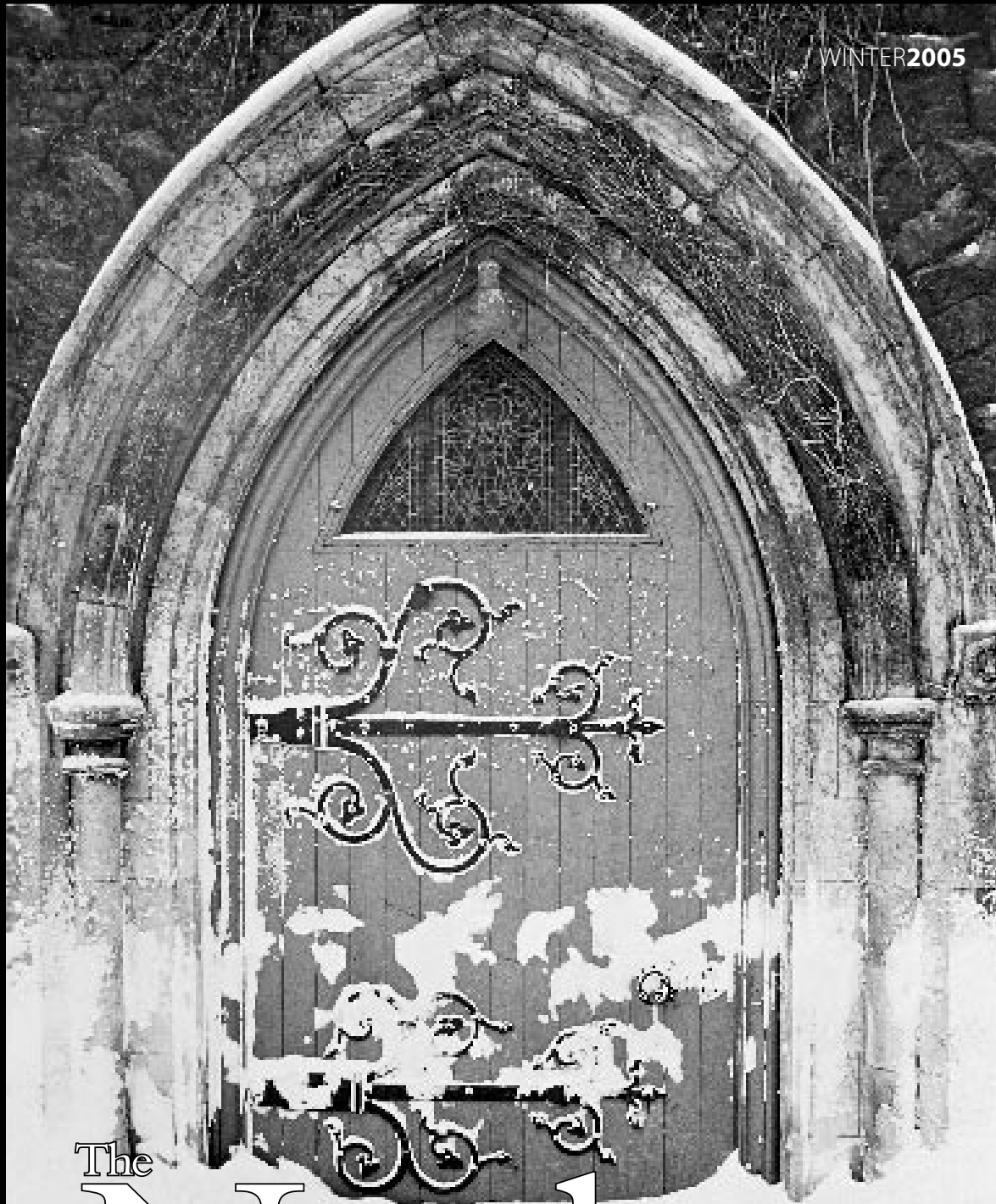


WHAT IS WHOLISTIC, EMBODIED DISCIPLESHIP? ■ BURTON NELSON ON PIETISM ■ ARE THERE ANY PIETISTS IN THIS GENERATION?


WINTER 2005



The
Narthex

A THEOLOGICAL PUBLICATION COMMITTED TO RENEWING A MOVEMENT
FOR JUSTICE WITHIN THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

The Narthex



Mission Statement ■ The Narthex is a theological publication committed to renewing a movement for justice within the Evangelical Covenant Church by encouraging each other on the way toward wholistic, embodied discipleship and biblical justice. We do this by publishing reflective essays, quality resources, and opportunities to take action for lay and clergy leadership of all ages across North America. We strive to help build community for those interested in committing to justice as they serve the church.

