

Toward a Pietist Homiletic

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The founding theologians of historic Lutheran Pietism, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) and August Herman Francke (1663–1727), sought to clarify the meaning of the true Christian life in a society in which every child born into a Lutheran family was automatically deemed a member of the Church. This doctrine in seventeenth-century Germany often resulted in nominal Christian belief and practice. Pietists contended that simply being on a church register and sitting in a church pew were not enough. More is required to be a follower of Christ, an active disciple, and a true Christian. Pietists pushed for a *living faith*, and against what they called “dead orthodoxy.” Assent to correct doctrine means nothing if it does not work itself out in Christlike living.

These unique theological emphases come together to make a compelling homiletic. Given that Pietism was spread primarily through sermons and tracts, perhaps this is not surprising. As we consider how to preach through modern challenges to contemporary congregations, historic Pietism’s theological emphases offer us a helpful way to think about preaching. Here I offer an overview of Pietist theology and lay out an original Pietist homiletic, concluding with reflections on my implementation of that homiletic.

Pietism’s Main Theological Themes

Pietism was not a movement built on novel theologies. Pietists were not interested in constructing another long set of doctrines or instituting another Protestant denomination. What is interesting, and what makes the study of Pietism worthwhile for us, is what ends up occupying their pastoral and theological attention. Roger Olson and Christian Collins Winn write, “Other Christian movements share many of these features

or hallmarks, but Pietism puts them together distinctively and emphasizes them in a manner most others do not.”¹ Pietists did not invent but instead refurbished and restored those parts of Christian theology and practice they felt had become tarnished, calcified, or fallen into disrepair.

What we see when we drill into fundamental Pietist theology is not a discrete list of doctrine and dogma. Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom says that Pietism is best understood as an ethos, something that is “caught, not taught.”² A pietistic ethic of life is not “decision-based,” meaning it is not primarily concerned with “what should I do in this specific circumstance?” Rather, it is virtue-based, focusing on “who ought I to be?”³ From that answer flow many specific applications, which occupied a great deal of the Pietists’ time.

What the Christian *does* comes from who the Christian *is*. This is one of the hallmarks of Pietist theology, what C. John Weborg calls the “convergence of Pietism,” belief and action converging in a living faith.⁴ Weborg writes, “The Pietists wanted to restore a balance; bring doctrine and life into congruity and pastor and people together around the scripture as the source of promise and power.”⁵ Pietists worked to bring together many threads into a common weave, with God as both the weaver and the pattern. This was how the Pietists intended to renew the whole church and the world.⁶ They wanted Christians, both clergy and laypeople, to integrate “intellectual belief, heartfelt commitment, and the practical living out of one’s faith in love,” as Christopher Gehrz and Mark Pattie write. “To put it simply, such a faith engages and enlivens one’s head *and* heart *and* hands.”⁷

Practical piety, or *praxis pietatis* as the Pietists would have written, is the central heartbeat of Pietism.⁸ Underneath all the other theological

¹ Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 107.

² Jane Chao Pomeroy, and Cathy Norman Peterson, “We Are Pietists” with Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, in *Love the Cov*, November 16, 2021. Podcast, website, 38:11. <https://covchurch.org/2021/11/16/we-are-pietists-with-michelle-clifton-soderstrom/>.

³ Michelle A. Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys: The Christian Ethic of Pietism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 15–16.

⁴ Weborg, quoted in Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 16.

⁵ C. John Weborg, “Pietism: ‘The Fire of God Which Flames in the Heart of Germany,’” *The Covenant Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1985): 3–29.

⁶ Christopher Gehrz and Mark Pattie III, *The Pietist Option: Hope for the Renewal of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 8.

⁷ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 64; emphasis original.

⁸ Ergon W. Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” *Covenant Quarterly* 36, nos. 1, 2 (1976): 37.

concepts that occupied Pietists' attention was the constant drumbeat of righteous practicality. When Francke needed to distill the essence of the Christian life and the goal of our spiritual growth, he said: "Quite simply remember you would 1) believe, 2) do, 3) hope what is taught, commanded, and promised in scripture."⁹

In addition to shaping an individual's spiritual maturity, Pietist theology broadly follows those three contours: believing, doing, and hoping. In seeking to answer the question of what constitutes a true Christian, Pietism says it is one who believes rightly, does rightly, and hopes rightly. Believing, doing, and hoping will be our framework and guide for understanding Pietism's unique theological emphases and impulses as we move toward a Pietist homiletic.

Believing

The guiding, orthodox principles of the Lutheran Reformation—including sola scriptura—were foundational for the originators of Lutheran Pietism.¹⁰ They worked tirelessly to identify and articulate doctrine grounded only in Scripture. Dale Brown writes in *Understanding Pietism*, "Pietism exalted the supremacy of the Bible above all other external standards."¹¹ Such an intense focus on Scripture over and against human teaching put Pietists outside the norm of seventeenth-century Lutheranism. Spener was adamant, however, writing, "The word of God remains the seed from which all that is good must grow."¹² What the true Christian believes must come from Scripture, which led the Pietists to develop a full pneumatology. Spener felt that the Spirit operated only through Scripture, and Scripture was only effective in transformation of the believer through the incessant work of the Holy Spirit.¹³ Spirit and Scripture work hand in hand; both must be engaged for true understanding.

With right belief coming solely from Scripture and the discernment of the Spirit, Pietists developed a unique way of handling disagreements. They knew that Scripture can be interpreted in various ways, so they distinguished between what was essential Christian doctrine and what was

⁹ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 90.

¹⁰ This was not necessarily true for Radical Pietists. See Douglas Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore: 2013), for a description of this and other branches of Pietism.

¹¹ Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 46.

¹² Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996), 91.

