

## Radical Discipleship: The Anabaptists, Puritans and Pietists

### Overview

The Reformation was a time of far-reaching changes both in the church and in the world in general. Much like waves from a ship hitting the shore well after the vehicle has passed out of sight, the effects of the Reformer's challenges would continue to impact the church for centuries.

Martin Luther and other Reformers challenged the Roman Catholic Church's emphasis on tradition, papal authority and the sacraments by re-establishing the centrality of scripture, faith, and grace. However, these Reformers were surprised to see the extremes to which other believers pushed their reforms. In the years following the Reformation, believers questioned and re-examined even more fundamental teachings in their attempt to follow Christ. Their efforts have shaped many of the current beliefs and practices of Protestant Christianity, beginning with the American colonies.

As we study the Anabaptists, Puritans and Pietists, we will see that they wrestled with many of the same questions we still ask:

- If scripture is our only guide, how literally should we apply biblical teaching to our daily lives? If the Bible is silent on an issue, how should we respond?
- To what extent should our churches and personal lives follow the example of the believers in the church in Acts?
- What should be our relationship to our government and culture?
- Is salvation a result of right beliefs, or of heartfelt love and faith? What role does emotion play in a Christian's life?
- Is Christianity a matter of individual, private faith, or of corporate faith and practice?

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## Understanding the Setting

1500

- 1525 Anabaptist movement born
- 1527 Schleithem Confession
- 1535 Fall of Münster
- 1536 Menno Simons adopts Anabaptism
- 1560 First Puritans appear

1600

- 1618-48 Thirty Years War
- 1620 Mayflower Compact
- 1621 Pilgrims land at Cape Cod
- 1630-42 Puritan migration to America
- 1662 Halfway Covenant
- 1675 Spener, *Pia Desideria*
- 1678 Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*
- 1692 Salem witch trials

## Step 1: Grasp the Issue

### Sound Bites

“It would probably not be inexpedient . . . to reintroduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings.” – Philipp Jacob Spener.

“Why would I want to try to be like 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews and Greeks? The church needs to adapt to the times and contemporary culture. Old fashioned is not necessarily holy.”

“This is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do his will . . . it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things.”

– Anabaptist teaching in the Schleithem Confession

“Whenever we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God’s excellent gifts.”

– John Calvin

“I would rather be governed by an honest Turk than a dishonest Christian.”

– Martin Luther

“Luther never dreamed that his call for reform, his excommunication and establishment of a rival form of Christianity would lead to the complete splintering not only of Christendom but also of Christian theology.” – Roger Olson

### Case Studies

It’s been a number of years since you visited your old college friend, Greg, and you’ve been looking forward to catching up with him. He was always a free thinker, but you are somewhat surprised by the rather isolated life he has chosen for his family. When you raise some questions about his life, he responds by saying, “Christians no longer seem any different from non-Christians. We’ve become so immersed in our culture that we have become just like it. I think that with the decline of American society and its eventual collapse, God has called us to separate ourselves. Despite the attempts of the 1990s, where are the great Christian statesman? Despite our attempts to be involved in education, where are the great Christian educators? When did you last see a Christian artist accepted in the

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New York art scene? Christians either become like the surrounding culture or they don't succeed. Our witness should be our distinctive lifestyle.”

What do you think about Greg's analysis and conclusions? With what do you agree or disagree? What alternatives to his approach might you suggest?

Sharon has always been what you would consider a faithful member of your church. She's been in your small group for a few years and serves as the craft coordinator for children's church. Since you haven't seen her in a few weeks, you decided to invite her to lunch in order to catch up with things.

During lunch, Sharon nervously shares that she has decided to stop attending your church in order to attend another. When you ask her about her decision, she says, “I became uncomfortable with the emphasis on searching for the warm, fuzzy feeling. All of our worship was about us and how God made us feel. Think about how many times the worship songs contained the words, I, me, and mine. They don't really mention much about God's character and majesty. We seemed so informal about it all. The focus in Bible study was on how something made us feel, not whether it was true. I know faith is about a relationship with God, but it seemed that the focus had shifted to me, not him. It had gotten too subjective. It was like a social club where people with similar values and beliefs decided to meet together. It was no longer about my role in God's worldwide body. I left to be part of a church that focuses more on God's sovereign will and my submission to it.”

How would you respond to Sharon? What truth is there in her statements? With what do you agree or disagree?

**What are some questions we need to explore as we seek to gain a better understanding of this issue?**

## Step 2: Study the Scriptures

### **Romans 13:1-7**

The Reformers had been born into a culture in which political power and spiritual authority often coincided. As political thought evolved the two spheres diverged, the Reformation movement expanded while secularism increased. At the same time, individuals placed increasing value on matters of conscience and their personal interpretation of Scripture. These developments raised a number of questions for Christians.

- According to these verses, how should churches and individual Christians respond to the authority of the state?
- What place, if any, is there for resisting secular authority when it conflicts with personal conscience?

### **Romans 13:11-14**

Following the Reformation many, particularly those with more radical views, had a heightened expectation of the second coming of Christ. Others placed great emphasis on the importance of personal piety and godliness.

- How do you think these verses should be applied in the life of a Christian?
- With what sense of urgency should we conduct ourselves in society and in our private lives?

### **Isaiah 58: 13-14**

Many times we see a focus on obedience as something which is controlling and takes away the spark of life. The Puritans saw obedience and true happiness as linked.

- What is the tone of Isaiah as he speaks of the Sabbath? What words does he use to describe the emotions involved?

