention of the scandals or criticism that began to appear around the mid-eighteenth-century, which might have actively deterred the SPCK from further involvement. The minutes continued to refer to workhouses throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, and up to the 1750 watershed that so many historians have drawn attention to.[700]

For example, in 1736, more than a decade after the majority of institutions inspired by the SPCK were established, it was; 'Agreed that a Bible be given to Sr. John Gouson for Celia Whiton a Poor women in St. Andrews Workhouse'.[701] The minutes also note that:

> The secretary reported that the Reverend Dr. Watkinson had reciev'd a commission from Dr. George Leigh Vicar of Halifax to subscribe 4 pounds a year to the society […] and desired at the same time a packet of such books and papers as may be of use in directing the setting up a workhouse.[702]

In 1737 a packet was also sent to a Mr. Dener, which included the 1732 *Account of Several Workhouses,* and *Prayers to be used in the Workhouse* along with a request for an account of the 'management' and 'success' of the workhouse at Eaton.[703]

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[700] Several historians have argued by the mid eighteenth-century the SPCK had lost all interest in the workhouses; see for example, Siena, *Venereal Disease*, and Marshall, *The English Poor*.
[701] SPCK.MS A1/17, (25 January, 1736)
[702] Ibid, (15 June, 1736)
[703] Ibid, (26 April, 1737)

In December 1738 there was a note in the margin of the minutes to insert a report of the workhouse at Leeds in the annual account of the SPCK.[704] The inclusion of workhouses in the annual account indicates that these institutions were still considered central to its work. In 1739 it was agreed that an account of the workhouse in Chertsey was to be inserted in the annual report for that year. It was also ordered that the secretary 'present a copy of the account of workhouses to each of the 3 workhouses in St. Andrews parish Holborn'.[705] The SPCK was still interested in aiding and promoting workhouses in the late 1730s, notwithstanding a decline in the creation of new institutions and entries in the committee minutes.

There is also evidence that the SPCK sought to maintain an active role in the way these institutions were run, beyond publicizing their activity and providing materials. In October 1739 the minutes noted:

> Upon reading Mr. Knight's account of the Workhouse at Chertsey read the 25th Sept. and notice being taken of the indulgence given there to relieving out pensioners.
> Agreed that he be wrote to and informed of the sentiment of the Society that such indulgence will in a great measure defeat the good intended by establishing of a Workhouse.[706]

The SPCK still felt the need to police and direct the way in which parishes used these institutions. In fact, as late as 1744 the Minutes show:

> A letter was read from Mr. Blundell at Liverpool […] He concludes with acquainting the Society, that they had built a workhouse which cost £1600 in which by keeping the poor employ'd, the Poors [sic] Tax is now reduced […]
> Ordered that Mr. Blundells letter be inserted in the Book of Letters, and that the Thanks of the society be sent for the above account.[707]

This letter demonstrates that contemporaries certainly believed that the SPCK remained interested in workhouses by the mid-eighteenth century, although entries such as this were becoming notably less common.

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[704] SPCK.MS A1/18, (5 December, 1738)
[705] Ibid, (25 August, 1739)
[706] Ibid, (23 October, 1739)
[707] SPCK.MS A1/20, (17 July, 1744)

Consequently, throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the SPCK's committee minutes reveal that it maintained an interest in workhouses as places to reform the poor and their children. This is in contrast to claims that 'by the middle of the eighteenth century the workhouse movement had failed, utterly and completely'.[708] The abstracts of the minutes continued to monitor 'new workhouses erected' and 'new charity schools erected', although only one or two institutions were recorded as founded in this later period. Thus, an interest was maintained to some degree despite the lack of new foundations.

It is only from 1750 that references to the workhouse disappear from discussion in the SPCK's committee minutes completely. In terms of this source at least, the specific reason for this remains elusive. As Chapter Two demonstrated, the SPCK did not confine itself to a single method for reform. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a broadening of the SPCK's interests and work on behalf of promoting the Christian faith. The religious education of the children of the poor may have been the SPCK's primary objective during the eighteenth century but it was not its only objective. Missionary work also occupied a greater proportion of its time, as did the systematic publication and distribution of prayer books and Bibles.[709] From 1746 to 1750 there was regular discussion in the committee minutes of the plight of the French Protestants, the publication and distribution of the Welsh Bible, and other foreign publications. Workhouses, while not mentioned in the general minutes, were still monitored by a list in the abstracts of the minutes, however.[710] In the 1750s the minutes demonstrate that the SPCK continued to pursue the publication and distribution of religious works, particularly those in foreign languages, as well as the East India Mission, North America, and foreign charity schools. There is evidence of

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[708] Marshall, *The English Poor*, p.145
[709] See: W.K. Lowther Clarke, *A Short History of the S.P.C.K.,* (SPCK, 1919)
[710] SPCK. MS A1/21

a continued interest in the charity schools, but the volume comprising the minutes from 1750 to 1756 is the first where workhouses do not appear at all, signifying a clear change.[711] In the late 1760s examination of the minutes demonstrates a particular focus on the Georgia mission as Hitchcock suggested.[712]

The later eighteenth century was a period in which Britain was expanding its influence. In the 1760s and 1770s it acquired a range of new overseas possessions. Like the poor, and the children of the poor at home, the SPCK viewed these new colonies and the indigenous peoples that occupied them, as in need of the Christian religion. It thus embarked on a campaign to Christianise the colonies. Bray had set up a sister society, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts [SPG] in 1701. It sought to promote religion specifically among its 'own' people in the plantations and convert natives. Alongside the SPG, the SPCK had always taken an interest in foreign projects. Extensive colonial expansion in this period however prompted a more extensive role. In many ways it is possible that the SPCK saw the poor at home and indigenous peoples abroad as part of the same project; with the same aim (instilling religion into the ignorant) just different geography. Carte Engel argues however that new ventures linking the SPCK to Protestants in Europe or the Empire flagged by the mid-eighteenth century. It focused instead on local projects such as the translation of the Bible into Manx during the second half of the eighteenth century.[713] Nevertheless, whether the SPCK expanded its foreign projects or continued to concentrate on matters at home after 1750, the development of new projects does not mean old ones had to be abandoned. This has been demonstrated by the continued interest in the charity school movement in Chapter Two. From the later

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[711] SPCK.MS A1/22
[712] See: SPCK.MS A1/ 24-28
[712] SPCK.MS A1/23
[713] Carte Engel, 'The SPCK', p.86

1750s the Welsh catechism, and circulating charity schools also received a lot of attention in the SPCK's committee minutes. A sustained interest in charity schools, hospitals, prisoners in Newgate prison, parochial libraries, and religious material for sailors accompanied these.[714] As Chapter Two also highlighted many of these institutions had common interests, especially in relation to children, and the SPCK attempted to introduce a similar programme of reform as that established in workhouses. This supports Carte Engel's argument about the SPCK's priorities in the mid-eighteenth century. [715] The SPCK continued to endorse and regularly discuss projects for reformation at home throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Foreign projects accompanied rather than replaced them. It is therefore unlikely that the SPCK simply turned its attention from the workhouse and the children of the poor at home to pursue foreign projects after 1750.[716]

The SPCK's committee minutes for the second half of the eighteenth century reveal its unrelenting concern for poor children, in particular through charity schools, catechising, publishing religious works specifically for children, and finally Sunday schools.[717] Innes has highlighted a revival of interest in the reformation of manners in the 1780s. The Sunday School Movement emerged as part of this renewed drive for religious and moral reform. As in workhouses and charity schools, the aim of Sunday schools was to endow children with a moral and religious education. The SPCK took an active role in the propagation of this movement exhibiting its continued efforts on behalf of the children of the poor. The press first spread the idea of Sunday schools in 1783, and by 1785 an interdenominational Sunday school Society was established in

