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## **‘Unveiling the Anonymous Philanthropist: Charity in the Nineteenth Century’**

**Sarah Flew**

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In 1902 the magazine of the East London Church Fund recounted a curious tale regarding an anonymous donation received through the post. The letter enclosing the anonymous donation read:

On Saturday last, as I was in Clifden Road, a working man jumped off his bicycle, came up and said, ‘Mr A— — I think’ and then put 5/6 into my hand, with the remark ‘I’ve been told to give this to the East London Church Fund.’ I asked – ‘Who is it from?’ And the reply was – ‘Never you mind.’ The same answer was all I could get when I asked the man’s name. However I struggled with the man a little longer – ‘Who is to have the receipt?’ ‘Never mind about no receipt.’ So in despair, I suggested ‘John Brown.’ ‘That’ll do,’ he said, and rode off. I never saw the man before. He was a man about 36. Will you kindly send me a receipt for ‘John Brown,’ in case I see my mysterious friend again.<sup>1</sup>

Anecdotes, such as this, highlight the intriguing nature of anonymous philanthropy. We will never know who ‘John Brown’ was or why he gave this sum to the East London Church Fund. However, it is possible to unveil the identities and motivations of some anonymous philanthropists through entries in charity minute books and through the pseudonyms that donors chose to represent their identity. These pseudonyms often reflect the donor’s relationship with the charitable society and express their motivational basis. Such descriptors give an insight into the hidden private nature of philanthropy and are at odds with the public and self-serving aspect of charitable giving often highlighted by historians.

The nineteenth century, with its spectacular growth in the number of voluntary organizations, was undoubtedly a great philanthropic age. A letter to the editor of *The Times*, in 1884, reflected upon the ‘immense ocean of charity’ at work in the metropolis.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the periodical *The Philanthropist* suggested that the metropolis could be better named ‘Philanthropis’.<sup>3</sup> Various charitable directories, such as *The Classified Directory to the Metropolitan Charities* and Herbert Fry’s *Royal Guide to the London Charities*, detailed the millions of pounds raised annually by charities at work in metropolis; the 1885 edition of *The Classified Directory to the Metropolitan Charities* reported that the 1103 charities operating in the city had an annual income of £4,447,436.<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, in reporting this fact, asserted that the income of these London charities was greater than the national budgets of the Swiss Confederation, Denmark, Portugal and Sweden.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not this claim was true, it is certain that charity was a pervasive force in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> *East London Church Chronicle*, 14.1 (Lady Day 1902), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 14 April 1884, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *The Philanthropist*, 1.1 (January 1882), 6. *The Philanthropist* (1882–1911) called itself ‘the representative Journal of Social Philanthropic Movements and Institutions’.

<sup>4</sup> The 1900 edition of Howe’s directory recorded the metropolitan charitable income as having risen to £6,431,062. *The Classified Directory to the Metropolitan Charities* was published by William F. Howe (1876–1919). *Herbert Fry’s Royal Guide to the London Charities* was published (1863–1942).

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 9 January 1885, p. 9.

Anonymous philanthropy made up a small but nonetheless significant proportion of this charitable revenue. Nevertheless, it has received little scholarly attention. David Owen, for example, makes no mention of anonymous donation in his classic study *English Philanthropy* (1965).<sup>6</sup> While there is a large body of work on nineteenth century philanthropy, it is fair to say that this historiography has largely ignored the economics of philanthropy.<sup>7</sup> Money is the life blood of any organization and nineteenth-century charities had to be well-managed if they were to maintain healthy levels of finance. Despite this, voluntary action historians have been reluctant to engage with the minutiae of financial detail found in balance sheets, general ledgers and cash books. Typically, research on philanthropy has concentrated on the ‘good works’ undertaken by organizations rather than exploring how these ‘good works’ were funded. There is, however, a wealth of unused material contained in financial ledgers and annual reports that can give scholars new insights into the life of voluntary organizations. Surprisingly, perhaps, documentation relating to anonymous gifts can yield something of the aims and intentions of philanthropic donors. In this article I focus on anonymous donation to uncover both individual motivation and the reason why some philanthropists shied away from public glory and recognition for their actions. The article therefore contrasts the public and private nature of the culture of philanthropy.