## Step 3: Consult Other Sources

Luther had challenged the Roman Church by removing any belief or practice that he saw as contradicting scripture. When Ulrich Zwingli led the Swiss Reformation, he went farther suggesting that believers should hold only beliefs which had scriptural foundation. But the Lutheran church would remain linked closely and be supported by the civil government. In fact, as governments chose sides between Roman Catholic and Protestant, states would go to war with each other. And over time the spiritual vibrancy of the reforms would sink in many cases in to a dry assent to correct doctrines. In addition, the focus on God's sovereign action led to a loss of focus on evangelism.

Several movements would challenge the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, the Swiss Reformation led by Zwingli, and the English Reformation which established the Church of England. The innovations and challenges they started have shaped the way many Protestant Christians worship today. Reading 1 discusses the Radical Reformation, the Anabaptist movement that began in 1525. Reading 2 and 3 discuss the fascinating movement that we call the Puritan movement. Beginning as a desire to establish a more pure church in early 1600 it would take full flower over the next 100 years. Finally, Reading 4 introduced a movement that focused on a believer's personal relationship with Christ. This movement in the late 1600's would be called Pietism."

As you read, try to answer the following questions: How did the Anabaptist understand what church should be and how did this differ from earlier visions of the church? How should the church relate to the government? List key lessons that can be learned from the Puritans. What impact can you see of Pietism in our churches?

"1525: Anabaptist Movement Begins," by A. Kenneth Curtis et al.

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"The Puritans," by Paul Spickard and Kevin Cragg.

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"Why We Need the Puritans," by J. I. Packer.

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## Step 3: Consult Other Sources (continued)

“1675: Philip Jacob Spener Publishes *Pia Desideria*,” by A. Kenneth Curtis et al.  
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# Radical Discipleship

## 1525: Anabaptist Movement Begins

by A. Kenneth Curtis, J. Stephen Lang, and Randy Petersen

**B**oth the Lutheran and Swiss Reformed movement had early connections with political systems. In Luther's case, Elector Frederick the Wise protected him, and various German princes, seeking political freedom, began to support his cause. Zurich stood by Zwingli in the face of Catholic opposition.

To a group of Christians under Zwingli, replacing Rome with Zurich was not acceptable. They wanted the church to proceed quickly with reforms that would return it to a first-century ideal. Instead of focusing on church hierarchy or political systems, this more radical group sought a self-governing church ruled by the Holy Spirit.

The issue that brought on conflict was infant baptism. This dissenting group objected that the Bible showed adult baptism and wanted to make it general practice. On January 21, 1525, the Zurich council ordered their leaders to cease disputation. But the radicals only saw it as another case of political powers trying to rule their spiritual lives. That snowy evening, in a nearby village, they met and baptized one another—later they would receive the name *Anabaptist*, “rebaptizer,” from their detractors.

The Anabaptists wanted to do more than reform the church—they sought to return it to the state they saw portrayed in the Scriptures. Instead of a powerful

institution, they wanted a brotherhood, a family of faith, created by God, who worked in people's hearts.

The Anabaptist propounded separation of church and state, because they saw the church as something distinct from society—even a “Christian” society. They did not want political powers to compel the conscience of the believer in any way.

Nor did they favor church bureaucracies. AS the first people to practice democracy in the congregation, they believed that God not only spoke through bishops and councils, but through the individual congregations.

At a time when the Muslim Turks stood at the door of Europe, the Anabaptist s preached the unpopular doctrine of pacificism. Oddly enough, this precept did not carry over to the actions of many followers. The name Anabaptist became synonymous with “disruption.” New Protestant preachers had their sermons interrupted by Anabaptists, and some of the radicals caused riots. In addition, occasions of the practice of polygamy and claims of bizarre revelations from God caused both Catholics and Protestants to believe they must rid the world of this wrongheaded group. Persecution ensued, and many Anabaptists were put to death by fire or drowning.

Yet the movement spread, especially among the lower classes. Evangelism brought new believers, and some Protestants



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were attracted by the Anabaptist insistence on purity and biblical preaching.

No one man ties this diverse collection of church together, but perhaps the best-known among the Anabaptist leaders was Menno Simons (1496—1559), who gave his name to the Mennonites.

To the world the Anabaptists gave the idea of separation of church and state. In its descendants, which include the Mennonites and Brethren churches, pacificism still remains an important doctrine.



## The Puritans

by Paul Spickard and Kevin Cragg

As we saw in [Issue 8], the English Reformation was initially less thoroughly infused with the principles of Luther and Calvin than was the Reformation on the Continent. The break with Rome occurred more because of Henry VIII's felt need for a male heir than because he or other English leaders were convinced of the rightness of Protestant theology. Only slowly and incompletely did Reformation views creep into the Church of England.

The main advocates of Reformation ideas in seventeenth-century England were young, vigorous reformers who came to be called *Puritans*. This was a term of abuse at first, describing their intention to purify the Church of England of its popish residue. But soon they embraced the title as their own. Many Puritans stayed within their Anglican congregations and pushed for Calvinist reforms, biblical preaching, and individual awakenings through a conversion experience. Others split off into congregations of their own and so became known as *Separatists*.

Some Separatists left England in 1608 for the Netherlands, where they could worship among other Calvinists. Tiring of life in a foreign country, however, soon they were back in England, planning to go to the New World. There they intended to set up a godly "city on a hill" that would be a beacon to the corrupt and decayed regimes of Europe. In time, they hoped, all Europe would profit by this example and return to God.

In the fall of 1620 a band of separating Puritans aboard the ship *Mayflower* landed on Cape Cod in North America and set up the

Plymouth Colony. In the next few decades hundreds and then thousands of Puritans joined them in Plymouth and nearby Massachusetts.