¹³ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 50.

not. Spener summarized this position with the Latin saying *in necessariis veritas (unitas), in non necessariis libertas, in omnibus caritas*.¹⁴ Olson and Collins Winn render this well in English as “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things charity (love).”¹⁵ Right belief includes the freedom to disagree about secondary issues and remain unified. Primary issues, for Pietists, are often tied up in individual salvation.¹⁶

It is perhaps not surprising then that right belief is shaped as an individual moves through stages of faith. Having moved from a corporate to an inwardly focused spirituality, the emphases in Pietist belief tended to fall on inward, individual experiences.¹⁷ Spener wrote of a person moving through three stages when being saved: “the kindling of faith, justification and adoption as children of God, and the completion of the new [person].”¹⁸ We will move through these stages as conversion, regeneration, and completion to understand Pietism’s emphasis on right belief.

Conversion lies at the heart of the whole Pietist movement, and Pietists understood its complex nature. They sought to renew the church by growing true Christians. A true conversion is the beginning of the journey that distinguishes between real discipleship and mere nominal adherence.¹⁹ A true conversion produces passionate followers of Christ. However, Pietists understood that conversion is more than simply the start of that journey, more than an initial mental commitment to Jesus. Pietists saw the Christian life as one of many conversions. We do not surrender our complete selves to Christ in one single moment, nor does complete faith in him spring up in us instantly. Ever and again, Jesus’s followers are presented with opportunities to abandon our unbelief and to trust more completely.

Experiencing Jesus personally was considered an essential element of true conversion for the Pietist movement. Only those who had directly encountered Jesus and knew his salvation for themselves could be counted as a Christian.²⁰ Emotional expression evidenced true conversion. Many

¹⁴ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 33.

¹⁵ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 104.

¹⁶ Theodore G. Tappert, “Introduction: The Times, the Man, the Book,” in *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 26.

¹⁷ Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” 51.

¹⁸ Manfred Waldemar Kohl, “Wiedergeburt as the Central Theme in Pietism,” *The Covenant Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1974): 2.

¹⁹ Jonathan Strom, *German Pietism and the Problem of Conversion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), loc.112, Kindle.

²⁰ Donald C. Frisk, “Theology and Experience in Early Pietism,” *Covenant Quarterly* 27, nos. 1–4 (1970): 17.

early Pietists, Count Nikolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) in particular, described conversion as bringing about “joyfulness” that continued throughout the converted one’s life.²¹ Francke’s own conversion was of this sort, a deeply emotional encounter with Jesus that moved him from disbelief and despair to the joy of faith in a single, radical evening.²²

True conversion produces true discipleship, a changed life that is lived differently since meeting Christ and surrendering to him. Francke highlighted this when he said,

We do not ask, “Are you converted? When were you converted?” But we ask, “What does Christ mean to you? What have you experienced personally with God? Is Christ necessary to you in your daily life?” And it is, to be certain, very likely that one does not know at all the period of time (of one’s conversion).²³

So essential to the Pietist is conversion of the whole life that one can only tell if he or she has been converted in retrospect, after a person has died. There is a decisive moment, to be sure, though as with so much of Pietist theology it must be born out in subsequent action. Thus, the Pietist emphasis on regeneration.

The theological doctrine of regeneration, which the Pietists often called “new birth” or “rebirth,” was not new, but it had been overlooked and underutilized. The Lutheran Church of the time, following in Martin Luther’s footsteps, highlighted justification over all else. Spener believed the church would only be reformed by emphasizing regeneration and its subsequent sanctification.²⁴ While the rest of the Protestant world focused on how one becomes a Christian, Spener highlighted what comes after conversion, the life of increasing holiness and devotion. Spener wrote in *Pia Desideria*, “I regard this as the principal thing. Our whole Christian religion consists of the inner [person] or the new [person], whose soul is faith and whose expressions are the fruits of life.”²⁵

Regeneration was the driving theological force of Pietism, not simply as

²¹ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 94.

²² For a full description of Francke’s conversion and a thorough treatment of Pietism’s unique take on conversion, see Strom, *German Pietism*, 2018.

²³ Francke, quoted in Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 78.

²⁴ Denise D. Kettering-Lane, “Philipp Spener and the Role of Women in the Church: The Spiritual Priesthood of All Believers in German Pietism,” *Covenant Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2017): 5–6.

²⁵ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 116.

a doctrine but as a vital experience of the Christian.²⁶ Our new birth must be felt and lived. As Gerdes wrote, “New Birth, for Spener is marked by a new ‘way,’ a new nature, that slowly replaces the old one. It is a process of growth, a renewing of conduct that is lived out ‘horizontally.’”²⁷ Here again we see the great convergence of Pietism. The Christian life is one of increasing holiness, which begins at the moment of justification and then continues.

Pietists are quick to point out that regeneration comes from faith and is a gift from God. As Clifton-Soderstrom writes, “The doctrine of regeneration allowed Spener, and subsequently other Pietists, to cling to faith alone as the basis of and motivation for action in the ethical life.”²⁸ We are saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone, without human effort or input. To be fully redeemed, that is for salvation to work its way through us, we must be changed from the inside out. God graciously gives us an encounter with Jesus, and from that experience we are moved toward Christlikeness.²⁹ Brown summarizes it well: “In the mysterious process of regeneration there is a moment of complete passivity in a person which gives room to the omnipotent working of God.”³⁰ This work of God, however, requires us to be co-participants.³¹

For Pietists, changes from sanctification happen in a certain direction; it is not random change for the sake of change. We are moved toward Christlikeness in every area of our lives. This is the Pietists’ idea of “completion.”

The life of the Christian is “completed” when it is wholly transformed. Completion is as tied to regeneration as regeneration is tied to conversion. For the Pietist, the process that starts conversion always has a definite direction and orientation. Salvation is an experience of transformation through an encounter with the Holy Spirit by faith, where the believer personally appropriates God’s grace.³² That personal experience of salvation and faith translates into an individual, lifelong commitment to Christ, in which the true Christian becomes like him.

²⁶ Bruce Leon Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 329.

²⁷ Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” 28–29. “Horizontally” here meaning our relationships with others.

²⁸ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 33.

²⁹ Weborg, “Pietism: ‘The Fire of God,’” 15.

³⁰ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 67.

³¹ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 33.

³² Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 89.

