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THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION AS PORTRAYED IN
SPENER'S "PIA DESIDERIA" IN LIGHT OF
THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Francis Wesley Monseth

May 1978

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THE LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Luther Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
Pia Desideria Monseth
1978

Approved by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Pietism" is the term applied to a movement beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century in Germany. It was a reaction against a growing drift toward formalism among some of the orthodox Lutherans. In the laudable effort to defend Lutheran doctrines, there was a lack of emphasis on the part of some clergy on the personal spiritual life of the members. Too often, all that was expected of church members was "recognition of the confessional writings of the Church as the authoritative presentation of the revealed Word of God, reception of the Word and the Sacraments, and obedience to various ordinances of church discipline."¹ The Pietist movement sought to correct what was felt to be an imbalance on the side of this formalism.

Philip Jacob Spener is generally regarded as the "father" of Lutheran Pietism and is described as "the most influential center of this movement."² In an attempt to correct the spiritual conditions as he viewed them, Spener published his Pia Desideria (pious desires) in which he not only offered his analysis of the state of the Church but also presented proposals aimed at a renewal of personal and corporate spiritual life. His tract aroused widespread interest.

¹G. E. Hageman, Sketches from the History of the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1918), p. 194.

²Erwin L. Lueker, Ed., Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 1001.

Pia Desideria is a message to the Christian Church. It is not in the category of an evangelistic tractate. Its main concern is in the area of sanctification. It takes for granted that its readers are in the state of justification. Owing to this over-arching concern for the deepening of spiritual life, it is proper to view this treatise from the standpoint of the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification of the Church is Spener's main burden.

The purpose of this study is to discover, present, and analyze Spener's understanding of the doctrine of sanctification. It is the writer's objective to test Spener's position in light of the Lutheran Confessions. It is hoped that the reader also will be helped in understanding and appreciating God's work of sanctification.

Rationale for the Study

The writer believes there is a need for a fresh study of the doctrine of sanctification. In the area of Christian ethics, a variety of views have found earnest adherents. Though various approaches have been advocated, three main categories are seen by the writer to be able to encompass the present spectrum: antinomianism, legalism, and truly biblical Christian living. The latter is given expression in the Lutheran Confessions. It is marked by pronounced emphasis upon the inseparability of justification and sanctification. Indeed, as A. T. Mollegen has expressed it, the whole of Protestantism in its historic confessions has derived its conception of ethics from its central and unique affirmation of justification by faith alone.³ According to justification-by-

³Ernest Johnson, Ed., Patterns of Ethics in America Today. (New York: Collier Books, 1960), "Ethics of Protestantism" by A. T. Mollegen, p. 65.

faith theology, "both Christian moral character and Christian action flow out of the new relationship to God."⁴

One of the popular manifestations of antinomianism today has been termed "situation ethics." Joseph Fletcher postulates that "the ultimate norm of Christian decisions is love; nothing else."⁵ Further, he directs that "decisions ought to be made situationally, not prescriptively."⁶ Those who advocate situation ethics consistently deny any absolutizing of right and wrong conduct such as is embodied in the Moral Law of the Scriptures. In such a climate, a fresh study of the doctrine of sanctification is warranted. Spener's professed desire to base Christian conduct solidly on the Word of God gives cause to investigate his position more closely.

Legalism is seen at various junctures of church history. Indeed, there is an unbroken line from the inroads of the Judaizers in the New Testament Church to the present day. George Forell offers a brief sketch of its appearances, noting particularly its pervasiveness in the Middle Ages. Though the Reformation is viewed as essentially a revolt against a legalistic concept of Christianity, Forell notes its quick recovery in the churches of the Reformation in a slightly altered form.⁷ Does Spener represent a revival of legalism? Does he teach a salvation by works of man? This has sometimes been a characterization of Spener's Pietism and therefore calls for a closer study.

⁴Johnson, p. 67.

⁵Joseph Fletcher, John Warwick Montgomery. Situation Ethics (Minneapolis, Minn.: Dimension Books, 1972), p. 25.

⁶Fletcher, p. 26.

⁷George W. Forell, Ethics of Decision (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955), p. 53.

Besides the opposing views in the area of Christian ethics, there are deep cleavages relative to great doctrines of the faith. One of the foremost doctrinal struggles regards the meaning and extent of the inspiration of Scripture. Harold Lindsell, author of the controversial book, The Battle for the Bible, believes biblical inerrancy is "the most important theological topic of this age."⁸ This is no longer an issue between liberal and conservative but among those who identify themselves as "evangelical." The Lutheran Church has not escaped this controversy. Most parts of the Lutheran Church have been affected in one way or another. As a member of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, the writer is aware of the concern for a high view of the Word of God which brought this fellowship of congregations into existence in 1962. The most recent "battle for the Bible" concerned the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. A courageous stand by a faculty minority at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, together with the strong leadership of the synodical president and the wholehearted support by a majority of the constituency of the synod, has resulted in a retention of the historic position of the synod on this vital doctrine. The coming generation owes a debt of gratitude to God for the "faith of our fathers."

In the midst of the concern for doctrinal purity, is it possible that emphasis upon the personal spiritual life of the members of the congregation is sometimes neglected? Is it possible that the attention of pastors and other church leaders can be drawn away unintentionally from the responsibility to "feed the flock." Certainly it is not a

⁸Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 15.

matter of choosing between "contending for the faith once delivered" and promoting growth in sanctification. Both aspects are sorely needed. There will not be healthy spiritual life without purity of doctrine.

In view of the current struggles regarding matters of doctrine, is the message of Philip Spener relevant for the Lutheran Church today? Amidst the doctrinal disputations of his day, Spener feared that emphasis on the walk of the Christian tended to be overlooked. Does his call for concentration on the edification of believers need to be heard by our generation? Are there pitfalls to be avoided in such emphasis upon sanctification? It is the writer's desire to explore the answers to these questions in the present thesis.

Another reason for interest in the man Spener and his "pietism" is the writer's desire to study his own "roots." A sizable part of the Scandinavian Lutheran immigrants to this country traced at least some of their spiritual heritage to Spener and his brand of pietism.⁹ Through the ministry of the lay-evangelist, Hans Nielsen Hauge, pietism gained a strong foothold in Norway. There were many who were touched by Hauge's ministry who emigrated to the United States. The Lutheran Free Church in America, to which the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations attributes its immediate doctrinal and organizational moorings, laid strong emphasis on the contribution of Hauge.¹⁰ The writer desires to learn more of the message of this man, Spener, who exercised such profound impact upon his spiritual forebears.

⁹Wilhelm Pettersen. The Light in the Prison Window (Minneapolis: The Christian Literature Company, 1926), pp. 15-16.

¹⁰Eugene L. Fevold. The Lutheran Free Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), pp. 6-10.

A final motivation for research on this topic is to seek a clearer understanding of the relationship of Spener to the unorganized movement called Pietism which considered him its founder. Is Spener to be identified with all that went by the name "pietist" in the ensuing period? Has there sometimes been a failure to distinguish Spener's views from the excesses and aberrations of other Pietists?¹¹ What deficiencies are noted in Spener's treatment of sanctification as compared with the Lutheran Confessions which may have paved the way for the un-orthodoxy of some later Pietists? These are questions needing clarification in the mind of the writer and perhaps in the mind of the reader as well. To the writer's knowledge, there has not been a definitive work on Spener's understanding of sanctification in the English language. He believes there is much to be gained in a systematic presentation of Spener views in this important area.

Plan of Study

The study will be divided into three major parts. The first part, the historical perspective, will consider the influences upon Spener which helped give shape to his views concerning sanctification. Of special interest will be a consideration of the kind of literature he was exposed to in his youth and also the educators who helped to stimulate and encourage his convictions. In addition to this personal biography, the first section will deal with Spener's most memorable and most important writing relative to the emergence of the Pietist movement, Pia Desideria. It will examine the circumstances through which

¹¹ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 3:174-75.

this book came into being. Of main concern, however, will be a survey of the contents of the book and the effect its publishing had upon its immediate readers. A final chapter in the first part of the thesis will note the development of Pietism as a movement in the church life of Germany. It will be observed that though the movement remained unorganized, it exercised great influence upon those who responded to its call for renewal of spiritual life.

The second part of the thesis will be a close examination of the doctrine of sanctification as set forth in Spener's Pia Desideria. Spener's definition of sanctification will be observed as will the importance he attached to this doctrine of Scripture. It will be of special concern to note how Spener believed sanctification could be deepened and strengthened in the life of the believer. The respective roles of the means of grace, preaching, the Holy Spirit, and the priesthood of believers will be discussed as to their contribution in furthering spiritual growth. Finally, the second section of the thesis will deal with the effect and motivation of sanctification in Spener's estimation as portrayed in Pia Desideria.

The third and final part of this study will seek to analyze Spener's position on sanctification in light of the Lutheran confessions. Because Spener professed allegiance to the confessions, this test of his orthodoxy is needed, particularly since his orthodoxy has been called into question. The "test," however, will be limited to his teaching on sanctification. Therefore, if Spener should pass the "test" in this area, it may not necessarily be assumed that his doctrinal convictions match those of the Lutheran confessions at all other points. Not only will the areas of agreement with the confessions be noted but also the

points of variance will be observed. The conclusion will seek to summarize the results of this research.

Procedure to be Followed

Since Pia Desideria is remembered as the catalyst which served to encourage a new concern for promotion of spiritual life in the Lutheran Church of Germany and since it purports to be addressing believers on the subject of sanctification, the study of Spener's views on this matter will be limited to Pia Desideria. The writer will seek to make a careful analysis of this book, proceeding on the basis of "discovery" rather than as a search for "proof-texts" to support personal preconceived opinions. Important comment from other sources will be introduced only as it serves to let Spener speak for himself.

Topics under the main theme will be allowed to suggest themselves as a result of reading and research in Pia Desideria. Not all topics under such a subject can be adequately dealt with in a thesis of this scope. Therefore, the outline already presented under the "plan of study" will be the limiting factor.

In the examination of Spener's views as compared with the Lutheran confessions, the main concern will be to analyze the topics Spener includes in his discussion of sanctification. This study does not profess to be a complete analysis of every component of sanctification. The research will be limited primarily to Spener's treatment of the same.

PART ONE

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

PART ONE

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the first part of this study, the concern is to examine the personal background of Philip Jacob Spener, noting those influences upon his early life which gave shape to the message which ultimately appeared in the publishing of his book, Pia Desideria. A review of his public ministry in the Lutheran Church of Germany is also included since it helps to establish the context out of which his message appeared.

Also in this section, the occasion which gave rise to the publishing of Pia Desideria will be considered. A review of the contents of the book will enable the reader to understand the main burden of Spener in his writing. The immediate reaction to the book will also be included.

A final discussion in this first part will be a look at the developing movement called "Pietism" as it arose, inspired by Spener and his message as set forth in Pia Desideria. The various interpretations of what Pietism was and stood for will be noted as will the influence that this movement had upon German society in Spener's day and beyond.

CHAPTER II

A MAN EMERGES - PHILIP JACOB SPENER

Observing the early influences in the development of the man who was called the "Father of Lutheran Pietism," one could almost predict the particular bent his theological convictions would take. Not since Luther did any movement make such impact upon German society as did the Pietist movement called forth and given inspiration by Philip Jacob Spener.

His Early Life

Spener, the son of a princely Hofmeister, a councilor of the Count von Rappolstein, was born at Rappoltsweiler in Alsace on January 13, 1635. The early years of his life were marked by a very pious and stern education.¹ Among those whom Spener later recalled as being especially helpful in his earliest spiritual impressions were his mother and his godmother, the widowed Agatha von Rappolstein. Spener's pastor, Joachim Stoll, also must be noted as one of the important early influences upon his life. Later becoming his brother-in-law, Stoll remained a respected adviser to Spener until the former's death in 1678.²

¹James O. Bemesderfer, Pietism and Its Influence Upon the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Press, 1966), p. 16.

²Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. from the German by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 8.

It was in his father's library that the young Spener found several books that gave definite shape to his convictions. One of these, John Arndt's True Christianity, ranked next to the Bible in Spener's choice of favorites.³

In his book, Arndt set forth many of the positions later to become more prominent because of the wider influence attained by Spener. One of the echoes from Arndt observed later in Spener is emphasis upon the "new birth." This experience of the new birth which brings man the desire to become the image of God, is the work of the Holy Spirit, Arndt taught, and is "spiritually propagated from Christ, through the Word of God."⁴

Arndt said there was to be constant growth in the Christian's life following conversion. He maintained that spiritual development was to be evidenced not only in an external manner but also in a progressive renewal of the whole man. True faith, Arndt explained, "purifies the heart and sanctifies the soul, so that in and through Christ such a one pardons and loves his enemies, blesses them that persecute him, and prays for them who use him wrongly."⁵ There is, according to Arndt, a virtual union and a growth toward perfection.

He denied that a Christian can attain a state of perfection because of the many impediments to his spiritual progress. But even though these deterrents to a closer walk with God exist in this world, yet Arndt believed that the Christian must desire and aim by God's

³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴ Quoted in Bemserfer, p. 5.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

grace at the goal of perfection. "The farther a man departeth from the world, from the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," he said, "so much more doth God, Christ, and His Spirit, enter into the heart again, and dwell there."⁶ While growth in Christ-likeness is possible and to be expected of a Christian, perfection remains out of the realm of fulfillment in this present life.

A recurring emphasis in Arndt's writing is that "not the reading or the hearing, but the doing and the practicing of the Word, demonstrates a true Christian."⁷ The influence of Arndt upon Spener should not be under-estimated. Spener was deeply moved by True Christianity and freely acknowledged his debt to Arndt. Newton Flew concurs that Spener "owed his early deep impressions of religion" to True Christianity.⁸ This is also the conclusion of Kenneth Scott Latourette, who states that Arndt's volume "was a chief means of awakening Philip Jacob Spener."⁹

The impression produced by True Christianity upon Spener was deepened by the study of other devotional books in his father's library. Writings of certain English Puritans attracted him, notably among them Richard Baxter.¹⁰ Others included Emanuel Sontham's Golden

⁶John Arndt, True Christianity (Philadelphia: Smith, English and Company, 1868), p. 73.

⁷Arndt, p. 420.

⁸R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 277.

⁹Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 895.

¹⁰Barend Klaas Kuiper, The Church in History (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 343.

Treasure of the Children of God and Lewis Bayly's The Practice of Piety. There was a common emphasis in each of these books by English Puritans--application of Bible doctrine to daily Christian living. Theodore Tappert believes these books shared with John Arndt an "emphasis on a rigorous religious and moral life as over against a dogmatic intellectualism."¹¹ Mental assent to truth was insufficient. That truth must penetrate and permeate every area of life.

The impact of these early influences upon Spener's youth is noted in his reply to a friend's question asked in later years concerning his behavior as a young person. Spener was asked whether he had been mischievous in his youth. He confessed that he had been a bad boy, for, when he was twelve years, he had been invited by some of his friends to go to a dance and he had at last consented. Just as he was beginning to dance, he was "seized with such remorse that he rushed away from the dancing never to attempt it again."¹²

After completing his preparatory studies at the age of sixteen in May of 1651, Spener matriculated at the University of Strassburg, one of the most enlightened German universities. It was here that he came under the influence of several men who were to make a deep impression upon him. One of his professors was John George Dorsch, who died in 1659, the year Spener finished his studies at Strassburg. Dorsch is described as "a man of irreproachable character . . . pious, kind, and

¹¹Spener, p. 9.

¹²Koppel Shub Pinson, Pietism As a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), p. 15.

always fair."¹³ Spener appreciated Dorsch's defense of John Arndt against the attacks of Lukas Osiander and others. Dorsch believed Arndt was to be regarded as an orthodox Lutheran.¹⁴ Dorsch is especially remembered for his many volumes of devotional literature, the type of literature that was of particular appeal to young Spener.

Another professor whom Spener encountered at Strassburg was Johann Schmid. Schmid was a professor of theology with "deep exegetical interest."¹⁵ It was likely under Schmid that Spener learned Greek and Hebrew.¹⁶ Spener supplemented his Hebrew studies by taking up Rabbinics privately with a Jewish rabbi.¹⁷ The high regard that Spener felt for Schmid is reflected in his reference later to him as "my dear father in Christ who served the Christian church so well."¹⁸

But the teacher who influenced Spener most at Strassburg, according to his own testimony, was John Conrad Dannhauer, called "the most eminent representative of later Lutheran orthodoxy."¹⁹ Dannhauer served as director of the seminary studies at Strassburg for twenty-five years. He taught courses mainly in dogmatics and ethics. Though Dannhauer exerted wide influence, his greatest and most effective service was in

¹³Robert D. Preus, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 56.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 394.

¹⁶Bemesderfer, p. 16.

¹⁷Pinson, p. 15.

¹⁸Spener, p. 105

¹⁹Preus, p. 57.

the classroom. The veneration Spener held for Dannhauer is noted in Pia Desideria as he refers to this former instructor as "my distinguished teacher, the sainted Dr. John Conrad Dannhauer."²⁰ Tappert believes that it was Dannhauer who encouraged Spener to read Luther's works. He was also thought to be the one who helped Spener to recognize the place of the laity in the church. From him the casuistical treatment of ethics was probably learned. Spener appealed to Dannhauer for support of his views on Sunday observance.²¹ And when Spener sought to expose the inconsistencies of the church with the end toward revival, Dannhauer did not hesitate to encourage and commend his former student.²² Though there were differences between teacher and student, Spener had a friend in this "pious, industrious, practical, evangelical, great figure in the history of the Lutheran Church."²³

Sometimes Spener has appeared in history as the great antagonist of seventeenth century orthodoxy. He has been characterized as the counterpart of confessionism. Perhaps the failure to distinguish a "pietist" from "Pietism" has led to this assumption. All who carried the banner "Pietism" after Spener did not march in the train of the "Father" of Lutheran Pietism. The question of Spener's relationship to the excesses and aberrations will be dealt with later. It is important to simply record at this point Spener's respect for, adulation of, and identification with many of the orthodox Lutherans of his day.

²⁰Spener, p. 84.

²¹Ibid., p. 10.

²²Preus, p. 58.

²³Ibid., p. 59.

In his treatise, Pia Desideria, Spener labors consciously and deliberately to demonstrate his oneness with the major Lutheran leaders as well as Luther himself. This identification will be noted further in the examination of the content of Pia Desideria.

At the conclusion of his studies at the University of Strassburg in 1659, Spener followed the prevalent student practice of traveling. Spener spent the better part of two years in France, Switzerland, and Germany. Forced by illness to remain for a time in Geneva, Spener came in contact with Jean de Labadie. Labadie, a zealous preacher and leader, had formerly studied with the Jesuits as a loyal member of the Roman Catholic Church, but never had become a professed part of that order. In his study of the Scriptures, he was drawn to the doctrines of the Reformation. In reading Calvin's "Institutes," he found himself in full agreement. After formally declaring his allegiance to the Reformed Church in 1650, he sought to be a reformer of the Reformed.²⁴ He had begun as pastor of a Reformed French congregation in Geneva shortly before Spener arrived. His reputation and his writings had attracted the attention of earnest Christians from far and near. In his stay in Geneva, Spener often went to hear Labadie. Labadie had not yet developed the extremely Puritanical views that brought him into conflict with orthodox Protestants in later life. Many of the views and practices Spener heard and saw in Labadie's congregation made a deep impression upon him. The active part taken by laymen was of special interest to Spener and helps to account for his emphasis on lay-activity in the Pia

²⁴Samuel Macauley Jackson, The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 391.

Desideria. Some of Labadie's mysticism also left an impact on young Spener.²⁵ The fact that Spener had one of Labadie's tracts translated into German and published some years after his stay in Geneva indicates the high view Spener held for this man's ministry.²⁶ It has been suggested that in the style and emphasis of Pia Desideria the influence of Labadie upon Spener is discernible. One of Labadie's books, Reformation of the Church Through the Clergy, is thought to bear striking resemblance to the Pia Desideria and is considered to have had a part in the composition.²⁷

Another individual whom Spener encountered in Switzerland was Anton Leger, a Waldensian pastor. Leger's deep commitment to remain true to his convictions, despite hardship and persecution, elicited the respect of the young Spener. The example of Leger in withstanding the abuse of even some church people must have inspired Spener when he himself experienced some ill-treatment for his convictions in later years.

From these early contacts with Labadie, Leger and others, there remained in Spener a deep admiration and appreciation for many of the emphases and practices of the Reformed Church.²⁸ Bemederfer remarks that the meeting of Labadie and Leger "seemed to complement the earlier teaching he had received at the University of Strassburg, as well as that received by his own constant searching of the Scriptures and an early

²⁵Andrew Landale Drummond, German Protestantism Since Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 57.

²⁶Spener, p. 11.

²⁷Latourette, p. 895.

²⁸Spener, p. 17.

study of Arndt's True Christianity.²⁹ The question of Spener's commitment to Lutheran doctrine during this period of continual exposure to persons and positions of Reformed tradition is answered by Kuiper who says that despite these associations, Spener "remained a loyal Lutheran."³⁰ It was primarily in the area of practical theology that the influence of the Reformed Church made first its impression upon, then later, its expression in Philip Jacob Spener. Though Spener's Lutheran convictions remained firm, there was a marked respect and love for persons of the Reformed churches throughout his life. This attitude was in contrast to what he believed was narrowness of some of the Orthodox Lutherans in their regard for other denominations.

His Ministry

Spener returned to Strassburg after his travels and soon was called to serve a congregation there. After much prayer and consideration he accepted this pastorate in 1663. It was during this time that Spener received his doctorate. His pastoral duties were not heavy, giving him time for extra study and for delivering lectures on theology. It was in Strassburg that Spener met and married Susanna Erhard, a daughter of a distinguished senator.

The choice of Spener's wife was really made by his mother with whose wishes he did not immediately comply. Spener felt that if he ever married, it should be to a widow who had had an unkind husband. He thought that such a woman might be more content with his own serious and studious nature. However, Susanna, though only twenty at the time

²⁹Bemesderfer, p. 16

³⁰Kuiper, p. 343.

of their marriage, knew how to accommodate herself without much difficulty to the seriousness of her husband. She loved him deeply. Eleven children, six sons and five daughters, were born to Philip and Susanna.³¹

At the age of thirty one, Spener became head of the Evangelical clergy in Frankfort-on-the-Main. Spener was disappointed in much of the preaching he heard in Frankfort. He believed that pastors concentrated too long on the formal divisions and technical terms of theology. The preaching of the Word of God should stir the hearts of the people to definite decision and appropriate action as motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. There should be less on the polemical side of preaching and more on the practical. From this perspective and to correct the seeming imbalance, Spener set himself to preaching to the hearts of the people. His preaching has been characterized as "fearless" and calling for repentance and discipleship. He preached Christ in simple, direct words. His appeal was for conversion and he did not use the pulpit for engaging in controversy. Spener was not an eloquent preacher and his sermons were often lengthy, but there were few who fell asleep when he preached. This was in contrast to the complaint of Kirchenschlaf in many churches of the day. There was an earnestness and sincerity that appealed to many people. There were many who heard him gladly.³²

Despite the generally receptive attitude that Spener's preaching received, the actual impact on the lives of his hearers has been considered

³¹James T. Hickman, "Spener's Pietism: Spiritual Fire," Christianity Today, vol. 20, May 21, 1976, 17:7.

