

**Education for "God's Glory and Neighbor's Good":
The Pietist Idea of a Christian College**

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"Not (Quite) Ready for Prime Time Presentation"

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Introduction

To my shame, this is the first time I've been to one of these highly valuable presentations, so I'm not sure just how to start. But as I've already started with one embarrassing confession, let me continue with two others.

First, I am an historian of international relations, diplomacy and warfare, and so I fear I am out of my element acting as a supposed expert on either Pietism or higher education. (If you want to hear me talk about something I actually know, in two hours I'll be killing over 9 million people in a lecture on the diplomatic failures that resulted in World War I. HIS354 Modern Europe, in RC 422A.)

And second, until I started teaching at Bethel, I had no idea whatsoever what a Christian college was. My life up to that point had involved several decidedly non-Christian educational experiences: a secular private school just north of what's now

Woodland Hills Church in Maplewood; a formerly Anglican state university in Virginia; and a formerly Congregationalist research university in Connecticut.

And so it has been both a joy and a challenge to work at a not-quite-formerly Baptist university that views education as a Christian calling. To teach in a class that combines study of Christianity with study of Western civilization. To find that collegiality involves prayer and fellowship as well as intellectual debate. And to continue my own education by reading works like Arthur Holmes' *Idea of a Christian College* and George Marsden's *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, which encourage Christian scholars to integrate their faith and learning.¹

But much as I appreciate the contributions of Reformed scholars like Holmes and Marsden, I must admit that the Reformed tradition is not my own, and it is not always a comfortable fit. I was raised in the tradition of Swedish-American Pietism, and have returned to that tradition as an adult, as a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and a professor at Bethel University.

Yet I am not sure how well we at Bethel understand the meaning of Pietism for what we do as educators and students. I was talking with Ken Petersen yesterday for our Christianity and Western Culture (CWC) podcast, asking his impressions of growing up in a Calvinist church and working at Dordt College before coming to Bethel. Ken mentioned that during new faculty orientation at Dordt, it was very clear what it meant to be at a Christian college in the Reformed tradition, and how much he appreciated the

¹ Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1977; revised, 1987); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York, 1997).

strong sense of distinctive purpose that prevailed among Dordt's faculty. I can't say that I came out of Bethel's new faculty orientation with a clear sense of what it meant to work at a Christian college in the Pietist tradition. Jay or George will bring it up periodically at convocation or commencement or faculty retreat, or GW will say something about it during a department meeting, but then GW says a lot of things, and I, at least, must confess to not having reflected carefully or extensively on the Pietist idea of a Christian college until this past summer. What follows is a kind of progress report on where that reflection (and preliminary research) has left me...

A Brief Summary of Pietism

Let me start with a brief summary of what I mean by Pietism...

Pietism draws on sources as diverse as the medieval mystics, the Moravian descendants of the Waldensians, and English Puritans, but it is most often associated with a revival within German Lutheranism in the decades after the Thirty Years War. Inspired by the Lutheran spiritual writer Johann Arndt and the Jesuit-turned-Calvinist Jean de Labadie, a pastor named Philipp Jakob Spener sought to reform Lutheranism from within.

While he never abandoned the state church, he did fear that it had become calcified, focused so much on defending its own orthodoxy against Catholic, Reformed, and Anabaptist challenges that it had lost the revival spirit of the Reformation. In his 1675 book *Pia Desideria*, Spener expressed six "pious wishes" for the continuing reformation of his church, including a greater emphasis on Bible study (both in the pulpit and in small group meetings), a more active role for the laity in the church life, and an irenic

spirit extended towards those holding different views.² Perhaps most distinctively, Spener proposed that having knowledge of the Christian faith, or assenting intellectually to theological propositions like those contained in the Lutheran "Symbolical Books," was vastly less important than the experience of living out what Luther had called "faith active in love."³

