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# Dawn of the Protestant missionary movement

It was August Hermann Francke and the Pietism of Halle that first opened the floodgates of Protestant mission. Francke's mentor, Spener, had gone on record that Protestants ought not to leave the global spread of Christianity in Roman Catholic hands. There had been massive Catholic missionary expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries; there was simply nothing comparable from Protestants. Some Protestant theologians, such as John Calvin, acknowledged in theory that the gospel should be taken to the ends of the earth; the Protestant Churches, however, had not yet experienced any awakening of an effective missionary impulse, except within Europe itself—evangelizing Roman Catholics. But Roman Catholics did not limit themselves to spreading their faith among Protestants; they went out into all the world. Such a global missionary impulse finally awakened in the Protestant consciousness through German Pietism.

However, we should qualify this by acknowledging that there was some Lutheran missionary activity prior to the 18th century. Some of this was within Europe/Russia, for instance the Lutheran missionaries sent by Swedish King Gustavus Vasa (1523–60) to the Sami people (formerly known as the Lapps) in 1559. The Sami inhabited the area of Sápmi (covering parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), and some of this territory had now fallen under Swedish sovereignty. Over a century later, this missionary work found its greatest labourer

in *Thomas von Westen* (1682–1727), a Lutheran Pietist nicknamed “apostle to the Sami”. Again, some early Lutheran missionary activity took place outside Europe but within the bounds of ancient Christendom, such as the work of the lay theologian and physician *Peter Heyling* (born 1607/8, died some time after 1652) in Ethiopia; working from 1634 as court physician to Ethiopian King Fasilides (1632–67), Heyling translated the New Testament into Amharic.

When Swedish Lutheran colonists arrived in America, their settlement at New Sweden (present day Wilmington, Delaware) was pastored by John Campanius (1601–83), who arrived in 1643. As well as ministering to the Swedes, Campanius took a strong interest in the native Lenape people who lived in the locality. He studied their culture, and invented a written script for their language, translating Luther’s Small Catechism. He also preached to the Lenape with (we are told) some positive effect.

These efforts, however, seem like relatively isolated outbursts of missionary zeal, compared to the more focused awakening of missionary consciousness that characterized Francke’s Pietism at Halle. Francke himself was possessed with a sense of the necessity of world mission as an integral part of the coming of Christ’s kingdom. He did everything in his power to implant this conviction in his students at Halle. There remained, however, the practical problem of how to get missionaries into non-Christian countries and support them while they worked there. Roman Catholic missionaries had the vast overseas empires of Spain and Portugal to ferry them abroad and protect them. What could Protestants do?

The answer came in the shape of a Protestant king—*Frederick IV of Denmark* (1699–1730). Frederick had a German Pietist chaplain, Franz Julius Lütkins (1650–1712), and Lütkins imparted to Frederick the Pietist enthusiasm for mission; the Danish king resolved that he must imitate the zeal of Catholic monarchs in promoting overseas evangelism. There was a Danish colony in Tranquebar, on the coast of south-east India, where the Danes ruled over native Indians whose religion was Hinduism. Frederick decided to send missionaries to work among these

Hindu natives. Where would he find people prepared to surrender their lives to such a calling? He consulted Francke in Halle; Francke immediately recommended two of his students, **Bartholomew Ziegenbalg** (1682–1719) and **Henry Plütschau** (1676–1747). They accepted King Frederick's offer, sailed at the close of 1705, and set foot in Tranquebar on 9th July 1706.

Ziegenbalg and Plütschau were the first Protestant missionaries to India. The Danish Pietist mission they founded at Tranquebar would have a 130 year history (1707–1837), during which 54 missionaries worked in the area. Since Ziegenbalg wrote regularly to his sponsors back in Europe, we know a lot about the early mission, its trials and triumphs. Certainly it enjoyed significant success; when Ziegenbalg died in 1719, he and Plütschau had established a 350-strong Lutheran congregation in Tranquebar. Not all its members were Hindu converts (some were slaves of colonists, some were ex-Catholics), but many were.