³²Hickman, p. 7.

slight. Discerning this and out of concern for deeper application of the Word of God, he revived the practice of catechizing which had been neglected by many pastors.³³ Desiring to reach a wider spectrum of persons and also wanting to help establish in the faith those who had been newly converted, Spener began to conduct devotional meetings in his home. These meetings, which came to be termed collegia pietatis (gatherings for the purpose of fostering piety) consisted of an exposition of Scripture by Spener and then an invitation to those present to express their thoughts and to ask questions. A time of extempore prayer was also included. The exposition and discussion usually centered around the sermon Spener had preached the previous Sunday. Spener's purpose in these meetings was to foster a deeper and warmer spiritual life. His concern was to apply the Word of God to the everyday life of the people. He feared that much preaching dealt with questions no one was asking, and, more significantly, weren't worth asking.³⁴

The collegia pietatis became more and more what Spener envisioned in initiating them. They were considered by many productive of much benefit.³⁵ The meetings won the approval and confidence even of the authorities in Frankfort. However, from the outset, there were those who severely criticized these gatherings. Some of the original members of the collegia pietatis were discouraged by the opposition experienced from what Isaac Dorner terms the "worldly party" in the

³³Samuel Cheetham, A History of the Christian Church (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1907), p. 123.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 203.

church and these succumbed to separatist opinions and errors.³⁶ The historian must distinguish this element from those members of the group whose lives were greatly enriched and who faithfully took their place and served in an effective way in the ministry of the Church. By 1700 there were about thirty-two cities in which the Pietist conventicles had sprung up and where the Pietists had attained to a position of great influence.³⁷

Many were converted through the ministry of Spener both through his preaching and in the small group meetings. Family life changed for many. A deeper interest in devotional literature emerged. This accounts in part for the re-publication of John Arndt's sermons. Spener wrote the introduction to one edition in 1675 which he entitled Pia Desideria (pious longings). The contents and response to this call for spiritual renewal will be discussed later.³⁸

Spener was becoming increasingly well-known owing to the spread of the conventicles and the publication of Pia Desideria. In 1686 he was called to Dresden as principal Court-chaplain. This was one of the most prominent positions offered by the Lutheran Church in Germany. Dresden, however, was the center of what has been called "High-Lutheranism."³⁹ The ministers of Dresden generally gave Spener a cold reception.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., p. 203.

³⁷ Pinson, p. 16.

³⁸ Infra, pp. 27-39.

³⁹ Drummond, p. 58.

⁴⁰ Kuiper, p. 344.

One of the first areas of need that Spener saw was the improvement of teaching in the universities. In Leipzig, the theological students had had no classes dealing with the direct Bible exposition for several years. The curriculum for these students consisted only of dogmatics, polemics, philosophy, and homiletics. Spener procured a government order that lectures on the exposition of Scripture should be resumed. This order was not received with much joy by the Leipzig faculty. Spener was the natural target of the negative reaction.⁴¹

Feelings toward Spener were not helped when his close friend, August H. Francke, began conventicle meetings in Leipzig about the same time as the government order had been received by the faculty. The theological faculty succeeded in having the small group meetings conducted by Francke, their fellow faculty member, forbidden.⁴² Pressure mounted from both ministers of Dresden and the faculty of Leipzig for the removal of Spener. There was opposition also from the faculty at Wittenberg.

Spener remained uncompromising in his preaching and his personal ministry despite the reaction against him. However, when the elector took offense at Spener's reproof of his drunkenness, Spener believed his day of effective ministry at Dresden was over. He was only too happy to accept the Elector of Brandenburg's invitation for him to come to Berlin in 1691.⁴³

⁴¹Cheetham, p. 124.

⁴²James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 83.

⁴³Kuiper, p. 344.

Spener's position in Berlin was as Head of the Consistory. Here the atmosphere was more congenial. It was in Berlin where many believe Spener's greatest work was done. Here also were spent the happiest years of his life. During his early years in Berlin, Spener assisted in the establishing of the University of Halle. His views and teachings largely determined the theological policy of the new university. He persuaded Frederick, the future king of Prussia, to invite Francke to become a professor there. It was Francke who carried on the administration of the school though Spener gave assistance until his death in 1705.⁴⁴

The University of Halle became a center for the Pietist movement in Germany. Thousands of Pietist pastors were trained at Halle which was the largest divinity school in Germany. Even the Reformed pietists contributed to Halle. Colonial Lutheranism in America was largely evangelized and organized from Halle.⁴⁵

His Person

Spener and Francke, as to their personalities and respective contributions to the Pietist movement, have sometimes been compared to Luther and Melanchthon. Spener is likened to Luther as the man who gave the movement its impetus and Francke is compared with Melanchthon insofar as he systematized ideas that had been already given expression.⁴⁶ As to personality differences, Francke was the more forceful leader than Spener, who is usually characterized as diffident. Though Spener

⁴⁴Hickman, p. 7.

⁴⁵Nichols, p. 84.

⁴⁶Drummond, p. 56.

profoundly influenced his generation and beyond, he was not a man one would call popular. There was nothing in his outward person that would be of an heroic nature. He is remembered as timid, peaceable, and pious, without bold initiative.⁴⁷ This portrait breaks down, especially in his Pia Desideria. There one notes a courage and forthrightness that cannot be denied.

Spener's physical features served to strengthen the image of diffidence, however, He is remembered as possessing "soft, mild, large open eyes" with "thick, soft, auburn hair being parted over his forehead" and falling in "long and natural ringlets upon his shoulders."⁴⁸ Wildenhahn says, "the mild and kindly expression of his countenance seemed to be made up of such a well-ordered combination of equanimity, submissiveness, and truthfulness, that the idea of the presence of worldliness, restlessness, fear, or of any evil passion did not occur to the beholder."⁴⁹

Wherein lies the secret to Spener's wide influence and lasting impact on those who associated with him, if not in his outward features and person? The consistent explanation has been put in terms of his living devotion, his profound moral earnestness and seriousness, and his strong sense of duty and responsibility that impressed people and led him into a life of such creative activity. Pinson says Spener's

⁴⁷Donald F. Durnbaugh, European Origins of the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1958), p. 33.

⁴⁸Carl August Wildenhahn, Life Pictures of Spener and His Times (Philadelphia: J. Frederick Smith, Publ., 1879), p. 37.

⁴⁹ibid.

"saintly personality together with his great scholarly prestige combined to spread his influence throughout Germany."⁵⁰

In his later years, Spener often became discouraged at the direction taken by some of his friends and followers. He never felt that the University of Halle theological school was quite true to the vision and ideals he set forth in Pia Desideria. Nevertheless, until his death in Berlin in 1705, he conscientiously fulfilled his duties as preacher and catechizer.

⁵⁰Pinson, p. 16.

CHAPTER III

A MESSAGE APPEARS - "PIA DESIDERIA"

While in Frankfurt, Spener wrote the preface for a new edition of John Arndt's sermons on the Gospels of the church year. Spener, who had been so greatly moved by Arndt's writing, wanted to commend this man and his message to his generation. Spener's views of the condition of the Church and society are readily seen. It is our concern to note why Spener wrote Pia Desideria. The text reveals his motivations quite clearly.

The Occasion

Briefly stated, Spener's perspective in writing reflected his deep concern with what he believed to be a spiritual coldness and deadness in the Lutheran Church he knew and loved. It was not so much false doctrine that disturbed Spener as the conviction that orthodoxy needed a thorough-going reawakening. Isaac Dorner describes the Pia Desideria as a "sketch of those notions of reform drawn upon the background of a mind painfully grieved by the declensions of the Church."¹

In his description of the Church of his day, Spener's main concern was with the clergy. He believed that both the main problems and the potential for renewal lay within the clergy. He addresses

¹Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 204.

himself, therefore, in his writing also to the need for reform in training future pastors. What were the issues with which Spener was concerned in regard to many of the clergy?

The doctrines of the Lutheran Church are not the issue in Spener's estimation. He affirms his own Lutheran orthodoxy in the Pia Desideria very clearly and deliberately. Bernard Lohse remarks that "Spener emphasized more than those who came after his agreement with Orthodoxy though he was drawn into severe controversy with it."² Reasons for the controversy will be noted later.

Neither is Spener's stance that of rigid anti-clericalism. No less than twenty-three of the leading Orthodox pastors and theologians, past and present, are referred to with great respect and admiration in Pia Desideria. Characteristically he speaks of the "sainted Dr. Weller," "renowned Dr. Zeller," "sainted and thoughtful Dr. John Valentine Andreae," "my beloved friend and brother in the Lord, Dr. William Zesch," "my very valued friend Dr. Balthasar Bebel," "my distinguished teacher, the sainted Dr. John Conrad Dannhauer," "the sainted Dr. John Schmidt, my dear father in Christ who served the Christian church so well," "Dr. Abraham Calovius, my especially honored patron and the theologian who is distinguished on account of the books he published with the particular purpose of defending true doctrine."³ The remarks about Calovius (Calov) are especially noteworthy in view of the fact that he was one of the most polemical of the orthodox theologians.

²Bernard Lohse, A Short History of Christian Doctrine (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 224.

³Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. from the German by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 54, 69, 84 and 105.

Spener's glowing adjectives and adulations about many of the orthodox theologians and pastors are not mere courtesy. He exhibits genuine respect and appreciation as he quotes from them to substantiate his points in Pia Desideria.

If it is not, therefore, a general distrust of Orthodox Lutheranism and its clergy, what is Spener's concern? As he viewed the lack of discipline among professing Christians, Spener believed that "no doubt their priests are not holy."⁴ He identified himself with his fellow-clergymen when he acknowledged, "we preachers in our estate need reformation as much as any estate can ever need it."⁵ Symptomatic of a worldly spirit among the clergy was the seeking of promotions and engaging in various political maneuvers to achieve their own advantage.

Of prime concern also for Spener was what he believed was an engagement by many of the clergy in polemics and controversy for unworthy ends. Too often these debates and discussions became mere displays of worldly wisdom and erudition. Pinson comments:

German religious life and thought presented a picture of endless disputations on matters of dogma, a new sort of scholasticism and sickly heresy-hunting. The rule of the mind was dominant. Logic, pedantry and ostentatiousness of learning predominated. This show of learning found its outlet even more in theological disputation. It was here that empty scholasticism found its most fruitful soil. The disputation, originally intended to instill the desire for "Lehre Reinheit," soon became a vehicle for mere ostentation. These disputations were often void of any sense of decorum or politeness. They were marked by coarseness of expression, insults and slander.⁶

⁴Spener, p. 44.

⁵Ibid., p. 45.

⁶Koppel Shub Pinson, Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), pp. 36, 38.

It was a joy to Spener to see the desire for pure doctrine, but he believed that too often it had been over-emphasized to the extent that some equated saving faith with holding correct doctrine. He believed that Christianity was in danger of being reduced to mere intellectual assent. In agreement with this analysis of the conditions, one German Protestant writer noted, "the Lutheran church was maintaining the dogmatic crust of Luther's faith, but had lost all of his dynamic Christianity."⁷

The growth of the idea that intellectual assent to correct doctrine is equivalent to saving faith stimulated many pastors to pursue higher education. The motivation for that further education, however, often was to impress others. Sermons became more lengthy and increasingly unintelligible to the average church-goer. In many pulpits, clear Bible exposition became secondary to lengthy quotations from a variety of other sources. The individual and his own deep spiritual needs seemed almost forgotten. Bemesderfer comments on the result. There was a

low ebb in the life of Protestantism and an utterly depressed condition of religious life everywhere. The universities were filled with immorality; and it seemed that there was a complete lack of any means to awaken or stimulate Christendom.⁸

It would be a mistake to lay all of the blame for the spiritual conditions at the feet of the clergy, however. There certainly were other facts contributing to the situation. Among them would be that this

⁷Donald F. Durnbaugh, European Origins of the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1958), p. 28.

⁸James O. Bemesderfer, Pietism and Its Influence Upon the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Harrisburg, Pa.: Evangelical Press, 1966), p. 4.

period was the aftermath of a long war. Kenneth Latourette observes that this also could be why there existed so much drunkenness and immorality. The sterility of many worship services again may have as a partial cause the interference of the state in the affairs of the Church.⁹

The feebleness of spiritual life in Germany was not confined to the Lutheran Church. It could be said quite generally that in Protestantism, "the churches were cold, formal and inactive. There was no idea of Christian missions and at home Protestantism was about as far as possible from being an aggressive enthusiastic force."¹⁰

In addition to the tendency among the clergy to orthodoxy for its own sake and neglect of the individual needs of the people, there were those who lived in immorality. Kuiper remarks, "Many of them were not converted men. Among the members of the clergy there was much drunkenness and immorality."¹¹ This was offensive to many church-goers. In most areas, church-going was not optional. Thus, many clergy faced a variety of response to their preaching, from open hostility to utter passivity. However, the average church-goer was left cold by his affiliation with the church.

Spener was not alone nor was he the first to express the desire for spiritual reform. There were men like Johann Gerhard who had

⁹Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 895.

¹⁰James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity, 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 98.

¹¹Barend Klaas Kuiper, The Church in History (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 343.

declared in his Meditationes Sacrae, published in 1606, that "the aim of theology is not bare theory nor subtle learning but rather better living and that the learned scholastic is not the sum total and end of the Christian religion."¹² Preachers like H. Muller, who died in 1676, and Christian Scriver, who died in 1692, also attempted to liberate the sermons from their logical schematism and rhetorical elaboration and to substitute more simple and practical presentations which would come from the heart. John Arndt has already been mentioned as one whose book, True Christianity, made such a profound impression upon young Spener. His stated purpose for writing his book was "to lead away the souls of the students and preachers from the controversial and quarrel-seeking theology which has again become a theologia scholastica . . . to take them from mere learning and theory to a real practice of faith and piety."¹³ Balthasar Meisner, professor of theology at Wittenberg in the early 1600's, was also conscious of the shortcomings of the Church in his day as he wrote, "I have tried to preach to the people, and therefore to guide men to heartfelt piety and good works, which are unfortunately passed over by many. I see that not the man who knows much and teaches much is a theologian, but the man who leads a holy and godly life."¹⁴ Another precursor of Spener who laid stress on practical piety was John Valentine Andreae, grandson of Jacob Andreae, who was known in the controversies of the 1500's in the Lutheran Church.

¹²Pinson, p. 40.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Quoted in Samuel Cheetham, A History of the Christian Church (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1907), p. 122.

Serving as Dean at Caliv, Andreae had as his leading thought "to turn men's minds from the vain jangling of endless disputation, and to fix them on the encouragement of true religion in Christian households."¹⁵ There were many others both preceding Spener and during his lifetime who saw the need for renewal of spiritual life.

The Contents

In the Pia Desideria, Spener's two-fold objective is to offer his diagnosis of the problems within the Lutheran Church of Germany and then to suggest a prescription for renewal of spiritual health. His diagnosis is that because of the defects in the clergy and the institutions from which they received training, an outward form of Christianity with little substance had been the result. He believed there were "fewer than may at first appear who do not really understand and practice true Christianity."¹⁶ He said the "common conception of the art of being saved, as most people imagine it, is not in accordance with the divine institution."¹⁷ He lamented how many there were "who live such a manifestly unchristian life that they themselves cannot deny that the law is broken at every point, who have no intention of mending their ways in the future, and yet who pretend to be firmly convinced that they will be saved in spite of all this."¹⁸

Spener's remedy centered largely in proposals aimed at the reform of the schools for ministerial training. He framed his formula

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Spener, p. 45.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 64.

for renewal under six themes. First, he called for a wider diffusion of the Bible.¹⁹ He believed that large sections of the Scriptures were virtually unknown by the people. He proposed that there be more reading of the Scriptures in the public services. He suggested special meetings for Bible study and discussion led by the pastors. This would be in addition to daily Bible reading in the home. A deeper, more thorough understanding of the Word of God was Spener's aim in this proposition.

The second idea advanced by Spener was that there be a re-awakening of Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers.²⁰ Much of the spiritual lethargy had resulted from an inadequate use of the laity, he believed. Many pastors were unwilling to permit anyone but a fellow-clergyman to exercise spiritual functions in the church. Many lay-people were only too willing to let the clergy perform their ministries for them. Rather than this common priesthood becoming a threat to the pastor, it would be a great boon. Spener pointed out that

One man is incapable of doing all that is necessary for the edification of the many persons who are generally entrusted to his pastoral care. However, if the priests do their duty, the minister, as director and oldest brother, has splendid assistance in the performance of his duties and his public private acts, and thus his burden will not be too heavy.²¹

Thirdly, Spener proposed that Christian knowledge be combined with practice in daily life.²² He believed that too often there was a

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

²² Ibid., p. 97.

large gap between what a man professed to believe and the way he lived. He saw a great need for the expression of Christian love. His suggestion for checking one's growth in love and growth in Christian graces generally was for a person to have a confidential relationship with his pastor or some other Christian to whom he would regularly report his progress or lack of it and receive counsel where needed.

In his fourth proposition, a call was issued to examine the motives for religious disputation.²³ Spener believed there was a time and place for disputation, pointing to the example of Christ and the apostles, but he thought that much of the religious controversy of his day had not been carried out in a spirit of Christian love and concern. He saw as worthy reasons for disputation to defend the faith, to recover the erring, and to win the lost to faith in Christ. Disputation is not for "putting down" the opponent but for leading him to the truth as it is in Christ.

In his fifth proposal, Spener comes to the heart of his convictions as he calls for an expanded emphasis in theological training. Not only the intellectual development of his student is to be the concern of the professor of theology. He must also give attention to the development of personal piety.²⁴ If one would have to be sacrificed for the other, Spener would choose the latter.

It is certain that a young man who fervently loves God, although adorned with limited gifts, will be more useful to the church of God with his meager talent and academic achievement than a vain

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 103.

and worldly fool with double doctor's degrees who is very clever but has not been taught by God.²⁵

To the end that ministerial training be geared toward producing a more pious clergy, Spener called for a return to "apostolic simplicity" in teaching theology. He commended the reading of devotional classics and cited as examples the writings of John Tauler and Thomas a Kempis'. He suggested a closer relationship of faculty and students in devotional meetings aimed at encouraging deeper spiritual life and based on studying the Scriptures together. He believed that the professor should invite the students to regularly give account of their development in Christian sanctity. If this were done, Spener said, "I have no doubt that within a short time a glorious advance in piety would result."²⁶

Spener's final proposal also was aimed at reform of ministerial training. He saw a need for theory to be taught but with the theory must come the opportunity to apply it. He said "it would also be useful if the teachers made provision for practice in those things with which the student will have to deal when they are in the ministry."²⁷ He thought this should include practice in teaching the Scripture, visitation of the sick, but especially in sermon preparation and delivery. It was not the mechanics of the sermon that Spener believed deserved the most attention but the focus or aim of the sermon. He thought all sermons should be aimed at the "inner man" or the new man, whose soul is faith and whose expressions are the fruits

²⁵Ibid., p. 108.

²⁶Ibid., p. 114.

²⁷Ibid., p. 115.

of life.²⁸ It is not the improvement of the exterior of an individual that is foremost but the change of his heart. Then the outward life will take care of itself.

The Effect

There was a mixed reaction to the publication of Pia Desideria. Generally, it may be said, however, that the initial response was favorable. Donald F. Durnbaugh reports that it met with "instant approval throughout Germany."²⁹ Here at last was a fresh breeze blowing into what many believed was staleness of spiritual life. What had been a growing conviction among several earnest Christians was now given eloquent and courageous expression by Spener. The generally positive response to Spener's work is more remarkable in light of the fact that the propositions he set forth were a call for radical change in many of the principles and procedures of the orthodox churches. That their reception was so positive is amazing.

Comparison has been made with the Reformation in respect to the impact of Pia Desideria. But the important difference is noted that it was not, as in the days of Luther, an acquaintance with evangelical truth that was needed. Rather, it was the application of the truth into everyday life and work.

. . . no sooner had Spener given the watchword of "Active Christianity," than the impulse to make the faith which was confessed by the lips seriously influential in the life was irresistibly spread by the effects of that evangelical preaching with which the intellect of the people was filled. It was universally felt that to stop at a merely intellectual belief as if this were the whole end in view, would be to make the life a

²⁸Ibid., p. 116.

²⁹Durnbaugh, p. 33.

refutation of the faith, existence a dualism, an unbearable fiction and hypocrisy, nay, the seat of skepticism and unbelief. And the teaching which had now crept into the Church and theology, together with evangelical doctrine, did, where the Word of God had fallen on good ground, but the more awaken desires for a purer and more vigorous form of the Church. It did this, moreover, in a manner which was but a continuation of the Reformation, namely, by instilling the universal conviction, in those whom this movement impelled to a more active Christianity, that the reform desired must begin in their own individual cases.³⁰

Not only the laity, but also the clergy, to whom Pia Desideria was primarily addressed, reacted approvingly at the outset. Warmest expression of approbation and commendation were even bestowed upon the collegia pietatis. This "honeymoon" period was not to last long, however. Spener's propositions sounded good and could be approved at a certain distance but they became threatening and upsetting when they were vocalized in the local parishes. The theory could be agreed with but the application in one's life and ministry was quite another matter.

When the matter began, with its personal demands, to touch themselves (the clergy) more nearly, when it threatened to disturb their accustomed mode of life, and attributed to them a different position with respect to religion and knowledge, to their office, and to the people, from that which they were wont to fill, they rose up, in the heat of a rigid and passionate conservatism, against the "innovations."³¹

It is not accurate to assume, however, that this "backlash" was all-inclusive. There were many of the clergy who adopted Spener's views and attempted to apply them in their parishes. Prayer meetings were introduced in many places, and generally "gave offense to the older theologians."³² Spener did not blame many of the theologians for being

³⁰Dorner, p. 204.

³¹Ibid., p. 210.

³²Cheetham, p. 124.

offended because of the excesses and disorder that were associated with some of the misguided attempts at application of his propositions. He admonished his followers to "move with caution."³³ He saw that some of them wanted to move too fast and too far. In this respect, there is a similarity to those who adhered to Luther's position. He too had warned his friends of going to excess in promulgating his views.

