

Comment

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Historian and Covenant pastor Jonathan M. Wilson begins this issue with a fascinating article that traces three Lutheran chaplains' diverging responses to the American Revolutionary War. All three chaplains, Christian Streit (1749–1812), Frederick V. Melsheimer (1749–1811), and Christopher Triebner (1740–1815), were to varying degrees linked to the German Pietism centering around the University of Halle, and all three negotiated the tensions of patriotism and clerical vocation differently. Wilson draws from these historical case studies contemporary application, suggesting finally that “today’s heirs to Pietism might consider reclaiming a framework of non-partisanship, that is, of political non-alignment, as we wrestle with and proclaim the ethical demands of justice, holiness, grace, duty, biblical hermeneutics, and conscience.”

In the previous issue of this publication, Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, professor of theology and ethics at North Park Theological Seminary, contributed a historical survey of Covenant freedom, followed by a constructive proposal for faithful dissent amid conflicting biblical interpretations.¹ The conversation continues in this issue with responses from Brian Bantum (associate professor of theology, Seattle Pacific University and Seminary), Stephen S. Bilynskyj, (pastor, Valley Covenant Church, Eugene, Oregon), Scott Erickson (head of school, Phillips Brooks School, Menlo Park, California), Mark Safstrom (assistant professor of Scandinavian studies, Augustana College), and Klyne R. Snodgrass (emeritus

¹ Michelle A. Clifton-Soderstrom, “Covenant Freedom: Freedom for All or Free-for-all?” *Covenant Quarterly* 75:3–4 (2017): 34–54.

professor of New Testament, North Park Theological Seminary). These responses, along with Clifton-Soderstrom's engagement with the questions and critiques they raise, bring further clarity to the nature and limits of freedom, the possibility of unity amid diversity, and the relationship between biblical exegesis and contemporary culture. Additionally, they raise further questions regarding the centrality of Covenant ecclesiology and the value of the language of "faithful dissent."

The *Covenant Quarterly* is a forum for charitable, critical dialogue on relevant issues in pastoral theology. We hope the dialogue printed here will generate further conversation in that same spirit, to the end described by Clifton-Soderstrom: "that we speak well of those in our communion, that we speak directly to those with whom we have issue, and that we commit to each other as members of the same body. This calls for charity in all things, and real charity requires courage to work through conflict over the long-haul."