Ziegenbalg and Plütschau laid the foundations of an effective mission by the policies they adopted at the outset. These have been summed up as five major points and hailed as guidelines of enduring validity:

1. Christian education must be a priority. All converts must be able to read the Bible; therefore they must be taught how to read. Church and school therefore go hand-in-hand.
2. The Bible must be translated into the native language. Ziegenbalg himself translated the New Testament into Tamil (the first ever Tamil version); it was published in 1714.
3. Preaching must be grounded in an understanding of the native culture and mentality. Ziegenbalg made an intensive study of Hinduism, and made sure his evangelism and teaching took full account of the beliefs of those among whom he laboured.
4. The mission must pursue the goal of authentic personal conversions, not a merely outward exchange of one lifestyle for another.

5. The mission must aim at establishing an indigenous Indian church as soon as possible. The first native Indian pastor, a man named Aaron, converted from Hinduism, was ordained in 1733, which was quick by missionary standards.

The Danish Pietist mission actually extended outside of the Danish territory in Tranquebar. The British had settlements in that part of India; and the British Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (commonly shortened to SPCK), an Anglican organization founded in 1698, offered to finance the Danish missionaries if they would extend their work into British territories, such as Madras and Trichonopoly. The Danes agreed. The first Danish Pietist missionary to be active in British territory for the SPCK was a Prussian, *Benjamin Schultz* (1689–1760), who from 1728 worked in Madras. Now employed by an Anglican body, the Danish SPCK missionaries used the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in worship, translating it into Tamil. Their converts were baptized as Anglicans rather than Lutherans.

Frederick IV's Pietist enthusiasm for mission also expressed itself in Greenland. He supported the venture of *Hans Egede* (1686–1758), a Danish Lutheran pastor, who sailed to Greenland in 1721 in search of any survivors from the old Norse colony there which had probably died out in the late 15th century. Instead he found the Inuit people,<sup>1</sup> and worked as a missionary among them until 1736, winning converts, and initiating a study of their language that enabled his son *Paul Egede* (1708–89) to translate the New Testament into Inuit.

Meanwhile, back in Germany, Francke publicized the work of the Pietist missionaries in a newspaper entitled *Hallesche Correspondenz* ("Halle Correspondence"), the first ever missionary journal. It circulated not only throughout Germany but across Europe, helping to stimulate at last a concerned Protestant consciousness of the mission field outside the

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1. Formerly known as Eskimos, a term now regarded as demeaning.

European homeland. It seems that Protestantism owes to Luther the first clarion call to Reformation, and to Lutherans the birth of the modern Protestant missionary movement.

### **Important people:**

Nicholas von Amsdorf (1483–1565)  
Johann Pfeffinger (1493–1573)  
Johann Agricola (1494–1566)  
Andreas Osiander (1496–1552)  
Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560)  
George Major (1502–74)  
Andreas Musculus (1514–81)  
Matthias Flacius (1520–75)  
Martin Chemnitz (1522–86)  
Victorinus Strigel (1524–69)  
Caspar Peucer (1525–1602)  
Georg Cracow (1525–75)  
Jacob Andreae (1528–90)  
Nicholas Selnecker (1530–92)  
David Chytraeus (1530–1600)  
Daniel Hoffmann (1538–1611)  
Augustus I of Saxony (1553–86)  
Cornelius Martini (1568–1621)  
Johann Gerhard (1582–1637)  
Jesper Rasmus Brochmand (1585–1652)  
Georg Calixtus (1586–1656)  
Johann Conrad Dannhauer (1603–1666)  
Peter Heyling (born 1607/8, died some time after 1652)  
Abraham Calov (1612–86)  
Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617–88)  
Valentin Ernst Löscher (1673–1749)

### ***The Thirty Years' War***

Johann Tserclaes of Tilly (1559–1632)  
Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654)  
Christian IV of Denmark (1588–1648)  
Maximilian I of Bavaria (1597–1651)  
Frederick V of the Palatinate (1610–23)

Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (1611–32)  
 Christian the Younger (1616–26)  
 Emperor Ferdinand II (1619–37)  
 Philip IV of Spain (1621–65)

