Foreword

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The use of the term *Pietism* is likely to result in blank stares on the faces of most church-going people, the public in general, and even some theologians. Even those of us who claim the label *evangelical* are sadly ignorant of the fact that Pietism is one of the most important influences on the evangelical movement. Pietism, properly understood and applied, brings a hopeful balance for the future of the global church and to Christ-centered higher education. This volume is an important contribution to a more robust understanding of this great theological heritage. The authors help us see more clearly Pietism's contribution to the church, to hymnody, to the arts, and to intellectual dialogue.

Pietism shapes the culture and trajectory of Bethel University. Because of our heritage, it was quite appropriate that the university host the conference which produced this volume. Our denominational roots in the Baptist General Conference go deep into the Pietist movements that spread through Europe. Eventually the convictions shaped by Pietism put our forebears in tension with the state church over issues such as believer's baptism, a believer's church, free access to read and study Scripture, the importance of prayer and other spiritual disciplines, and a lifestyle that exhibited separation from sin. Those convictions resulted in an approach to education that was centered on a devoted life, intellectual engagement with key issues in culture and discipleship carried out in community. From founder John Alexis Edgren onward a Bethel education has been characterized by a devoted heart and a keen mind. In the words of Bethel University's third president, Carl H. Lundquist, "Understanding without devotion can be cold and formal. Devotion without understanding can lead to subjectivism and heresy. Each is incomplete without the other. The point of Christian education, in my judgment, is that the pursuit of truth in any field leads ultimately to the Christ who is Truth absolute. And when we come to Him through various fields of specialization it is to more perfectly 'love Him with all our mind'" (*Baptist Pietist Clarion* 6/1 [June 2007], 5). Loving Him with all of our mind, however, is balanced with loving those He created. This results in epistemic humility, in which we recognize the limits of our human knowledge, an irenic spirit, in which we seek to live at peace with others, and a commitment to social justice, in which we commit to right the wrongs brought by sin.

Some argue that there is a downside to Pietism, and Mark Noll identified it in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994): "At its extreme, the Pietist emphasis on religious life gave very little attention to self-conscious Christian thought. To be consumed by feeling was to have no time for thinking through the relationship between God and his creation" (49). It is just this concern that makes this volume so important to the growing conversation about Pietism today. The authors show that Noll's analysis was incomplete with regard to the Pietism of the past and Pietism as it is practiced in places like Bethel University today. Rather than a mushy sentimentalism, Pietism today is characterized by the balance articulated by Lundquist: heart-felt devotion with clear-minded engagement with the most important issues and ideas of the current age.

One exemplar of this balance is one of my personal heroes, Virgil Olson, ThD, professor emeritus of church history and global missions at Bethel Seminary. In addition to his teaching role, Virgil served as dean of Bethel College during a tumultuous time from 1968–1975. In his role as professor and dean, Virgil exhibited the best of Pietism. He used his keen mind to advance the cause of Christ and Christ-centered higher education while winning people to the cause with his warm heart, devoted to Christ. His irenic spirit calmed the campus during moments of crisis and helped Bethel find a better way forward. Having a big picture of what God was doing in the world helped him challenge the campus to have a bigger view of education than could be found in St. Paul, Minnesota. Now in his 90s, Virgil continues to pray for Bethel and to share his deep understanding of Pietism in meetings with faculty and administrators. His keen sense of history coupled with his deep knowledge of Scripture provides a valuable backdrop to Pietism lived well. This volume is fittingly dedicated to him.

