

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

### You're Such a Pietist

How many Christians would want to be called a "pietist" nowadays? The term has taken on a meaning that is associated with smug self-righteousness and escapism.

This issue will demonstrate that the word should be understood in a wider and richer context in terms of the historical movement itself and what it believed, how it behaved, what it sought to accomplish, how it understood and affirmed the gospel.

### What Is Pietism?

Pietism is an historical movement which arose within the Protestantism of Continental Europe during the closing decades of the seventeenth century. Lutheran scholars have usually dated its beginning from Philip Jacob Spener's publication of his *Pious Desires* in 1675. It should be understood, however, that the same movement is discernible in the Reformed communion and was shared by so called "radicals" and others who eschewed any ecclesiastical affiliation. By the middle of the eighteenth century it had largely run its course, though the religious impulses it had generated were incorporated in various subsequent movements down to the present day.

Pietists were basically interested in the religious renewal of the individual, belief in the Bible as the unfailing guide to faith and life, a complete commitment to Christ which must be evident in the Christian's life, the need for Christian nurture through the faithful use of appropriate devotional aids, including sermons and hymns, and finally a concern to apply the love of Christ so as to alleviate the social and cultural ills of the day.

### A Second Phase of the Reformation?

The Pietists themselves generally believed and often asserted that their movement was an extension of or second phase of the Reformation. Whether or not that is true is a question that is still debated today.

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## **A Much Maligned Movement Re-Examined: From the Publisher-- Pietism**

Last fall, we sent a brief survey to our subscriber list asking for an evaluation of the various elements in this magazine. The percentage who completed and returned the questionnaire was unusually high and you should know that your input is taken most seriously and is invaluable to us.

An example of our intent to be responsive to your interests is this present issue. Over the past year we received many letters urging us to devote an issue to an examination of the Pietistic movement. This advice came from an amazing diversity of sources, including professors, pastors, and laity representing a wide diversity of denominational backgrounds.

We happily discovered that the acknowledged dean of Pietist studies in America, Dr. Ernest Stoeffler, professor emeritus at Temple University lived only a few miles from our office. He graciously provided guidance in the planning of this issue and contributed a major article.

We offer this issue as a small contribution to a long overdue and much needed reassessment of Pietism. Its streams of influence within contemporary Christianity are deep, diverse, and often unrecognized. Its contributions to the Body of Christ deserve new understanding and reappraisal. Its deviations and excesses also have much to teach us.

Harold O.J. Brown included a 33-page treatment of Pietism in his book *Heresies* published by Doubleday. Although the title of his book might at first seem misleading, his treatment is helpful and, we think, fair. He concludes with this statement: "Without Pietism, Protestantism might never have survived the eighteenth century, but with Pietism, it may ultimately cease to be Protestantism." Give that some further thought after reading this issue.

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## Pietism: Did You Know?

The term "Pietism" was first applied as a term of derision at Frankfort on Main, Germany in 1674.

While there is no official or recognizable "Pietist" church or denomination as such, nevertheless the movement has left its mark on much of contemporary Christianity. The influence of the "Pietists" can be clearly traced in contemporary expressions of missions, ecumenism, revivalism, social activism and Bible study groups. Pietism has also influenced how we worship through its rich hymnology, how we give, and how we conduct our devotional life.

Pietism and Puritanism, while usually considered two separate movements, were actually related. Puritanism was one of the formative influences on Pietism. The American Puritan Cotton Mather carried on correspondence with the Pietist leader Spener.

Pietists did not see themselves as a new church but as an extension of the Reformation within the Reformation churches. They did promote the creation of conventicles (cell groups), that is little churches within the church.

A Pietist, A.H. Francke, instituted the faith mission movement by depending upon voluntary contributions of friends for the support of his schools. He is said to have believed in vivid, specific answers to prayers.

Pietists in the Netherlands were the first to use the term "huts kerk" or house church for their renewal meetings.

New World Pietists negotiated liberal treaties with Native Americans when occupying lands.

The Pietist Amana Society was turned into a joint stock corporation and now ranks as one of the leading producers of household appliances in the U.S.

A Pietist press at Ephrata produced the longest book in colonial America in 1748/49, *The Martyr's Mirror*.

Pietists were uncomfortable with formal titles in the Christian community and introduced the nouns of address, "brother" and "sister." Also "the pastor" was familiarized to "pastor" as a name. In six years in the early Eighteenth Century, the Halle Pietists distributed 100,000 New Testaments and 80,000 Bibles.

Pietist emphasis on Bible translation had the effect of generating renewed interest in written language wherever they went.

Pietists created the model of orphanages for both church-related and public programs. In each of Halle's orphan asylums, children were taught a trade and treated as individuals.

The first organ was brought to the new world by the followers of the pietist Kelpius, many of whom were musicians.

Philip Jacob Spener's ***Pia Desideria*** or "Heartfelt Desire for God-Pleasing Reform," first published in 1675, is considered to be the "manifesto" of Pietism. An English translation is still being published today by Fortress Press who reports continued strong interest in the book. (See ***Pia Desideria***).

Pietists known as the "Woman of the Wilderness", settled in caves outside of Philadelphia, PA in 1695. This band of forty men sought to meditate and prepare for the coming of the Lord while engaged in works of mercy and evangelism.

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## Overwhelmed as with a Stream of Joy: An Autobiography

Translated from Marianne Beyer-Frohlich, hrsg., *Pietismus und Rationalismus* (Leipzig, 1933), pp. 19–20.

***Auguste Hermann Francke (1663–1727) was one of the leading figures of the Pietist movement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. His spiritual struggle and pilgrimage is typical of many in the movement and were included in his "Autobiography" which was first published in 1692. Other biographical details on Francke are found in the Gallery and an excerpt from his essay on "Christian Perfection" is found in "On Christian Perfection".***

As far as my Christianity was concerned, particularly during my few years in Leipzig, it was very bad and gross. My intention was to be an eminent and learned man, to gain wealth and to live in good days ... The surges of my heart were vain and were directed to future things which I did not have in my hand. I was more concerned to please men and to place myself in their favor than I was for the living God in Heaven. In external matters as well, I copied the world in superfluous clothing and other vanity. In short, inwardly and outwardly I was a man of the world and did not remove myself from evil but drew evil to myself. My knowledge increased but because of it I was ever more pompous. I have no cause to complain to God because of this situation, for God did not cease often very strongly to stir up my conscience and to call me to repentance through his Word. I was truly convinced that I was not in the proper state. I often cast myself down upon my knees and asked God for improvement. The result, however, demonstrated that my actions were of passing intensity. I knew very well how to justify myself before men, but the Lord knew my heart. I was in great unrest and in great misery, yet I did not give God the honor to acknowledge the basis for my disease nor did I seek in him alone the true ease. I saw clearly that I could not acquiesce in such principles on which I based my activities, yet nevertheless I allowed myself to be ever more enmeshed in them through my corrupted nature, and I pushed off my repentance from one day to the next.

I can say only that for twenty-four years I was nothing better than an unfruitful tree which bears much foliage but for the most part evil fruit. In such circumstances my life pleased the world to such a degree that we were able to get along very well together, for I loved the world and the world loved me. I was therefore very free from persecution because among the pious I had the appearance of being pious, and among the evil I was truly evil: I had learned to let my cloak blow in the direction the wind was blowing. No one hated me for the sake of truth because I did not eagerly make people my enemy, nor could they say anything against me truly because I did not live in opposition to them. Nevertheless such a peace with the world was not able to bring any rest to my heart. But concern for the future, desire for position, the desire to know everything, the search for human favor and friendship and other similar things flowing from the evils of worldly love (in particular, however, the continual secret nagging worm of an evil conscience that I was not in the right state), drove my heart as a stormy sea now to one side, now to the other, even though I often presented an external joyousness before others. I spent most of the time in Leipzig in these circumstances and I cannot recall having taken up a truly earnest and basic concern for improvement until 1687.

But in the twenty-fourth year of my life I began to take up this serious question in myself, to acknowledge more deeply my wretched state and to look upon myself with greater earnestness, desiring that my soul might be freed from this state. If I were to say what first gave me the opportunity to come to this, I know of nothing outside of the continual prevenient grace of God, externally indicated by nothing more certain than my theological study, which I grasped only in knowledge and in reason alone. As a result I thought I could deceive people, hold a public office, and tell people what I myself was not convinced of in my heart.

Who is more wretched than I, had I remained in such circumstances, since I grasped heaven with one hand and the earth with the other, wished to enjoy God and the friendship of the world at the same time, or fought first against the one, then against the other, and could hold neither properly. But oh, how great is the love of God, which he manifested to the human race in Christ Jesus! God did not cast me aside because of my deep corruption in which I stood fast, but he had patience with me and helped me in my weakness, since I could not find the courage but only always hoped that I might break through into a true light which is from God.

I was asked to present a sermon in the church of St. John, and I was asked to do so a good time before the sermon was to be presented. My mind was in such a state that I was not only concerned with the mere preaching of a sermon but chiefly with the upbuilding of the congregation. Thinking on this, the text came to me, "this is written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). With this text I had particular opportunity to discuss true living faith, and how this faith is distinguished from a mere human and imaginary foolish faith. Earnestly considering this matter, the thought came to me that I did not find the faith in myself that I was to demand in the sermon. I therefore left off meditation on the sermon and found enough to meditate on in myself. The fact that I had no true belief troubled me in an ever more serious way. I wished to justify myself and to drive the sad thoughts away but they remained.

When I was among people I covered up my inner misery as much as I could. Once, when I had finished eating, I wished to go with a friend to the superintendent who lived in the area. I took along the Greek New Testament to read. When I opened it up my friend said, "Truly we have in this book a great treasure." I looked about and asked him if he saw what passage I had opened the testament up to. He said no. I told him to look at the answer: "We have our treasure in earthly vessels" (2 Cor. 4). As soon as he had said these words they struck me in the face. They entered into my heart a little and I thought that it was really not strange that this should thus happen—it seemed thus that a hidden consolation sank into my heart but my atheistic mind immediately brought forth corrupted reason as its instrument to tear the power of the godly word once again out of my heart. I went on the way with my friend and came to the house of the superintendent. He directed us into a room and had us sit down. Hardly had we sat down but the superintendent began to discuss the question "how one should know if he had faith or not." He said different things about this question, so that a believer might be strengthened. I sat there, however, and initially wondered if such a highly necessary discourse had come to me merely by chance since no one knew for certain of my state. I listened carefully to him but my heart would not be still. Rather, I was by his word much more convinced that I had no faith because I knew in myself the opposite of this mark of faith which is cited from Scripture.

When we said goodbye and I went again with my friend into the city, I revealed my heart to him, saying that if he knew in what state I was, he would wonder how we ever came to discuss such a matter. And he asked, "In what state are you?" I answered "I have no faith." He was frightened by this and sought to do everything he could to correct me. I opposed him and finally said that I could give him good reasons for what he stated, but it would not help me.

On the following day, which was Sunday, I thought that I would likely lie again in my bed in my earlier unrest. I was also thinking that if no change arose I would not preach the sermon since I could not preach in unbelief and against my own heart and so deceive the people. I did not even know if it would be possible for me to do so. I felt very deeply what it is to have no God to whom the heart can hold, to whom it can confess its sins while not knowing where or who he was who brought forth tears, or if there truly was a God whom man had stirred to wrath. I also knew what it was to see the heart's misery and great sorrow daily, and yet not know or understand any savior or any refuge. In such great dread I went once more upon my knees on the evening before the Sunday on which I was to preach. I cried to God, whom I still did not know nor trust, for salvation from such a miserable state [asking him to save me], if indeed he was a true God. The Lord, the living God, heard me from his throne while I yet knelt. So great was his fatherly love that he wished to take me finally, after such doubts and unrest of my heart, so that I

might be more convinced that he could satisfy me well, and that my erring reason might be tamed, so as not to move against his power and faithfulness. He immediately heard me. My doubt vanished as quickly as one turns one's hand; I was assured in my heart of the grace of God in Christ Jesus and I knew God not only as God but as my Father. All sadness and unrest of my heart was taken away at once, and I was immediately overwhelmed as with a stream of joy so that with full joy I praised and gave honor to God who had shown me such great grace. I arose a completely different person from the one who had knelt down.

With great care and doubt I had fallen to my knees but with an unspeakable joy and a great certainty I stood up again. When I knelt down I did not believe that there was a God but when I stood up I believed it to the point of giving up my blood without fear or doubt. I then went to bed, but because of the great joy I could not sleep and if I closed my eyes for a few minutes I woke up again and began anew to praise, give honor, and acknowledge the living God who had given himself to be known to my soul. It was as if I had spent my whole life in a deep sleep, and everything to this point had only been a dream and I had just woken up. No one can tell me what a difference there is between the natural life of a natural man and the life which is from God. It was as if I had been dead and now saw that I was alive. I could not stay in my bed that night but I leapt from it for joy and praised the Lord my God. I wished that everything might praise the name of the Lord with me. "You angels in heaven," I cried. "Praise the name of the Lord with me, the Lord who has shown me such mercy." Reason stood away; victory was torn from its hands, for the power of God had made it subservient to faith.

Now I experience that it was true what Luther had said in his preface to the epistle to the Romans: "Faith is a divine word in us that changes us and gives us new birth from God (John 1:12) and kills the old Adam, makes us completely other men in our hearts, minds, thoughts and all our powers and brings the Holy Spirit with it." And "faith is a living, moving trust in God's grace, so certain that one would die for it a thousand times. And such trust and knowledge in divine grace makes one joyous, bold and delighting in God and all creatures; this the Lord God does in faith." God now filled my heart with love for him; he gave me to know the highest and only precious good.

On the following day I was able to tell my friend, to whom I had declared my wretched state on the evening before, about my redemption, but not without the tears, and he rejoiced with me. By the middle of the week I returned once again to the sermon I was to preach, with great joy of heart and out of true divine conviction concerning John 20:21, and I could say with truth the words of 2 Corinthians 4:13: "since we have the same spirit of faith; as it is written: I believe and therefore I speak, so we believe and so we speak."

And this is the period to which I can point as that of my true conversion from this time on my Christianity had a place to stand and it was easier for me to deny the ungodly ways and the worldly lust and to live chastely, righteously, and godly in this world. From this time on I held continuously to God, and I cared nothing for promotion, honor, and visibility in the world, riches, good days, and exterior worldly pomp. Whereas earlier I had made an idol out of learning, I now saw that faith as a mustard seed counts for more than a hundred sacks full of learning and that all the knowledge learned at the feet of Gamaliel is to be considered dirt beside the superabundant knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. From then on I also knew for the first time properly what the world is and how it is distinguished from [the life of] the children of God. From then on the world began immediately to hate me and to build up enmity against me ... Nevertheless, in this I must praise the great faithfulness and wisdom of God, who did not allow a weak child to be corrupted through strong food, or a pliant plant through an all too chilly wind, but he knew what was best, and in what degree he should give something to his children and through this he tested and guided their faith. Thus, I was not lacking in testings but in them God at all times watched over my weakness, and first give me only a little suffering but later a greater amount of suffering; according to the divine power which I received from him the last and greater sufferings were much easier to bear than the first and smaller ones.

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## Can These Bones Live?

**A spiritual hunger grew in reaction to the coldness and formalism of the Protestant state churches. Drawing from diverse roots, Pietism emerged as a quest to apply Reformation doctrine to personal life.**

ERNEST STOEFFLER F. Ernest Stoeffler, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His publications include *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, and *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*

Like all religious movements Pietism has its roots in a definite historical context. Behind it were related developments within the three major Protestant communions of the seventeenth century, namely the Anglican, the Reformed, and the Lutheran. All three branches of mainstream Protestantism had chosen to establish territorial or national churches, which were closely tied to a political structure, and to which virtually the whole population belonged, unless they were Jews. Under the circumstances the moral tone of these churches left much to be desired. To make matters worse, the close affiliation between state and church resulted in the appointment of people as members of the clergy who were often unqualified, both religiously and morally, and sometimes downright incompetent.

It is not surprising, therefore, that church life tended to be shallow, and that meaningful religious commitment on the part of church members was frequently lacking. Among both clergy and laity there was little awareness that in the biblical understanding of the Christian life, religious profession and an appropriate mode of daily living must go together. Already in 1569 Edward Dering tried to bring to the attention of Queen Elizabeth I his observation that in the church of his time the parson was set against the vicar, the vicar against the parson, the parish against both, and "all for the belly." During the following century, one of the outstanding Reformed preachers in the Netherlands registered a widely supported claim that in the Reformed church one sees nothing that has the appearance of the true church. At about the same time religiously sensitive pastors in the Lutheran communion, in so far as they could be found, inveighed vigorously against the prevailing drunkenness, immorality, cruelty, and utter disregard for human suffering among their parishioners.