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[714] Carte Engel, 'The SPCK', p.86
[715] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.86
[716] Hitchcock suggests this as a possible reason, See: 'Paupers and Preachers', p.161
[717] See: SPCK.MS A1/ 24-28

London.[718] The Sunday school system expanded rapidly, and by 1803 there were 7,125 Sunday schools in Britain.[719]

In 1787 the SPCK supplied Mr. Jacobson, the secretary to the Society for the Establishment of Sunday Schools, with 500 testaments specifically 'for the use of the schools'.[720] The Reverend Mr. Emeris also provided the SPCK with 'six copies of the Rules of Louth Sunday Schools, and the same number of the prayers used in the said schools […]'.[721] In 1791:

> […] a paper entitled "a plain and serious address to the parents of poor
> children, on the subject of Sunday Schools" having been read, examined,
> and approved by the general board;
> agreed that the same is "proper and requisite to promote the designs of the
> Society", and that it be accordingly admitted into the Society's List of
> Books and Papers for the purpose of dispersion.[722]

The SPCK was not just interested in these institutions, and providing and publishing literature and religious works to support them. Sunday schools were part of the 'designs' of the SPCK. Like the charity schools and the workhouses, Sunday schools were a tool used by the SPCK to carry out its principal aim of reforming the children of the poor; something it remained consistently devoted to throughout the eighteenth century.

Thus, the SPCK's committee minutes reveal that after 1750 the SPCK broadened the range of projects it supported both at home and abroad. Over more than fifty years it had streamlined its operations and recruited an ever-growing body of members, thus it is not surprising that it was able to expand its activities. The minutes also illustrate, more importantly, that the SPCK maintained its concern for the

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[718] J. Innes, 'Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in later Eighteenth-Century England', in E. Hellmuth, (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the late Eighteenth-Century,* (Oxford, 1990), p.66
[719] Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, p151
[720] SPCK.MS A1/29, (5 June, 1787)
[721] Ibid, (12 June, 1787)
[722] Ibid, (6 December, 1791)

religious reformation of the children of the poor, alongside other projects. Mention of the charity school movement in the minutes for example, continues throughout the eighteenth century. However, while concern for workhouses certainly continued up to 1750, after 1750 mention of these institutions undeniably disappear from the minutes. There is no hint or suggestion as to why all references to workhouses completely disappear in 1750 following a decline from 1736. Apart from publishing religious works in foreign languages though, nothing quite seems to have taken its attention as the workhouses did in the 1720s.

The Continued Importance of Religion and Religious Reform in Workhouses 1750-1782

If we examine the implementation of religious reform in workhouses there is more persuasive evidence of this continuation. Workhouses were still able to meet the SPCK's needs in the second half of the eighteenth century. Hitchcock noted that while these parochial workhouses may well have been for the most part badly run and expensive, and thus in some ways deserving of the mid-century attacks, their influence over the poor continued to be strong.[723] As a result, these institutions persisted in achieving their desired ends specifically in terms of the aims of the SPCK; they continued to be a tool through which the poor could be reformed. John Millar also notes that these 'workhouses achieved at least some of their objectives'.[724] Furthermore conclusions of failure in terms of religious reformation are not based on the institutional records of the SPCK and parochial workhouses such as those established in Westminster parishes.

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[723] Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.160
[724] Millar, *Cities Divided,* pp.72-3

Thus there is a need for analysis of this alteration in the SPCK's efforts in the context of wider social and political shifts from the mid-eighteenth century and indeed the operation of parochial institutions. Evidence of the daily running of workhouses inspired by the reforming ideals of the SPCK, demonstrates the success of the parochial workhouse specifically in terms of the SPCK's reforming agenda during the eighteenth century. Parochial workhouses continued to implement a regular round of religious observance, and house a significant number of children, which were religiously educated and apprenticed to masters, chosen at least partly, on religious grounds. The workhouses therefore followed the SPCK's programme for religious reform after 1750.

Notwithstanding the SPCK's apparent neglect of these institutions in terms of their mention in the minutes, medical expansion and a declining number of children in workhouses, religious observance and education were maintained in Westminster institutions throughout the eighteenth century. Specific clergymen were consistently appointed to officiate in the workhouse. In 1772 for example the governors and overseers at St. George's ordered:

> That it be considered when the Rector comes to town for appointing of a
> proper clergyman to officiate at the workhouse in the room of Mr. Magill
> who is rendered incapable by age and infirmities […].[725]

This entry illustrates that there was no lapse in provision and a position for those administering religion in the workhouses was maintained. The role was also of such significance that it was specified that a 'proper' clergyman be appointed. The emphasis on catechising the young was also retained. In St. James's as late as 1782:

> The committee proceeded to examine all the Boys in the House as to their
> progress in reading and righting and getting by heart the Church
> Catechisms and Collects for Sundays and Holydays […]
> The committee promised to give every child 1d by way of encouragement
> who could say the Church Catechism perfectly on their next
> examination.[726]

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[725] COWAC-C, C 898, Mf 569, (10 June, 1772)

Children were still being catechised regularly and taken to church on Sundays, but most importantly the parish was prepared to reward children financially for learning their catechism. As earlier chapters illustrate, there would have been an element of 'show' here, in that it would satisfy those paying the rates to see the young objects of their charity reciting the catechism perfectly in church. Justifying expenditure would have been even more important in a period in which social and economic concerns were at a height, and the benefit of the workhouse itself was being debated. Nevertheless, catechising the young was also a cornerstone of the SPCK's policy for reform. The fact that the parish was willing to put money into this is testament to an importance that went beyond the views of ratepayers, in a period in which historical consensus has deemed ideals for religious reform obsolete.

In 1770 the vestry minutes for St. James's demonstrate exactly what religious observances were undertaken in the workhouse there, nearly half a century after it was established, and the SPCK's programme for reform first introduced. They noted:

> Whereas it appears to the Board that several of the paupers under the pretense of going to Church strole about the streets and commit acts of vagrancy.
> To prevent which it is ordered that the master do suffer no one of them to go out of the House under pretense of going to Church or Chapel but on Sunday and High Festivals, prayers being read twice a week in the House [...].[727]

This suggests that previously paupers had been allowed out of the house to go to church regularly aside from the usual Sundays and religious festivals. More importantly however, this explicitly states that paupers in the workhouse at St. James's attended church every Sunday and during high festivals, and that prayers were read twice a week in the house.

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[726] COWAC-D, D 1869, Mf 890, (31 December, 1782)
[727] COWAC-C, C 896, Mf 569, (12 December, 1770)

In order to facilitate religious observance the parish of St. George's was still willing to pay for more than the chaplain's salary. The Bible, The Book of Common Prayer and *The Whole Duty of Man* were regularly ordered for the use of the house and distribution to apprentices throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1769 for example it was ordered:

> That the following Necessary's [*sic*] be sent into the House, viz. 24 pair of Mens Breaches 2 pieces of white Biaz, 2 pcs of Narrow Check 12 Bibles & 12 Common Prayer Books.[728]

The particular use of the word 'necessary's' here is also significant. The Bible describes the 'necessary's' of life as clothing, shelter, food and medicine, all of which were provided by the workhouse. The fact that the governors included religious works in this list is testament to its importance within these institutions. St. George's parish workhouse ordered one or two dozen Bibles and Common Prayer Books annually. In 1777, incidentally a year in which the cost of the poor was particularly high for the parish, it was ordered that '48 Bibles, [and] 48 Common Prayer Books […] be sent into the House'.[729] Presumably these were to provide for the increased numbers of paupers resident in the house. Thus, religious provision was expanded in response to greater numbers of paupers, as it had earlier in the eighteenth century.

