

**Conrad Bröske, *Hofprediger* in Offenbach: The Life
and World of a Late-Seventeenth Century German
Court Preacher and Eschatologue**

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***The Role of Protestant Court Preachers in Germany during the
Seventeenth Century***

This paper considers the role and influence of Conrad Bröske (1660-1713) as First Preacher in Offenbach, and as Court Preacher and Inspector of Schools for the Landeskirche of Graf Johann Philipp of Ysenburg-Offenbach from 1686 to 1713.¹ Bröske may have had radical chiliast ideas but he was not a separatist; he saw his place being to remain in the state church and to work for renewal of church and society. An understanding of Bröske's social, cultural and religious roles and influence on the Graf is basic to appreciating the impact of the man and the context of his eschatological thought.

The nature of Bröske's work as Court Preacher is best understood when seen against the backdrop of broader social trends as they affected German clergy in the seventeenth century. To this end, one can do no better than consult the recent study of German Court Preachers by Luise Schorn-Schütte,² one of the first scholarly monographs to investigate this leading middle-class group in the transition from the early modern to the modern period.³ Schorn-Schütte examines the "political and social position" of this leading new middle-class group in the courtly society of the seventeenth century. Her study focusses on three regions of Germany

in this period: Hessen-Kassel, Hessen-Darmstadt and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.

Schorn-Schütte notes that the office of Court Preacher did not exist in Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. The presuppositions for the office include the relative autonomy of German princes and courts and the right they had after the Peace of Augsburg and of Westphalia to determine the religious confession of their realm. Also important was the widespread assumption in early modern Europe that “all the measures and undertakings of a godly prince, not least of which the political, must be done according to the Word of God.” These two factors explain the “unusually great significance which the evangelical Court Preacher attained in the sixteenth and seventeenth century not only for ecclesiastical life but also for political life.”⁴

Schorn-Schütte formulates the scope of her study regarding the Court Preacher as follows:

At the close of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. the Court Preacher assumed (*wahrgenommen hat*) definite political functions and so stood in the very centre of political decision-making in the early modern period, the Court. The loss of this involvement among clergy after the turn of the seventeenth century points to a basic problem in the social and political significance of the class of preacher in the early modern state, *one which will be considered in what follows* . . . In speaking of the office of Court Preacher as well as in speaking of the members of other leading groups among the clergy, one speaks of a social group which in some measure personified the change from Early Modern to Modern.⁵

The great significance which the evangelical Court Preacher attained in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. in political life was grounded in the direct and close relation the Preacher typically had with the prince.⁶ The godly prince of the outgoing sixteenth century had needed the Court Preacher as his personal adviser in church-political questions. Not surprisingly, the method of appointment of the Court Preacher was similar in all three territories examined by Schorn-Schütte, with the Court Preacher generally being appointed entirely and directly by the Lord in that region.⁷

However, with the end of the Thirty Years War there came a change with regard to the role and office of Court Preacher. “In the . . . period of

Absolutism the territorial Lord sought, if not confessionally neutral at least tolerant theologians who accepted the territorial Lord's right to interfere in Church matters."⁸ The Court Preacher's role changed to an instructional function, concentrating especially on the prince's duty of service to his subjects, and to a modelling function within the Court.⁹ There is "a trend in all three of the territories being compared here."¹⁰ Schorn-Schütte asks "how far the withdrawal from a counsellor function [*Berater*] to a moral instructor [*Mahner*] is also to be considered a withdrawal from the political sphere."

Two reasons are suggested for the change in social status of the Court Preacher after the mid-seventeenth century: first, the loss of political function lead to the determination of a new social field of action: the political adviser [*Berater*] is replaced by the instructor [*Mahner*] in the background without direct political influence. This process of differentiation in the completion of professionalization is probably not limited to the Court Preachers. Second, the leading social group of Protestant pastors took on the character of a profession in the second half of the seventeenth century. "Social origin, standardized education, standardized social place of business as well as normatively controlled self-understanding are the categories with whose help . . . a social group can be described as a profession."¹¹

Schorn-Schütte then addresses the social origin and prestige of Court Preachers in the seventeenth century. She finds that noble origin was rare for clergy. The office of Protestant clergy was not of interest to the nobility. As a reason for this, Wunder points to the reduction in social significance of the class of preacher after the Reformation. This was due to the fact that the majority of territorial preachers were paid extremely poorly.¹² "The economically stressed situation of Protestant clergy was a problem since the Reformation." In the late-sixteenth century the Court Preacher came in at about third place in income after the upper officials of the central administration, and those of the Court. A typical Court Preacher's salary might be: 70 florins of gold; 41 quarter of grain; 6 animals (pigs), 1 Fuder (1,000 litres) of beer. "This seems to have remained unchanged right into the first decades of the seventeenth century." One Court Preacher, however, complained that without a raise in salary he simply could not make ends meet "in the current changing and costly times." He then received as additional salary: free lodging, 2 Ohm (300 l.) Wine, 1 piece of beef, 10 Klafter (30 cubic meters) of wood, and