The case-study for this article is what can be termed ‘high-end’ philanthropy, of which London presents the ideal location. The metropolis involved the wealthy elite on a national scale. The upper-classes typically had a second home in London where they lived during the season and additionally, it contained an unrivalled concentration of wealthy Anglicans employed in professions such as finance and brewing.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the subscription lists of the London charities contained the names of the most prominent and wealthy individuals in the metropolis, with well-known names such as the first Duke of Westminster and Baroness Burdett-Coutts and lesser known names such as the bankers Francis Alexander Hamilton and Richard Foster. The article focuses on anonymous payments made to Anglican voluntary associations because the Anglican laity formed the concentration of wealth holders in the capital. This analysis of Anglican organizations is contrasted with anonymous giving to welfare associations.<sup>9</sup>

## **I. Rethinking the culture of giving**

In 1959 the historian W.K. Jordan argued that the motivation for philanthropic donation is unknowable: ‘What really animates our action when we subscribe to a hospital fund . . . ? This

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<sup>6</sup> D.E. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Flew, ‘Valuable Volumes: The Vital Importance of Financial Records to the Historical Researcher’, *Catholic Archives*, 32 (May 2012), 1–11; Sarah Flew, ‘Money Matters: The Neglect of Finance in the Historiography of Modern Christianity’, in *The Church in its Past*, ed. by Peter Clarke and Charlotte Methuen, *Studies in Church History*, 50 vols. (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2013) XLIX, 430–43.

<sup>8</sup> Most of the philanthropists listed in the directory *The Charitable Ten Thousand* (published in 1896 and 1904) have London addresses. See W.D. Rubinstein, *Men of Property: The Very Wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 61–63.

<sup>9</sup> The voluntary organizations (with their dates of establishment) discussed in this paper are: the Bishop of London’s Fund (1863); the East London Church Fund (1880); the London City Mission (1835); the London Diocesan Deaconess Institution (1861); the London Diocesan Home Mission (1857); the New Hospital for Women (1872); the Parochial Mission Women Association (1860); Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824); the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity (1818). The emphasis has deliberately been towards Anglican religious voluntary organizations because their subscribers included the wealthiest in London and they experienced higher rates of anonymity than their welfare contemporaries. See Sarah Flew, *Philanthropy and the Funding of the Church of England 1856–1914* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014).

most essential datum remains deep in the recesses of our nature, immune, perhaps happily from the fumbling probing of the historian, and, certainly happily, from the too arrogantly pitched enquiry of the psychoanalyst.’<sup>10</sup> Since the 1970s, however, historians have been less reticent in attributing motivations, conscious or unconscious, to charitable giving. Though tacitly acknowledging the religious impetus behind nineteenth-century philanthropy, many historians have viewed charity through modern ‘secular’ eyes and given unmerited weight to motives such as emotion, social power, prestige, peer approval, social control, social responsibility, guilt and even boredom.<sup>11</sup> Typically the historiography of philanthropy has concentrated on how the individual benefitted personally from their act of public giving. Peter Shapely, for example, has argued that individuals manipulated their involvement with charity to gain social esteem:

Within the social context, voluntary charities provided a vehicle for individuals to exhibit virtuous qualities, legitimizing their social status and position in the community . . . . By entering the charity field individuals could acquire the mantle of virtuous Christians and social leaders, and it was fundamental to the transforming of economic power into symbolic power.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, Gareth Stedman Jones’s influential elucidation of the ‘gift theory’ emphasizes the inherent manipulation of the gift as a coercive act that expects a reciprocal act from the receiver.<sup>13</sup>

Some Victorians, it should be noted, shared similar suspicions, and suggested the desire for recognition and high regard lay behind public philanthropy. In 1896, for example, George Bernard Shaw claimed, ‘a millionaire does not really care whether his money does good or not, provided he finds his conscience eased and his social status improved by giving it away’.<sup>14</sup> The self-gratification obtained by the knowledge that your philanthropy would be observed by others was criticized by the author Samuel Smiles (1812–1904): ‘The Bishop of London’s Fund had become a very fashionable thing, and many persons gave money because it was the fashion; but there their work ended.’<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the Reverend Charles Edward Ricketts Robinson, Perpetual Curate of Holy Trinity Church, Milton-near-Gravesend in Kent, reported that some individuals would give greater amounts if their contributions were publicly acknowledged. Robinson recounted a conversation with one such philanthropist: ‘A very good fellow most kindly disposed to help me with my charities, said to me when the cotton famine was pressing, “Well, if you have a collection in Church I shall give probably 1s., whereas, if you have a

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<sup>10</sup> W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480–1660: A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations*, 2nd edn (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964 [originally published 1959]), p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Peter Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 2000); F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Robert Humphreys, *Poor Relief and Charity, 1869–1945: The London Charity Organization Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). See Kathleen Joan Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962) for an excellent example that puts faith at the heart of the philanthropic action.

<sup>12</sup> Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>13</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. 251–53.

<sup>14</sup> Shaw quoted in William T. Harbaugh, ‘What do Donations Buy? A Model of Philanthropy based on Prestige and Warm Glow’, *Journal of Public Economics*, 67 (1998), 269–84 (p. 271).