The New England towns they built were closed communities, dominated by clergy and filled in the early years with believing Puritans. They took seriously God's call to holy living and examined themselves and each other rigorously for evidence of sin. As in other parts of the North Atlantic world at the time, the Massachusetts Puritans did not tolerate deviation from their standards of theology or behavior. Outlandish deviants, such as Baptists and Quakers, were punished severely and sent from the colony. Because each individual who had been elected by God for salvation was supposed to undergo a conversion experience, individual Puritans looked deep inside themselves for signs of God's grace and anguished over the fate of their souls.

The Puritans believed not only that God chose individuals for salvation, but also that God chose each person for a particular type of work. Because one was called by God to a vocation there was an obligation to work conscientiously in it. All this hard work, plus low taxes and cheap land, meant that, on the average, New England Puritans enjoyed a high degree of financial success compared to Europeans.

H. L. Mencken, a twentieth-century American social critic, wrote that "Puritanism is the haunting fear that someone, somewhere

may be happy.”<sup>1</sup> Many people today share his misunderstanding, but the Puritans of the seventeenth century bore little resemblance to the somber, repressed individuals that the adjective *puritanical* connotes. Mencken perceived inhibitions in his contemporaries and laid them at the door of the Puritans, when those inhibitions in fact stemmed more from the Victorian period, two centuries later. Although Puritans worked hard, they liked fun. They wore bright clothing—most often earth tones, such as green and russet, but sometimes red, yellow, or violet. Black was preferred for Sunday worship. Puritans insisted that a fulfilling sexual relationship was the joy and duty of every married couple. Puritans drank beer and complained bitterly when they could not get it. They loved family life and doted on their children.

The watchword for Puritans was not abstinence but moderation. All things belonged to God and were for God’s glory. If God gave people good things they were to be enjoyed, but not to the point where the person became so enthralled with the gift that he or she ceased to perceive the Giver. So food or drink or play or sexual intercourse, each good in itself, should not be pursued for its own sake, but should be enjoyed in moderation and appreciated as a gift of God.

Puritan society was intensely intellectual. Most Puritans could read and write, for it was necessary for all of God’s people to read Scripture for themselves. Puritans founded Harvard and Yale colleges, initially to train ministers, but later simply to educate young Puritans. They also laid the foundations for one of America’s most important achievements: an effective public school system.

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<sup>1</sup> Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1.

The New England Puritans are reputed to have been governed both by the people (democracy) and by the ministerial elite (theocracy). Neither was quite the case. Starting with the Mayflower Compact of 1620, rule was by a majority of adult free male church members in the New England colonies, or at least these were the franchised voters who elected governing officials. Puritans thought a social covenant among humans was the basis of society. Since all believers were spiritually equal, and all were called by God to their vocations, all had an equal responsibility to contribute to public management.

But society was also based on a collective covenant with God. Christian principles must undergird every law and government action. Government was responsible to see that all people observed true religion and behaved in a godly manner. This extended to wage and price controls and laws against usury. The doctrine of vocation suggested that some people—not ministers but prominent laypeople—were the natural leaders of society. So, although the colonies held free elections with high participation, the same individuals—men such as William Bradford and John Winthrop—were chosen with monotonous regularity.

When the Puritans sailed to America they hoped to provide England with an example of a godly commonwealth. In time, they hoped, England would see the light and reform itself. Their hopes seemed to be realized in the 1640s, when a Puritan-influenced Parliament rose up and overthrew the increasingly autocratic King Charles I and proclaimed a Puritan state in England. Seven years of civil war tore the country apart, and the Puritan experiment in national government ended ignominiously with the restoration of royal government in 1660. During the dozen years

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of Oliver Cromwell's government in England, attention was torn away from New England and the sense of purpose of some American Puritans began to falter, along with the economy.

There were other signs of decline. The Puritan missions into the wilderness began to fall apart in the second generation as the holy zeal of the founders began to wear thin among their successors. The first sign of decline was the *Halfway Covenant*, reached in 1662. The Puritans baptized their children as infants but did not admit them to full church membership until they could testify to a conversion experience. The problem was that an increasing number of second- and third-generation people had not had such experiences, even though they believed the correct doctrine and lived righteous lives. Furthermore, they could not vote since they were not church members, and their children could not receive baptism. The Halfway Covenant allowed children to be baptized on the same terms as their parents, in the hope of preparing them for conversion experiences of their own.

This was the first public move to water down the requirements of Puritan theology, and it was much lamented by Puritan ministers. In ensuing decades the New Englanders were plagued by Indian wars, immigration of large numbers of people who did not care about Puritan theology, and

outbreaks of witchcraft. The last culminated in the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692, in which hysterical preadolescent girls charged men and women with practicing evil arts. The only hope for an accused person was to confess, repent, and name other witches. To deny one was a witch was to insure one's doom. In four months twenty-seven people were convicted and twenty executed before the religious and civil authorities brought the panic under control. Anti-witchcraft episodes of this sort were common and sometimes bloodier in "enlightened" Europe in the same era, but that one occurred in New England signaled that the Puritan experiment was falling apart.

The Puritans have bequeathed to later generations much that is near to the heart of American culture. American universities and public schools got their start in the Puritan colonies. American democratic institutions owe a great deal to the New England town meeting and the Massachusetts legislature. The Puritans handed down an ethic of public service and civic responsibility that has helped provide the nation with effective leadership. On the negative side, some observers trace a certain intolerance in the American character to the Puritan legacy.



## Why We Need the Puritans

by J. I. Packer

**H**orse racing is said to be the sport of kings. The sport of slinging mud has, however, a wider following. Pillorying the Puritans, in particular, has long been a popular pastime both sides of the Atlantic, and most people's image of Puritanism still has on it much disfiguring dirt that needs to be *scraped off*.