In 1770 St. George's workhouse committee also specifically ordered 'that a Dozen Bibles and Prayer Books be bought for the House use at the Office for promoting Christian Knowledge in Hatten Garden'.[730] This directly links the work of the SPCK to religious provision in the workhouses after 1750, without mention of these institutions in the SPCK's minutes. Those in charge of administering the workhouse continued to view the SPCK as a source of support, if only in terms of the publication of religious material to support religious reforming programmes.

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[728] COWAC-C, C 896, Mf 569, (27 September, 1769)
[729] COWAC-C, C 903, Mf 571, (16 July, 1777)
[730] COWAC-C, C 896, Mf 569, (12 September, 1770)

Slack argues that a 'more realistic skepticism about what they could achieve' characterised the operation of workhouses by 1750.[731] These institutions abandoned their ideals of reform in favour of a more pragmatic approach to indoor relief. He resolves that workhouses became 'a refuge for the old and impotent poor whose claims could not be denied or deterred'.[732] Siena comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that 'the provision of care for the sick and infirm quickly became a crucial function of most London workhouses'.[733] He has found that by the mid-eighteenth century 'roughly' forty per cent of all workhouse inmates were admitted specifically to receive medical treatment of some kind.[734] This is certainly an important point, and the committee minutes for the Westminster workhouses demonstrate that medicine was becoming an increasingly important part of workhouse life during the first half of the eighteenth century. Siena goes on to conclude however that as a result, 'by the second half of the eighteenth century it was an accepted reality that workhouses were not primarily for the able-bodied, as intended, but rather for the sick, old, weak and infirm.'[735]

Evidence from the running of the Westminster workhouses illustrates that, in support of Siena's conclusions, medical provision in these institutions was expanding over the course of the eighteenth century. In 1761 the apothecary to the workhouse in the parish of St. George's, Mr. John Saxon, 'presented a case to the board relating to the great & additional trouble he has by increase of poor & attendance thereon.'[736] The board agreed, and ordered that his 'salary should be raised […] and that Mr.

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[731] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.44
[732] Ibid, p.42
[733] Siena, *Venereal Disease*, p.138
[734] Ibid, p.141
[735] Ibid, p.146
[736] COWAC-C, C 888, Mf 567, (15 April, 1761)

James Burkett surgeon should also have some addition […]'.[737] Medical personnel in the workhouse were dealing with increasing numbers of the sick. Additionally this increase was so great that the apothecary felt the need to ask for an increase in his salary, and the board also recognising this growing demand, agreed to spend more of its notoriously limited budget on medical provision. Just two years later 'Mrs. Meres, acquainted the board that there was a great number of sick poor in the house, and not room sufficient to contain them'.[738] These workhouses were clearly becoming ever more important medical facilities due to increasing numbers of the sick poor being housed in them as Siena argues; crucially however, this does not mean that efforts at reform had to be abandoned as he suggests. Indeed in the Westminster workhouses religious reform was maintained and even increased alongside an expansion in medical facilities.

Workhouse records reveal that children maintained a significant presence in the Westminster workhouses in the later eighteenth century and these institutions continued to provide for the education of the children of the poor. Education in the workhouse also remained primarily religious in tone as demonstrated by entries concerning catechising. In the parish of St. George's, quarterly salaries show that both a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress and at times assistants were retained after 1750. In St. James's in 1767 it was specifically ordered:

> […] the sum of one shilling and sixpence per week be paid to the school
> mistress at the workhouse […] as it hath been allowed to former school
> mistresses it appearing that she hath taken great care of the children.[739]

Thus, the parish was still prepared to pay for this provision. It was also ordered in St. James's that 'Mr. Richardson be allowed and paid four pounds per annum for

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[737] COWAC-C, C 888, Mf 567, (15 April, 1761)
[738] Ibid, (28 September, 1763)
[739] COWAC-D, D 1866, Mf 888, (20 November, 1767)

teaching the children in the workhouse to sing psalms […]'.[740] The religious

education children received in the workhouse continued to constitute more than

simply catechising. It was not just members of the Church that were being created it

was a genuine piety and a religious reformation of character. Furthermore, in 1770 it

was 'Ordered that Mr. [?] do draw up advertisements to be inserted in the daily

advertiser […] for a person properly qualified as a schoolmistress for the said

workhouse'.[741] Education was not to be undertaken by an inmate, or someone who

was simply willing to do it for the money. It was to be undertaken by a 'properly

qualified' individual, signifying its importance.

In 1781 in St. George's it was 'ordered that the Revd. Mr. Pugh Chaplain to the

House be requested to hear the poor children the catechism once a month as the Rules

and Orders for the Regulation of the House direct.'[742] It is possible that there had been

a lapse in provision or that previously the schoolmaster or even another inmate had

administered this. Either way, the order illustrates that even towards the end of the

eighteenth century the religious education of children was still part of the rules and

orders for the house. Moreover, the governors and overseers continued to demand that

this particular rule be enforced. Religious reformation was thus just as important to

the intentions behind the operation of the workhouse in 1781 as it was in 1726 when

the SPCK inspired its foundation.

Evidence that a portion of the religious observance sustained in the Westminster

workhouses was specifically aimed at children (catechising for example) and efforts

to provide for their religious education in the house supports arguments by Levene

and Ottoway that children maintained a noteworthy presence in the workhouse during

the second half of the eighteenth century. A report on the inmates in St. George's

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[740] COWAC-D, D 1866, Mf 888, (10 November, 1769)
[741] Ibid, (20 April, 1770)
[742] COWAC-C, C 910, Mf 573, (10 October, 1781)

workhouse in 1779 shows that there were 500 inmates, 250 of whom were fit to work, a further 50 were employed in the house and of the remaining 200, there were 22 children.[743] Thus in 1779, aside from those out with a nurse, children accounted for 4.4 per cent of the total resident workhouse population and 11 per cent of those in the workhouse unable to work. This is much less than the one-third that Levene found in London workhouses, however this simply constitutes a snapshot as opposed to an average across the second half of the eighteenth century.[744] Furthermore, the fact that the workhouse continued to maintain specific religious provision for such a small number of inmates is testament to their relative importance in these institutions.

Arguments by Slack and Siena about the changing nature of these institutions in terms of the inmates the workhouse housed and catered for hint at the conclusion that the SPCK and its ideals of religious reform abandoned these institutions after 1750 because they no longer accommodated its principal target for reform; the children of the poor. A decline in the numbers of children in these institutions is also supported by Hanway's revelations of exceptionally high rates of infant mortality and endeavours on behalf of children in London workhouses. Jonas Hanway was a merchant, philanthropist, writer and governor of the Foundling Hospital, who expressed serious concerns about the high mortality rates for children in London workhouses in the 1750s and 1760s.[745] Infant mortality was already much higher in London than the rest of the country, and was elevated further in the workhouses he visited.[746] In 1762 he supported the Registers Bill, which required all parishes to record the fate of the poor children under their care. It became known as Hanway's Act and provided the groundwork for infant welfare reform in workhouses. It also

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[743] COWAC-C, C 907, Mf 572, (10 December, 1779)
[744] See: Levene, *Childhood of the Poor*
[745] Levene and Ottoway, 'Dependency', p.6
[746] Levene, *Childcare, Health and Mortality*, p.76

came at a time when open admission to the Foundling Hospital was coming to an end and parliament was looking for an alternative means of providing for these children, making the issue all the more pressing.