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Smiles, *George Moore, Merchant and Philanthropist* (London: Routledge, 1878), p. 312.

subscription list, of course I shall give a guinea.”<sup>16</sup> These observations suggest individuals were aware their philanthropic activities (or absence from them) would be publicly observed and judged. The action of public philanthropy therefore indicated the stature of the stature of your wealth and attested to your generosity.

Both these contemporary and historical assessments of the motives of philanthropists neglect, however, the phenomenon of anonymous donation, where giving cannot be attributed solely to the desire for recognition or prestige. The field of behavioural economics has been mainly the preserve of modern economists. Outlining his ‘theory of conformity’, the economist B. Douglas Bernheim argues that human beings wish to be viewed by their peers in a favorable light and, consequently, their behaviour is affected by the need to be accepted, popular and highly regarded.<sup>17</sup> Bernheim suggests that charities can exploit the human need for ‘prestige’ through the publication of lists of charitable donations. Under this reading, the philanthropic act is self-serving in nature because the philanthropist gains from self-publicity, social advancement, or recognition. Charitable giving is thus viewed as a consequence of peer pressure.

The economist William Harbaugh, however, adds an alternative dimension to this view through his differentiation between the emotional states of the ‘warm glow’ and ‘prestige’. The ‘warm glow’ refers to ‘a purely internal satisfaction’ that comes from an act of giving, while ‘prestige’ is derived from a public act of charity and refers to the ‘utility that comes from having the amount of your donation publicly known’.<sup>18</sup> This reading of philanthropy argues that the norms of society are an important factor in putting pressure on the individual to be involved in some kind of charitable activity. It is against this backdrop of public observation, that the phenomenon of anonymous philanthropy will be discussed here. Anonymous philanthropists drew their ‘warm glow’ from the internal knowledge of their donation; public ‘prestige’ and its consequent power was not a motivating factor. While, undoubtedly, many philanthropists were motivated by self-serving interests, it is important to put faith back at the centre of the nineteenth-century charitable mindset and to highlight the personal and private impulses behind donation.

## **II. Descriptions of anonymity**

Charitable annual reports listed at great length the names of each annual subscriber and donor and the sum they had given in that accounting year; some subscription lists also gave the accumulated sum given by each philanthropist. Peppered through these lists are a number of individuals who chose to conceal their identity through the use of a pseudonym. The standard forms of the anonymous descriptions can be found in the subscription lists of both religious and welfare societies. One of the most common representations was the description of ‘Anonymous’ or ‘Anon’. The descriptions simply recorded as ‘Anonymous’ are generally very difficult to penetrate and in many cases, even the society was never aware of the identity of the individual. In 1865, the Bishop of London’s Fund received an anonymous donation of £4000 through their subsidiary bank account at Hoare’s Bank. The bank was unwilling to divulge the identity of the donor but allowed the society to communicate with the donor through the bank; the donor is described as being a man in the society’s minute books.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> C.E.R. Robinson, *Almsgiving and the Offertory* (Gravesend: Godfrey John Baynes, 1866), p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> B. Douglas Bernheim, ‘A Theory of Conformity’, *Journal of Political Economy*, 102.5(October 1994), 841–877 (pp. 842–44).

<sup>18</sup> Harbaugh, ‘What do Donations Buy?’, pp. 271–72.

<sup>19</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Ms. DL/A/K/09/02/001, Bishop of London’s Fund Executive Committee Minute Book, Vol. 1, 1863–66, 21 February 1865 and 28 March 1865;

The principal form of illustrating an anonymous identity was through the use of initials; about half of all anonymous entries were entered in this form. These initials typically expressed the individual's name. The identity 'FAH' was a very generous supporter and was one of the top subscribers to the Bishop of London's Fund and the East London Church Fund. In 1902, 'FAH' gave a donation of £7000 to the Bishop of London's Fund.<sup>20</sup> 'FAH' also gave £1350 to the East London Church Fund, of which £1000 was given in 1900. Reporting this large donation, the London Diocesan Magazine stated: 'The donor does not wish his name revealed; he has in former years given us very generous support, and, while remaining anonymous, we would commend his example to the wealthier friends of our Church.'<sup>21</sup> The identity of 'FAH' is almost certainly that of Francis Alexander Hamilton (1814–1907), whose name can be found across many of the subscription lists, giving many significant donations in the last few years of his life.<sup>22</sup> Hamilton worked for the merchant bank Messrs Brown Shipley and Company, becoming a partner in 1845 and remaining with the company until his retirement in 1904. He died shortly afterwards in 1907 aged 93.<sup>23</sup> Hamilton's name appears in the subscription lists of many religious organizations, giving £500 to the London Diocesan Home Mission, £4300 to the Bishop of London's Fund, £380 to the East London Church Fund, £5638 to the London City Mission, and also a small sum to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Evidence for the fact that he did give sums anonymously can be found in his biography, which discloses that he was the identity behind an anonymous donation of £1000 to the Waterloo Bridge Hospital.<sup>24</sup> The minute book of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society discloses that Hamilton was the wealthy patron using the identity 'FH' and 'Friend' to conceal his generous patronage; in the period 1901 to 1903 he gave the society £18,000 anonymously in the form of three large sums.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, he was publically giving the society a £50 per year subscription in his name and was listed as having given the society £1760 in total as a life member.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the Scripture Readers' Association announced in 1899 the support of a new generous anonymous donor 'desiring only to be known by his initials', which were 'FH'.<sup>27</sup>