It is clear that the publishing of Pia Desideria was of no small moment in seventeenth century Germany. Indeed, many church fellowships today trace their origin back to this period. Durnbaugh cautiously suggests that Pia Desideria might be called a "forerunner of Pietism."³⁴ Most assessors, however, without reservation attribute the Pietist movement to the emergence of Pia Desideria. "German Pietism may be said to have begun officially with the publication of Spener's Pia Desideria, says Pinson.³⁵ Andrew Drummond concurs: "At Frankfurt-on-Main, Spener published the book which launched Pietism as a definite movement."³⁶

³³Bemesderfer, p. 21.

³⁴Durnbaugh, p. 33.

³⁵Pinson, p. 15.

³⁶Andrew Landale Drummond, German Protestantism Since Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 57.

CHAPTER IV

A MOVEMENT ARISES - PIETISM

There are differing opinions as to the origin of what came to be termed "Pietism." Some limit its beginnings to Spener and Francke;¹ others see its roots in Reformed circles;² still others believe it was a "continuance of the religious revival which accompanied the Reformation."³ Nearly all are agreed, however, that the word, "pietism," was first used in 1689 in derision of the movement in German Lutheranism which had gathered around the views of Philip Jacob Spener as particularly enunciated in his Pia Desideria and as given application in the "collegia pietatis."

The Initiation

While Spener "sparked" the Pietist movement, he was not one who fanned the flame to any great extent. Indeed, Pietism developed along quite independent lines. Spener's relationship to the developing movement has been characterized as that of an advisor. He warned against dangers. He tried to shield the Pietists from attacks and,

¹Andrew Landale Drummond, German Protestantism Since Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 54.

²James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 81.

³*Ibid.*, p. 100.

in the words of Isaac Dorner, doing this "with admirable tenderness, perseverance, and wisdom."⁴ He followed the movement as a counselor, not as an organizer or developer.

The early years of the Pietist movement in Germany have been divided into two distinct stages. The first stage extended to the death of Spener in 1705. The second covered the period from Spener's death until about 1730. During the first period, the focus of the movement was on apology and defense. This was also the time of the so-called "first love."⁵ Enthusiasm and zeal propelled the Pietists into ever-widening circles. Nichols describes it in these early years as "a widespread and powerful awakening."⁶

As mentioned, Pia Desideria met with generally favorable response. The reception, however, was not quite as favorable for the Pietist movement which found identity in an expanding un-organized network of small-group devotional meetings (collegia pietatis). The one was the highly orthodox churchman who believed polemics was the main calling of the preacher. He viewed with alarm the seeming neglect of defending the faith and the pre-occupation in devotional application of the Scripture. The other type of clergyman who objected to Pietism did so on the basis of the strict moral teachings of the Pietists. Wildenhahn, in his mixed fictional-historical account of Spener's Pietism, projects this definition of a Pietist's identity from the mouth of this latter type of opponent,

⁴Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 205.

⁵Ibid., p. 203.

⁶Nichols, p. 100.

A Pietist is one who regards it as a mortal sin to wear an embroidered handkerchief and a wig; one who fasts every other day, and wears shabby garments; one who talks from morning till night about godliness, and who, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, attends Spener's examina. This is a Pietist.⁷

The second period of early Pietism continued until about 1730. This has been characterized as the "aggressive and victorious part."⁸ The foundations had been earlier laid for the steady growth that ensued. Pietism became the "ruling influence in German Protestantism."⁹

The Interpretation

It is difficult to find a consensus as to what Pietism actually represented in its early development. Some would define it on the basis of its entire history which tends toward a more negative description because of the excesses and errors that arose later. Representative of this broader type of definition is the statement, "Pietism was essentially the revival within the Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican state churches of the sectarian, spiritualist, and mystical motifs of the medieval and Reformation periods."¹⁰ Albrecht Ritschl also thought of Pietism as "an intrusion of medieval mysticism into Protestantism mediated by Dutch and Rhenish mystics."¹¹ Others see Pietism's link with the past from a different perspective. Bemserfer comments that the Pietist movement "was a necessary stage in the

⁷Carl August Wildenhahn, Life Pictures of Spener and His Times, trans. by G. A. Wenzel (Philadelphia: Frederick Smith, Publ., 1879), p. 28.

⁸Dorner, p. 203.

⁹Nichols, p. 100.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹Otto W. Heick, A History of Christian Thought, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 21.

development of Protestantism for it turned back from the cold faith of the seventeenth century to the warm living faith of the Reformation."¹² Durnbaugh expresses the relationship of Pietism with the Reformation similarly as he says, "the Pietistic movement can best be defined as a continuation of the sixteenth-century of the reformation of doctrine through a reformation of life. The Pietist was a person who studied God's Word and sought to order his life by it."¹³ There are those who believe that Pietism tended to be over-balanced in its emphasis on reformation of life. Among them is Fisher who notes in his definition of Pietism that it represented "the religious spirit of those who set a value, and the highest value, on the religion of personal experience, but with less than a just respect for thought and science."¹⁴ Wildenhahn frames the words of opposition contemporary to Pietism similarly when he depicts Pietists as "people who attempt to lead others to piety, but have not the skill to do it; people who, to the neglect of all necessary studies, speak only of studium pietatis."¹⁵ Early Pietism's conception of necessary studies centered in the Scriptures and their practical application. Spener's collegia pietatis revolved around Bible study. A reform movement always runs the danger of imbalance, however, and the accusations may not be far from being

¹²James O. Bemesderfer, Pietism and Its Influence Upon the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Press, 1966), p. 4.

¹³Donald F. Durnbaugh, European Origins of the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1958), p. 32.

¹⁴George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1896), pp. 494-95.

¹⁵Wildenhahn, p. 145.

justified that in their new love and appreciation for the Scripture, some areas, though secondary to the Bible, were minimized too much by the early Pietists.

In understanding Pietism, it is well to note the distinctions within this movement which has been termed a "phenomenon of church life."¹⁶ As in the case of the Reformation, there was in Pietism a biblical evangelical group and a speculative spiritualistic wing. The "father" of biblical evangelical pietism was Spener. As has been mentioned, August Hermann Francke was a close associate of Spener's and would be a part of this element. Some of the leaders of the latter group were Gottfried Arnold, Johann Conrad Dippel, and Johann Wilhelm Petersen.¹⁷ Arnold, who for a short time was a professor in Giessen, maintained that even the views of so-called heretics have their place in the history of Christian thought. In a review of church history, he believed one would find that "there had been more truth with the heretics than with the orthodox."¹⁸ It is this kind of clear departure from biblical Christianity going under the name of Pietism that is responsible for much of the negative criticism Pietism has received.

Biblical conservative Pietists were true to historic Lutheran doctrine for the most part. Heick comments,

Their (conservative Pietists) dogmatics was that of the Orthodox, but trimmed of the excesses. Like the Orthodox, they believed in the literal infallibility of the Scriptures and upheld the satisfaction theory of the atonement. They were less interested in

¹⁶Dorner, p. 205.

¹⁷Heick, p. 21.

¹⁸Williston Walker, ed., A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 449.

some of the fine distinctions made by the Orthodox dogmatists . . . Spener and his followers were opposed to an orthodoxy which carried theological definitions to the extreme. The Lutheran Pietists tried to curb the excesses of theological statements. In that sense they were unorthodox.¹⁹

The Influence

By the middle of the eighteenth century "Spenerian" Pietism had waned considerably in Germany. Rationalism was rapidly gaining ascendancy and had all but doused the flickering flames of conservative Pietism. Pietism has often been faulted for preparing the environment in which Rationalism could thrive. There is validity to this criticism when it is aimed at the speculative spiritualistic side of Pietism. With their one-sided emphasis on experience to the virtual exclusion of doctrine, the ground was fertile for the development of Rationalism. Reason at last became the judge of experience rather than the Scriptures.

Biblically conservative Pietism, however, made a profoundly positive impact in Germany both in religious and civil life. Arthur Skevington Wood credits it with stimulating "warm evangelical preaching in pulpits where a dull and lifeless orthodoxy had prevailed."²⁰ This "new" preaching emphasized Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers. Every believer is vitally involved in the ongoing ministry of the church. There are no secular or spiritual estates in the work of God's kingdom on earth.

¹⁹Heick, pp. 22-23.

²⁰Arthur Skevington Wood, The Inextinguishable Blaze (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 28.

Pietism entered into more intimate contact with the daily home and family life of the lay class in religious life, broke down the pompous wall that the orthodox clergy had built around themselves and developed a sense of self-dignity and self-esteem in the laity.²¹

One can readily see the easy step to "individualism" in this focus on the laity. Indeed, here is a point where Pietism and Rationalism were allied in their reaction against "dead" Orthodoxy. "On the ethical side, both Pietism and Rationalism appreciated the individual conscience and discounted moralizing that was merely traditional."²² For the biblical "Spenerian" Pietist, however, the "traditional" did not include the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions. The proposals for reform of this "dead" Orthodoxy differed radically. The true Pietist appealed for the practical application of God's Word. The Rationalist insisted that reason was the safest and surest guide.

It is because of this concern for the individual that Pietism has been credited with helping to "thaw the ice that had frozen the German spirit after the warmth of Luther had given place to the glacial climate of Lutheran scholasticism."²³ A new interest in education was registered. "It is an undisputed fact," says Pinson, "that education in general and German education in particular are enormously indebted to the Pietist movement and the Pietist leaders."²⁴ Greater emphasis on the practical in education was given by the Pietists. This is

²¹Koppel Shub Pinson, Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), p. 107.

²²Drummond, p. 75.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Pinson, p. 125.

reflective of Spener's remark, "Knowledge is not enough. Christianity consists much more of activity."²⁵

Individualism for the Pietist knew no social boundaries. Equality of all persons, regardless of social or economic status, was given fresh expression. This is why Pietism has been called "the greatest cementing force in eighteenth-century Germany, torn, as it was, by religious controversies and rigid class distinctions and social barriers."²⁶ It is interesting to note in this connection the criticism of Spener by John Carpsov, the Leipzig theologian, for mingling with the lower classes. Carpsov intimated that this was "undignified behavior."²⁷ In their writing, in their daily social contacts, and in their church affairs, Pietists demonstrated an interest in the lower classes and this helped to foster greater social unity.

While Newton Flew calls attention to excesses and defects of the Pietist movement in general, he believes these are overshadowed by the renewed interest in missions which was stimulated by the Pietist movement. "Judged by missionary enthusiasm alone, the Unitas Fratrum is the greatest communion in the world. What would Lutheranism itself have to show in the cause of world-evangelization," he says, "if it were not for the work of the Pietists?"²⁸

It cannot be denied that there is room for criticism in any evaluation of Pietism. There were off-beat views held by some Pietists.

²⁵Ibid., p. 140.

²⁶Ibid., p. 108.

²⁷Quoted at Ibid., p. 110.

²⁸R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 279.

There were hypocrites who joined the ranks for unworthy motives. But an objective evaluation must conclude that Pietism led to a re-awakening of spiritual life at a time when it was at a low ebb in Germany.

PART TWO
THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN "PIA DESIDERIA"

The doctrine of sanctification in the *Pia Desideria* is a central theme. It is a process of growth and maturity in the Christian life. The author, John Calvin, emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in this process. Sanctification is not a one-time event but a continuous journey. It involves the believer's cooperation with God's grace. The *Pia Desideria* provides a practical guide for this journey, focusing on the heart and the mind. It encourages the reader to seek holiness and to love God and neighbor. The text is written in a clear and accessible style, making it a valuable resource for students and scholars alike. The doctrine of sanctification is a key element of the Christian faith, and the *Pia Desideria* offers a profound insight into this doctrine. The author's perspective is both theological and practical, providing a solid foundation for understanding the Christian life. The *Pia Desideria* is a classic work of Christian literature, and its teachings remain relevant today. The doctrine of sanctification is a central theme in the Christian faith, and the *Pia Desideria* provides a clear and practical guide to this doctrine. The author's perspective is both theological and practical, providing a solid foundation for understanding the Christian life. The *Pia Desideria* is a classic work of Christian literature, and its teachings remain relevant today.

PART TWO

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN "PIA DESIDERIA"

Not surprisingly, the particular doctrinal concern of Philip Jacob Spener in his life and ministry was the doctrine of sanctification. The collegia pietatis concentrated on application of Bible doctrine to daily Christian living. The Pia Desideria was a call for renewal of Christian life. The Pietist movement everywhere called attention to the need for godly behavior to coincide with Christian profession. Indeed, "the reformation of morals formed the topstone of the edifice [of Pietism]. The Church must proceed from religion to morals. Sanctification of life must be the chief and earnest labor of the Christians."¹

Since Pia Desideria in its publication in 1675 is singled out as igniting the fires of the Pietist movement, it is important to consider what Spener was calling the Church to give heed to in his propositions. What was his concept of true Christian life? What did he mean by "sanctification"? How important did he think pious living was for the Christian? How could a person develop in Christ-likeness? What were the effects of deeper spirituality upon the inward and outward person? What was the purpose or goal of sanctification? These are questions before us as we approach Pia Desideria.

¹Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 210.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF SANCTIFICATION

Spener has been faulted for seeming disinterest in the doctrine of justification, not only in Pia Desideria, but in his life and ministry in general. In his pre-occupation with sanctification of life, he has sometimes been construed as promulgating works-righteousness not unlike that which Luther had resisted in his break from Roman Catholic doctrine. Otto Heick compares Spener with the Apostle James in his emphasis on works as a proof of faith. He says Spener inverted the relationship between faith and piety. Heick continues,

Luther, like Paul, began with faith. Although faith, of necessity, will be active in love, the primary concern of both was faith in God who justifies the ungodly. Spener, on the other hand, like James, concentrated on piety as a proof of faith. Man is justified because by faith he walks in love. In the background lurks the Catholic and rationalistic idea of the meritoriousness of the Christian life. The just, not the sinner, is justified before God.²

If Heick is correct in his analysis, the charge is serious indeed. Heick's interpretation, however, is open to question. To confine Paul's focus to justification is to limit one's perspective of Pauline theology. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul is deeply committed to teaching and urging sanctification in the lives of the justified. Moreover, to conclude that Luther's emphasis on justification by faith somehow precluded interest in morals, is to miss the main burden of the great

²Otto W. Heick, A History of Christian Thought, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 25.

reformer. Against the backdrop of Roman Catholic teaching, justification by faith alone was the issue to be given careful expression in sixteenth century Wittenberg whereas sanctification of life was seen to be the matter to be emphasized in seventeenth century Frankfort where dead orthodoxy was felt to prevail. Heick's pitting of Paul against James goes too far in intimating that one taught "faith" while the other taught "works" and that this dichotomy fits Luther and Spener. The starting point for all parties named is faith. Spener, for his part, makes this clear, when he writes:

We gladly acknowledge that we must be saved only and alone through faith and that our works or godly life contribute neither much nor little to our salvation, for as a fruit of faith our works are connected with the gratitude which we owe to God, who has already given us who believe the gift of righteousness and salvation. Far be it from us to depart even a finger's breath from this teaching, for we would rather give up our life and the whole world than yield the smallest part of it.³

Spener believed there were those who really didn't understand the biblical concept of faith. He termed this misunderstanding a "fleshly illusion of faith."⁴ He maintained that true faith cannot exist without the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit's entrance signalled a definite change in an individual. Spener quoted Luther's description of this dynamic action:

Faith, however, is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1:13). It kills the old Adam and makes altogether different men of us in heart and spirit, and mind powers, and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith, and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there

³Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 63.

⁴Spener, p. 64.

are good works to do, but before the question rises it has already done them and is always at the doing of them, etc.⁵

Of real concern for Spener was the possibility that there were those who stood in the pulpits preaching the truth of the Word of God and yet themselves lacked this "genuine" faith that results in works. Describing these ministers, he says,

. . . these preachers, with their own human efforts and without the working of the Holy Spirit have learned something of the letter of the Scriptures, have comprehended and assented to true doctrine, and have even known how to preach it to others, but they are altogether unacquainted with the true, heavenly light and the life of faith.⁶

The preacher's lack of a true faith didn't render the Word ineffective, Spener held, but it hindered him in several areas of Christian ministry. The most serious drawback would be the inability to teach clearly the way of salvation. "If the preacher himself does not know this, how are his hearers to be brought to the point of recognizing what is necessary?"⁷

Spener understood the necessity of faith in its relationship to justification. He saw that before any emphasis on sanctification must come the true foundation of justification by faith alone. Yet, aside from some of the Orthodox pastors and others in their congregations who did not know the meaning of faith, Spener writes Pia Desideria to those who are in the faith, have been justified, but who need to understand the fruits that surely must follow such true faith.

⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷ Ibid., 47.

Meaning of Sanctification

Presuming that his readers know the meaning of justification, Spener proceeds to dwell on the doctrine of sanctification. On the one hand, Spener recognized that sanctification involves more than outward actions. He said the practice of true Christianity "consists of more than avoiding manifest vices and living an outwardly moral life."⁸ There are many pious pagans whose outward morality puts many professing Christians to shame. It is the "inner man" that is the true focus in any biblical discussion of sanctification. Spener voiced his appreciation for John Arndt because of his emphasis in this direction. He applauded Arndt for his writings which "turn on the real core, the inner man."⁹ Arndt was promoting, according to Spener, "true orthodoxy"--"not the vain reputation of an orthodoxy that consists merely of doctrinal statements but a living knowledge of effective Christianity and what such orthodoxy is aimed at, namely, the inner man."¹⁰

The content of sanctification as understood by Spener was given eloquent expression, he felt, by David Chytraeus. He writes:

. . . the Christian religion . . . consists of this, that from his Word, we have a right knowledge of the true God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, that we inwardly fear and in true faith love him, that we call upon him and are obedient to him as we bear our crosses and throughout our life, help them charitably, in all peril of life and death put our full confidence in the grace secured for us in Christ, and look forward to living eternally with God.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

Spener underlined obedience as a key to understanding the true expression of Christianity. This obedience is rendered to Christ and His Word. He mourned that "none of the precepts of Christ is openly observed."¹² He hailed the example of the early Christian Church who, he said, "recognized as brethren only those who lived according to its standards."¹³ He believed Justin Martyr represented the consensus in his admonition, "Let those who are not found to live as Christ taught be understood to be no Christians, even though they profess with their lips the precepts of Christ."¹⁴ Not mere profession but expression of faith in practical obedience typified what the New Testament meant in its reference to sanctification, Spener contended.

The obedience to which Spener referred did not only relate to the precepts of Christ but also to His example. The believer is to take note of the words and works of Christ. Spener found support for this view in the words of John Affelman: "He (Christ) is the way on account of his life, and we should imitate this life with earnest zeal."¹⁵ This is the strong recurring affirmation found in the writing of John Arndt as well. Arndt wrote in True Christianity,

But no man can love Christ who does not imitate his holy life . . . [Christ] only, is the rule of life and the pattern which every Christian should strive to imitate . . . wherever there is not the life of Christ, there Christ is not himself, however loudly the faith and the doctrine may be commended . . . That man, therefore, who does not imitate the life of Christ, is an entire stranger to true repentance . . . Let us labor and strive after this one thing;

¹²Ibid., p. 57.

¹³Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 51.

that our lives may resemble the life of Christ . . . the sum of Christianity is to follow Christ.¹⁶

It is little wonder that Spener should reflect this same position in light of his devotion to the writings of Arndt. He sought to repeat Arndt's view to his own generation.

One will not find in Spener's understanding of sanctification any notion of instantaneous action. He saw Christian living as a gradual process, a growth in Christ-likeness. He speaks of growing "more and more in our knowledge of the truth."¹⁷ He underlines the importance of simultaneous growth in "learning" and morals, stating, "whoever grows in learning and declines in morals is on the decrease rather than the increase."¹⁸ He held that ministerial students be given concrete suggestions on "how to observe growth in goodness or where there is still lack . . ."¹⁹ The question as to whether Spener saw this growth arriving at full maturity in this present life will be considered later.

Sanctification, according to Spener, is not simply a dutiful response of a justified individual to the will of God. It is not a continuous heavy burden laid upon a person which forces him into positions which he himself would not invite. For the truly justified, there will be a strong motivation to serve God out of loving gratitude for His grace in Christ. Love is the essence of true sanctification as

¹⁶John Arndt, True Christianity (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1868), pp. xi, 10, 26, 33, 43 and 54.

¹⁷Spener, p. 102.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 112-113.

Spener declares, "Indeed, love is the whole life of the man who has faith and who through his faith is saved, and his fulfillment of the laws of God consists of love."²⁰

In summary, one may conclude on the basis of Pia Desideria that sanctification always stems from justification by faith. Faith is dynamic, resulting in a sincere desire to obey the precepts of Christ, as expressed in His Word and as seen in His example. The "inner man" is the proper focus of true sanctification. Motivated by love, the Christian grows in Christ-likeness, keeping his eyes fixed on the perfect goal--Christ.

The Importance of Sanctification

It is obvious that Spener considered sanctification as very important to the Christian. The extent of this importance and the relative position alongside other doctrinal verities is worthy of note in a study of Pia Desideria. Also, it is necessary to observe why sanctification loomed so large on the horizon of Spener's theological outlook.

As Spener viewed the religious situation in his day, he believed that there were too few who sought to foster growth in Christian piety. He thought that there were not a small number of clergy who regarded as "unimportant what the apostle mentioned to the Ephesians as something long since learned, namely, that 'in Jesus there is righteous conduct' (Ephesians 4:21)."²¹ It would follow that those who would adhere to such preachers would also give little attention to the fruits that

²⁰Ibid., p. 96.

²¹Ibid., p. 47.

follow genuine faith. He observed that,

. . . there are not a few who think that all Christianity requires of them . . . is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God's Word, confess and receive absolution, and go to the Lord's Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at the time, whether or not there are fruits which follow . . .²²

He appealed for "enlightened men" to take up the task of "advancing true godliness."²³ He believed that this subject should occupy prime attention for the time being because of what he felt was a tremendous dearth of true spiritual life in the orthodoxy of his day. In light of this need, he called on all Christians "to examine the condition of the church and consider how it may be improved."²⁴ It grieved him to think that so few discerned the condition and the necessary corrective.

Numerous are those who do not recognize the ruin of Joseph in many areas. They think that the church is in a most blessed condition as long as we are not hard pressed by opponents of a false religion and enjoy outward peace. They do not see the dangerous wounds at all. How, then, can they bind them up and heal them?²⁵

In his desire to alert the clergy and laity to their responsibility, Spener appealed to Abraham Calov who stated that "those [ministers] who wish to enter and leave the house of the Lord must also bestow pains on the sanctification and purification of their lives."²⁶ Illustrative also of this deep concern for sanctification of life is Spener's comment that "our whole Christian religion consists of the inner man or the new man, whose soul is faith and whose expressions are

²² Ibid., p. 65.