1 Fuder (1,000 litres) of coal.¹³

Insight into the “ideal self-understanding of the Court Preacher” in the seventeenth century can be gained from the nine rules which Polycarp Leyser formulated in 1605 in his well-known *Hofpredigerspiegel*. He spoke of the Court Preacher’s central duty being to keep some distance from Court; otherwise, it would be impossible for him to fulfill his task of admonishing its members to a Christian way of life. “All the rules aimed at an exemplary life in the Court Preacher.”¹⁴ Leyser’s 9 rules were as follows:

- i) the duty of pure preaching without regard for the person;
- ii) honourable, Christian way of life in the Court Preacher himself;
- iii) modesty with the income that is granted to the Court Preacher;
- iv) obedience and being discreet, truthful and honest in dealing with rulers, so far as humanly possible;
- v) restricting oneself to one’s own calling;
- vi) strict observance of church ordinances;
- vii) turning aside all gifts and bestowments, and service to fellow men out of love of neighbour;
- viii) each should receive the honour due him; never denouncing the prince, but being reserved in criticism, excepting the regulations of the 10 commandments, which should be brought to mind;
- ix) patience in facing events and others.¹⁵

Schorn-Schütte summarizes her investigation of the political and social position of the office of Court Preacher in the seventeenth century under the following points. First, she observes the existence of two phases of development: the first phase corresponds to “the completely political function of the office . . . as a protector of social norms, while at the same time attaining a low level of professionalization.” The second phase was marked by the professionalization of the office as a middle-class profession. “The close of the seventeenth century saw the overcoming of confessional narrowness and this led to the loss of the political, moral functions and the beginning of the loss of the social function of the office of Court Preacher.”¹⁶ “The generalizing of worldly values after the 30 Years War and resulting multi-confessionalism meant also the end of an accepted special role for the class of preachers.”¹⁷

Second, the author observes differing degrees of institutionalization of the state church and professionalization of clergy within the three

regions. Institutionalization attained a higher standard in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in the first half of the seventeenth century than in the two Hessens. As a consequence the political and social position of the leading clergy in Hessen, above all of the Court Preachers, preserved its personal character longer than in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. For that reason the political sphere of action of the individual Court Preachers remained in their hands longer.¹⁸

Schorn-Schütte's study leads one to ask whether Bröske's role was that of a *Berater* or *Mahner*. Was he a personal, social and political counsellor to his Count, or rather an instructor in the background without direct political influence? Did Bröske wield political, moral and social functions in the Court of Johann Philipp II, or not? Did Bröske's role preserve its personal character and political sphere of action as it did in other regions of Hessen?

This paper argues that as Court Preacher, Conrad Bröske did in fact exercise "significant influence in the court." It is clear that Bröske and the Graf enjoyed a close personal relationship of esteem and trust.¹⁹ The paper demonstrates this by investigating and documenting Bröske's many social involvements, including those of adviser and confidante to the Count, Superintendent of Schools, and Publishing overseer and Censor of his Count's printing press. Bröske indeed served as *Berater* or intimate counsellor and adviser to his Graf, not merely as a distant *Mahner* or moral conscience in the background.

Bröske as Favoured Adviser and Confidante to the Count

"The centers of action, the so-called 'residence cities' (*Residenzstädte*) of the princes, grew rapidly during the seventeenth century." "In almost every principedom a substantial proportion of the princely revenues was spent on the court. Magnificent palaces for the princes and stately residences for the court nobility, sumptuous clothes and decorations, elaborate ceremonies and lavish entertainments all were intended to enhance a ruler's 'representation' of himself and his dynasty." "The court, far more than the military, offered opportunities for the industrious and ambitious."²⁰

Appointed by Graf Johann Philipp of Ysenburg-Offenbach in 1686, Bröske served as Court Preacher from the young age of 26 years until his death at age 53. Besides being Court Preacher, Bröske also held the office

of First Preacher in the new city residence of Offenbach. Second Preacher from 1687-1698 was his relative Johann Christoph Bröske, and from 1698 until 1706 his own brother Johann Hermann Bröske, a student of Heinrich Horch.²¹