It has been possible to trace a few of these anonymous supporters owing to the fact that the general ledger of the London Diocesan Home Mission noted the anonymous supporters' full names next to the initials, with only the initials appearing in the printed annual reports.<sup>28</sup> By way of example, Miss Jessie Eleanor Richards, daughter of Reverend Prebendary Henry William Parry Richards (1827–1900) was entered in the annual report as 'JR'. She subscribed

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Ms. DL/A/K/09/04/001, Bishop of London's Fund Origination Committee Minute Book, Vol. 1, 1864–66, 8 November 1864. The customer account ledgers (which still exist at Hoare's Bank) record the transaction as 'Anonymous'.

<sup>20</sup> London Diocesan Magazine, February 1902, pp. 57–58.

<sup>21</sup> London Diocesan Magazine, May 1900, p. 215.

<sup>22</sup> The identity of 'GC' (who gave £4500 to the Bishop of London's Fund) could be that of George Cubitt, first Baron Ashcombe (1828–1917) who gave £4200 to the Fund in his own name. Baron Ashcombe was the son of Thomas Cubitt (1788–1855), one of London's main building developers.

<sup>23</sup> The Times, 5 February 1907, p. 8; Financial Times, 1 January 1904, p. 7. Despite his large donations, all made in the final years of his life, the probate value of his estate was still £383,561.

<sup>24</sup> John Crosby Brown, *A Hundred Years of Merchant Banking* (New York: privately printed, 1909), p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> Cadbury Research Library, CPAS 1/4/1/24, CPAS Minute Book, 1900–1903, 29 January 1901; 6 February 1902; 27 January 1903.

<sup>26</sup> Seventy-First Church Pastoral-Aid Society Annual Report 1905–06.

<sup>27</sup> Scripture Readers' Journal, 225 (April 1899), p. 213. Hamilton's obituary in the journal in 1907, noted he had given the society £11,000: Scripture Readers' Journal, No. 257 (April 1907), p. 751.

<sup>28</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, Ms. DL/A/H/021/MS31995, London Diocesan Home Mission Cash Book, 1891–1955.

£5 annually between 1904 and 1914, giving £65 in total.<sup>29</sup> Stephen Smith Duval (1842–1926), a colonial broker, was entered in annual reports as ‘SD’. He gave two guineas in both 1913 and 1914. Miss Mary Sworder (1835–1915) the daughter of a maltster, gave £77 to the society between 1893 and 1913. These annual subscriptions are entered in a variety of ways during the period: ‘Anonymous’; ‘MSR’; ‘MS’; and ‘XYZ’. They highlight the fact that it was not just the very wealthy that chose to conceal their identity; these individuals were all ordinary middle-class people. In relation to anonymity and gender, there is no evidence to suggest that either men or women were more pre-disposed to hide their identity.

The use of initials was a common form of anonymity employed to shield authorship in literature in the nineteenth century. In fact, such was the culture of concealing identity in literature that a four volume series of books on the subject was published between 1882 and 1888: *A Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain, including the Works of Foreigners Written in, or Translated into the English Language*.<sup>30</sup> This series is an ‘A to Z’ of titles, which have been published under anonymous authorship, with the author’s identity being revealed in the case of each entry. The final volume contains an index of pseudonyms and user identities and a corresponding author index. Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898), better known as Lewis Carroll, asked Catherine Laing (the editor) to withhold his identity from this book. In reply Laing observed that his identity was ‘perfectly well known’. Dodgson, however, held the view that ‘public announcement was different from common knowledge’.<sup>31</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) is revealed in this series to have used the pseudonyms of ‘P.S.B’ and ‘By a gentleman of the University of Oxford’.<sup>32</sup> Robert Tener argues that the use of initials, in periodicals, allowed the author to conceal their identity from the world at large, while allowing their identity to be easily penetrated by those in the inner circle.<sup>33</sup>