Hanway pointed out in 1766 that 'many children instead of being nourished with care, by the fostering hand or breast of a country nurse, are thrust into the impure air of a workhouse […]'.[747] He found that the infant poor in London workhouses only had a survival rate of forty-seven per cent.[748] Hanway therefore concluded that '[…] all parish poor infants should be sent out to be nursed in villages, in cases where they are not nursed by the mother […].'[749] Furthermore, he maintained that they should '[…] continue there till they are fit to be returned with safety to work.'[750] He was therefore suggesting children were sent out from workhouses for a significant period of time. As Chapter Four illustrates, high rates of infant mortality was a particular problem for the Westminster workhouses, and St. Margaret's Westminster in particular.[751]

Hanway was an active member of the SPCK, and used it to help distribute his pamphlets calling for reform.[752] This might suggest a common and ongoing interest in workhouse reform on the part of the SPCK. It is likely that there were other social reformers in this period that were also members of the SPCK but Hanway is perhaps the most high profile example directly connected to workhouses. If after the initial efforts of the SPCK, workhouses gradually became the abode of the old, sick and infirm it is possible that the declining number of children in these institutions could account for the SPCK's dwindling interest, since children were always its primary

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[747] J. Hanway, *An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor, Particularly those belonging to the Parishes within the Bills of Mortality…*(London, 1766), p.11
[748] Ibid, p.13
[749] Ibid, p.110
[750] Ibid, p.110
[751] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.172
[752] J.S. Taylor, 'Hanway, Jonas', *Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (retrieved, 15/10/2013)

concern.[753] However, Levene's conclusion through work on workhouse admissions registers that children constituted a substantial presence in metropolitan workhouses during the second half of the eighteenth century, illustrates that this was not the case.[754] Ottoway has also shown that in Terling in Essex the parochial workhouse was principally used to house children and some adults during the mid-eighteenth century. Most importantly, she concludes that the age structure of this institution only changed much later, between 1774 and 1799, when indeed it did become much more of a home for the aged.[755] Sir Frederick Eden's *The State of the Poor,* published in 1797, which Morrison has defined as an 'invaluable source of information on the late eighteenth century workhouse' supports this assertion.[756] In his description of workhouses in England he makes it clear that children accounted for over half the total number of inmates.[757] Thus, these institutions continued to meet the needs of the SPCK in terms of their ability to reform the children of the poor.

Following Hanway's revelations on infant mortality there is evidence that infants (those under four years old) no longer maintained such a presence in the Westminster workhouses. For example, in 1769 the workhouse at St. James's:

> Resolved that this board doth approve of the placing out poor children to be
> nursed in the country […] the several children recommended to this board
> as fit and proper to be placed out be sent to be nursed forthwith at the
> charge of this parish.[758]

However, it was not these children that the SPCK's programme of religious reform was aimed at, since they were too young to be religiously educated. It was further ordered in St. James's that 'the poor children at nurse in the country be put to the

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[753] For the traditional view of the development of the workhouse see Siena, *Venereal Disease*, and Slack, *The English Poor Law*
[754] Levene, 'Children, Childhood and the Workhouse', p.41
[755] Ottoway, *Decline of Life*, p.250
[756] Morrison, *The Workhouse*, p.30
[757] Ibid, p.132
[758] COWAC-D, D 1866, Mf 888, (4 January, 1769)

school as soon as they arrive [in the workhouse] at the age of four years'.[759] Thus, although Hanway's findings may have affected the overall numbers of children present in workhouse, it did not affect the numbers of children in the workhouse that were relevant to the SPCK's agenda for reform.

Likewise, in 1776 in St. George's it was noted: 'That a letter be wrote to Mr. Bishop desiring to know whether Susanna Sherman is a proper person to take the child she had to Nurse an apprentice.'[760] The parish obviously had a different set of criteria for masters and mistresses than for nurses. Since children at nurse were too young to be educated and influenced, the character of these nurses was obviously not regarded as important as that of masters and mistresses. Only when the child was older and their religious future was at stake was this an important consideration.

During the second half of the eighteenth century increasing numbers of children were sent out of the workhouse to be nursed in the country in order to improve their chances of survival. On returning to the workhouse at the age of four years they were to be religiously educated. In 1780 however, in the parish of St. George's it appears there may have been a change in this provision. The governors' and overseers' minutes recorded that:

> The Board proceeded to take into consideration the annual expenses for nursing children in the country Exclusive of extra expenses for medicines, schooling & carriage.[761]

This amounted to a significant £1,362.[762] Following this, there are further entries concerning additional payments to nurses for educating their young charges, suggesting that a number of children were educated outside of the workhouse from this period. This complements Ottoway's evidence of a much later date for the

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[759] COWAC-D, D 1867, Mf 888, (26 March, 1773)
[760] COWAC-C, C 902, Mf 571, (24 October, 1776)
[761] COWAC-C, C 907, Mf 572, (20 January, 1780)
[762] Ibid.

changing age composition of inmates in the workhouse. It could also account for earlier evidence in December 1779 of children making up much less of the total workhouse population than Levene suggested for this period, especially since Levene often included children out at nurse as under the care of the workhouse.[763] During the last two decades of the eighteenth century it appears children would only have returned to the workhouse for a short period until they were apprenticed out, so reducing overall numbers of children and most importantly the ability of workhouses to reform them. This also coincides with the period in which the SPCK became active in the new Sunday school movement. It is therefore possible that although after 1750 children remained a substantial presence under the care of the workhouse more broadly speaking, in the 1780s there was a significant shift and after this point children only spent very short periods actually housed in these institutions. Based on analysis of the SPCK and its aims for reform it is possible that this shift prompted a change in the way it viewed workhouses since children were no longer in these institutions long enough to be religiously reformed. Although further work on a wider range of workhouses and SPCK records would be required in order to qualify this, it does complement Ottoway's evidence for Terling. After 1780 large numbers of poor children were housed not in workhouses, but were provided for in charity schools and Sunday schools in which the SPCK continued to play a role.

Nevertheless, following a religious education in the workhouse children were still being apprenticed from the Westminster workhouses after 1750 based on religious principles. While calls for investigations into the character of prospective masters and mistresses were no longer attached to each statement of apprenticeship, it became a standardised practice. In 1769 the parish resolved:

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[763] See earlier statistical evidence for St. George's workhouse, COWAC-C, C 907, Mf 572, (10 December, 1779)

> […] that the messenger enquire into the character circumstances and
> ability of the several persons who have taken poor children
> belonging to the parish […] and that he also enquire into the
> character and conduct of the said poor children and report the same
> to this board […].[764]

It was then further 'resolved and ordered that the messenger do make a like enquiry every 3 months'.[765] There are repeated references to these inquiries illustrating that this practice was undertaken throughout the eighteenth century. Similarly in St. George's in 1770 it was ordered that the:

> […] Overseers of the poor to take opportunity's of visiting the masters and
> mistresses of the several apprentices Bound out by officers of this parish
> and enquire into their good behaviour and the conduct of their masters
> […].[766]

As Chapter Five demonstrated these 'enquiries' almost certainly centered at least in part on a master or mistress's ability to maintain the piety of parish children that had been instilled in the workhouse, illustrating the continuation of a religious reforming quality within the operation of parish workhouses. The parish of St. George's also persisted in ordering religious materials in order to help facilitate this. In 1771 the governors and overseers minutes ordered explicitly 'that two Dozen of Bibles and two Dozen of Prayer Books be bought for the use of apprentices bound out'.[767] This also marked a shift from the use of *The Whole Duty of Man* to the Book of Common Prayer, which the Foundling Hospital also preferred for its charges. The change in religious literature reflected a wider shift in which the *Whole Duty of Man* fell out of favour as a result of the proliferation of more specific religious manuals from the 1770s. There was no longer a need for something so general for apprentices. The religious future of these young charges continued to demand a status that warranted the allocation of the parish poor rate in the form of religious books.