What's in a Name ■ The name of this publication has been resurrected and re-applied from its original use as a journal for Covenant conversation. The term “narthex” refers to the common meeting space of the people of faith - the outer area of the sanctuary that provides information and fellowship for the body of Christ and the space where hospitality and guidance pave an introduction to our faith to those seeking. It is both a formational and active space that prepares and shapes disciples; whether entering and preparing to worship or leaving and preparing to serve in the world. The narthex is the foyer that links the community to the body.

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*Welcome to The Narthex,
a gathering space for
discipleship and justice*

THE NARTHEX ■ is put together by the Young Pietists and is published two times a year (January and June). Communications regarding subscriptions should be sent to: THE NARTHEX, 7213 Pontiac Circle, Chanhassen, MN 55317, or smallbooks@hotmail.com. The annual subscription price is \$8.00.

ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS ■ We invite you to be part of the dialogue starting within the pages of The Narthex. In the summer 2005 edition, we will discuss, "What is biblical justice as it relates to the story of the ECC?" We are accepting submissions related to this topic through April 15, 2005. For more information or to submit material, contact verhages@hotmail.com.

FRIENDS IN PRODUCTION ■ Liz VerHage, Kyle Small, Rebekah Eklund, Heidi Griep, Mark Carlson, Aaron Johnson.

THE NARTHEX IS ONLINE ■ at www.thenarthex.org



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to *The Narthex*: a new forum for dialogue and community for all those interested in biblical justice and wholistic, embodied discipleship in the Covenant Church. We are excited to re-introduce The Narthex in new form after it stopped being published several years ago. The Narthex was resurrected in order to continue the conversations from our past, develop the voices of the present, and encourage future cadences to help shape our church family. Much hard work from a diverse crowd of people united in this common purpose has made this publication a reality – and we are looking for more potential contributors, writers, and supporters even as we roll out the first issue! So give us your feedback, ideas, article submissions, and critiques.

In these pages you'll find a balance of thought that represents many facets of our life as disciples and members of the body of

Christ. **Conversations** explores the question, "What is wholistic, embodied discipleship as it relates to the story of the ECC?" from three perspectives, building on the rich legacy of the late Prof. Burton Nelson. **Everyday Sacred** gives us a window into a young pastor's journey to embody discipleship at the dinner table; **Poems, Prayers, & Praises** moves us to reflect and worship. Check out the **Call to Action** for concrete ways that you and your community might embody justice, and read **We Thought You Should Know** for updates on issues that may impact justice and spiritual formation in the church. A few practical helps are highlighted in the **Resource Review**, selected from among the hundreds of others out there!

Our contributors have given us a wealth of starting conversation topics, as well as insight into how we might embody discipleship. We want to let the contents speak for themselves,

but there is one contributor we must comment on, the late Rev. Dr. F. Burton Nelson – a faithful fixture at North Park Theological Seminary who also garnered world renown for his scholarship. Burton's life constantly reflected Jesus Christ and the pursuit of justice in the world, whether in the classroom, as a father and husband, on an ecumenical march, or through a warm friendship. As students of his, we hope to continue forming a generation of leaders, teachers, writers, pastors, prophets, and disciples (as well as comedians!) who celebrate the convictions of Burton Nelson and all those who have gone before us in the name of Christ and doing the work of justice. May The Narthex be a collaborative, communal, and conversational encouragement to the larger church in this tradition—"For God's Glory and Neighbor's God." ■ *Editors-in-Chief, Liz Mosbo VerHage & Kyle Small,*



Faith without works is dead.

James 2:17

It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

They will know you are my followers if you love one another.

John 13:35

CONVERSATIONS

PIETIST HERITAGE AND SOCIAL CONCERN ■ Dr. F. Burton Nelson

“Conversations” includes three reflections discussing the topic, “What is wholistic, embodied discipleship as it relates to the story of the Evangelical Covenant Church?” Writers are the late Dr. F. Burton Nelson, former Professor of Ethics at North Park Theological Seminary; Alexandria Taylor, College Program Coordinator at The Associated Colleges of Illinois and member of New Community Covenant Church in Chicago, IL; and Adam Phillips, student at North Park Theological Seminary and intern at Bread for the World in Washington, D.C.

IN THE THREE CENTURIES since pristine Lutheran Pietism came to birth in post-Reformation Germany, the collection of criticisms and caricatures has sometimes reached ludicrous proportions. One of the choice examples can be found in a novel about the life of Philipp Jacob Spener by Karl August Wildenhahn written in the nineteenth century: “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 Spender’s examina. This is a Pietist.”

Although this colorful description may have fit a son or daughter of Pietism turned legalistic through the years, it is, like most caricatures and excessive criticisms, sadly overdrawn and generally inadequate to accord with accuracy. The same assertion can be made about a common view of Pietism in relation to social concerns, social ethics, and social institutions:

- That Pietism is individualistic, subjectivistic, and uninvolved in social aches and pains;
- That the pietist is like an ostrich with its head deeply buried in the sand;
- That the pietist has a blunted conscience;
- That Pietism encourages spiritual isolation and even spiritual snobbishness;
- That Pietism is so other-worldly that it has little or no connection with the this-worldly.