²³ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

the fruits of life, and all sermons should be aimed at this."²⁷

Because of Spener's strong call for teaching on practical Christian living, his position has appeared too one-sided to some of his assessors. Again, it is important to recall that he did not think there was a problem among the Orthodox regarding the teaching of justification by faith. He believed they were true "sons of the Reformation" in this respect. His burden involved what he thought was lack of emphasis in both teaching and practicing the Christian life. He was not advocating any lessening of attention on justification. Rather, he was urging a stress on the fruits of that declaration which he believed were to be expected in the lives of the truly justified. Dorner offers this comment accordingly,

Spener and all genuine Pietists were deeply impressed with the conviction that God's purpose in the Gospel is not mere pardon or justification, but that the end to which these are indeed the indispensable means is a truly pure and moral life well-pleasing to God.²⁸

In other words, God's interest is in both justification of the sinner and his subsequent sanctification of life. This should be every Christian's interest too as he surveys his own relationship to God and as he seeks to be of spiritual help to others. Spener was heartened by the Orthodox interest and enunciation of justification by faith, the chief article of the Christian faith, but he believed that sanctification belonged on the agenda also. To not include teaching on the latter was to omit something very basic. Justification and sanctification

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁸ Dorner, p. 216.

belong together, the former preceding the latter to be sure, but together just the same.

When Spener spoke of "unnecessary things" relative to theology, he certainly was not referring to justification or any other cardinal doctrine of the Scripture. What he had in mind were instances when a theological professor or pastor would try to be "smart and clever without the Scriptures or beyond them."²⁹ He believed that when this occurred, "much that is alien, useless, and reminiscent of the world's wisdom has here and there been introduced gradually into theology."³⁰ The consequences of feeding on such a diet distorts one's spiritual tastes, he asserted.

. . . it becomes exceedingly difficult to grasp and find pleasure in the real simplicity of Christ and his teaching. This is so because men's taste becomes accustomed to the more charming things of reason; and after a while the simplicity of Christ and his teaching appears to be tasteless.³¹

It was Spener's strong conviction that much that was unnecessary was occupying the minds and hearts of theological professors and their students. He pleaded that "the whole of theology ought to be brought back to apostolic simplicity."³² That which edified was his interest. He believed students should be continually reminded that "study without piety is worthless."³³ It disturbed him that many put the most value on the mere accumulation of knowledge without corresponding concern for their growth in godliness.

²⁹Spener, p. 51.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 56.

³²Ibid., p. 110.

³³Ibid., p. 104.

Many, instead, hold that while it would be a good thing for a student of theology to lead a decent life, it is not necessary or important, provided he studies diligently and becomes a learned man, whether he allows himself to be governed by a worldly spirit during these years and participates with others in all the pleasures of the world, for there is time enough to change his manner of life when he becomes a minister.³⁴

Of much more use in the work of the church will be the pious man, though less gifted in outward abilities, than the person who may possess great intellectual acumen but be of a worldly spirit.³⁵

One of the chief hindrances to the advance of wholesome Christian pietism, in Spener's estimation, was the attention given in the theological schools and in the pulpits to polemical argument. He granted that there was a place for disputation but he believed that the positive proclamation of Law and Gospel and the demonstration of the power of that Gospel as exhibited in the personal life of individual believers was far more effective in serving the cause of Christ. What the concentration on polemics displaced was the most serious of Spener's reservations. He quoted David Chytraeus to illustrate his convictions in this regard.

Would to God that we might accustom our own and our hearers' hearts and minds to the fear of the Lord, to repentance and conversion, to error because of sin before the wrath and judgment of God, and to the practice of true godliness, righteousness, and love of God and neighbor rather than to quarrelsome disputatiousness, from which it is evident that the sophistry which was characteristic of former times has not been overcome but has simply been shifted and transferred to other questions and disputes.³⁶

³⁴Ibid., p. 107.

³⁵Ibid., p. 108.

³⁶Ibid., p. 52.

What should be of secondary importance had been elevated to primary consideration. Spener felt Johannes Dinckel was correct in the following observation:

The consequence is that true theologia practica (that is, the teaching of faith, love, and hope) is relegated to a secondary place, and the way is again paved for a theologia spinosa (that is, a prickly, thorny teaching) which scratches and irritates hearts and souls, as used to happen before Luther's time."³⁷

A return to that medieval scholasticism which highlighted the details was envisioned also by Spener in his assessment of much of the Orthodoxy of his day. The spirit in which many disputations were conducted was not furthering what the purpose of such sessions should be, he thought. Recovery and restoration of the erring is the worthy motivation for debate. Display of one's personal skill at confounding opponents only advertises the worldly attitude of the debater. Finding Chytraeus again to be an ally, he quotes, "We show ourselves to be Christians and theologians by our godly faith, holy living, and love of God and neighbors rather than by our subtle and sophistical argumentation."³⁸ Spener professed concern regarding the impression made by the "sophistical argumentation." He spoke of the offense that was unnecessarily caused by this type of disputation.

This defect does more harm than most people imagine, for they become accustomed to those very things about which St. Paul long ago warned his Timothy when he commanded that certain persons should "not occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith . . ."³⁹

³⁷Ibid., p. 53.

³⁸Ibid., p. 112.

³⁹Ibid., p. 55.

Instead of encouraging genuine spiritual life, Spener believed the over-attention to polemics, particularly as it stemmed from selfish motivation, became a hindrance.

It was the position of Spener that hand in hand with evangelism in the church must go reform. He believed the "pure" Church was a powerful Church in its impact upon society. At the same time that he spoke of evangelizing the Jews and confronting the errors of Rome, he emphasized this reform of morals. ". . . it is incumbent on all of us to see to it that as much as possible is done, on the one hand, to convert the Jews and weaken the spiritual power of the papacy and, on the other hand, to reform our church."⁴⁰ Reformation of doctrine is not the focal point here; it is reformation in Christian living. Spener was biblical and realistic in allowing that a perfect Church was impossible. His conception of a "pure" Church was one "free of manifest offenses."⁴¹ Church discipline must continually be exercised to see that this is achieved. It was Spener's conviction that "nobody who is afflicted with such failings (manifest offenses) should be allowed to remain in the Church without fitting reproof and ultimate exclusion."⁴² He was cognizant of the inevitable presence of tares among the wheat but the cleansing or removal of the open offenses would allow the grain to conceal the rest.

Illustrating Spener's high estimation of the need for practicing true Christianity is the way he refers to John Olearius, court

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴² Ibid.

chaplain in Halle. Olearius was held in his high regard because he "in a praiseworthy manner promoted the practice of piety in his writings."⁴³ This was the measure of a spiritual man to Spener. In his suggestions for reform of theological training, he makes the same point. The student deserving of special attention and commendation, if indeed such is offered, should be the one who shows evidence of growth in godliness. He is the one who will be of greatest usefulness in the Kingdom of God.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the theological student who has neglected his own spiritual life and instead "has devoted his time to 'controversial matters'" will, in the words of Christopher Scheibler, either be "a bungling preacher, no matter how erudite he may be in polemics, or he must become a beginner, start the study of theology all over again and study it in a different way."⁴⁵

Underlying how important Spener considered the life of sanctification to be is his view that one was in danger of losing his salvation without it. Without continued daily repentance and growth in grace and godliness, true Christianity could not be sustained. One could not persist willfully in sin and expect that all would be well with one's relationship to God. Discussing certain gross sins, Spener comments, ". . . if they do not believe that unless such sins are earnestly and resolutely rooted out these vicious and unrepentant persons will lose their salvation."⁴⁶ John Arndt had said essentially

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

the same thing as Spener notes, "He who does not follow Christ in faith, holiness, and continued repentance cannot be delivered from the blindness of his heart but must abide in eternal darkness, nor can he have a true knowledge of Christ or fellowship with him."⁴⁷ Spener sums up the matter by saying, "An unchristian life leads to false doctrine, hardness of heart, and blindness."⁴⁸ In light of such a possibility, Spener felt he must do all he could to make this possibility known. Growth in godliness was no option for the believer as far as Spener was concerned. The fruits of the Holy Spirit indicated a right relationship to God whereas their absence meant something was terribly wrong. Repentance lay at the heart of the remedy.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 100.

⁴⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE WAY OF SANCTIFICATION

In preparing the Pia Desideria, Spener was concerned not only with exposing and illustrating the need for sanctification among believers but also with presenting the way it is effected. He sought to outline the remedy for what he believed was a low point in the spiritual life of his day. At the very heart of his "proposals to correct conditions" was the Word of God.

The Word of God

By the prominence Spener gives to the Scriptures in Pia Desideria, it can be said that he deemed it pre-eminent among the means of grace. Indeed, all other means find their efficacy in their connection with the Word. Though it is not the doctrine of the Word that is the issue in Pia Desideria, Spener presents a fairly complete outline of his position. Of particular focus are the following: the inspiration, the authority, and the efficacy of the Scriptures.

Inspiration

It is clear that Spener held a very high view regarding the inspiration of Scripture. He fully concurred with the orthodox leaders in believing in verbal inspiration. In discussing a passage in the book of Revelation, which he relates to a possible future fall of "papal Rome," he states, ". . . its (Rome's) spiritual power is

still too great to permit us to claim that the prophecy in Revelation 18 and 19 has been completely fulfilled, especially when one observes with what emphatic words the fulfillment is described in those chapters."¹ To the Holy Spirit, the very words of Scripture are attributed.

In making the point that all Scripture be known by a congregation, Spener quotes 2 Tim. 3:16, "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."² Because all Scripture is inspired, all of it should be read and studied by a congregation, he holds. No part should be overlooked because of this equality of origin. There is no section that is more inspired than another. Only as a congregation is exposed to "all Scripture" will the full potential of benefit be available.

Authority

Arising from its full inspiration is the full authority of Scripture in all that pertains to faith and life. Because the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God, anyone who would enter into a relationship with God must acknowledge this authority. This property of the Word receives major attention in Pia Desideria.

Spener maintains that his message is based squarely on the Word of God. Therefore he calls his readers to prayer "that here and there God may open up one door and another to his Word."³ The belief that it was the Word of God he was proclaiming warranted such a request, he felt.

¹Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 77.

²Ibid., pp. 87-88.

³Ibid., p. 38.

He considered his proposals to correct conditions in the Church to be anchored in the Word of God and therefore, deserving of attention. The Scriptures have been his guide in what he writes in Pia Desideria. "I make bold to set down here on paper what, on the basis of pious reflection and the guidance of the Scriptures, I think is useful and necessary."⁴ Only as his views are recognized to conform to this authoritative Word are they worthy of study. He was aware of the problems resulting from a teacher who did not anchor his doctrine in the Word. ". . . no little damage is done when one tries to be smart and clever without the Scriptures or beyond them"⁵ Luther's effectiveness as a Reformer is seen to lie in his subjection to the authority of Scripture. In describing what the relationship a theological professor should have with his students, Spener again pointed to the Scripture as the authority. "The professor would exercise no other authority over the consciences given into his care than, as one who is more experienced, to point out, on the basis of the sole authority of the Word of God, what his opinion in any given case may be."⁶ There is no room for authority outside of the Word of God in true Christianity.

The promotion of true piety must proceed from the Word according to Spener. He calls on "enlightened" men to consider "the practical implementation of salutary remedies which conform with the rule of the Word of God."⁷ Any views finding their sole support in human tradition

⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁵Ibid., p. 51.

⁶Ibid., p. 114.

⁷Ibid., p. 35.

and custom must not be promoted as incumbent upon Christian believers. Discussing the matter of drunkenness, Spener resists the idea that tradition or temperament somehow invalidates opposition to it,

. . . how is it that we pay so little attention to this sin of drunkenness and are hardly willing to consider it culpable unless it occurs frequently? What can we advance in defense of it except that it is an ancient inherited custom of Germans and Scandinavians which is abetted by the temperament of some of them? Are we to say, however, that this custom makes the Word of God of no effect?⁸

The authoritative Word of God must judge all the views of man whether in doctrine or conduct. Advancing true godliness in the theological schools must proceed on the basis of the "rules of conduct which we have from our dear Savior and his apostles."⁹ The Word of God is absolutely necessary in true Christianity. Spener quoted Erasmus Sarcerius to uphold his conviction in this regard, "Where the Word of God is neglected, real and true religion collapses."¹⁰

Because of the nature of the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, it is to be treated reverently. One must not trifle with or speak lightly of these sacred writings. Spener viewed with dismay conversation that tended to disregard the serious purpose of the Scriptures.

Unseemly talk, especially talk in which texts of the Bible, parts of hymns, and similar words are misused by twisting their meaning to evil purpose (whereby more harm is done than one may imagine, for godly persons are often disturbed in their devotions the rest of their lives whenever they come upon such words), should be averted and earnestly rebuked, not complacently tolerated.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 104.

He did not intend to put hymns or theological terms on a par with Scripture in his warning. The appeal is to reverence for the things of a truly spiritual nature. Because the hymnody and the terms arise out of the truths of Scripture, they are placed together in this context.

Efficacy

At the very outset of Pia Desideria, Spener acknowledges the fact that the Bible is more than a book of reliable information. There is a dynamic quality to the Scripture which produces results in the life of the recipient. Greeting the leaders and pastors of the Church, he desires among other things for them,

Blessing and success to observe with joy that the Word goes forth from God's mouth, as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, shall not return to God empty but shall accomplish that which he purposes and prosper in the things for which he sent it.¹²

The one who handles God's Word can be confident that God is at work whenever the Bible is used. This efficacy is not dependent upon the preacher and teacher. It is inherent in the Word itself. ". . . the Word does not receive its divine power from the person of the one who proclaims it but has this power in itself."¹³

The Holy Spirit is at work whenever the Word of God is used. The inseparability of Word and Spirit is consistently noted in Pia Desideria. Spener calls the Word of God "the divine hand which offers and presents grace to the believer, whom the Word itself awakens through the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ In describing the proper response to the Word, he

¹²Ibid., p. 30.

¹³Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 62.

declares, "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."¹⁵ Even though the Word is efficacious, it does not violate the will of man. Man is able to resist the Holy Spirit working through the Word. According to Spener, "the Word of God has the power, if it is not viciously impeded either by those who declare it or by those who hear it, to convert men's hearts."¹⁶ No opus operatum is suggested in Spener's discussion of Scripture's efficacy. Not the mere hearing of the Word produces the effects.

We cannot deny--on the contrary, daily experience convinces us-- that there are not a few who think that all that Christianity requires of them (and that having done this, they have done quite enough in their service of God) is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God's Word, confess and receive absolution, and go to the Lord's Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at the time whether or not there are fruits which follow, provided they at least live in such a way that the civil authorities do not find them liable to punishment.¹⁷

The outward performance is not enough. The heart of man must be allowed to be opened. Spener challenges his readers,

Again, you hear the Word of God. This is good. But it is not enough that your ears hear it. Do you let it penetrate inwardly into your heart and allow the heavenly food to be digested there, or does it go in one ear and out the other?¹⁸

Spener is convinced that if only men will cease their resistance to the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to call, enlighten, and sanctify, the renewal that he felt was needed would come. "This much is certain: the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 66.

diligent use of the Word of God, which consists not only of listening to sermons but also of reading, meditating, and discussing (Ps. 1:2), must be the chief means of reforming something."¹⁹ As the Word was the power of the Reformation, so it must be in the call for reform he was issuing, Spener maintained.

. . . it was one of the major purposes of the Reformation to restore to the people the Word of God which had lain hidden under the bench (and this Word was the most powerful means by which God blessed his work). So this will be the principal means, now that the Church must be put in better condition, whereby the aversion to Scripture which many have may be overcome, neglect of its study be counteracted, and ardent zeal for it awakened.²⁰

It was because of this confidence in the productive nature of the Scriptures that Spener called for reading and study of the Bible on all levels--by the individual, the family together, the congregation in worship services, and in small group meetings.²¹ He was sure that this would result in edification for all participating. In fact, to the degree that one exposed himself to the Word of God, to that degree would he be enriched in his spiritual life. "The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith, and its fruits."²² In large part, the very heart of the early Pietist movement can be traced to this renewed emphasis on a more extensive use of God's Word, not primarily as a polemical weapon but as the source of true spiritual life to all who would simply receive it by faith. Confident in the ability of the Word to produce positive results, this appeal went forth.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

²² Ibid., p. 87.

The Sacraments

Pia Desideria was not written in a vacuum. There were definite convictions held by Spener relative to the conditions of the Church. His purpose was to deal with those aspects of Christian truth which related to the problems he saw and the answers he suggested. Thus, one does not find in Pia Desideria a complete definition of his position on any one truth. The closest he comes to a full presentation would be in the doctrine of sanctification itself. Only as he believes other doctrines relate to it and to the degree that they do, are they given treatment. This accounts for his heavy emphasis on the Word as the pre-eminent means of grace. This also helps to clarify why the sacraments are discussed in the way they are. Frankly, he felt that the misuse of the sacraments was part of the problem in the dearth of true spiritual life. Therefore, the overall impression one receives is that great care must be exercised in the administration and reception of the sacraments.

Early in the Pia Desideria, Spener points to the Word and sacraments as the one great hope for renewal in the Church. As he notes the lack of truly "living" Christianity, he rejoices in the fact that "in his inexhaustible goodness God has not taken away his Word and holy sacraments."²³ This fact gives Spener the courage and optimism to face the problems as they are and to prescribe the remedy in that very Word and sacraments.

Already having faced verbal assault regarding his Lutheran orthodoxy, Spener felt compelled initially to present his own position

²³Ibid., p. 42.

relative to the sacraments. His confession regarding Baptism is clear.

Nor do I know how to praise Baptism and its power highly enough. I believe that it is the real "washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5), or as Luther says in the Catechism, "it effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants" (not merely promises) "eternal salvation."²⁴

No orthodox Lutheran would quarrel with this testimony.

Likewise, Spener's presentation of what the Lord's Supper means to him would square with the finest orthodox statement.

Not less gladly do I acknowledge the glorious power in the sacramental, oral, and not merely spiritual eating and drinking of the body and blood of the Lord in the Holy Supper. On this account I heartily reject the position of the Reformed when they deny that we receive such a pledge of our salvation in, with, and under the bread and wine, when they weaken its power, and when they see in it no more than exists outside the holy sacrament in spiritual eating and drinking.²⁵

Herein the meaning and efficacy of the sacrament are clearly and concisely confessed. The Real Presence of Christ is held without question. According to Dorner, Spener went beyond the Orthodox Lutherans in his high evaluation of the Lord's Supper. He reports that Spener believed that this sacrament was "the chief means by which we are to be made partakers of the Divine nature."²⁶ He observes that the theologians at Wittenberg found this view to be not in harmony with "the genuine Lutheran spirit" and that they replied, ". . . the Lord's Supper is indeed a precious treasure, but by no means to be placed before the Word

²⁴Ibid., p. 63.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 222.

or baptism.²⁷ In the Pia Desideria, as has been noted, the Lord's Supper is highly appreciated, but it is not elevated above the Word, at least in emphasis. The Word appears as the chief means of grace with Baptism and the Lord's Supper finding their efficacy and value in their relationship to that Word.

Aside from the affirmations of orthodoxy relative to the sacraments already noted, the remainder of the references to them in Pia Desideria centers around an attempt to correct what Spener considers is a widespread misunderstanding of the proper response to them. He desires to show that the focus of the sacraments is upon the "inner man."

Nor is it enough to be baptized, but the inner man, where we have put on Christ in Baptism, must also keep Christ on and bear witness to him in our outward life. Nor is it enough to have received the Lord's Supper externally, but the inner man must truly be fed with that blessed food.²⁸

Spener is striking out at that attitude which contents itself in the mere external reception of the elements with no reference to the condition of the soul. Met with faith, the sacraments must produce a definite difference in the inward and outward character of a person. If there is no change, this is the signal that faith is absent. For Spener, positive fruits would be the result of the believer's meeting with God in Word and sacraments.

Of real concern for Spener was the possibility of a drift back to the Roman notion of opus operatum wherein the response of a true faith was omitted from the basic components of God's dealings in the sacraments.

²⁷Dorner, p. 222.

²⁸Spener, p. 117.

It is important to bear in mind Spener's qualification of the term, faith. As previously observed, true faith is God's work in an individual which never remains static but is in the words of Luther, "a living busy, active, mighty thing, this faith."²⁹ With this understanding, Spener grieved because he believed there were many who contented themselves with a merely formal observance of the sacraments and were not at all concerned about godliness in their lives. This attitude did not typify what Spener thought would be the fruit of genuine faith-encounter with God in Word and sacraments. It only confirmed for him that the Roman idea of opus operatum was gaining a foothold in the Lutheran church.

The same is the case with the Lord's Supper. There are extraordinarily many people who think only of discharging this holy work and of how often they do it. But they hardly consider whether their spiritual life may be strengthened thereby, whether they proclaim the Lord's death with their hearts, lips, and life, whether the Lord works in and rules over them or they have left the old Adam on the throne. This can only mean that the dangerous error of the opus operatum, for which we condemn the papists, has in some measure been reintroduced without our really being aware of it.³⁰

The blame for such an intrusion was not to be directed toward the Lutheran confessions. Rather, Spener says, it is "the wickedness of men and the craftiness of the devil which seek to make of the divine means of grace occasions for greater security and accordingly of greater condemnation."³¹ It was Spener's conviction that the foundations of the Lutheran church were solid. "Although our Evangelical Lutheran church is a true church and is pure in its teaching, it is

²⁹Ibid., p. 65.

³⁰Ibid., p. 67.

³¹Ibid.

in such a condition, unfortunately, that we behold its outward form with sorrowful eyes."³²

Another concern of Spener's relative to the sacraments involved the continuance of a person in the grace of Baptism. Though the initial reception of this grace may have been true, yet there was no guarantee that all would be well spiritually for the one who did not continue to walk in faith. There was no eternal security in Baptism, in Spener's opinion. Yet, he believed he detected this erroneous idea on the part of many in the church.

Thereby these blind people turn the holy intention of God upside down. Your God has indeed given you Baptism, and you may be baptized only once. But he has made a covenant with you--from his side a covenant of grace and from your side a covenant of faith and a good conscience. This covenant must last through your whole life. It will be in vain that you comfort yourself in your Baptism and its promise of grace and salvation if for your part you do not also remain in the covenant of faith and a good conscience or, having departed therefrom, return to it with sincere repentance. Accordingly if your Baptism is to benefit you; it must remain in constant use throughout your life.³³

It is evident that Spener sees the wrong understanding of the sacraments as a real hindrance to true spiritual life. He wants to affirm his belief in their efficacy and yet, he fears that the essential element of faith is either overlooked or not comprehended. Because of this apprehension, he appears at first glance as negative toward the sacraments. It has been noted, however, that he did appreciate them very highly. His burden in this context was to speak to the matter of their abuse.