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[764] COWAC-C, C 910, Mf 573, (7 July, 1769)
[765] Ibid.
[766] COWAC-C, C 896, Mf 569, (14 March, 1770)
[767] Ibid, (18 December, 1771)

The religious denomination of masters and mistresses also continued to be an important, and at times a decisive, concern for parish officials. Even after the political threat from Catholics had declined, the governors and overseers at St. George's were concerned in 1759 'That the Churchwardens & Overseers be desired not to bind any children to Roman Catholicks [*sic*]' (having already ordered this in 1745 during the Jacobite rebellion).[768] In 1768 they even went so far as to order 'that for the future none of the children of this parish be bound to any person but those of the established Church of England'.[769] Thus, despite earlier evidence of a degree of toleration towards dissenting paupers in the workhouse at St. James's and indeed the SPCK's toleration of particular groups, Protestant Dissenters were not to be permitted to have control over the poor. It is possible this was prompted by a political shift in 1760 from a tolerant Whig government to a Tory administration.

It also seems that anti-Catholicism in these institutions was about control, power and influence. While Catholic masters were not permitted to take apprentices in St. George's, there is evidence of Catholic paupers in its workhouse during the second half of the eighteenth century. In fact by this point Catholics in the workhouse had become so numerous that:

> The board being informed that several Romanish [*sic*] Priest do
> frequently come into this house to administer their function to some
> patients that are papists.
> That for the future the master & porter do not permit any such persons to
> be admitted for the purposes aforesaid.[770]

Thus, it seems that the workhouse would relieve Catholics, but twenty years after the Battle of Culloden and unlike Protestant Dissenters in St. James's workhouse, their religious needs were not accommodated. Catholicism remained illegal. This complements earlier evidence from St. Margaret's concerning the purchase of anti-

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[768] COWAC-C, C 886, Mf 566, (23 May, 1759). For the first order concerning apprenticing children to Catholics see Chapter Five.
[769] COWAC-C, C 895, Mf 568, (8 June, 1768)
[770] COWAC-C, C 892, Mf 892, (13 November, 1765)

Catholic catechisms outlined in Chapter Four. On 7 June 1780, St. George's also ordered 'That a list of such persons who are in and out of this House belonging to Ireland, be laid before the board'.[771] The list contained just three names but was obviously something that the parish felt it needed to monitor, most likely as a result of the Gordon Riots which lasted from the 2 to the 7 June 1780, following the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. Anti-Catholicism in the country remained high and initially peaceful protests turned into large-scale riots in 1780. On entering the workhouse Catholics had to submit to Anglican services, and critically, their children to an Anglican education. Furthermore, in terms of the aims of the SPCK and its hostility to Catholicism, which persisted throughout the eighteenth century, the workhouses presented an opportunity to convert Catholics, including their children. Thus, workhouses would have been willing to take Catholics in, but under no circumstances could they permit them to practice their religion, educate their children in it, or indeed influence others.

The SPCK's committee minutes demonstrate a similar commitment to anti-Catholicism throughout the eighteenth century. As the previous chapter highlighted: Rose has argued that although the SPCK was hostile to Catholics, anti-popery was not of central importance, and only 'came to the fore' at moments of 'acute danger to the Protestant succession'.[772] The threat of Catholics as a political force, and in particular to the Protestant Succession, ended after the final defeat of Charles Edward Stuart 'the Young Pretender' in 1746. Yet, the SPCK printed and distributed tracts against popery throughout the eighteenth century, not just at times of 'acute' threat during the various Jacobite uprisings. As late as 1765 in fact, two decades after the defeat of Jacobitism, it discussed and printed an account of *Mr. Hurly's Conversion from*

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[771] COWAC-C, C 907, Mf 572, (7 June, 1780)
[772] Rose, 'Origins and Ideals', p.186

Popery.[773] This also preceded the political conflict surrounding concessions made to Catholics from the 1770s. Ingram has noted that by the 1770s the state was willing to 'pacify' Roman Catholics by removing some of the legal barriers.[774] The first Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1778, but an oath promising allegiance to George III and to disclose any information about treasonable conspiracies was still felt necessary.[775]

Basil Hemphill contends that the Gordon Riots demonstrated how 'deep-seated' the distrust of Catholics was in this period.[776] It was not until the second Catholic Relief Act of 1791 that Catholics were allowed to worship openly and freely in officially registered churches.[777] The SPCK's anti-Catholicism represented more than politics and the succession. It represented a deep-seated hostility based on theological grounds that consistently formed part of its policy during the eighteenth century. This was a policy that remained visible in the operation of the Westminster workhouses even in this later period.

Criticism and Scandal in the Westminster Workhouses

In contrast to evidence of the relative success of the parochial workhouses in terms of implementing the SPCK's religious reforming agenda, Marshall concluded that by the middle of the eighteenth century 'the workhouse movement had failed, utterly and completely.'[778] In this instance she referred to the workhouses in general as a means of providing for the poor. Marshall's argument was based on the flourish of published critiques of workhouses around 1750. These accusations of corruption and neglect in

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[773] SPCK.MS A1/25, (22 October, 1765)
[774] Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity,* p.xi
[775] Butler, *Methodists*, p.4
[776] Hemphill, *Vicars Apostolic,* p.80
[777] Butler, *Methodists,* p.6
[778] Marshall, *The English Poor*, p.145

workhouses in the later eighteenth century may not have presented a true reflection of

workhouse life as demonstrated through the continued emphasis on religious reform

and children, but it perhaps did reflect a portion of it. There is evidence of some cases

of both embezzlement and negligence in the Westminster workhouses during the

second half of the eighteenth century, which show it was becoming a concern for

workhouse officials. In 1772 the vestry at St. James's felt the need to order that:

> […] a reward of Seventy Guineas be given to the person or persons who
> give information to the Church Wardens or Overseers of the poor of any
> officer or servant in the workhouse or of any other person whatever that
> have been guilty of Embezzling any of the provisions belonging to or
> brought into the workhouse of this parish.[779]

Seventy guineas was a substantial reward, reflecting the extent of the parish's

concerns about this issue. It seems unlikely that the parish would have ordered this

without any cause for concern; it is however possible that it was a provisionary order

made in response to attacks on these institutions regarding corruption in this period.

There was no further entry concerning any accusations made or that the reward was

paid. Hitchcock notes that there was several critiques of parish workhouses published

around the 1750s and that social reformers were beginning to advocate different types

of institution.[780]

Tomkins argued that Marshall's assessment that the workhouse had failed by

1750 relied on evidence from contemporary pamphleteers to paint a picture of

overcrowding, dirt, hunger and neglect.[781] Marshall's 'picture' therefore suggested

that by this point both the SPCK and its programme of religious reform had indeed

abandoned the workhouse. Slack argues that while the Webbs took complaints about

workhouses 'too much at face value' there were revelations of mismanagement and

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[779] COWAC-D, D 1867, Mf 888, (19 March, 1772)
[780] Hitchcock, ' The English Workhouse', p.249
[781] Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, p.40

cruelty in some houses.[782] Hitchcock also concedes that corruption was a problem for these institutions, and this was becoming visible by the 1750s. In the 1740s, he notes for example, that the master of the workhouse in the Westminster parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, William Warburton, was providing for more paupers than were actually in the house. Hitchcock maintains however that none of these parochial workhouses were large enough for corruption on a large scale.[783] The most horrifying and notorious revelations, such as the Andover workhouse scandal, came much later (1845-6) following the advent of the New Poor Law and the establishment of larger institutions.