Spener's movement, derisively called Pietism by its orthodox critics, spread rapidly. First to Prussia, where August Hermann Francke established a new pietistic university in Halle, plus schools, orphanages, and other institutions, then to a Moravian community led by the Pietist-trained nobleman Nicolaus von Zinzendorff. Later in the 18th century, the influence of Moravian missionaries and a fortuitous visit to a Moravian society in Aldersgate, London led John Wesley to start the greatest revival in British history. And a variety of Pietist, Moravian, and Wesleyan influences led to revivals in 19th century Scandinavia, some of whose impoverished people brought Pietism with them to a new life in North America. They promptly founded churches that that did not use phrases like "life of the mind" and cared little for theological complexity and much for experience and emotion. (Subdued, Swedish emotion: warm hearts and stone faces. But emotion nonetheless.)

Beyond this flimsy outline of a history, let me just add that Pietism had a unique interest in and commitment to education. This is true of Spener and Zinzendorff, of their Moravian-influenced predecessor Johannes Comenius, and especially so of August Francke, who founded schools and a university and whose educational writings were

² The most common English translation is Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, tr. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia, 1964).

³ K. James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago, 1986), 99-100.

remarkably ahead of their time in their intuitive understanding of child psychology and development.⁴ And, needless to say, Francke always saw education through the lens of his particular Christian commitments. (Which tended to blind later, post-Enlightenment critics to the merits of his educational theories.)

And it shouldn't surprise us to find Pietists interested in education. It might even be possible that Pietism can sustain a life spent in the academy. In *Conceiving the Christian College* (one of many books inspired by Arthur Holmes), Wheaton president Duane Litfin provides a familiarly Reformed model, but even he describes piety (defined as "a passionate personal allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ" and "loving God with our *minds* as well as our hearts, souls, and strength") as providing the "deepest and most enduring motives for Christian scholarship."⁵

Pietism and the Literature on Christian Higher Education

At the same time, Litfin prefaces his brief discussion of piety and scholarship with a warning: "If such a personalistic emphasis [the Christian scholar's allegiance to Jesus Christ] strikes some as pietistic, we must nevertheless not shy away from it."⁶ If piety can so deeply and enduringly motivate Christian scholarship, why would Litfin fear that his readers would recoil from the faintest scent of Pietism? Perhaps he shares the old concern that Pietists devalued the life of the mind, since they privileged right conduct (orthopraxy) over right belief (orthodoxy) and rejected the Lutheran

⁴ For a survey of Comenius and Francke's educational principles, see Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, 1983), 153-87. On Francke's early child psychology, see Marcia J. Bunge, "Education and the Child in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism: Perspectives from the Work of A.H. Francke," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Bunge (Grand Rapids, 2001), 247-78.

⁵ Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, 2004), 60.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Scholastics' "philosophical quest for God" in favor of what Dale Brown terms a "theology of experience."⁷ Supporting Spener's description of Christianity as a religion of the heart rather than of "empty thought," Brown quotes Francke's frank assessment of himself as a student: "I kept my theology in my head and not in my heart, and it was much more a dead science than a living knowledge."⁸

While the fair-minded Reformed historian Mark Noll understands that "warm piety and hard thinking" need not be in conflict, he reminds us that the same emphases that helped Spener, Francke, *et al.* "[breathe] a badly needed vitality into several parts of the church"⁹ might also have helped bring about the very separation of faith and learning that required (re)integration in the twentieth century. Noll restates the shopworn critique that Pietists may feel too much and think too little, but then goes further:

At its extreme, the Pietist emphasis on religious life gave very little attention to self-conscious Christian thought. To be consumed by feeling was to have no time for thinking through the relationship between God and his creation. Once this point had been reached, it soon became difficult to distinguish between those forms of feeling that remained within the Christian orbit and those that had spun off as meteorites with no fixed center.

Noll therefore holds "unchecked Pietism" partly responsible for the rise of theological liberalism and the "humanistic romanticism" that supplanted an orthodox view of God and the world in favor of a "vague nature mysticism."¹⁰

In his famous book on formerly Christian colleges and universities, Catholic scholar James Burtchaell would agree, though less charitably. Because Pietism emphasized personal feeling and simple piety rather than right belief and rigorous scholarship,

⁷ Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, 1978), 27-28, 105.

⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 108-109.

⁹ Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, 1994), 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

Burtchaell blames its "subversive influence" for accelerating the once-Christian academy's descent into "liberal indifferentism," inclusivism, and then rationalism.¹¹ If pietists were not willing accomplices in the secular revolution that transformed so many of America's religious colleges, it seems that they were at least, in Lenin's lovely phrase, useful idiots.

It is nice to be noticed, though. In discussions of Christian higher education, Pietism has generally been dismissed as escapist anti-intellectualism or simply ignored altogether. For example, Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen of Messiah College, who sympathize with Anabaptist and other traditions that dissent from the integrationist norm and teach at a school that has pietist roots, lump Pietists together with Baptists and Evangelicals in a hasty discussion of the "primitivist tradition." Although they find "something very energizing and important" in the primitivists' centering of the "Bible alone," the Jacobsens also see little of scholarly value in that tradition, since its need continually to start "from scratch" tends to result in "immature and amateurish scholarship."¹²

If not individual scholarship, can Pietism provide a model of Christian higher education? The Lutheran scholar Robert Benne did not see fit to include a pietist school among his elite six colleges and universities who "keep faith with their religious traditions," but he did agree with James Burtchaell that the Pietists' "interiorizing of faith was and continues to be a fatal flaw."¹³ Even the estimable Richard Hughes, who is

¹¹ James Turnstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges & Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, 1998), 838-47.

¹² Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (New York, 2004), 89-90.

¹³ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, 2001), 36.

a scholar of the primitivist tradition mentioned by the Jacobsens, has almost entirely passed over Pietism in choosing models of Christian higher education to study.¹⁴

And so I find myself temporarily less interested in the history of international relations than in testing this implication that Pietism is incapable of inspiring a distinctive model of Christian higher education. I'm certainly not there yet, but I think you're getting me at an interesting point in my project: I've framed the question and done enough research to start to refine that question and propose hypotheses, which I then hope to test using historical case studies (starting this summer with research in the archives of Bethel and North Park University, the Evangelical Covenant school in Chicago).

Some caveats before I *tentatively* suggest some features of the Pietist college – as well as potential drawbacks to that model. First, for those of you who have grown up in this tradition and served at Bethel or a similar school for many years, I fear that what I'm about to say may sound quite trite and obvious. Please bear with me: I do think there's value in succeeding generations bringing new eyes to a tradition, and I very much want to hear your own perspectives on this issue during our Q&A time (or at a later opportunity).

Second, as George Marsden would surely say in my place, something can be *distinctively* pietist without being *uniquely* pietist.¹⁵ I am sure that Christians from many other traditions (including the Reformed) would not disagree with much of what I am about

¹⁴ See his discussions of Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, and Anabaptist/Mennonite models in Richard T. Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, 2001), 57-96. To these he and co-editor William B. Adrian add Baptist, Evangelical, and Wesleyan models in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, 1997).

¹⁵ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 68-69.

to say, and a wide variety of Christian colleges will have something in common with the "Pietist" model I am trying to describe. But if they are not unique contributions, they are certainly distinctive of Pietism.

Third, most of the German Pietists' writings on education concern either seminaries or what we would now call early childhood and elementary education. Where it seems reasonable, I have attempted to extrapolate their principles to the realm of undergraduate higher education, especially where there seems to be historical evidence of such principles in the stories of Bethel and North Park.

That said, I do not mean to suggest that Bethel University (or North Park) embodies my admittedly squishy Platonic idea of a Pietist college, but given my audience and location today, please forgive me if I editorialize occasionally and comment on how Bethel exemplifies aspects of this idea – or how it may be straying from it.

Distinctive Features of the Pietist Idea of the Christian College

#1. The Christian college is Jesus-centered.