'Puritan' as a name was, in fact, mud from the start. Coined in the early 1560s, it was always a satirical smear word implying peevishness, censoriousness, conceit, and a measure of hypocrisy, over and above its basic implication of religiously motivated discontent with what was seen as Elizabeth's Laodicean and compromising Church of England. Later, the word gained the further, political connotation of being against the Stuart monarchy and for some sort of republicanism; its primary reference, however, was still to what was seen as an odd, furious, and ugly form of Protestant religion.

In England, anti-Puritan feeling was let loose at the time of the Restoration and has flowed freely ever since. In North America it built up slowly after the days of Jonathan Edwards to reach its zenith a hundred years ago in post-Puritan New England. For the past half-century, however, scholars have been meticulously wiping away the mud, and as Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel have unfamiliar colours today now that restorers have removed the dark varnish, so the conventional image of the Puritans has been radically revamped, at least for those in the know. (Knowledge, alas, travels slowly in some quarters.) Taught by Perry Miller, William Haller, Marshall Knappen, Percy

Scholes, Edmund Morgan, and a host of more recent researchers, informed folk now acknowledge that the typical Puritans were not wild men, fierce and freaky, religious fanatics and social extremists, but sober, conscientious, and cultured citizens: persons of principle, devoted, determined, and disciplined, excelling in the domestic virtues, and with no obvious shortcomings save a tendency to run to words when saying anything important, whether to God or to man. At last the record has been put straight.

But even so, the suggestion that we *need* the Puritans—we late twentieth-century Westerners, with all our sophistication and mastery of technique in both secular and sacred fields—may prompt some lifting of eyebrows. The belief that the Puritans, even if they were in fact responsible citizens, were comic and pathetic in equal degree, being naive and superstitious, primitive and gullible, superserious, overscrupulous, majoring in minors, and unable or unwilling to relax, dies hard. What could these zealots give us that we need, it is asked.

The answer, in one word, is maturity. Maturity is a compound of wisdom, goodwill, resilience, and creativity. The Puritans exemplified maturity . . . They were great souls serving a great God. In them clear-headed passion and warm-hearted compassion combined. Visionary and practical, idealistic and realistic too, goal-oriented and methodical, they were great believers, great hoppers, great doers, and great sufferers. But their sufferings, both sides of the ocean (in old England from the authorities and in New England from the elements), seasoned and

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ripened them till they gained a stature that was nothing short of heroic. Ease and luxury, such as our affluence brings us today, do not make for maturity; hardship and struggle however do, and the Puritans' battles against the spiritual and climatic wildernesses in which God set them produced a virility of character, undaunted and unsinkable, rising above discouragement and fears, for which the true precedents and models are men like Moses, and Nehemiah, and Peter after Pentecost, and the apostle Paul.

Spiritual warfare made the Puritans what they were. They accepted conflict as their calling, seeing themselves as their Lord's soldier-pilgrims, just as in Bunyan's allegory, and not expecting to be able to advance a single step without opposition of one sort or another. Wrote John Gere, in his tract *The Character of an Old English Puritane or Nonconformist* (1646): 'His whole life he accounted a warfare, wherein Christ was his captain, his arms, prayers and tears. The Crosse his Banner and his word [motto] *Vincit qui patitur* [he who suffers conquers].'<sup>1</sup>

The Puritans lost, more or less, every public battle that they fought. Those who stayed in England did not change the Church of England as they hoped to do, nor did they revive more than a minority of its adherents, and eventually they were driven out of Anglicanism by calculated pressure on their consciences. Those who crossed the Atlantic failed to establish new Jerusalem in New England; for the first fifty years their little colonies barely survived. They hung on by the skin of their teeth. But the moral and spiritual victories that the Puritans won by keeping sweet, peaceful, patient, obedient, and hopeful under sustained and seemingly intolerable

pressures and frustrations give them a place of high honour in the believers' hall of fame, where Hebrews 11 is the first gallery. It was out of this constant furnace-experience that their maturity was wrought and their wisdom concerning discipleship was refined. George Whitefield, the evangelist, wrote of them as follows:

Ministers never write or preach so well as when under the cross; the Spirit of Christ and of glory then rests upon them. It was this, no doubt, that made the Puritans . . . such burning and shining lights. When cast out by the black Bartholomew-act [the 1662 Act of Uniformity] and driven from their respective charges to preach in barns and fields, in the highways and hedges, they in an especial manner wrote and preached as men having authority. Though dead, by their writings they yet speak; a peculiar unction attends them to this very hour. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Those words come from a preface to a reprint of Bunyan's works that appeared in 1767; but the unction continues, the authority is still felt, and the mature wisdom still remains breathtaking, as all modern Puritan-readers soon discover for themselves. Through the legacy of this literature the Puritans can help us today towards the maturity that they knew, and that we need.

In what ways can they do this? Let me suggest some specifics. First, there are lessons for us in *the integration of their daily lives*. As their Christianity was all-embracing, so their living was all of a piece. Nowadays we would call their lifestyle holistic: all awareness, activity, and enjoyment, all 'use of the creatures' and development of personal

<sup>1</sup> Cited from Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (Epworth Press: London, 1957), p. x.

<sup>2</sup> George Whitefield, *Works* (London, 1771), IV: 306f.

powers and creativity, was integrated in the single purpose of honouring God by appreciating all his gifts and making everything ‘holiness to the Lord’. There was for them no disjunction between sacred and secular; all creation, so far as they were concerned, was sacred, and all activities, of whatever kind, must be sanctified, that is, done to the glory of God. So, in their heavenly-minded ardour, the Puritans became men and women of order, matter-of-fact and down-to-earth, prayerful, purposeful, practical. Seeing life whole, they integrated contemplation with action, worship with work, labour with rest, love of God with love of neighbour and of self, personal with social identity, and the wide spectrum of relational responsibilities with each other, in a thoroughly conscientious and thought-out way. In this thoroughness they were extreme, that is to say far more thorough than we are, but in their blending of the whole wide range of Christian duties set forth in Scripture they were eminently balanced. They lived by ‘method’ (we would say, by a rule of life), planning and proportioning their time with care, not so much to keep bad things out as to make sure that they got all good and important things in—necessary wisdom, then as now, for busy people! We today . . . could learn much from the Puritans at this point.