³²ibid.

³³ibid., p. 66.

The Role of Preaching

It is to preachers and to prospective preachers that Pia Desideria is largely directed. Spener saw the Christian ministry as possessing tremendous potential for spiritual blessing. He believed that preachers bear the biggest burden in renewal of the Church. Because of this, he said "it is of the utmost importance that the office of the ministry be occupied by men who, above all, are themselves true Christians and, then, have the divine wisdom to guide others carefully on the way of the Lord."³⁴ Not only is the potential for blessing great but also, the serious concern of Spener is that a minister can be a major hindrance to the advancement of true Christianity. He believed it was very distressing that the lives of many preachers and "the absence in them of the fruits of faith indicate that they are themselves wanting in faith."³⁵ He grieved that many people, looking at these preachers' examples, would fail to discern that what they observed was not the practice of true Christianity. For this reason he was convinced that "we preachers in our estate need reformation as much as any estate can ever need it."³⁶ He believed, in fact, that the reformation he called for must begin with the clergy.

Spener had two expectations regarding the preaching of the Word of God: the salvation of sinners and the edification of believers. Dismissing the view that the pulpit is a place to display one's skill as

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

an orator, he said, "Preaching should be the divine means to save the people, and so it is proper that everything be directed to this end."³⁷ Preaching is a means only insofar as it is a proclamation of the Word of God.

The second major purpose of preaching is the edification of the believer. Spener believed that there were some preachers who had forgotten their mission. Concerning these preachers he said, "They can hardly be kept from taking to market what gives them the most pleasure, and they generally concentrate on something that is not very edifying to their hearers who are seeking salvation."³⁸ Among the matters of little benefit for Spener was the concentration on religious disputation.

At the very center of a pastor's call to serve a congregation was the responsibility to foster true spiritual life, according to Spener. He did place responsibility upon the laity also to discern how the congregation could be helped but there was no question in his mind that the pastor must not evade this task. "It is beyond dispute that every preacher is called to do just this" (promote true spiritual life).³⁹ In the training of future ministers Spener was concerned that the men be taught that sermons should have in view the edification of the congregation. He felt it should be pointed out that "everything in their [the students] sermons should have edification as the goal."⁴⁰ His sixth proposal for renewal of the Christian Church was "that sermons be so

³⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

prepared by all that their purpose (faith and its fruits) may be achieved in the hearers to the greatest possible degree."⁴¹

Preaching to the end that believers be edified is accomplished in the context of both Law and Gospel, Spener contended. The believer must be awakened to his need for daily repentance lest there be a slipping into a false security in which, for example, there would exist the error of opus operatum regarding the means of grace. For this reason, the preacher "ought to protest more diligently against such security and false notions in order to open the eyes of the people, for many could thus be awakened out of their sleep and snatched from destruction."⁴² The role of preaching thus is viewed in terms of arousing believers to their need to base their salvation on nothing else than Christ and His finished redemption at Calvary's cross. However, this awakening by the Law only prepares for spiritual growth. It makes possible the application of the Gospel promises which deepen the walk in fellowship with God.

While assigning great importance to preaching, Spener thought that more could and should be done in the deepening of spiritual life in the congregation. Whatever would result in a more extensive use of the Scriptures was promoted. Because he believed that the Word of God was such a mighty means of grace, his concentration was on its wider application.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Spener makes constant reference to the Holy Spirit in Pia Desideria. He sees the Holy Spirit as inseparable from any discussion or realization of true spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is always actively working through the means of grace. One cannot speak of the Spirit's ministry apart from the Word and sacraments as He works in the Church today. Spener shows clearly that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures to be written is the One who applies them effectually to the believing heart.⁴³ Though this was assented to by the orthodox party, Dorner holds that it was not stressed as it was by the Reformers. He says, "We cannot but hail, on the part of Spener, the re-discovery of that original fountain of life (the work of the Holy Spirit) unclosed by the Reformation, but again choked up by so-called orthodoxy."⁴⁴ The alleged neglect of the work of the Holy Spirit was evidence for Dorner of serious deficiency in spiritual life.

It is nowhere more clearly manifested than here how the original lively feeling for the divine had gradually dried up in the so-called orthodox party; orthodoxy had so accustomed itself to deal purely with second causes that every mention of the continuous and vital agency of the Holy Spirit seemed exaggerated, incredible, nay, fraught with danger to the Church. It shows to what a feeble state the religious pulse had fallen, in the theology of the day, that the doctrine of the active operation of the Holy Ghost should have become strange and incredible . . . In this respect, then, Spener reopens the living fountains of primitive Christianity and of the Reformation.⁴⁵

Though Dorner aligns Spener's treatment of the Holy Spirit with the Reformation, a difference in focus is observed by Smeaton.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 71, 77, 46, 90 and 117.

⁴⁴Dorner, p. 215.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 213-214.

The previous theology represented by Melancthon, Chemnitz, Gerhard, and others, had spoken of the Spirit's work in the order of salvation. Spener's constant reference to the Holy Spirit's operations introduced into theology a new set of terms. The operations of the Spirit came to be reduced under different heads, or classified in a new way. And the theologians who had spoken in a vague, general way on the work of the Spirit in the order of salvation, were under the necessity of explaining themselves in reference to the Holy Spirit as a topic which now required to be treated independently, and in reference to Biblical terms such as calling, conversion, repentance, illumination, regeneration, renewing, holiness, which could no longer be fused together as having no distinct or separate significance, and as all meaning one and the same thing. The union to Christ effected by the Spirit and the personal inhabitation of the Spirit, had to be treated in a different way.⁴⁶

While some might question whether the orthodox theologians were indeed "vague," it is evident that Spener did discuss the order of salvation in separate stages. The Holy Spirit was viewed as definitely at work in each aspect. This was no immediate operation of the Spirit but His working through the means of grace.

One of the facets of the Holy Spirit's work in an individual was enlightenment or illumination. It was the Holy Spirit who not only convinced of sin as the Law was brought to bear but also He made clear the Gospel promises and effectually applied them to the believing heart. In introducing his analysis of the spiritual condition of the Church, Spener remarked,

Let us therefore be diligent in investigating ever more deeply our own shortcomings and those of the rest of the church in order that we may learn to know our sicknesses, and then with a fervent invocation of God for the light of His Spirit let us also search for and ponder over the remedies.⁴⁷

It is one thing to be awakened to one's needs and even to be aware that there is help available. This realization, however, may not necessarily

⁴⁶George Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), pp. 372-373.

⁴⁷Spener, p. 37.

signal any concern about it. This is why Spener spoke of the Holy Spirit's work in producing repentance in distinction from enlightenment. Repentance in his understanding meant a definite change of heart and mind regarding sin. When repentance was true, one could no longer live comfortably in the former life of deliberate or willful sin. The Holy Spirit would not continue to dwell in the life of one who lived in habitual sin no matter how correct one might be in the content of his belief. Spener quoted Abraham Calov to support his convictions in this regard--"Whoever is addicted to sins, therefore, cannot become a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁸ The words of Johann Gerhard were also recalled by Spener,

Those who are wanting in love of Christ and who neglect the practice of piety do not obtain the fuller knowledge of Christ and more abundant gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence to obtain a genuine, living, active, and salutary knowledge of divine things it is not enough to read and search the Scriptures, but it is necessary that love of Christ be added, that is, that one beware of sins against conscience, by which an obstacle is raised against the Holy Spirit, and that one earnestly cultivate piety.⁴⁹

It is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit to the extent that He departs the life of the believer even though that person may retain the semblance of orthodox faith. Willful continuance in sin with no repentance evidenced is the obstacle to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is true also for the unconverted person who may be awakened and aware of potential salvation but has not allowed the Holy Spirit to produce the godly sorrow leading to repentance.

Inseparable from true repentance and yet distinct in terms of focus or direction in Spener's system is saving faith. The Holy Spirit

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

is the One who makes clear to a person what the nature of true faith is. This He does through the Scriptures. Believing that there were those occupying pulpits who did not know the meaning of true faith, Spener said,

What they take to be faith and what is the ground of their teaching is by no means that true faith which is awakened through the Word of God, by the illumination, witness, and sealing of the Holy Spirit, but is a human fancy. To be sure, as others have acquired knowledge in their fields of study, so these preachers, with their own human efforts and without the working of the Holy Spirit, have learned something of the letter of the Scriptures, have comprehended and assented to true doctrine, and have even known how to preach it to others, but they are altogether unacquainted with the true, heavenly light and the life of faith.⁵⁰

Intellectual assent to Christian doctrine was not equivalent to saving faith in Spener's presentation. The Holy Spirit is the bestower of this true faith. Spener is clear in saying that "godly faith does not exist without the Holy Spirit, nor can such faith continue when deliberate sins prevail."⁵¹ The entire order of salvation is attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit in the writing of Spener. Thus, he can greet the readers of Pia Desideria: "To all who seek the Lord: grace, light, and salvation from God our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit."⁵²

The Holy Spirit's work continues in the life of the believer in the process of sanctification. In reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the early Church, Spener says, "It is the same Holy Spirit who is bestowed on us by God who once effected all things in

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 64.

⁵² Ibid., p. 39.

the early Christians, and he is neither less able nor less active today to accomplish the work of sanctification in us."⁵³

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is described as an "anointing." This anointing is placed in the context of service. Speaking of Luther's description of the priesthood of all believers, Spener credits him with saying that "not only ministers but all Christians are made priests by their Savior, are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and are dedicated to perform spiritual-priestly acts."⁵⁴

While wholeheartedly concurring with Luther in his stress on each believer's role as a priest, particularly in contrast to the Roman notion of two estates, spiritual and secular, like Luther, Spener also saw the Scriptural basis of and need for the office of the Christian ministry. In his concern to suggest helps by which the theological schools could experience renewal, he refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit several times. He speaks of the theological school as a "workshop of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁵ He believed students of theology should be instructed and preserved by the Holy Spirit. He felt it was possible to be students of what may be called "a philosophy of sacred things" but not true students of theology. The latter, he said, are "instructed and will be preserved only in the light of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁶ They will be pastors who, rather than depending on their own native abilities, realize the need to rely on the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Commenting

⁵³Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 92.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 107.

on 1 Cor. 2:4-5, Spener says of Paul, "This means that he derived his knowledge not from human ingenuity but from the illumination of the Spirit, and these are as far removed from each other as heaven is from earth."⁵⁷ In this case, "illumination" is not being referred to as enlightenment but rather as enablement.

It was difficult for Spener to relate the work of the Holy Spirit to the manner in which many of the religious disputations were carried on. While seeing a place for apologetics, he felt constrained to say, "How often the disputants themselves are persons without the Spirit and faith, filled with carnal wisdom from the Scriptures, but not instructed by God."⁵⁸ The Holy Spirit must be the interpreter of the Scriptures. Without His help, "carnal wisdom" is all that can be expected to result.

The many references to the Holy Spirit in Pia Desideria illustrate the importance Spener attached to His work in bringing people to repentance and faith and then preserving them in Christ. Without His ministry, one might go through the motions of Christianity but there would be no true spiritual life.

The Priesthood of Believers

One of the great contributions of the Reformation was the fresh enunciation of the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Luther, in his study of the New Testament, had come to believe that the Christian Church is undivided and without distinctions. He said it is made up of people,

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 100.

. . . among whom there is to be no layman, no cleric, no monk, no nun--no differences at all, all being married or celibate as each one pleased. There is also no essential difference between bishops, elders, and priests on the one hand and laymen on the other.⁵⁹

Luther, of course, spoke out against the backdrop of what he considered a wide cleavage between priest and people, the sacred and secular estates, in the Roman Church. He did not belittle the office of Christian ministry but tried to put it into its proper perspective. He believed it existed to serve the congregation and was dependent for its existence on the congregation, not vice versa.

Spener was not resurrecting an old controversy between Lutherans and Catholics in his stress on the priesthood of all believers. He believed that many of the orthodox Lutherans had drifted away from the actualization of the common priesthood in regular church life. It was not a matter of denying its truthfulness but rather failing to apply it. In his emphasis, Spener believed he was being true to the Scriptures first of all in this regard, and secondly, true to Reformation Lutheranism. After proposing the "establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood" as one of his spiritual correctives, he remarks,

Nobody can read Luther's writings with some care without observing how earnestly the sainted man advocated this spiritual priesthood according to which not only ministers but all Christians are made priests by their Savior, are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and are dedicated to perform spiritual-priestly acts. Peter was not addressing preachers alone when he wrote, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."⁶⁰

⁵⁹Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament II, vol. 36 of Luther's Works, Abdel Ross Wentz, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 139.

⁶⁰Spener, pp. 92-93.

Spener considered Luther's stress on this matter as highly significant in his refutation of Roman error. Indeed, he goes so far as to say, "The papacy could suffer no greater injury than having Luther point out that all Christians have been called to exercise spiritual functions."⁶¹

It is in the area of Christian growth that Spener sees the matter of the priesthood of all believers as of great importance. Not only will the individual exercising his spiritual gifts prosper but he will benefit fellow believers. Nichols comments,

Spener revived the Reformation doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, and showed that one of its practical meanings was that laymen should enter into religious service, teaching and helping one another.⁶²

Spener believed that the need of teaching and helping one another was crucial in the matter of sanctification. The fellowship of the saints for the purpose of edification is a prominent stress in Pia Desideria.

Believing that the Church was more organism than organization, Spener spoke of it as "the precious spiritual body of Christ."⁶³ Every Christian is a part of that body and is valuable in his relationship to the rest of the members of the body.

One of the first developments in the concern for believers to "teach and help one another" was the emergence of the collegia pietatis. These small-group meetings were not to be a substitute for the regular preaching services but were to serve as a supplement. Spener described what he had in mind in terms of 1 Cor. 14:26-40.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 93-94.

⁶² James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 100.

⁶³ Spener, p. 31.

One person would not rise to preach (although this practice would be continued at other times), but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would also speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgment of the rest, doing all this in such a way as to avoid disorder and strife. This might conveniently be done by having several ministers (in places where a number of them live in a town) meet together or by having several members of a congregation who have a fair knowledge of God or desire to increase their knowledge meet under the leadership of a minister, take up the Holy Scriptures, read aloud from them, and fraternally discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all. Anybody who is not satisfied with his understanding of a matter should be permitted to express his doubts and seek further explanation. On the other hand, those (including the ministers) who have made more progress should be allowed the freedom to state how they understand each passage. Then all that has been contributed, insofar as it accords with the sense of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, should be carefully considered by the rest, especially by the ordained ministers, and applied to the edification of the whole meeting. Everything should be arranged with an eye to the glory of God, to the spiritual growth of the participants, and therefore also to their limitations. Any threat of meddlesomeness, quarrelsomeness, self-seeking, or something else of this sort should be guarded against and tactfully cut off especially by the preachers who retain leadership in these meetings.⁶⁴

The spiritual edification of fellow believers is the repeated purpose of the collegia pietatis. Spener was aware of pitfalls that might make these gatherings do more harm than good. Therefore he urges that ordained clergy not only should be present at such meetings but also exercise leadership and control at all times. He demonstrates confidence in the clergy in such a position. Anti-clericalism is not the position of Spener. What he is seeking, however, in the collegia pietatis is an "opening up" by the laity. He is urging a mutual sharing of the Word to the spiritual progress of all participants. He is asking his fellow pastors to allow, encourage and guide such fellowship meetings.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Great blessing was envisioned by Spener as a result of the collegia pietatis. He was convinced that these gatherings would help pastors to know the members of their congregation better. The pastor would have greater awareness of the spiritual growth or lack of it among his people. Also a deeper bond of confidence would be promoted between pastor and people. Above all, there would be edification of the believers. Spener remarked, "In a short time they [the participants] would experience personal growth and would also become capable of giving better religious instruction to their children and servants at home."⁶⁵ At the very center of these gatherings must always be the Word of God. Spener sees no profit in meeting to share opinions and experiences without the Scripture as the foundation.

The collegia pietatis was not the sum total of Spener's proposal for spiritual renewal and progress in the Church. Neither was the "small-group fellowship" idea set forth as the way but rather, as a way to deepen spiritual life. A repeated emphasis of Spener is on the helpfulness of good literature in stimulating and developing believers in their walk with God. Indeed, the publishing of Pia Desideria had, according to Spener, this as a central objective. Speaking of the Pia Desideria, he says,

They have no other purpose than to be edifying--if not to many, then at least to a few. If nothing else is accomplished, it is hoped that through these pages other enlightened men, who are more highly endowed by God, may be encouraged earnestly to undertake this most important work of advancing true godliness.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 35.

Pia Desideria, as has been noted, was originally a preface to a new edition of sermons by John Arndt. Spener cannot say enough about the blessing he has received from Arndt's writing and he is confident that new readers will experience the same. "I have no doubt," he says, "that the Christian reader will have abundant pleasure in the present edition and that in his use of it he will be able, with God's grace, to edify himself magnificently."⁶⁷

Spener mentions several other books that he believes will deepen spiritual life. In observing with what high esteem Luther held the Theologia Germanica and the writings of John Tauler, he even goes as far as to say that next to the Scriptures, these writings "probably made our dear Luther what he was."⁶⁸ In reference to Theologia Germanica, Luther is quoted as saying, "No book except the Bible and St. Augustine has come to my attention from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things."⁶⁹ Stemming largely from such a testimonial, Arndt arranged for the republishing of Theologia Germanica, Spener reports, "in the interest of edification."⁷⁰

It is the conviction of Spener that one of the essentials if believers would edify each other is the application of Christ-like love. He recognizes that "love is the whole life of the man who has faith and who through faith is saved, and his fulfillment of the laws of God

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

consists of love."⁷¹ The great appeal of Spener is for an application of Christian love for one another.

If we can therefore awaken a fervent love among our Christians, first toward one another and then toward all men (for these two, brotherly affection and general love, must supplement each other according to 2 Peter 1:7), and put this love into practice, practically all that we desire will be accomplished.⁷²

Though formal church discipline is not presented as distinct proposal in Pia Desideria, Spener believes love sometimes manifests itself in rebuking and correcting an erring brother. Out of consideration for the fellow believer's spiritual welfare, one cannot remain silent in the face of manifest sin. Also the testimony of the local church will be blunted by allowing open sin to continue within the membership. Speaking not as a Donatist, Spener comments,

We do not understand the perfection which we demand of the church in such a way that not a single hypocrite is any longer to be found in it, for we know that there is no field of grain in which there are no weeds. What we mean is that the church should be free of manifest offenses, that nobody who is afflicted with such failings should be allowed to remain in the church without fitting reproof and ultimate exclusion."⁷³

The early Christians are cited by Spener as worthy models for present-day believers to observe closely in this regard. He pointed out that the early Church "gave evidence that it did not tolerate the sins of its members but that it deterred others from sinning and reformed those who had fallen."⁷⁴ It is this desired reformation or repentance of the erring brother that is the highest concern of those involved in exercising the discipline, either formally or informally.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 96.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p. 81.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 83.

The very best situation that could exist in the fellowship of the congregation, according to Spener, would be for ongoing relationships to be maintained where believers would confess their faults to one another and examine each other in the light of God's Word as to their progress spiritually. This would be no organized effort but would arise out of loving concern for each other's welfare.

. . . for the sake of Christian growth in general, it may be useful if those who have earnestly resolved to walk in the way of the Lord would enter into a confidential relationship with their confessor or some other judicious and enlightened Christian and would regularly report to him how they live, what opportunities they have had to practice Christian love, and how they have employed or neglected them.⁷⁵

A similar situation would be of great help in the training of men for the Christian ministry, Spener believed. In an informal setting, smaller groups of students could regularly meet with their professor. Besides a devotional study of the Scripture, such meetings could include mutual exhortation, encouragement and confession of faults. Speaking of the students, Spener remarks,

They should also come to a mutual agreement to keep an eye on one another and with brotherly admonitions suitable thereto, see how one or another may accommodate himself. In fact, they ought to give an account to one another and to their professor of how, in this or that situation, they have acquitted themselves in the light of the given rules.⁷⁶

The "given rules" Spener has in mind refer to the Word of God. It is in the light of God's Word that any examination must take place and on its authority alone that exhortation and consolation are offered.

Spener was sure that his proposed measures are based on the Word of God and will result in spiritual renewal within the Church if

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 113-114.

applied. The consistent application of the Word of God and the realization and practice of the priesthood of believers is at the heart of Spener's answer to what he believed was spiritual inertia in the church. He said,

As for me, I am very confident that if several persons in each congregation can be won for these two activities (a diligent use of the Word of God and a practice of priestly duties), together with such other things as, especially, fraternal admonition and chastisement . . . a great deal would be gained and accomplished. Afterwards more and more would be achieved and finally the church would be visibly reformed.⁷⁷

In Spener's estimation, the reformation and renewal of the Church was vital not only for the sake of its own members themselves, but also for the sake of the world outside. A revived Church will make a positive impact in the area of evangelism. As believers minister to one another for each other's edification, this will be a means of attracting others to Christ, Spener believed. He believed that the growing Christian is a "shining example to others."⁷⁸ He believed that as spiritual progress was taking place, "by God's grace we may also gradually attract those who at present seem to be lost in order that they too, may finally be won."⁷⁹ It may be observed at this point that the best elements of the Pietistic movement had a deep interest in evangelism. A great missionary enterprise was begun at the school of Spener and Francke in Halle which spread to many parts of the world.⁸⁰ True edification should result in a definite concern to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 37.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Nichols, pp. 83-85.

CHAPTER VII

THE EFFECT AND MOTIVATION OF SANCTIFICATION

What evidences will there be that growth in sanctification is occurring in the life of a believer? How will this progress manifest itself? On the one hand, Spener urged that the work that God is doing is not always detectable. He would encourage pastors and all Christians that though one may not discern spiritual development, yet it is incumbent to be faithful in one's ministry of the Word.

Let us not abandon all hope before we have set our hands to the task. Let us not lay down our rod and staff if we do not have the desired success at once. What is impossible for men remains possible for God. Eventually God's hour must come, if only we wait for it. Our fruit, like other fruit, must be borne in patience, and the fruit in others must be cultivated by us with perseverance. The work of the Lord is accomplished in wondrous ways, even as he is Himself wonderful. For this reason his work is done in complete secrecy, yet all the more surely, provided we do not relax our efforts. If God does not give you the pleasure of seeing the result of your work quickly, perhaps he intends to hide it from you, lest you become too proud of it. Seeds are there, and you may think they are unproductive, but do your part in watering them, and ears will surely sprout and in time become ripe.¹

In such counsel, strong confidence is placed in the power of the Word of God to produce the fruit. Whether one sees the results or not, they are surely there or will be there sooner or later.

¹Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 37-38.