Unfortunately, saying that a Christian college is "Christ-centered" has become as clichéd as it is profoundly beautiful, so let me tweak things just a bit. As Phyllis Tickle points out in her foreword to a recent collection of Pietist texts, "It's probably not an exaggeration to say that while 'Christ' was central to Pietism, 'Jesus' as a name or term for Messiah, by virtue of being more personal, was more central..."¹⁶ The Pietist college is a Christian college because it centers on a personal experience of Jesus, not because its

¹⁶ Phyllis Tickle, Foreword to *The Pietists: Selected Writings*, eds. Emilie Griffin and Peter C. Erb (New York, 2006), viii-ix.

administrators, professors, staff, and students can accede to truth-claims about the Incarnation, Resurrection, Lordship, and Second Coming of the Christ (though they can), or because those claims run through its curriculum (though they do).

During Bethel's faculty retreat last August, this distinction seemed to be at the heart of guest speaker Roger Olson's critique of the "Christ-centered" Christian college conceived by Duane Litfin. Olson held up Bethel as an alternative to Litfin's preferred "systemic" Christian college: "Here [at Bethel] Christ-centered education begins with the experience of knowing Jesus Christ personally.... Jesus Christ and our experience of him called 'conversional piety' form the glue that holds everything together."¹⁷ I believe that he would find a similar Jesus-centeredness in the history of North Park, whose founder, David Nyvall, told students in 1901 that the "very pulse [of the school's life] is the love of Christ and of all those whom he loves, making this school a center from which radiates to all ends of the world the light of Christ's truth, and the warmth of Christ's love, and the beauty of Christ's character."¹⁸ (Okay, so Pietists call Him Christ too.)

In this vision of Christian education, biblical study is foundational, but orthopraxy and orthopathy are more important than orthodoxy. In his fictionalized biography of Philipp Spener, the 19th century German writer Karl von Wildenhahn has the Pietist patriarch assert that " All knowledge, all learning, is dead and useless, as long as it does

¹⁷ Roger Olson, "Thoughts on the Christ-centered College/University," Bethel University Faculty Retreat, August 2006, <http://bethelnet.bethel.edu/cas-faculty/committees/retreat/olson-ch4.html>. The excerpt I will quote consists of Olson's response to Ch. 4 of Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College*.

¹⁸ Quoted in Scott E. Erickson, "David Nyvall and the Shape of an Immigrant Church: Ethnic, Denominational, and Educational Priorities among Swedes in America" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Uppsala, 1996), 267.

not impart *true life* to the heart, or promote the cause of *practical* Christianity."¹⁹ If Spener did not say these exact words, they seem consistent with his recommendations for seminary reform, and his distinguishing between "literal and living knowledge."²⁰ Likewise, Francke wrote that the purpose of education is to lead young people "to a lively [or living] knowledge of God and Christ and to upright Christianity."²¹

For Spener and Francke, Christians start to come to this "living knowledge" of Jesus through the experience of conversion. While Spener never had the dramatic epiphany described by his younger disciple, conversion was central to his understanding of salvation (and church and social reform). I suspect he would therefore agree with Olson that conversion is also the starting point of Jesus-centered education. Many of you probably know that, when seeking students for his new Baptist seminary, the Swedish Baptist Pietist John Alexis Edgren stressed that they "be conscious of a real conversion and a call to the gospel ministry," not that they be able to agree with a set of doctrinal statements.²²

After conversion, new life blossoms with the process of renewal or regeneration. Roger Olson again: "What I find missing in Litfin's treatment of Christian higher education is this note of spiritual and personal transformation by means of encounter with the living God through Jesus Christ. This transcends mere moralism as well as integration of faith

¹⁹ Quoted in Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 85 (emphasis mine).

²⁰ Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 81.

²¹ Quoted in Bunge, "Education and the Child in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism," 261n.

²² Quoted in Norris A. Magnuson, *Missionsskolan: The History of an Immigrant Theological School; Bethel Theological Seminary, 1871-1981* (St. Paul, 1982), 10.

and learning as an academic exercise."²³ Which brings us to a second distinctive feature...