I. Social Concern in Early Lutheran Pietism

It is true to say that Spener was no enthusiastic advocate of social action. As far as is known, he led no protest rallies in the parks of Frankfurt or Halle, nor did he seek to present a list of sixty demands to the political-powers-that-be about the restructuring of the war on poverty program.

Both Spener and August Hermann Francke, and the pietists who followed in their train, were people of their time—late seven-

teenth and early eighteenth centuries. This, of course, is obvious, but it does imply that we should view them not merely through twentieth century eyes. We are best served if we see them in their own life-context, and then ask what the implications and translations might be for today’s Church.

As we comb through the writings of Spener and Francke, and as we review the historical data available concerning their impact upon the churches and societies of their time, the evidences of social concern are more prevalent than is commonly believed. The very sub-title of Spener’s most familiar work, *Pia Desideria*, indicates the concern for reform and renewal in the Church: “Heartfelt Desire for a God-Pleasing Reform of the true Evangelical Church, Together with Several Simple Christian Proposals Looking Toward This End.”

This “God-Pleasing Reform” was directed toward the sickness of the Church—her sad corruption, her promotion-minded ministers, her frigid orthodoxy, her people’s satiated life. A cleansing of the interior being of the Christian was needed. This meant a greater diligence in reading the Scripture; it meant the conventicle for corporate encounter with the Scripture, and with God, and with fellow Christians. It meant a recovery of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

There was more than this, however; and this “more” is so frequently overlooked both in learned and in popular analyses of Pietism. The “God-Pleasing Reform” was also directed toward the social order, toward the political decision-makers, and toward the world. In the *Pia* Spener expressed grave concern about the defects in the civil authorities, “how few there are who remember that God gave them their scepters and staffs in order that they use their power to advance the Kingdom of God.”

The spotlight of criticism was beamed toward those holding public trust who had

betrayed this sacred responsibility for private advantage.

More positively, there were guidelines and counsel which Spener articulated for the shaping of a piety which was not only turned inward for the health of the soul, but turned outward toward the neighbor. Again and again he underscored the insistence of Luther on a “faith active in love.” People are com-

Was all of this just whistling in the wind, or did the early Pietists express these lofty counsels in flesh and blood?

pelled to perform deeds of love toward needy neighbors “even when their own livelihood be noticeably affected by their gifts.” We are saved only by grace through faith, Spener insisted, but our works and godly lives emerge from grateful hearts for what God has done for us. Christianity does not consist of mere knowledge of the faith but rather of practice; the real mark of Christ’s disciples is love. Our goal in the Church must be the awakening of a fervent love, “first toward one another and then toward all men.”

Christians have to become accustomed “not to lose sight of any opportunity in which they can render their neighbor a service of love, and yet while performing it, they must search their hearts to discover whether they are acting in true love or out of other motives.”

In *The Spiritual Priesthood*, Spener reminds his Christian brothers that although their greatest joy may lie in their relation to God and his Word, they are God’s servants in daily work and life; they “prove in such service their obedience to God and their love to their fellowmen.” The entire welfare of the neighbor is enjoined upon us. The Lord’s Prayer points us toward real neighbor concern: “As we recognize and call upon a common Father, we should have a loving and brotherly mind towards all, and this brotherly love includes care for the welfare of our neighbor.”

Was all of this just whistling in the wind, or did the early Pietists express these lofty counsels in flesh and blood? They did. August Hermann Francke was the outstanding channel of agape love in early Pietism, in reaching literally thousands of people with Christ's compassion.

The city of Halle was the scene of this golden era of pietistic social concern. Francke really cared about people—about their nitty-gritty miseries, about their poverty, about their homelessness, about their inadequate education, about their loneliness. Out of this

Sons and daughters of the pietist heritage ought to be in the forefront of the social concerns of the Church today.

loving care for people, a whole constellation of institutions and agencies began to emerge.

■ An orphanage. This serving agency was first lodged in Francke's home. At the time of his death in 1727, more than 2,200 children were being served in the various institutions of Halle, 300 of them orphans.

■ A school for poor children. Francke believed that the Church has a direct responsibility for the poor. He initiated a box in the Church of St. George for contributions to the education of poor children.

■ A widow's house

■ A house for unmarried women

■ A place for needy students

■ Hospital and dispensary

■ A home for itinerant beggars

■ Services available to the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and the mentally ill

■ Visitation of the unfortunate residents of almshouses, hospitals, and prisons.