Second, there are lessons for us in *the quality of their spiritual experience*. In the Puritans’ communion with God, as Jesus Christ was central, so Holy Scripture was supreme. By Scripture, as God’s word of instruction about divine-human relationships, they sought to live, and here, too, they were conscientiously methodical. Knowing themselves to be creatures of thought, affection, and will, and knowing that God’s way to the human heart (the will) is via the human head (the mind), the Puritans practised

meditation, discursive and systematic, on the whole range of biblical truth as they saw it applying to themselves. Puritan meditation on Scripture was modelled on the Puritan sermon; in meditation the Puritan would seek to search and challenge his heart, stir his affections to hate sin and love righteousness, and encourage himself with God’s promises, just as Puritan preachers would do from the pulpit. This rational, resolute, passionate piety was conscientious without becoming obsessive, law-oriented without lapsing into legalism, and expressive of Christian liberty without any shameful lurches into license. The Puritans knew that Scripture is the unalterable rule of holiness, and never allowed themselves to forget it. Knowing also the dishonesty and deceitfulness of fallen human hearts, they cultivated humility and self-suspicion as abiding attitudes, and examined themselves regularly for spiritual blind spots and lurking inward evils. They may not be called morbid or introspective on this account, however; on the contrary, they found the discipline of self-examination by Scripture (not the same thing as introspection, let us note), followed by the discipline of confessing and forsaking sin and renewing one’s gratitude to Christ for his pardoning mercy, to be a source of great inner peace and joy. We today . . . could profit much from the Puritans’ example at this point too.

Third, there are lessons for us in *their passion for effective action*. Though the Puritans, like the rest of the human race, had their dreams of what could and should be, they were decidedly not the kind of people that we would call ‘dreamy’! They had no time for the idleness of the lazy or passive person who leaves it to others to change the world. They were men of action in the pure Reformed mould—crusading activists without a jot of self-reliance; workers for God who depended

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utterly on God to work in and through them, and who always gave God the praise for anything they did that in retrospect seemed to them to have been right; gifted men who prayed earnestly that God would enable them to use their powers, not for self-display, but for his praise. None of them wanted to be revolutionaries in church or state, though some of them reluctantly became such; all of them, however, longed to be effective change agents for God wherever shifts from sin to sanctity were called for. So Cromwell and his army made long, strong prayers before each battle, and preachers made long, strong prayers privately before ever venturing into the pulpit, and laymen made long, strong prayers before tackling any matter of importance (marriage, business deals, major purchases, or whatever). . . . Surely it is obvious that at this point also the Puritans have a great deal to teach us.

Fourth, there are lessons for us in *their program for family stability*. It is hardly too much to say that the Puritans created the Christian family in the English-speaking world. The Puritan ethic of marriage was to look not for a partner whom you *do* love passionately at this moment, but rather for one whom you *can* love steadily as your best friend for life, and then to proceed with God's help to do just that. The Puritan ethic of nurture was to train up children in the way they should go, to care for their bodies and souls together, and to educate them for sober, godly, socially useful adult living. The Puritan ethic of home life was based on maintaining order, courtesy, and family worship. Goodwill, patience, consistency, and an encouraging attitude were seen as the essential domestic virtues. In an age of routine discomforts, rudimentary medicine without pain-killers, frequent bereavements (most families lost at least as many children as they

reared), an average life expectancy of just under thirty years, and economic hardship for almost all save merchant princes and landed gentry, family life was a school for character in every sense, and the fortitude with which Puritans resisted the all-too-familiar temptation to relieve pressure from the world by brutality at home, and laboured to honour God in their families despite all, merits supreme praise. At home the Puritans showed themselves (to use my overworked term) mature, accepting hardships and disappointments realistically as from God and refusing to be daunted or soured by any of them. Also, it was at home in the first instance that the Puritan layman practised evangelism and ministry. 'His family he endeavoured to make a Church,' wrote Gere, ' . . . labouring that those that were born in it, might be born again to God.'<sup>3</sup> In an era in which family life has become brittle even among Christians . . . there is once more much to be learned from the Puritans' very different ways.

Fifth, there are lessons to be learned from their *sense of human worth*. Through believing in a great God (the God of Scripture, undiminished and undomesticated), they gained a vivid awareness of the greatness of moral issues, of eternity, and of the human soul. Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is man!' is a very Puritan sentiment; the wonder of human individuality was something that they felt keenly. Though, under the influence of their medieval heritage, which told them that error has no rights, they did not in every case manage to respect those who differed publicly from them, their appreciation of man's dignity as the creature made to be God's friend was

<sup>3</sup> Wakefield, *loc cit*. One cannot help thinking of the married lady who came to tell D. L. Moody that she thought she was called to be a preacher. 'Have you got any children at home?' Moody asked. 'Yes, six.' 'There's your congregation; off you go!'



strong, and so in particular was their sense of the beauty and nobility of human holiness. . . . the Puritan spirit is at this point a corrective from which we can profit greatly.