After two years of joint rule, in 1687 Graf Johann Philipp divided his father's inheritance with his brother Wilhelm Moritz. That left him with a territory of mainly agricultural land that included about 50 houses and 600 inhabitants. He made Offenbach his official residence. "In order to stimulate the economy of the region, repopulate the land, build up his residence city and promote trade, from 1698 on the Graf welcomed Huguenot refugees from France and the southern Netherlands. As well he granted to German refugees protection and residence without regard to their confession or religious opinions."²²

Besides these political and economic reasons, the Graf's personal religious convictions, developed under the influence of his Court Preacher Conrad Bröske, help to account for the guarantee of toleration that he extended to these migrating groups.²³ The Graf evidently shared a lively interest in Bröske's eschatological speculations, as well as sharing his Philadelphian tolerance for a spectrum of theological persuasions. Bröske was obviously a key figure in the inter-play of political, economic and religious factors which made Offenbach an early centre of religious toleration in Germany and a refuge for persecuted radicals.

Clearly Bröske and the Count enjoyed a close and trusting relationship. "How close this trust relationship was is evident in that in 1692 the Count gave his own half sister Luise as wife to Bröske his Court Preacher, going against every convention of his class."²⁴ Their close relation is further illustrated in a letter Bröske wrote on 24 February 1705:

As long as by God's providence I have been in this land, to my great comfort and pleasure I have found Your worship to be well-disposed towards me, with so much favour, that not only was Your Worship the first who, informing my blessed father, recommended me and gave me the gracious opportunity to come to Offenbach and to preach; but even to the present time you are among those who . . . encourage me for all sorts of reasons not to move from here . . .²⁵

Written some twenty years after taking up his post, one cannot imagine a more positive working relationship between Lord and Pastor.

Further evidence of the favour Bröske found with the Count can be seen in the grant of land that he received from the Count. The extent of Bröske's goods and land can be estimated from the statement he prepared shortly after receiving a call to serve as Second Preacher at the Reformed Church in Elberfeld, near Düsseldorf. Dated 10 December 1704, the document provided "a list of Court Preacher Conrad Bröske's property in Ysenburg . . . as follows": it then listed 33 Morgen of arable land, and 25 Morgen of meadow land.²⁶ In all, this grant of 58 Morgen of land would amount to about 50 acres.²⁷

This land grant is confirmed by a document from the hand of the Graf Johann Philipp, dated 30 December 1704:

We, Johann Philipp Count of Ysenburg and Büdingen, testify and hereby confess for myself and my heirs in the County of Ysenburg, that . . . in recognition of our Court Preacher, our beloved and honourable Conrad Bröske . . . and of his office, which he has managed so well among us . . . with care and untiring effort, zeal, profit and devotion till now, and God willing will do so in future . . . that he may have, possess and enjoy the below noted cultivated land and meadows within this region . . . most assuredly from now and for futurity . . . and be in all respects free and exempt from me and my heirs . . . and from all customary privileges, terms and ordinances.²⁸

Two months later, in a letter dated 24 February 1705, Bröske acknowledged the generous property provision he had received:

I am assured by others that Your gracious Lordship would be pleased should I remain here [in Offenbach] . . . As well, your Grace has consented, with graciously-provided clarification, to confirm and empower with his own signature and imprinted Count's seal the freedom of my few properties given to me by my glorious Lord at his pleasure some years ago and now also confirmed in writing. A few days ago he provided for me a *Freyheitsbrieff* for my own and my family's use . . . Although in my own person no proper reciprocation can be offered, much less given, nevertheless I may dare to offer for your person and whole house my continued and zealous prayers to God, the true recompenser, for both your bodily and your spiritual well-being.²⁹

The Count's actions obviously pleased Bröske greatly, giving him clear title to the land, and the ability to pass on his estate to his children.

Bröske as Superintendent of Schools

Bröske probably found his most demanding calling to be the establishment of schools in the region. In his brief autobiography Bröske noted:

Despite various calls to other places, being invited to be Pastor both in Elberfeld in the ducal region of Bergen and also in Frankfurt am Main, [I] have not forsaken the good establishments undertaken in the churches and schools in Offenbach . . . but would rather help with their advancement than take up another calling.³⁰

These establishments were a long time in coming, given the frail economic basis on which to build in this part of Germany in the post-Thirty Years War period.