In emphasizing a theology of human completion, Pietists highlight transformation over information. This is the primary goal of God's revelation to us in Jesus and his communication through Scripture.³³ Transformation comes from intimate communion with God. We share our deepest selves, with all our sin and sinfulness, and we feel the Holy Spirit work there to bring about change for the better. When we are transformed, or rather as we are transforming, we will feel close to him. Quoting Spener, Olson writes, "Pietism was, and at its best is, about inward transformation by God through repentance and faith, which results in renewed affections, or feelings about God and the 'things of God.'"³⁴ While emotions were not the *goal* of Pietism, they were a convincing proof of one's true conversion and true Christianity. Sanctification toward completion brings our internal life, the realm of both thoughts and feelings, into ever greater conformity with Jesus.

Orthodoxy that lacks a lived and felt piety amounts to what Pietists called "dead orthodoxy."³⁵ Dead orthodoxy is an entirely cerebral faith, with no life change or heart change. It is possible to agree with all correct theology, all right doctrine, all church dogma and yet still not be converted as a follower of Jesus. Pietism "insists that without convertive piety, devotion that arises from and deepens the transforming personal relationship with God in the 'inner man,' doctrine and theology amount to little more than useless speculation."³⁶

To avoid uselessly speculating about God and to achieve completion, Pietists strongly engaged a personal relationship with Jesus. The life of faith is primarily about a relationship with a living God who is active in an individual's life and in the present world. "True Christianity cannot be found in a relationship to God that is wholly mediated by symbols, rituals, institutions, and the like," write Olson and Collins Winn. "The true Christian relationship with God may include those, but it cannot be reduced to what they do. It is at its core unmediated, direct, and personal."³⁷ This is why the person of Jesus became so central to Pietist theology. Phyllis Tickle draws this out in her introduction to a collection of Pietist writings, saying, "It's probably not an exaggeration to say that while 'Christ' was central to Pietism, 'Jesus'...by virtue of

³³ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 183.

³⁴ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 3.

³⁵ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 6.

³⁶ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 183.

³⁷ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 10.

being more personal, was more central.”³⁸ Centered on Jesus, Pietists keenly felt their interpersonal relationship with him. That relationship drove conversion and regeneration and was the center of what Pietists considered right belief.

Pietism’s emphasis on relationship did not stop at one’s relationship with God. Relationships with other people, particularly other Christians, matter a great deal, particularly as the Christian moves toward completion.³⁹ This is to be lived out in the spiritual priesthood of all believers, one of Pietism’s most-loved tenets. According to Weborg, “No doctrine was more persistently dealt with than the priesthood of all believers, and no effort was spared in attempting to effect a proper use of this doctrine.”⁴⁰ This priesthood includes everyone, male and female, and presupposes that each person already possesses gifts from the Holy Spirit and that everyone participates in all aspects of ministry, except the ordination to Word and sacrament. All are baptized on equal footing, all take up the yoke with Jesus, and all are commanded to go out into the world to make disciples.

Pietists often mingle together what others might try to keep separate. Is the life of faith primarily about believing or about doing? A Pietist would say “both.” Doing must be a part of a truly Christian life and if it is absent, one would wonder if that person has been converted. But action for its own sake is equally misguided. Spener embodied this tension, knowing that “true belief is not so much felt emotionally as known by its fruits of love and obedience to God,”⁴¹ and that “outer faith without inner life would not do what the evangelistic mission of the church was supposed to do, namely live a life that witnesses to the truth of Christ.”⁴² Maintaining the balance and tension of belief and action is the goal of spiritual completion. Gehrz and Pattie summarize this well: “Engaging the heart along with the head was a key emphasis for the early Pietists. It is clear, though, that their ultimate aim was a life transformed....A faith that makes sense in one’s head and even brings warm sentiment to the heart is still not a living faith unless it makes a difference in how

³⁸ Phyllis Tickle, in Emilie Griffin, Peter C. Erb, eds., *The Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), ix.

³⁹ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 6.

⁴⁰ C. John Weborg, “Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation,” *The Covenant Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1983): 61.

⁴¹ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 76.

⁴² Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 36.

one lives.”⁴³ So believing flows directly into doing, and, as we will see later, moves into hoping.

Doing

Pietists were relentlessly practical, and their theology reflected this emphasis. Friederich Christoph Oetinger, a German Pietist who lived from 1702 to 1782, wrote, “All God’s ways end in the flesh.”⁴⁴ Right belief was only ever the beginning of the Christian life, the first step, with right action following as the second. If true Christianity is walking, a single step is not enough. We must take one step and then a second and then back again, alternating between these essential, foundational legs of belief and action.

As with many aspects of Pietist theology, these two steps were intermingled. Pietists were passionate about profession and practice remaining in congruence. This was seen in Christians’ actual lives, not merely in systematized doctrine.⁴⁵ Right belief cannot be separated from right action, as one might memorize a poem and recite it by rote. Pietists grounded this ethic in Galatians 5:6, which reads in part, “all that matters is faith active in love.” A true, saving faith works itself out in love; if loving action is not present, the Pietist wonders if real faith is there. As Weborg writes, “Faith, hope, and love are not just what one has; they are also what one is in relation to others.”⁴⁶ Congruence between stated beliefs and actual behavior is where our faith and God’s ways are enfleshed.

Spener emphasized the usefulness of faith. He left behind what he considered the overly philosophical theology of the previous century in favor of an “apostolic simplicity,” emphasizing practical application for the Christian life.⁴⁷ “Theology,” he wrote, “is a practical discipline,” and all theological education should be tailored to the practice of faith.⁴⁸ This was the third of his six recommendations for reforming the church.⁴⁹ Spener and later Pietists’ emphasis on the convergence of belief and doing found unique expression in their ever-present conventicles and their heavy use of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

⁴³ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 71.

⁴⁴ Olson, and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 78. Gerdes renders this quotation as “Corporality is the end of all the ways of God,” in Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” 52.

⁴⁵ Weborg, “Pietism: ‘The Fire of God,’” 4.

⁴⁶ Weborg, “Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation,” 59–60.

