

# After Three Centuries - The Legacy of Pietism

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### After Three Centuries - The Legacy of Pietism

The last few decades have witnessed a remarkable upsurge in interest in Pietism, at least in European theological circles. One of the best of recent researchers of and writers on the subject, the late Martin Schmidt of Heidelberg, begins a *Luther-Jahrbuch* essay with this bold statement: "Only one man in Germany's evangelical church history has achieved and for a long period maintained a position just slightly behind Luther himself. This is Philipp Jacob Spener, the father of Lutheran Pietism."<sup>1</sup> This is high praise, even if it comes from the pen of a fan or fanatic.

Another Schmid, this one with the given name Heinrich and without a *t* in his surname, over a century ago wrote a standard study of the Pietism movement, known to many of you, that is much less flattering and much more denunciatory.<sup>2</sup> This Heinrich Schmid would not by any means grant Spener the place at Luther's right hand in our denomination's hall of fame.

The Schmid(t) "brothers" are cited at the outset of this writing to emphasize the long interest in and the broad interpretations of Lutheran Pietism. Since its emergence three centuries ago — make that in the interest of accuracy 310 years ago — the movement has made and has left its mark, "for better or for worse." Perhaps the quotation should be slightly altered to "for better *and* for worse." With the inbred distaste for Pietism we WELS pastors and teachers share, we might well at the outset allow that there could just be a worthwhile aspect or two of this old and still new development in general and Lutheran church history.

What we favor and what is influential is not always the same. Few of us in the senior citizen age bracket ever voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, even though we had four chances to do so. None of us, however, would contest the *influential* accolade when applied to this president.

So it is with Pietism. Whether we like it or not, the movement merits our concern. Such attention takes us into the deep reaches of theology. It focuses on the abiding issues of the proper relation of law and gospel, justification and sanctification and confessionalism and outreach. As 1988 draws nearer on the calendar of United States Lutheranism, those issues loom all the larger. Our topic is significant.

The topic also affords some problems in semantics. Most emphatically, the theme word is not *piety*. Just as it was *orthodoxism*, not *orthodoxy* that provoked the countermovement, so it is *Pietism* not *piety* that is being given attention. Piety is as old and honorable as Christianity itself. Pietism is the endeavor for increased piety that in Lutheran circles was engendered by the 1675 writing of Spener, *Pia Desideria*.<sup>3</sup> The Lutheran scene has not been the same since that year and that writing.

The term *Pietism*, it must be understood, covers a multitude of sins and types and that presents us with semantic problems. German Lutheranism has a Pietism that is our special concern but there is also a concurrent Reformed Pietism. Even the Roman Church had at the same time its very similar Jansenist controversy provoked by Jansen's challenge of the easy going Jesuit morality.

Also in German Lutheran circles there are variations and deviations. One can speak of a Halle Pietism and also of a Wuerttemberg Pietism.<sup>4</sup> Some Frankfurt Pietists are a special breed, rank separatists, and representative of a "Radical Pietism" in Lutheranism. At the fringes of Lutheranism one should note Zinzendorf. This Moravian-Lutheran plays a large role in the Pietism story. He pushed the concept of an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* to the extreme.

In Scandinavian Lutheranism, Pietism is a whole new story in itself. There are Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finnish chapters. They will be given some attention in the third part of this writing.

For most of us, however, the term Pietism suggests names like Spener and Fancke and Halle. It is this German Lutheran Halle Pietism that we know best and that is of special importance for us when we reflect on the three-century old legacy of the movement. Unless there is mention to the contrary, the assumption will be that this is the brand of Pietism under discussion in this writing.

One other introductory item should be mentioned. The paper, as the attached outline indicates, will utilize the larger-to-smaller, general-to-specific, broader-to-narrower approach. It views Pietism's legacy as it affects first Christendom at large, then the whole of Lutheranism, then United States Lutheranism and finally our own church body.

It should be obvious that this approach, as well as the time factor, means that the hearer will have to assume as the point of interest narrows instead of expecting the reader to repeat matters previously covered.

If, for example, the point is made early that a general Pietism pitfall was the downgrading of doctrine and confessionalism, that very significant point will not necessarily be belabored repetitiously and redundantly when the syndocial inheritance of Pietism's legacy is under discussion. What is said in the broader sections logically and necessarily applies also in the narrower sections, whether specifically mentioned or not.