Sixth, there are lessons to be learned from the Puritans' *ideal of church renewal*. To be sure, 'renewal' was not a word that they used; they spoke only of 'reformation' and 'reform', which words suggest to our twentieth-century minds a concern that is limited to the externals of the church's orthodoxy, order, worship forms and disciplinary code. But when the Puritans preached, published, and prayed for 'reformation' they had in mind, not indeed less than this, but far more. On the title page of the original edition of Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*, the word 'reformed' was printed in much larger type than any other, and one does not have to read far before discovering that for Baxter a 'reformed' pastor was not one who campaigned for Calvinism but one whose ministry to his people as preacher, teacher, catechist and role-model showed him to be, as we would say, 'revived' or 'renewed'. The essence of this kind of 'reformation' was enrichment of understanding of God's truth, arousal of affections God-ward, increase of ardour in one's devotions, and more love, joy, and firmness of Christian purpose in one's calling and personal life. In line with this, the ideal for the church was that through 'reformed' clergy all the members of each congregation should be 'reformed'—brought, that is, by God's grace without disorder into a state of what we would call revival, so as to be truly and thoroughly converted, theologically orthodox and sound, spiritually alert and expectant, in character terms wise and steady, ethically enterprising and obedient, and humbly but joyously sure of their salvation.

This was the goal at which Puritan pastoral ministry aimed throughout, both in English parishes and in the 'gathered' churches of congregational type that multiplied in the mid-seventeenth century.

The Puritans' concern for spiritual awakening in communities is to some extent hidden from us by their institutionalism; recalling the upheavals of English Methodism and the Great Awakening, we think of revival ardour as always putting a strain on established order, whereas the Puritans envisaged 'reform' at congregational level coming in disciplined style through faithful preaching, catechising, and spiritual service on the pastor's part. Clericalism, with its damming up of lay initiative, was doubtless a Puritan limitation, and one which boomeranged when lay zeal finally boiled over in Cromwell's army, in Quakerism, and in the vast sectarian underworld of Commonwealth times; but the other side of that coin was the nobility of the pastor's profile that the Puritans evolved—gospel preacher and Bible teacher, shepherd and physician of souls, catechist and counsellor, trainer and disciplinarian, all in one. From the Puritans' ideals and goals for church life, which were unquestionably and abidingly right, and from their standards for clergy, which were challengingly and searchingly high, there is yet again a great deal that modern Christians can and should take to heart.

These are just a few of the most obvious areas in which the Puritans can help us in these days.



# Radical Discipleship

1675: Philip Jacob Spener Publishes *Pia Desideria*  
by A. Kenneth Curtis, J. Stephen Lang, and Randy Petersen

**B**y the later part of the seventeenth century the Lutheran Church had fallen away from its emphasis on personal faith and into the desire for correct doctrine. One pastor would challenge that situation with a small book that changed Protestantism.

In his studies at the University of Strasbourg, Philip Jacob Spener had learned the biblical languages, doctrine, and history that were generally part of the course of study for the ministry. But his professors also impressed upon him the need for spiritual rebirth and Christian ethics. Spener discovered the need to apply scholarship to personal experience. Unless a person is born anew, no formal religion will be of any consequence.

As the new minister preached against laziness and immorality and sought to make his congregation practice personal Christianity, he faced controversy. The clergy of the Lutheran Church had seen themselves as the center of the church, and they felt threatened at the individualistic turn of such preaching.

Spener formed devotional meeting, known as *collegia pietatis*, which would form the basis of the movement that resulted—Pietism.

Not satisfied with preaching from his own pulpit in Frankfurt and the formation of local groups, this Lutheran pastor put his ideas for reform into writing. In 1675 he published *Pia Desideria*, “Pious Desires,” which presented a six-point plan.

First, he wanted to see Christians have a deeper, more life-affecting understanding of the Scriptures. To achieve this goal, he suggested the small meetings in homes.

Seventeenth-century churchmen found this a novel and possibly threatening idea.

Spener wanted the church to take the priesthood of all believers seriously, so he suggested giving responsibility within the *collegia pietatis* to lay people. Though the pastor was important, he should not carry the whole burden for spiritual nurture.

Opposing the fear of his age that individualism led to trouble, Spener advocated that the church emphasize personal experience. He perceived that correct doctrine alone led to a dead faith.

Learning for the Thirty Year War, which had proved the dangers of religious controversies, Spener sought to avoid theological conflict. If unavoidable, debates should be carried out in a spirit of charity, but he urged people to hold on to the essentials of the faith and not fuss over minor points. Better, he told them, to pray for the erring person rather than to shout at him.

Not only should pastors learn their Bible and theology, they should also learn to deal with the laity, Spener said. The pastor who could not express the life of devotion could not lead his congregation in that direction.

He also encouraged pastors to give sermons that applied Scripture to life. They should inspire and inform, be understandable and uplifting. Instead of simply lecturing, pastors needed to inspire God’s people.

The furor raised by Spener’s ideas caused him to move from Frankfurt to Dresden and then to Berlin. In Berlin, in 1694, he and August Francke formed the University of Halle. Under Francke the university became a center for evangelism and missions. Many

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years after the Catholic Church had brought missions to Asia and America, Protestant missions began at Halle, with a center for studying Oriental languages and translating the Bible.

Though the clergy saw great threats in Spener's program for reform, it brought joy to laypeople. In the churches that adopted his teaching, family life improved, the moral standards were raised, and people learned that Christianity meant more than simply agreeing with a catechism. Small-group meetings encouraged a family feeling within the congregation, and the Bible came alive to believers.

Luther had emphasized the importance of congregations singing, but its use had languished. Pietism gave a great boost to hymnody, and writers like Paul Gerhardt, Joachim Neander, and Gerhardt Tersteegen produced hymns that would later be translated into the English Methodist hymnbooks.

Many churches, influenced by the warmth of Pietism, developed the Bible study, group prayer, and outreach that its founder had idealized. The practical aspects of Pietism—the emphasis on feeling and spreading Christianity—would have far-reaching effects and have been particularly influential in the development of American Christianity.