It is undoubtedly true to say that to a large extent the acts of love in early Pietism were largely individualistic, and that the rank and file of the people did not adequately grasp the realization that the whole Church is called to the tasks of love and mercy. It is equally true to say that the acts of love were primarily remedial, "healing the wounds of the afflicted rather than uncovering and dealing with the causes of social wrong." It is, however, too harsh to assert that "the Pietists were little concerned about the physical needs of people except in so far as they gave access to a ministry of spiritual needs." That is too simple and too caustic.

By looking at the writings of early Pietism, and considering the historical data, the conclusion of Francke about social responsibility is substantiated:

Concern and regeneration should lead man into service on behalf of the social betterment of the world.

II. Translations for the Church of the 1970s

The temptation in the Church is always present to canonize the past. If worship forms, theological language, lifestyles, are fixed from one century to another, we speedily become irrelevant and bypassed as Christians. If, however, we can recover the intent of an historical movement, get behind its timeboundness, and translate its goals and purposes into terms appropriate for our own day, the spiritual momentum of the movement can continue to influence the People of God, and through them, the world out there. To be faithful to the pietists in the latter segment of the twentieth century does not necessarily mean repeating what they said as they said it, but to constantly reflect on their concerns and to seek relevant and effective translations.

1. The pietists were concerned about the reform and the renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This is our concern, too, as the descendants of the pietist heritage. To be God's People in mission as the early Church was, to be obedient to God's guidance and call: this means reforming, restructuring, reshaping the Church's life.

2. The pietists were concerned about the inner life with God. The devout personal life—including prayer, the study of the Scriptures, meditation on spiritual classics—needs constant attention and cultivation.

This could be a vital and penetrating contribution to the social activist movement in the church life of our time. The activist who is committed to the reordering of society, refashioning its priorities and values, making life more human for all, needs the perennial reminder that the tender plant of personal devotion calls for daily watering; and he neglects it to his serious peril.

3. The pietists were concerned about the holy life, a life "God-pleasing" and loving toward the neighbor.

It is difficult, even impossible, for me to see how a life can be in any full sense genuinely holy today unless it shares the aches and pains of people. Contemporary holy living calls for:

■ justice for the blacks and other racially oppressed groups;

■ concern for the hungry and the poor;

■ alarm over man's wanton pollution of his environment;

■ passion for the end of war;

■ respect for the rights and dignity of every human being—woman, child, man—whoever.

Sons and daughters of the Pietist heritage ought to be in the forefront of the social concerns of the Church today—not because of their humanism, nor because of theological liberalism, nor because of lowest-common-denominator ideology, nor because of philanthropy, but because of their being new creations in Jesus Christ and because of their unquenchable yearning for the truly holy life.

Christian college students and others whose consciences are sensitized toward the seemingly senseless conflict in Indochina, toward the pervasive racism which is poisoning the bloodstream of our society, toward the inhumane conditions of ghetto existence, toward the industry's rape of natural resources, toward injustice wherever it appears may be fulfilling in most pointed fashion the pietist dream: a holy life to match the inner life with God.

4. The pietists were concerned about an authentic daily expression of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. A new importance of the Christian layman emerged—not simply his familiarity with the Bible, nor his capacity to discuss theological concepts with the pastor and with others in the fellowship, nor his participation in the services in the Church. Wherever he was—at work, at home, in the community—he was a bearer of the Good News and a channel of agape to his neighbor.

All of this is to say: the pietist heritage and the social concerns of the contemporary Church ought to get together! They are not incompatible at all! As a matter of fact, they were meant for each other!

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CONVERSATIONS—RESPONSE

A CALL FOR A 21ST CENTURY PIETIST ■ Alexandria Taylor

I REMEMBER THE PHONE CALL as if it were yesterday. I was standing in the living room of my suburban apartment. I answered the phone with my normal greeting and continued to do what I was doing as the other person started to talk. There was something different about this call – the person began to share his thoughts on what God was revealing to him about starting a multicultural church in the city with a group of college students. I was intrigued enough at this point to stop what I was doing and start listening to something that would change my life forever. He asked me, “What would happen if a generation of believers gathered across racial, social, and cultural differences for one common purpose, to seek the heart of God and build relationships that will impact Chicago and then the world? Is it possible to be a church that models the New Testament church of the 1st century and still impact a generation in the 21st century? Can this generation be the kind of church where people from all walks of life, regardless of where they’re at in their spiritual journey, are valued and find acceptance?”

In this phone call, I heard how he believed this could be done and why he wanted me to be a part of it. As he continued to share, I could mentally, physically, and spiritually see the vision of this multicultural church led and established by a group of diverse people ready and willing to pursue God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. God honored my prayer request that I could become a part of this new community. The person on the other end of the phone was my friend and colleague at the time, and within a year he became my pastor at this multiethnic church.