The use of initials to hide philanthropic identity, in some cases, could likewise be a way of identifying yourself as a generous supporter while also professing to be humble. This seems a plausible explanation, as initials such as ‘FAH’ appear to be easily penetrated by the historian and presumably also by contemporaries. The remaining anonymous payments were descriptive, either portraying who the supporter was or why they were giving. First, are pseudonyms that convey a characterization of the financial supporter. Examples of such entries are: ‘A Lady’; ‘The Dame’; ‘A Times Reader’; ‘An Associate’; ‘A Churchwoman’; ‘A Country Curate’; ‘A Country Parson’; ‘A Freeholder of Middlesex’; ‘An Officer’s Widow’; ‘A Peer’; ‘An Old Balliol Pupil’; ‘Former Missionary Curate’; ‘A Countess’; ‘Member of the Executive Committee’; ‘Octagenarian Egrotans’ (which translates as ‘A Sick Man in His Eighties’); and

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<sup>29</sup> Henry William Parry Richards was appointed Prebendary of St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1885 and Rector of St-Giles-in-the-Fields in 1892.

<sup>30</sup> Catherine Laing (ed.), *A Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain, including the Works of Foreigners Written in, or Translated into the English Language*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: W. Paterson, 1882–88). The editor, Catherine Laing, completed the work that her father (Reverend John Laing, 1809–1880), the librarian of New College, Edinburgh, had taken over from Samuel Halkett (1814–1871), the librarian of the Faculty of Advocates, College of Justice, Edinburgh.

<sup>31</sup> John Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 44; Morten N. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (London: Papermac, 1996), pp. 72, 191, 298.

<sup>32</sup> Laing, *Dictionary of the Anonymous*, IV: col. 2851; III, col. 2250.

<sup>33</sup> Robert H. Tener, ‘Breaking the Code of Anonymity: The Case of the “Spectator”, 1861–1897’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Literary Periodicals Special Number 16 (1986), 63–73 (pp. 67–68).

‘A Visitor to London’.<sup>34</sup> The merchant banker Richard Foster (1822–1910) acquired the habit of anonymous giving from his youth. He gave away his twenty-first birthday gift from his mother (£2) anonymously to the National Society under the description of ‘B.D.P.’, which signified the words ‘birthday present’.<sup>35</sup> Foster often donated anonymously under the description of ‘A Merchant of the City of London’ because he felt he had an obligation to help Londoners and hoped the use of this pseudonym would ‘arouse a sense of responsibility in other merchants’.<sup>36</sup> Subscription lists of the societies that had a larger contingent of male supporters were more likely to have anonymous descriptors which reflected who the giver was. Examples of such descriptions are: ‘Member of the Executive Committee’; ‘An East End Curate’; ‘A Peer’; and ‘A Member of the Currier’s Company’. As indicated by Foster’s use of a pseudonym, these descriptions may have been used to encourage other people with the same background or status to give. Pseudonyms such as these were also commonly used as author’s pen names in literature. A Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain reveals that the wealthy London printer William Rivington (1807–1888) often published under the pseudonym of ‘A Layman’ and that the Reverend Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–81) published under the description of ‘A batchelor of divinity’ and ‘E.B.P.’.<sup>37</sup> Such functional descriptions were rare in the subscription lists of welfare charities.

Some of the most commonly employed descriptions are variations of the concept of friendship, found in the subscription lists across a variety of religious and welfare charities. Descriptions used in the subscription lists of religious charities are: ‘A Friend’; ‘Amicus’; ‘A True Friend’; ‘A Distant Friend’; ‘A Friend to the Good Cause’; ‘An Absent Friend’; ‘An Old Friend’; and ‘A Wellwisher’. References to ‘friendship’ were commonly employed as pseudonyms when donating to welfare societies. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals annual reports list donations from ‘A Lover of Dumb Things’ and ‘A Friend of the Oppressed’; the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity lists contributions from ‘A Friend to the Poor’; and the New Hospital for Women lists donations from ‘Amicus’ and ‘A Friend’. In 1913, the East London Church Fund expressed its relief at unexpectedly ending the 1912 budget year without a deficit:

No relief, however, manifested itself; as the monthly returns were announced the figures were even below those of the previous year, and as time went on a large deficit appeared inevitable. By God’s mercy it was ultimately avoided by a gift of £5000, made by a friend who had long subscribed £50 yearly, and who, in view of that large donation, would no longer be able to continue the annual subscription.<sup>38</sup>

This £5000 donation was entered in the subscription list as ‘A Friend’. The society’s minute book reveals her identity to be Miss Emily Ann Maynard (d. 1920), the daughter of a solicitor.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Some anonymous descriptions related to locations: from English towns and villages such as ‘Brighton’; ‘Chester’; ‘Rustington Sussex’ to further flung destinations such as ‘Canterbury, New Zealand’; ‘San Remo’ in Italy and ‘Rio Pongas’ in Gambia.