Together with specific attacks on the workhouse Slack has identified a general 'spurt' of reforming activity that gathered momentum during the second half of the eighteenth century and would impact perceptions of these institutions.[784] Black notes for example, that it was social conditions in particular that became the focus for contemporaries at this time, and Hitchcock has gone so far as to highlight a 'crisis in social policy' in the mid-eighteenth century.[785] There were campaigns concerning gin, illegitimacy and venereal disease, together with a renewed interest in the ever-prominent issue of the growing dependent poor, and therefore the workhouse movement. Hitchcock argues that it was changing perceptions rather than changing reality that brought these issues to 'boiling point'.[786] Nevertheless, the mid-eighteenth century also ushered in a number of changing realities. The accession of the new king drove forward change in the party system and led to a period of volatility. The new King took the idea of pious governance more seriously than his grandfather and father

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[782] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.44
[783] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.163
[784] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.42
[785] See: Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain,* p.109. See: Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, p.104
[786] See: Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, p.104

had done.[787] There was also rapid population growth during the second half of the eighteenth century. This was compounded by high levels of unemployment following the end of war in 1763, and rising food prices as a result of harsh winters and bad harvests.[788] Slack maintains that reforming activity was principally due to fears of national decadence and declining population during a time of war.[789] This all put considerable pressure on the mechanisms for poor relief. The workhouse at St. George's Hanover Square was first enlarged in 1743 and then again in 1772 to enable it to accommodate more inmates (600 after 1772).[790] According to Slack from 1760, population growth, increases in food prices and unemployment meant that these workhouses did not have a hope of keeping costs down.[791] In light of these pressures it is perhaps even more impressive that these institutions were able to maintain their programme for religious reform, and points to just how important religion was in this period.

The harsher economic climate of the later eighteenth century precipitated a period of intense debate about how to accommodate the needs of the ever-growing numbers of dependent poor. Between 1696 when the Bristol Corporation of the Poor was established, and 1750, when workhouses were scattered across the country, poor law expenditure doubled.[792] By the 1770's there were nearly two thousand workhouses in England, yet this had done nothing to curb expenditure.[793] As a result, between 1750 and 1834 when the New Poor Law was introduced, there were forty-

[787] L. Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60,* (Cambridge, 1982), p.292
[788] J. Garnett and C. Matthew, *Revival and Religion Since 1700: Essays for John Walsh,* (London, 1993), p.70, and Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, p.6
[789] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.42
[790] 'London Lives'
[791] Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p.42
[792] Ibid, p.32
[793] J. Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689-1727,* (Oxford, 2000), p.87

four enquires into the poor and provision for their relief and from the 1770s committees of inquiry into the Poor Law were set up.[794]

Workhouses were a significant topic of debate throughout the eighteenth century, but after 1750 growing social pressures provided opponents with a much stronger argument.[795] In his *History of the Poor Laws* published in 1764 Richard Burn argued for example that although 'populousness [*sic*] […] is the greatest blessing a kingdom can have' it also 'become the burden of the kingdom by breeding up […] successive generations in a mere trade of idleness, thieving, begging, and barbarous kind of life […].' He added that this also 'must in time prodigiously increase and overgrow the whole face of the kingdom, and eat out the heart of it'.[796] This was the fear. The growing numbers of poor, who were considered idle and immoral, would ultimately lead to the destruction of the country. This was a fear that was amplified by the social and political pressures of the second half of the eighteenth century.

Regardless of success in terms of reducing the burden of the poor it appears the need to morally reform paupers was as prominent as ever in the mid-eighteenth century. These critiques and concern about value of workhouses are not necessarily a true reflection of life in the eighteenth century workhouse. Indeed evidence of daily life in the Westminster workhouses presented by the vestry minutes and the governors and overseers minutes illuminate a very different picture; but they do illustrate the wider context in which these institutions were operating in the later eighteenth century. There is some evidence of neglect, in the area of religious education in the Westminster workhouses. In 1772 the records for St. James's for example, stated that:

> The overseers reported that upon examining the children at the
> workhouse they found the schoolmaster had been very remiss in

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[794] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain,* p.109
[795] Levene and Ottoway, 'Dependency', p.3
[796] Burn, *The History of the Poor Laws*, p.150

The fact that this had been going on for 'some time past' suggests that the workhouses

may have indeed abandoned its aim to religiously educate children. However,

following this, it was immediately 'ordered that an advertisement be inserted in the

daily advertiser for persons qualified for that office […]'.[798] Thus, while there is

certainly evidence of negligence specifically in terms of the religious reform of

children, there were also efforts by those who directed the running of these institutions

to rectify such problems as soon as they were discovered. The vestry sought to ensure

that the workhouse maintained the SPCK's reforming agenda.

Similarly, in St. George's in 1758 when 'Mr Parry produced a letter from Mrs

Pratt of George Street purporting that the children in the house were not well looked

after & taken care of,' the overseers found that the 'information was not true they

having examined several children […]'.[799] Thus, while there certainly were

complaints, and some of these may have been valid, not all reports were necessarily

accurate.

Levene and Ottoway highlight that notwithstanding increasing reproaches, there

remained a 'broad middle ground' and that the benefits of the workhouses continued

to feature in debates.[800] It took until 1834 for a definitive change in poor law

provision, suggesting that arguments were by no means clear-cut. Most of the

institutions that had been established in the 1720s and 1730s continued to operate into

the nineteenth century regardless of this increasing condemnation. Furthermore, these

criticisms only represent a portion of contemporary opinion, and certainly did not

reflect the feeling of the SPCK. Parochial workhouses were concerned with more than

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[797] COWAC-D, D 1867, Mf 888, (23 October, 1772)
[798] Ibid.
[799] COWAC-C, C885, Mf 566 (2 August, 1758)
[800] Levene and Ottoway, 'Dependency', p.7

keeping costs down, and their aim to morally reform the poor was as important to contemporary society and the SPCK as ever after 1750. Thus although it appears in the later eighteenth century, a degree of corruption and neglect may have crept in, these instances were the exception and certainly not large-scale enough to prompt public scandal. In terms of the success of parochial workhouses in this period it depends on the criteria by which they were judged. Their efforts to reform the poor had definitely not been a success in terms of reducing the cost of the poor or satisfying the rate paying classes, but this was not its primary function at least in the short term. In the Westminster workhouses, despite increasing numbers of sick paupers, children being sent out to nurse, social pressures and scandal, religion and religious reform remained central to the operation of these institutions in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Conclusions

The SPCK's committee minutes undeniably demonstrate a broadening of its projects after 1750, with an obvious absence of workhouses. However, it appears that this did not trigger a significant change in the role of religion in the Westminster workhouses. Evidence from the parish workhouses at St. George's Hanover Square and St. James's Piccadilly illustrates that daily life in these institutions was not a 'vision of the workhouse radically altered from the one put forth by the SPCK' as Siena has alleged.[801] These workhouses continued to implement a regular round of religious observance, which included specific provision for children, always the principal focus of the SPCK. The parish consistently spent on religious provision despite an ever-tightening budget due to increasing numbers of dependent poor. Children were also

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[801] Siena, *Venereal Disease*, p.147

still apprenticed from these institutions, and again despite economic concerns, only to masters and mistresses whose religious character was acceptable: not just pious and Protestant but Anglican.