A recent study provides a fine portrait of the state of education throughout the German Empire at this time. In the period of reconstruction after the Thirty Years War it was generally recognized that "improved education for all strata of the population was an important key to economic growth, greater general prosperity and enhanced fiscal yields." "Initially . . . it was in the smaller states, and especially those of central Germany, where the first significant attention was given to school improvement; here, the traditions of pious, patriarchal rulership combined with the absence of expensive and distracting foreign policy and military concerns . . ." to allow princes to focus on school improvement. This is evident in the regions of Gotha, Brunswick, *Hesse*, Hanau and Magdeburg. Here "princes promulgated comprehensive school ordinances and provided for supervisory inspections and other means to insure the physical establishment of schools as well as adequate standards of curriculum and instruction."³¹

Typically, religion was the most important subject of instruction, from the beginning right through to the intermediate stages of education.

In the rural or village parish schools, the education of peasant children consisted almost entirely of reading and reciting the catechism and other simple religious texts . . . In the urban Latin grammar schools,

religion still remained the substantively most important subject and it was not until students entered the universities that it was possible to choose a curriculum not primarily oriented towards religion.³²

The school facilities and resources were often minimal.

While every parish had a school, that did not necessarily mean a separate structure or one in an even reasonable state of repair. Often enough, school convened in a rented room or in the home of the pastor, sexton or artisan to whom the unrewarding task of playing teacher fell . . . Schools often had no books and frequently neither did the children, whose parents resented . . . the expense of books and of *Schulgeld* – the pittance paid to the schoolmaster – but also the absence of their children from working farms where every hand was needed for the survival of the family.³³

Urban schools were generally better than those in the country. In the cities there were typically two levels of formal instruction: the “German” schools (primary schools) where the youngest children were sent to learn reading, writing and perhaps some arithmetic, along with Bible and catechism; and “Latin” schools, where emphasis on religion was combined with teaching a command of Latin whereby students could gain admission to a university at the end of instruction, usually at about age sixteen. Here the teachers were often “theology graduates waiting for parish livings . . .”³⁴

Sommerlad describes Offenbach in the 1690s and the situation that Conrad Bröske faced:

The region was at that time small and insignificant. But in its favourable location for business and trade, as well as in the great privileges which Count Johann Philipp granted to all new foreign immigrants, were to be found the essential conditions for it to flourish. Soon the population multiplied . . . and new streets had to be laid out, and various new professions and vocations were required. And a good school for up to date higher education, alongside the already existing common school, could no longer be put off. This was recognized by the Court Preacher at the time, Conrad Bröske, a man who deserves a prominent place in the history of Offenbach schools . . .³⁵

Hans-Jürgen Schrader speaks of Bröske's "significant influence in the court and position of unlimited power in directing the region's churches and schools." It was Bröske's efforts that "essentially produced the cultural establishment of the region" (*dessen Aktivitäten den kulturellen Aufbau des Landes wesentlich gefördert haben*).³⁶ This is especially evident in Bröske's efforts to establish a Latin School.

When Bröske came to Offenbach in 1686 and assumed the office of Court Preacher, he made it his main concern to establish a respectable educational institution for the region. "Graf Johann Philipp supported him in these efforts most enthusiastically, but due to the difficult circumstances with which his land had been afflicted by the Thirty Years War and which were still evident, he was unable to provide the means in sufficient measure for establishing and maintaining the planned-for school . . ." As Adviser and Inspector of schools in the small Landeskirche of Ysenburg-Offenbach county, Bröske took up the task of personally raising the financial resources for the establishing of a Latin school in Offenbach. To that end he made fund-raising trips on two different occasions on behalf of the Graf.³⁷

In September 1690 Bröske went on a fund-raising mission to Holland and England, equipped with an official letter of commission from the Graf. Count Johann Philipp's letter reflected on the importance of good schools to the life of a nation:

Schools and gymnasia are like . . . a nursery garden which serves the Church and the State to such a degree that everything blossoms and flourishes in the State when the schools are in good condition. For the hope for everything in later life depends upon a good education, which forms the foundation of the State.³⁸

Philipp then noted the destructive results of the Thirty Years' War throughout his region, and the lack of available funds for projects such as schools. "In this local area many Reformed churches and schools have fallen into disuse on account of the war."³⁹

Bröske hoped to find support for the school among friends he had made on academic visits to these countries some five years earlier. Unfortunately Bröske's efforts in England met with limited success. Bröske was denied permission by the Bishop of London even to pursue public fundraising, because England was already facing requests from so many

sides. With the lifting of the Edict of Nantes, French Reformed refugees had arrived on England's shores requiring a great amount of support. Bröske did obtain one private gift of some 2 1/2 pounds sterling from a London merchant named Cook.⁴⁰ In addition, Bröske was pleasantly surprised when informed that due to the same Bishop's mediation, Queen Mary, wife of King William III, agreed to a grant of 30 pounds sterling annually from her own private charitable fund in support of the project, a grant that was paid out regularly up to the year 1716.⁴¹