Out of this state of affairs came the early impulses within Post-Reformation Protestantism toward renewal. Renewal included, on the one hand, the spiritual and moral renewal of the individual, which would result in a new life, patterned on biblical models and motivated by the spirit of Christ. On the other hand, it envisioned the reform of the church by means of a revised theology, a readjusted set of institutions, a reborn clergy, and all of this reoriented toward a new goal. There was a widespread perception that the Reformation of the sixteenth century had indeed altered the theology and structures of western Christendom but had never succeeded in reforming the life of the church. Nor had it provided the means necessary for religious nurture, such as appropriate preaching, hymns, devotional aids, and educational enterprises.

In England the agitation for religious renewal began with the advent of Puritanism. It arose during the sixteenth century in a time of political revolution, accompanied by whatever religious reform seemed advantageous to the political party in power. A series of violent ecclesiastical reverses resulted in the revision of the Second Edwardian Prayer Book under Elizabeth I, which made Anglican worship considerably more palatable to Roman Catholics. Not surprisingly the same Prayer Book appeared decidedly unsatisfactory to the Reformed segment of the English church, which had been influenced in large part by John Calvin. Their initial objection was to what they called "popish" remnants for which they could find no warrant in the New Testament. Because of their desire to "purify" the worship of the church they came to be referred to as "Puritans" during the early 1560's.



In a relatively short time many Puritans, whose intellectual center became Cambridge University, moved beyond the merely negative stance of opposing such practices as having a vested clergy and kneeling at the altar when receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. Among the first of these was William Perkins (1558–1602), who opened his influential *Golden Chain* with the words, "The body of Scripture is a doctrine sufficient to live well." In writing this he indicated clearly the new direction in which a substantial segment of Puritanism meant to proceed. Their interest shifted from ecclesiastical and doctrinal concerns to the quality of life which they felt the Christian faith ought to produce, and which they came to refer to as "godliness." They tended to regard the Bible as God's revealed law according to which men and women who profess to be Christians must govern their lives. In time the piety which they read out of the Bible was fashioned into a code of formidable proportions which was expected to govern every aspect of the believer's daily life. The various Puritan directories for daily living ended up as systematic attempts to apply God's law to every conceivable circumstance or moral dilemma which a Christian might encounter.

Not only were parishioners admonished to be watchful about their actions, but also with regard to their thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. In the hope of coming to know more perfectly their real selves they often kept diaries, which were treated as reminders of both their progress and their failings respecting their religious pilgrimage. Like other mortals, of course, they did not always succeed in walking with complete constancy upon the straight and narrow path that was of such importance to them. Hence on September 12, 1587 Richard Rogers (1550?-1618), one of the great systematizers of Puritan godliness, wrote into his diary: "This noon I felt a strong desire to enjoy more liberty in thinking upon some vain things which I had lately weaned myself from."

Puritan piety was infused with a seriousness which is astounding, and to the modern mind little short of distressing. Thomas Fuller says of Perkins, for instance, that in his sermons "he would pronounce the word 'Damn' with such an emphasis as left a doleful echo in his auditor's ears a good while after." The full intensity, however, with which Puritan preachers appealed to their congregations is well portrayed by a brief quotation from the famous *Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live* by Richard Baxter (1615–1691): "Once more," he tells his readers in the preface, "in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it to the standing lines to convert you or condemn you: to change you or rise up against you."

This, then, was Puritan piety. It put emphasis upon thoroughgoing repentance, a sincere religious commitment, the meticulous observance of God's law as found in both the Old and the New Testaments, including a stringent observance of the sabbath, and the progressive cultivation of a godly character (sanctification). The Puritan sermon, instead of being "witty" (by which they meant that it was learnedly ostentatious), was direct, often ruthlessly honest, witheringly earnest, and calculated to bring about the above mentioned results in the lives of people. Pastoral work, which had been well nigh forgotten except for the essentials of marrying and burying people, was greatly emphasized and designed to reinforce the message of the pulpit through personal contact and explicit exhortation.

Out of Puritanism issued a veritable stream of devotional literature, which was meant to comfort, reprove, exhort, and edify the believers in their daily bouts with the allurements and temptations of the world they were living in. A part of it were such classics as Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, Immanuel Sonthom's *Golden Gem*, Daniel Dyke's *Mystery of Self-Deceiving*, Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and among Baptists John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. These and similar works soon found their way into both the Reformed and Lutheran Communions on the continent, where they had significant influence.

In time these developments led to what came to be known as Precisianism. Geographically it is associated with the Netherlands and various sections of northwestern Germany. Gradually, Reformed Protestantism, having issued from Zwingli in Zurich and Calvin in Geneva, had established a dominant position in this area. While each territorial church had its own separate identity all of them were part of the Reformed communion and hence tied together by a spirit of mutual appreciation and loyalty which

crossed political divisions. The intellectual centers of Utrecht, Leyden, and Franeker in Holland exercised theological leadership throughout the region.

During the seventeenth century the Reformed communion, like Lutheranism, found itself ever more tightly in the grip of a lifeless Orthodoxy. Reason was employed in the establishment of theological propositions, and hence exalted, while feeling was largely ignored. The major emphasis in the churches was on right belief as set forth by the theologians. Calvin's concern about the Christian life was paid only lip service. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the Reformed churches were "preferred" churches, i.e., folk churches, closely associated with the state, with the implications for church membership previously noted. In this setting the temptation was strong to conform church life to prevailing culture patterns. The message of the pulpit tended to project and defend accepted theological doctrines, while it adhered uncritically to generally accepted conventions and values. Any attempt on the part of a member of the clergy or laity to insist on a more strenuous ethic, purportedly based on the New Testament, was widely decried, and often mercilessly opposed, as "Precicianism," a term initially meant to have perjorative connotations.

Precicianism, then, was a movement within the Reformed communion of seventeenth century Holland and its theological dependencies during the time between Puritanism and the classical period of Pietism, its aims and objectives having close affinities with both. Because of its evident correspondence with later Pietist aspirations it is often referred to as Reformed Pietism, though the terminology was still fluid in the 1600's.

On the one hand, Precicianism developed out of native religious traditions, notably the spiritualism of an earlier day. After all this was the home of much of the older mystical piety. On the other hand, it was also indebted to the Puritan tradition described earlier. Within Precicianist circles the devotional literature generated by Puritanism was greatly valued and England was viewed by many as the seat of true piety. As a result many of the Puritan works were translated and thus made available to many of the people in the churches.

Dutch church historians tend to think of Willem Teellinck (1579–1629), and perhaps his brother Eewout, as giving the original impulse to Precicianism as a movement. Willem made at least two trips to England, where he found lodging in a Puritan household. He was so impressed by the Puritan way of life that he described it in some detail in his *Housebook*, summing up his observations with the following remark: "The fruits which were brought forth by these religious exercises were of such a kind that the genuineness and purity of this sort of religion could be clearly established. For one could see here how faith was strong and active through love in various ways: in the quiet doing of one's professional duties, in charitable deeds for the poor, in the visiting of the sick, in the comforting of the worried, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the punishing of the wrongdoers, in the encouraging of the downhearted."

Willem Teellinck was not only a very effective preacher, but he worked tirelessly in an effort to write a set of devotional tracts for his people. In them he appealed to his readers to practice the kind of piety which he had come to regard as normative for the Christian and of which he had seen a demonstration in England. His chief concern was that every Christian should live the new life in Christ, which includes the careful control of all natural desires, the irradiation of every bad habit, the ordering of one's life according to the ethic of the Bible, and the patient acceptance of the ways of Providence. In contradistinction to the Puritans, however, he had a great deal to say about the profound satisfaction and joy which accompanies such an approach to daily living. Looking beyond his immediate parish he did not stop short of exhorting the leadership of the nation, including the political establishment, to obey God so as to be truly able to serve the people as it ought.

The outstanding theologian of the movement was William Ames, or Amesius (1576–1676), as he was often called in the Netherlands. He was born in Norfolk, England, received his theological training at

Christ's college in Cambridge, and his favorite theological mentor was William Perkins. In time he occupied the position of professor of divinity at Franeker. His famous *Medulla Theologiae* was not only used as a text for his students at Franeker, but in various other places, among them both Harvard and Yale in the American colonies. Following closely in the footsteps of Perkins he taught that theology is not simply concerned with making assertions about God; it deals, rather, with the knowledge of how one ought to live for him; nor is the highest aim of Christians, to be the blessed life, but the good life. Essentially faith does not consist in intellectual assent to theological propositions, as was taught by Orthodoxy, but in "the resting of the heart in God." The new life in Christ is entered into through "conversion," eschews all sins of the heart, sins of the mouth, and sins of work. It finds its deepest satisfaction in union with Christ. Reason must be guided by faith, otherwise it will go wrong, for "the devil is the best metaphysician."

Perhaps the greatest preacher among the Precilianists was Jodocus van Lodensteyn (1620–1677). His major concerns are given expression in the title of one of his books: *Spiritual Awakener, Meant for a Christendom Which Lacks in Self Denial, Is Dead and Spiritless*. It is a book of sermons in one of which the author insists that "one is only converted when one does no longer seek his own will or advantage, when one is wholly for Christ, so that one does not even wish to seek heaven." "Not that such a person is then fully perfect," he writes in another place, "but he desires to be perfect and realizes that he cannot excuse himself because of his imperfection." Strong feelings of joy may be experienced by the Christian, but they are not the goal of a person's spiritual pilgrimage, and the attempt to strive for them directly is egotism. What is really important for the Christian life is the doing of God's will as revealed in Scripture.

The great trio of Precilianists was followed by many others who took their cue from them. One of them, Jean de Labadie (1610–1674), brought into the movement the enthusiasm of Port Royal, a Roman Catholic community whose mystical piety was finally condemned by the papacy. Labadie ended up as a separatist, who in imitation of the New Testament pattern, established "house churches" in order to further the cause of Precilianism. His very prominent disciple and chief defender was Anna Maria van Schürman, one of the outstanding women of the age. At Geneva, where Labadie was a popular preacher for a season, Philip Jacob Spener, thought by many to be the originator of pietism, made Labadie's acquaintance and frequently heard him deliver his fiery sermons. Conditions in Germany prior to the rise of Pietism must be seen against the background of the Thirty Year's War (1618–1648), a confused and confusing struggle in which foreign armies criss-crossed German territories and tyrannized the population. Multitudes fled before the onslaught of the plundering soldiery and sustained themselves by begging, robbing, and destroying anything that stood in their way. Famine and disease followed in their wake and further decimated the population, so that whole villages were simply wiped out. One of the worst features of the war and its aftermath was the decline of moral sensitivity. "Old and young," one pastor complained, "can no longer tell what is of God or of the devil, poor widows and orphans are counted for dung, like dogs they are pushed into the street, there to perish of hunger and cold." Nor did the churches seem to be in a position to give much help. Largely under the sway of theological Orthodoxy their energy was chiefly spent upon doctrinal disputes far removed from the needs of the people. Sermons were likely to be exercises in polemics, intended for congregations that largely absented themselves from Sunday morning worship: Clergy salaries were paid by the state and there was little incentive to go beyond the basics of pastoral responsibility. In the history of Lutheranism, the period of 1575–1675 leaves much to be desired with respect to effective preaching, pastoral care, as well as moral guidance and spiritual support of its people, outstanding exceptions among the clergy notwithstanding.

In this fairly dismal religious climate a rising tide of self-criticism within the Lutheran communion began to make itself felt. It was largely directed against prevalent conditions in the church—the intolerance of theologians and clergy, the ineffectiveness of the pulpit, and the almost complete lack of emphasis on standards of Christian conduct. How much of this criticism resulted from reading works on Puritan and Reformed piety, and how much of it is to be attributed to impulses found in the Lutheran reformation itself, is not clear at this moment. Because of the high esteem in which Luther was held one may assume that the attempt to return to the Reformer himself was of primary importance. What is certain is

that in time men came to the fore such as Stephan Praetorius (1536–1603) whose ***Spiritual Treasure Chest*** contained a whole chapter on “the virtuous life,” and whose fervent, joyful faith must have been felt as a welcome relief from the dullness of scholastic polemics in the pulpits of Lutheranism. Mention must also be made of Philipp Nicolae (1556–1608), who began to talk about love for God and the need of a holy life. Of considerable importance, too, is Valentine Weigel (1533–1588), who, though terribly maligned as a theosophist, put emphasis on the new birth and the new life in Christ, and had, therefore, much to do with the rise of a new concept of piety among Lutherans.

The real champion, however, of a new religious climate among seventeenth century Lutherans, a climate which began to take seriously the ethical dimensions of the Gospel, was John Arndt (1555–1621). Inspired especially by the fervor and piety of earlier mystical works, which he regarded as compatible with historic Lutheranism, he wrote his famous devotional classic ***True Christianity***. As he stated in the preface he produced this book to show Christians “wherein true Christianity consists, namely, in the proving of true, living, active faith through genuine godliness.” Arndt was much concerned about “true repentance,” renewal of the individual “from the inside out,” and about union with Christ which results in dying to self and living a Christlike life.

Though Arndt found himself initially opposed with great vehemence, his ***True Christianity*** gradually won the day. In time it became the most widely read devotional book within Lutheranism and hence began a trend within the Lutheran communion the effects of which are still felt today. Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705) translated Labadie’s ***Manual of Piety*** into German. He was acquainted with various devotional classics which had come out of Puritanism, but he wrote his famous ***Pious Desires*** originally as a preface to a new edition of Arndt’s sermons on the Gospels. The year was 1675 and Pietism as an historical movement was now on its way, eventually making itself felt not only among Lutherans, but also in the German Reformed churches, as well as among various separatists

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

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## Pietism: The Gallery - Thumbnail Sketches of Important Leaders in the Pietist Movement

### Johann Arndt (1555–1621)

Considered by modern historians to be the true father of Pietism, Johann Arndt surely was responsible for transferring Luther's doctrine of the Word into an ethical concern. The son of a Lutheran minister, young Arndt chose to study medicine but a serious illness brought him to read theology and study the Scriptures. In 1583 he became a pastor and continued in that role until 1609 when he was made a Lutheran general superintendent. His chief influence came through his highly effective preaching and his devotional classic, *True Christianity* (1606).

Arndt was influenced by Thomas a Kempis and several German theological writers. He urged his followers in the ministry "to take heed to themselves" by which he meant that pastors must be models of the Christian life. Daily devotions and study of the Scriptures was important; further, sermons should be simply biblical and straightforward. Arndt gave great attention to his own pastoral role: "he was indefatigable in reconciling those at enmity, rousing the lukewarm, instructing the ignorant and rebuking the perverse." The central theme in Arndt's writing was that of the new life in Christ. Christians, Arndt asserted, are to grow in faith and virtuous life until they reach the stature of 'a perfect man in Christ.' There should be a point in each Christian's life when worldliness has been put aside for a will and affection that are wholly committed to God. And, above all else, the love of God and the love of one's neighbor must go together to form a full Christian experience.

### Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705)

Of all the Pietists, Philip J. Spener personifies the spirit and the vitality of the movement. His controversial "collegia pietatis," or Christian renewal groups, at once transformed congregational life in both the Reformed and Lutheran churches and his major work, *Pia Desideria* became a manual for Pietistic reforms. Spener was indebted to Johann Arndt and Jean Labadie, the latter of whom he met at Geneva. In fact, Spener translated Labadie's *Manual of Piety* into German.

Spener was concerned about the lack of vitality in Lutheran congregations. Through his preaching, writing and influence upon other pastors, Spener gradually turned the spiritual tide in German Lutheranism and beyond. In a series of key pastorates at Frankfurt on Main, Dresden, and Berlin, he easily became the most prominent German clergyman of his day. Among the privileges he enjoyed were close associations with political rulers in the House of Saxony and free postal rates as a reward for his work as an effective pastor. In all of his work, Spener believed his ideas were the logical fulfillment of the Lutheran Reformation. He was increasingly concerned with the worldly nature of the church and the overemphasis of the sacraments and the doctrine of justification by faith. Practical suggestions were necessary and he advised local churches to establish pastoral care groups and a functional eldership. Further Spener urged the establishment of devotional and Bible study groups which would raise the level of personal piety. The goal of all these efforts for Spener was to have the contemporary church reflect the early Christian community. Spener was not necessarily original; it was the impetus he gave to Pietism by his own personal influence and reputation that established his leadership in the movement.