#2. *The Christian college educates the whole person, not solely (or even primarily) the intellect.*

For David Nyvall, *this* is what set apart North Park and schools like it: "Only one kind of education even pretends [to concern itself with the whole person]. And that is *Christian Education*. Therefore, as a matter of fact, Christian Education is the only one existing worth the name."²⁴ Here too, we are trucking in clichés: rare is the college nowadays (Christian or otherwise) that does not claim to educate the whole person. But, historically, pietist educators were unusual in this respect. Nyvall wrote the above words at a time when the dominant philosophy governing higher education in the West was still that of the Prussian civil servant Wilhelm von Humboldt, who stressed the acquisition of knowledge rather than vocational training or character or spiritual formation. Even in the late 17th century, as Pietism began to gather support among students and instructors at the University of Leipzig, the orthodox Lutheran theologian Johann Karpzov insisted that "Our mission as professors is to make students more learned and not more pious."²⁵

To be sure, the Pietist college would hope to graduate more learned students, and some Pietists would be comfortable with the language of faith-learning integration. Almost throughout his two long terms as president of North Park, Nyvall fought to preserve a liberal arts curriculum and high academic standards, and even encouraged students of the then-academy to continue their education at leading national universities

²³ Olson, "Thoughts on the Christ-centered College/University."

²⁴ Quoted in Erickson, "David Nyvall and the Shape of an Immigrant Church," 264.

²⁵ Quoted in Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 13.

(prompting a running debate with the president of Wheaton College, Charles Blanchard, who believed that his institution was the proper finishing school for young Covenanters²⁶). Karl Olsson, the University of Chicago-trained Covenant historian who, as North Park's president, realized the fondest dream of his mentor Nyvall when he guided the school's final evolution into a four-year college, told his faculty in 1959 that "[North Park] is Christian because it has believed from its very beginning that the Christian faith forms a necessary presupposition for all meaningful intellectual activity."²⁷

But intellectual development is not the only or even highest goal of a Pietist college; it also seeks the formation – better, the transformation – of the whole person. As Litfin has already reminded us, loving God requires the mind, but also the heart, soul, and strength; *all* are regenerated or renewed in the new life that starts with conversion. Famously, Edgren believed that it was more important for his aspiring preachers to "cultivate the spiritual life" than that of the mind: "Thus, while storing the mind with useful information of a biblical as well as a secular nature, spiritual edification must never be lost sight of."²⁸ In the years immediately after World War I, Bethel Academy (like Francke's schools over 200 years earlier) emphasized right conduct at least as much as right belief. Its catalog in 1918-19 instructed students that the "real purpose of education is the development of character and the acquisition of right habits of thought and action."²⁹

²⁶ On the Nyvall-Blanchard correspondence, see Erickson, "David Nyvall and the Shape of an Immigrant Church," 288-91.

²⁷ Quoted in *The Covenant Companion*, September 1, 1968, 6.

²⁸ Quoted in Magnuson, *Missionsskolan*, 11.

²⁹ Quoted in G. William Carlson and Diana L. Magnuson, *Persevere, Läsare, and Clarion: Celebrating Bethel's 125th Anniversary* (St. Paul, 1997), 29.

In the Pietist idea of the Christian college, therefore, I wonder if the distinctions between student life, campus ministries, and academics would be as stark as they seem to be at Bethel (and most colleges). Certainly, individuals are called to different specialties in the larger project of education; most professors, for example, do not have the skills necessary to counsel students suffering from clinical depression, or to envision and preach a chapel series. But these are not absolute differences, and students don't necessarily compartmentalize their lives in this way. Yet because I am in an academic department and not Residence Life, I fear that I know very little of how my students live – even though their living environment no doubt affects how they study for my classes. Nor do I know much about how they worship, or pray, or read the Bible. (Nor do I think this problem resides solely with the faculty. I wonder how much our campus ministries or student life staff know about the general education curriculum, or professors' expectations for student progress in the classroom.)

I recently sat in on a job interview along with Jim Ferreira, and was struck by how little I knew of the problems that he deals with as Bethel's Dean of Students – even though those problems no doubt spill over into my classroom. Integrationists like Holmes and Litfin believe that every Christian scholar, regardless of discipline, must also be well-versed in theology and philosophy. In a Christian college that emphasizes experiential piety rather than propositional faith, it may be more important that professors know something of psychology and counseling.