⁴⁷ Tappert, “Introduction,” 25.

⁴⁸ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 105.

⁴⁹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 95.

Spener's *collegia pietatis*, or conventicles, represent the Pietists' mixture of faith and action. The small group would meet a day or so after Sunday worship to summarize and then discuss the sermon.⁵⁰ Using what Weborg calls an "activistic reading of scripture," the members spent time discussing how that text could be applied to their lives, "how one is to enact and to embody scripture."⁵¹ There wasn't much in the way of ministerial oversight or even direction. These believers gathered for mutual support as they all pursued holiness and godliness together.⁵² As Frisk states, in these small groups "little emphasis fell on technical theological issues but rather on practical helpfulness. The goal of these '*koinonia*' groups was the development of personal insight and spiritual maturity in dependence upon the Holy Spirit."⁵³

These conventicles were, ultimately, an exercise in the priesthood of all believers, one of Pietism's most discussed theological positions. It was here that lay Christians lived out that theology, caring for each other's spiritual wellbeing, correcting each other (or even the pastor!), and encouraging each other.⁵⁴ Here was the proving ground where Pietist belief met Pietist action. As the Holy Spirit transformed individual laypeople, unique gifts would arise. Pietists put a premium on those gifts, encouraging lay participation in nearly every area of the church and as agents of ecclesial, political, social, or educational change.

This emphasis on action did not slip into works righteousness, however. Pietists were adamant that every aspect of salvation, including this inward transformation, was God's work. But they also insisted that God's work must include whole-life transformation and the implementation of the spiritual gifts God has given.⁵⁵ Zinzendorf emphasized this in his preaching, holding that the true Christian, one who is in profound relationship with Jesus, will naturally produce godly actions and make Christlike decisions.⁵⁶ Christians want to please God and will work to do that without compulsion. Brown summarizes the Pietist position well: "Faith grasps God's love through Christ which alone brings about holy actions."⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire of God,'" 19.

⁵¹ Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire of God,'" 20.

⁵² Alec Ryrie, *Protestants: The Faith That Made the Modern World* (New York: Viking Press, 2017) loc. 2985. Kindle.

⁵³ Frisk, "Theology and Experience in Early Pietism," 27.

⁵⁴ Frisk, "Theology and Experience in Early Pietism," 27.

⁵⁵ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 89.

⁵⁶ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 96.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 22.

Pietist theologians insisted that right action was not limited to interactions between individuals; they had much larger goals. By focusing on improving the lives of the poor, Pietists envisioned nothing less than a changed world. Spener was a pioneer, teaching and leading his congregations to make a positive impact on the needy.⁵⁸ Francke took this much further, embodying what Weborg calls the “experimental character of Pietism.”⁵⁹ Francke felt that a true Christian would be one who took risks on behalf of others, lived out a faith that acted in love, and lived sure of God’s promises.

This spirit that experimented to find new ways to help their neighbor blossomed to encompass the whole world. The Pietists at Halle and Hernhutt were among the first Protestant missionary forces, and they used the same tactics abroad they used at home. Pietist missions relied on social action to improve the world toward the kingdom of God.⁶⁰ That social action had a broad footprint, including work to “transform the living conditions of the poor and oppressed, reform the prison system, abolish slavery, break down rigid class distinctions, establish a more democratic polity, initiate educational reforms, establish philanthropic institutions, increase missionary activity, obtain religious liberty, and propose programs for social justice.”⁶¹

This action, both close to home and far afield, was driven by love for neighbor. Kohl summarizes Pietist missions with the phrase “Transformation of the world through the conversion of [humans].”⁶² They longed for an in-breaking of the Holy Spirit, bringing ever-increasing love and peace. This was a particularly potent theology given the vivid memories of the horrific Thirty Years War (1618–1648) that remained fresh. Yet Pietists relentlessly “expected a revolutionary transformation of the world to be accomplished by God’s work in changing human lives.”⁶³

The Pietists’ focus on the congruence of right belief and right actions, and improving the world is built on their third major emphasis: hope for better times.

⁵⁸ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 101.

⁵⁹ Weborg, “Pietism: ‘The Fire of God,’” 18.

⁶⁰ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 100.

⁶¹ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 86–87.

⁶² Kohl, “Wiedergeburt as the Central Theme in Pietism,” 13.

⁶³ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 22.

Hoping

For the Pietist, hope is the foundation upon which right beliefs and right actions are built. Looking for the ways God is breaking into the world to bring about new life, Pietists “always have hope for better times.”⁶⁴ “Hope for better times” is so foundational to Pietism that Spener used the phrase as the subtitle for *Pia Desideria*. Spener’s lofty expectations for what Christians could do and be in the world are easy to see in the *Pia*. He calmly proposed the idea that we ought to be able to handle doctrinal controversies well and thought that our fractured Christian church might be able to find a unified common ground. Hope infused Spener’s work and carried through all of Pietism.

Hope enlivens the Pietists’ orthodoxy and revitalizes their orthopraxy. As Clifton-Soderstrom writes, calling back to the Pietist ethical grounding in Galatians 5, “hope acts in such a way as to give content and context to *faith acting in love*.”⁶⁵ As Pietists worked out their faith acting in love, their hope manifested itself in specific ways for people, for the church, and for the world.

As is evident from Pietism’s theological emphasis on regeneration, Pietists are endlessly hopeful about the condition of the individual Christian. Spener believed all sermons should be first and foremost encouraging and edifying for those in the congregation, pointing them to the ways they can do and be better through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶ This comes primarily through God building a good conscience in us.⁶⁷ Through the prevenient work of the Spirit, the Christian learns to trust his or her conscience in daily decisions. This makes it possible to participate in a secular world, avoiding sinful activities while taking joy in what is not.⁶⁸

Congruence between thought and action is also a fundamentally hopeful belief. Gehrz and Pattie write, “Pietism reminds Christians who imagine themselves to be people of faith to actually *be* people of faith, to put our hope resolutely in God and live like it.”⁶⁹ Hope for better times for us individually ought to affect how we live, orienting our lives in an upward direction. Pietists believed that the whole person could, in fact, be transformed, and through a transformed person, whole communities

⁶⁴ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 8.