### Henrietta Catherine von Gersdorf (1656–1726)

The baroness was Pietism's outstanding hostess and benefactress. She used her Bohemian mountain estate at Gros Hennersdorf as a retreat center for religious leaders of many persuasions to gather and debate their concerns. Men like Philip Spener and Auguste Francke frequently visited her home and knew her to be an evangelical student of the Bible, able to read the Scriptures in Greek and Hebrew. At the death of her husband in 1702 she devoted much of her income to benevolent projects such as the care of widows, orphans and the underprivileged. When her son-in-law died in 1700, Baroness Gersdorf assumed the care of her grandson, Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and she readily exposed him to her Pietist friends. When the young lad grew to manhood, he proudly acknowledged his debt to his grandmother and may well have patterned his community at Herrnhut after his childhood impressions at Gros Hennersdorf. Surely the feeling was mutual: on June 8, 1722 the Baroness Gersdorf personally received the first Moravian emigrants which her grandson Count Zinzendorf had invited to the estate and she took delight in providing them with food, shelter and land for their needs.

### **Auguste Hermann Francke (1663–1727)**

From 1690 to 1725 Auguste Hermann Francke was the intellectual and political leader of Pietism in central and northern Germany. His writings, lectures, church leadership and vision for foreign missions mark him as one of the great leaders of the Post-Reformation period in Europe.

Francke was born in Lübeck near Hamburg in 1663 into a prominent family with a strong interest in university education and civic leadership. His older sister, Anna, was an important influence on his childhood, as she encouraged him to study Pietist literature, notably, Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*. As a young man Francke attended several universities and struggled to find his own identity. In 1686 he joined a Bible club at the University of Leipzig and was soon converted. At Lüneburg Francke came to appreciate Philip J. Spener and considered himself Spener's "dutiful son in the faith."

In 1692 upon the advice of Spener, Francke became a pastor at Gnanha and professor of Oriental Studies at the newly established University of Halle. In the next two decades he created a model educational community which supplied pastors and teachers for other communities, with the same zeal for religious and moral renewal found at Halle. Because the theologian was primarily concerned with a changed life in the Christian experience, he laid great stress on practical theology. The core of his curriculum was intensive Bible study in conjunction with membership in a Bible club.

As a pastor he led a strenuous church program. He preached five times a week, held daily catechetical classes for the youth, and published a religious magazine for his parishioners. He was also keenly interested in foreign missions and he produced a new spirit of ecumenism throughout Europe. His contemporaries recalled him as an uncommonly kind and gentle man who was genuinely concerned about everyone's problems.

His *Autobiography* lays the groundwork for a ministry which he described as "a life changed, a church revived, a nation reformed, and a world evangelized."

### **Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714)**

Among Pietists, Arnold was considered a radical because he demanded such a vivid change in life for Christians. Born in Annaberg, Arnold was educated at Wittenberg, the citadel of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Later, he came under Spener's influence at Dresden.

Early in his career he bitterly attacked the established churches and produced a spate of remarkable literary achievements, including a *History of Heresy* and twenty others. In this period his overriding concern became a life of simple piety, consisting of love for God and man. With the blessing of Philip Spener, Arnold married Anna Sprögel in 1701, hoping to have a spiritual marriage, to his consternation the couple had a child which ruined Arnold's plans to devote his energies entirely to religious matters. Eventually, Arnold accepted a church and became a Lutheran Superintendent.

With Johann Arndt and Jacob Boehm as his models, Arnold divided all theology into two categories, Aristotelian and mystical, or experiential. For Arnold the latter was supremely important because it allowed the awakened Christian to be a theologian. True Christianity involved a radical experience of rebirth and a "thorough cleansing of the heart." To his discredit in the eyes of mainstream theologians, Arnold also felt

that a Christian's devotion to Christ must be all-embracing and consuming and he described this relationship in erotic terminology. Later in life, this radical Pietist tempered his criticism of the Lutheran tradition and he urged the reform of Lutheranism from within.

### **Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752)**

Bengel brought to the Pietist family a strong interest in biblical exegesis and he became the leading biblical critic and scholar of his era. As a young person he read the writings of Arndt and Spener and absorbed their religious warmth. In his work as a local pastor and teacher at a cloister school in Denkendorf, Bengel carefully applied the historical method to biblical studies in an attempt to recover a completely reliable text: he was convinced of the absolute religious authority of the Scriptures. He also taught that the Bible is only rightly understood after personal regeneration and careful research. In his own research he hoped to extricate the historical context of the Scriptures from centuries of theological controversy in the church. His rule "the more difficult textual reading is to be preferred over the easy one" was a model for later biblical scholars.

Bengel emphasized the study of Bible prophecy. He considered the book of Revelation to be a blueprint for the future and biblical prophecy to be prefigured history. He calculated the date of Creation to be 3939 B.C., but stopped short of predicting the date of the final judgment, though he appeared to believe that it was imminent in an era of broken values and post-war instability. Since Bengel taught that all history is God's history, he helped his countrymen to rise above many of the frustrations of human existence. In his autobiography Bengel wrote, "My ambition was exclusively directed toward doing faithfully whatever was at hand ... according to the ability which God has given to me." Little wonder that John Wesley referred to Bengel as "that great light of the Christian world."

### **Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1692–1747)**

Frelinghuysen was a font for the "Great Awakening" in America. Born in Westphalia, Germany, Theodore was the son of a German Reformed pastor who ministered in the Lower Rhine Valley and under the influence of Pietists at Utrecht and Herborn. At an early age, Theodore expressed interest in the ministry and his father and another pastor assisted him in entering the Dutch University at Lingen. After graduation, Frelinghuysen served a church in East Friesland and he then emigrated to New Jersey in America. From his pulpit (actually a multiple church charge) in the Raritan Valley, he stressed the need for individual rebirth, in a theological approach which he called "experimental divinity." Additionally, he demanded evidence of conversion as a requirement for communion and he encouraged private individual devotions. Because he met with stiff opposition from the well-to-do farmers and lawyers, Frelinghuysen easily concluded that "the largest portion of the faithful have been poor and of little account in the world."

### **Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760)**

Born into Austrian nobility, Zinzendorf was influenced by pietistic preaching and literature as a child. Although he desired a theological education, his family prevailed upon him to enter law and become a political leader in the Court of Saxony. In 1722 he acquired an estate in Lusatia which became a haven for refugee Hussites from Bohemia and Moravia. At the Count's insistence, the group formed an ecclesiola within the Lutheran ecclesia and called themselves the "Unites Fratrum" or Moravians. Zinzendorf himself became preacher and later bishop in a flourishing community called Herrnhut (The Lord's Protection). Their peculiar style involved a twenty four hour a day communal prayer watch, evangelical preaching, songfests, lovefeasts, and private devotions. Their emphasis upon fellowship instead of creeds allowed them to be more ecumenical than most other contemporary Christians. The Count traveled widely in pursuit of his dream for a "Congregation of God in the Spirit." In 1741–43 he tried unsuccessfully to convince the German Reformed and Lutheran communities in America to join his efforts and he conducted three missionary journeys among the Delaware and Iroquois Indians. Zinzendorf stressed the importance of "experiencing God."

## **Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711–1787)**

When he arrived in Philadelphia in 1742, Muhlenberg found Lutheran parishes in disarray, little concern about spiritual matters and generally incompetent ministers. His important work would become the strengthening of Lutheranism in the colonies and a general spiritual renewal. At first he met with the same ridicule which other Pietist Lutherans had; later as he began to take a stand against drunkenness and immorality, he won widespread acclaim for his positions.

One of Muhlenberg's chief concerns was Count Zinzendorf's plan to unite many of the American German groups under an evangelical Moravianism. His superiors at Halle urged him to do the work of a missionary and plant churches which were faithful to the Augsburg Confession. This he did between the Hudson and Potomac Rivers by itinerating ceaselessly, preparing a uniform liturgy and hymnal and organizing the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the first permanent Lutheran Synod in America. His Pietistic sentiments are illustrated in an observation he made in 1764: "The worthiest, strongest, and most necessary characteristic for the training and emulation of the children of God is the love of Christ... this love must be truly cultivated and imitated by the children of God. In this they must become peripatetics. The more profound the union and love between Christ and the believer, the more vividly will His image express itself in imitation."

## **Martin Boehm (1725–1812)**

Martin Boehm was the son of German immigrants to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The family was active in the leadership of the Mennonite community and in 1756 Martin was chosen by lot to be one of the preachers. He found his task difficult in part because the Mennonite pattern was quite formal and because he lacked assurance of his own salvation. About 1758 as he was plowing a field, he cried out to God for help and "a stream of joy poured over him." His preaching improved and a year later he was designated a bishop. Martin read the writings of German Pietists and he became attracted to the preaching of George Whitefield. At one of Boehm's preaching services in 1767, Philip W. Otterbein, a visiting Dutch Reformed pastor, rushed to the preacher at the close of the sermon and exclaimed, "Wir sind bruder" (we are brethren) which is considered the origin of the United Brethren in Christ. Boehm severed his connection with the Mennonites in 1777 because of a censure for his pietistic doctrines and preaching style and his association with other denominations. After Francis Asbury arrived in America in 1770, Boehm was closely affiliated with the Methodists, though with a German language persuasion.

## **Hans Nielsen Hague (1771–1824)**

Hans N. Hague, the father of Scandinavian Pietism, was born April 3, 1771 on a farm in southeast Norway. He was raised in a Christian home which was characterized by deep piety. In his childhood the Scriptures, great Church hymns, and the writings of Luther and Arndt were a part of his heritage. Hague was deeply interested in spiritual matters in his youth, and because of some close brushes with death, had a serious outlook on life.

On April 5, 1796, Hague had a profound spiritual experience. He was working under the open sky and singing from memory the second verse of "Jesus, I Long for Thy Blessed Communion." Suddenly his mind was exalted, his soul was filled with the Spirit of God. He regretted that he had not served the living God as he should, and he became aware that nothing in this world was worthy of any regard save serving God. He sensed a burning love for God and his neighbor, and had a special desire to read the Scriptures and to bring the message of salvation to others.

Hague began immediately, and with dramatic results, to share his experience first with his own family, then in his parish, and then for eight years he traveled at least 10,000 miles throughout Norway, by foot, ski, and horseback, holding meetings, speaking to individuals, families, and groups large and small. He emphasized the need for genuine repentance, and for true conversion which results in a genuine transformation of a person's life.

He was an amazingly practical man, skilled as a cabinetmaker, carpenter, beekeeper, and blacksmith, and



later he started salt works, paper mills, and a trading company with its own fleet of ships. He often used his skills to gain the spiritual attention of his audiences and he helped to raise the status of the common people both economically and politically. But his primary concern was to reach the hearts of people with the love of Christ.

Hague often ran afoul of the authorities. Local pastors largely opposed him. They saw him as a threat, although Hague always urged loyalty to the established church. An old ordinance was used against him which placed severe restrictions on religious meetings not authorized by the official clergy. Hague was arrested ten times during his eight years of ministry for brief periods. In 1813 he was found guilty, and was sentenced to two years of hard labor and the cost of the trial. Hague appealed, and the sentence was finally lessened. Despite poor health, Hague continued to speak and write. The attitude toward him by many of the bishops and clergy began to change dramatically, and some even came to him to seek his counsel.

In his latter years he enjoyed increasingly popular appeal. His last words, said to his wife, were "Follow Jesus" and "O Thou Eternal God."

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

### Reborn in Order to Renew

The Pietists' emphasis on the new birth and biblical authority had startling implications as to how one treated orphans, the lower classes and one's opponents. Orthodoxy was not enough. A changed life was required.

C. JOHN WEBORG John Weborg, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Theology at North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois.

It is customary to speak of the material principle and the formal principle of the Protestant Reformation. The **material** principle answers the question, "How are sinful human beings saved or justified before a holy God?" The answer: on the basis of Christ's death alone, made possible by grace alone and received by distraught sinners by faith alone. This is the content of the gospel, the "material" of Christian life and thought as preached by Luther and Calvin.

The **formal** principle has to do with authority. On what basis can one know that God is gracious, that He freely wants to have mercy on people? The answer: on the basis of scripture alone.

Sweeping changes took place in the church following such theological reformations. There was no need for indulgences and purgatory. The teaching authority of the Pope was replaced by the authority of scripture alone. The mass was shorn of any notion of a redeeming sacrifice. It was now celebrated as a thanksgiving for a redeeming sacrifice completed. The words of institution, "This is my body... This is my blood" were more proclamation than consecration. The list could go on. The material of the faith and the formal character of authority underwent identical changes. They were simplified and made single: one redemption, namely by grace alone; one authority, namely scripture alone.

The twin principles of the Reformation figured highly in Pietism but not without change and development. The language of salvation changed from its forensic, legal character to a more biological and organic type of expression. No Pietist would deny or disregard the gospel of the justification of a sinner by the free grace of God. But a Pietist would express reservation as to the sufficiency of the language of justification to encompass the scope of God's saving activity.

For one thing, it has a more formal than relational character to it. For another, it is more external than internal as regards its effects on people. It is the formal and external character that Johann Arndt, the "grandfather" of Pietism, came to recognize as a potential threat to the religious life. Arndt had noted that Luther's preaching of the free grace of God, founded on Jesus' complete sacrifice for sin and received in faith, had released people from fear. People had feared that their good works were not sufficient or done in the proper spirit leaving God displeased with them. People also feared long stints in purgatory and the power of the church over them and their eternal destiny.

In Arndt's *True Christianity*, he lamented the opposite situation in his day. There was no fear of God at all. The people of the Lutheran lands had been baptized, catechized and communed. In all of this, the formal and external word of justification had freed them from the bondage of sin. What had happened was that the **religious** and the personal, experiential dimensions of justification by grace through faith were missing. What was missing was **awe** before a holy God—the God before whom Luther fell down as dead, and at the same time, a profound and mysterious gratitude for a grace that freely reached out to the alienated and to the wicked offering justification before God, self, and others. What Arndt saw as the perversion of justification we would call presumption. When the grace and mercy of a person are taken for granted, they are insulted and made fools of, or so it seems. Bonhoeffer called it "cheap grace." The

Pietists wanted to restore the religious and the personal/experiential dimensions to the relation between God and persons. If this could be done they reasoned, then a delicate, not a distressing fear would return to religious life. This fear is the fear of presuming on God's grace or of taking God for granted. If that happens the link between grace and gratitude is severed.

So how did the Pietists speak of the material principle? Shifting from legal to biological language, from an external to an internal work of God, the Pietists such as Spener began to stress the "new birth," or the work of God within the person, recreating the person from the inside out (John 3:1–15 and 1 Peter 1). Physical birth is a radically passive act. So is spiritual birth. Just as in physical birth, one being born again (spiritually) neither conceives nor births himself/herself. The chief actor is God. Three stages encompass this work: 1) faith is kindled and issues in new birth, but new birth does not create faith, thus preserving the radical character of God's initiative; 2) such persons are justified and adopted into God's family; 3) the "new person" is made complete in the process of sanctification by means of which one's entire life is brought more and more into the likeness or imitation of Christ.

This summary of Spener's thought can be virtually duplicated in Reformed Pietism. D. Coornhert (1522–1590), a precursor of Reformed Pietism, had written of the new birth as the mortification of evil in persons and the vivification of God's good life in repentent people. Willem Teellinck (1579–1629) continued the theme of regeneration, speaking of Christ as the "new maker." In 1693 J.H. Reitz published his *History of the Re-Born*, a book of sketches of those who had been remade by God's regenerative power. Among the Lutheran and Reformed Pietists, a newer way of formulating God's work was emerging. God was not only good enough to justify persons, he was also powerful enough to change them. Note the language: "new-maker," vivification or resurrection power, regeneration and recreation. Francke brought this to a succinct expression in a 1697 sermon on rebirth: "This (i.e., the doctrine of rebirth) is the very ground upon which Christianity stands." This understanding of the work of God made it possible for Pietists to speak, not only of growth in knowledge but also growth in grace. Clearly, the growth language opens the way to speak, not only of a progressive sanctification but of a perfecting of the saints. The material principle had now acquired a decidedly human as well as a divine dimension. It now even became customary to raise the issue of the righteousness of Christ being imparted to believers and not just imputed to them. People were not only justified, they were changed.

But what of the formal principle, that of the authority of scripture among the Pietists? Following the Reformation, formal questions about the nature of the Bible were raised. What gave it its authority? Increasingly, the doctrine of verbal inspiration became the primary way of establishing the Bible's authority. The words of the authors of scripture, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, coincided with the words of God. What scripture said, God said. The scripture then became more closely related to the theological system, serving as proof-texts for statements of doctrine.

During the period of orthodoxy, around 1580, the relation between scripture and system became even more tightly formed because of the theological conflicts among Protestant groups, each trying to demonstrate that it was the true church. The scriptures became the instrument of strife as Lutheran and Reformed people each tried to show the more scriptural alignment of their confessions. Unwittingly and unintentionally the scriptures became more serviceable to polemics than to serving the spiritual needs of the people in the pew. The people starved.