The church is located in a predominately Latino neighborhood north of downtown Chicago. Like many neighborhoods in Chicago, each one comes with its own unique stories and histories. After working with the church for a year, my husband and I decided to move to this Latino neighborhood of Logan Square. At first the hardest thing about moving into the city was getting lost, but after I learned my way around, I realized that living in Logan Square and learning the streets wasn’t enough. It is essential for me to live in Logan Square. I needed to get to know the

community, its history and its stories. I needed to shop at the neighborhood stores. It meant walking in the neighborhood wasn’t about me getting from place to place, but a way to know the real community and the people we came to serve and the community that will serve us.

Recently, a friend gave me an article written by the late Dr. F. Burton Nelson, “The Pietist Heritage and Social Concerns.” He writes about the history of pietism and its effect on Christian life and service: who the Pietists were, how they affected the larger society, and how they influenced social concerns by putting their faith into action – not just using words. As I read the article one question stood out to me: Are there any Pietists in this generation? Does this generation love their neighbors more than themselves? Are they capable of uncovering and dealing with the causes of social wrongs, or will we just focus on healing the wounds of the afflicted?

One thing I love about this generation is that they are willing to ask hard questions. They recognize that giving food to the homeless only heals the wounds for a moment; they want to find the cause of why the wound keeps opening. I believe this generation pursues the hard questions to get real answers. This generation also has access to receiving news and information in seconds. They can see the start and end of wars broadcast to them twenty-four hours a day. There is another pivotal thing that we now have access to that this generation’s ancestors did not: the availability to discover and build relationships across cultures and ethnic backgrounds in schools, neighborhoods, and churches. This generation can live, work, and play with people from all over the world from preschool to college. With all the power, money, education, and technology at their fingertips, this generation is well equipped to be a “priest” of our time, like Philipp Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke in the 18th century.

But even after three years of being in community with my church, I still wrestle with answering the questions that my pastor asked me. Can a community of diverse people

seek the Kingdom and not worry about the color of their skin? Can we be Pietists today and fight the causes and the wounds in our communities? There are many problems that come with worshipping in a multicultural community. Most of the time I lose hope, rely too much on myself, am tempted to push my own agenda, and sometimes I even forget that

Are there any Pietists in this generation?

God is what gives me hope for this community. The call to be a multicultural community isn’t the idea or vision of one person, but the vision and calling of God. My prayer is that God honors and trusts us to allow us to see this vision – and when we seek God, the battles and fights become easier and they become His. We must be committed not only to community, fellowship, and breaking bread, but to truly loving each other, for better and for worse, and across different skin colors. The call to pursue a multicultural community is part of the vision to see God’s Kingdom here on earth. It is to believe in the vision that John talked about in Revelation, and to believe that it is starting to happen now.

I want to *call* Pietists to seek the Kingdom of God by living with or worshipping with or supporting a multicultural community. I want to *call* all Pietists from all cultures and ethnicities, young and old, with blue eyes or brown hair or olive skin or mocha skin, with green eyes or Swedish background or brown skin or white skin, short or tall, medium or long hair, sienna skin or of Asian descent, with light skin or First Nation people or Latino people, and people from all over the world—I want to *call* all Pietists to come together to seek and worship the one God, our Heavenly Father and Son Jesus Christ. I want to *call* all Pietists to sing “Holy, Holy, Holy.” It doesn’t matter if you sing loud, off-beat, move side to side, sing from your heart, clap your hands, dance, or just stand in awe. When the kingdom comes, everyone will worship the King.

I believe that this generation is equipped to bring the universal Church as a whole to become a better reflection of God’s Kingdom in all its cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity. How will you – how will your generation – live out the call of Pietism?

CONVERSATIONS—RESPONSE

THE WORLD WE CANNOT SEE: RECLAIMING PIETISM FOR GOD’S GLORY, NEIGHBOR’S GOOD ■ Adam Phillips

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”
—Revelation 21:4

WE MUST NOT THINK OF PIETISM AS A MUSEUM EXHIBIT, highlighting the glory days of a now distant era. This is the antiquarian’s task. It is not a manual either, a how-to book for the problems of our world today.

Pietism is a rich inheritance, a treasure to be re-investigated and re-told: a collected story and memory of a movement that came out of a trajectory of real events, leading to new mission. This is the work of history. To unearth and reflect with the goal of re-remembering and re-planting—connecting with one’s root system while seeking to bear new fruit.

F. Burton Nelson’s 35-year-old essay “The Pietist Heritage and Social Concerns” is this attempt at re-remembering and re-planting. Both a call to bear witness and a prayer for real socio-ecclesial change at the dawn of the 1970s, Nelson’s essay is brilliant in its simple clarion call – “sons and daughters of the Pietist heritage ought to be at the forefront of the social concerns of the Church today.”