### *Hymns and music*

Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608)  
 Michael Praetorius (c.1571–1621)  
 Johann Heermann (1585–1647)  
 Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)  
 Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676)  
 Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637–1707)  
 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

### *Pietism*

Johann Arndt (1553–1621)  
 John Durie (1596–1680)  
 Jean de Labadie (1610–74)  
 Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705)  
 Christian Thomasius (1655–1728)  
 Joachim Justus Breithaupt (1658–1732)  
 August Hermann Francke (1663–1727)  
 Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714)  
 Henry Plütschau (1676–1747)  
 Bartholomew Ziegenbalg (1682–1719)  
 Thomas von Westen (1682–1727)  
 Hans Egede (1686–1758)  
 Frederick III of Prussia (margrave 1688–1701; king 1701–13)  
 Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769)  
 Benjamin Schultz (1689–1760)  
 Frederick IV of Denmark (1699–1730)  
 Paul Egede (1708–89)

## **Primary source material**

### **Martin Chemnitz: The true doctrine of predestination**

In the third place, they [Roman Catholic theologians] erect the doctrine of predestination, or election, against the assurance of

salvation. To give some plausible colour to this, they say that we must avoid foolhardy presumption concerning the hidden mystery of predestination. True indeed (and it is carefully taught among us), no one should pry into the secret purpose of God, thereby to establish whether we belong to the ranks of the elect. That way leads to a head-first plunge into many errors, ultimately into sheer despair. Where election is the subject, we must not judge by the canons of the human mind and its thoughts, nor by questionable speculations about what God has decreed in His secret purpose concerning each individual's salvation or damnation. We must judge from the Word of God, where God has made His will known to us.

We must not, however, learn this from the Law, which preaches about our works, our merits, and what we deserve; we must go to the Gospel. And the Gospel speaks of election—although not like poets telling fairy-stories about “the books of Fate”, where some are predestined to life, others to death, about which we know nothing for certain, since we do not know if we belong to the ranks of those who will be saved, or of those who will be damned. No, the revealed doctrine of predestination in Scripture sets forth God's decrees concerning the causes and way of salvation or damnation, like this:

1. There is God's decree to redeem humankind through the obedience and suffering of Christ the Mediator.
2. There is God's decree to call Jews and Gentiles alike, through the ministry of the Word, to share in the merit of Christ for salvation.
3. There is God's decree that He wills, through the hearing of the Word, to work by His Spirit in human hearts to bring them to repentance and faith in the Gospel.
4. There is God's decree that He wills to justify and save those who, when they feel their sins and God's wrath, flee by faith to the throne of grace, and embrace Christ the Mediator, as He is proclaimed in the Gospel. On the other hand, God has decreed to damn those who

reject the Word, despising the promise, and refusing to embrace it.

This is a précis and outline of the doctrine of predestination, insofar as it stands revealed to us in the Word. It does not teach true believers to doubt whether they belong to the ranks of the elect, but imitating Paul in Romans 8:30, it establishes this sequence of steps: “Those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified.” Therefore, those whom God calls and justifies should certainly conclude that they are elected!

If the reader will look at what Scripture says about election, he will plainly see that the doctrine of predestination, as it stands revealed in Scripture, is not given in order to cast doubt and uncertainty on the salvation of believers, but to be a basis of certainty. Eph. 1:4: “He chose us in Christ before the founding of the world.” 2 Tim. 2:19: “God’s foundation stands firm, bearing this seal: The Lord knows those who are His.” John 10:27–28: “My sheep hear My voice... and they will never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand.” Rom. 8:28, 34, 35: “Those who are called according to God’s purpose.” Therefore, “who is He that condemns? Who shall separate us?” Rom. 11:29: “For the gifts and the calling of God cannot be revoked.” 2 Tim. 1:7–9: “God did not give us a spirit of fear... For He has called us because of His own purpose and the grace He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, etc.”