## Pietism on the Continent

by Mark Noll

The methodism of the Wesleys and like-minded evangelists could be considered the British phase of a more general movement in the Protestant churches of Europe. The English historian W. R. Ward has been a leader in charting the thick web of connections and common interests that linked pietists on the Continent, evangelicals in Britain, and revivalists on the American frontier.<sup>1</sup> Chief among these links was a common thirst for a more directly personal religion and a common resistance to efforts by both Catholic and Protestant state-church regimes to exert tighter control over their local populations. So it is that a sketch of the pietist movement in Germany, which emerged in the generation before Wesley, features many of the themes, questions, problems, and solutions that also characterized the work of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and their associates in Britain.

“Pietism” is a contested term, but it can be traced historically to currents within German Lutheranism in the seventeenth century. At the start of that century the Lutheran churches in the German lands labored under many difficulties. Their work was tightly confined by the princes of Germany’s many sovereign states. Their ministers seemed often more interested in philosophical wrangling and rhetorical ostentation than in encouraging their congregations. The quarrel with the Reformed-Calvinistic wing of Protestantism, which dated from Luther’s lifetime, continued

with considerable bitterness into the 1700s. Moreover, the devastating Thirty Years’ War (1618-48), which was fought over a confused welter of religious, political, and economic matters, had enervated central European life in general, including the churches.

To be sure, the religious picture was not entirely bleak. Influences from beyond German-speaking lands were encouraging a more vital Christian faith and practice. A resurgence of godly living and wholesome theology in Holland spilled over into northern Germany. Devotional works by English Puritans like Richard Baxter (1615-91) and John Bunyan (1628-88) were being translated into German. There was also renewed interest in some of the mystical Christian writings of the Middle Ages. In Germany itself a more vigorous faith was promoted by the writings of Johann Arndt (1555-1621), whose *True Christianity* (1606) would become an important influence on later pietists, and the moving hymns of Philip Nicolai (1556-1608), like “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying.”

But in many places these signs of spiritual life were obscured by the formalism and insincerity of church leaders. This bleak general situation was the context for the unstinting work of Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), who is often called the Father of Pietism. Born near Strasbourg and educated in that city and elsewhere on the Continent, he was called in 1666 to be the chief minister at Frankfurt am Main. There, beyond his heavy schedule of official duties, he renewed structures for educating and confirming young people. He called for moral reform in the city. And he initiated a far-flung correspondence

<sup>1</sup> Especially important is W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

with rulers and other leaders that eventually won him the title “spiritual counselor of all Germany.”

Most important, Spener also promoted a major reform in the practical life of the churches. A sermon in 1669 mentioned the possibility of laymen meeting together, setting aside “glasses, cards, or dice,” and encouraging each other in the Christian faith.<sup>2</sup> The next year Spener himself instituted such a *collegia pietatis* (pious assembly). The group met on Wednesdays and Sundays in Spener’s home to pray, discuss the previous week’s sermon, and apply passages from Scripture and devotional writings to their lives. Two generations later John Wesley would modify Spener’s innovation as the basis for the class system (or interconnected small groups), which became the spiritual hallmark of methodism.

Spener’s efforts reached a broader public when in 1675 he was asked to prepare a new preface for the published sermons of Johann Arndt. For this effort, Spener penned his famous *Pia Desideria* (The piety we desire). This brief work examined the sources of spiritual decline in Protestant Germany and offered proposals for reform. It was an immediate sensation. Spener criticized nobles and princes for exercising unauthorized control over the church, ministers for substituting cold doctrine for warm faith, and laypeople for disregarding proper Christian behavior.

Spener’s six proposals for reform became a banner for Pietism in general. First, there should be “a more extensive use of the Word of God among us.” The Bible, said Spener, “must be the chief means for reforming

something.” Second, Spener called also for a renewal of “the spiritual priesthood,” the priesthood of all believers. Here he cited Luther’s teaching as a way to urge all Christians to be active in the work of Christian ministry. Third, he appealed for Christian faith to be expressed in authentic practice, arguing that Christianity was more than a matter of simple knowledge. Fourth, Spener urged restraint and charity in religious controversies. He asked his readers to love and pray for unbelievers and the erring and to adopt a moderate tone in disputes. Fifth, he called for reform in the education of ministers. Here he stressed the need for training in piety and devotion as well as in academic subjects. Last, he implored ministers to preach edifying sermons, understandable by the people, rather than technical discourses, directed at other clergy.

These proposals provided an impetus for reform and renewal among many clergy and laity alike. They also posed two difficulties that continue to trouble pietistic and evangelical religion. First, they were opposed by some clergymen and professional theologians. Some were concerned only about preserving their traditional authority, but others saw dangers of rampant subjectivity and anti-intellectualism in the populism of Spener’s proposals. Second, some laypeople took Spener’s proposals as authorization for departing from the traditional churches altogether. While Spener firmly rejected the separatist, or sectarian, conclusions that others drew from his proposals, he was not always successful at reining in those who criticized the traditional churches. In a similar fashion, John Wesley hoped his methodist societies would be a fruitful assistance to the Church of England, but he lived to witness the formation of a new Methodist denomination that separated from the Church of England.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, introduction to Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 13. All quotations from *Pia Desideria* in the next paragraphs are from this English translation.

# Radical Discipleship

Spener's aim was to revive the concerns of Luther and the early Reformation. Yet he also altered Reformation theology in much the same way that Wesley would alter it. For example, Spener saw salvation much more as regeneration (the new birth) than as justification (being put right with God), even though the reformers had stressed the latter more than the former. Spener, along with later pietists and evangelicals, also regarded the sacraments more as occasions for fresh experiences of God within the heart than as the objective offering of grace, which had been the view of the major reformers. Such changes in Protestant doctrine were subtle, but as with similar changes from John Wesley, they represented important adjustments fitting the Christian message to their best understanding of the needs of the age.