Ash Wednesday, 2011

Foreword

Peter C. Erb

Although Pietism must be counted among the two or three most important developments in Protestant spirituality, strikingly limited study has been devoted to its origins and development. This is particularly the case in the English-speaking world, above all in North America, where, despite growing secularization and a broad public discourse misconstruing its ends,[1] Pietism's Evangelical descendants have maintained a firm and now increasingly vigorous tradition, alongside their dramatic growth in the Third World. But Pietism has not only been excoriated by its opponents—the seventeenth-century Protestant Scholastics and the nineteenth-century Liberals. Even among those communities directly shaped or strongly influenced by the movement, there were believers who saw in the Pietist impulse a negative turn. By the mid-twentieth century, for example, many American Lutherans, endeavoring to distinguish themselves from their conservative associates, disparaged the latter as "Prairie Pietists," and similar approaches were reflected in Reformed communities. Likewise, some among the Church of the Brethren preferred to emphasize the Anabaptist sources in their tradition,[2] and Mennonites, firmly committed to "the Anabaptist vision," pressed for a rejection of the Pietist elements which had so strongly shaped it from the early eighteenth-century.[3] In the heady days of the post-1960s it was natural to praise a liberationist "fear of God" (*Gottesfurcht*) over-against what was then considered the saccharine "inner devotion" (*Gottseligkeit*) of the Pietists.

Fortunately such patterns were early opposed by a mass of German scholarship: *Pietismus und Neuzeit. Ein Jahrbuch zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus,* a journal begun in 1974, a monograph series, the "Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Pietismus," now numbering over 50 volumes begun in 1967, and much other work followed, including the now standard and massive history, the *Geschichte des Pietismus*.[4] In the English-speaking

1. For a reasonably balanced although nationally limited view, see David M. Haskell, *Through a Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals* (Toronto: Clements, 2009).

2. Note, however, the extensive and balanced work of Donald F. Durnbaugh (1927–2005) with respect to the Church of the Brethren and Pietism generally, above all, his *European Origins of the Brethren: A Source Book on the Beginnings of the Church of the Brethren in Early Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Elgin, IL: Brethren, 1958) and *Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century* (Elgin, IL: Brethren, 1967), among many of his later publications.

3. On this reaction, see above all Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature* (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), a volume both demonstrating and opposing the strong influence of Pietism on Mennonite piety.

4. See also the two volume "Bibliographie zur Geschichte des Pietismus" (1979, 1993), and an impressive series of primary sources, the "Texte zur Geschichte des Pietismus," initiated by the "Historical Commission

world, attention to Pietism was not so early nor so directly focused, on the one hand because many of those Christian communities most immediately touched by the movement were Germanic in origin and struggled in greater or lesser degrees with the effects of anglicization on their theology and piety, and on the other because the Revivalist, Holiness, and Evangelical movements in North America and the United Kingdom were in varying ways generations "once-removed" from the initial impulse and, contending with local debates, were less likely to seek support in what appeared initially to them as less immediate resources.[5] Scholarly work in English was not, however, lacking. Above all, already in the 1960s, the work of F. Ernest Stoeffler opened the area for both popular and scholarly consideration and served an important function in directing readers to consider more carefully the "Puritan" background to Pietism[6] and to recognize the importance of Pietist developments in North America.[7]

All this work, and the range and number of studies that have appeared in the past quarter-century,[8] have gone far to overcome many of the earlier negative views of Pietism. Its initial supporters, and indeed many of its later adherents, were neither the anti-intellectual nor the anti-academic bigots often painted by popular prejudice. Their biblicism was in fact often much more learned and broadly considered than that of their historical-literalist attackers sometimes describe it, their sense of mission was by no means unaware of "euro-centric" evaluations and concomitant dangers, and their devotion not separate at large from a sense of "social justice."

A good number of these issues are noted throughout the essays that follow: In the opening section on "Pietism and the Pietist Impulse," and the second, "Continental German Pietism," the essays consistently open new, fascinating, and important areas in Pietist study, as do those treating the ongoing Pietist tradition ("The Pietist Impulse under the Conditions of Modernity"), the Evangelical links to Pietism ("Wesley the Pietist"), the often neglected importance of "Nineteenth & Twentieth Century Trans-Atlantic Scandinavian Pietism," and "The Pietist Impulse in North American Christianity," and that "in Missions and Globalizing Christianity." All these materials make not only engaging, expanding, and stimulating reading both in an intellectual and religious sense—as Pietist forebears would

for the Study of Pietism" in the 1970s, alongside the series, "Kleine Texte des Pietismus" (begun a decade ago); For the *Geschichte* see *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); *Der Pietismus im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht und Klaus Deppermann et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); *Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* ed. Ulrich Gäbler et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); *Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten des Pietismus* ed. Hartmut Lehmann et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

5. One must, however, note the work of Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, rev. ed. (1996) and the important place it has had in overcoming this prejudice.

6. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965) and *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

7. F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

8. See Jonathan Strom, "Problems and Promises of Pietism Research," *Church History* 71/3 (2002) 536–54, and note the studies first presented at "Pietism in two Worlds: Transmissions of Dissent in Germany and North America, 1680–1820," Emory University, Atlanta, GA (March 4–6, 2004).

have approved—but they refocus readers as well on the wider import of Pietism for understanding Christianity as a whole. Contemporary expositions of Christianity that read their subject primarily in denominational categories without taking the Pietist impulse seriously mistake some central foci of Protestantism in particular and of the Christian world generally. Pietism in a strong sense marks the beginning of what, by the late twentieth century, required a remapping of the Reformation and 1848 Westphalian agreements: As the term "pietist" itself could be applied to Lutheran, Reformed, and other religious groups, so later theological polities merged into and were better understood according to broader and shifting "spiritualities"—Modernism, Liberalism, Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism, many of which themselves overlap and a number of which include Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic strains.[9] The implications of such movements for local-pastoral and wider ecumenical efforts cannot be ignored in the twenty-first century, and as these are taken more seriously one can only expect that there will be an increased awareness of the ecumenical dimensions of Pietism itself.

Not every aspect of the Pietist impulse will prove positive for ecumenical endeavors, but its manifestations of schismatic exclusivism must always be balanced with a view to its healthier and consistent commitment to truth. As such aspects of the movement continue to be investigated the Pietist tradition may well also provide new insights into one of the major questions of our own time: the problem of modernity. The Pietists were, after all, with their emphasis on individual experience, interiority, and expressivism first among us moderns as they adjusted to the modern age and in part supported its development, not all of which can be characterized, in Max Weber's words, as "an iron cage."[10] Indeed, as postmodernist and post-Liberal thinkers continue to consider the sources of modernity, they will need to nuance earlier historiographical reflections,[11] in which the Pietist impulse has too often been ignored or simplistically called forth in one or other of its dimensions to prove a particular emphasis in modern thinkers such as Kant or Schleiermacher. For contemporary Christians, the question goes much deeper. However, Protestants or Catholics, we come to grips today with what Charles Taylor has called "the malaise of modernity,"[12]

9. On the latter, note the articles on "Evangelical Catholicism? A Symposium on the Prospects of Catholic Theology in America" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31/1 (2004) 35ff., and John L. Allen, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church* (New York, 2010). Roman Catholics, like myself, can only be aided by closer studies, to offer only one example, of the links between Pietism and Catholicism in the Bavaria of Bishop Johann Michael Sailer (1751–1832), as well as the lives and thought of such men as Martin Boos (1762–1825) on the one hand and Johannes Evangelista Gossner (1773–1858) on the other.

10. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958) 182–83.

11. On this issue see particularly Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago, 1949) and the relevant sections opposing his argument in Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

12. On this see above all Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ont., 1991; also published as *The Ethics of Authenticity* [Cambridge, MA, 1992]) and his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), in which note 302ff., and his treatment of "the expressivist turn," 368ff.

however we understand the implications of being in the world but not of it (the Church as "a sign of contradiction"[13]), a firm sense of the Pietists' own struggles in this regard is greatly strengthened by the essays in this collection and can only serve to inform the faith more fully and offer vital resources for renewal in our coming life together.

Waterloo, Ontario
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13. On Pope John Paul II's use of this Lucan phrase, see Karol Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction* (New York, 1979), and note the implications of Stanley Hauerwas' contention regarding John Paul II as the first non-Constantinian Pope in the closing chapter of his *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and natural Theology: Being the Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of St. Andrews in 2001* (Grand Rapids, 2001).