My intention was not to explain the whole doctrine of predestination at this point, but only to show that divine election, as it is revealed in God’s Word, does not beget uncertainty, but rather confirms and establishes the certainty of salvation and the confidence of believers. The Council of Trent is quite wrong when it says, in Chapter 12, that no one can know from God’s Word whom God has chosen for Himself, unless He adds a special revelation beyond and apart from the Word. Nor is it true that a true believer cannot establish with certainty from God’s Word, without any special revelation, that he belongs to the ranks of the predestined. Trent here clashes with Scripture, as we have just shown. Of course, I am not unaware of the fact

that disordered minds conjure up many mystifying and ghastly things about predestination; but I have set out this summary of teaching in what I judge to be a very simple manner.

**Martin Chemnitz**

*Examination of the Council of Trent, Ninth Topic, section 3:23–5*

### **Johann Gerhard: a meditation on how Christ's death profits us**

Behold, Lord Jesus, how inadequately I contemplate Thy suffering! It disturbs my heart and greatly saddens my spirit that my own works and merits are not to be found in Thy suffering, although Thy suffering is (even so) my deed and Thy works are my merits. O how inadequately I contemplate Thy suffering because, despite the perfect adequacy of Thy suffering, still I restlessly try to bolster it with my own works! Yet if I could manufacture some righteousness of my own, then Thy righteousness would cease to be of any benefit to me. At any rate, I surely would not have thirsted after Thy righteousness so strongly. If I try to do the works of the Law, then by the Law I shall be condemned. Yet I know that now I am no longer under the Law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). My life has been intemperate. Holy heavenly Father, I have sinned, and I am not worthy to be called Thy child! And yet Thou wilt not call me Thy servant!

O may the fruit of Thy suffering not be denied me. Thy blood is not infertile; truly it bears fruit, and liberates my soul. My sins have always lived in my fallen nature. Now at last, I plead that they will die with me! Up until now, my fallen nature has always controlled me; O grant that my spiritual nature may gain the victory! May my external self be made subject to perishing and poison, so that my inner self may come forth to glory! Up until now, I have always followed Satan's promptings. O may he at last be bruised beneath my feet! He is always ready to accuse me, but he has no rights over me. The sight of death fills me with fear; yet death will bring an end to my sins and instate me in the life of holiness. Yes, very soon, my God, I will at last be able to please Thee perfectly. The enemy terrifies me by showing me

my sins; but in reality, he accuses the One who took My failings upon Him, whom God delivered to death for my sins! How overwhelmingly great is my debt, which I cannot pay at all. But I trust in my Surety's riches and love. He underwrote my debt and sets me free, paying in full for me!

O Lord, I have sinned: how many are my sins, how great beyond calculation. Even so, I will not commit the most awful sin of all, the sin of accusing Thee of lying, when Thou dost testify by Thy words and works and oath that Thou hast made atonement for my sins! Thou art my righteousness: therefore I do not fear my sins! Thou art my wisdom: I do not fear my ignorance! Thou art my life: I do not fear death! Thou art my truth: I do not fear falsehoods! Thou art my resurrection: I do not fear that I may perish! Thou art my joy: I do not fear the pangs of death! Because Thou art my righteousness, I do not fear to stand before the harshest judge.

O may the dew of Thy grace, and the comfort of the resurrection, be outpoured into my parching soul. My spirit shrivels up, but soon it will rejoice in Thee! My feeble flesh droops, but soon it will blossom forth! Necessity is laid upon me; I perish. But Thou hast set me free from all ills, and Thou wilt free me from perishing! Thou hast made me: shall anything destroy what Thy hands have made? Thou hast redeemed me from every foe: how can the final foe, death, triumph over me? Thou hast lavished Thy life, Thy blood, Thy all to save me: how shall death keep its hold on those redeemed at so costly a ransom-price?