At home, the Offenbach city councillor Matthew Stock designated the following annual revenues to the school: 12 cords of wood; all funds from marriage and baptism licenses; a portion of the registration fees for apprenticeship papers; all taxes arising from dance and game concessions; half of the 10 taler penalties for fornicators (if they preferred not to spend two weeks in jail); 2 taler payments from all Jews who were allowed to set up businesses in Offenbach; in addition, 18 florins annual payments by Jewish synagogues in Offenbach for permission to hold synagogue worship.⁴²

With this support in place, the school was opened in May 1691 shortly after Bröske's return from England. It was evidently a very modest enterprise, for it was accommodated in what had been the Preacher's home, Schloßstraße 56, refurbished for purposes of instruction. On 26 May 1691 Graf Johann Philipp appointed Heinrich Kuhaupt, a theologian from Ehringen in Niederhessen, as the first school Rector. He was granted an annual salary of 150 florins, as well as free lodging in the school house and the right to gather free fire wood in his ruler's forests. The school was established as a "free school," so the Rector could not collect payment from students, although honoraria for additional private instruction or tutoring would be allowed.⁴³

Because the school had taken over the Preacher's house in 1691, a new residence was built for the Court Preacher Bröske in Herrnstraße number 41. In 1708 a factory on Herrngasse, built by a Frenchman Simony de Tournay, was purchased for 800 florins to serve as new premises for the school. It was remodelled and named the Latin School.⁴⁴

The school, however, continued to face financial pressures. In 1691 only ten pounds Sterling were received from England instead of the thirty that had been promised, and in 1692 only fifteen pounds arrived. To address this situation, Bröske made yet another trip to England in 1693. This trip occasioned some illness on Bröske's part so that upon his return

he was unable to report immediately to the Graf about its success.

After I returned I should have provided a complete account of my accomplishments. However, I came down with a particularly severe illness on the return trip . . . so that I had to be helped from wagon to wagon, and from ship to ship . . . The illness still bothers me, so that I dare not as yet get properly dressed and get up, much less write a proper letter [to you]. Which brings me to the question: how might I in some way be able to present my report, which demands both necessity and haste, through someone else in a suitable place? But because there is something important concerning our *Schulgeld*, I would respectfully request a face to face meeting. As I would not be able to come into the castle in my nightgown [*Schlaffrock*], which serves me best in my illness, I would humbly suggest the Church as the place where this discussion could take place. I put all this to the disposal of my honourable Lord, your servant Conrad Bröske. Offenbach, 18 September 1693.⁴⁵

Evidently Bröske's second trip to England was successful, for upon his return a total of forty-five pounds sterling were received from England for the school, with fifteen pounds as back payment.⁴⁶

Under Kuhaupt's rectorship the school thrived, and already in 1696 various pupils were promoted to "students." The Court Preacher Bröske held various scholarly lectures for these students over the course of a year, after which they went to University.⁴⁷ One scholar suggests that "Bröske established the reputation of the school by the scholarly lectures he held for students of more mature age."⁴⁸

In 1700 Bröske reflected some pride regarding his work in the schools in Offenbach: "through my efforts and care they have been so greatly improved from [the days of having just] one bad German school-master, so that they now have a Rector and two additional teachers, and the young people graduate with honour, going on to public [university] lectures."⁴⁹

Bröske as Overseer and Censor of his Count's Printing Press

Bröske felt great pride in doing whatever he could to promote the intellectual attainments of his beloved Hessen, and to advance the region's reputation as a place of scholarship. In April 1700 Bröske wrote Johann

Christoff Kalckhoff in praise of the latter's book in honour of "Hessen Gelehrte": "Your noble, devoted efforts in behalf of [Hessen] are greatly to be honoured. If I am indeed the least among those who in Hessen bear the name of scholar, I have nevertheless sought ever to work in such a way that my land at least might have no shame in me."⁵⁰

Seemingly at cross-purposes with Bröske's efforts in behalf of "Hessen Gelehrte" were his even more vigorous efforts to promote the writings and careers of various Philadelphian writers, individuals generally regarded by Orthodox Protestants as unbalanced heretics. Under Bröske's oversight as Censor, Offenbach became the publishing capital of the growing Philadelphian movement within Germany. The list of authors published by Bröske's press reads like a who's who of German radical Pietists and separatists: Johann Heinrich Horch (1652-1729), dismissed from his post as theology Professor in Herborn in February 1698; Johann Heinrich Reitz (1655-1720), deprived of his position as Court Preacher and Inspector of churches and schools for the County of Solms-Braunfels in 1697; Samuel König (1671-1750), dismissed from preaching in Bern, Switzerland on account of his chiliastic messages.⁵¹ In addition, the works of Johann Konrad Dippel, Johann Wilhelm Petersen, and Gottfried Arnold also appeared with the Offenbach imprint.⁵²