There are two possible explanations for the seemingly contradictory evidence these two sets of records present. Firstly, it could suggest that religion in the workhouse was never the product of the efforts or ideals the SPCK. These practices were simply a consequence of a society that remained deeply religious in this period.[802] However, evidence of the SPCK's early involvement in these institutions, and its specific aims for reform in the daily operation of these workhouses presented in Chapters One to Five implies that this is unlikely. In corporation institutions such as the Bristol workhouse, for example, religion occupied a much less prominent position. However, the role and importance of religion in the workhouse was not solely the result of the efforts of the SPCK. It certainly set the tone and provided the ideas, encouraged and facilitated religious reform in these institutions, but it was the vestries, churchwardens and workhouse committees that ensured the SPCK's agenda for religious reform was implemented day to day. Secondly, the evidence from St. George's and St. James's illustrates that the SPCK had been successful in implementing a programme of religious reform in these institutions. Thus, there was little need for the SPCK to continue to take such an active role. Once these provisions had been put in place, they were relatively easy to maintain and required little further input from the Society. Therefore, especially since fewer institutions were being established, all the SPCK had to do in order to maintain its programme for reform was to monitor the movement. Since the evidence from the Westminster workhouses

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[802] See: Clark, *English Society*

demonstrates that the SPCK's agenda was maintained, there was no need for it to step in, therefore there was nothing concerning workhouses to report in the minutes.

Crucially the SPCK's minutes present no evidence that previous theories concerning a total abandonment of the workhouse movement due to changes in the age composition of inmates or criticism and scandals or are valid. The SPCK certainly broadened its work, but this does not mean it abandoned anything. Particular projects occupied a greater portion of the SPCK's time at different points, but one tool for reform was not abandoned in favour of another. There is no statement concerning a move away from the workhouse, or even suggesting why it might have, except that such active involvement may no longer have been necessary. Children remained the SPCK's principal focus for reform, and they continued to maintain a noteworthy presence in workhouses. By 1750 these institutions had not just become hospitals and hospices and abandoned reform as Siena and Slack suggest. It is possible that at the end of the eighteenth century following Gilbert's 1782 Act, the groups of paupers these institutions catered for and therefore the nature of these workhouses changed, but this was not apparent by 1750. The SPCK may well have abandoned the workhouse, but crucially the workhouse did not abandon religion and religious reform. Religion continued to play a significant role, in accordance with the reforming agenda of SPCK, in the parochial workhouse movement from 1723 when the Workhouse Test Act was passed until at least 1782 when Gilbert's Act was introduced.

Conclusions: Religion and the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse

This thesis has demonstrated that religion was central to the operation of the Westminster workhouses throughout the eighteenth century. Detailed evidence of the daily running of these institutions reveals the significance and longevity of the intention, and practice of religiously reforming inmates. Such a conclusion contributes to the 're-enchanting' of perceptions of the eighteenth-century workhouse.[803] It supports the proposition that parochial workhouses began as religious reforming institutions, underpinned by the religious principles of the SPCK, and challenges the assumption that they quickly abandoned this agenda in favour of a greater degree of secular pragmatism.[804] It also illuminates the form of religious observance and instruction implemented in these institutions across the eighteenth century. The importance of piety, and specifically Anglican piety, in terms of the religious character of potential masters for parish apprentices, for example, also further indicates that religion warrants a greater appreciation in our understanding of the welfare system more generally. The thesis therefore fills a significant gap in our understanding of the eighteenth-century workhouse.

The experiences of corporation workhouses established in the City of London and Bristol in the early eighteenth century addressed in Chapter One pointed to the important place religion would occupy in later parochial institutions in terms of both the government of the poor and the daily operation of these workhouses. It highlights some of the important religious concerns that would affect the establishment and

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[803] See Clark, 'Re-enchantment'

[804] For the thesis that parochial workhouses sought to reform inmates see Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers', p.152. For arguments that this was quickly abandoned in favour of a greater degree of pragmatism, see for example, Tomkins, *Urban Poverty,* and Marshall, *The English Poor*, both of whom argue that the eighteenth century workhouse was a failure. See also Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement,* in which he argues that the primary aim of the workhouse during this period was deterrence.

operation of the later Westminster workhouses, including attitudes to Protestant Dissenters and whether they should be allowed any influence over the poor. As a product of a society in which religion was complex and contested, and irrevocably bound up with politics and every aspect of life, it is impossible to view these institutions without an understanding of the religious context of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, these issues have not previously been teased out of the history of these types of institution. The London and Bristol Corporation workhouses also illustrate that the specific objectives and influence of the SPCK elevated religion to a more prominent position in the later parochial institutions. While religion occupied a portion of daily life in these corporation workhouses it was never a priority; religious instruction and the education of children often lapsed in the Bristol workhouse for example.

Chapter Two demonstrated that the SPCK viewed parochial workhouses firmly under the governance of Anglican churchwardens, as a tool through which it could carry out its wider aim of fostering a religious reformation in society. It maintained that the catechism, learned young, would save society and create a pious population in the future. Thus, the significant and distinctive presence of children in workhouses enabled the SPCK to target those it considered most important. Furthermore, evidence that the SPCK broadened the range of projects it supported over the course of the eighteenth century, without losing interest in those it had already founded, such as the charity school movement, indicates that it may not have consciously abandoned the workhouse movement after 1750.

Religion, and more specifically the provision of Anglican education, played a prominent role in the operation of the Westminster workhouses throughout the eighteenth century, in part as a result of the influence, energy and direction of the

SPCK. It was able to direct and encourage the establishment and operation of the parochial workhouse movement firstly through the contractor-manager Matthew Marryott, and then through the collection and national dissemination of information in publications such as *An Account of Several Workhouses*. The Society thus generated and distributed the ideology that drove the reforming element of this movement. Provision was Anglican: though it made allowances for Dissenters, it was particularly hostile to Catholicism and sought to correct its doctrine. This complimented the principles of the SPCK, which exercised a degree of toleration towards Protestant Dissenters; it united these diverse groups within wider aim of reforming society, but sought to defend the nation against Popery. The workhouse also prioritised the religious education of children in line with the SPCK's agenda. As Chapters Three and Four illustrated, workhouses in both affluent and poorer Westminster parishes alike, ensured that inmates attended church regularly. Paupers also received additional religious instruction in the workhouse, for which the parish was willing to pay. Children were baptised quickly by eighteenth-century standards, and catechised regularly. While Protestant Dissenters were tolerated and even permitted to attend their own services, Catholicism was targeted with anti-papist instruction. Religion, following the objectives of the SPCK was thus central to the operation of these institutions in a variety of ways.

Chapter Five shows that when it came to apprenticing pauper children from the workhouse, the governors were keen to ensure that these impressionable charges were only put into the care of those that who would continue the religious reformation and education that had been instilled in the workhouse. They insisted that pauper children were only put into the care of those who bore a 'good character'. The criteria for 'good character' in the eighteenth century, particularly in terms of the specific

requirements of the workhouse committee, included a significant religious component, alongside other conditions including economic standing. The parish not only required that a prospective master or mistress had 'good character' and was therefore pious and would ensure apprentices maintained the piety instilled in the workhouse, but that they were Anglican. It was stipulated that regardless of any other consideration children should not be apprenticed to Catholics or Protestant Dissenters. This stipulation directly connected the principles behind, and concerns of, these later institutions to the earlier Bristol and London Corporation workhouses discussed in Chapter One. In the same way as there was anxiety and conflict surrounding Protestant Dissenters governing the poor through the management of the City of London and Bristol workhouses, Westminster parishes were concerned about Catholic and Protestant Dissenting masters influencing pauper children. In these cases religion had a definitive impact on apprenticeship from the workhouse. The role of religion and the inculcation of Anglican piety in the workhouse was of such importance to the operation of these institutions, that regardless of the economic benefits of apprenticing out as many children as possible, only those that would continue the reforming intentions of the workhouse would be permitted to take these paupers.