We cannot see with our own eyes the world of the Pietists. But we know, through their theological reflections, periodicals, hymnody, educational material, and the fruits of their vast missionary efforts, that the Pietists were ultimately concerned with what Nelson so aptly describes as “an authentic daily expression of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.” C. John Weborg calls this “a sociological apologetic for the gospel,” where “a fruitful Christian life is evidence of the power and therefore of the truthfulness of the gospel.”

The Pietist anthem “God’s Glory, Neighbor’s Good” reflects the ethos of a people who saw their vocation as Christian disciples – equipped and called to good works – following the One who was executed for the sake of the entire world. The Pietists also understood the life-implications of the resurrection. New

life in the resurrected Christ was not a static event but a dynamic event that transformed both individual and communal life. This is reflected in the Covenant’s early Mission Friend question, “Are you yet living in Christ?”

The early Pietists chose to seek transformation – this was not a passive acceptance of a new age. Coming out of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), people of good faith and good will sought a reconciled life where a Spirit of peace and new life squelched quarrels over the otherworldly confessions and the this-worldly allegiance to competing nationalisms. Theirs was a life rooted in the real struggles of this world, inspired and sustained by the world to come, seeking real change. Dale Brown suggests that “never before had there been such a universal sense of irretrievable disaster. The war was religiously divisive, morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, and ultimately futile in its results.”

This is the Germany in which Philipp Jakob Spener survived his adolescence and emerged as a church leader in the war’s aftermath. It is not surprising, then, that the general thrust of Spener’s seminal *Pia Desideria* would be eschatological, with a “hope for better days.” As a practical theologian, Spener described a “true Christianity” which consisted “of more than avoiding manifest vices and living an outwardly moral life.” The truly godly life was that of the early Church, which sought to live not for personal gain, but in service of God to the glory of God and the nurture and flourishing of the neighbor. Citing Tertullian, Spener saw the godly life as exhibiting the marks of wisdom, temperance, chastity, compassion, truth, and liberty.

The Halle project, led by Spener’s student and godson August Hermann Francke, affirmed these marks of the godly life by applying them practically. There in the orphanages, grammar schools, hospitals, university, and missionary training facility, “the whole per-

son” was involved. At the center of Francke’s concern was what he called, in a 1697 sermon, “The Duty to the Poor.”

“Although God the Most High quite earnestly enjoined the care for the poor in the Old as well as in the New Testament through commandments, promises, and threats, experience teaches that most people’s hearts are set upon how they either may gather treasure for themselves or use up their abundance in worldly pleasures while the poor go astray and must perish in body and soul.”

Urging his government’s leaders to have more concern for “the least of these” in his day, it was not enough, to Francke, to exhibit only empty talk, or a “mouth-faith” of praise, song, and adulation. One was a “true person of prayer before God” by “practicing love toward neighbors.”

So what do we seek today in reclaiming a Pietist identity? We seek to answer the call to the contemporary holy life – contextual, abundant, and humble – through servant compassion, justice, and advocacy. The Christian seeks justice because it is “that whole and lasting life” – right relationship with God and Creation. Justice is the already and the not-yet promise of the world to come: a place that has to be believed before it can be seen.

Nelson’s call still rings prophetic for us today. Are we teaching and preaching (in the church and in the public square) a faith that is concerned with the whole of society? Are our spiritual and moral values concerned with individuals or with communities? Do we nurture Christian disciples as “whole people?”

Real change and progress has been made in Nelson’s ‘five concerns’ (see *Covenant Quarterly*, Nelson, p. 104). At the dawn of 2005, however, we are on the cusp of taking (at times consciously and with indifference) large steps backward. The bitter crop of racism and ethnic prejudice still infects our hearts and social structures. 842 million people around the globe experience daily hunger. Energy consumption in this country alone is at

One was a “true person of prayer before God” by “practicing love toward neighbors.”

Continued on page 10

POEMS PRAYERS & PRAISES

ORIGINAL CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS THAT REFLECT OUR JOURNEY TOWARD DISCIPLESHIP



“All This Life”

Song lyrics by Andrew Thompson

*Refrain: For all this life I live is a gift from you
So all my life I'll live to honor you*

*I see it in the dancing brook
I see it in the swaying trees
I hear it in a child's laugh
And it draws me to my knees*

*I feel it in a loving touch
I hear it when you call my name
I taste it in the bread and wine
And I find the joy again*

*I see it in the crown of thorns
I see it in the cross of pain
I look inside an empty tomb
And I'll never see the same*

(Copyright 2001, Cwazy Wabbit Music, CCLI# 3402425)

For audio clip and chords, visit: <http://www.columbiagroove.org/creativity.html>

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” —Colossians 3:16-17



Hike Before a Funeral
Rebekah Eklund

*The familiar dirt trail,
fragrant with the spring smell of mud.
In the ache of silence*