#3. The Christian college provides education in community.

We have already heard Robert Benne complain that Pietism results in the interiorizing of faith, making private and personal what should be public and shared. This is a fair

criticism; a pietistic emphasis on one's personal relationship with Jesus can also turn one inward, to the detriment of the larger Body of Christ. But is it important to understand that this was not the intention of Spener or Francke, both of whom saw life together as essential to following Christ. In fact, it can be argued that Spener's greatest contribution was to revive the Protestant reformer Martin Bucer's commitment to "pious groups" (or *collegia pietatis*) that would gather together for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship.

The first such *collegium* began to meet in Frankfurt in 1670, when sermons of Spener's prompted a group of laymen to ask him to host meetings in which "pious minds might occasionally come together... to confer with one another in simplicity and love...."

Typical meetings featured prayer, Spener's commentary on the previous Sunday's sermon, discussion of a scriptural passage or a devotional book, and a closing hymn. As the first small group grew into several *collegia*, the make-up of the participants grew more diverse, to include men *and women* from all social classes. Most were Lutheran, but others were Reformed and even Catholic.³⁰ (Remember that we are only a generation removed from the religious strife of the Thirty Years War.) These original "pious groups" inspired the class meetings of the Methodist revival in England and the *läsare* movement that spread pietistic revival in Sweden.

This emphasis on communal study is quietly counter-cultural in an age when, as Philip Jenkins reminds us, Christians in the global north tend to read the Bible privately and

³⁰ Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 85-93. The quotation comes from p. 86.

individually, much as they would any other book.³¹ The same individualism too often extends to higher education, where students (and faculty) sometimes forget that the word "college" comes from the word "colleague."

Yet education in community is absolutely essential to the Pietist idea of a Christian college, since, as Roger Olson points out, "[knowing Jesus Christ personally] is not just an individual experience; it is a community experience." Here he mentions the role of "covenant groups" at Baylor's Truett Seminary, where faculty and students gather weekly for Bible study, prayer, meditation, conversation, and mutual accountability.³²

Please note that these groups cut across academic hierarchy, just as the German Pietist *collegia* transcended ecclesiastical, denominational, social, and gender divisions. Here I fear that Bethel falls far short of its heritage: there is much emphasis on small groups within individual constituencies of the community, but I am unaware of such intentional efforts that bring together faculty, staff, and students, despite Edgren's founding belief that the teacher-student relationship should be "one of real friendship and helpfulness" rather than one of "master and subordinate."³³

It leads me to wonder whether a Pietist model of Christian higher education can be sustained past a certain size, or in the more rigid, segmented structure of a university. If so, it will take a concerted effort from throughout the community.

³¹ Quite unlike how the Bible is read in most other parts of the Christian world; Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York, 2006), 25-29.

³² Olson, "Thoughts on the Christ-centered College/University."

³³ Magnuson, *Missionsskolan*, 11. This is not to minimize the special role that teachers have in Pietist education, not just as instructors but as models of Christian conduct and experience; for Francke's perhaps too-lofty view of the teacher, see Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 177-78.

#5. *The Christian college educates students for a life of service to others.*

Francke famously described schools as "workshops of the Holy Spirit," places where God could work in the child (or young adult) to prepare him or her for a Christian vocation of worship and service. Francke biographer Gary Sattler concludes:

To these ends, God's glory and neighbor's good, Francke arranged the Halle educational system. The process was to facilitate the struggle against inward and outward evil and eventually led to the development of a Christian person capable of living the Christian life in any vocation and circumstance. Such a person would be equipped with the necessary moral, intellectual, and spiritual tools to be a vital force for God's kingdom as an adult.³⁴

Of course, certain vocations received special attention in the Pietists' view of education for "God's glory and neighbor's good." Of Spener's six "pious wishes," those most directly pertaining to education called for the reform of seminary training to stress the acquisition of pastoral skills (preaching, teaching, visitation) rather than theological erudition. In addition to pastors, Francke's pietist university in Halle made a special effort to train the men who would teach in the many schools he sought to found; it included special *seminarien* for elementary and secondary school teachers. Bethel's own strong programs in education (as well as nursing and social work) are very much in this tradition. But education for *any* vocation in a Pietist college seeks "God's glory and neighbor's good."