Thou art my righteousness, Lord Jesus: my sins will not succeed against Thee. Thou art the resurrection and the life: my death-sentence will not succeed against Thee. Thou art God: Satan will not succeed against Thee. Thou hast given me the gift of Thy Spirit! In this I exult, in this I triumph, in this I most surely believe, not doubting that Thou hast granted me to enter the marriage supper of the Lamb! O my Advocate, Thou art my wedding garment with which my baptism has clothed me. Thou hast covered my nakedness! Forbid that I should ever sew onto this costly and loveliest of garments any patch of my

own righteousness; for what is human righteousness but a filthy rag? With what audacity can I sew this foul rag onto the robe of Thy righteousness? I shall stand forth in this robe before Thy face in Thy judgment, on the day Thou dost judge the world in righteousness and equity. I shall stand forth in this robe before Thy face in the kingdom of heaven. This robe is the covering for my embarrassment and my unseemliness, so that none of it may ever again be recorded in eternity. There I shall stand forth in Thine eyes glorious and holy in my flesh; my very body will be imperishable, clothed in the most blessed glory—eternal glory unto the ages of ages!

**Johann Gerhard**  
*Sacred Meditations, Meditation 5*

### **Johannes Andreas Quenstedt: the difference between Christ's atonement and His merit**

The atonement and the merit of Christ are not the same thing. The reasons are:

1. The atonement negatively “pays damages” to God for a grievance against what we have done, recompenses for sin, makes good a debt, and altogether rescues us from penalties that would endure for ever. Christ's merit, however, positively reinstates us into God's acceptance, and secures for sinners an undeserved reward—the free gift of forgiveness of sins, justification, and everlasting life.
2. The atonement is the cause, but Christ's merit is the effect. For merit flows from the fountain of atonement. Christ made atonement for our sins, and for the punishments they had incurred, and *thereby* He merited God's favour for us, sin's forgiveness, and everlasting life.
3. Atonement was given to the triune God and to His justice, not to us, although it was given for our sakes. But when Christ merited, by that merit He secured something for us, not for the Trinity.

4. The acts of Christ's humiliation, such as His obedience to the Law, His suffering and death, etc., are both atoning and meritorious at the same time. But the acts of His exaltation, such as His resurrection, ascending into heaven, and being enthroned at God's right hand, are not atoning acts; they are purely meritorious. In other words, Christ did not atone for our sins by rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; but by doing these things, He thereby merited everlasting life for us and opened the gates of heaven.
5. Finally, the work of atonement originates from debt. Merit, however, is a work that is in no sense owed, but is done freely. It is to merit, then, that reward or recompense belongs.

Even so, not all theologians accept this distinction, but some incorporate Christ's atonement itself into the concept of merit.

**Johannes Andreas Quenstedt**  
*Didactic-Polemic Theology or Theological System, Part 1,*  
 Chapter 2, section 1

### **Paul Gerhardt: Christ-centred faith**

*Jesus, Thy boundless love to me  
 No thought can reach, no tongue declare;  
 Unite my thankful heart with Thee  
 And reign without a rival there.  
 To Thee alone, dear Lord, I live;  
 Myself to Thee, dear Lord, I give.*

*O, grant that nothing in my soul  
 May dwell but Thy pure love alone!  
 Oh, may Thy love possess me whole,  
 My joy, my treasure, and my crown!  
 All coldness from my heart remove;  
 My every act, word, thought, be love.*

O Love, how cheering is Thy ray!  
All pain before Thy presence flies;  
Care, anguish, sorrow, melt away  
Where'er Thy healing beams arise.

O Jesus, nothing may I see,  
Nothing desire or seek, but Thee!

This love unwearied I pursue,  
And dauntlessly to Thee aspire.

Oh, may Thy love my hope renew,  
Burn in my soul like heavenly fire!  
And day and night be all my care  
To guard this sacred treasure there.

My Saviour, Thou Thy love to me  
In shame, in want, in pain, hast showed;  
For me, on the accursed tree,  
Thou pourest forth Thy guiltless blood;  
Thy wounds upon my heart impress,  
Nor aught the mark shall e'er efface!

More hard than marble is my heart,  
And foul with sins of deepest stain;  
But Thou the mighty Saviour art,  
Nor flowed thy cleansing blood in vain;  
Ah soften, melt this rock, and may  
Thy blood wash all these stains away!