⁶⁵ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 89. Emphasis original.

⁶⁶ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 115.

⁶⁷ Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” 40.

⁶⁸ Allen C. Deeter, “Pietism, Moralism, and Social Concern,” *Covenant Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1975): 32.

⁶⁹ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 37.

could be transformed.⁷⁰

Individual transformation was always the first step for Pietists, but only ever the first of many; they intended to renew the entire church. A firm belief that the church could become more like the body of Christ that Scripture imagined inspired widespread renewal.⁷¹ While Pietism was interested in inspiring true Christians, Pietist hope for the church was never about purging false Christians. Spener, like any good preacher, explained with a metaphor:

Like a grain field is never free of weeds, we don't need to strive to have a church totally free of hypocrites. Instead, we should work toward a church that is free of "manifest offenses," where those who fail in these ways are corrected or, if they choose to remain in their sins, excluded. In this way, "the true members of the church should be richly filled with the many fruits of their faith," such that the weeds will not cover the grain but the grain covers the weeds, making them inconspicuous.⁷²

The church will be a truly Christian church when the wide-ranging fruit of the Spirit is evident and spreading. The pietistic hope opens us to see where God is growing such fruit, wherever that might be.

Pietism's hope is thoroughly eschatological, but it is a realized eschatology. The hope was not simply that one day God would put the world right, but that God works in this world now to make it right. Pietists believed that they could bring about a close approximation of the kingdom of God on earth.⁷³ Their hope was not otherworldly but grounded in reality, and so they sought to redeem the world wherever they found themselves.⁷⁴

Hope drove the Pietists' mission, both at home and abroad. It was because of their sure conviction that God would one day fully realize his kingdom on earth that they worked so hard to improve the lives of the poor. Leaning into God's promise of a brighter future for the Church, Spener sought to set the stage for God to work his future into the present.⁷⁵ Pietists spread this hopeful message throughout Europe and the world, making truly good news manifest.

⁷⁰ Olson, and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 10.

⁷¹ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 73.

⁷² Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 81.

⁷³ Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, 100.

⁷⁴ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 29.

⁷⁵ Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," 64.

Clifton-Soderstrom shares this insight: “people who hope build.”⁷⁶ Francke embodied this hope thoroughly, building myriad mission endeavors at Halle because the Pietists knew they could positively affect the world. Pietists “are fully persuaded that this present age can and will be refashioned and brought into closer accord with the mind of Christ through the continuing work of the Spirit of God,” writes Frisk.⁷⁷ Pietists relied on the unpredictable and essential work of the Spirit in and through the church. Their hope drove them to build upon a strong foundation of biblical orthodoxy and the integrity of congruent action, all for, as the Pietists themselves would say, “God’s glory and neighbor’s good.”

Toward a Pietist Homiletic

Pietism has a unique theological core heavily influenced by a drive toward practicality and Bible reading, necessitating a reliance on preaching ministry. While some have described Pietists as anti-intellectual, Gerdes holds that they simply maintained a different theological orientation than Protestant norms of that time. Pietists were more likely to *do* theology, not merely *think* it. “After all,” says Gerdes, “Pietists are usually not found behind lecterns, but in pulpits.”⁷⁸

Given Pietists’ unique theological emphases on right belief, action, and hope, we can move toward a Pietist homiletic. Pietist preaching should embody the same emphases and impulses described above, all with that uniquely Pietist way of doing theology. To describe this homiletic, we will look at the manner in which a Pietist preaches. It must start with the preacher’s own heart, and then be rigorous, simple, and heartfelt. Then we will discuss the content of Pietist sermons. These sermons would share the same impulses as their theology, emphasizing believing, doing, and hoping.

Manner

Just as Pietists pushed for congruence between Christian thought and Christian action, Pietist preaching must maintain that same integrity. *How* we preach is just as important as *what* we preach. Pietism suggests a method of preaching that starts with the preacher’s heart and is rigorous, simple, and heartfelt.

If the preacher has not truly encountered Jesus in the sermon text, if we do not know that the Holy Spirit has spoken to us, we will not be

⁷⁶ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 98.

⁷⁷ Frisk, “Theology and Experience in Early Pietism,” 28–29.

⁷⁸ Gerdes, “Theological Tenets of Pietism,” 53.

able to usher others into that experience. Francke left no room for doubt, saying that if a preacher did not love Christ truly, or if the preacher's own heart was not warmed by the text, then the sermon "will be apt to be cold and lifeless, and therefore unprofitable and fruitless."⁷⁹

Spener was so convinced of this that he included it as a fundamental idea in the *Pia*. Pastors must be trained in piety while in seminary, including engaging their own heart in sermon preparation. For Spener, "the preacher must comprehend the miracle of God first, and then pass that along to their people."⁸⁰ This experience then becomes the primary means of communication. The preacher's emphasis falls not on his or her powers of persuasion or rhetorical ability, but on the work of Christ in his or her heart. Many preachers, says Spener, can learn the craft of preaching through human effort, and they can do it well. They can teach biblical information and convey orthodox doctrine. However, these pastors and preachers are "without the working of the Holy Spirit" and are "altogether unacquainted with the true, heavenly light and the life of faith."⁸¹ Preachers who have truly experienced the Holy Spirit and are truly converted and regenerated will be "faithful guides to Christian living as well as faith, basing this all on the word of God contained in scripture."⁸²

Here again we see the Pietists' emphasis on congruence. For preachers to move a congregation, they must first be moved themselves. As Gehrz and Pattie say, borrowing a phrase from Spener, "For those in the common priesthood called to preach, proclaiming the word of God must begin with listening to the word of God. We must—as we hope those who hear us will—allow it 'to penetrate to the heart.'"⁸³ We cannot approach the text merely as words on a page, or else our sermons will be ineffective. If we bring our heart to the words of Scripture and the Word revealed there, the Holy Spirit will faithfully continue that good work in our own souls, which allows us to communicate powerfully to our people.