Schrader summarizes the significance of the Offenbach press: "The intellectual historical significance of the . . . press of de Launoy lies in that it made possible the continuous publication of heterodox and openly separatist writings, when such activity was not yet possible in other German states."⁵³

All this was . . . in the 1690s, a time when everywhere in Protestant Germany there was violent guerilla-warfare going on over the issue of Pietism . . . But most astounding was that here [in Offenbach] writings, which in such controversies normally would have appeared anonymously, here for the most part were brought to the market with the imprint of the territorial Court printer. Indeed, a rugged Separatist such as Heinrich Horch, recently dismissed from office, could here with a properly published tract including the author's name, publisher and place of publication accuse his Orthodox opponent of illegal intrigue, for the latter had published an anonymous pamphlet against him with falsified publication information.⁵⁴

Clearly the precondition for all this was "the certainty that the Offenbach

Court Preacher responsible for censorship . . . was Conrad Bröske, who himself . . . was a prolific propagandist and zealous organizer for the Philadelphian movement.”⁵⁵ The freedom Bröske enjoyed to promote such literature can be attributed in part to favourable political and economic conditions in the region. “In order to stimulate the economy of the region, repopulate the land, build up his residence city and promote trade, the Graf welcomed Huguenot refugees from France and the southern Netherlands. As well he granted to German refugees protection and residence without regard to their confession or religious opinions.”⁵⁶

The printer, Bonvventura de Launoy, of Huguenot extraction, first set up his press in Offenbach in 1685, having come from Frankfurt. An official document dated in Birstein, 19 March 1686, honoured de Launoy with the title, “Book printer to the Court of the Count of Ysenburg.” Because official printing work would hardly have supported de Launoy’s business, he was assured of additional revenues through exclusive rights to printing and selling the customary song and school books, “which he must give to the Censor on every occasion before printing along with the Ysenburg calendar.”⁵⁷ De Launoy operated the Offenbach printing press until his death in 1723.

De Launoy was a colourful figure. It is not clear whether he himself came to Offenbach as a result of persecution, or simply joined the Philadelphian circle upon his arrival. It clearly was by conviction that in the decade of the 1690s he printed almost exclusively books by radical Pietist groups in Offenbach, and even sought to sell them, at his own cost, outside of the County. His business competitors accused him of “enthusiastic Pietist radicalism in the highest degree” (“Quakerischen, Enthusiastischen und Pietistischen Schwermerey, im höchsten Grad . . .”)⁵⁸ Besides the accusation of illegally publishing heretical material, they also accused him of improper business practices, including trying to break into the Frankfurt market “by charging ruinously low prices, and benefitting from the protection of Pietist minded people in high places.” And although he put his own name and publishing house on the title-page of books like Reitz’s *Historie*, “careful examination reveals throughout the book the use of differing kinds of paper, vignettes, and even the re-beginning of pagination part way through the book, so that in fact only a small part of such books was actually printed in Offenbach.” Competitors portrayed the Offenbach printing house as, “an inefficient *Winkelpresse* (hick press), whose owner not only brought in all kinds of senseless, obscure and illegal works, but

also continually sought with aggressive business methods to break into the privileged and protected market of his out-of-town colleagues.”⁵⁹

In examining Bröske’s work as “censor,” at least three things are clear: first, most of these Offenbach publications dealt with such matters as mystical, spiritualist, chiliastic and speculative eschatological themes; second, these themes were typically addressed above all by Bröske and his brother Johann Hermann, and by his Reformed radical Pietist friends and acquaintances such as Heinrich Horch, Johann Henrich Reitz and Samuel König along with Gottfried Arnold, Johann Conrad Dippel, Johann Wilhelm Petersen and Jodocus van Lodenstein; and third, there is a clear focussing of publication activity in the years 1697 to 1704 precisely when “the Philadelphian strivings in Offenbach attained their greatest radiating power.”⁶⁰ Sixteen of Bröske’s twenty-five publications appeared between 1698 and 1703. About twenty-five out of 104 publications were produced directly by Bröske himself, and another six by his Second Preachers Johann Hermann and Johann Christoph Bröske. Six came from the pen of Heinrich Horch and six more from Johann Heinrich Reitz. The latter’s work, *Historie Der Wiedergebohrnen* in three parts (1698-1701), was by far the best-selling book put out by the Offenbach press.