The Effect of Sanctification

The focus placed by Spener as evidence of God's work in an individual is upon his ethical character. Not what a person knows is determinative but what he is. One of the proposals in Pia Desideria was that "it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice."² Not what a person says but what he does is a better indicator of the presence of spiritual life. Men training for the Christian ministry must be fully conscious of this factor in their own personal walk with God, Spener insists. He envisions these young men, prospering under the Word of God in the classroom, as those who will "take pains to do rather than to teach."³ He does not mean to belittle teaching but rather to elevate personal Christian conduct to a greater level of appreciation and importance.

True faith always results in a changed life, according to Spener. Pinson comments that in Spener's understanding, faith and good works "are related to each other as are the rays of the sun; one is inconceivable without the other."⁴ A false faith is discerned by the absence of Christian fruits. Spener quotes Luther in this matter, "But it is a human imagination and idea that never reaches the depths of the heart, and so nothing comes of it and no betterment follows it."⁵

²Spener, p. 95.

³Ibid., p. 114.

⁴Koppel Shub Pinson, Pietism As A Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), p. 16.

⁵Spener, p. 64.

In his analysis of the spiritual conditions of German society in his day, and speaking specifically of the political leaders, he remarks, "From their manner of life one must conclude with sighs that few of them know what Christianity is, to say nothing of their being Christians and practicing the Christian life."⁶ While one will not see all that God may be doing in another person's life, yet, a consistent, deliberate walk in sinful conduct with no repentance shown, is clearly at odds with the biblical picture of the Christian life, in Spener's understanding. Moreover, the absence of positive Christian traits in an individual's life is also a signal that one's relationship to God is not what it should be. Spener lamented the fact that the order had been reversed among some of his contemporaries, ". . . we judge who are good and who are evil, not according to their life but according to their doctrinal agreement or disagreement with us."⁷ This was not to under-rate the importance of sound doctrine in Spener's thinking. It was simply to acknowledge with the Apostle James that ". . . faith without works is dead" (James 2:20b). It is God's Word received and applied by the Holy Spirit that inevitably results in a definite, though gradual, difference in one's life.

What changes should be occurring in the life of the one in whom the Holy Spirit is working through the Word? It was Spener's conviction that the emphasis in any discussion of the fruits of sanctification should be on what he termed the "inner man." The "outward man," the observable conduct of a person, is but a reflection of the inner man.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 49.

One's conduct may conform to an accepted pattern of Christian behavior and yet, one may be woefully devoid of true spiritual life. For this reason, Spener warned,

. . . we may by no means be content merely to have the people refrain from outward vices and practice outward virtues and thus be concerned only with the outward man, which the ethics of the heathen can also accomplish, but that we lay the right foundation in the heart, show that what does not proceed from this foundation is mere hypocrisy, and hence accustom the people first to work on what is inward (awaken love of God and neighbor through suitable means) and only then to act accordingly.⁸

One of the recurring themes, therefore, in Pia Desideria regarding the inward man and the traits it should bear, is love for God. It is love for God which causes one to desire to hallow his name, extend his kingdom, and do his will. Spener terms such persons "godly people."⁹ They are the sort who grieve over any decline in spiritual life. They sorrow because they love God and want His desires to be realized on earth as they are in Heaven. It is love of God that causes a person to be willing to die physically if need be. In noting the example of the early Christians, Spener observed, "What an ardent love of God it was that caused Christians to hasten toward the most horrible martyrdom rather than be terrified by it when confession of their dear Savior was at stake!"¹⁰ Love for God because of His initial love for mankind must be a prime mark in a true Christian. Without this Holy Spirit-wrought response, all other "evidences" are spurious.

Love for God will mean love for His Church, Spener maintained. Indeed, love for fellow-believers is hailed as a definite indication

⁸Ibid., pp. 116, 117.

⁹Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 84.

of a true believer. Commenting on John 13:35 ("By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another") Spener explained "Here love is considered the distinguishing mark, and this is not merely a pretended love that is hugged to one's heart in unfruitful embrace but a love that manifests itself openly."¹¹ Characteristically, Spener finds a model in the early Christian Church, "How fervent was the love among themselves when they not only called one another by the endearing names of 'brother' and 'sister' but also lived in such a fraternal fashion that they were ready, if need be, to die for one another."¹²

Genuine love for fellow-believers results in concern for their spiritual and physical welfare, Spener believed. A desire to help each other grow in faith and its fruits should be the norm. Noting the provision in the Old Testament for meeting material needs, Spener, on the basis of mercy received in Christ, says the Christian is obligated,

. . . when the need of a neighbor demands it, to be ready to give not less but more and, in fact, all that we possess. That this does not happen, and that the charity of most of the people who mean to be benevolent almost never goes beyond contributing "out of their abundance" (Mark 12:44), is a rather clear indication that we are so far from a sincere practice of real brotherly love that we can hardly believe what it requires.¹³

Love for the Church was not confined to fellow Lutherans as far as Spener was concerned. He felt that some of his Lutheran contemporaries were in danger of adopting such a position. "To tolerate adherents of another religion," he wrote, "is not only not opposed to

¹¹Ibid., p. 57.

¹²Ibid., p. 84.

¹³Ibid., p. 62.

universal love nor to the duties of the regent, but is far more so in accord with both . . . where one sees a fellow Christian filled with sincere love of God, he is to deal kindly with him even though he is of another church."¹⁴

Love for one's fellow-believer does not close its eyes to doctrinal deviation, however. Spener's real aim in protesting the religious disputations was not doctrinal indifference but rather the spirit in which many of these discussions were held. Disputation for demonstrating one's knowledge or one's eloquence with little or no regard for the recovery of the erring was unworthy of one who confessed to be a Christian. Where one's efforts should be concentrated in his concern for pure doctrine is in an on-going ministry of the Word in the congregation. Spener comments, "We must first take pains to strengthen and confirm ourselves, our friends, and other fellow believers in the known truth and to protect them with great care from every kind of seduction."¹⁵ It is this preventative "medicine" that helps to avoid situations in which one must seek to restore. However, it is inevitable that some will wander from the faith because of the deceitfulness of the flesh and the wiles of the devil. In such cases, Spener advises as to the motions of Christian love and concern for them,

We owe it to the erring, first of all, to pray earnestly that the good God may enlighten them with the same light with which he blessed us, may lead them to the truth, may prepare their hearts for it or, having counteracted their dangerous errors, may reinforce what true knowledge of salvation in Christ they still have left in order that they may be saved as a brand plucked from the fire. This is the meaning of the first three petitions of the

¹⁴Pinson, p. 82.

¹⁵Spener, p. 97.

Lord's Prayer, that God may hallow his name in them, bring his kingdom to them, and accomplish his gracious will in, and for them.¹⁶

Having prayed for the erring, one should be mindful of setting a good example by one's manner of life that one's conduct would not tend to deny or undermine the truth one is setting forth. Then, as God gives opportunity and ability, the believer should present the truth to the erring and indicate "decently but forcefully how their errors conflict with the Word of God and what dangers they carry in their wake."¹⁷ The vigorous refutation is done out of love for God and for His Church.

A third direction of the love of God as manifested in the life of the Christian is toward one's neighbor. One's neighbor in this respect encompassed the world or all who stand in need. Paraphrasing the "Golden Rule," Spener declared, "we must do everything for our neighbor which we expect others to do for us."¹⁸ He grieved that the words of God to the effect that one should love his neighbor as himself were little pondered.¹⁹

There is no one excluded in Christ-like love for neighbor, Spener believed.

If only we Evangelicals would make it our serious business to offer God the fruits of his truth in fervent love, conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling, and show this in recognizable and unalloyed love of our neighbors, including those who are heretics . . .²⁰

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 97-98.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 102.

Christ's love manifested in the life of the believer would accomplish much toward winning of the erring and lost back to Christ, Spener contended. Indeed, herein lies the effective "formula" in the ongoing mission of the Church. He points to the early Christian church as illustrative of the influence Christ's love really has.²¹

When one's interest and concern centers on oneself, this is indicative to Spener that the spiritual life of an individual is at a very low ebb if there is indeed any life at all.²² Rather, there is to be expected of the Christian a denial of his own selfish ambitions in favor of building and extending the Kingdom of God. Addressing himself to the professors who train ministers, he envisions great gain

. . . if they [the professors] would conduct themselves as men who have died unto the world, in everything would seek not their own glory, gain or pleasure but rather the glory of their God and the salvation of those entrusted to them.²³

Speaking to his fellow pastors, he suggests that the examination of one's life on the Day of Judgment will include whether one really sought to deny oneself, take up the cross, and follow Christ.²⁴ Not forgotten in the call to self-denial are the ministerial students of whom Spener remarked, "Surely, students of theology ought to lay this foundation, that during their early years of study they realize that they must die unto the world and live as individuals who are to become examples to

²¹ Ibid., p. 82.

²² Ibid., p. 56.

²³ Ibid., p. 104.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

the flock."²⁵ Great responsibility is placed upon spiritual leaders and would-be leaders in the Church.

Another quality that Spener believes should be expected in the life of the justified one is meekness. Again the early Christian church is hailed because of its regard for this characteristic. Spener quotes Origen to exemplify the predominant emphasis:

The name of Jesus can produce a marvelous meekness of spirit and complete change of character, and a humanity and goodness and gentleness in those individuals who do not feign themselves to be Christians for the sake of their livelihood or the supply of any mortal wants but who have honestly accepted the doctrine concerning God and Christ and the judgment to come.²⁶

The counterpart of meekness is manifested in the lives of those clergy who "seek promotions, shift from parish to parish, and engage in all sorts of machinations!"²⁷ Equally foreign to Christ-like meekness in Spener's estimation are those students of theology who "distinguish themselves in riotous living, tippling, bragging, and boasting of academic and other pre-eminence."²⁸ These persons should be looked down upon by their teachers with the hope that they will realize the error of their conduct and, by the grace and power of God, seek to grow in humility.

Out of love and gratitude to God for His grace in Christ, the believer will desire to walk in holiness of life. While the believer is perfectly holy in his standing as a justified one, he realizes his

²⁵Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

²⁶Ibid., p. 83.

²⁷Ibid., p. 45.

²⁸Ibid., p. 107.

need to be more and more transformed into the likeness of Christ. This progressive renewal lies outside of his ability and strength. It must be worked from within by the indwelling Holy Spirit operating through Word and sacraments. Spener's call in Pia Desideria is mainly a call to holiness. At all levels of religious life, the appeal was issued. He sees as the main goal of ministerial education, for example, that "the true and unadulterated Christian religion, the fervent practice of holiness, and Christian virtues be better planted, nurtured, and inculcated in the hearts of students."²⁹

One of the most beneficial aspects of an improvement in the conduct of professing Christians would be the testimony this would be to the unconverted. Spener reveals concern for the salvation of souls in calling the Church to holiness. Holiness is not an end in itself. To be sure, it's first goal is to glorify God; next, it is of edification in the Christian Church; but also the unbelieving world sees evidence of the reality of Christ in the changes He works in the lives of those whom He has made His own. Spener comments, accordingly,

In order for the Jews to be converted, the true church must be in a holier state than now if its holy life is to be a means for that conversion, or at least the impediments to such conversion . . . are to be removed.³⁰

He fears the careless lives of many professing Christians present an offense and cause of stumbling to many who are outside of Christ. One should generally be able to recognize a believer because of his Christ-like manner and conduct. Spener reports:

²⁹Ibid., p. 105.

³⁰Ibid., p. 77.

Histories of the church testify that the early Christian church was in such a blessed state that as a rule Christians could be identified by their godly life, which distinguished them from other people. Tertullian wrote: "What mark do we exhibit except the prime wisdom, which teaches us not to worship the frivolous works of the human hand; the temperance, by which we abstain from other men's goods; the chastity, which we do not pollute even with a look; the compassion, which prompts us to help the needy; the truth itself, which makes us give offense; and the liberty, for which we have even learned to die? Whoever wishes to understand who the Christians are must needs employ these marks for their discovery." How well things then stood! Yes, it was wonderful when dear old Ignatius could write in his letter to the Ephesians, "Those that profess themselves to be Christ's are known not only by what they say but also by what they practice . . ." Justin also records in his apology that some were converted through the uprightness and justice of the Christians in their dealings with men.³¹

In addition to the character qualities that should be progressively manifested in the lives of believers, there are certain activities and interests that Spener expects to find in a Christian. He believes these activities will find their orientation around the Word of God. Indeed, it is love for God's Word that prompts the believer to a life of good works.

Every Christian is bound not only to offer himself and what he has, his prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also industriously to study in the Word of the Lord, with the grace that is given him to teach others, especially those under his own roof, to chastise, exhort, convert, and edify them, to observe their life, pray for all, and insofar as possible be concerned about their salvation.³²

There is a definite mission for every believer, Spener held. That mission finds its direction in the Scriptures. The believer should not depend solely on others for nourishment in God's Word. As one indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Christian can expect the Spirit's help in understanding and interpreting the Word of God also for himself. Referring

³¹ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

³² Ibid., p. 94.

to the Apostle Paul, Spener remarks, ". . . he derived his knowledge not from human ingenuity but from the illumination of the Spirit, and these are as far removed from each other as heaven is from earth."³³

The humblest saint submitting to the Scriptures can enjoy this enlightenment.

Attention has often been drawn to Spener's views regarding so-called "innocent amusements" or adiaphora and a Christian's relationship to them. All that is often remembered about Spener's thoughts on these "indifferent things" is that he had a negative view. It is well to note, however, Spener's rationale for his position and what that stand really entailed. Speaking of these "amusements," he states,

It would be wrong, yea, even contrary to the expressed will of God and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, if Christians were to regard every innocent amusement as sinful. But the mistake lies in the fact, that there is scarcely an innocent amusement which does not also at the same time awaken impure thoughts and feelings . . . when we reflect how the preparations for such things enslave the heart and the mind, days, and even months before, so that, during all this time, the pleasure in the Word of God must utterly give way to the lust of the world; when we reflect how even the enjoyment of these pleasures almost always transcends the limits of a pure, innocent cheerfulness of the heart, and how at such times only sensual and impure thoughts take possession of the human heart, mind and sense so exclusively, that godliness can find no entrance, and that thus weeks, and even months pass by, during which, among the great majority of men, the thoughts about their heavenly calling, about repentance and amendment, and the building up of the kingdom of heaven within them, are entirely neglected; and if, in addition to all this, we call to mind the declaration of Scripture, that we shall give an account for every unprofitable word, we might well hesitate in regarding such amusements as indifferent.³⁴

Opposition is voiced on the basis of what is replaced by the innocent amusements. Spener would have the Christian single-minded in his

³³Ibid., p. 57.

³⁴Carl August Wildenhahn, Life Pictures of Spener and His Times, trans., G. A. Wenzel (Philadelphia: J. Frederick Smith, Publ., 1879), p. 154.

devotion to following Christ. Whatever tended to distract from that position was no longer innocent but harmful. Essentially it is his understanding of the first commandment that is in view in such a stance. Anything which is placed ahead of God in one's thoughts, words, or deeds is to transgress this command.

The Pietist movement, following Spener's lead, therefore found it necessary to repudiate everything which led to worldliness, or exercises a distracting or destructive effect upon that single-mindedness that is needful for the formation of Christian character. Under this head were included abstinence from "cards, dancing, and the theatre and moderation in food, drink, and dress."³⁵ Spener himself did not go to the extremes that later Pietism did. His desire was simply that believers not go to an excess in any area of the "adiaphora." His conviction was that "lawful pleasures cannot hurt the soul, and must refresh and invigorate the body."³⁶

Spener found it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish habitual from occasional drunkenness. He observes in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-10) that drunkenness is set alongside such sins as fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, greed, reviling, and extortion. He asks people who defend occasional drunkenness if they

. . . regard as damnable the life of only those who practice whoredom every day, commit adultery every day, engage in homosexual relations, steal, rob, etc., every day, or if they do not consider it

³⁵Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 895.

³⁶Isaac August Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), p. 210.

too much to do these things even once a year, not to say once a month, and if they do not believe that unless such sins are earnestly and resolutely rooted out these vicious and unrepentant persons will lose their salvation.³⁷

Spener is unwilling to accept the excuse that one's customs within particular nationalities somehow weakens Scriptural authority in this respect. He asks,

What can we advance in defense of it except that it is an ancient inherited custom of Germans and Scandinavians which is abetted by the temperament of some of them? Are we to say, however, that this custom makes the Word of God of no effect? . . . Just as we cannot minimize the particular vices of other nations, which may be addicted to lechery, stealing, or the like, so they cannot excuse us on account of drunkenness. Even less will the just God allow us to abolish his law.³⁸

In Spener's reasoning, just as stealing has no rightful place in the life of a child of God, neither does drunkenness, whether habitual or occasional.

The attitude toward the "innocent" amusements was most distasteful to many of the orthodox Lutherans. They were fond of comparing the Pietists to Anabaptists, Quakers, and Rosicrucians.³⁹ Spener was embarrassed by the opinions and practices of some of his followers who tended to be one-sided and extremist in this respect. He did not encourage those who over-emphasized the break between sacred and secular. Some things that were "worldly" could be hallowed, he felt. This is why he could justify his hobby of heraldry which he enjoyed all his life.⁴⁰

³⁷Spener, pp. 58-59.

³⁸Ibid., p. 59.

³⁹James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity 1650-1950 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 85.

⁴⁰Andrew Landale Drummond, German Protestantism Since Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 59.

The stress on the inward and outward ethical character of a Christian was motivated strongly by a deep concern for evangelism. Spener envisions great results as believers more and more reflect in word and deed their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. "The more profoundly Spener is impressed with the ethical and productive character of grace, the more does he delight to dwell upon the thought of the happy change which must befall the world when evangelical faith begins to revive."⁴¹

Did Spener believe that a Christian could arrive at perfection in his life of sanctification? Did he teach, as R. Newton Flew suggests he did, that it is "necessarily possible for the regenerate to fulfill all the divine commands?"⁴² If he did, it is certainly not his position in Pia Desideria. Indeed, Spener plainly states, "If one seeks perfection one must leave this world and enter the world to come. Only there will one encounter something perfect; one cannot hope for it before then."⁴³ However, there is in Spener the concern that believers often set their sights too low in their standards for Christian living. Reminiscent of John Arndt's emphasis, he believes the Christian is called to follow Christ. This means to seek to be by God's grace and strength like Christ in one's thoughts, words, and deeds. The model is not the most earnest Christian one knows, but Jesus Christ Himself. To follow Christ is to seek to follow God's will as revealed in the Scripture.

⁴¹Dorner, p. 216.

⁴²R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 276.

⁴³Spener, p. 80.

As Spener viewed the level of Christian living in the church of his day, he was grieved at the laxness of discipline of those who were involved in "manifest offenses." While not expecting the church to be a society of people who do not sin, he felt that real love for one another would express itself in dealing with the open gross sin.

What we mean is that the church should be free of manifest offenses, that nobody who is afflicted with such failings should be allowed to remain in the church without fitting reproof and ultimately exclusion, and that the true members of the church should be richly filled with many fruits of their faith. Thus the weeds will no longer cover the grain and make it unsightly, as is unfortunately often the case now, but the weeds will be covered by the grain and made inconspicuous.⁴⁴

Spener recalls several passages that urge the believer on to perfection or maturity in Christ. His understanding is that these injunctions apply to every believer. There is to be the desire to grow more and more into the fullness of Christ. Yet, the one who is truly setting his sights on Christ as the one to emulate does not himself feel that he is achieving any kind of progress (though, in reality, he is if abiding in Christ). Spener observes,

It is like the observation that as a rule those who have made the most progress in their studies are far less likely to consider themselves learned than others who have just begun to look into books a half-year ago. With the passing of time the former come to a fuller understanding of what true erudition means than they could have had before. So in spiritual matters, too, there is more cause to be concerned about beginners who think themselves to be perfect than about those who have already taken some steps in that direction.⁴⁵

Spener was well aware of how far short he fell of the goal of maturity in Christ. He confesses, "I daily discover faults in myself."⁴⁶ Yet, the

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

continuing prospect and goal is to develop more and more into Christ-likeness.

Motivations of Sanctification

The over-arching motivation for desiring growth in one's spiritual life is, in Spener's thinking, for the glory of God. Indeed, everything that the Christian does should be for God's glory. God is truly glorified when a believer applies to his own life the teachings of God's Word. Spener urges, "Above all, there must be a desire, in promoting God's glory, to apply to ourselves and to all others what we hold to be true, and in this light to serve God."⁴⁷ It dishonors God to give intellectual assent to His Word, and yet not desire to apply its promises and guidance to one's own personal life. Spener calls to mind the words of John Schmidt, one of his professors at Strassbourg, who commented,

. . . the target should be that God be glorified or, to put it more clearly, that the true and unadulterated Christian religion, the fervent practice of holiness, and Christian virtues be better planted, nurtured, and inculcated in the hearts of students.⁴⁸

In seeking to awaken the church to its need for renewal, again the motivation must be the glory of God. Because one loves God and His Church, he not only comforts but also admonishes. Spener says,

We should be urged on by our love of the church and the glory of God to make improvements, fulfill the longings of godly people, and open wide to the erring the gates to a knowledge of the truth . . . Everything, however, be to the glory of God Himself and (which has the same outcome) the advance of his kingdom for the sake of Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 75, 122.

Everything that the Christian engages in should be examined in the light of whether or not it will promote God's glory. The collegia pietatis must meet this criterion, he insists: "Everything should be arranged with an eye to the glory of God."⁵⁰ Participating in religious controversies should be checked against this objective of "pure zeal for the glory of God."⁵¹ Spener is saddened by the character of religious disputations he has observed and comments, "How often is unholy fire brought into the sanctuary of the Lord?--that is, an unholy intent, directed not to God's glory but to man's."⁵² God will be honored if the true purpose of disputation is kept before the participants, Spener believes. "If the glory of God is to be properly advanced, disputation must be directed toward the goal of converting opponents and applying the truth which has been defended to a holy obedience and a due gratitude toward God."⁵³ It is in efforts for the salvation of souls that God is most wonderfully glorified. In reference to the teachers of ministerial students, Spener states how greatly God would be glorified if they would direct their attention to the salvation of their students and thus, the glory of God.⁵⁴ Spener is heartened by all who seek God's glory in their manner of living. He alludes to a Christian friend who "takes pains to allow God's honor and its promotion to be his sole

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵² Ibid., p. 100.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 101.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 104.

purpose and the rule in all that he does."⁵⁵ Such a man, he believes, should be commended in the direction of his service to Christ.