Preaching an effective sermon is not a simple task, which Pietists knew well. For Spener, sermons were far too important, and too essential to the improvement of the Church, to be taken lightly.⁸⁴ An effective pietistic sermon is one that is clear, accessible, and understandable. Spener's con-

⁷⁹ Francke quoted in Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 41.

⁸⁰ K. James Stein, *From Head to Heart: A Compendium of the Theology of Philipp Jakob Spener* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2020), 236.

⁸¹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 46.

⁸² Stein, *From Head to Heart*, 232.

⁸³ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 106.

⁸⁴ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 44.

cern was for the laypeople in his church, particularly the uneducated. The gospel is for them if it is for anyone, and if they can't understand the sermon, they won't hear the good news.

Our sermons must be clear communication, and it is worth honing the craft of preaching to meet that goal. Many books have been written on the craft of preaching; the Pietist preacher must take that self-reflective work seriously for the sake of the message. We must put time and effort into the structure and flow of the sermon so that the clear tone of the Word of God rings out.

There must be no mistake either that the Pietist preacher is preaching Scripture. Spener desired "to communicate and make familiar to his hearers the simple message of the Bible."⁸⁵ Though the original Pietists may not have been familiar with the Word, they certainly embraced the tenets of expository preaching. As we seek to communicate what the Holy Spirit has done in us through the text, we must use all our mental and spiritual faculties to ensure we are drawing authentic meaning from the Bible. We must be careful not to force our agenda or our ideas onto Scripture. Pietists are rigorous with both the craft and the content of sermons.

The Pietist drive toward core orthodoxies in our preaching takes the form of pressing toward simple truths. Pietists simplify, particularly when it comes to essential doctrines.⁸⁶ Our sermons ought to distill these, making them palatable and understandable to the laypeople in our specific congregations. For Spener's part, he targeted his preaching at the least educated and most vulnerable people in the congregation, instead of those who could speak Latin or Greek. Throughout his ministry, he found that those who were most vulnerable were often the most faithful followers and the most likely to be truly pious. As he sought to edify them through his preaching, and then by teaching them through conventicles, those in the lowest caste of society became the faithful yeast spread through the whole congregation.⁸⁷ To accomplish this, he simplified.

This is not to imply that Christian doctrine is uncomplicated, but rather it represents a drive toward the true purpose of the sermon: renewing and growing true Christianity. Pietists called it an "apostolic simplicity," emphasizing above all else what the apostles knew from personal experience. Following Jesus requires a close, personal relationship with

⁸⁵ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 52.

⁸⁶ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 7.

⁸⁷ Chao Pomeroy and Norman Peterson, "We Are Pietists."

him.⁸⁸ As Gehrz and Pattie write, “Pietism reminds us that the center of our lived faith is not an idea (however true) but a person.”⁸⁹

Again, pietistic preaching is not reductionistic or bland. We would rather not take the bite, or the meat, out of the text. To the contrary, we ought to provide as much good spiritual meat to our congregation as they can handle, as they grow from the spiritual milk of their early walk with Jesus. To achieve that, however, we call our people to come back to Jesus and to the simple orthodoxies of our salvation, regeneration, and sanctification. If we broach such subjects and get lost in the theological weeds, we will leave our people there, with little hope of finding their own way out. Pietists simplify for the sake of our hearers and their comprehension.

Finally, in crafting and delivering our sermon, we must be heartfelt, aiming at the heart of the hearer. Faith lives, as Spener put it, in this inner person. That faith is a gift from God and energizes and enables the outer person to do the work of God. Preaching must be targeted at the inner person, strengthening faith to produce outer change.⁹⁰ Spener writes, “Hence it is not enough that we hear the word with our outward ear, but we must let it penetrate to our heart, so that we may hear the Holy Spirit speak there, that is, with vibrant emotion and comfort feel the sealing of the Spirit and the power of the word.”⁹¹

That inner space is the realm of the Holy Spirit where we find the power to live truly Christian lives, and so we must point our preaching in that direction.

This begins in the preacher. We must first experience God through the text for ourselves before we preach it to another. As Weborg puts it, “People communicate themselves. The communication of the gospel is to be done faithfully to the gospel and with the feeling of the gospel.”⁹² Again, the Pietists’ insistence on congruence comes to the fore. We must have a heartfelt experience of Christ before we attempt to communicate. Without that, we will fail to engender an experience of Christ for our congregants.

This does not happen in a homiletical vacuum, however. Pietists are always practitioners; Pietist preachers must first be pastors. For a sermon to reach the heart of the listener and have an impact there, Pietists, and

⁸⁸ Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 32.

⁸⁹ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 96.

⁹⁰ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 116.

⁹¹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 117.

⁹² Weborg, “Pietism: ‘The Fire of God,’” 20.

Spener in particular, insist that the preacher have a strong pastoral relationship with his or her congregants.⁹³ Armed with a firm love of our people, with the goodwill that a caring, pastoral relationship affords, we aim at the heart, both our own and those in our churches.

Like Pietism's theology, this manner of preaching is not a checklist to work through, but more of an impulse to hone. As we go about crafting sermons week after week, the Pietists' *way* of preaching becomes engrained in us like a second nature. If we start with our own hearts engaging with the text, then we will find our sermons to be rigorous, simple, and heartfelt.

Content

Pietists did not have a content program that said, "These are the things you must say and these you must not." Rather, the theology Pietists preach comes across as emphases, like using primary colors in a painting. Certain colors drew the Pietists' eye over and over again. The homiletic will take the same shape as our survey of theology above. *What* Pietists preach aligns with believing, doing, and hoping—all intended to grow true Christianity.

When preaching on what a Christian must believe, a Pietist preacher will focus on those doctrines that make up core orthodoxy. Much in Christian theology is valuable, but not all is essential. Our sermons ought to consistently emphasize that which is essential to our faith, leaving aside nonessential theology for other venues. Spener, as we saw above, felt that essential doctrines come from the human experience of salvation: conversion, regeneration, and transformation. Spener used the idea of "completion" but never supposed that we could achieve it in this life. Thus, I am opting for "transformation" here to convey completion's ongoing nature. These three are built on the foundation of the highest regard for biblical authority and a firm grasp of the Triune God's living activity in the world. This constitutes core doctrine.