Conclusion

Bröske exercised “significant influence in the court and a position of unlimited power in directing the region’s churches and schools.” It was Bröske’s efforts that “essentially produced the cultural establishment of the region” (*dessen Aktivitäten den kulturellen Aufbau des Landes wesentlich gefördert haben*).⁶¹ It is clear that Bröske and the Graf enjoyed a close personal relationship of esteem and trust.⁶² Bröske indeed served as *Berater* or intimate counsellor and adviser to his Graf, not merely as a distant *Mahner* or moral conscience in the background.

Endnotes

1. I wish to thank both Hans Schneider for his help in obtaining crucial documents during a memorable visit to the Grafresidenz in Birstein, Hessen, and Jens Zimmerman, my colleague at Trinity Western University, for his help in reading Bröske’s letters.

2. Luise Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," *Bürgerliche Eliten in den Niederlanden und in Nordwestdeutschland*, ed. H. Schilling and H. Diederiks (Köln/Wien: Boehlau, 1985), 275-336.
3. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 282.
4. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 289.
5. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 279-281.
6. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 290; and Hartmut Lehmann, *Das Zeitalter des Absolutismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 31.
7. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 290.
8. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 300.
9. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 301.
10. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 303.
11. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 306ff.
12. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 316.
13. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 321ff.
14. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 324.
15. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 324 n. 200.

16. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 326ff.
17. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 326ff.
18. Schorn-Schütte, "Prediger an Protestantischen Höfen der Frühneuzeit," 326ff. The precondition for this was the confessional opposition between the nobility and the *Landgraf*. The vacuum could be filled by the higher clergy as well as by the properly appointed officials of the Burger class.
19. Hans Jürgen Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 133. Schrader speaks of the "close trust relationship" between the two men, evidence by the fact that in 1692 the Graf gave his own half-sister to Bröske as his wife, going against all conventions of class. Schrader has, with good reason, described Bröske as having "exercised significant influence in the Court and through a position of unlimited power in guiding Church and School in the region was able to exercise far-reaching control of its religious political life."
20. Richard L. Gawthrop, "The Social Role of Seventeenth-Century German Territorial States," *Germania Illustrata*, ed. Andrew C. Fix and Susan C. Karant-Nunn (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1992), 254.
21. Wilhelm Diehl, *Pfarrer- und Schulmeisterbuch für die hessen-darmstädtischen Souveränitätslande: Hestia Sacra* (Darmstadt, 1930), IV: 394.
22. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133.
23. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133.
24. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133.
25. Bröske letter, 24 February 1705, located in the private archive of the Graf in the Birstein Schloß, Offenbach N 11621, 1704-1795.
26. Manuscript located in the private archive of the Graf in the Birstein Schloß, Offenbach N 11621, 1704-1795.

27. According to Langenscheidt, one Morgen represents a “measure of land varying from 0.6 to 0.9 acres.” Dr. Otto Springer, her., *Langenscheidts Enzyklopädisches Wörterbuch der Englischen und Detuschen Sprache, Teil II Deutsch-Englisch, 2. Band, 6. Auflage* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1992), 1100. According to Grimm: 1) “Ein Morgen sei so viel, als ein mann an einem morgen bearbeiten könne . . . Der Pflüger theilt nach seinen morgenwerken die erdfäche in festbegränzte morgen.” 2) “ein morgen lands ist in der mark 10 ruthen breit, 30 ruthen lang” (*Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, Bd. 6*, Bearb. von Dr. Moriz Heyne [Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1885], col. 2563).
28. Manuscript located in the private archive of the Graf in the Birstein Schloß under: Offenbach N 11621, 1704-1795. “Wir Johann Philipp Graff zu Ysenburg und Büdingen, uhrkunden und bekennen hiermit für uns, unsere Erben und Nachkommen an der Graffschaft Ysenburg, daß wir unseren Hofprediger und lieben getrauen, Ehre Conrad Brüßken, Louysen, geborner von Eysenberg, dessen Ehelicher Hausfraues, und Ihren Leibs descendenten Mann und weiblichen Geschlechts in Ansehung seines Ampts, das er so wohl bey unsers in Gott ruhenden Herrn Vatters, dann auch unsere Regierung mit rühmlicher . . . und Sorgfalt, auch unverdrosenenem grosem Fleiß, Eiffer, Nutzen und Erbauung, biß hieher verwaltet, und künfftighin, ob Gott will! also verwalten kann und will, die besonders gnad gethen, und diejenige Äcker und Wiesen in hießiger Terminey, welche er auff seinen eigenen Kosten von . . . gerettet und umgemacht . . . Wiesen und Äcker, samtt . . . von nun an und zu ewigen Tagen, allerdings frey haben, besitzen und genießen . . . sondern von solchem allem und absolute frey und exempt seyen, und hier wieder, weder von uns selbst noch von den Unserigen, über kurz oder lang auff keinerley weiß oder . . . gekrämelet werden sollen . . . Wir verzeihen und begeben uns auch aller Exemptionen, Privilegien, Pacten . . . Satz und Ordnungen, gewonheit und gebräuchen, die sonsten insgemeine oder bey Unserm Gräffl. Hauß und besonder, bereits eingeführt seyen, oder hiernachs eingeführet und zu . . . diesem unserer freywilligen concession allegiret und angezogen werden mögten.”
29. Bröske letter, 24 February 1705: “so bin ich doch durch andere versichert worden, daß es Ew. Hochgräfl. Gnad. wohl gerne sehen möchten, wannn ich hier bleib . . . worauß ich dann an meinem unterthänigsten Orte fließen muß, daß Ew. Hochgräfl. Gnad., die hier gebrauchte und beigebrachte argumenta vor guth halten, Und zu dem . . . auch die, von meines Gnädigst Herrn Hochgräfl. Gnaden, nun einige Jahre her, mir