This means that it would be a grave mistake for the hearer to let his attention lapse until that most personal and practical fourth section of the essay is reached. The Wisconsin Synod will already be given attention as a subsumption in the first part. That first part will now picture in broad outline the most general and far-reaching three-century old deposits of Pietism

### **I. In Christendom at Large**

Three divisions and only three are being allowed. They will have to be most essential and all-embracing. One such issue is

#### **A. The Reach Beyond the Borders**

In any study of Pietism some good news and some bad news will always emerge. The very best news about Pietism's legacy is the mission outreach beyond the territorial boundaries that preceded by a century and eventually bellweathered Protestantism's great mission drives in the 1800s. The Danish-Halle India Mission will, as long as this earth stands, bear eloquent testimony to God's gracious and eternal plans for the salvation of sinners and to the human enterprise that those plans envision.

The critics of Pietism, early and late, can rack up some good scores when dealing with the overstress of the subjective at the expense of the objective or with a downgrading of doctrine in the interest of activism. These critics, early and late, fall flat on their faces, however, when they try to belittle and downgrade this God-pleasing and God-blessed drive to reach out with the gospel beyond the boundaries of the little territorial church

and the European center of interest. Whatever the theological concern and whatever the place and the time, there never will be any gainsaying the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel.

There is some bad news. Pietism arose out of a period of intense religious strife. The Thirty Years War may not have devastated as scientifically and instantaneously as the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but it did have its own way of prolonging misery and devastation from one generation to another. Efforts at Thorn and elsewhere to prevent repetition by reuniting Christendom failed and in fact set in motion the drawn-out bitter theological battle over syncretism. Abraham Calov led the forces of orthodoxy in promoting denominational and confessional integrity even to the point of seeking the addition of a new confession to the Book of Concord.<sup>5</sup> The intense theological strife made the weak-kneed and faint-hearted yearn for fleshpots of Egypt in the form of a reunion of the churches.

Long before Spener put out his *Pia Desideria* in 1675 and thus inaugurated the movement called Pietism, an anti-polemical mood developed in Lutheran circles. A so-called "Saxon Silence" decreed an end to polemical preaching. About all it accomplished was to unseat and trouble Paul Gerhardt and occasion the writing of some of his best hymns. The mood and mindset, however, that was asserting itself was heartily embraced and energetically fostered by Pietism.

Already in 1690, Loescher reports, Leipzig was disturbed by a view of Pietism that it was not all that bad to go over to Calvinism.<sup>6</sup> Spener's affinity for the Reformed is well known. Some of his early years were spent in Geneva. In his Frankfurt years he was working as head of the Lutheran ministerium in a city that had sizable Roman and Reformed minorities and a Jewish population exceeded only by that in Vienna and Prague. At Frankfurt and long before the publication of *Pia Desideria* Spener had to ward off the views that he was soft on the Reformed and even on the Jews.<sup>7</sup>

In Hamburg the battle between Orthodoxy and Pietism reached a new high when the last-named of the trio of Pietists there, Winkler, Hinckelmann and Horb, used as a New Year's Day gift to the members in his charge a devotional booklet with Roman origins and "Pelagian, Papistic, Socinian, Quaker, Arminian, Weigelian and Schwenkfeldian" overtones.<sup>8</sup> What Horb did at Hamburg may have been an error of oversight at the outset but it was the kind of error that could only occur when denominational boundaries are blurring and wavering.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the intention, wheels were being set in motion that would speed the way to a Prussian Union of the previous century and the ecumenism of our own.

Accompanying this decline in denominational identity, is deemphasis of doctrine and doctrinal concerns. Actually we have here a sort of chicken-egg problem as to what came first and what was cause and what was effect. In any event, one of the greatest problems with Pietism and one of its least desirable legacies is doctrinal indifference.

Spener may well have had no such intentions. He considered himself an orthodox Lutheran, insisting that even his views on regeneration and millennialism were not necessarily in direct conflict with orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> Whatever his intentions, Spener had two strikes against him at the very outset.

His Pietism arose in reaction to the Age of Orthodoxy when the great dogmaticians of Lutheran were writing their big books. It was all but impossible to duel with the dogmaticians without dueling with doctrines or at least appearing to do so. As the strife continued, it became more and more of a temptation to move from appearance to reality. An example of extreme doctrinal indifference is the radical Pietism of Gottfried Arnold. Arnold opposed orthodox doctrines to the point of declining all ministerial posts. He sought instead an appointment as theological professor. When he wrote his erratic church history, he gave it the title, *Unparteiische kirchen und Ketzerhistorie.*" The book isn't as impartial as it sounds. The partiality unfortunately is all on the side of the heretics and separatists.