It is best not to let our sermons become dragged down into partisanship or infighting, though we do not need to avoid controversial topics altogether. There are right ways and wrong ways to think about essential doctrines, and occasionally, we must correct or challenge our congregation in that area. For Francke, though, the correction should never be condemning. He wrote, "Admonishing one another need not be done by speaking critically to one another but by speaking in a way

⁹³ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 45.

that uplifts and encourages another to desire to be good or to respond more faithfully next time.”⁹⁴

Pietists loved and relied upon the spiritual priesthood of all believers, and we should too. There is an interesting dynamic between a preacher, who is a priest, speaking God’s Word to a room full of priests. We must not talk down to or belittle our congregation, because in this priesthood, we are all the same. All of us are sheep and Jesus is our shepherd (John 10:11). With this in mind, we preach in humility, wisely sharing our struggles, our need for grace, and the Spirit’s transforming work in our own lives. As we do the work God has called us to do, we preach to encourage and build up our fellow priests for the work God has called them to do. Always with the desire to encourage truly faithful discipleship in our listeners, our sermons hone in on essential doctrines. We can use as a starting point Spener’s three areas of human experience: conversion, regeneration, and transformation.

The life of true discipleship begins with our conversion. Spener wrote, “Preaching should be the divine means to save the people.”⁹⁵ With so weighty a calling, we must take conversion seriously and treat it intentionally in our preaching. Conversion was a complicated and multifaceted experience in Pietist thought, as we have seen. However, preaching to conversion can be simpler. It begins not with us deciding but with an understanding that God’s grace worked in us before we could acknowledge it. “While we were still sinners,” Paul writes in Romans 5:8, “Christ died for us.”

Only when we recognize God’s already present work do we decide to convert. That human decision is essential. Pietists will always emphasize our need to partner in what God is doing. We must *choose* to convert. Our conversions are not only from atheist to Christian, but a continual kind of conversion, intensifying devotion by moving away from atheism in any area of life and toward true faith that is lived out. Francke treated conversion in this way, not only as a singular moment of my choice but as a regular re-examination of what Christ means to me. Am I personally experiencing God? Is Jesus necessary to my life, to how I live? These questions are fertile ground for Pietist preaching on conversion, both in personal experience and right thinking.

The more we consider conversion as both a moment and a lifelong process, the more it bleeds into regeneration, which we might also call

⁹⁴ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 39.

⁹⁵ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 116.

the new birth. This area is a heavy focus for Pietist theologians and will likely occupy the lion's share of a Pietist preacher's preaching calendar. It is so essential, though, that Spener encourages clergy not to tire of that repetition. "A preacher should not grow weary of *reminding*," he writes. "In fact, if he has opportunity, he would do well to tell the people again and again in his sermons what they once learned, and he should not be ashamed of so doing."⁹⁶

Therein is the soul of regeneration, and an excellent summary of Pietist theology. If we *know* it, we ought to then *do* it. In our conversion, God has birthed a new life in us, a new way of life. We must participate in nurturing that new life, progressing in holiness. We participate individually, but not individualistically. Our new birth builds us into a vibrant community, the body of Christ, the remnant of true Christians in every church. The new birth entails myriad practical realities, both corporate and individual, to which the Pietist preacher can apply the gospel.

Once again, we find a tension in Pietist thought and preaching. The work of growing that new life is all God's grace, and yet, we must partner with him. We must give the Holy Spirit room in our souls in which God can do God's work.

We are transformed, or as Spener would say, "completed," through a personal relationship with Jesus. Just as Pietists would emphasize the person of Jesus over the title of Christ, our preaching ought to center Jesus, a person who wants to be in a relationship with us. Our God is not distant, cold, and far away, but as Paul says in Athens in Acts 17:27, God is "not far from any one of us," and this God wants us to "seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him." We find God through personal relationship with Jesus.

Later Pietists in Sweden would often ask the penetrating question, "How goes your walk with Christ?"⁹⁷ Viewing our Christian life as a walk with a friend can be a helpful metaphor as we prepare to preach. This kind of intimate relationship goes two ways. It offers open space for conversation, for listening, and for speaking. There is an intentionality of centering our relationship with Jesus that opens us up to those areas of our lives where we do not walk with him, or where we fear to walk with him. Transformation comes as we walk ever closer with our Savior. Ultimately, without that meaningful relationship with God, that

⁹⁶ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 116. See Jeffrey Arthur, *Preaching as Reminding* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2017) for suggestions on how to "not grow weary" of reminding, as Spener says.

⁹⁷ Gehrz and Pattie, *The Pietist Option*, 114.

walk with Jesus, that intimacy with the Holy Spirit, no amount of right thinking matters.

For Pietists, a Christian faith is not true belief unless it works itself out in action. True Christianity requires a transformation not only of our interior selves but our exterior lives as well. As Clifton-Soderstrom stated, Pietists hung significant weight on Galatians 5:6b, “The only thing that counts is faith working through love,” and there gave particular emphasis to the word “working.” She goes on to write that one of Spener’s main concerns for preaching “was doing, or application. He hoped that the congregation would be transformed by the hearing of the word—that those who heard would then have the capacity, or excellence of character, to apply the good news to their lives.”⁹⁸ Spener’s preoccupation with practicality came through into his preaching and ought to shine in ours.

What must Christians do? We work, as the popular Pietist axiom went, “for God’s glory and neighbor’s good.” For the Pietists, the Christian obligation to action went beyond simply avoiding vices. Many Pietists could be very strict in this regard, but emphasizing action always included both *not doing* harmful things and *doing* helpful things. We must continually remind our congregants that they are gifted members of the spiritual priesthood, essential pieces of the body of Christ. Each one is gifted for ministry, that is, for doing the good works that God prepared for us (Eph 2:10). To ignore those works would be to squander God’s gifts and do harm to our neighbors.