Finally, but perhaps most significantly, the Westminster workhouses did not abandon these religious reforming ideals in the second half of the eighteenth century. Religious observance, instruction and reform, which prioritized children, remained central to the intentions behind, and operation of, these institutions throughout the eighteenth century. Chapter Six demonstrates that while entries relating to workhouses in the SPCK's committee minutes decline after the initial period of foundation in the 1720s and 1730s, and disappear altogether after 1750, workhouse records reveal that these institutions did not abandon the SPCK's agenda for religious

reform. The divergence in these two sets of records highlights two important points. Firstly, it demonstrates that the role and importance of religion in the workhouse was not solely the result of the efforts of the SPCK. It certainly provided the ideas, energy, influence and direction to religion in these institutions, but there was also a desire to reform inmates on the part of the parishes and poor law officials. It was the vestries, churchwardens and workhouse committees that ensured the SPCK's agenda for religious reform was implemented day to day. Secondly, these records show that parochial workhouses did not abandon aims to inculcate religious principles in inmates after 1750, at least until 1782 and perhaps beyond. In the later eighteenth century workhouses continued to employ clergy to administer religious education in addition to church attendance, and pay for religious materials in order to facilitate education and reformation. While it is possible that this was simply the product of a society that remained deeply religious, evidence from the running of the Bristol corporation workhouse illustrates that this set of religious practices, at least in terms of consistency and priority, was not the case in all eighteenth-century institutions. Despite increasing criticism and pressure on systems of relief in terms of numbers of paupers, as well as expanding medical facilities and an increase in children sent out to nurse, religion continued to expand within these institutions rather than become less of a priority during the second half of the eighteenth century.[805] The SPCK may have lost interest in the workhouse movement but crucially this did not lead to the abandonment of religious reform in these institutions.

The SPCK's role in the charity school movement in the 1780s, demonstrates that besides its broadening interests, children continued to be the focus of its efforts throughout the eighteenth century. Recent studies have shown that children continued

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[805] See Chapter Six. See also: Slack, *The English Poor Law* and Siena, *Venereal Disease*

to form a large part of the workhouse population during the second half of the eighteenth century.[806] It therefore seems unlikely that the SPCK would simply distance itself from this movement. Parochial workhouses continued to present the SPCK with an opportunity to reform the poor, in particular, the children of the poor. The sustained commitment of parochial workhouses to religious reform may have rendered such an active role that required frequent reference in the SPCK's minutes unnecessary. The governors' and overseers' minutes and vestry records for Westminster parishes present no evidence of forsaking ideals of reform, therefore there was no need for the SPCK to step in or record any complaint in its own minutes. While there is certainly more work to be done here, this thesis has demonstrated that religion formed an important part of the operation of parochial workhouses in Westminster throughout the eighteenth century, 're-enchanting' views of these institutions and highlighting the need for more work in this field, in order to put religion firmly back into the histories of welfare.

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This thesis also sets an important agenda for future scholars, illustrating the need to consider other religious influences on the Poor Law and workhouses, and explore additional sources for interrogating it, such as the role of individual clergy, and members of the vestry and the workhouse committee. For example, Chapter Three suggested that the relatively tolerant approach to the dissenting poor in St. James's could have been the result of the influence of a number of notably tolerant clergy, including Samuel Clarke and Thomas Secker. Since the rector of the parish regularly sat on the workhouse committee and it was the vestry that administered poor law funds, analysis of the impact of churchmanship on the operation of workhouses

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[806] See Levene, 'Children, Childhood and the Workhouse'

certainly warrants further investigation. In addition there is undoubtedly the need for a wider national picture to be established and the role of religion within welfare more generally to be reappraised. Of course there are some things that may never be able to be tested, for example it may never be possible to trace a child educated and brought up in the workhouse to a pious adulthood, except possibly through conversion narratives. Nevertheless, religion certainly deserves a much bigger place in our view of eighteenth century welfare than has previously been allowed.

Although this thesis has demonstrated the importance of religion in the operation of the Westminster workhouses throughout the eighteenth century, these case studies are not necessarily illustrative of the national picture. The nationwide scope of the SPCK, and its endeavours to generate a coherent national movement, certainly indicates that it should be. Nevertheless, more studies of institutions across the country are required in order to conclude definitively that the instillation of Anglican piety was important to the running of the parochial workhouse movement in England during the eighteenth century. In particular, analysis would be welcome of those workhouses in more rural parishes where the challenges faced by these localised societies may have impacted the role and importance of religion in the workhouse.

There is a need to explain fully the SPCK's change in focus from the mid-eighteenth century, using a wider range of sources to interrogate the relationship between religion, the SPCK and the workhouse in this period. This thesis suggests that since its agenda was being implemented in these workhouses there was little need for a more active role; it however needs to be underpinned by more detailed and definitive evidence. There is a range of other sources from the SPCK archives that may shed more light on this development including accounts and correspondence.

Similarly, analysis of the impact of Gilbert's 1782 Act on the role of religion in these institutions is also necessary, since it altered the types of inmates workhouses catered for. Following on from this, the period building up to the passage of the New Poor Law in 1834, and indeed the role and importance of religion in New Poor Law institutions as compared to that in Old Poor Law workhouses warrants consideration. Consequently, this thesis opens avenues to future research in related areas. However, this, at least in part, was the intention: to point to the importance of religion in histories of welfare and the need for more research in this field, in order to re-enchant views of eighteenth-century welfare.

Finally, the success of the religious reforming agenda, and in terms of its impact on the lives of inmates also remains in question. Indeed there is little evidence in terms of the workhouse committee minutes at least, of the impression made by mandatory religious observance and education on inmates. There are no entries expressing whether paupers responded to religious instruction, for example. The few glimpses we do have are where the parish made a specific order in response to the actions of paupers, for example when it was ordered that children should be punished for not attending religious instruction in the house.[807] This entry indicates that children were absenting themselves from instruction, although the specific reason for this can only be assumed. Thus, a much broader range of sources would be required in order to investigate this, if indeed it is even possible to do so due to the lack of available sources detailing the lives of the poor in this period, aside from poor law records.

Hitchcock has suggested that the ideals of the SPCK, as might be expected, received more sympathy from poor law administrators than the inmates they sought to

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[807] For this specific order see Chapter Three.

target.[808] The SPCK minutes noted for example that the Plymouth correspondent had complained that some of the SPCK's tracts against swearing would be better used if they were bound together with others, 'for he has heard that some of them which he distributed among the seamen in the Hospital, served them to light their pipes with'.[809] Evidently some adult paupers did not exhibit a positive response to reforming efforts. Yet, if we revisit Robert Blincoe, the orphan apprentice raised in the workhouse at St. Pancras, we see that efforts to instill an active and genuine piety seemed to have had an effect on him, and he took his religious education very seriously, at least as a child.[810] Blincoe recorded in his memoir (taken down and edited when he was an adult) that when he was six years old the workhouse children were saying their catechism, when it was his turn to repeat the Fifth Commandment 'honour thy father and thy mother' he suddenly burst into tears and felt 'greatly distressed'. When he was asked why he was upset he recalled saying 'I cry because I cannot obey one of God's commandments, I know not either my father or my mother, I cannot therefore be a good child and honour my parents'.[811] He may simply just have been missing his parents, but the fact that he then put this into a religious framework is an important testament to the religious education children received in the workhouse. Whether this God-fearing attitude lasted into adulthood remains unclear, but it perhaps illustrates why the SPCK was keen to target the young. Based on the complaint of the SPCK correspondent about adults using religious tracts to light their pipes rather than educate themselves, it was right to do so. There is clearly scope for more work in this area, supplementing evidence of the reforming intentions and activity of both the SPCK and workhouse committees in order to generate a more

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[808] Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.256
[809] SPCK.MS A1/1, partly reproduced in Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse', p.256
[810] See Chapter Five.
[811] Brown, *A Memoir of Robert Blincoe*, p.9

comprehensive view of the religious reform of workhouse inmates in the eighteenth century. This thesis in 're-enchanting' interpretations of the eighteenth-century Westminster workhouses presents a platform for putting religion back into the history of welfare.

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