A second problem arose because of the concern of Spener and his movement for the practical in church work and in theological training.<sup>12</sup> The heavy emphasis on the theoretical, on the dogmatical, Spener says, should give way to something more useful in the day-to-day life of pastors and people. He calls for a concentration on those doctrines that are functional and practical.

The theory of emphasizing those Bible teachings that are most practical sounds good but it just isn't practical. Who sorts out the doctrines? The doctrine one person says is not necessary, another may cherish deeply and apply daily. How does one avoid doctrinal indifference when it is assumed that certain doctrines in the Bible need not necessarily be the believer's concern?

When one reflects that in Spener's century religious wars were being fought and heretical doctrinal views were being punished, one realizes that a momentous change was being introduced when at the expense of doctrinal concerns other items of emphasis were being found and fostered. There are many other milestones on the ecclesiastical highway that stretches from Spener's century to ours with its slogan "Deeds not creeds." A beginning, however, had been made. Seeds were sown then, we in our time are reaping the whirlwind of doctrinal indifference.

In this shift of emphasis the *terminus a quo* has been identified. What was the *terminus ad quem*? What is really being called for is a definition of Pietism, an identification of its most basic characteristics. Doctrinal and denominational indifference is one; an emphasis on the subjective and the personal is another. Here there is again good and bad news.

Spener in the first section of *Pia Desideria* bemoans a church organization in which the members every Sunday morning hear a *Kunstpredigt* and then live like heathen between times. He wants more heart and less head religion. He was right, then and now.

The personal, the heart element of religion dare not be ignored or omitted. Saving faith is a personal reaction to God's offer in the means of grace. Luther said it best, "The words 'for you' require nothing but hearts that believe." There can be no God-pleasing church or religion without "hearts that believe." "Hearts that believe" will devote themselves to piety, to a life of faith, to an earnest effort in sanctification. An emphasis on heart religion and on the personal element in Christianity and on sanctification is always in place, then and now.

It should not, however, become an overemphasis at the expense of the all-important content of the heart's faith, the *fides quae creditur*, the objective element of Christianity. This overemphasis is what unfortunately Pietism eventually produced.

Again, the intention may not have been there. The results, however, are clear handwriting on the wall. They are a record of what man feels and does instead of what God does and says. A doctrinal system, such as Calvinism, that shortchanges God's grace and love may logically — not scripturally — need the buttress of human inner assurance and human testimony of works. It is most regrettable that an area of Lutheranism, without any such void to fill, joined in the chorus and added its voice to others who could not simply take God in his gospel promises at his certain word and at his sacramental signs and instead insisted, like Hezekiah once did, "What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me?"<sup>13</sup>

Hezekiah got his sundial sign. The Pietists looked for theirs in regeneration evidence. Spener's pet theme was *Wiedergeburt*. A fan, not a foe, points his finger at the bottom line when he insists: "Regeneration is a biological figure of speech that for Spener strides as an elaboration and advancement alongside the juridical figure of speech of justification."<sup>14</sup> Man's living, in other words, elaborates on and completes God's verdict of justification. That is the problem; this takes us to a parting of the ways. Another Pietism specialist of this view point in this way: "Regeneration as reception into the status of a child of God results of course in baptism; since, however, the majority lightly cast aside baptismal grace, all must be born again anew through the Word of God."<sup>15</sup> Spener's insistence on the pastor's own regeneration would also be a serious area of conflict.

Francke carried on the emphasis. He himself seems to have had a very startling personal conversion experience.<sup>16</sup> This occurred in the summer of 1687 at Lueneburg where Francke spent some time between the two Leipzig stays. As he himself tells it, he was scheduled to preach on John 20:31 and was developing a sermon that should contrast dead and living faith. The longer he worked on the sermon, the more he became convinced that his own faith was the former kind. He fell into grave doubts about the existence of God and the reliability of the Bible. It seemed he would not be able to preach the sermon. He tried to pray to God whom he did not believe in and then he reports:

The Lord, the living God, heard me from his lofty throne while I was still on my knees. For just as one turns his hand over, so all my doubts vanished. I was assured in my heart of God's grace in Christ Jesus. I could call God my father, all grief and unrest in my heart were taken away and instead I was suddenly showered as with a flood of joy.<sup>17</sup>

From that moment Francke dates his new life. While he did not insist that his experience was a model for all and could allow for what he termed microconversions, he did let this Lueneburg experience influence his theology. *Busskampf* and *Wiedergeburt* played large roles at Halle.