There is a change that occurs in the life of those who have been justified, Spener is convinced. This change is a result of the power of God's Word. The development is not simply growth in intellectual knowledge of spiritual realities but a change in the ethical character of an individual. This maturing is inevitable because of the dynamic character of faith. Where no evidence of spiritual life exists, one may well question the genuineness of the faith. The real focus in God's work of sanctifying an individual is on the inner man. The major fruit to be expected is love; love for God, for His Church, and for one's neighbor. Another of the inward qualities one should find in a Christian is meekness. The "inner man" as it is renewed by the Holy Spirit will find expression in a life of holiness. Christ-like conduct is a powerful force for evangelism. The believer will want to present his life in service to God, finding his guidance in the Word of God. In his desire to glorify God in his life, the Christian should not allow himself to be distracted even by so-called "innocent amusements." One of the vices that surely should have no part in Christian life is drunkenness. There is no possibility for a believer to arrive at perfection in this present existence. However, the Christian is exhorted to have his eyes fixed on Christ as the One he seeks to emulate. He is to follow in His steps. In all he says and does, his goal should be to honor and glorify God.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 34.

PART THREE

AN ANALYSIS OF SPENER'S DOCTRINE IN LIGHT OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

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In this final section, the goal is to analyze Spener's views regarding sanctification in the light of the Lutheran confessions. It does not lie within the scope of this thesis to examine other aspects of Spener's theology, however interesting that might be. The limitation of the present study is Spener's Pia Desideria. The doctrine of sanctification as set forth in this book is the subject of our inquiry.

It is our purpose first of all to observe the correspondence of Spener's views with the Book of Concord. This "test of orthodoxy" will be applied at those points where the same topic is under discussion by both parties. Our second task is to note the areas where Spener's presentation falls short of confessional standards. The question is whether Spener is at direct variance with the confessions at certain points or whether he omits material which the confessions deem important to the discussion. Also it is our desire to observe whether there are tendencies in Spener's theology which, if carried a little further, result in departure from Lutheran orthodoxy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TEST OF ORTHODOXY

Before noting points of harmony in Spener's teaching on sanctification and that of the Lutheran confessions, it is of interest to note his regard for them. This is especially important since there have been questions about his commitment to Lutheran orthodoxy. Kenneth Latourette charged, for example, that he was untrue to Lutheran doctrine.¹

Spener's attitudes concerning the Confessions need to be understood against the backdrop of the general Orthodox practice, if not theory, about them. Some maintain that there was a tendency among the Orthodox to consider the Book of Concord as almost on a par with the Bible. Otto Heick discusses this position.

Though recognizing in principle the inferior authority of the Book of Concord, the Orthodox had practically put the symbolical writings on the same level as the Bible. They would not admit any flaws or errors in either volume. This equation of Scripture and the Book of Concord called forth the criticism of the Pietists and gave rise to allusions to the "papacy of the Book of Concord."²

Spener would not support any notions of equality in the two writings. To correct this tendency which he felt held sway among many of the Orthodox, he stressed the absolute uniqueness of the Scriptures.

¹Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 895.

²Otto W. Heick, A History of Christian Thought, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 25.

To me the Holy Scripture is the only book upon earth which contains direct revelation, such as were communicated through the agency of the Holy Spirit to the authors of the different books composing it. Such a theopneustic, as theologians call it, I can, however, not allow to be ascribed to the Symbolical Books, nor can I regard them as of such indispensable necessity, that the Church could not have existed without them.³

There is an intimation in these comments of a wider concept of orthodox Christianity than what he felt was the stance of many of the Orthodox party. In Spener's thinking, it was not absolutely necessary to be knowledgeable of and consciously committed to the Book of Concord to be orthodox. His own professed personal commitment to the Confessions, however, is unmistakable.

I myself do not hesitate to subscribe to the Symbolical Books with quia ("because" in contrast to quatenus - "insofar as"), because I have convinced myself that the teachers of our church, who have composed and received these writings, were far from intending to lay the conscience under constraint. Besides, our reformers have complained against the Papists, for attempting to bind the conscience to the decisions of men. Furthermore, our church declares no where, that she considers her Symbolical Books fully equal to the Holy Scriptures, or that she looks upon them as infallible. She rather left in them only a testimony, in order to set forth in a summary statement, the doctrines she confesses; yet, always so that if any doubt should arise, the Holy Scripture is not to be interpreted by the Symbolical Books, but these by the Holy Scripture, which is, after all, the one and only rule and plummet of our faith. Now, being fully convinced that such was the intention of our reformers, I receive the Symbolical Books, because I regard their teachings, in articles of faith, as in agreement with the Holy Scripture.⁴

The Scriptures always are to be held supreme, he was convinced. Any attempts at equalizing confessional statements with divine revelation undermines the authority of these Scriptures.

³Carl August Wildenhahn, Life Pictures of Spener and His Times (Philadelphia: Frederick Smith, Publ., 1879), p. 138.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 140.

While claiming full and unreserved confessional allegiance for himself, Spener is not willing to say that a quia-subscription to the confessional writings must be universally and unconditionally binding. He can envision someone unable to make such a commitment on the basis of certain scruples. Nevertheless, he does not consider such a one as in any way a better man for such reservations. He simply believes that allowance should be made for such weak persons.

If anyone were so weak that because of this scruple he dared obligate himself in no other way than with the condition, quatenus, namely, insofar as the Confessions agree with God's Word; also, since perhaps there might be found something in the confessional writings which, without his knowledge, might not be in accordance with God's Word, I judge that his conscience should be spared and they be satisfied with this, if otherwise there is not found any trickery in him. Nevertheless I regard it as just, since under this condition "insofar" anyone may easily conceal deception, namely, that although he thinks the confessional writings do not agree with God's Word also in articles of faith, but err, yet for secular advantages he would subscribe under the condition "insofar," that ordinarily the obligation should be demanded and made not conditionally, but absolutely, namely, quia (because) such writings are in agreement with Scripture . . . I have always obligated myself not conditionally, but only absolutely.⁵

It is this opening for quatenus that is considered latitudinarian by C. F. W. Walther and a departure from the kind of whole-hearted allegiance that the Confessions expect and deserve. To open the door, however slightly, is to diminish the rightful importance the Confessions should have. This is why Walther feels constrained to speak as he does.

It is not possible for us to agree with Spener in his attempt to maintain the hypothetical formula "insofar as" for scrupulous men, since they are not fit for a proper ministration of the office of the ministry. It is far more important for the Church not to

⁵Quoted in C. F. W. Walther, The True Visible Church (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), p. 127.

jeopardize the priceless treasure of the orthodox confession than to win the service of a man who has an erring conscience.⁶

Spener has been termed the first "union theologian" because of his conviction that even though a man may err at some secondary point in regard to the intellectual apprehension of revealed truth, he may still possess a genuine faith. "An upright and sincere fides qua may be hidden beneath a false fides quae creditur."⁷ This position paved the way for a rapprochement of the Lutherans and the Reformed. Although Spener was broad in his sympathies throughout his life toward the Reformed, he was, nevertheless, narrow in his loyalty to the Lutheran church. It was in this Evangelical church "in which alone we must therefore recognize that the true church is visible,"⁸ Spener believed. He was sure that the Lutheran church had particular responsibility because of its blessed heritage. "If we, to whom God restored the bright light of the gospel through his servant Luther, fail to do our duty, God will get help elsewhere and preserve his honor."⁹

Spener saw little change in the condition of the Roman Catholic church from the days of Luther. There is no evidence of a unionistic spirit in him relative to Rome.

Spener complained against the great use of force by the Pope and the Catholic clergy. He attacked their attempt to dictate in matter of belief, assailed their prohibition of the reading of the Scriptures and derided them for their neglect of justification by faith . . .

⁶Walther, "Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings?" Concordia Theological Monthly, vol. 18, April, 1947, 4:252.

⁷Heick, p. 23.

⁸Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 40.

⁹Ibid., p. 78.

Never did he suggest the possibility of reunion with Protestantism and Catholicism. Not only did he combat the practice of mixed marriages but he even considered it sinful to attend Catholic services or listen to Catholic music. Protestants, declared Spener, have the right to withhold equal political rights from Catholics because the Catholic clergy is dependent on a foreign prince, the Pope.¹⁰

Spener's modern detractors would be considered "unionistic" in contrast to his narrow views regarding Catholicism.

Means of Grace

In reference to the Word and Sacraments in Pia Desideria in their relationship to the doctrine of sanctification, the agreement with the Book of Concord is apparent at several points.

A common stress in both Spener's writing and the Confessions is on the inseparability of the Word of God from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always expected to be operative through the Scriptures. He is not expected to minister apart from the Bible. This has been observed already in this study.¹¹ One of the powerful statements of the Book of Concord in this regard is that of Luther in the Smalcald Articles. ". . . we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil."¹² The charge of "enthusiasm" cannot be made against Spener.

¹⁰Koppel Shub Pinson, Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), p. 85.

¹¹Supra, pp. 70, 81.

¹²Smalcald Articles, The Book of Concord, Theodore Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 313. (Hereafter the confessions will be noted only by their title and reference in the Tappert edition.)

It has been observed that Spener pointed to the Scriptures as the only authoritative guide in matter of Christian living.¹³ It is not on the basis of "pious reflection" that one understands the meaning of true spirituality. That the standard of true piety is to be found in the Word alone is the teaching of the Confessions. Representative statements of the Confessions in this respect include the following:

That is a good and perfect state which has God's command to support it; on the other hand, that is a dangerous state of life which does not have God's command behind it (Augsburg Confession) . . . that only those are truly good works which God himself prescribes and commands in His Word, and not those that an individual may devise according to his own opinion or that are based on human traditions (Formula of Concord).¹⁴

The Bible is much more than a guide for believers. One of its great benefits for the Christian is the strength it gives to live a godly life. This emphasis has also been earlier shown to be prominent in Spener's thinking.¹⁵ Luther in his Large Catechism shows the need of the Christian for the Bible.

Not only do we need God's Word daily as we need our daily bread; we also must use it daily against the daily, incessant attacks and ambushes of the devil with his thousand arts . . . Deut. 6:7-8 solemnly enjoins that we should always meditate upon his precepts whether sitting, walking, standing, lying down, or rising, and keep them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant token and sign.¹⁶

This more frequent use of the Scripture in the life of Christians is the great appeal of Spener in his Pia Desideria.

¹³Supra, pp. 67-70.

¹⁴Augsburg Confession, p. 80; Formula of Concord, p. 552.

¹⁵Supra, pp. 70-72.

¹⁶Large Catechism, p. 360.

Relative to the Sacraments, it was noted in Spener's treatment of them a truly Lutheran understanding but at the same time that he saw actual and potential abuse, and cautioned accordingly. Are similar warnings found in the Confessions? Spener held that unless one made constant use of his baptism, he would fall from grace. He stressed that there was no eternal security in baptism.¹⁷ This is an echo of the Formula of Concord, "But if those who have been baptized act contrary to their conscience and permit sin to rule in themselves and thus grieve the Holy Spirit within them and lose Him, they dare not be baptized again, though they must certainly be converted again."¹⁸ The Small Catechism depicts the very meaning of baptism in terms of daily repentance.¹⁹ Similarly the Large Catechism speaks of this continued application of baptism's real meaning.

If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and promotes it . . . Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned. . . Therefore let every body regard his Baptism as the daily garment which he is to wear all the time. Every day he should be found in faith and amid its fruits, every day he should be suppressing the old man and growing up in the new.²⁰

The emphasis on a constant and life-long use of Baptism in terms of daily repentance is common to the Pia Desideria and the Book of Concord. Spener appears to be in full agreement with the Confessions in what he says of the means of grace in his little book.

¹⁷Supra, p. 77.

¹⁸Formula of Concord, p. 534.

¹⁹Small Catechism, p. 349.

²⁰Large Catechism, pp. 445-446.

The Holy Spirit

Earlier Spener has been cited for initiating a new set of terms relative to the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual's life.²¹ Distinctions, though not always precise, were made between concepts such as illumination, repentance, and anointing. Later Pietists were to make distinctions of this sort more clearcut. It is of these later Pietists such as Francke, Breithaupt, and Frelinghausen, that Walther makes his protest in regard to their alleged difference between awakening and conversion. Walther, on the basis of Scripture, maintains the difference is imagined.²²

In setting forth the proper order between faith and good works, the Formula of Concord gives the following outline:

First the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us in conversion through the hearing of the Gospel. Faith apprehends the grace of God in Christ whereby the person is justified. After the person is justified, the Holy Spirit next renews and sanctifies him, and from this renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works will follow.²³

Four facets, though not necessarily standing apart from each other, are identified as the work of the Holy Spirit. The context in which these stages are set forth is usually a discussion of the relationship between justification and sanctification. The Confessions do not tire in insisting on justification as coming ahead of sanctification.

It is no doubt on the basis of statements found in the Formula of Concord that Spener would defend his separation of terms such as

²¹Supra, pp. 81-86.

²²Walther, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel (St. Louis, Concordia, 1928), pp. 362-364.

²³Formula of Concord, p. 546.

enlightenment and conversion. In describing the absolute deadness of man's spiritual nature until God intervenes, the confessors remark, "It is useless to threaten, to scold, or even to teach and preach until the Holy Spirit enlightens, converts, and regenerates man, a destiny for which only man, no stone or log, was created."²⁴ In making the same point, the Formula states, "But before man is illuminated, converted, reborn, renewed, and drawn by the Holy Spirit, he can do nothing in spiritual things of himself and by his own powers."²⁵ Spener would see in such statements intimations of separate stages of the Holy Spirit's work. Whether the differentiations are all to be made or not, Spener has affirmed his agreement that man has no part in preparation for or effecting of his salvation. He declared, "we must be saved only and alone through faith and that our works or godly life contribute neither much nor little to our salvation . . ."²⁶

Faith

One of the most pronounced emphases in Pia Desideria is on the definition of saving faith.²⁷ Again and again, Spener instructs the reader that faith is not merely an intellectual acceptance of propositional truth as found in the Word of God. There is a dynamic quality to faith that results in a definite, though gradual, change in the one possessing it. Faith is not something man can produce. It remains always

²⁴ Ibid., p. 525.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Spener, p. 63.

²⁷ Supra, pp. 51-53, 75-76, 83-84, 96, 97.

a gift of God as a result of contact with the powerful means of grace. If one's life is not affected by his faith, that faith is spurious. Genuine faith always results in good works. Do the Confessions share this conception of faith? Is Spener in error in expecting too much of faith? Is he going beyond the confessional understanding?

In a review of confessional expressions regarding faith, it is readily apparent that Spener is no innovator in his definition of faith. In fact, the Confessions make the case for faith as a dynamic more extensively than Spener does. Luther is quoted in the Formula of Concord:

Whoever does not perform such good works is a faithless man, blindly tapping around in search of faith and good works without knowing what either faith and good works are, and in the meantime he chatters and jabbars a great deal about faith and good works. Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God's grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes us joyous, mettlesome, and merry toward God and all creatures. This the Holy Spirit works by faith, and therefore without any coercion a man is willing and desirous to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything for the love of God and to his glory, who has been so gracious to him. It is therefore as impossible to separate works from faith as it is to separate heat and light from fire.²⁸

Both the Augsburg Confession and its Apology had set forth in unmistakable language that faith is only one assent to God's truth. Melancthon reminded his readers, "As we have often said, faith is not merely knowledge but rather a desire to accept and grasp what is offered in the promise of Christ."²⁹ Mere knowledge of historical events is shown to be the capacity of the ungodly and the devil himself.³⁰ The

²⁸Formula of Concord, p. 553.

²⁹Apology, p. 139.

³⁰Augsburg Confession, pp. 44-45; Apology, pp. 114, 121.

medieval scholastics are hailed as representative of a static understanding of faith. "The scholastics do not teach the righteousness of faith. They interpret faith as merely a knowledge of history or of dogmas, not as the power that grasps the promise of grace and righteousness, quickening the heart amid the terrors of sin and death."³¹

It was Spener's conviction that the presence or absence of good works in a person's life was a clear indicator of the reality or falsity of one's faith in Christ. The Formula of Concord supports his contention.

When, however, the question is asked, how a Christian can identify, either in his own case or in the case of others, a true living faith and distinguish it from a simulated and dead faith (since many lazy and secure Christians delude themselves into thinking that they have faith when they do not have true faith), the Apology gives the following answer: "James calls that faith dead where all kinds of good works and the fruits of the Spirit do not follow," and the Latin text of the Apology states, "James teaches correctly when he denies that we are justified by such a faith as is without works, which is a dead faith."³²

Good works are no optional matter for the believer according to the Confessions. One cannot retain true faith where there is no concern to live one's life according to the will of God. The Formula of Concord rejected and condemned as false the view that "good works are free to believers in the sense that they may or want to do or not do them or to act in a contrary fashion and nonetheless still retain faith and God's mercy and his grace."³³ Luther in the Smalcald Articles declared that where sin reigns, the Holy Spirit and faith are missing. "If sin does

³¹Apology, p. 165.

³²Formula of Concord, p. 547.

³³Ibid., p. 554.

what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present."³⁴

There can be no co-existence of willful, continuance in sin with genuine faith. The Formula of Concord describes those who imagine otherwise as caught up in a

. . . complacent Epicurean delusion, since many people dream up for themselves a dead faith or superstition, without repentance and without good works, as if there could be in a single heart both a right faith and a wicked intention to continue and abide in sin, which is impossible. Or as if a person could have and retain true faith, righteousness, and salvation even though there still is and continues to be a barren, unfruitful tree since no good fruits appear, yes, even though he were to persist in sins against conscience or embark deliberately on such sins again, which is impious and false.³⁵

Spener is faithful to the Lutheran Confessions in his emphasis on faith as resultant in changed lives.

Spener has been shown to be very wary of a return to an opus operatum-concept of the means of grace as he believed was the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁶ He warned that without faith, the means of grace will not personally benefit an individual, no matter how frequent the means are used. He feared that many of his contemporaries in the Lutheran Church were succumbing to this notion. Do the Lutheran Confessions share Spener's alarm concerning the intrusion of this viewpoint? Is Spener betraying a lack of confidence in the efficacy of the means of grace in his concern? The Confessions demonstrate similar caution in regard to misuse of the means of grace. In the Apology, the opponents are depicted as imagining that "the sacraments bestow the Holy Spirit ex opere operato without the proper attitude in the recipient, as though

³⁴Smalcald Articles, p. 310.

³⁵Formula of Concord, p. 553.

³⁶Supra, pp. 71, 75-77.

the gift of the Holy Spirit were a minor matter."³⁷ Melanchthon refers to people of the Old Testament who imitated the works of the patriarchs but did not keep their faith. "The people of the Old Testament imitated these sacrifices with the notion that on account of them they had a gracious God, so to say, ex opere operato."³⁸ He shows how sternly the prophets rebuked this evil conception of the people. Elsewhere The Apology speaks of this view as "pharisaic" and "pagan."³⁹

Good Works

The insistence on good works as inseparable from authentic Christian living was seen to be a burden of Pia Desideria. Spener repeatedly maintained that good works were necessary.⁴⁰ The vital question to be raised is why good works are so important. Is there in Spener a re-statement of the Majoristic error of the 16th century? George Major, who perhaps had had good intentions in stating his formula, had posited that good works are necessary for salvation.⁴¹ He claimed that he wanted to underline the biblical axiom that faith without works is dead but was interpreted to mean that good works have some role in meriting one's forgiveness of sins. The controversy heightened when this interpretation was defended by some of Major's adherents. In the Formula of Concord, there is clear rejection of Major's implications. However, the confessors

³⁷Apology, p. 115.

³⁸Ibid., p. 135.

³⁹Ibid., p. 251.

⁴⁰Supra, pp. 52-53.

⁴¹J. L. Neve, Introduction to Lutheran Symbolics (Columbus, Ohio: F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1917), p. 168.

state that there is no disagreement regarding that fact that believers should walk in good works.⁴² It is not a choice of whether to take or leave good works. Rather, the problem arises when good works are mingled with discussion on the way of salvation. Good works must never enter the conversation prior to justification. However, once justified, it is appropriate to speak of them as necessary. Surely it is to be understood that it is the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit in the life of the justified one. God is at work, taking the initiative, granting the grace and strength, at every juncture of the believer's life.

The necessity of good works was explained by Spener to obtain as a fruit of faith in expressing gratitude to God for His mercy. This reason is given also in the Augsburg Confession in terms of glorifying God.⁴³ A good summary of the confessional stance in the matter of this necessity of good works is found in the Augsburg Confession. "Our churches also teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits and that it is necessary to do the good works commanded by God."⁴⁴ This is what Spener was proposing in his writing of Pia Desideria.

It was possible to lose one's salvation without continued repentance and growth in grace and godliness, Spener held.⁴⁵ The Book of Concord surely makes this same point with clarity. The following excerpts from throughout the text are illustrative of the handling of this issue.

⁴²Formula of Concord, p. 552.

⁴³Augsburg Confession, p. 45.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁵Supra, pp. 64-65.

. . . faith does not remain in those who obey their lusts, nor does it exist together with mortal sin . . . Whoever casts away love will not keep his faith, be it ever so great, because he will not keep the Holy Spirit . . . We also reject and condemn the teaching that faith and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost through malicious sin, but that the holy ones and the elect retain the Holy Spirit even though they fall into adultery and other sins and persist in them . . . In explaining 2 Peter 1:10, "Be the more zealous to confirm your call and election," the Apology states in Article XX: Peter teaches why we should do good works, namely, that we confirm our calling, that is, that we do not fall from our calling by lapsing again into sin. He says, "Do good works so that you remain in your heavenly calling, lest you fall away and lose the Spirit and his gifts, which you have not received because of your subsequent works but which have come to you by grace through Christ and which you retain through faith! Faith, however, does not remain in those who lead a wicked life, lose the Holy Spirit, and reject repentance."⁴⁶

One can speak of possessing faith but an ungodly life speaks of self-delusion. One can hold and defend the orthodox faith but willful persistence in sin means the profession is false. One may have been brought to Christ and established on a good foundation but it is possible to depart from the Lord, forfeiting so great salvation due to one's own resistance to the Holy Spirit. Spener is faithful to the Confessions in his warning of the potential of falling away. The Lutheran Church knows nothing of an impossibility to lose one's salvation.

In discussing the fruits of salvation, Spener turned the attention on the "inner man."⁴⁷ He believed it was relatively easy for a person to conform outwardly to many biblical patterns of Christian conduct but that the real examination should be directed inward. The Confessions point in the same direction. The Augsburg Confession explained, "Actually, true perfection consists alone of proper fear of

⁴⁶Apology, pp. 127, 137; Formula of Concord, pp. 477, 556.

⁴⁷Supra, pp. 54, 75, 97-99.