<sup>35</sup> W.F. Foster, *Richard Foster* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1914), p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> Foster, *Richard Foster*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>37</sup> Laing, *Dictionary of the Anonymous*, I: col. 396; III, cols 2072 and 2476. See also Tener, ‘Breaking the Code of Anonymity’, p. 68; Robert T. Griffin, ‘Anonymity and Authorship’, *New Literary History*, 30.4, Case Studies (Autumn 1999), 877–95 (p. 890). Robert J. Griffin (ed.), *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *East London Church Chronicle*, 25.1 (Easter 1913), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> LMA, Ms. DL/A/K/11/01/007, *East London Church Fund Committee Minute Book*, Vol.7, 1911–1916, 27 December 1912. Her sister, Miss Laura Mary Maynard (d. 1909) left a £5000 legacy to the Bishop of London’s Fund.



The use of friendship as a descriptor of anonymity was more prevalent in those societies that had a higher proportion of financial support from women.

The other forms of description, expressed the motivation or emotion behind the donation. For example: 'For the Spread to the Gospel'; 'God's Truth before Expediency'; 'Offering to God'; 'Gratitude'; 'A Grateful Hearer'; 'Fides, Spes et Caritas' ('Faith, Hope and Charity'); 'Te Deum Laudamus' ('We praise you God'); 'LCD Windfall' and 'Dicto Paremus Ovantes' ('Rejoicing We Obey the Word'); and 'Parts of the 46 years profits of a Tradesman'. Again, such descriptions are rarer in the subscription lists of welfare charities but the few that appeared in the subscription lists of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also referenced the emotional basis of the gift: 'Faith, Hope and Charity'; 'Infinite Pity'; 'Sympathy'; and even 'Dachshund'. The concept of a thank offering and thankfulness could be found in the subscription lists of all of the religious charities studied and in the case of the New Hospital for Women; the Hospital received many donations in the names of 'A Grateful Patient' and 'Thankoffering'. By way of example for a religious organization, in 1911, a £3000 donation to the East London Church Fund was given under the description of 'An East End Worker – A Thankoffering'.<sup>40</sup> The following extract from a letter to the East London Church Fund, explains the context for one anonymous offering that is given as a thank offering to God for a day free from pain. This contribution is listed as a donation in the 1905 annual report under the description of 'Thankoffering S.N.':

I have for a long time suffered pretty continual pain and have had much pain on Sundays. Last Sunday I did my work without pain and had only ten minutes or so all day. I hope that this may continue, but in any case I send a small thank-offering for last Sundays relief. As it is the 25th anniversary I send 25s for the Fund. I am not well off, so it must only be a donation. Please enter it: 'Thankoffering S.N.'<sup>41</sup>

A small proportion of the anonymous contributions expressed some form of remembrance, in particular using the form of words 'In Memoriam' often followed by initials or a name. For example, a donation of £5 was made in 1873 to the Bishop of London's Fund under the description of 'In Memoriam (GH Brettle)'. Investigation shows that this donation relates to George Henry Brettle (1820–1872) a merchant of the family hosiery company, George Brettle and Company. One of the principal funders of the East London Church Fund was Caroline Amelia Newman (1840–1934), who made her annual subscription of £100 in memory of her husband Reverend Frederick Newman (d. 1894), a Wiltshire Rector; this was in the form of 'In honoured Memory of Rev Frederick Newman – for St Anne's Limehouse'. In another example, a donation was made to London City Mission in 1860 for £1 under the description of 'A thankful heart for the Lord's tender mercies to a beloved child in his departing hours'. This use of commemoration is also found in the subscription lists of the Royal Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for example, 'In Memorium' and 'In Memory of a Dear Departed Pet'. Many of these anonymous descriptions convey the nature of the individual's relationship and their deeply felt attachment to the society in question.

The wording of biblical teachings was also employed as anonymous descriptors but these were only found in the subscription lists of religious organization, and more specifically only those societies that had a proportionately higher number of male supporters. These descriptions cited specific Bible readings, either by description or by Bible reference. For example, one donation

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<sup>40</sup> None of the anonymous contributions to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in the sample of subscription lists, make reference to 'thank offering'.