There is no reason to doubt that Francke actually had the experience as he describes it. That was God's way of dealing with him but it isn't God's way of dealing with everybody. Francke, however, joined Spener in putting great stress on the personal feelings of the sinner in his conversion experience and spiritual struggle. Thus Lutheran Pietism added its bit to what was native to Reformed thinking and helped produce the born-again theology that is so much with us today. A very visible line runs from Spener and Francke through Schleiermacher and his experience theology to the Christian existentialist of today whose religion is what he feels. He or she can be found also on the Lutheran scene to which attention now turns.

## II. In the Lutheran Denomination

### A. Problems with the *Solas*

The *sola scriptura* area is not the problem area. Radical Pietists may have at times drifted into a mysticism that tries to find its way to God without benefit of clergy or Books. There was some inclination to gospel reductionism in line with the emphasis on *Heilsordnung*.<sup>18</sup> These were, however, aberrations of extremists. Reverence for Scripture is the norm in Pietism.

It will be recalled that the very first of the six reform proposals in *Pia Desideria* called for more diligent use of the Word of God. It was Francke who pioneered in lay Bible study. When he and Paul Anton in Leipzig used the *collegium philobiblicum* for study of the content of whole books of the Bible, beginning with Genesis and Matthew, a new day in adult Bible study dawned. Students flocked to those evening lectures by the hundreds. Even though the main language was Latin, townspeople began to take part. It was an exciting and novel experience to find that the Book of Books, previously used too often only as a source for proof texts and sermon texts, contained books whose content edified. For the most part give Spener and Francke high marks when it comes to attitude toward Scripture and use of Scripture.

One should at least mention in this connection the leading Wuerttemberg Pietist, Johann Albrecht Bengel and his outstanding work in New Testament studies. His best-known publication was the *Gnomen Novi Testamenti*.<sup>19</sup> In 1734 he put out a New Testament with a critical apparatus that was widely used for a long time.<sup>20</sup> Bengel was perhaps the most respected theologian of Pietism outside its own circle. He is a reminder that the Pietists could approach the Scriptures with careful study and great reverence. The famed Canstein Bible Institute testifies that they were also eager to distribute the Scriptures.

What about *sola gratia* and *sola fide*? What about justification? No easy answer can be given. Spener knew and believed in the Bible doctrine of justification. After Spener's death the question whether he was in heaven was debated by Loescher and Francke but this was more a regrettable matter of misunderstanding and heated controversy, than serious doubts about Spener's salvation.

In the presentation of such pet points of Pietism as the indivisible connection between justification and sanctification, the distinction between a dead and a living faith, and the overriding emphasis on regeneration, however, confusion could sometimes set in. It is true there is no justification without sanctification but it must be equally clear that sanctification is not justification. It is true that in sanctification there are grades and strengths of faith but in justification and with grace such distinctions must fall away. Now can trouble be averted when regeneration gets so much attention that the truth of justification by grace through faith in Christ no longer is *articulus stantis et cadentis*?

One cannot help having concerns in these areas when so many Pietists insisted that their movement was a Second Reformation, not just a reform of the church that came from the first. One has to take that to mean that they wanted to improve on *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. In our century not so many years ago at Helsinki the

Lutheran denomination demonstrated itself to be woefully unclear and hopelessly divided on the doctrine of justification that Luther expounded and Lutherans espouse. The list of causes for this sorry state of affairs is long but high up in the list must stand our theme. The confusion at Helsinki is a legacy of Pietism.

### **B. Other Doctrinal Areas**

This section treating “other doctrinal areas” will have to be selective. There are just too many items to consider in a forty-five minute paper when one considers that the Wittenberg faculty is supposed to have charged Spener with 283 doctrinal deviations when in leisurely fashion in 1695 it finally got around to issuing a *Gutachten*.<sup>27</sup> The number may be an exaggeration. It hardly seems possible for any human to harbor that many heresies, not even a Middler Seminarian halfway through his first Dogmatics quarter. In any event, only a few of the many can be given attention here.

In the matter of our denomination’s *norma normata* Spener had a way of combining high praise with a reluctance to go all the way to *quia* subscription. He could allow the lesser *quatenus* for troubled consciences. Tappert, a Confessions expert and no foe of Spener’s, tells it all when he asserts: “This had the effect of relegating other doctrines to the realm of unnecessary ballast and in the long run the position was theologically more revolutionary.”<sup>23</sup> The position went a long way in saddling Lutheranism with the untenable distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental doctrines when fellowship is the consideration.