*I follow it absently, climb steadily
up, into the steep hills
rising above the city.*

*Wind smoothes the reddened stone.
Patches of vivid green flare:
glint of new needles.*

*My cheek to the butterscotch bark.
Overhead, the outstretched limbs
spiral into strong noonday light.*

*Blue: blue deep as new paint,
brushed in a gentle curve,
the sun bright as honey.*

*Aspens like white gasps
between the pines.
Spring surprises me,
carves into my coldness;
sunlit woods rush into my emptiness
sharp, new, their warmth and scent*

*shockingly tender, touching me
here and there with shadows,
the whispers of leaves.*

*I long to stay here, rooted to this stony ground,
sheltered under these great spreading arms,
learning stillness.*

EVERYDAY SACRED

RECOVERING A THEOLOGY OF MEALTIME ■ James Amadon

“YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT.” The truth of this maxim becomes more complete if we add, “You are how you eat.” Food and mealtimes may seem like peripheral issues for theological examination, but if we are looking for ways to live out justice in our everyday lives, the first place to turn just may be the dinner table.

Food and mealtimes play a major role throughout the Bible. From the dangerous fruit of Eden shared by the first couple to the fruit in the center of the New Jerusalem designed for the healing of the nations, food and its consumption teach us valuable lessons about God, creation, and ourselves. Negatively, we see the Tempter enticing humans to eat harmful produce, Esau selling his birthright for a pot of stew, the newly freed Hebrews rejecting God’s manna and pining for Egyptian delicacies, Amos crying out against rich Israelites trampling on the poor and then asking for grain, Pharisees closing ranks around the table, and a growing Pentecost church overlooking widows in the daily distribution of food. Positively, we witness God constantly providing for Israel and setting aside time for harvest gleaning and the Year of Jubilee; Jesus making radical statements of inclusiveness, love, and grace by choosing his dinner guests without discretion; and Peter being moved to new levels of faith and fellowship in his vision of ‘clean’ food.

The Scriptures teach us that what and how we eat affects the way communities are formed and strengthened, how we set and tear down social boundaries, and how time is lost or redeemed. A central part of our worship life is a reenactment of Jesus’ final meal with his disciples, in which we remember what Jesus has done and become part of it, share in the Body of Christ, and declare who God is, who we are, and how we are to live.

These lessons are in danger of being forgotten in the midst of our fast-food culture. Life in modern America has little time for shared meals, rejecting healthy, intentional, corporate eating in favor of processed, quick, individualized consuming. In the name of efficiency and ease we actually lose our sense of true time, allowing the myth of instantcy to

swallow the slow, deep, redemptive experience of shared meals and conversation. With the loss of true time comes the fracturing of relationships and the closing in of social boundaries. Underneath it all lies a disrespect for God’s creation as we uphold a system that taxes the land as well as our bodies.

To see this in action we need to look no further than the explosion of fast-food franchises and profits over the last few decades. Providing swift, inexpensive, processed, tasty food to American consumers has come at a hefty price. Profits have become more important than values, and food has been reduced to a product. This has led to unjust worker practices and pay, a beef industry that consumes enough grain to feed millions of people, questionable marketing practices targeting children and teenagers, a pending health crisis, and a disturbing strategy to spread this phenomenon globally.

In the midst of this we have the opportunity to redeem mealtime. Our choices each day of what we eat, how we eat, and with whom we eat offer a chance to live justly in

our daily lives and provide a witness to the world of an alternative way to live and be. We can help build and protect our families, churches, and communities by setting aside time for good meals, upbuilding conversation, and mutual support. In doing this we will also stand against destructive practices that harm ourselves, our neighbors, and God’s creation.

Covenanters have always understood strong relationships to be at the center of our shared faith. As we continue to form these bonds and ask each other the age-old question, “How is your walk with Jesus?”, perhaps we might find that a good place to answer this question in words and deeds is at the table.

THE WORLD WE CANNOT SEE **continued from page 7**

unsustainable levels, leading to ecological destruction. Reports of prisoner torture, child sex-trafficking, and other abuses are widely reported and documented. We live in a world that sees violence as a first response to conflict.

This is not the time to despair, however. With God, anything is possible (Mark 10:27). As young Pietists today, we must continue, in the words of Spener, “to discern what is the hope of our calling.” Science and industry, trade and diplomacy are, in this world, inherently flawed – but they are not irredeemable. With much discovery and capability, we must channel our energy, reflecting God’s grace and seeking God’s glory, to do good work for the world.

We cannot save the world. But we must seek justice in this world. With the promise of the world we cannot see, and

emboldened by the One who went before us and for our collective sake, we must live out a boldly holy life today that seeks:

1. An end to racism, jingoism, and ethnic hate – both individual and systemic.
2. An end to world hunger, seeking a greater equity for all.
3. An ecology reflected in a sustainable economy that seeks to maintain, steward, and nurture the non-human creation.
4. A peaceful world without war.
5. The protection of human rights.