<sup>41</sup> East London Church Chronicle, 17.2 (Midsummer 1905), p. 10.

was given to the Bishop of London's Fund under the description of 'St Matthew vi 1–4', which relates to the following teaching by Jesus on the subject of charity:

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.<sup>42</sup>

Alternatively, the anonymous descriptor of 'Leviticus ii 12' refers to the offering to God of the first fruits of the harvest: 'As for the oblation of the firstfruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour'.<sup>43</sup> More general descriptions of biblical concepts that reference the act of giving were also used for the donor's identity, for example, descriptions such as: the 'Widow's Mite', 'First Fruits' and the 'Tithe'.<sup>44</sup> John Forbes Moncrieff, the author of *Our Giving* (1911) recounted an anecdote regarding an anonymous philanthropist that had been revealed to him by the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. In this example, the donor references a Bible reading (Acts 20:35) in his anonymous identity:

A working man . . . once entered my office, and laid down four five-pound notes. He then said: 'I am a London scavenger, and I have saved that out of my wages for the Congo missionaries. Please put it down in your ledger as an anonymous gift, but insert alongside of it the text: 'Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive'.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, some individuals chose to support their charitable organizations by making both public contributions in their own name and private contributions anonymously. The merchant banker, Richard Foster, gave contributions under three identities: in his own name; under the description of 'A Merchant of the City of London'; and also under the description of initials. The motivation for Foster's use of these different philanthropic identities is explained by his biographer who states that Foster would sometimes make three contributions to a church building fund: in his own name; through a church building society; and anonymously. This combined approach was carried out for strategic reasons; Foster had found that money coming into a project from a variety of sources stimulated that project in a way that one large donation could not.<sup>46</sup> The wealthy wool broker, Charles Jacomb (1816–1891) widely supported religious causes and again would give his donations both publically and privately. His biography in the *East London Church Chronicle* reports:

He preferred that his gifts should be anonymous, and although sometimes under pressure he would yield for the sake of influencing others to give, his public and private charities, amounting to a very large annual sum, were usually given under his simple initials. Frequently, too, his name would appear with some modest sum attached, while

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 6:1–4. All references are to the Authorised King James Bible.

<sup>43</sup> Leviticus 2:12.

<sup>44</sup> Mark 12:41–44: 'And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto to you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.'

<sup>45</sup> J. Forbes Moncrieff, *Our Giving: What it is, and What it Ought to be* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1911), p. 38.

<sup>46</sup> Foster, Richard Foster, p. 83.

a much larger donation would accompany it, but without any indication to the outside world whence it had been derived.<sup>47</sup>

### III. Anonymity and large donations

The incidence of anonymity expressed as a proportion of total contributions was on average between 5% and 8% for religious organizations.<sup>48</sup> Comparative statistics from samples of annual reports of welfare organizations show that the total proportion of anonymous subscribers was slightly lower in the region of 2 to 4%. An analysis of donations or subscriptions of an individual amount of '£100 plus' demonstrates that the larger the payment, the more likely it was to be made anonymously.<sup>49</sup> The overall proportion of the larger payments made anonymously to religious organizations in this study were much higher. For example, 30% of the large contributions made to the London City Mission were made anonymously; 31% of the East London Church Fund's large contributions; 53% of the London Diocesan Home Mission's large contributions; and 67% of the London Diocesan Deaconess Institution large contributions. In terms of class and gender, however, the evidence has shown that those societies that had a funder-base with a higher proportion of titled individuals had lower rates of anonymity in respect of their large contributions. This is presumably because there was a greater value for the charity in a titled individual's name appearing in their subscription lists. It is notable that the large donations made to the Parochial Mission Women Association were all made publically. This society had a different supporter profile than the other religious societies examined, in that a large proportion of its supporters were upper-class and female thereby reflecting its committee structure. It is possible that a contribution was more valuable to the society if made in a titled lady's name because its public identification would solicit more donations from the donor's contemporaries. Likewise, although the Bishop of London's Fund's anonymity rate was also higher at 11% for its £100 plus contributions, this only slight increase (from 6% across the board) again reflects the society's higher proportion of titled supporters. In complete contrast to the religious organizations, none of the larger payments (£100 plus) made to the examined welfare charities were made anonymously. This absence suggests that people giving to religious charities were more likely to connect their giving to biblical teachings such as 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven' (Matthew 6:1). The culture of giving large sums privately was applauded by the periodical *The Philanthropist*: 'Apart from the amount of a gift there is usually more real charity in large donations because they are frequently given anonymously, and therefore only with the object of benefaction; and not that the donor may parade his wealth – and his kind-heartedness.'<sup>50</sup> The giving of large amounts secretly can be seen to be following the advice given by the eighteenth-century theologian William Paley (1743–1805). He encouraged individuals to give normal amounts of charity openly, in keeping with the biblical teaching 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (Matthew 5:16). He advised

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<sup>47</sup> East London Church Chronicle, 4.1 (September 1891), p. 2. Jacomb's name appears in the Bishop of London's Fund's subscription lists. Jacomb was a good friend of Richard Foster and both men lived in Upper Clapton, Middlesex.

<sup>48</sup> The proportional statistic stated relates to volume not financial value; so five to eight out of every 100 subscriptions or donations were made anonymously.