The sacraments should be mentioned. While the Baptism hymns we sing were actually written by Pietists such as Rambach, the intent was usually to serve, the confirmation service. The stress on an aware regeneration simply had to put Baptism in the shadows. Confirmation as a renewal of the Baptism covenant, which needs no renewal as God’s covenant, moved downstage. It was an easy step to a repudiation of infant baptism. The step has been taken by a number of Lutheran candidates of theology in Germany who have declared they will baptize no infants and are not now being assigned. A controversy over this issue is already brewing in the avant-garde circles of our denomination. It will soon reach our district. Blame Spener for much of the trouble when it comes.

The Pietists had more troubles with the Lord’s Supper in the area of practice than in actual doctrine. Radical Pietists of course raised objections about formalism. In the main, however, the doctrine held firm. Practice was another story. The related matter of private confession and absolution was a bitter point of controversy.<sup>24</sup> Pietist pastors usually wanted more than a mere confession as a warrant for absolution and, consequently, sought to put a damper on private confession. What they opposed may have often been misused and abused, but one could see advantages in what was opposed for our present time.

It is obvious that many Pietists would opt for open communion with the Reformed, if not the Romans. Little needs to be added about reasons and results. The implications for our time loom large.<sup>25</sup> Communion reception was affected by Pietism’s bent for believers’ self-inspection and introspection. Am I a worthy recipient? That was the all-important question. Again, the point of concern was shifting from what God promises and gives to what the communicant feels and does. The inevitable result was that many felt they could not achieve the necessary *high* except at special times in the church year, notably Good Friday or Easter after a rigorous Lenten preparation and Christmas and New Year after Advent repentance. Infrequent communion reception on special festivals became the order of the day. That order is still with us to a certain extent. A few comments of the many that could be made should be provided about Pietism’s developments in the church-ministry area. An obvious point is the little-church-within-the-church that caused so much strife and such bitter separation. If one could ask Spener why he promoted such a divisive innovation and he could answer, he would answer with a question of his own, “Why blame me?” He would explain: “All I ever sought was an application of the Bible’s little leaven.’ I wanted to begin by raising the spiritual heights of a select circle and then by gradually enlarging that circle as the few reached out and more moved in, I hoped to raise the whole congregation to new levels of sanctification.” “Good theory but not practical” is this paper’s paraphrase of the fabled scouting report on a shortstop that simply said, “Good field, no hit.” Given the human condition, the system of operating with the chosen few and pegging them some notches above the rest simply ran its course

into prejudice and jealousy. The worst became separatists. Many became opponents of even the best of the innovations, as the opposition to Bible study demonstrated.

Spener's second of the six *Pia Desideria* reform proposals called for an energetic employment of the universal priesthood of all believers. An important point, sometimes even called the unnamed fourth *sola* of the Reformation. God knows and we know that we could use a lot more of a functioning universal priesthood in these bad days. Happy the parish where each believer admonishes and encourages his neighbor in matters of faith and life! If Spener were alive and well today, he might with his keen sense for spiritual diagnosis even be tempted to make his very first reform proposal for the church today, a functioning universal priesthood.

But a universal priesthood that is directed along lines indicated above is not a good answer. Like Job's comforters, it will lack the essential ingredient, the quintessence of love. And a universal priesthood that sets itself in opposition to the public ministry is no answer at all and something else, a violation and mutilation of the very body of Christ. We have many tasks and many problems. Thanks to a great extent to Pietism, one of the greatest of them is keeping the balance between the twin doctrines of universal priesthood and public ministry. So many today want to do their own thing no matter what guidance God provides them through the public ministry. So many today want to ignore the privileges of the universal priesthood God has established for their own good and the good of their fellow believer. God give us the happy medium that was not achieved three centuries ago!

One doctrinal point that brooks no omission is the issue of millennialism. It is one of Spener's spiritual Achilles' heels and an enduring lure of those with Pietism's leanings. There are degrees of millennialism ranging from a mild brand to the worst postmillennialism and rapture notions. This point was not injected in the previous part of the essay because Spener should not be blamed in the first instance for the worst vagaries of this kind that contemporary Fundamentalists perpetrate.