The challenge before us is to live out a faith that is active in love. We seek this life because it is the call of the Sermon on the Mount, the vision of the prophets, and the intention of our Creator. Thankfully we have the Holy Spirit before us and amongst us – and a deep well of heritage that helps equip us for the days ahead. For God’s glory, world’s good.

CALL TO ACTION

Participate in God's mission for justice in the world.

The following are a few tangible suggestions for how you, your church, and your community might embody wholistic discipleship and justice in your own context. We want to encourage each other to practice our faith in these tangible ways, and continue sharing with each other options for how we might embody biblical justice each day.

■ **Buy fair-trade coffee** for your household; ask your church board if they would consider switching over the coffee used for the congregation as well. Information about fair-trade coffee can be found at www.citykidjava.com, www.equalexchange.com, and www.tenthousandvillages.com. Also, look for local fair-trade distributors in your area.

■ **Partner with local congregations** who have different cultural practices than yours. Develop long-lasting relationships. Worship, eat, and read scripture together.

■ **Help your church become a partner** (covenant) congregation with Bread for the World. Visit www.bread.org to learn how your congregation can be a voice for the voiceless and speak on behalf of the hungry in the United States and abroad. As a beginning step, host an Offering of Letters at your church with Bread – for a Letters kit and more information, visit: www.bread.org or call Adam Philips at 1-800-82-BREAD.

■ **Subscribe to “Sojourns”** or Prism, an online forum sponsored by Sojourners and Evangelicals for Social Action, at www.sojonet.org or www.esa-online.org/prism.

■ **Plan to attend the Joint Conference on Poverty and Hunger** being held between Bread for the World and Call to Renewal June 4-7, 2005, in Washington, D.C. Hear speakers, attend workshops, attend an interfaith prayer service, and lobby Congress on behalf of poor and hungry people. For more information visit: www.bread.org/nationalgathering.

WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW

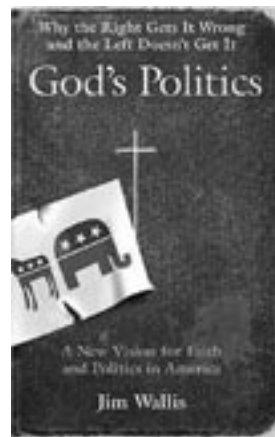
News in Brief

■ Two resolutions submitted by the Young Pietists were passed at the 2004 Covenant Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, MN: the

Resolution to Encourage Emerging Leaders on Covenant Boards, and the Resolution to Encourage Churches to Support Bread for the World and Call to Renewal. Both resolutions can be found at: www.youngpietists.org/Witness.htm.

■ The Department of Christian Formation has a new curriculum available for local churches called “The School of Racial Righteousness,” available in 2005. The curriculum focuses on how to have dialogue and education around the emotionally charged, personal, and historic aspects of race in the church. For more information contact Debbie Blue at 1.773.583.0220.

■ The Department of Christian Formation is preparing for Sankofa: Journey toward Racial Righteousness. The journey sends intentionally cross-racial partners to historic sites of racial injustice, including Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia. The trip departs from Chicago on February 4. Please pray for the participants and their impact on Kingdom work.



God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It by Jim Wallis

The new book by Sojourners director Jim Wallis grows out of his heartfelt vision of what he calls a “fuller, deeper, and richer conversation about religion in public life, about faith and politics.” His provocative title points to Wallis’ belief that there is a fourth option in American politics for the faithful Christian: neither conservative, liberal, nor

libertarian, but prophetic - an option that draws from the powerful prophetic tradition. The book’s passionate call is for both religious communities and the government to pay heed to the key values of this prophetic tradition, and for the church to be challenged by God’s politics, which Wallis claims are never partisan, neither Democratic nor Republican. —Reviewed by Rebekah Eklund

RESOURCE REVIEW

Book & Websites

A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life by Parker Palmer

In *A Hidden Wholeness* Palmer speaks to our desire as individuals and groups to live undivided lives. By this he means lives that are rooted in who God made us to be as uniquely us. For him injustice, violence, and forces that separate us from being whole in everyday life are forces of fragmentation. Living an unfragmented or undivided life happens through an inner journey we take both in solitude and with others. His explanation of circles of trust is one of the practical ways he shows this journey toward wholeness happening. The circle of trust is a gift from the Quaker tradition which has some similarity to early Covenant pietistic home groups. In early Covenant history groups of people would sit together and ask each other questions like, “How goes your walk?” and “Where is it written?” The Quaker circles of trust also ask questions. What makes them unique, however, is that they have guidelines

“We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well... We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.”
—Monseñor Oscar Romero