The pietist educators' prioritization of service reflects their tradition's commitment to the integration of learning with the Pauline virtues of love and hope, anticipating an observation by the Mennonite scholar Rodney Sawatsky. In a prologue to the previously mentioned work by Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen, Sawatsky noted that faith is only one part of the triad in I Corinthians 13, yet that one virtue has dominated

³⁴ Gary R. Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good: A Brief Introduction to the Life and Writings of August Hermann Francke* (Chicago, 1982), 56-57.

the integrationist discourse – and then with faith meaning a worldview or set of beliefs, rather than simply trusting God or seeking meaning.³⁵

Paul tells us, of course, that love is the greatest of the three.³⁶ However, as we have already heard David Nyvall's claim that the "love of Christ and of all those whom he loves" is at the heart of the Christian college, let me pass over love-learning integration with only a brief encouragement that you read our colleague Jenell Williams Paris's recent article in *Christian Scholar's Review* on how pietist perspectives on love (specifically, those of John Wesley) enhanced her understanding of cultural anthropology.³⁷ The literature of Pietism is replete with descriptions of love; I can do little better than to refer you to it, since you will immediately be led to think of new ways to integrate love and learning that I could not imagine.

Hope-learning integration may seem less obviously pietistic, but it is crucial for Sawatsky. Indeed, he identifies hope as providing an end, a *telos*, to Christian scholarship:

Complementing [a rich theology of creation] with an eschatological orientation—a biblical vision of the future in which peace and righteousness will flourish and learning will result in wisdom—might be a helpful, appropriate, and even necessary counterbalance to what can become a nostalgic and anxious fixation on the past.³⁸

This is strikingly reminiscent of one of the lesser-known aspects of Spener's theology, his hope for a better church and world. James Stein reminds us that the second section of *Pia Desideria* ("The Possibility of Better Conditions in the Church") starts with

³⁵ Rodney J. Sawatsky, "Prologue: The Virtue of Scholarly Hope," in Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship & Christian Faith*, 4-5.

³⁶ I Corinthians 13:13.

³⁷ Jenell Williams Paris, "A Pietist Perspective on Love and Learning in Cultural Anthropology," *Christian Scholar's Review* 35 (Spring 2006): 371-85.

³⁸ Sawatsky, "Prologue: The Virtue of Scholarly Hope," 9.

"Spener's bold claim that the Scriptures affirm God's promise that his Church on earth will have a better state than it now possesses."³⁹ His hopeful eschatology also led Spener to trust that the world itself, not just individuals or the church, would be renewed. (Again, remember that he is writing within living memory of the worst war to that point in European history, a war that killed perhaps a quarter of his countrymen and women.) For Pietists, then, the "scholarly virtue of hope" not only provides ultimate meaning for their studies of history or physics or literature, but for their service to the church and world beyond the classroom.

Some Drawbacks to the Pietist Model of Christian Higher Education

While I cannot deny that I am sympathetic to the possibilities of this model of Christian higher education, I also do not pretend that it does not have its own distinctive (if not unique) shortcomings. So before I can hear your own thoughts on the nature of a Pietist college, let me suggest some difficult questions facing anyone attracted to this Pietist idea of a Christian college.

#1. Can a Pietist college sustain either the "Umbrella" or "Systemic" model described by Litfin?

Not that it's a problem to scrap Litfin's terminology; Roger Olson has already pointed out its flaws. But it seems possible that a Pietist college might struggle either to (a) keep its distinctive religious identity while still reaching out to other Christians and even non-Christians (the "umbrella" model), or even (b) to remain a place where historical, orthodox Christianity is, in Litfin's phrase, "systemic throughout the institution, root, branch, and leaf."⁴⁰

³⁹ Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 95.