The Pietists could and did speak of verbal inspiration. But what they did was to reopen the question of the purpose of scripture: was the result of scripture a proof-text, or a provision of spiritual food able to strengthen and serve the growth of faith, hope, and love in and among believers? Of course, the distinction I have made is too neat. But it serves to show that when Pietists opened again the issue of the function of scripture, they took a road other than that of scripture as proof-text.

The word of God was something to be done as well as taught and believed. For Pietists, in addition to lexicons, dictionaries, and commentaries, obedience to the Word was part of the way one brought a text to understanding.

When Francke spoke of the inspiration of scripture he took account of the affections and reason, of intuition and intellect. The Holy Spirit "kindled sacred affections" in the writers, making it "absurd to suppose that, in penning the Scriptures, they viewed themselves as machines; or that they wrote without **any** feelings or perception, what we read with so great a degree of both." Thus the same Holy Spirit who inspires the affections and reason must also **illumine** those who read. Why? In order to understand what the apostles wrote, one must not only love **what** they loved but **as** they loved. The affections participate in the achievement of clear understanding. Interestingly enough, Spener cited Luther to this same effect: one needs to invest oneself with the apostle's mind in order to understand him. What this comes to is the Pietistic contention that in order to understand the scripture from the inside out, one must be reborn. Such an understanding required new affections and a renewed mind.

Since one's affection and intuition lead one on to do the will of God, to experiment with ways to fulfill God's will, the Pietists spoke of obedience as a way to make God's word clear. Three questions were asked of a text in Bible study groups: 1) What does it teach? 2) What does it command? 3) What promise or hope is given? Note how those questions empower and enlightened the virtues of faith, love, and hope. This very notion of "doing the word" was informed by the metaphor of metabolism. When food is eaten, the digestive chemicals break down the food so that it can be distributed to and absorbed by, the body tissues. The tissues are built up and kept at full strength. Building on the metabolic process, Francke says, "Remember that you may know no truth in Scripture for which you will not have to give an account (1 Timothy 6:14), of whether you have transformed it into life as one transforms food and drink into flesh and blood."

If in Orthodoxy doctrine was tested by scripture, in Pietism life was tested. The formal authority of the Reformation was brought into direct relation to one's behavior, thought, and affection. For this reason, it is often said that the Pietists wanted to complete the Reformation. What started as a reformation of doctrine needed to be completed in a reformation of life.

How then was theology to be practiced? For a focus of this practice, Spener set his eyes on the church. He lamented an essentially negative Christianity. By that he meant that there was an outward conformity to standards ecclesiastical and political. Initiatives of love were missing. Example: class distinctions fostered the custom of changing the water between the baptism of the children of the peasants and the nobility. Conforming to custom was a compromise of the sacrament, yet the service was orthodox and no law or custom was upset. As for the polemics among Christians, who had the courage to ask if doctrine was the only concern when looking for true Christianity? He further lamented a view of the sacraments meets that placed one's trust in the sheer fact of one's baptism without raising the question as to whether one had truly remained in the covenantal relation of baptism. Then there were the persistent problems of drunkenness, of lawsuits, and of pastors who gave no care to their people but who only functioned in formal and ritualized ways.

The material principle gave Spener a clue as to possible ways for renewal. As justification and new birth had served as models for understanding the redemption of persons, a model was needed for the renewal and regeneration of the church. When the Pietists made the "new birth" the operative model for God's redeeming work, they derived from it the notion of renewal from the inside out. What starts small, develops. Applying this model to the church situation, Spener sought a way to renew the church from the inside out. In his thinking, one could begin in a small way and with a few people and watch the "practice of theology" bear fruit.

What emerged was the conventicle, a small group of people who met to discuss the Sunday sermon and to make application to their lives. There was an opportunity to discuss scripture, using the three questions mentioned previously. Naturally, such a gathering was not complete without prayer. This gathering acquired the technical name of **ecclesiola in ecclesia**, the little church in the big church. What Spener counted on was that this gathering of the reborn ones could engender new life in the entire parish. In this view he differed from the Anabaptists who tended to think that the only true church was

the little band of the faithful (the *ecclesiola*). For Spener, the little church had instrumental value. It was the material principle, the work of redemption, at work in the congregation.

What of the formal principle, the principle of authority to embark on such an active pattern of renewal? Spener's favorite phrase was that God had promised "better times for the church."

The Pietists believed that the promises were to be acted upon, not just waited upon. God's promise was organically related to the church and to the church's obedience to His word and will. Luther had spoken of faith as a "busy, active, mighty thing." Together with Luther, the Pietists put Galatians 5:6 into operative terms: "...faith that is active in love." Francke spoke of "risk-taking faith," not just believing faith. Hence Spener, if ever so modestly, gave faith an operative mode, acting on God's promise for better times for the church. What were the occasions Spener proposed through which faith could experiment, bringing God's promise and the human situation into organic relation?

First, a greater use should be made of the Bible than just the pericope texts assigned to the Sundays of the Church Year. The conventicle provided an additional setting for increased awareness of the Bible. In the context of the conventicle, Spener averred that pastors have a singular opportunity to both learn to know and be known by their parishoners. The setting was ideal. All were under the authority of the same Word of God and under the illumination of the same Holy Spirit. He spoke of this as "bonding." Take a moment to reflect on the revolutionary character of this proposal in a highly stratified society. No doubt this very setting made possible the change in address to the clergy from "Herr Pastor" to just "Pastor" or the even more familial "brother" and "sister."

The concern for knowledge of scripture made itself evident in other ways. Pietists were leaders in the science of textual criticism, with Johann Bengel of Wuerttemberg sometimes being called its "father." In the Preface to his *Gnomon* (i.e. Pointer), a commentary on the New Testament, he recorded his scientific principles of textual study. During his time (1687–1752) he is credited with having established the finest Greek text of the New Testament available. Bengel's concern for the printed text was matched by Francke. At the University of Halle one could study the biblical languages for a four to six year period. It is little wonder that this linguistic training proved its worth in the work of missionaries which Halle sent out, for they were expert in making the scripture available in the language of the people they served. On the homefront, a more extensive use of the scripture was facilitated by the printing efforts carried on at Halle. Between 1717 and 1723 over a half million writings were distributed throughout Germany, including 100,000 New Testaments and 80,000 complete Bibles. Publications had reached Siberia and became part of a revival among Swedish prisoners of war captured by Peter the Great. Upon repatriation, these Swedes brought new life to the Swedish religious scene.

Second, Spener proposed a more extensive use of the spiritual priesthood. By their baptism all Christians had been consecrated kings and priests. What was missing was the exercise of this office. Spener's treatment of this subject is interesting. In an exposition of Luther's catechism, one of the places he treated this doctrine was in a peculiar spot, namely in relation to the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." My interpretation of this arrangement is this. Priestly work is a life-giving work. One kills by failing to nourish hope, by killing incentive when one remains impersonal and detached, or by conducting oneself in an intimidating manner. The exercise of the spiritual priesthood is carried out faithfully when one speaks encouraging or admonitory words to another. A priest breaks a guilty silence. A priest waits in silence with another when it is appropriate. In this way they are Christ to each other and speak God's word.

There are other spinoffs from this doctrine. In the conventicle, women and men could speak, a source of no little criticism for Spener. Where this prevailed, baptism, the source of the priesthood of all believers, was given its proper authority. Since all were priests of God, something needed to be done to help people develop their gifts. The Pietists pioneered in vocational education and moved toward classroom instruction in the German language, not Latin. In this way the Pietists sought to help Christians develop

their sense of vocation as a calling from God. If all Christians took this seriously think of how the church's ministry is both diversified and multiplied. A preacher-centered church is not a part of the Pietist vision.

Third, it was not enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consisted in practice. But for Pietists, even practice needed a spiritual dimension. A favorite means for discerning a proper quality of service was to use the designations "hireling" and "shepherd" from John 10. A hireling was not only a blatant thief. Hirelings could also be subtle. At the orphanage in Halle, childcare workers were called hirelings if their work was merely professionally competent and not personally involved. Such detachment was incapable of engendering new dispositions in the children. When love is tested, the worker does not get testy. Only when love is questioned and one's commitment tried does steadfast love come through. Steadfast love was what the orphans knew nothing about. So the wisdom of Spener was vindicated, namely that if Christians were not priests to each other they might have been each other's murderer. Hirelings could not have been sources of regeneration but they could have gradually moved others in their care to a fatal resignation or to despair.

The practice of love was corporate as well as personal. At Halle for example, the industries and shops of the city were pressured to take orphans as apprentices in the various trades. The guilds of these various crafts objected strenuously, which might have been one of the first examples of an affirmative action program, started by Pietists no less! The proportion of this issue is striking in its magnitude, considering that in the space of three years the number of orphans cared for at Francke's orphanage had grown to 100. Within the institution, the personhood of each child was enhanced in every way. Contrary to accepted procedures, each orphan was given a bed, a practice that was ridiculed as extravagant. But not to Pietists. Only hirelings fostered the impersonal. The practice of love, personally and institutionally, was the most humanizing endeavor of all.

Fourth, renewal of the church and community called for care in the exercise of religious disputes. Interestingly enough, Spener linked this proposal to the matter of conversion. As I read Spener, the erring and the people with whom Christians have disputes were won for the gospel more by demeanor than by argument. Such persons were neighbors and brothers by the right of creation. Think of the world view in those words! Whatever is done, good or ill, is done to a family member. Cold argumentation is an act of depersonalization; it hardens rather than regenerates.

The last two of Spener's proposals concern pastoral training and the nature of preaching. Relying on biological and organic metaphors, he referred to the seminary as a nursery (not the infant variety, but the horticultural type). What he wanted was a setting for education as much as the content of it. The setting was important because that was where the spirit was either killed or given wings, to cite Gregory of Nazianzus. Student life and the demeanor of faculty are part of the setting, the "soil" of the nursery. In order to cultivate the "seedling," the professor was for practical purposes a spiritual director as well as a teacher. Spiritual exercises were to be taught as much as content of courses. Students were to accompany professors on pastoral visitation. In a way, what was emerging there is what we call praxis. Education is by doing and then by reflecting on the meaning and significance of what has been done. Furthermore, the student was allowed to experience himself (sic) in the process of ministering, a crucial element that the Clinical Pastoral Education movement has made into a cornerstone of educational philosophy. Thus as Pietists looked at it, a student not only knows theology but has begun to learn how to know the self. Much of pastoral care has to do with exercising that art and teaching it to others.

The theory was that the preacher required as much preparation as the sermon, because the sermon was directed to the inner person, with the goal in mind to awaken love and fear for God and service to one's neighbor. The preacher (his demeanor as well as his skill) was to the congregation what the professor was to the theological student. Both school and church were nurseries, places conducive to spiritual growth and vitality. The pastor therefore had two ministries: planter of the seed by preaching, and cultivator of the seed by priestly demeanor. And so all Christians have two ministries: planting and cultivating.

Reborn in order to renew. Pietism passed that vocation on to every Christian.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

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## The Roots and Branches of Pietism

Experiencing the Christian Faith

Unlike other major movements in the Christian story, Pietism is difficult to illustrate in a sequential form. Its roots are varied and include the Reformation, Puritanism, Precisianism and Mysticism. Moreover, Pietism was not bound by a single culture, language, or political context as it spread through Europe to North America and beyond. Major Pietist thinkers and writers may be found in the Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic and Radical Reformation groups across a chronological period of a century and a half. Even these distinctions were not discreet altogether, for there were definite relationships between each of the branches of the movement. This chart suggests the chronological and relational dimensions of the major currents and branches of Pietism.

### Reformed Pietism

#### *Progenitor*

Jean deTaffin (1529–1602)

#### *Theme*

"To Renew the Reformed Churches"

#### *Major Characteristics*

Stress on preaching

Emphasize pastoral work

Youth catechism Daily Christian walk

Societal reform

#### *Major Writers*

Gottfried C. Udemans (1580–1649)

William Brakel (1635–1711)

Jean Labadie (1610–1674)

Joachim Neander William A. Saldems (1627–1694)

#### *American Outgrowths*

Michael Schlatter (1718–1790)

Samuel Guldin (1660–1745)

Philip W. Otterbein (1726–1813)

Theodorus Frelinghuysen (1692–1747)

### Lutheran Pietism

#### *Progenitor*

Johann Arndt (1555–1621)

#### *Theme*

"To Complete the Lutheran Reformation"



### ***Major Characteristics***

Emphasize biblical theology  
Importance of the individual before God  
Creation of an ethical dimension  
Optimistic view of history

### ***Major Writers***

John Tarnow (1586–1629)  
Auguste H. Francke (1663–1727)  
Joachim Lutkemann (1608–1655)  
Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705)  
Christian Scriver (1629–1693)

### ***American Outgrowths***

Henry M. Muhlenberg (1711–1787)  
Daniel Pastorius (1651–1720)  
Johann E. Schmidt (1746–1812)  
J.H.C. Helmuth (1745–1825)

## **Moravian Pietism**

### ***Progenitor***

Baroness Gersdorf (1656–1726)  
John Amos Comenius (1592–1670)

### ***Theme***

“To Unite All True Believers with Christ”

### ***Major Characteristics***

Vivid personal experience with Christ  
Missionary emphasis  
Strong Christology  
Ecumenical Christianity

### ***Major Writers***

Nicolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760)  
August G. Spangenburg (1703–1792)  
Christian David (1690–1751)  
John Wesley (1703–1791)

### ***American Outgrowths***

Peter Boehler (1712–1775)  
David Nitschmann (1696–1772)  
David Zeisberger (1721–1808)  
John Ettewein  
(1715–1802)  
Henry Antes (1701–1755)

## **Radical Pietism**

### ***Progenitor***

Pierre Poiret (1646–1719)

### ***Theme***

“To Replace Ecclesiastical Forms with Genuine Personal Experience”

### ***Major Characteristics***

Stress thorough conversion

Centrality of love

Separation from the world

Disdain for human sexuality

### ***Major Writers***

Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714)

Johann Dippel (1673–1734)

Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769)

Heinrich Horch (1652–1729)

Ernst von Hohenam (1670–1721)

### ***American Outgrowths***

Johannes Kelpius (1673–1709)

Conrad Beissel (1690–1768)

George Rapp (1757–1847)

Joseph Bimeler (1778–1853)

## **Mysticism**

Like the medieval mystics, Pietists stressed a true union of God through spiritual exercises and the contemplative life. Unlike the earlier mystics, mystical Pietists like Richard Sibbes, Joseph Hall, and Francis Rous spoke of the saving relationship between God and the individual soul as a gracious gift. Because this relationship was an intimate one, these writers often used terms of endearment in references to God.

## **Puritan Piety**

In the continuing reformation of the English Church, numerous Puritan writers developed Pietistic affinities. Men like William Perkins, Jeremy Taylor, Richard Baxter and Robert Bolton spoke of the need to enliven dead orthodoxy by attending to spiritual exercises and daily devotions. Others like John Bunyan wrote about the Christian life as a pilgrimage. The work of holiness and the doctrine of sanctification received new emphasis, especially as related to the ministry.

## **Precianism**

A pre-Pietist movement in Holland, Precianism was a stress upon the keeping of God's law as revealed in Scripture. Exemplary of this group was Gottfried Udemans who wrote that the "soul of faith was good works." Other Precianists produced manuals for family devotions and spiritual exerc

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Moving on Many Fronts

**Preaching, social concern, missions, ecumenicity were among the major emphases of Pietism.**

GARY SATTLER Gary R. Sattler, Th.D., is Assistant Professor of Christian Formation and Discipleship, and Director of the Office of Christian Community at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

Pietism's primary concern was to carry out the Reformation in the area of Christian living. Pietists felt that the theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries had used the insights and work of the Reformers to establish a solid doctrinal foundation. Now their task was to promote a continuing reformation in the life of the church, and the transformation of the world through the conversion and constant renewal of individuals.

### The Person

Pietist writers took the Fall very seriously and assumed that the world, sin, the devil and the fallen nature of the unregenerate person were ever-present threats to the well-being of both individual and society. By his or her fallen nature the person is surely "lower than a worm," yet because the Creator is good and Christ died to redeem humanity, the person is at the same time "nobler than the angels."

Heinrich Mueller pointed out in his *Heavenly Kiss of Love* that humanity is indeed God's "noblest creation" because not only is human nature united with God's nature in Christ, but because it is so created that it can bear the marks of Christ. Thus, while humanity is totally depraved (that is, is totally incapable of attaining to salvation on its own), there is that within the person which can be "awakened," although this awakening cannot occur apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit in the hearing of the Word of God.