Spener and Pietism, however, get entrapped into a millennialism of sorts by their premise of ever-advancing sanctification that is measurable and discernable. It is entirely in character that Spener should try to get some of his Hamburg millennial followers off the book with his 1693 writing, *Behauptung der Hoffnung besserer Zeiten*. He and his followers would always maintain that the views expressed there were not the "Jewish opinions" rejected in the *Augsburg Confession*.<sup>26</sup> The views would live on in Pietism's strongholds, even Bengel was badly infected, and would eventually transplant themselves into American soil in the General Synod, the General Council, the Iowa Synod and elsewhere. That, however, is a subject to be reserved for Part Three. There should be some mention of Pietism's tendency to

#### **D. Methodism and Legalism**

The term *methodism* is to be taken, not in the sense of a denomination that did not exist before Francke's death, but in the sense of a planned and patterned sanctification program. Catechetical lessons had to progress in the mode of the *Heilsordnung*: first a *Busskampf*, then a *Durchbruch* and finally a *Wiedergeburt*. Certain sins were singled out for absolute annihilation, and excommunication was the means for extermination. Certain virtues were made the be-all and end-all of the elite among the saints. The biggest strife between Orthodoxy and Pietism in this matter revolved around *adiaphora*.<sup>27</sup> The Pietist's, in the interest of sanctification, soon developed the slogan, "There is no such thing as an *adiaphoron*." They put any drinking and any dancing and any dalliance high on their sin hit list.<sup>28</sup> Their point was that real sanctification would not permit any use of anything that could involve sin. The problem was that this rigid position allowed little room for sanctified judgment when sanctified judgment was called for.

It isn't just Reformed theology that is posing us problems in this day about smoking and bodily avoirdupois and a host of other things. In a sense and in his worst Reformed tendencies, Spener poses the question: "Is someone as obese as the essayist to be regarded on sight as saint or sinner?" Please be charitable when formulating your answer! We have drifted into the subject of our country's Lutheranism. We might just as well make it official and note Pietism's legacy

### **III. In United States Lutheranism**

After a long exercise in the negative it is a pleasure to reach a point where the positive can be emphasized. The point is Pietism's legacy in United States Lutheranism. The story begins already

### **A. In the Colonial Era**

The Halle zeal for foreign missions that aimed first at India soon reached out also in the direction of North America. As soon as Lutherans began to come to the Colonies in large numbers the Pietists began to send pastors to gather them into congregations and care for them spiritually. In the case of large-scale migrations pastors would sail over with the people.

Terms that come immediately to mind are the Salzburger in Georgia, their Ebenezer planning and their spiritual father, Samuel Urlsperger.<sup>29</sup> The latter was deeply influenced by Francke and worked energetically for the Salzburger as their European-based agent. From Halle he obtained the first pastors of the colony. Ebenezer soon developed into a model Pietist colony. Internal strife between the fourth pastor, Rabenhorst, who drifted from Pietism to Rationalism, and Triebner, the fifth, spilled over into Revolutionary War conflicts and much devastation. The colony never recovered and soon disintegrated. As a colony its influence ceased but the settlers that drifted into other areas and joined other Lutheran congregations, we can be sure, carried with them some remnants of their Pietism and piety.

Farther north Pietism's influence was even stronger. The first Lutheran pastor to be officially ordained in this country was Justus Falckner who had studied under Francke at Halle but had not entered the ministry. In the New World he was persuaded to take over the vacant New York-Albany parish and served it faithfully for 20 years. In his ministry he seems to have avoided most of the pitfalls of Pietism.

Henry Muhlenberg, founder of the mother ministerium of United States Lutheranism, who had taught for a year at the Halle orphanage after graduating from Goettingen, was persuaded by Francke's son at Halle to accept the call to the triple parish of Philadelphia, Providence and New Hanover. He had to dispossess his old neighbor, Zinsendorf, before he could begin work.

Muhlenberg's influence was great, not only in Pennsylvania, where most Colonial Lutherans had settled, but also throughout the Colonies. He served as vacancy pastor as far north as New York and as trouble-shooter as far south as Ebenezer. He continued to obtain pastors, mostly from Halle, for the new congregations. He was a born organizer and leader.

How much of the influence that Muhlenberg exerted was the influence of Pietism? The point has been strenuously debated and there is evidence on both sides of the question.<sup>30</sup> This much is certain, however, Pietism's auspices prevailed at the founding of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. Pastors who had expressed dislike for Pietism were simply not invited to come to the 1748 constituting convention or to join until much later.<sup>31</sup>

To sum up, in the colony with the heaviest Lutheran concentration and in other colonies also the influence of Pietism was strong, as the first Lutheran congregation and the first ministerium were founded.

