

Lutheran Pietism: What is it, and how did it start?

Historical Theology

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I. PIOUS, PIETY, PIETISM

(According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Ed.)

A) Pious: showing or characterized by religious devotion

B) Piety: The state or quality of being pious

C) Pietism:

1. Stress on the emotional and personal aspects of religion.
2. A reform movement in the German Lutheran Church during the 1600's and 1700's, which strove to renew the devotional ideal in the Protestant religion.

II. SCRIPTURES SUPPORTING PIETIST BELIEFS

A) Relating to gathering and fellowship

1. Matthew 23 especially vss. 4 & 25-27 (dead orthodoxy)

2. Acts 4 especially vss. 13 & 19-20

(radical conversion experience)

3. James 1:26 (self controlled)

4. Matthew 18:20 (small gatherings)

5. 1 Peter 2:21-24 (affection for Christ's wounds)

6. Ephesians 5:19 & Colossians 3:16

(psalms, hymns & spiritual songs)

a. Johann Freylinghausen

B) Relating to those others

1. Matthew 28:19-20 (go and make disciples)

2. Matthew 18:5, Mark 9:37, Luke 9:48 (receiving children in Jesus' name)

3. James 2:15-17 (go in peace, be warm and filled)

4. James 1:27 (caring for widows and orphans)

III. JOHANN ARNDT (1555 - 1621)

- A) Studied at Helmstadt, Wittenberg, Strasbourg and Basel.
- B) Became pastor at Badeborn in 1583, removed in 1590 for refusing to remove pictures from his buildings and performing exorcism as part of baptism.
- C) Authored a very influential and controversial work titled Four Books on True Christianity between 1605 - 1609.
- D) Defended by his contemporary, Peter Meiderlin, AKA Rupert Meldenius who is credited with developing the idea which was eventually condensed to the motto, "In essentials unity, In doubtful things liberty, In all things charity"

IV. PHILIPP JAKOB SPENER (1635 - 1705)

- A) Strongly influenced by Arndt's writings.
- B) While studying at Strassburg (1651 - 1659) he became very troubled by the rigidity of doctrinal training and lack of morality he saw in the clergy.
- C) While superintendent of the Lutheran Church at Frankfurt on Main he began the *collegia pietatis* (Schools of Piety, eventually these would become known as conventicles) small gatherings for discipleship, accountability, prayer and Bible study.
- D) Corresponded with many German clergy who adopted his methods and influenced even more by writing *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires). This is the source of the names for the movement: Pietism and Pietist.

- E) He had many supporters, but also many opponents who believed his emphasis on practice was extreme and detracted from doctrine. Spener held that arguments over doctrine were often irrelevant and harmful.
- F) Eventually gains support from the royal court at Brandenburg allowing him to carry out many reforms. The elector of Brandenburg also started a University at Halle which was favorable to Pietism in 1694 where Spener was able to secure employment for his student Augustus Francke.
- C) Was criticized by traditional Lutherans for “Biblical revivalism and social activism.”
- D) The criticisms reach a crescendo with the founding of a school for poor kids which would eventually develop into the Franckesche Stiftungen (Francke Foundations) which included the original school for poor kids as well as enrolling wealthier kids who could pay tuition, an orphanage, a pharmacy and a publishing house.

V. **AUGUST FRANCKE (1663 - 1721)**

- A) Professor of Theology at Halle University
- B) Was responsible for multiple Pietist groups at Halle University.

SOURCES

- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition
- Encyclopedia Britannica Online
- Gotquestions.org
- Wikipedia.com
- A large variety of videos from Youtube.com