The Pietists took seriously the significance of human emotion and the psyche. Emotionalism was, in fact, fostered to some degree by the introspective, psychologizing tendencies found in Pietism: Who am I? Am I truly a child of God? Am I living in a state of sin or grace? Am I backsliding? Why am I doing this? What are my feelings telling me? Thus while calling for godly lives, Pietist leaders in all walks of life were primarily concerned with the inner person, whose emotional/spiritual condition gave rise to, and was manifested in, those outward signs of godliness.

### Preaching

As the Pietist emphasis on heartfelt faith and right practice was at least in part a reaction to the perceived aridity and theological squabbling of scholasticism, so the Pietist emphasis on the personal, emotional and practical in preaching was a reaction against the practice of using the pulpit to flay one's theological enemies and/or to display one's erudition. The Pietists felt that knowledge of the biblical languages was absolutely essential for the pastor to prepare a meaningful sermon (Francke even encouraged laypersons to learn Greek and Hebrew in order to enhance their personal understanding of Scripture), but the point of preaching was to illumine and inspire the listener, not dazzle him or her with theological formulations and unknown languages. Some preachers went so far as to form small groups to discuss and reflect upon the sermon.

Pietist preaching was directed primarily at those within the Church. In the Church the Pietists tended to identify two basic groups: those who had been born and baptized into the Church yet had little or no true Christian commitment, and those who were born again, or converted. Thus we find two basic

emphases in the Pietist pulpit: conversion, and piety or devotion.

The Pietists' audience, then, was made up primarily of "Christianized" persons, people who for the most part were baptized, catechized, church attending folk. For the Pietists, Christian society was the new, but yet old, Israel. That is, as Israel was God's people but did not follow God's commands and eventually rejected the Messiah, so are those baptized into the new covenant also God's people, but they are an errant, disobedient and unseeing people—until they are born again. Francke wrote that "There is a difference between Christians just as there was in the Jewish people," that is, there were disciples, Pharisees and scribes, tax collectors and sinners. Yet all were "good Jews" and "true Israelites" until John the Baptizer came, called them to repentance and baptism, and made the essential, crucial differences apparent, thus spawning discord, faith, rejection, obedience, division—all manner of responses and consequences. This was exacerbated by Jesus' preaching and is precisely what occurs in "Christian" society when "God's Word is preached in earnest" (presumably by Pietists)—some become scoffers while others follow the light (that is, Pietist ways of thinking, believing and living). Thus one can be a Christian and a "child of the world" at the same time, or one can be a Christian and a "child of God" just, as the Jews were God's people yet were still in a state of unrepentance, or were in obedient faithfulness—depending upon the nature of their response to John's call to repentance or, later, to Jesus' preaching. The sermon can be a decisive event in the lives of individuals and, through their changed lives, in Church and society.

Response was precisely the aim of Pietist preaching. The person trapped in original sin was not only blind, but was incapable of recognizing his or her blindness. The Holy Spirit, who is active in the preaching and hearing of the Word of God, awakens the image of God in the person and reveals the depths to which he or she has fallen. Since fallen humanity is incapable of drawing correct conclusions about the love of God which abounds in creation, the sermon is intended to draw the listener into self-examination. This self discovery in light of God's holiness and love presented in the sermon should make quite clear to the listener just how crucial rebirth is. It is a rare sermon which does not call the church-goer to scrutinize his or her heart and surrender it to God. Johann Porst, one of Spener's successors at St. Nicholas' Church in Berlin used even the dedication of a new organ to exhort people to examine their hearts:

***Well now, dear listeners, are you all taking this occasion to examine your hearts as to how they stand and have heretofore sung before God? If you have merely sung out of habit or not in true devotion of the heart, not in spirit and in truth, and thus without the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, you have deceived yourselves miserably.***

The desired response was either one of repentance and personal commitment, or a renewed desire for holiness manifested in love for God and acts of love for one's neighbor.

For the believer the sermon was not an isolated event. Nor was it a matter which concerned only the preacher. The Pietists stressed the significance of personal meditation on Scripture, small group discussion of Scripture and the sermon, and personal and family preparation for Sunday worship. In a booklet designed to help his parishioners Francke lists, among numerous others, the following suggestions:

***Phooey on the lukewarm ways of our worship service! ... Now when the sermon is going on, reasonably, all the listeners' hearts should be there... Concerning this [the introduction of the sermon], Christian listeners should be right observant so that they may take to heart all the better what sort of subject shall be presented in this sermon. . . Two main vices chiefly occur in the hearing of the sermon, that they either sleep, or chatter with their neighbor...***

The power in Pietist preaching lay in the fact that these pastors were utterly convinced of the truth of

their message and pursued the personal holiness they espoused. The sermons, while basically concerned with conversion and sanctification, convened a wide range of topics from "practical" or ethical issues such as the Christian's duty to the poor, to more "spiritual" matters such as submission to God's guidance.

## **Social Concern**

There was never a question as to whether the Christian is to be involved in the concerns of the world. While the Pietists did not intend to bring about rapid major changes in the political situation, they did in fact intend to change the entire world, including the political realm, through the conversion of all people, including those in the ruling classes.

Johann Arndt, the early German Pietist, had said "Fire burns for the poor as well as for the rich." He was "upset by the crass differences between poor and rich in a Christianity which had fallen so far from the image of the first Christians." In his book *Little Garden of Paradise* he prayed,

***Ah, give me grace that I may help relieve and not make greater my neighbor's affliction and misfortune, that I may comfort him in his sorrow and all who are of a grieved spirit, may have mercy on strangers, on widows and orphans, that I readily help and love, not with tongue, but in deed and truth. The sinner says the wise man ignores his neighbor, but blessed is he who has mercy on the unfortunate.***

The image of God in all people makes race and nationality of secondary importance, and the unity of those in Christ makes, according to Spener, "Poverty ... a stain upon our Christianity." Spener connected the existence of poverty (in a "Christan" nation) with the lack of true piety.

Despite the frequent charges against Pietism of hostility toward the world and other-worldliness, it is at Halle, where Francke was leader, that one finds such "modern" concerns as socialized medicine, health education, the creation of jobs for the unemployed, education for the poor, and the like. Two phrases found frequently in Pietist literature, often connected, are "God's glory" and "neighbor's good" or "neighbor's best." While looking after the good of one's neighbor certainly included evangelization, edification, and correction in spiritual matters, it also had to do with his or her physical well-being. One's neighbor was not only the person next door or the friend in one's small group; neighbor also meant the poor and disadvantaged in one's town.

Francke's sermon, "The Duty to the Poor" illustrates Pietist concern for Christian involvement. In this sermon Francke takes to task members of the ruling classes and the teaching profession for prizing personal honor and financial success over their responsibility to the poor.

***Those who look only to their temporal pleasures and comfort, and thus have no consideration for the poor, have already merited hell in excess and must be with the rich man [in the story of Lazarus in Luke] in torment even though they neither go whoring nor steal nor commit other wrongs.***

In the same sermon Francke dismissed the usual excuses for not giving to the poor: the inability to decide who is really "rich enough" (anyone is rich enough to give to someone less fortunate), the assumption that people are poor because they have wantonly wasted their means and thus do not deserve assistance, and the fear that any money given the poor will be used for unjust ends. In other words, every Christian had sufficient possessions, money or at least good will to give something to those less fortunate. And this was not merely an observation, rather it was an imperative.

With God's glory and neighbor's good as Pietism's main concern, it is not surprising that under Francke's leadership at Halle there appeared an orphanage, two homes for widows, a school for poor children (including girls), free food for needy students, a home for beggars, a hospital, free medicine for the poor, regular visits to prisons and hospitals, and care for the handicapped.

While Pietism manifested social concern primarily in the sort of personal and immediate care mentioned above, charges that it was uninterested in the larger social issues are simply not true. Indeed, Pietists were not involved in protest marches and/or violent revolution, but virtually no one in the churches was active in that way in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were, however, lobbyists and agitators and chaplains. Francke founded the orphanage because he was sufficiently socially astute to see that the waifs whom he tutored and fed were not likely to be rehabilitated so long as they returned to abusive households or had to sleep in alleys. Halle's orphanage was one of the few in its day in which the orphans were not housed with criminals, vagabonds and beggars, and were not used as cheap labor. Rather, they were educated according to their abilities and were treated by a physician whose primary concern was the orphanage.

Aware that the unemployed and disenfranchised were likely to turn to crime, Francke encouraged the wealthy in government positions to establish institutions and programs for the homeless and jobless. As the University of Halle's representative to the funeral of Friedrich I, Francke preached, "You, the mighty, the ruling, and the wealthy are truly pitiable people if you do not have the Spirit of God," and he went on to remind them of their duties to their citizens. He also proposed a new concept of justice within the court system. Law books were to be written in German, trials were to be shortened, and pious judges were to make their decisions according to goodness rather than to the letter of the law. As there was an outer and inner person, so there was an outer and inner court, the court of the letter of the law to which the harsh could appeal, and the court of the gracious God in which the accuser would have to display patience and kindness. As members of the local courts of Brandenburg-Prussia became more involved with Halle Pietism they busied themselves with social concerns. Some began new school systems, others introduced reading lessons to prisons and even knocked windows in prison walls; others erected orphanages after the Halle pattern. The Pietists intended to reform the world by converting its leaders, and one result of conversion is love for individuals and society.

## **Missions**

Missionary activity by no means began with Pietism. Wherever European Christians settled new lands, their pastors attempted to bring the Gospel to the local peoples. It was Pietism, however, which was a prime mover in sending theologically trained people for the express purpose of evangelizing other peoples in non-Christian cultures.

Contrary to popular belief, Pietist missionaries were hardly the culture-destructive, insensitive villains so frequently portrayed in novels and movies. Sigurd Westberg identifies five basic principles of Pietist mission work:

1. Church and school go together. All Christians must be taught to read so that they may read Scripture.
2. The Bible must be available to people in their own language.
3. The preacher must know the mind of the people. To this end missionaries occasionally wrote rather extensive descriptions of local religions and customs as training tools for future missionaries.
4. The point of it all is personal conversion.
5. As soon as possible, a local, indigenous church with its own ministry, must be established.

These five points show a sensitivity and a practical realism not commonly perceived by critics and, it must be admitted, not always put into practice by missionaries. Nonetheless, Pietists took seriously the customs and rights of the cultures in which they evangelized. In Tranquebar, for example, Halle provided medical supplies, equipment, and money to support those who turned to Christianity and thus experienced rejection by family and friends. In the USA, Moravian missionaries requested the permission of local Native American tribes before moving into their territories to proclaim the gospel. Once settled in, they frequently adopted the local customs and life-styles. They also encouraged the establishment and growth of local congregations rather than the expansion of the Moravian "denomination."

## Ecumenicity

Of particular interest is ecumenical involvement in missions. Francke was already in contact with the S.P. C.K. (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) in 1698, the year of its founding in London. Pietists in the courts of England and Denmark were in contact with Halle, seeking missionaries and reports from the field. By 1709 Cotton Mather in New England was in correspondence with Francke in Germany and Pietist missionaries in the East Indies, sharing reports of missionary activity, and raising money for the mission in Tranquebar. Wherever Christians of good will were interested more in bringing souls to Christ than establishing particular denominations, the Pietists were very willing to co-operate. This did not lead to the dissolution of denominational ties, but did facilitate the spread of the gospel and helped prevent unnecessary duplication of effort. The primary goal was to win souls to Christ and to do so in a loving and sensitive way.

We may remember the Pietist view of the person: while culture and custom may be different, we are all one in our creatureliness, fallenness, and need of redemption and subsequent sanctification through devotion to God's glory and neighbor's good. The overwhelming goodness of God and the realities of the human condition should inform our lives as Christians in our preaching (which should invite, challenge and inspire), our social concern (which should begin in our homes and stretch to the ends of the earth), and our missionary activities (which should proclaim the Gospel in love ***in word and deed***, free of cultural, denominational or theological imperialism). When our primary concern is that God be glorified in every aspect of our personal and corporate lives and that God's love be manifested in ministry to ***whole persons*** taking into account their, and our, condition and needs, then we will have learned the most basic implications of Pietism for Christianity, and Christians, today.

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## The Flowering of Pietism in the Garden of America

DONALD DURNBROUGH Donald F. Durnbaugh, Ph.D., is Professor of Church History at Bethany Theological Seminary, Oak Brook, Illinois. His writings include *The Believer's Church: The History Character of Radical Pietism*

Finding expression in America in a bewildering number of forms and denominational expressions, Pietism clearly provided the foundations for much of American religious structure. Its emphasis on the Christian walk, on evident piety, and active and mutual support fit well with the American environment.

### Pietism Permeates America

For many Americans, Puritanism is the classic form of American religion. Early educational influences ensure that stories of the Pilgrims and Plymouth Rock appear at Thanksgiving time. The poetry of Longfellow and Bryant, the essays of Emerson, the literature of Thoreau and Melville—all reinforce this orientation. This is not surprising, for it was New England which provided the basic American stories for understanding itself; the New England schoolmaster taught the nation. Such teachers were not limited to the American Northeast; the McGuffey readers, for example, though written in Ohio perfectly inculcated New England ideals. To this day the Georgian meetinghouse of colonial New England provides the stereotype image for what church architecture should be.

For all of the Puritan emphasis, the case can be made that Pietism with its various branches has played just as important a role in American religious development. On a quantitative basis, those faiths influenced and permeated by Pietism loom as large in the historical record as does Puritanism. In terms of cultural achievement, particularly in hymnody, Pietism has arguably created more advanced works. The Pietist ethic of active and practical Christianity has been more characteristic of American religious orientation than has the demanding Calvinistic theology of Puritanism.

A generation ago scholars led by Samuel Eliot Morison and Perry Miller won a reassessment among academics of the place and integrity of Puritanism. A similar renaissance in understanding is badly needed for the slighted Pietist movement. One of the problems has been the rich variety of Pietist developments, difficult to incorporate into easily apprehended categories. They can be organized into four components: 1) sectarian Pietists; 2) churchly Pietists; 3) Wesleyan Pietists; and 4) communal Pietists.

### Sectarian Pietists

By the end of the 17th century, a variety of religious bodies had members in the American colonies, particularly in the Middle Colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. In 1687 a governor of New York, after listing chaplains of the Anglican, Dutch Calvinist, French Calvinist, and Dutch Lutheran faiths, reported: "Here bee not many of the Church of England; few Roman Catholocks; abundance of Quaker preachers, men and Women especially; Singing Quakers; ranting Quakers; Sabbatarians; Anti-Trinitarians; some Anabaptists; some Jews; in short, of all sorts of opinions there are some, and the most part of none at all." Quite early, those groups singled out for suppression by European authorities as religious dissenters found the freedom of America attractive. Many of these religious groups were infused with Pietist thought and style, while they retained Anabaptist and Separatist distinctives. Several colonies directly recruited these dissenters, for they were known for their industrious work habits and exemplary lifestyles.

Prominent among them were the Mennonites, Dunkers, and Moravians. The Mennonites were the direct descendants of the evangelical Anabaptists of the 16th century. By the late 17th century their earlier



aggressive Anabaptist spirit had been tempered by the quieter, more inward-looking tenets of Pietism. Mennonites had by this time won nearly complete toleration in the Netherlands and tenuous toe-holds in other countries, particularly in several German principalities along the Rhine river. Mass Mennonite emigration from Continental Europe began in 1683 with 13 families who left from Krefeld on the Lower Rhine to seek new lives near Philadelphia. They established near Philadelphia the village of Germantown, which came to be a center for sectarian Pietists. As many of the Krefelders had affiliated with the Quakers before leaving Europe, the first Mennonite congregation was not organized there until 1708.

Yet earlier was an abortive attempt by Mennonite/Collegiants from Holland led by P.C. Plockhoy (1620?-1720?). The Dutchman's colony along the Delaware, settled in 1663, was plundered the next year in the wake of the successful English usurpation of Dutch colonial possessions on the Atlantic seaboard. Though the colony was "destroyed ... to a naile" by the English raiders, Plockhoy and his wife survived. In 1694 they made their way to Germantown, where they lived out the years remaining to them.

Mennonites continued to arrive in the 18th century; this, combined with the natural growth of their prolific families, resulted in expansion. They pushed into the interior of Pennsylvania, into Maryland, the valley of Virginia, and to the Carolinas. Settling slowly across the United States in rural enclaves, Mennonites were known primarily as good farmers, good neighbors, and conscientious objectors to war. They experienced a marked revival and renewal in the 20th century, centered in the "recovery of the Anabaptist vision." A world-wide extension of relief aid and service through the agency called the Mennonite Central Committee was linked with an active program of missions. By the 1980s the Mennonites, though splintered into several different denominations, were a multi-cultural, multi-lingual body of more than 500,000 adult members.