### **B. Scandinavian Pietism**

Thousands of Scandinavians migrated to this country in the previous century from 1825 on. Almost all were Lutherans and a considerable number of these were Pietists. At the turn of the previous century, Hans Nielsen Hauge had ministered as a lay preacher to little groups of pietistically minded people who did not like the services of the state church. The Raugian Movement spread to our country when such people, mostly peasants, settled in our midwestern states and when lay preachers in the mold of Hauge, like Elling Relsen, came to serve them. Soon whole synods were formed with a strong bent for lay preaching and Pietism.

Some of these synods have found their way into the American Lutheran Church either via the union of Norwegians into the Evangelical Lutheran Church or as joiners of the American Lutheran Church. The Hauge Synod is a representative of the first group; the Lutheran Free Church represents the later. Other synods have remained independent. Among these are: the Eielson Synod, if it is still functioning; the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, the unmerged remnant of the Lutheran Free Church; and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, who emphasize the conversion experience most strongly.



Among the Swedes who gathered in the Augustana Synod, now a part of the Lutheran Church in America, there were many who came to this country as adherents to Swedish Pietism. While they did not form any special synod of their own — that isn't to this day the Swedish thing to do — those people exerted a great influence in their church body.

Danish Pietism was a strong force in the Inner Mission development that Beck headed. Followers of his who came to this country became known as the “Gloomy Danes” because of their pietistic practices. They eventually formed the United Evangelical Lutheran Church that has become a part of the American Lutheran Church. The story is much the same as far as the Finns are concerned. In the Old World a robust Finnish Pietism developed that was also brought to America by immigrating Finns. It is most emphatically demonstrated in the independent Apostolic Lutheran Church. Many, however, joined the other Finnish church groupings that have disappeared in mergers. In summary, Scandinavian Pietism has left its mark on many independent synods and also on both the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. What is most important for us, these two large Lutheran bodies will merge in 1988 along with the AELC into

### **C. The New Lutheran Church.**

We don't even know at this point what the name of this church will be. We don't yet know how it will be structured. But this we do know: the new church will have long and strong roots to Pietism.

The Lutheran Church in America's story begins with the founding of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. That founding was under the auspices of Pietism. The oldest seminary of the LCA, Gettysburg, was founded in 1826 by S.S. Schmucker on the proposition, “Without piety, no man can be a faithful minister.” Others might substitute “Pietism.” Its long history that stretches over 150 years can be linked, says a competent local researcher, by an enduring commitment to piety. Others might substitute the term, “Pietism.”<sup>32</sup>

The American Lutheran Church also has strong and long roots to Pietism, especially through its Scandinavian components. Those roots will entwine comfortably with their counterparts in the Lutheran Church in America.

What the eventual result will be is still in the future. A reasonable prediction is that United States Lutheranism will see an upsurge of Pietism's influences. Where does that leave us? It is time to turn attention to our own church body and briefly evaluate Pietism's Legacy

## **V. In the Wisconsin Synod**

### **A. Early Influences**

Those German Lutheran immigrants who found their way into the Wisconsin Synod left their first country late enough to have escaped the impact of the first erratic outbursts of Pietism. By 1840 Pietism had been replaced by Rationalism and that in turn had been challenged by an upsurge of confessionalism. What Pietism survived in the congregations had been tempered by time and controversy until it almost became identical with piety. This is especially true of the Wuerttembergers in whose homeland the original Pietism had been very decidedly of the mild brand.

There were traces of Pietism's thinking and practice, to be sure. Those in our midst with greying hair, like the essayist, may recall growing up in homes where use of a regular deck of cards was taboo but Flinch or Rook cards were given a clean bill of health. Several generations of our young people have had troubles with a ban on dancing. Some of our forefathers leaned in the direction of the dictum of the Pietists, “There is no such thing as an *adiaphoron*.” Infrequent communion reception lingered long. In the main, however, there were no great problems. In fact, some of the ethical reservations may have helped some of us on the pathway of sanctification.

### **B. Orientation**

A factor that played a large part in putting our church body off-limits to Pietism's reach was the early commitment to confessionalism, especially the orthodox position on justification. We soon turned from loose fellowship practices characteristic of Pietists and we rejected the millennialism they so fondly embrace. These positions caused us to withdraw early from the General Council.

