

Shropshire in 1656, went to Oxford, was ordained and given a living in Warwickshire, and then came to London on the strength of reputation acquired by published lectures. In April 1696 he was invited by the Bishop of London to go out as his commissary to the colony of Maryland, and he started in December 1699. By that time the S.P.C.K. had been founded and was at work; and either before Bray went out or after his return—for there seems to be some confusion of dates—he planned the S.P.G. He made his visit to Maryland conditional upon being given assistance in providing parochial libraries for the ministers who should be sent to the colony and, as he was leaving England, he founded libraries at the seaport towns at which his ship called, Gravesend, Deal and Plymouth. His design was to institute lending libraries for the clergy both at home and overseas, and together with it he contemplated providing schools for negroes, for he held that civilising coloured men was a necessary preliminary to their conversion. In later life his philanthropic interest in prisoners and unemployed brought him into touch with Oglethorpe. His intense zeal for providing libraries for the clergy meant that in his view ignorance was the mother of vice and knowledge the highroad to Christianity. Thus the S.P.C.K. started with promotion of knowledge in its title and in the forefront of its work, and with education of poor children—the provision of charity schools in the true sense—engrossing in early days the main energies of its founders. A circular letter, which they issued in 1699, attributed the decay of religion and the increase of vice in great