To the Mennonites in colonial America were added the Amish, followers of Jakob Amman (fl.1700) of Switzerland. The Amish had split from the mainstream of Anabaptism in 1693 because Amman, when an elder, demanded greater separation from "worldly" practices and stricter church discipline. Some Amish may have arrived in America before 1720 but the larger immigrations into Pennsylvania came after the mid-1730s. Although rent in turn by several divisions, the Old Order Amish flourish to this day in Lancaster County and other parts of Pennsylvania and have even larger settlements in Holmes County, Ohio.

An associated body was the River Brethren, which took the official name ***Brethren in Christ*** during the Civil War. Of Mennonite background, they borrowed Dunker patterns and created a revival spirit as they developed as a separate body between 1775 and 1788.

The Dunkers or Brethren became a distinct religious movement in 1708 in Schwarzenau, Germany. They formed themselves into a covenanted community much like the Mennonites, although members were originally Pietists from several parts of Germany, Switzerland, and France. The nickname ***Dunkers*** arose from their practice of baptism of adult converts by a triple forward immersion. The first contingent of Brethren arrived in Pennsylvania in 1719; church organization followed in 1723. Several other large migrations ensued, so that by mid-century the movement was completely transplanted to North America.

In contrast to the Mennonites, the Dunkers were quite zealous and were active in revival, renewal activities in the 1730s. A critical contemporary wrote of them that the better-known Great Awakening was preceded by a "tempestuous movement" among the "old Brethren." They "have always been diligent proselyters" who travelled and "preached as far as Virginia," speaking of repentance, conversion, and the inward life; they "considered themselves to be the centerpiece of the kingdom of God."

Morgan Edwards (1722–1795), a well-informed Baptist historian and preacher, reckoned the size of the Brethren in 1770 to have reached about 1500 adult members, with five times that many associated in some way. Like the Mennonites, Brethren joined the general tide of westward settlement, reaching the Pacific coast by 1850. Despite a three-way split in 1881–1883, the major body, now known as the Church of the Brethren, flourished in size and activity in the later 19th-century, developing higher education, publications, and foreign missions. It became best-known for an active and extensive program of relief and

rehabilitation through its Brethren Service Commission. Brethren leaders were instrumental in starting a host of service programs later adopted as well by other churches, including the Heifer Project, Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP), and a high-school student exchange.

The Renewed Moravian Church, though never large numerically, has made an outstanding contribution to American life. With roots in the radical reformation of 15th century Moravia, it gathered renewed energy under the charismatic leadership of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) after 1727. Several Moravian communities were established in Georgia (1735), North Carolina (1753), and, especially, in Pennsylvania (1741–42). Although Zinzendorf's ecumenical ventures of the 1740s (Pennsylvania Synods) were not successful in unifying the diverse German-speaking bodies, they did solidify the emerging Moravian church and, paradoxically, stimulated the denominational identity of other groups. Two areas of Moravian achievement deserve specific mention: the sacrificial missionary program among the American Indians—David Zeisberger (1721–1808) and others—and the rich musical and hymnic program.

### Churchly Pietism

Although Pietists of sectarian background tended to come first, in the course of the 18th century most immigrants arrived in the American colonies with established church backgrounds. These were the Lutherans and the Reformed (Calvinists). Ordinarily, the motivations for their exodus from the homeland were economic, whereas the earlier dissenters had suffered from various degrees of official pressure and therefore sought religious freedom. Those from state church backgrounds had more difficult adjustments in the New World than did the dissenters, because the former had to adopt a new pattern of support and personal initiative if they were to have religious support. There was no political authority in the Middle Colonies to insure pastoral appointment and regular worship services.

Given this lack, Lutherans and Reformed looked to the home countries for assistance. The home base for Lutherans was the citadel of German Pietism, Halle in Prussian Germany. Most of the pastors who ministered to Lutherans in colonial America were commissioned and sent out from Halle. Their reports represent the most complete record of early Lutheran church life in America. The outstanding figure, though not the first on the scene, was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711–1787), often called the patriarch of American Lutheranism. His theology was clearly shaped by Hallensian Pietism, as was the case of most of his colleagues.

There was another link between early Lutheranism and German Pietism. A Pietist circle created in Frankfurt on Main by the "father of German Pietism," Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705), purchased land in "Penn's Woods." This Frankfurt Land Company recruited young and learned Dr. Francis Daniel Pastorius (1651–1720) in 1683 to go to Philadelphia as their agent to prepare the way for proposed later colonization on 15,000 acres. Pastorius was one of the first settlers in Germantown and is often called its founder. Although this is exaggerated he was made its first mayor and played a key role in its development. As a Pietist, he felt at home in the Quaker/Mennonite religious meetings; as such he was one of the signers of the famed 1688 declaration against slaveholding, the first such protest in American history. Pastorius was a leading intellectual in colonial Pennsylvania and commented extensively in an encyclopedic commonplace book (still unpublished), which he called the "Beehive," on happenings in this New World. His account of travel to America and conditions there (*Sichere Nachricht aus America*) was published in Europe in 1684 and served to induce other Germans to risk emigration to the colony. As it happened the expected mass migration of the Frankfurt Pietists never took place but there was extensive exchange of correspondence between Frankfurt and Germantown.

Not all Lutherans were sympathetic to Pietism. Indeed, early Swedish Lutherans and some other Lutheran clergy were harshly critical of Pietism and stayed loyal to the orthodox or scholastic school of Lutheran dogma. But it was clearly the Pietist phalanx of Lutheran clergy who created colonial American Lutheranism. Some later immigrations in the 19th century were a different story, as many came as orthodox faithful, determined to escape the rationalist and unionist trend in the homeland.

Yet, there were 19th century Lutheran immigrants who came as Pietists. Two important examples were the (Swedish) Evangelical Covenant Church and the Evangelical Free Church. The Covenant movement began with the established Lutheran Church of Sweden in the early 1800s. Carl Olof Rosenius (1816–1868) edited *Pietisten*, a periodical initiated by an English revivalist, and introduced conventicles where students of the Bible met to edify each other. A veritable revival swept through Sweden. In the mid-19th century, many of these Pietist “readers” migrated to the United States as part of the large number of Scandinavians seeking economic survival. They found each other in North America and eventually developed a separate denominational identity in 1884–85 under the leadership of Carl A. Bjork and Eric Skogsbergh. Bjork was originally a layman, a cobbler by trade, who led worship by reading sermons from the *Pietisten*. Once a member of the congregation, who wished to hear him preach, removed the periodical from the pulpit which forced Bjork to extemporize a sermon. This he did with such freedom and power that several in the congregation were brought under conviction of sin and sought conversion. Skogsbergh became renowned as an evangelist, adopting many of the techniques of American revivalists.

In similar fashion, the Evangelical Free Church was formed in 1950 by the merger of two independent Pietist churches from Scandinavia, the Swedish Evangelical Free Church (formed in 1884) and the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church (1909). The roots of both were earlier revival movements in the homelands. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, is a noted and large seminary sponsored by the church, also known for its missionary activity.

It is necessary to return to the colonial period of American church life, to pick up the story of the second of the “mainline” Protestant bodies of the Reformation Era, the Calvinist or Reformed Churches of German and Dutch descent. The Reformed faithful looked to Europe, as had the early Lutherans, but in this case the sending and supporting base was the *Classis* (district governing body) of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. Although the German Reformed did not have one dominant personality (unlike the Lutherans with H.M. Muhlenberg), two Pietists, the German Johann Philip Boehm 1683–1749) and the Swiss Michael Schlatter (1716–1790), can serve as typical figures. First Boehm, and then Schlatter labored to create a synod to stabilize the church life of the scattered Reformed laity by training and accrediting worthy ministers.

Some of the early Reformed clergy had roots in a separatist form of Pietism, such as Samuel Guldin (1660–1745), who was driven from his native Switzerland because of his outspoken Pietist critique of the church establishment. The most gifted academically of the Reformed clergy in colonial America was Johann Peter Mueller (1709–1796). He, however, was attracted to the Ephrata Community, where he became its leader as successor to its founder, Conrad Beissel.

A more important development for the Reformed persuasion came within the Dutch ethnic element. Here the leading figure was Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen (1692–1748), who figured prominently in the beginnings of the Great Awakening. Frelinghuysen was a German by birth but served a Dutch-speaking congregation in Raritan (Somerville), New Jersey. Although the German and Dutch Reformed elements in American church life were later incorporated into and overshadowed by their English and Scotch Presbyterian counterparts, their contribution to the American religious mosaic is significant.

## **Wesleyan Pietism**

Pietism with a Wesleyan flavor can be described in three categories. The first stems directly from the societies in England founded by John Wesley himself. Another important development flowed from the German ethnics, led by Philip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Jacob Albright. Their efforts resulted in the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association. The third comes from the variegated movements that separated from the main Methodist body.

The connection of John Wesley (1703–1791) and Pietism is both personal and doctrinal. Wesley was profoundly influenced by the Moravians, on the way to his brief mission effort in Georgia, while in Georgia,

and upon his return in disgrace to England. Their influence was evident in the course of his conversion/breakthrough at the Aldersgate society (1738), where his heart was strangely warmed. Wesley traveled to the Moravian headquarters in Germany, and his later organizational ideas bear direct impress of that visit, although he came to differ with them on some points of teaching. "It was his contact with the Moravians ... which gradually turned Wesley the seeker into Wesley the possessor of that experiential 'knowledge' of God which Pietists universally considered basic to the religious life" (Stoeffler).

As far as doctrine goes, there are strong links between Wesley's emphasis upon sanctification, assurance, and perfection and the Pietist emphases on the Christian walk. Also, his tolerance for diversity on minor points of doctrines as long as the heart is right is a basic Pietist attitude. Although scholars have pointed out Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, and mystical influences on John Wesley, there is real justification for counting his societies—and the broader Methodist churches—among the Pietist fold. Further evidence for the influence of Pietism upon the Wesleyan movement is readily found in Methodist hymnody. Many hymns were taken directly from the rich Moravian storehouse of hymns. Moreover, the large number of hymns written by Charles Wesley (1707–1788) exhibit characteristic Pietist language and intention.

Wesleyanism is commonly held to have arrived in America in 1766 with Barbara Heck and Philip Embury in New York and Robert Strawbridge in Maryland. By the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, there were still relatively few members of Methodist societies along the Atlantic seaboard. For that matter their future did not seem bright because of the loyalty of Wesley to the British cause.

Nevertheless, the story of the post-revolutionary Wesleyan movement, which became the Methodist Church, is one of the great success stories of American church life. Under the leadership of Francis Asbury (1745–1816) and the indigenous clergy, the Wesleyan combination of tight organization and open theology was a perfect match for frontier America. The willingness of Methodist circuit riders and other young clerics to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the gospel, along with the evident democracy of a faith which made salvation readily available for all who were willing to accept its severity and discipline, enabled Methodism to grow in geometric proportions throughout the 19th century. By 1844 it had become the most numerous religious body in the United States, with over one million members and eleven thousand preachers.

Philip W. Otterbein (1726–1813) secured his theological education from Herborn, a stronghold of German Pietism of Dutch provenance. Otterbein labored in America as a German Reformed clergyman and was passionately concerned with introducing Pietist teachings and patterns. These included personal examination before communion, prayer meetings, and pastoral visitation. He was closely associated with the Mennonite Martin Boehm (1725–1812) in organizing the United Brethren movement, completed by 1800. This was virtually identical to Wesleyanism, except for the German tongue.

A similar movement was that led by Jacob Albright (1759–1808), known as the Evangelical Association. Albright was "awakened" by a colleague of Otterbein's and sought to share his new understanding of the gospel with other Germans. His followers adopted a Methodist pattern of church polity, but the linguistic barrier was sufficiently high that Albright's movement was not accepted within the Methodist fold. The year 1802 is given for the formal organization of the Association.

Union movements within the Methodist family were thus delayed by ethnic differences. In 1946 the Evangelical Association combined with the United Brethren in Christ to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. This body, in turn, was merged with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church.

Other significant Wesley-related movements diverged from the main stem when it was held that the parent church was becoming too highly organized and too lax in doctrine. Here appear the Wesleyan Methodists (1843), Free Methodists (1860), and the burgeoning Holiness and Pentecostal movements of the late 19th century, which include the Church of the Nazarene (1908), the Assemblies of God (1914), several Churches of God, and others.

## Communal Pietists

A steady counterpoint to the Pietist development has been the hiving of communal movements. Typically, they have taken the renewal emphasis of the parent movements so seriously that only full Christian communalism could satisfy their longing for complete submission. The Plockhoy settlement on the Delaware in 1664 was the first Pietist-related communal experiment, but it was destroyed by outside forces before it had a chance to mature.

Somewhat more successful was the Labadist colony at Bohemia Manor in Maryland, founded in 1683 upon the teachings of the French reformer Jean de Labadie (1610–1674), a key personality in the transmission of continental Pietism. The theologian Peter Sluyter (1645–1722) led the group of one hundred, until commercial motives led to the demise of the colony by 1727.

Clearly a success was the Ephrata Community, which splintered from the Dunkers (Brethren). Led by the brilliant but erratic Conrad Beissel (1691–1768), the “Cloister” (as it is often called) was organized by 1732 in what is now Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It was noted for the excellence of its choral music, its *Fraktur* art, its economic achievements, and its printing press. It was on the Ephrata press that the largest book of the colonial era was produced, the massive *Martyrs’ Mirror* in a German translation, printed in 1748–49 for the growing Mennonite body. Although the community still lives on in the tiny German Seventh-Day Baptist Church, the celibate orders disbanded in 1814. A daughter colony, Snow Hill, at Quincy, Pennsylvania, persisted until the late 19th century.

The early 1800s saw a blossoming of communal creations, largely of Radical German Pietist background. Father George Rapp (1757–1847) directed the establishment of a large colony at Harmony in Butler County, Western Pennsylvania, in 1803–05. (A one-time follower, Dr. F.C. Haller (1753–1828), created a rival community in central Pennsylvania called Blooming Grove.) The Rappite-led Harmonists moved in 1814 to southwestern Indiana to found New Harmony. They developed it to a high degree of completeness in buildings and farmland, before selling the property in 1825 to the Scottish reformer Robert Owen (1771–1858). The Harmonists returned to Pennsylvania to establish Economy on the Ohio River. The community expanded and flourished there remarkably, only to disband under the uncertain leadership of the Duss family in 1898. Several spin-off communes in Ohio, Louisiana, Missouri, and Oregon were created by former Rappites.

Another Radical Pietist settlement, the colony of Zoar in Eastern Ohio, began in 1819 with Joseph Bimeler (1778–1853) as its prophet and leader. The Zoarites survived a shaky start to become an established community, before peaceably agreeing to disband in 1895–98.

In many ways of reckoning the most successful of all was the Amana Society. Created originally in 1714 in central Germany as the community of True Inspiration, the society moved in 1843 to Erie County, New York. The encroachments of the expanding city of Buffalo and the need for more land led in 1854–55 to a planned exodus to the rolling hills of southeastern Iowa where they erected seven self-sufficient villages. The Amana Society of Inspirationists persisted in its full communal life in harmony and prosperity until 1932, when the community was changed into a mutually-held business. The Church Society, however, continues to this day.

Finding expression in America in a bewildering number of forms and denominational expressions, Pietism clearly provided the foundations for much of American religious structure. Its emphasis on the Christian walk, on evident piety, and active and mutual support fit well with the American environment.

Though hampered by a long-standing theological prejudice, Pietism awaits a renewed assessment. It will be impossible for scholars and the general religious public to ignore much longer this broadly-gauged movement which inspired so many of the important religious personalities, institutions, beliefs, and church

bodies in America. These several elements, in turn, were not limited to religious expressions but rather they shaped much of the character of American society.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

## The Wissahickon Hermits

From Robert Borneman, *Fire Hymns from the Hymnbook of Magister Johannes Kelpius (1976)*. Used with permission of Fortress Press.

On the twenty-fourth day of June, 1694, a band of German pietists and mystics landed at the port of Philadelphia. They numbered forty, the symbol of perfection. They had come to the New World from all parts of Germany to find religious haven, but especially, like the woman of Revelation 12:14–17, to go into the wilderness to meditate and prepare for the coming of the Lord. For this reason the Brotherhood was known by the symbolic name, "The Woman of the Wilderness," although they called themselves "The Contented of the God-loving Soul." Their leader was the twenty-one year old Johannes Kelpius, visionary and introspective, a man of great devotion and imagination.

After a brief sojourn in Germantown, the Fraternity settled on a large tract of land "amid the silence and rugged banks of the Wissahickon," whence the names, "The Wissahickon Hermits," and "The Mystics of the Wissahickon." There the members of the Brotherhood meditated and studied, worshiped together in their Tabernacle, and engaged in works of mercy, teaching, tending the sick and evangelizing.