As we live out of our own vibrant personal relationship with Jesus, we can be confident that the Holy Spirit will guide our actions. This is why it is essential that one of the actions we take as true Christians is to join in small group Bible study, a conventicle. Our preaching ought to encourage this. Reading Scripture together will test and try the congruence of what we believe and how we live. When we invite others into vulnerable parts of our lives in safe and responsible ways, we offer the Spirit another avenue to do that transformative work and give us more chances to work out our own salvation.

For the Pietist preacher, this must extend beyond simply telling our congregation to do good works. We must lead them by example and join in the doing of our faith. Bruce Shelly points out that Pietism brought preaching and pastoral visitation to the center of Protestant ministry, combining the two like sides of a coin.⁹⁹ Spener felt this so strongly that

⁹⁸ Clifton-Soderstrom, *Angels, Worms, and Bogeys*, 44.

⁹⁹ Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 329.

he almost seemed to hold the two as equals. He said, "Of what does this (ordained) ministry consist? It consists not only in pure doctrine and preaching of the word, but also in faithful care of the congregation, as the preached word produces fruit among them. To this end belongs also public and private admonition (Ezek 3:17-21; Acts 20:31)." ¹⁰⁰

However strongly Pietists emphasize the necessity of action for both clergy and laity, we must not allow our sermons to slip into moralizing or works righteousness. All the will, energy, and ability to do good for our neighbor and glorify God comes from God alone. Spener said Christians represent Christ to the world "not only with their doctrine and words but also with their lives and holy walk, that people see the powerful grace of God which has so sanctified them to the Lord's glory." ¹⁰¹ God's powerful grace is effective in our lives, as evidenced by our works, and that is a powerful testimony to the world.

Just as God's grace effectively brings about change in an individual life, so too will God's grace bring about better times in the world. Pietists' hope orients our homiletical work and directs it to the good ends that God designed for the world. We set the stage for God's kingdom to come more fully into the world, and that is good news. So good is the coming kingdom and its inbreaking now that we ought to feel fundamentally hopeful about our situation and the world's condition.

This does not mean we ignore or downplay the world's most dire circumstances in our sermons. On the contrary, Christian hope takes those circumstances seriously and shines out brighter because of the darkness. Zinzendorf stands as an example. He felt that the Christian life ought to be joyful, even as he was mobilizing one of the first worldwide mission forces. Moravian missionaries brought joyfulness to the most abject and marveled at the work God did there.

We preach sermons full of hope, always with an eye toward encouragement. Stein wrote of the Pietists' goal, "In preaching, to seek nothing other than the edification of the congregation." ¹⁰² Through encouragement, we orient ourselves to the inexorable forward march of the kingdom of God. God is always advancing his kingdom, bringing with it justice and peace, life, and light. We must keep an eye out for places where God is breaking in and preach about it. God not only *can* do good works in our lives and in our world; he *will*. It is as sure a hope as we can have (Heb 11:1).

¹⁰⁰ Spener, quoted in Stein, *From Head to Heart*, 233.

¹⁰¹ Spener, quoted in Stein, *From Head to Heart*, 237.

¹⁰² Stein, *From Head to Heart*, 238.

A Pietist homiletic, like Pietism itself, urges congruence and integrity between the spoken word and the lived life. The homiletic begins with the preacher encountering Jesus in Scripture and suggests a manner of sermon preparation that is rigorous, simple, and aims at the heart of the listener. Just as Pietism comes across through a set of impulses or emphases, our homiletic is not a checklist but a heartbeat. The emphatic beats in the Pietists' sermons are right belief that centers on core doctrines such as conversion, regeneration, and transformation, followed by right action, all full of hope that God will continue to do God's work.

My Experience with Pietist Preaching

I had the opportunity to utilize this homiletic as I completed the project portion of a doctor of ministry degree in preaching. I intentionally infused my preaching with Pietist impulses for six months and then, through a pretest and posttest, measured the effect this kind of preaching had on the spiritual maturity of my congregation. This homiletic produced a small but measurable improvement, raising the overall maturity of those who filled out both surveys. I brought three key takeaways from that experience.

First, I deeply appreciate Pietism's emphasis on the preacher's own heart. I have long struggled with the (supposed) need to keep my own devotional reading of Scripture separate from my sermon preparation. I found that when I brought my soul to the study, I produced more heartfelt sermons. Preparing to preach became a joy, a place where God met and ministered to me and then through me. Undoubtedly, sermon preparation should not be the *only* place where the preacher devotionally encounters Jesus, but it also need not be excluded from that enriching space.

Second, I found it helpful to plan, track, and target my preaching to certain markers of spiritual maturity. Wanting to fully represent Pietism, I made sure to incorporate all the theological themes Pietists emphasize. In practice, this meant writing a sentence describing how the sermon highlighted an emphasis. By tracking that over the months, I could look back and see what I had already covered and how I did it. Looking at the upcoming months of preaching, I would select a different emphasis or present a familiar one differently.

Finally, practicing this homiletic quickly became second nature and, in the year since the project ended, has become habituated. I no longer think hard about which emphasis to preach; it arises from my soul-engaged study. Like a painter might be drawn to a certain color pallet over many works, I find myself easily reaching for these theological emphases of right

belief around conversion, regeneration, and transformation, right action, and right hope. It has become a natural part of my creative expression in the weighty task of proclaiming God's Word.

I had the chance to talk through this homiletic as I was forming it with Timothy B. Johnson, a long-time pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church. After hearing my description of a Pietist homiletic, he commented, "You know, I think I already preach like this." Many who have served a significant time in this Pietist-formed denomination will probably feel the same way. Pietism spreads through the church and through a pastor like yeast in bread; slowly, over time, those soul-enriching theological emphases bubble out of our inner selves and into our preaching. More preachers leaning into this homiletic will, I believe, speedily rekindle wholehearted devotion to Jesus, producing ever-increasing numbers of true, mature Christians who follow in both word and deed.