O that I, as a little child,  
May follow Thee, and never rest,  
Till sweetly Thou hast breathed Thy mild  
And lowly mind into my breast!  
Nor ever may we parted be,  
Till I become as one with Thee.

*Still let Thy love point out my way;  
     How wondrous things Thy love hath wrought!  
 Still lead me, lest I go astray;  
     Direct my word, inspire my thought;  
 And if I fall, soon may I hear  
     Thy voice, and know that love is near.*

*In suffering be Thy love my peace,  
     In weakness be Thy love my power;  
 And when the storms of life shall cease,  
     Jesus, in that tremendous hour,  
 In death as life be Thou my guide,  
     And save me, who for me hast died.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Johann Arndt: the urgent necessity of sanctification in the life of faith**

How can a person who has faith in Christ remain in the sins for which the Lord paid so costly a price as His own most precious blood? When, therefore, O soul, you are tempted to high thoughts of yourself and selfish ambition, think about the scorn and humiliation which Jesus took upon Himself to atone for these sins. When you desire this world, think of the poverty Jesus experienced that He might make atonement for your grasping desires; and surely this will extinguish in you the love of money and material goods. What pain and agony Christ endured because of your sinful desires and pleasures! And are you still pursuing these pleasures whose aftermath will be a deadly sting? Alas! how great must the depravity of our nature be, when we can find sweetness in things for which our Redeemer and Lord underwent sorrow even unto death! Christ died to pay the price for your anger, hatred, and hostility: to atone for your bitterness and malignity, your delight in taking revenge, and your unforgiving spirit. This He accomplished by

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2. Based on the translation by John Wesley, with very slight alteration.

His utmost meekness and patience, His compassion and long-suffering. And will you become angry for every trivial reason, and consider revenge to be delicious, when your Redeemer drank to the last drops the cup of bitterness and suffering in order to atone for these very things?

In truth, those who take to themselves the name of Christians, and yet do not renounce the pleasures of sin, crucify Christ to themselves anew, and put Him to public disgrace (Heb. 6:6). It is, therefore, utterly impossible that they should share in that merit which they trample underfoot. They defile the blood of the eternal covenant, that is, they do not consider it a purification of their sins. They despise the Spirit of grace; they scorn Him and resist Him; and, by their ungodly lives, they treat as some cheap and despicable thing God's grace offered in Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:29). Thus the blood of the Saviour, which was shed for their salvation, now cries aloud for justice against them; they will have to face the righteous judgment of God, which they attract to themselves by their sin. This thought ought to instil dread into everyone who names the name of Christ. For in truth, how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). For He is a living God, not a dead idol who will allow His grace and mercy to be forever mocked and scorned...

Even though these truths are certain and self-evident in themselves, many people who say they are Christians have never repented—and yet they have the effrontery to claim a share in the merits of Christ, and in the forgiveness of sins He has procured. They have not stopped indulging their usual anger, worldly desires, pride, ill-will, jealousy, hypocrisy, and injustice to others; in fact, they have fallen into an ever deeper bondage to these things! And yet (alas!) they expect their sin to be forgiven! With false confidence they think the merits of Christ will protect them against the coming judgment of Almighty God. Although this is one of the most crude and blatant errors in the world, they have no hesitation in calling it “faith” by which they expect to be saved! O what a fallacy! These are people who sweet-talk themselves to their own destruction, foolishly

imagining they are true Christians merely because they have a head-knowledge of the Gospel, and because they believe that Jesus died for their sins. But sadly, this is not faith. It is mere fancy. You are a wretched and most appallingly self-infatuated counterfeit Christian, if you can let yourself be deceived in this way! The Word of God never taught such a doctrine.

**Johann Arndt**  
*True Christianity, Book 1, Chapter 8*

### **Philip Jacob Spener: Church Pietism**

Thirdly, it might be profitable (I offer this for deeper and more mature consideration) to bring back the kind of church meetings they had of old, in apostolic times. As well as our ordinary preaching services, we could have other gatherings such as Paul sets out in 1 Corinthians 14:26–40. Here, it would not be one person getting up to preach (although this custom would carry on at other times); no, others blessed with gifts of understanding would also speak, giving their godly opinions on the topic proposed, to be evaluated by the rest. All this would be done in a way designed to avoid disorder and conflict.