Many of the members were musicians, and had brought musical instruments with them from Europe—strings, woodwinds, brass and keyboard— indeed, they are credited with bringing the first organ to the New World. They regularly used instruments in worship for voluntaries and accompaniment to the singing of hymns, just as did their more famous spiritual successors, the community at Ephrata. A number of them were also hymn writers, the best known being their leader, Johannes Kelpius, whose hymns are contained in two manuscripts of which only one has musical notation. Other writers among the Brothers were Heinrich Bernhard Koster, Johann Gotfried Seelig, and Justus Falckner, whose most famous hymn, "Rise, ye children of salvation," is still sung.

Falckner is especially noteworthy because he was the first Lutheran pastor to be ordained in America. His ordination was an impressive occasion. It took place on November 24, 1703, at Old Swede's Church in Philadelphia in the building that stands to this day. The Wissahickon Brotherhood participated in the service, singing and playing the organ (probably their own), viols, hautboys, trombones, trumpets and kettledrums.

The Brotherhood flourished until the untimely death of its Magister Kelpius in 1708. Attempts to keep it going under other leadership were not successful, and it soon died out.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## From the Archives: True Christianity

Johann Arndt's work is recognized as the first great literary expression of Pietism. In his *True Christianity* he lays the foundation for biblical faith and how the believer must experience the power of faith in a vivid Christian lifestyle.

Text is from *Wahres Christentum (1606)* translated by Peter Erb in the 1979 edition. Used with permission of Paulist Press.

### What True Faith Is

[He who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God.](#)

Faith is a deep assent and unhesitating trust in God's grace promised in Christ and in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It is ignited by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Through this faith we receive forgiveness of sins, in no other way than through pure grace without any of our own merits (Eph. 2:8) but only by the merits of Christ. For this reason, our faith has a certain ground and is not unsteady. This forgiveness of sins is our righteousness, which is true, continual, and eternal before God. It is not the righteousness of an angel but of the obedience, merit, and blood of Christ and becomes ours through faith. Even if it is weak and we are still hemmed around with many sins, these are covered over out of grace for Christ's sake (Ps. 32:2).

By this deep trust and heartfelt assent, man gives his heart completely and utterly to God, rests in God alone, gives himself over to God, clings to God alone, unites himself with God, is a participant of all that which is God and Christ, becomes one spirit with God, receives from him new power, new life, new consolation, peace and joy, rest of soul, righteousness and holiness, and also, from God through faith, man is newborn. Where new faith is, there is Christ with all his righteousness, holiness, redemption, merit, grace, forgiveness of sins, childhood of God, inheritance of eternal life. This is the new birth that comes from faith in Christ. Therefore, the Epistle to the Hebrews in chapter 11:1 calls faith a substance or a certain true assurance of things on which man hopes and a conviction concerning things man does not see. The consolation of living faith becomes powerful in the heart: it convinces the heart, in that one finds in one's soul heavenly goodness, namely, rest and peace in God, so certain and true that one might then die with a happy heart. This is strength in the spirit, in the internal man and the joyousness of faith, or *parrhisia* (Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1 John 2:28, 3:21), that is, joyousness in God (1 Thess. 2:2) and *plerophoria*, a completely unhesitant certainty (1 Thess. 1:5).

When I am to die this faith must strengthen me in my soul and must assure me internally by the Holy Spirit. It must be an inner, living, eternal consolation: it must hold me and strengthen me also as a supernatural, divine, heavenly power to conquer death and the world in me, and there must be such an assurance and union with Christ that is able to stand in either death or life [2 Tim. 1:12; Rom. 8:38]. Therefore, John [in 1 John 5:4] says: **"Everything which is born of God conquers the world."**

Everything that is born of God is truly no shadowy work, but a true life work. God will not bring forth a dead fruit, a lifeless and powerless work, but a living, new man must be born from the living God. Our faith is the victory that conquers the world.

That which man is to conquer must be a mighty power. If faith is to be victorious over the world, it must



be a living, victorious, active, working, divine power: indeed Christ must do everything through faith.

Through this power of God we are once again drawn into God, inclined toward God, transplanted and set in God, taken out of Adam and as a cursed vine placed in Christ the blessed and living line (Jn. 15:4). Thus, in Christ we possess all his goods and are made righteous in him.

Just as a graft is set in a good stem and grows, blossoms, and brings forth fruit in it, but out of it dies, so a man outside of Christ is nothing but a cursed vine and all his works are sins (Deut. 32:32–33): ***Their grapes are grapes of poison.*** In Christ, however, he is righteous and holy. Therefore, Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: ***"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."***

From this you now see that works cannot make you righteous. First, you must be established in Christ through faith and be righteous in him before you can do any good work. See to it indeed that your righteousness is the grace and gift of God that comes before all your merit. How can a dead man walk, stand, or do anything good if someone does not first make him living? Thus, since you are dead in sins and dead before God you can do no work pleasing to God unless you are first made living in Christ.

Righteousness comes alone from Christ through faith, for faith is in man as a newborn, small, naked, and simple child that stands unclothed simply before his Redeemer and Sanctifier, and receives all from him who begot it, namely, righteousness, piety, holiness, grace, and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, if this naked, simple child is to be clothed with God's mercy, it must lift both its hands up and receive everything from God, grace together with all holiness and piety. Receiving this, it is made pious, holy, and blessed.

Therefore, righteousness comes only from faith and not from works. Indeed, faith receives Christ and makes him its own with all those things which he is and has. You must turn from sin, death, the Devil and hell. If you have all of the sin of the world upon yourself, it cannot harm you, for so strong, mighty and living is Christ in you with his merits through faith.

Since Christ now lives and dwells in you through faith, his indwelling is not a dead work but a living work. As a result, the renewal from Christ through faith comes about. Grace brings about two things in you: first, faith places Christ in you and makes you his possession: second, it renews you in Christ so that you grow, blossom, and live in him. What is the use of a graft in a stem if it does not grow and bring forth fruit? Just as once through Adam's fall, through the deception and treachery of the Devil, the seed of the serpent was sowed in man—that is, the evil, satanic pattern of life out of which an evil, poisonous fruit grew—so by God's word and the Holy Spirit faith was sowed in man as a seed of God in which all divine virtues, qualities, and characteristics, in a hidden manner, were contained and grew out to a beautiful and new image of God, to a beautiful and new tree on which the fruits are love, patience, humility, meekness, peace, chastity, righteousness, the new man, and the whole kingdom of God. The true sanctifying faith renews the whole man, purifies the heart, unites with God, makes the heart free from earthly things, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, works love, gives peace, joy, patience, consolation in all suffering, conquers the world, makes children heirs of God and of all heavenly eternal goods and coheirs of Christ. If you find someone who does not have the joy of faith but is weak of faith and seeks comfort, do not reject him because of this but comfort him in the promised grace in Christ. This always remains firm, certain, and eternal. If we fall in weakness and stumble, God's grace does not fall away if we arise again through true repentance. Christ remains always Christ and the Sanctifier. He may be grasped with weak or with strong faith. Weak faith belongs as much to Christ as strong. Whether a man is weak or strong of faith, he is Christ's own just the same. The grace that is promised is common to all Christians and is eternal. On this, faith must rest, whether it be weak or strong. In his time, God will allow you to come to refreshing, joyous consolation, whether he bring it to your heart in a short time or in a longer period (Ps. 32:2–5, 77:8–11). On this see Book II.

## God's Word Must Demonstrate Its Power in Man Through Faith and Become Living

*Lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you* (Lk. 17:21).

Since everything is based on the rebirth and renewal of man, God included everything that must occur spiritually in man in faith in the external Scriptures, and in them described the whole new man. Since God's Word is the seed of God in us, it must bring forth spiritual fruit and it must do so through faith in the manner taught and testified externally in the Scriptures or it is a dead seed and a dead birth. What the Scripture teaches I must experience for my comfort in spirit and faith.

God did not reveal the Holy Scriptures so that they might externally on paper remain a dead letter, but that they might become living in us in spirit and faith and that a completely new inner man might arise. [If this does not occur], the Scriptures are of no use to us. This must occur in men through Christ in the spirit and faith as the Scriptures externally teach, as, for example, in the history of Cain and Abel. In their manner of life and qualities you can discover what is in you, namely, the old and the new man with all their works. These two are opposed to each other in you. Cain always wishes to overcome and drive out Abel. This is nothing other than a battle between flesh and spirit and the enmity of the seed of the serpent and the seed of a woman. The flood must occur in you and this quality of the flesh must be drowned. The faithful Noah must remain in you, God must make a new covenant with you and you with him. The confusion of Babel must not be built up in its pomposity in you. You must leave with Adam and all his family, giving up everything, even your body and life, and travel alone in the will of God, so that you might achieve blessing in the promised land and come into the kingdom of God. This is nothing other than what the Lord said [in Luke 14:26]: ***He who does not leave father, mother, child, sister, house, field, goods, indeed life, cannot be called my disciple, that is, before he would deny Christ.*** You must strive with Abraham against the five kings that are in you, namely, the flesh, the world, death, the Devil, and sin. You must leave Sodom and Gomorrah with Lot, that is, the ungodly life of the world must be denied and you must not look back with Lot's wife as the Lord said in Luke 17:32.

In a word, God gave the whole of the Holy Scriptures in spirit and in faith and everything in them must happen in you spiritually. This is true as well of the battles of the Israelites against the pagan peoples. What is this other than the battle between the flesh and the spirit? The same is true of the whole, external, mosaic priesthood with the tabernacle, with the ark of the covenant, and with the seat of grace. This must all be in you spiritually through faith with offerings, sacrifices, and prayers. The Lord Christ must be all this in you. He has brought this all together in the new man and in the spirit and will perfect everything in faith, indeed, often in tears, for the whole Bible flows together in one center or central point in man, just as all of nature does.

In the New Testament as well, the letters are nothing other than an external witness to that which must occur in faith in all men. The whole New Testament must be completely and totally in us and stir also with power in us, for the kingdom of God is in us. Just as Christ was conceived and born physically by the Holy Spirit in the faith of Mary, so he must be spiritually conceived and born in me. He must grow and come to life spiritually in me. Since I am created a new creature out of Christ, I must also live and walk in him. I must be with him and in him in exile and misery. I must walk with him in humility and the rejection of the world, in patience and meekness, in love. I must forgive my enemies with him, be merciful, love my enemies, do the will of the Father. I must be tempted with him by Satan and I must also conquer. I must, for the sake of truth, which is in me, be slandered, rejected, despised, attacked, and if it is necessary I must suffer death for his sake as have all his saints, as a witness to him and all the elect that he was in me and I in him and that I have lived through faith.

To be properly conformed to the image of God is to be born in him and with him, to put on Christ properly, to grow and mature with him and in him, to live in misery with him, to be baptized with his baptism, to be despised with him, to be crucified with him, to die and rise again with him, to rule and have dominion with him, and to do all this not only by bearing a holy cross but also by daily repentance

and inner regret and sorrow for sin.

You must daily die with Christ and crucify the flesh or you can not remain united with Christ as your head. Otherwise, you will not have him in you except in an external way, outside of your faith, heart, and spirit. This will not help you for he wishes to be in you, to be living, to comfort and to make you blessed. Note that faith does everything that makes the holy Word of God alive in you and it is a living witness of all that of which the Scriptures testify. Faith is a substance and essence (Heb. 11:1). Thus, it is clear enough from this how all sermons and statements of Christ—indeed, the whole Holy Scripture—are directed to all men and to each man. All the prophecies and all the parables of Christ relate to me and each man in particular as well as do all the miracles.

Therefore, it is also written that it is to occur spiritually within us. Since Christ has helped others he will help me for he is in me and he lives in me. He has made the blind to see. I am spiritually blind; therefore, he will make me also to see. Thus it is with all the miracles. Therefore, acknowledge yourself as a blind person, a lame person, a cripple, a deaf person, as one exposed, and he will help you. He made the dead live again, so that I have a part in the first resurrection.

In a word, faith does all that in man of which the Scripture testifies externally. It describes the image of God externally and that image must come to be in me through faith. It describes the kingdom of God externally in letters and it must come to be in me through faith. It describes Christ externally and he must come to be in me through faith.

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### From the Archives: The *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires)

#### The Manifesto of Pietism

The *Pia Desideria* or "Heartfelt Desire for God-pleasing Reform" is the classic statement of Pietism. First published in 1675 by Philip Jacob Spener of Frankfurt on Main, it is both a devotional work and a textbook on church renewal.

The churches in Germany in the century following the Reformation were weakened by sacramentalism and confessionalism and the clergy frequently engaged in endless theological disputes. Morality and spirituality among individual members were at a low ebb.

Influenced by earlier Pietistic writers in England and Germany, Spener took advantage of a Frankfurt publisher's invitation to write a preface for a new edition of Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*. As was his custom, Spener discussed his assignment with his fellow ministers and submitted his manuscript in 1675. His remarks, dedicated to all officials and pastors won immediate acclaim and within six months he published the preface separately under its own title, "Pious Desires." In this seminal work, Spener responded to the spiritual conditions he observed with a sixfold program of church renewal. His principal concern was the "scandalous worldliness" of the churches and his hope for renewal was based on the conversion of Jews to Christianity in the first century churches.

The work is divided into three sections. In the first, Spener comments on the prevailing political, economic, and religious conditions in German Lutheranism. He is especially critical of the contemporary view of the Lord's Supper, confession, and absolution. He notes the disregard among Christians for the rising problems of drinking and adultery. In a second short section, Spener outlines his hope for the improvement of the church. While it might not be possible to realize the ideal, the author is convinced that the church must seek it earnestly and always try to approximate the ideal.

In the third and key section of the *Pia*, Spener sets forth six concrete measures for church reform. In brief these are:

1. ***A more serious attempt to spread the Word of God.*** Pastors should preach from the entire Bible and Christians should meet in small groups to study the Bible.
2. ***The Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers should receive a new emphasis.*** The differences between the laity and clergy should be minimized. The clergy in particular should recognize that their calling involves Bible study, teaching, reproving and consoling and a personal, holy life.
3. ***More attention should be given to the cultivation of individual spiritual life.*** Love for God and man should take priority over theological disputes. Knowledge is secondary to practice.
4. ***Truth is not established in disputes but through repentance and a holy life.***
5. ***Candidates for the ministry should be "true Christians."*** Their training should include small groups for devotional life and personal Bible study.
6. ***Sermons should not show the preacher's erudition,*** but attempt to edify believers and produce the effects of faith.

**In the section reprinted below from his fourth proposal, Spener discusses a proper attitude to religious disputes. It was an age of religious controversy, and opponents were usually treated with invective and insult. In sharp contrast, Spener affirmed that truth is established not in disputes, but through through repentance and a holy life.**

*We must beware how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies* with unbelievers and heretics. We must first take pains to strengthen and confirm ourselves, our friends, and other fellow believers in the known truth and to protect them with great care from every kind of seduction. Then we must remind ourselves of our duty toward the erring.

We owe it to the erring, first of all, to pray earnestly that the good God may enlighten them with the same light with which he blessed us, may lead them to the truth, may prepare their hearts for it or, having counteracted their dangerous errors, may reinforce what true knowledge of salvation in Christ they still have left in order that they may be saved as a brand plucked from the fire. This is the meaning of the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, that God may hallow his name in them, bring his kingdom to them, and accomplish his gracious will in and for them.

In the second place, we must give them a good example and take the greatest pains not to offend them in any way, for this would give them a bad impression of our true teaching and hence would make their conversion more difficult.

In the third place, if God has given us the gifts which are needful for it and we find the opportunity to hope to win the erring, we should be glad to do what we can to point out, with a modest but firm presentation of the truth we profess, how this is based on the simplicity of Christ's teaching. At the same time we should indicate decently but forcefully how their errors conflict with the Word of God and what dangers they carry in their wake. All of this should be done in such a way that those with whom we deal can see for themselves that everything is done out of heartfelt love toward them, without carnal and unseemly feelings, and that if we ever indulge in excessive vehemence this occurs out of pure zeal for the glory of God. Especially should we beware of invectives and personal insinuations, which at once tear down all the good we have in mind to build. If we see that we have made something of a beginning in this fashion, we should be so much the more energetic in advancing what has begun, perhaps with the assistance of others. On the other hand, if we see that they have been so captivated by their preconceived notions that, although we perceive in them a disposition to serve God gladly without being able for the present to comprehend what we have said, they are to be admonished at the very least not to slander or speak evil of the truth which they have heard from us, to reflect further on the matter in the fear of the Lord and with fervent prayer, and in the meantime to try seriously to advance in the truth and to serve their God according to the practical principles and rules of conduct which most people who call themselves Christians have to some extent in common.