God and real faith in God, for the Gospel does not teach an outward and temporal but an inward and eternal mode of existence and righteousness of the heart."⁴⁸ This is not to say that the outward works are to be ignored or considered unimportant. Rather, it is expected that if the inner man is bearing fruit by the power of the Holy Spirit, the external would take care of itself. The inward is given the precedence in a statement from the Apology: "Therefore we hold that the keeping of the law should begin in us and increase more and more. But we mean to include both elements, namely, the inward spiritual impulses and the outward good works."⁴⁹

A fundamental trait expected to be increasingly observed in a believer's life, according to Spener, was love.⁵⁰ This love will have as its prime object God. Love for God will show itself also in love for His Church and love for all mankind. The accent on love is readily noted in the Confessions. The confessors want no one to misconstrue their position, however, that love always proceeds as a fruit, not as a cause of salvation. "Love is a fruit which certainly and necessarily follows true faith. For if a person does not love, this indicated certainly that he is not justified but is still in death."⁵¹ This love is not aimless but finds its chief object in God. Melancthon said that "it is impossible to separate faith from love for God, be it ever so

⁴⁸Augsburg Confession, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁹Apology, p. 126.

⁵⁰Supra, pp. 98-103.

⁵¹Formula of Concord, p. 543 (See also Apology, pp. 113, 124-128, 152).

small."⁵² The importance of the first table of the Law is stressed in the Apology. Something is radically wrong with one who belittles this table in favor of the second.⁵³

Spener is consistent with the Confessions in understanding holiness as referring to more than pure doctrine. In the Small Catechism, the believer is instructed as to how God's Name may be hallowed: "When the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with it."⁵⁴ In explaining how the kingdom of God comes to us, the same type of exhortation is observed: "When the heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit so that by his grace we may believe his holy Word and live a godly life, both here in time and hereafter forever."⁵⁵ Holiness does not stop with believing and maintaining correct doctrine but proceeds to honor and glorify God by a life lived in joyful consecration to His holy will.

In the realm of outward and external behavior, Spener has been heard in his attitude toward drunkenness. He simply believed that the Scriptures nowhere made allowance for drunkenness, no matter how infrequently it might occur.⁵⁶ In hallowing God's Name, Luther explained in the Large Catechism that one of the ways one may profane that Name is by an openly evil life. Included among those who so dishonor God's Name are those who profess to be Christians and yet live as drunkards.⁵⁷

⁵²Apology, p. 126.

⁵³Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁴Small Catechism, p. 346.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Supra, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁷Large Catechism, p. 426.

Whether one may distinguish between the state of drunkenness and the condition of being a drunkard is perhaps a moot question. Since this is so, one is hard-pressed to label Spener un-Lutheran in his castigation of drunkenness.

The stance of Spener toward so-called "innocent amusements" has been discussed. It was not so much a matter of evil versus God's will as it was legitimate activities distracting from the primacy of God in one's life and thereby becoming evil. Love for God and the desire to live wholeheartedly for Him meant that those activities that served to distract from this purpose should be avoided. It is in this sense that Spener undoubtedly understood Luther in his explanation of the first commandment.

He wishes to turn us away from everything else, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one, eternal good. It is as if he said: "What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or anything else, turn to me for all this." Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it. It is primarily in the heart, which pursues other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils . . . does your heart cling to something else, from which it hopes to receive more good and help than from God, . . . Then you have an idol, another god.⁵⁸

Though accused of teaching the possibility of a believer arriving at a state of sinlessness in this life, Spener was seen to have deemed such a condition hopeless until one reaches heaven. Only there will one find perfect conformity to the will of God by redeemed humanity.⁵⁹ In such an understanding, Spener is shown to be in full agreement with the Confessions. Holsten Fagerberg summarizes the thinking of the confessors

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 366-368.

⁵⁹Supra, p. 109.

in his remark that for the believer, "keeping the Law becomes possible, thanks to the Holy Spirit; but it is nevertheless always inadequate."⁶⁰ This is faithful to the following statement from the Apology: "In this life we cannot satisfy the law, because our unspiritual nature continually brings forth evil desires, though the Spirit in us resists them."⁶¹ Only in heaven is there perfection. This is the reminder also of the Formula of Concord.

Now we are only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life are only perfectly pure and holy people, full of goodness and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all evil, living in new, immortal, and glorified bodies.⁶²

In this assessment of Spener's doctrine of sanctification, it has been observed so far that there is no departure from the direct doctrinal statements or the spirit of the Lutheran Confessions as embodied in the Book of Concord. Rather, Spener appears to be well-versed in the confessional issues and explanations and consciously seeking to disseminate the contents of the Book of Concord relative to this issue of sanctification in his own style and in the context of the spiritual conditions of his day as he perceived them. There is nothing new or strange about his insistence that the standard of piety must be the Word of God. The attitude he reflects toward the Sacraments, though containing cautionary reminders due to the abuses he felt he detected, is in substance a confessional echo. Spener's dynamic definition of faith was observed

⁶⁰Holsten Fagerberg, A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529-1537) (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), p. 278.

⁶¹Apology, p. 127.

⁶²Formula of Concord, p. 418.

to have its equivalency in the Book of Concord as well as his apprehensions in regard to a drift toward a mechanical distribution of God's forgiveness in the means of grace (ex opere operato). There is an apparent harmony also in a comparison of Spener's teaching regarding the role and identity of good works with that of the Confessions. With the Confessions, Spener concurs that perfection is impossible in this life. In fact, instead of progression, there may be digression to the point of losing one's salvation if one fails to make use of the means of grace and lives an ungodly life.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFECTS

It should be acknowledged that Pia Desideria does not profess or intend to be a complete treatise on the subject of sanctification. It originally served as a preface to the larger work of John Arndt's which also did not aim at such a goal. Therefore, in fairness to Spener, it should be kept in mind that what he is writing in Pia Desideria is a reaction and response to what he felt was a serious spiritual drift in the Lutheran Church of his day. His proposals are aimed at helping to correct specific problems as he saw them. Yet, it is not inappropriate to analyze Spener's work critically in light of the Confessions since he professes to write as one loyal to the same. Are there areas of important omission in the handling of the doctrine? Are there tendencies that, if carried further, would result in a departure from Lutheran orthodoxy? Finally, do we find in Spener's Pia Desideria, despite his professions of allegiance to the Confessions, a shift in emphasis from them at some points?

Tendencies

Although Spener recognizes the Donatistic error of expecting a totally regenerate church membership, he appears to be moving in the direction of Donatism in his questioning of the effectiveness of unregenerate preachers.¹ He has elsewhere hailed the efficacy of the

¹Supra, pp. 78-79.

means of grace in and of themselves despite the character of the ministrant, but he appears to contradict this in the impression given that there is no hope of renewal unless the clergy are spiritually alive. This is to place too much confidence in the effectiveness of people and to under-rate the dynamic power of the bare Word of God in its inseparable connection with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Surely it is to be admitted that it is much to be preferred if the ministrant of the means of grace is regenerate but one dare not carry this to the extent that God is stymied by such an individual.

The Augsburg Confession wishes to make clear that "the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ himself indicated, 'The Pharisees sit on Moses' seat' (Matt. 23:2)."² One has not sinned even if he receives the Word and sacraments from "unworthy men" in the church.³ This does not justify a complacency about the spiritual condition of the leaders of the church but it does help one to expect and continue to believe God is at work in spite of wicked men. As Spener himself acknowledged, as long as one has the Word and sacraments, there is every reason to be encouraged that the Holy Spirit will be mightily active to the salvation of souls and the edification and sanctification of God's people.

It is true that Spener was offended by the personal conduct of the clergy in particular. However, he was not "donatistic" in seeking to create a schism in the church because of the situation. Rather, he sought to be of help within the church. He ever remained within the

²Augsburg Confession, The Book of Concord, Theodore Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 33. (Hereafter the confessions will be noted only by their title and reference in the Tappert edition.)

³Apology, p. 173.

Lutheran Church and would give no encouragement to those later Pietists who were schismatic in the spirit of the Donatists.⁴

Another tendency that is observed in Pia Desideria is a devaluation of precise doctrinal formulations. One begins to wonder in the over-much protestations against the conduct observed in the religious disputations if it really is only this that Spener is concerned about. The question arises whether Spener was not somewhat ambivalent regarding at least some of the secondary issues. His youthful contacts with the Reformed in their literature and in personal fellowship may have dulled his appreciation for the finer points of theology. He adheres to the tenets of Lutheran orthodoxy personally but appears to be able to co-exist with minor doctrinal deviations more easily than could the Orthodox party. The impression is given at some points that if only the life and conduct correspond with the biblical norms, there is little doubt but that the doctrine is also sound. This is suggested as only a tendency in Spener's writing, but a tendency which, if left unchecked, could be seen to have spawned the kind of subjectivism and ultimately rationalism that gained ascendancy several decades after Spener.

Rather than the worst evil being ungodly living, the Confessions identify false doctrine as of a more serious nature. In discussing how God's name is profaned, Luther states in the Large Catechism that "it is profaned when men preach, teach, and speak in God's name anything that is false and deceptive, using his name to cloak lies and make them acceptable; this is the worst profanation and dishonor of the divine name."⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 178.

⁵Large Catechism, p. 425.

Luther believes that incumbent upon the believer in his concern to hallow God's Name is a continual watchfulness and regard for pure doctrine. He calls believers "constantly to cry out against all who preach and believe falsely and against those who attack and persecute our Gospel and pure doctrine and try to suppress it."⁶ Rather than doctrinal concern fostering disunity, the confessors believe that all hope for fellowship lies in adherence to correct doctrine. There will be no true unity unless it is based solidly on the Word of God. The Formula of Concord says, "In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise (1 Tim. 3:9; Titus 1:9, 2 Tim. 2:24; 3:16)."⁷ Though one's human nature may find such a task unpleasant since it characterizes one as negativistic and censorious, yet for the well-being of the church, one must lift up his voice and contend boldly for the "faith once delivered."

Omissions

Besides the above-mentioned tendencies in Pia Desideria that do not reflect the spirit or emphasis of the Confessions, there are issues that are omitted from the discussion which properly should appear. In the many exhortations to an increase in godliness and the attendant measures proposed to foster Christian growth, Spener says little of the way sanctification is effected. Yes, he speaks of the wider dissemination and study of the Word as fundamental but largely fails to say what

⁶ Ibid., p. 426.

⁷ Formula of Concord, p. 506.

it is in the Word that truly promotes sanctification. The Confessions leave no room for question in this respect. It is the Gospel that truly and powerfully effects sanctification. "The Law says indeed that it is God's will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel, Galatians 3:14, renews the heart."⁸ Pieper recalls Luther's words to the effect that "those preachers who use the Law instead of the Gospel to effect sanctification are to blame for the paucity of sanctification and good works."⁹ Spener does not necessarily use the Law to promote sanctification but he does not clearly use the Gospel either and in this, there is vital omission. The problem is one of neglect on the part of Spener.

In the Smalcald Articles, Luther points to the Gospel as effective in the Christian's battle against sin. "We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace."¹⁰ Among these ways, he includes the Gospel as it comes in the means of grace and in the fellowship and encouragement of God's people. True piety is found, says the Augsburg Confession, "when we believe that God receives us into his favor for the sake of Christ, his only Son."¹¹

⁸Formula of Concord, Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 965.

⁹Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 19.

¹⁰Large Catechism, p. 370.

¹¹Augsburg Confession, p. 77.

Another lack in Spener's treatment of sanctification is stress on the need for daily repentance in the life of the Christian. He speaks of confession of sins to one another but says little of the ongoing penitence that the confessors insist is part and parcel of Christian experience. The fine place given to faith has been noted in Pia Desideria. The Book of Concord, however, teaches that hand in hand with true faith should be true repentance. Repentance is not properly understood if it is seen as only appropriate at the time of conversion. It is part of the very fabric of Christian existence. In establishing that man's reborn will cooperates in all the works that the Holy Spirit does through an individual, the Formula of Concord speaks of the "daily exercise of repentance."¹² This repentance continues in the Christian until death, Luther teaches in the Smalcald Articles, since "all through life it contends with the sins that remain in the flesh."¹³ Repentance is so important for the Christian because it serves as a real aid in growth in grace. Repentance permits the Holy Spirit to purify the believer and daily makes him "more pious and holy to the complete exclusion of our own powers."¹⁴

The performance of good works in no way excludes the need for mercy, the Apology instructs. Many clear testimonies in the Scripture and in the Church Fathers are reported to unanimously declare that "even if we have good works we need mercy in them."¹⁵ Repentance shows the recognition of the need for that mercy and faith takes hold of it.

¹²Formula of Concord, p. 538.

¹³Smalcald Articles, p. 309.

¹⁴Formula of Concord, p. 528.

¹⁵Apology, p. 157.

Wherever the subject of good works appears in the Book of Concord, there is almost always warning to the effect that one must not trust in good works as in any way contributing to one's salvation. The confessors, knowing their own proclivity to works-righteousness as well as all mankind's, never tire of teaching that good works always follow as a fruit of faith and that they are never to be introduced in a discussion of the way of salvation. Although Spener certainly would agree with this vital principle, yet he comes short in warning against trusting in good works. He assumes too much in believing that his readers will not be tempted to put the "cart before the horse" in the relationship of sanctification to justification. At this point, he fails to reckon with the deceitfulness of the old nature still resident within the reborn which continually seeks to inject a man-made righteousness into the plan of salvation.

The reformers were accused of forbidding good works in their efforts to enunciate the biblical doctrine of justification by grace alone. In response, the Augsburg Confession makes clear that works are not being forgotten. It is just that formerly works were so inculcated into the consciousness of religious society that the chief article, faith, was neglected. Therefore, the Augsburg Confession states, "We begin by teaching that our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace for us, for this happens only through faith, that is, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who alone is the mediator who reconciles the Father."¹⁶

¹⁶Augsburg Confession, p. 42.

In the Apology, Melanchthon expresses the conviction that "good works must necessarily follow faith. We do not overthrow the law, Paul says (Rom. 3:31), but uphold it; for when we have received the Holy Spirit by faith, the keeping of the law necessarily follows, by which love, patience, chastity, and other fruits of the Spirit gradually increase."¹⁷ The confessors see man's greatest problem not in identifying what God's will is regarding the doing of good works but rather in keeping straight that works do not justify. If one is solid in this respect the good works will follow as a matter of course. This suggests that Spener's approach to the problems as he saw them was deficient in this emphasis, a matter that is now to be considered.

Imbalance

In discussing sanctification, Spener sought to put his readers at ease with some fine comments on the importance of justification and the need to keep this topic always ahead of any consideration of sanctification. Yet, aside from these few statements, the pendulum has swung in Pia Desideria almost entirely to a discussion of Christian living. Is it possible to be well-balanced in one's presentation of sanctification without full integration of justification into the consideration? Spener evidently thinks one can. The Confessions, on the other hand, have higher expectations of what simple dwelling on the chief article of the faith, justification, can mean in the life of the believer. In the Gospel, one receives the forgiveness so sorely and continually needed. In receiving the Gospel in repentance and faith, one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who empowers for all Christian service. In the Gospel

¹⁷Apology, p. 229.

one finds the proper motivation for living a God-pleasing life. Must not the Gospel with its declaration of sins forgiven for the sake of Christ alone be inextricably linked with any attempt at promoting growth in Christ? Is it not inevitable that attempts otherwise invite a legalistic and moralistic interpretation? This is why the Lutheran Confessions refuse to discuss sanctification and good works without constant referral to the chief article, justification.

In defense of the sustained dwelling on justification by faith, the Augsburg Confession offered this rationale:

Inasmuch, then, as the teaching about faith, which ought to be the chief teaching in the Church, has so long been neglected (for everybody must grant that there has been profound silence concerning the righteousness of faith in sermons while only the teaching about works has been treated in the church), our churches have instructed . . . concerning faith as follows.¹⁸

Then follows a concise statement regarding salvation by grace alone and a clear warning of the danger of trusting in works as in any way meritorious. The Reformers were sure that if the biblical foundation of justification by grace alone through faith was intact, exhortations to godliness and Christian character were not nearly so important. In fact, without this proper foundation, all mention of living a sanctified life was potentially corruptive of biblical truth.

Faith in Christ is to be esteemed above all works, says Melancthon. Roman teaching tended to obscure the doctrine concerning grace and righteousness of faith, which, he said,

. . . is the chief part of the Gospel and ought above all else to be in the Church, and to be prominent in it, so that the merit of Christ may be well-known and that faith which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake may be exalted far above works and

¹⁸ Augsburg Confession, p. 42.

above all other acts of worship. Paul therefore lays the greatest weight on this article and puts aside the law and human traditions in order to show that the righteousness of a Christian is something other than works of this sort; it is faith which believes that for Christ's sake we are received into grace.¹⁹

Though Spener acknowledges justification to be the chief article of faith, he falls short of the confessional emphasis upon it in Pia Desideria. In so doing, sanctification appears to be a more important aspect of Christian truth. However, as the Confessions caution, this is to depart from the main burden of Scripture. One must pay more than lip-service to justification. Its meaning, implications, and relationship to Christian life and growth, must be inextricably united with a discussion of sanctification. There can be no genuine spiritual life, no proper motivation for Christian living, no real understanding of the purpose of sanctification, without justification at the very heart of the message.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 64.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to discover, present and analyze Philip Spener's understanding of the doctrine of sanctification. The limiting factor of the research has been a consideration of Pia Desideria, Spener's most influential and most enduring writing. His position was checked against the confessions of the Lutheran Church to which he professed loyalty.

At the outset, it was noted that the influences brought to bear on the maturing Spener clearly contributed to his settled convictions. His early reading, particularly of True Christianity by John Arndt, together with a variety of contacts with individuals who emphasized the devotional aspects of Christianity were of no small importance in producing this "father of Pietism."

Pia Desideria, Spener's call for spiritual renewal in the Lutheran Church of Germany, was surveyed in outline form. The precipitating factors in Spener's estimation which called forth such a treatise were noted, as was the varying response this publication received by its immediate audience. The rise of the Pietist movement was traced to the influence of Pia Desideria and Spener's relationship to the movement was briefly discussed. He was observed as an advisor or counsellor but not as an organizer or developer. He was distinguished from some negative manifestations of Pietism in his day. His concern to base his proposals for renewal on the Word of God and to conduct himself accordingly set him apart from some "Pietists" who emphasized spiritual experiences

in determining God's will. His determination to remain true to the Lutheran confessions also separated him from some of his early admirers.

As mentioned, a major objective in this study was to examine the doctrine of sanctification as dealt with by Spener in Pia Desideria. It was believed that Spener might help to shed light on some contemporary issues relative to Christian living. One such issue was a modern expression of antinomianism called "situation ethics." In contrast to the experience-based criteria of many modern ethicists for determining the rightness or wrongness of man's moral alternatives, Spener was hailed as one who found his guidance in the Word of God alone. He advised his readers that the authoritative Scriptures must judge all the views of man whether in faith or life.

Another question in beginning this study concerned Spener's connection with a legalistic approach to Christianity. Did Spener advocate works-righteousness to any extent? Defining legalism as any attempt to mingle the contribution of man into God's economy of salvation in Christ, Spener was seen to be no legalist. He emphasized the fact that man is justified by grace alone through faith and that human "righteousness" indeed is no righteousness. Having been justified by grace, there will be the constraint of love worked by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Out of gratitude for grace in Christ, a person will want to walk in conformity to God's will as revealed in the Scriptures. One of the differences between Spener and some of the Orthodox clergy was the interpretation of what that conformity to God's will actually entailed. Though Spener echoed their focus on the "inner man" as the main arena of the Holy Spirit's operations in the life of the justified one, he stressed that

if indeed the Holy Spirit is at work, there will be external manifestations as well. One's outward conduct will be a reflection of this inner working of the Spirit. He was convinced that any activities that served to distract a person from serving Christ faithfully in the Church were no longer "innocent amusements" but something sinful in the sight of God. In naming some popular pastimes of his day in which he could see no spiritual value and therefore felt were out of place in Christian circles, he incurred the displeasure of many. His professed intention, however, was not to condemn the activities but rather to warn against the undue attention to them in one's life so that one's spiritual life suffered.

One of Spener's main burdens in Pia Desideria centers on the need for the edification of believers. He discusses at length the means God has ordained for the spiritual up-building of His people. He sees in the means of grace, Word and sacraments, the gracious provision for this nurture. Neglect of the Word and sacraments will result in anemic and ill-formed Christianity. The Word of God comes to an individual in various ways. One of the important avenues is preaching. Spener places large responsibility upon a pastor in nurturing the Christian congregation. A faithful pastor cannot afford to use the pulpit for anything less than the edification of believers. He must preach the whole counsel of God, Law and Gospel, for admonition and comfort of all. Another way the Word of God comes to an individual is through the ministry of fellow-believers. Spener advocated a fresh recovery of the truth concerning the priesthood of believers as an important way the deepening of spiritual life could be realized. The small-group devotional

meetings, the collegia pietatis, were encouraged because of their potential in this regard. As Christians discussed the Scriptures with an eye toward application in daily living, Spener felt great blessing could result. It is the Holy Spirit who is active wherever the Word is used who produces such great effects, Spener stressed. He is inseparable from all of the means of grace.

Spener wrote his Pia Desideria in a day of concern in the Church for doctrinal purity. He applauded this concern, supporting it wholeheartedly. He acknowledged that true spiritual life issues out of sound doctrine. However, Spener believed that in the zeal to defend the faith, some of the orthodox clergy were neglecting the promotion of personal piety or the edification of believers. Indeed, the careless personal habits of some pastors were a reproach to the cause of Christ. The unloving, condemnatory attitudes in which debates and disputations relative to doctrine were often conducted also were not reflective of godly concern for the erring, Spener believed. The spiritual recovery of the ones in error should be the chief concern of those engaging in doctrinal disputation. In a day when doctrinal strife is again touching also our beloved Lutheran church, Spener's reminder of the need for godly motivation in debating the opponents of the truth is needed. Without compromising one iota from the revealed truth of God's Word, the discussions must proceed with the conscious intention of restoration of those who have departed from the truth. In addition to defense of the faith in this evangelical manner, care must be exercised that the spiritual well-being of the believers in the congregation

is not neglected. There must be a balance between doctrinal apologetics and practical exegetics.

While Spener's admonition to concentrate on the sanctification of believers is worthy of note by the Church today, there are lessons to be learned from Spener's undue emphases. The pendulum has swung too far in Spener's approach. Spener tends to pay only "lip-service" to "the chief article of faith," as our Lutheran Confessions express it, the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. He thus fails in practice to emphasize the inseparableness of justification and sanctification. Any treatment of the doctrine of sanctification must always be founded on a clear exposition of the doctrine of justification. Without that basis, the potential for misinterpretation and mishandling is too great.

The writer has found great benefit in the study of Pia Desideria and in the review of related sections of our Lutheran Confessions. He has profited from the positive example of Spener's earnest endeavor to encourage deeper spiritual life in believers. In his comparative study of Pia Desideria and the Lutheran Confessions, he has been reinforced in his conviction that the doctrines of justification and sanctification are inseparable and must be treated side-by-side.

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