<sup>49</sup> The largest single donation made to the London City Mission in the period 1860–1914 was an anonymous donation in 1902 for £15,000 in the name of 'Faith'. This prevalence of giving large donations anonymously is at odds with contemporary research (carried out by economists in experiments) that indicates that anonymity in giving leads to selfishness. See Terence C. Burnham, 'Engineering Altruism: A Theoretical and Experimental Investigation of Anonymity and Gift Giving', *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, 50 (2003), 133–44.

<sup>50</sup> *The Philanthropist*, 1.8 (August 1882), p. 113.

that, in contrast, significant sums should be given in secret in order to be modest and avoid boastful behaviour.<sup>51</sup> This practice of combining larger private and smaller public contributions can be observed in the contributions made by Reverend Edward Bouverie Pusey who gave the Metropolis Churches Fund £1000 publicly in his own name and £5000 anonymously as ‘From a clergyman seeking treasure in heaven’.<sup>52</sup> This descriptor was based on a phrase he had used in his 1835 pamphlet *Churches in London* that referenced Matthew’s Gospel.<sup>53</sup> Pusey, who gave all of his large donations anonymously, gave this amount at huge personal sacrifice. The size of this donation forced him to curtail his personal expenditure including cutting back on his number of servants and giving up his carriage.<sup>54</sup> Such acts highlight the religious basis of some uses of anonymity.

Of course, it is possible to counter that the use of anonymity may have been for self-serving reasons. As the century progressed, philanthropy became more businesslike with the professionalization of the writing of begging letters. The *Times*, in 1880, reported that when ‘a name has once been printed on a subscription list, its owner becomes a marked man . . . From that day forward his persecutors will never cease.’<sup>55</sup> Publications, such as *The Charitable Ten Thousand* (published in 1896 and 1904) were used by canvassers and collectors on behalf of charities. This book was an A to Z list with addresses of philanthropists drawn up from subscription lists, called by the historian David Owen the philanthropic ‘sucker-list’.<sup>56</sup> However, the publication of the directory does not appear to have been a significant factor behind anonymity. An analysis of the subscription lists of these societies in this study does not show an increase in anonymity within this later period.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, a small proportion of individuals chose to hide their identity when giving contributions to charity. Analysis has shown that the likelihood of a contribution being made anonymously increased if the society had religious objects and increased again if the contribution was for a large size. This study of anonymity discloses the many different reasons that individuals chose to hide their identity: modesty; religious reasons; economic self-preservation; wanting to express the motivation for giving the contribution; and wanting to use the anonymous identity as a tool to encourage more donations. Above all, the evidence suggests that the anonymous philanthropists of the nineteenth century were more motivated by the

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<sup>51</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001 [originally published 1988]), p. 104. See William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (London, 1785). An analysis of the subscription list contained in the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge annual report (for the year 1749/1750) suggests anonymity rates may have been higher in the eighteenth century. 17% of supporters gave sums anonymously, with 37% of sums in excess of one guinea being made anonymously (principally under the description of ‘gentleman/ gentlewoman desiring to be unknown’). It must be borne in mind that public charitable subscription lists were relatively rare in the eighteenth century and are mainly associated with the dramatic increase in voluntary societies in the nineteenth century.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Parry Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 2 vols (London: Longmans Green, 1893), I, 330–31. The Metropolis Churches’ Fund was an Anglican home missionary organization established in 1836.

<sup>53</sup> E.B. Pusey, *Churches in London: Past and Present Exertions of the Church and Present Needs*, with an Appendix containing Answers to Objections raised by the ‘Record’ and Others to the Plan of the Metropolis Churches’ Fund (London: Baxter, 1837), p. 13; see subscription list in *Final Metropolis Churches Fund Report*. ‘But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal’ (Matthew 6:20).

<sup>54</sup> Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, I, 330–31.

<sup>55</sup> *The Times*, 1 July 1880, p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> D.E. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 480.

emotional state of ‘warm glow’ than the pleasure obtained from ‘prestige’. The use of anonymity is counter to the idea that philanthropists deployed their wealth to gain public power and prestige. Indeed, the mechanism of anonymous giving allowed the individual to privately fulfil their philanthropic obligations in a way that reflected upon their relationship with God and their deeply felt connection with the society. This article has demonstrated that it is possible to uncover the many motivations of philanthropy through the descriptive entries given to many of the anonymous donations. These descriptions express many emotions: they reflect duty; loss; remembrance; thanks giving; and repentance. Anonymity, therefore, can be viewed as a tool that can be used both to hide identity and to communicate identity. This is nicely crystallized in the form of the pseudonym chosen by an individual in 1860 who gave the sum of 10 shillings to the London City Mission under the description ‘A Friend to Humanity.’<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Listed in the 1860 annual report subscription list for the London City Mission.