To this should be added, in the fourth place, a practice of heartfelt love toward all unbelievers and heretics. While we should indicate to them that we take no pleasure in their unbelief or false belief or the practice and propagation of these, but rather are vigorously opposed to them, yet in other things which pertain to human life we should demonstrate that we consider these people to be our neighbors (as the Samaritan was represented by Christ in Luke 10:29–37 as the Jew's neighbor), regard them as our brothers according to the right of common creation and the divine love that is extended to all (though not according to regeneration), and therefore are so disposed in our hearts toward them as the command to love all others as we love ourselves demands. To insult or wrong an unbeliever or heretic on account of his religion would be not only a carnal zeal but also a zeal that is calculated to hinder his conversion. A proper hatred of false religion should neither suspend nor weaken the love that is due the other person.

In the fifth place, if there is any prospect of a union of most of the confessions among Christians, the primary way of achieving it, and the one that God would bless most, would perhaps be this, that we do

not stake everything on argumentation, for the present disposition of men's minds, which are filled by as much fleshly as spiritual zeal, makes disputation fruitless. It is true that defense of the truth, and hence also argumentation, which is part of it, must continue in the church together with other things instituted to build it up. Before us are the holy examples of Christ, the apostles, and their successors, who engaged in disputation—that is, vigorously refuted opposing errors and defended the truth. The Christian church would be plunged into the greatest danger if anybody wished to remove and repudiate this necessary use of the spiritual sword of the Word of God, insofar as its use against false teachings is concerned. Nevertheless, I adhere to the splendidly demonstrated assertion of our sainted Arndt in his **True Christianity**. "Purity of doctrine and of the Word of God is maintained not only by disputation and writing many books but also by true repentance and holiness of life." The two preceding chapters are also related to this insight: "He who does not follow Christ in faith, holiness, and continued repentance cannot be delivered from the blindness of his heart but must abide in eternal darkness, nor can he have a true knowledge of Christ or fellowship with him. An unchristian life leads to false doctrine, hardness of heart, and blindness."

I therefore hold (1) that not all disputation is useful and good. What our sainted Luther said holds at times: "Truth is lost not by teaching but by disputing, for disputations bring with them this evil, that men's souls are, as it were, profaned, and when they are occupied with quarrels they neglect what is most important." How often the disputants themselves are persons without the Spirit and faith, filled with carnal wisdom drawn from the Scriptures, but not instructed by God! (For all knowledge which we take from the Scriptures with our own natural powers and merely human efforts, without the light of the Holy Spirit, is a carnal wisdom, else we would have to say that reason is capable of divine wisdom.) What is to be expected from such disputants? How often is unholy fire brought into the sanctuary of the Lord?—that is, an unholy intent, directed not to God's glory but to man's. But such sacrifices are not pleasing to God. On the contrary, they call forth his curse, and nothing is achieved by such disputing. How often is the principle of such disputation not investigation and discovery of truth, but rather obstinate assertion of what has once been proposed, reputation for a shrewd intellect and for ingeniousness, and conquest of an opponent, no matter how this is achieved? An opponent is so annoyed by this that, although he may not be able to answer, the manner of proceeding against him, the carnal emotions, the insults, and the like, all of which are observed and all of which savor of natural man, hinder the hoped for conversion. If one were properly to investigate the disputing which has been going on, one would find now this and now that to be at fault. One may well believe that this is the reason why all that was expected has not been achieved by this method. Disputation has in fact become so distasteful that an unseemly loathing of it has developed, and what is the fault of its abuse tends to be ascribed to disputation.

Just as all disputing is not praiseworthy and useful, so (2) proper disputation is not the only means of maintaining the truth but requires other means alongside it. Even if one resolves to limit debate to occasions in which everything is well arranged and confine it to that which is the sole and entire purpose of disputation (namely, the defense of true teaching and the refutation of the false opinions which are opposed to it in order that human reason may recognize that the former doctrine, as it is stated, conforms with the Word of God and the latter opinions do not conform), God may not add his blessing, nor will he always allow the truth to prevail. This is the case with those whose thoughts hardly extend beyond making many people Lutheran and do not deem it important that with this profession such people become genuine Christians to the very core. They therefore regard true confession of faith merely as a means of strengthening their own ecclesiastical party and not as an entrance upon a life of zealous future service of God. If the glory of God is to be properly advanced, disputation must be directed toward the goal of converting opponents and applying the truth which has been defended to a holy obedience and a due gratitude toward God. Such a **convictio intellectus** or conviction of truth is far from being faith. Faith requires more. The intention must be there to add whatever is necessary to convert the erring and remove whatever is a hindrance to him. Above all, there must be a desire, in promoting God's glory, to apply to ourselves and to all others what we hold to be true, and in this light to serve God. The glorious sayings of Christ belong here: "If any man's will is to do his will (namely, the Father's who sent him), he shall know whether the teaching is from God' or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (John 7:17). Here our Savior says that nobody is really assured in his heart of the divine truth of his own teaching unless the will is also there to do the Father's will, and so it is not a matter merely of knowledge. "If you continue in my

word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31–32). "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me: and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

From all this it becomes apparent that disputing is not enough either to maintain the truth among ourselves or to impart it to the erring. The holy love of God is necessary. If only we Evangelicals would make it our serious business to offer God the fruits of his truth in fervent love, conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling, and show this in recognizable and unalloyed love of our neighbors, including those who are heretics, by practicing the duties mentioned above! If only the erring, even if they cannot as yet grasp the truth which we bear witness to, would make an effort (and we ourselves should point them in this direction) to begin to serve God, in love of God and fellow man, at least to the extent of the knowledge which they may still have from Christian instruction! There is no doubt that God would then allow us to grow more and more in our knowledge of the truth, and also give us the pleasure of seeing others, whose error we now lament, alongside us in the same faith. For the Word of God has the power, if it is not viciously impeded either by those who declare it or by those who hear it, to convert men's hearts. Thus holiness of life itself contributes much to conversion, as Peter teaches (1 Pet. 3:1–2).

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

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## From the Archives: On Christian Perfection

To offset the decline in moral and spiritual values, Pietists sought to establish new standards of conduct and Christian discipline. Often these standards appeared to be perfectionistic and Pietists were criticized for this tendency. However, as this selection from A.H. Francke shows, Pietists also recognized human imperfections and thus strove for their ideals, fully aware that frailty and ignorance are a part of man's struggle.

Originally written in 1690, the text is translated by Peter Erb from Gustav Kramer, *August Herman Francke: Ein Lebensbild, 1880*, and is found in *Pietists: Selected Writings, 1983*. Used with permission of Paulist Press.

1. We are justified only by faith in the Lord Jesus without merit or the addition of work in that the Heavenly Father because of the perfect satisfaction and the precious merit of his Son judges us free and liberated from all our sins.
2. Through this justification, which occurs through faith, the justified person becomes completely and totally perfect: indeed, it is seen as the justification of God himself, as St. Paul writes: God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the justification of God [2 Cor. 5:21]. Just as God looks upon the Lord Christ as sin (because our sins were reckoned to him), so he sees the sinner as just and completely perfect because he gives to the sinner as the sinner's own the innocence and righteousness of Christ.
3. He who does not have this perfection cannot become holy. Perfection is nothing other than faith in the Lord Jesus and is not in us or ours but in Christ or of Christ for whose sake we are considered perfect before God and thus his perfection is ours by ascription.
4. However, if a person is justified he can be completely certain of his blessedness. Nevertheless he immediately discovers the weakness of the flesh and inherited sinful behavior. He desires in the depth of his heart nothing other than God and eternal life and he looks upon everything which is in the world as the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life as dirt and harm. Nevertheless, he discovers that original sin stirs in his flesh and causes in him all kinds of doubts and evil thoughts, at times evil inclinations of the will. Likewise he discovers that because of the great and long habit of sinning he often hastens into this or that external activity with words or deeds.
5. Such remaining disorderly patterns and activities, however, are not reckoned to the justified man. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, namely, those who do not walk according to the flesh although the flesh attracts them but according to the spirit. Thus as soon as the newborn man recognizes his error which does not proceed out of his own intentions, he turns in true faith to the grace of Jesus Christ and is in his heart an enemy of sin.
6. If the newborn Christian acknowledges such sins of the flesh, he strives with all earnestness against the evil which arises in his flesh. And he does so not through his own power and strength, but he destroys the works of the flesh through the spirit and he depends on the power of Jesus Christ which is made sanctification for him from God and conquers the evil in him.
7. In such sinful habits and crimes the justified man remains, however, never standing in one position,



but through the grace of God he sets aside ever more and more the evil, and day to day grows in faith and in love just as in one's physical life one is first a child then a youth then finally a man.

8. In such growth however a person can never get as far as he wishes. He is never completely perfect but he can grow and increase in good works as long as he lives. One who prides himself in an understanding of perfection deceives himself and others.

9. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that in the understanding, in a certain way, a perfection is attributed to man according to the Holy Scripture, namely, I can call someone a master in an art even if he has not completely learned that art and has other masters over him. Thus the Scripture does not wish to teach that a person can be completely perfect in his life, that he can be without sin or the attraction to sin, but that a person can come to a human strength in Christianity so as to kill the old habits in himself and to conquer his flesh and blood, and that one person is always more perfect than the other. Thus the epistle to the Hebrews [5:12–14] says that for the perfect there is strong food and it describes the perfect as those who have, because of practice, a practiced sense of distinguishing good and evil, but they are not those who are no longer inclined to evil through sinful lust.

10. From this it follows that both the following statements are true in a certain sense: We are perfect, and we are not perfect. Namely, we are perfect through Christ and in Christ through our justification and according to the righteousness of Jesus Christ ascribed to us. However, we are not and will not be completely perfect in the sense that we will nevermore be able to grow, to set aside evil and to take on good toward sanctification.

11. The one who does not wish to err in this matter must distinguish well the article concerning justification and that concerning renovation or sanctification. Otherwise, he will increasingly become entangled in controversy.

12. From this it follows that a justified man has no sin, namely, after justification, and he has sin after renovation, for that which still clings to a man is not reckoned to him because of Christ's sake.

13. If the person who is justified prays or goes to confession, he prays that for Christ's sake God will forgive the sins which are still in him and not ascribe them to him. He knows and is assured that as one who is in Christ Jesus there is no damnation for him.

14. As a result the justified man eats the sacrament for the strengthening of his faith and for the improvement of his life.

15. In all this, however, one has to be careful that his repentance is not hypocritical, but that he works out his salvation with fear and trembling. Otherwise the consolation from the grace of Christ can easily become willful and the person who has love for the world will speak as if the love of God is in him. Such an act is a deception and makes Hell rejoice.

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

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## From the Archives: Examining the Candidate

One of the immediate concerns of Henry M. Muhlenburg when he arrived in Pennsylvania in 1742 was the improvement of the quality of the clergy in the colonial Lutheran churches. To aid this process, Muhlenburg created a series of questions to examine candidates for the ordained ministry. While the author is concerned with loyalty to the historic Lutheran position, evidences are apparent of his "reverend fathers in Halle."

The selection is excerpted from *The Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States 1748–1821(1898)*.

I. The candidate is to prepare a sketch of his life, giving, in as brief a compass as possible, an account of its chief events and of his academical studies. As this may readily become too extensive, it will suffice, if he briefly narrate: 1. His first awakening; 2. How God furthered the work of grace in his heart; 3. What moved him to study for the holy ministry, and where, in what branches and under whose direction, he has attempted to prepare himself.

II. What theological books does he have?

III. Mention the Chief Divisions of Theology, and answer the following questions concerning—1 . What is Theology? 2. A general answer to the question: What is Sin, and a more specific statement as to what is Original Sin? 3. Describe the Sin against the Holy Ghost; 4. Give an extended description of the Justification of the Sinner before God, and confirm it with proof texts: 5. What is Saving Faith? 6. Whether and in how far are good works necessary to Salvation? 7. What is Sanctification, and how is it promoted? 8. In how far is Death the Wages of Sin (a), in the converted, (**b**), in the unconverted?

IV. Whether our Evangelical Lutheran is the only justifying and saving faith, and upon what scriptural foundations does it rest?

V. Give an exegetical explanation of Luke 16:8.

VI. Prepare from this the theme and skeleton of a sermon, with application.

VII. Describe the true character and duties of an evangelical preacher.

VIII. How an evangelical preacher should conduct himself towards the dying who confess that they are sinners in general, without confessing any special sin?

IX. Whether, and in how far evangelical preachers can and should be in subordination to one another? The answers, with the questions and proofs, to be neatly written out, and to be ready for submission by three o' clock tomorrow afternoon.

All for the glory of God, and the good of the Church!

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## From the Archives: Hymns

The most vivid—and memorable—evidence of Pietist thought is to be found in their hymns and poetry. Singing was a cherished means of expressing spiritual desires and struggles and several Pietists contributed whole volumes of poetry to which familiar Lutheran and Reformed tunes were applied. In these stanzas the reader immediately notes a warm love for Christ and the simple faith trust of the believer.

### CHRISTIAN HEARTS,

#### IN LOVE UNITED

Christian hearts, in love united,  
Seek alone in Jesus rest;  
Has he not your love excited?  
Then let love inspire each breast;  
Members—on our Head depending.  
Light—reflecting him our Sun.  
Brethren—his commands attending.  
We in him, our Lord, are one.

Come then, come, O flock of Jesus,  
Covenant with him anew;  
Unto him, who conquered for us,  
Pledge we love and service true;  
And should our love's union holy  
Firmly linked no more remain,  
Wait ye at his footstool lowly,  
Till he draw it close again.

Grant, Lord, that with thy direction,  
'Love each other,' we comply,  
Aiming with unfeigned affection  
Thy love to exemplify;  
Let our mutual love be glowing;  
Thus will all men plainly see,  
That we, as on one stem growing,  
Living branches are in thee.

And that such may be our union,  
As shine with the Father is,  
And not one of our communion  
E'er forsake the path of bliss;  
May our light 'fore men with brightness,  
From thy light reflected, shine;

Thus the world will bear us witness,  
That we, Lord, are truly thine.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 10: Pietism: The Inner Experience of Faith

## From the Archives: Pietism and its Formidable Critics

**Pietism has had its severe critics right from its beginnings and continuously through its history.**

**Sometimes the attacks have been based on caricature and misunderstanding and other times based on substantive theological and doctrinal issues.**

**In addition to the scorn of the world, Pietism has drawn the ire of church leaders, evangelicals, Catholics and Protestants alike.**

The first of the major critics was Valentin Ernst Löscher, a Lutheran theologian and champion of Reformation orthodoxy. Part of the Establishment, Löscher, and his following feared the Pietists as political opponents who could seize power by cultivating the good will of the secular authorities. Löscher, called Pietism a sickness, a stranger denunciation even than designating it a heresy. In his mind, Pietists evidenced an unhealthy individualism, a reckless enthusiasm, and an overly romanticist form of religious experience. While Joachim Lange had coined the word "pietism" as a positive term, Löscher, lumped together as "Pietists" all those whose theology he did not like.

Erberhard Ludwig, Duke of Württemberg from 1693 to 1733, issued an edict regarding the Pietist movement of his day. It orders "how to oppose strongly the so called Pietist nuisance (Pietistery) which ever and again swarms in and around the country, as well as other dangerous errors, and how everyone is to be earnestly held to the diligent hearing of God's Word and the use of the holy sacraments in public church services, and bow to live according to the wholesomely constituted regulations of court sanctioned church order, as well as the symbolic books of our Evangelical Church, which are carefully observed by teachers and bearers, while obstinate persons are to be regarded as subject to warning and serious correction." These rather stringent regulations were greatly modified in the direction of toleration by the Pietisten-Reskript of 1743.

A second round of criticism occurred in the writing of Albrecht Ritschl, a German historian and theologian in the nineteenth century. In a major historical study, Ritschl wrongly associated Pietism with the mystics of the Middle Ages who reduced Christianity to a type of monastic life. He thought Pietists lacked any sort of social concern, confining their faith to conventicles or private, spirituality elite groups. Ernst Troeltsch, the noted historian of religions, followed Ritschl as a critic of the Pietists.

The critics of the twentieth century are no less adamant. Leading theologians such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Emil Brunner and Reinhold Niebuhr, have all found fault with Pietistic stresses upon emotionalism and individualism and the seeming lack of profound theological discussion or systematic doctrinal concern. Barth, in particular, was especially critical of many of the great hymns of Protestantism for being "overly pietistic." Among modern evangelicals, there are those like Richard Foster who lament the "heresy of Pietism. "

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## Pietism: Recommended Resources

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