bereits in genuß-gegebene, und nunmehr auch schriftlich bestätigte Freyheit meiner wenigen Güter, mit dero Gnädigst.-beygefügtten Erklärung, eigener Hand-Unterschrift und beygedrückten Hochgräfl. Siegel in allem Gnaden haben mit bestätigen und bekräftigen wollen; Allermaßen mir ein solcher Freyheitsbrieff vor wenig Tagen ungehändiget und zu meinem und der meinigem Gebrauch übergeben worden ist . . . obgleich durch meine Person keine Vergeltung kaum angebothen, vielweniger gegeben worden, dennoch Ew. Hochgräfl. Gnaden, vor dero eigenem Person und ganzen Hochgräfl. Hauses so wol leibl. als geistl. Wolforts, einen beständigen und eifferigem Bether zu Gott, dann rechten Vergelter, haben werden an dem, der sichs vor eine Hohe Gnad. sitzt.”

30. Conrad Bröske, “Brief, 10te April, 1700” (mit einer Selbstbiographie für ein Büch über die Gelehrten in Hessen). Ms Hass 103, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel.
31. John Gagliardo, *Germany under the Old Regime: 1600-1790* (London: Longman, 1991), 188.
32. Gagliardo, *Germany under the Old Regime*, 188.
33. Gagliardo, *Germany under the Old Regime*, 189.
34. Gagliardo, *Germany under the Old Regime*, 190.
35. Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach* (Offenbach: 1892), 18.
36. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133ff.
37. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 134.
38. Direktor Dr. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule* (Offenbach, 1912), 9.
39. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 10-11.
40. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 15ff.
41. P. Heber, *Geschichte der Stadt Offenbach* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag von Siegmund Schmerber, 1838), 176ff; Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach*, 19; and Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 17.

42. Heber, *Geschichte der Stadt Offenbach*, 176ff; Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach*, 19; and Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 12-14.
43. Heber, *Geschichte der Stadt Offenbach*, 177; Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach*, 20ff; and Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 16.
44. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 24ff. See also Heber, *Geschichte der Stadt Offenbach*, 177; and Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach*, 20ff.
45. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 17.
46. Buchhold, *Zur Geschichte der Offenbacher Lateinschule*, 17.
47. Sommerlad, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Schulwesens zu Offenbach*, 22.
48. Heber, *Geschichte der Stadt Offenbach*, 177.
49. Conrad Bröske, 10 April 1700, Selbstbiographie für ein Büch über die Gelehrten in Hessen. Ms Hass 103, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel.
50. Bröske letter, 10 April 1700, located in the private archive of the Graf in the Birstein Schloß, Offenbach N 11621, 1704-1795.
51. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 132; and Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 102.
52. Hans Schneider, "Der Radikale Pietismus," *Geschichte des Pietismus, Bd. 1, Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum fröhlichen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 410.
53. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 140.
54. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 131.
55. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 131ff.

56. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133.
57. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 135.
58. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 135, 138.
59. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 136-138.
60. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 158ff.
61. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133ff.
62. Schrader, *Literaturproduktion und Büchermarkt des radikalen Pietismus*, 133. Schrader speaks of the “close trust relationship” between the two men, evidence by the fact that in 1692 the Graf gave his own half-sister to Bröske as his wife, going against all conventions of class. Schrader has, with good reason, described Bröske as having “exercised significant influence in the Court and through a position of unlimited power in guiding Church and School in the region was able to exercise far-reaching control of its religious political life.”