Fellowship with Missouri and membership in the Synodical Conference followed. In the very first Synodical Conference session the subject of justification was on the agenda. It became the benchmark of the Conference and of our segment of it, especially when the controversy over objective justification flared at the turn of the century and later. This stand for justification, also the objective kind, has made us especially wary of the worst of Pietism.

Have we become too wary. Many of us are not at our sermonic best when preaching sanctification and when making application to the daily life. Do we neglect personal piety because we are so anxious to strike a blow against Pietism? One more question: How can we care for the souls of our people in this society that demonstrates much more immorality and religious indifference than Spener's ever did? No matter how bad the times and the morals get, no matter what lags and failures in sanctification are encountered each day, no matter how much coldness our members show to Word and Sacrament, the answer to the problems is not a resort and return to Pietism. There is a better answer. There is only one answer. We all know what it is.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Martin Schmidt, "Spener and Luther" in *Luther-Jahrbuch*, 1957, p. 102.

2 Heinrich Schmid, *Die Geschichte des Pietismus* (Noerdlingen. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1863

3 A description is provided by Martin Westerhaus', "Literary Landmarks of Pietism" in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Winter, 1985) pp 5-13.

4 J.P. Koehler's *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, as an example, refers to and describes a Nuerttemberg pietism" on p 16.

5 This proposed addition to the Confessions was Calov's *Consensus Repetitus*.

6 V.E. Loescher *Vollstaendiger Timotheus Verinus*. (Wittenberg: Samuel Hannauern, 1722) II, 133. The precise charge is that it was a teaching of Pietism that *es sey nicht sehr bedenklich Calvinisch zu werden*. Loescher in I, 152-155, list dozens of instances of indifference in doctrine and practice.

7 Schmidt reports p 55 in *Pietismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983) that many believed: *der neue Senior des lutherischen Ministeriums sei im Herzen reformiert Tesinnt*. A discussion of Spener and the Frankfurt Jews follows.

8 The familiar Krauss, *Lebensbilder* (St. Louis, Concordia, 1915) has an interesting chapter on *Pietismus und Orthodoxie*, pp 599-630. The quotation of Mayer's objections is found on p 617.

9 Ritschl , *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Bonn: Marcus, 1884) discusses Horb's goof and Spener's attempted defense in II, 181-183.

10 Ritschl, II, 102-103.

11 Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartiesche Kirchen - und Ketzerhistorien* (Schaffhausen: E. and B. Hurter, 1740).

12 Spener's fifth proposal in *Pia Desideria* is in fact a plea for the practical in the training of those who would become pastors.

13 The reference is to 2 Kings 20:8.

14 Martin Schmidt, p 122. See also "Spener's Widergeburtlehne?" in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 1937, pp 17-30.

15 Ritschl, II, 191.

16 Erich Beyreuther, *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1978) narrates the event on p 135, Schmidt on pp 64-65 and Ritschl in II, 250-253.

17 Ritschl, II, 251.

18 Ritschl, II, 335.

19 See the Westerhaus article cited in Note 3 for a description.

20 Gottfried Maelzer, *Johann Albrecht Bengel* (Stuttgart: Calver, 1970). Chapter 6 describes the New Testament edition and Chapter 7 the *Gnomon*.

21 Martin Schmidt discusses the matter and the misunderstanding in the article in Note 1, pp 105-106.

22 See Schmid, 241-246.

23 See Tappert's introduction to his translation of *Pia Desideria*, pp 25-26.

- 24 Schmid has a lengthy section regarding the *Beichtstuhl* controversy on pp 259-274.
- 25 Reference is to recent calls for interdenomination communion from the ALC head, David Preus.
- 26 The brief Article XXIV is being cited.
- 27 Schmid deals with the *adiaphora* strife on pp 274-286.
- 28 A classic case involving all three instances arose in Hamburg. Time permitting, it will be related verbally. In the other case, consult an essay of the essayist in the Seminary's vertical files on "Social Dancing."
29. Horst Weigelt, *Pietismus - Studien: I, Der spener-hallische Pietismus* (Stuttgart: Calver, 1965). \_CKa-pter ~ des s the Salzburger immigration.
30. Robert Scholz, "Was Muhlenberg a Pietist" in *Concordia Historical Institute quarterly*, 1979 - 2, pp 50-65.
31. See Richard Wolf's *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), p 11. Muhlenberg claims, "They decry us as Pietists without reason."
32. J. Russell Hale, "Gettysburg Seminary - 150 Years" in *Essays and Reports -1976* of the Lutheran Historical Conference, pp 23-37.