We could do this acceptably by bringing together a number of pastors, in towns that have more than one pastor in residence. Or a number of church members whose knowledge of God is reasonably good, or who wish to make progress in that knowledge, could meet under a pastor's oversight, read out from the holy Scriptures, and discuss the verses in a brotherly way. They would search for the plain meaning, and whatever the verses contain that serve the purposes of common edification. If anyone at the meeting has some difficulty with a verse, he should be allowed to air his doubts and ask for a better explanation. The more knowledgeable—including the pastors—would be free to give their understanding of the passages in question. All the contributions, assuming they are in keeping with what the Holy Spirit intends in the Scriptures, should be pondered with care by the others (especially the ordained pastors), and the practical application be brought out, so that the gathering might

be edified. Everything should be organized with God's glory in view, and also the spiritual progress of group members, bearing in mind their limitations. If anyone becomes impertinent, argumentative, self-promoting, and so forth, the preachers in charge should keep watch against this and diplomatically impose silence on such people.

Considerable benefit might be expected from this kind of meeting. The preachers would get better acquainted with church members, with their weaknesses or their progress in doctrine and godliness; preachers and people would gain a closer confidence in each other, to their mutual advantage. The people would have a wonderful opportunity to get down to some solid study of God's Word, ask questions politely, and get an answer (people do not always feel able to discuss such things with their pastor on their own). The outcome would soon be personal growth, and a greater ability to instruct children and domestic servants in Christian things. Without such meetings, set-piece sermons are not always understood very well, because people have no time to stop and think about each point. Or if they do stop to think, they then lose the thread of what the preacher is saying next. Discussions avoid this pitfall. Or again, reading the Bible in private or out loud to one's family, without anyone present to offer help now and then in understanding this or that verse, does not give us an adequate explanation of all we would wish to understand.

The defects in these two methods—public preaching and private reading—would be remedied by the meetings I have described. No great burden would be laid on the preachers or the people, and it would contribute greatly to fulfilling Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Indeed, the meetings could sing such songs to praise God and inspire group members.

We can be sure of this: the careful and industrious use of God's Word does not consist merely of listening to sermons! It includes reading, meditating, discussing (Ps. 1:2), and is the

chief means of reformation—whether my suggestion above is followed, or some other is adopted. God’s Word is ever the seed from which everything good in us must grow. If we can just get people to seek their happiness gladly and seriously in the Book of Life, it will gloriously strengthen their spiritual life, and change them into very different people!

Philip Jacob Spener

*Pia Desideria*, Part 3, section 1

### Gerhard Tersteegen: the poetry of Radical Pietism

*Still, O soul! the sign and wonder*

*Of all ages see:*

*Christ, thy God, the King of glory,*

*On the Cross for thee:*

*From the Father’s bosom come,*

*Wandering soul, to bring thee home.*

*Wouldst thou know if Jesus loves thee?*

*If He loves thee well?*

*See Him suffer, broken-hearted,*

*All the pains of hell:*

*Smitten, bearing in thy place*

*All thy guilt, and thy disgrace.*

*See Him of His God forsaken,*

*Hear His bitter cries*

*Rise unanswered through the darkness*

*Of the silent skies:*

*See the fountain of the blood*

*Shed to bring thee back to God.*

*Mine the sin, O mighty Saviour,*

*Laid by God on Thee;*

*My eternal condemnation*

*In Thy Cross I see;*

*In Thine agony divine*

*See the curse that else were mine.*

*See the conquest and the triumph  
Thou for me hast won;  
Justice satisfied for ever,  
All God's pleasure done.  
Thus, O smitten Rock! from Thee,  
Life eternal flows to me.*

*Unto me, the base, the guilty,  
Flows that living flood;  
I, Thine enemy, am ransomed  
By Thy precious blood.  
Silent at Thy feet I lie,  
Lost in love's immensity.*

(from the translation by Frances Bevan)