⁴⁰ Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College*, 18.

To the first problem... If the Pietist college is Jesus-centered and sees personal conversion as the means and end of education, what place is there for students (or faculty or staff) who either come from one of the many Christian traditions that does not understand salvation in these terms, or who is not a Christian at all? "Conversional piety" might not only be a mystifying concept then, but even an off-putting one. It will be interesting to study North Park more closely this summer, as that school (unlike Bethel) has long reached beyond its core constituency, and has no faith screen for students. Can it move in the direction of the "umbrella" model and still retain its pietist educational distinctives? (Or, in Bethel's case, if the student population includes a number of adult learners who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ, can the university remain distinctively pietist?)

But there is a problem from the other direction as well. Since the 17th century Pietists have lamented the "dead orthodoxy" of those who assent to propositions about Jesus Christ but seem not to have had a personal experience of him. But isn't "dead orthodoxy" preferable to heterodoxy? Couldn't a Pietist college, with its emphasis on the personal, subjective, even emotional experience of God, lead to any number of heresies? Historically, it has been associated with everything from Enlightenment rationalism to mystical spiritualism, both of which may challenge the historic doctrines of the Church and the objective authority of Scripture.

Perhaps this is the rationale for Bethel's surprisingly long statement of faith. But given Bethel's dual Pietist/Baptist heritage, it's sometimes shocking to see that our faith statement is far longer and more theologically complex than the Nicene Creed. ("Soul competency," anyone?) To participate in the life of a Pietist college, shouldn't the

principal qualification be that someone has had a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, or the desire for conversion? I'd like to think that education in community (built on the foundation of Scripture) would at least result in a generous orthodoxy.

For all our periodic *sturm und drang* over various elements of the lifestyle statement, that document at least seems consistent with a pietistic emphasis on orthopraxy. But an emphasis on right conduct leads to a different pair of objections...

#2. *Doesn't a focus on orthopraxy both encourage legalism and diminish academic ambitions?*

It is hard to read a pietist document like August Hermann Francke's "Scriptural Rules for Life" (all 91 of them, not counting the fifteen articles of the "Appendix on Christian Perfection") and not think (a) "Wow, Bethel's lifestyle statement could be much longer," and (b) "Hmm, I thought Protestants didn't believe in works-righteousness."⁴¹ Of course, Francke would affirm Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone and rationalize that obedience to law is the fruit of conversion and regeneration, which are acts of grace alone. But I hardly need to tell an audience of Bethel faculty, staff, and students that a tradition that doesn't necessarily pride itself on discerning and teaching the finer points of theology might easily fall into legalism.

At the same time, one might ask whether a Pietist college, stressing experiential piety and anonymous service rather than the intellectual rigor required to build Arthur Holmes' hoped-for "Christian academy," will ever achieve the kind of academic reputation enjoyed by Calvin College, Wheaton College, or some Lutheran and Catholic

⁴¹ Francke's "Scriptural Rules" (and appendix) are available in English in Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 199-237.

universities. True, the renown enjoyed by certain programs at Bethel suggests that this need not be a Catch-22; our physics professors and students would warm the heart of David Nyvall, who dreamed of achieving a balance between intellectual discipline and experiential piety. But personally, I struggle to reconcile my priorities, and often end up questioning whether a higher intellectual standard is achievable or even desirable.

I would like to see more of our history majors admitted to elite graduate schools and win Fulbright scholarships, but I also fear that I spend too much time finding ways to challenge and advise the academically ambitious and too little time forming helpful, friendly relationships with C+ students, or worshipping with the community in chapel, or taking part in a small group Bible study with students and faculty/staff colleagues. I am sometimes frustrated by the lack of intellectual curiosity and discipline among some of my students, but I also would not like to see Bethel set a higher standard for ACT scores or class rank and thereby turn away young people earnestly seeking a transformative, whole person education at a Jesus-centered college.

And rather than try to end with a tidy, pithy conclusion, I'd rather leave off with a question for you all: What is *your* idea of a Pietist Christian college?