Spener left Frankfurt for Dresden in 1686; from there he was called to Berlin in 1691. His time in Dresden was stormy and beset by controversy. Before the decade was out, the faculty of Luther's university, the University of Wittenberg, would charge Spener with 284 doctrinal errors. His stay in Dresden was not a loss, however, for there he met the individual who would become his successor, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727). Later, Spener helped found the University of Halle (near Berlin), to which Francke was called in 1691. Under Francke's guidance the University of Halle showed what Pietism could mean when put into practice. Francke's Halle, in fact, became an inspiration for Protestant renewal and Protestant service throughout Western society.

Francke began his extensive practical work by opening his own home in 1695 as a school for poor children. The next year he founded an orphanage that became world famous and established an institute for the training of teachers. Later he was influential in

setting up a publishing house, a medical clinic, and other institutions. To understand the importance of these pietistic efforts in society, it is helpful to remember that when George Whitefield went to Georgia in 1738, the official task of this famous itinerant was to serve as director of an orphanage, a work inspired by Francke's example in Halle.

Francke himself had experienced a dramatic conversion in 1687. In turn, his extensive and pioneering missionary efforts flowed from the desire to make Christian conversion possible for others who had not yet heard the gospel. Under Francke's direction, pietists trained at Halle became the first Protestants to engage in extensive cross-cultural mission work. The university established a center for studying oriental languages and also promoted translations of the Bible into non-Western languages. Francke's missionary influence was felt both directly, through laborers who went from Halle to foreign fields, and indirectly, through groups like the Moravians and an active Danish mission that drew inspiration and guidance from the leaders of Pietism.

The pietistic renewal sponsored by Spener and Francke soon multiplied into other varieties of German Pietism during the age of Wesley. Count Ludwig Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), head of the renewed Moravian church, was Spener's godson and Francke's student. Zinzendorf organized refugees from Moravia (in today's Czech Republic) into a kind of *collegia pietatis* within German Lutheranism. Later he shepherded this group in reviving the Czech Unity of the Brethren. These Moravians, as they came to be called, carried the pietistic concern for personal spirituality almost literally around the world, with important missions in India, the West Indies, North America, and elsewhere. It is of momentous

significance for the history of English-speaking Christianity that John Wesley was thrown into a company of Moravians during his voyage to Georgia in 1735. What he saw of their behavior then and what he heard of their faith after returning to England contributed directly to his own evangelical awakening.

The Moravians were pietists who moved beyond Lutheranism. Another group, at Wurttemberg in Germany, remained within the Lutheran state church and became noteworthy for the nature of its biblical study. Its leading figure, Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), possessed an unusual combination of scholarly expertise and devotional commitment. Bengel was a pioneering student of the text of the New Testament as well as a careful and pious exegete. His *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* was used by Wesley for his own biblical works and remains in print today. Bengel's contention that the story of salvation constitutes the heart of all Scripture stimulated the work of many others. He also wrote several books on the millennium and the last days, which also led to a characteristic pietistic and evangelical fascination with the end of the age.

The influences radiating from Halle, Wurttemberg, and the Moravians profoundly affected Protestantism throughout Europe and the New World. Pietistic influences moved rapidly into Scandinavia. When soldiers from Sweden and Finland were captured in battle with Russia (1709), pietist concerns migrated with the captives to Siberia. Pietism was important in America too. The father of American Lutheranism, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-87), was sent to America by Francke's son in response to requests from German immigrants for spiritual leadership. Elsewhere in early America pietist influences were also present among the Mennonites,

Moravians, Brethren, and Dutch Reformed.

As indicated above, Pietism had a formative influence on John Wesley, even though he would break with the Moravians in the early 1740s. During his stay in Georgia from 1735 to 1737 and after his return to England, Wesley's direct contacts with several Moravians played a key role in his discovery of God's active grace. Despite these connections, Wesley eventually came to feel that pietistic spirituality incorporated too much mysticism and that pietistic sensibility did not lead to sufficient activity in Christian causes. Yet despite later differences, Wesley's debt to the pietists—as shown by his visits to Germany and his translations of German hymns by Zinzendorf and other pietists—remained substantial.

Several movements of renewal in Europe throughout the nineteenth century can also be traced in part to the continuing influence of Spener, Francke, and their circle. In Germany the revival of interest in Luther and his theology is associated with pietistic impulses. The Basel Mission and the Inner Mission Society of Denmark, two active agencies for cross-cultural activity in the nineteenth century, also drew upon pietistic traditions. In Norway the revivalist Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) restored a pietistic presence to the Lutheran state church. In Sweden the recovery of pietistic concerns was one of the factors in the establishment of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church (1878). Especially when offshoots of Pietism migrated to North America, with its large English-language population, the merging of evangelical and pietistic influences was a common experience.

The movements of renewal on the Continent shared a great deal with the methodism promoted by John and Charles Wesley and exemplified in large measure by the hugely popular preaching of George

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Whitefield. The English and continental movements shared an emphasis on Scripture, a zeal for evangelism, a method of organization through small groups, and a dedication to practical social benevolence. It was not only what these commitments meant positively, however, but also what they entailed by way

of negation that marked the rise of evangelicalism (and Pietism) as such important developments in the history of the church.





## Just a Closer Walk with Thee by Timothy Clark

“It’s not about religion, it’s about relationship.” If you worship in almost any evangelical church, these words probably have a familiar ring. While we might think they reflect the ideas of the Reformation as it rebelled against the authority and traditions of the Roman Church, Luther and Calvin might find them a little odd. This sentiment actually is the fruit of seeds sown by the radical reformation studied this week. So it might be helpful to take a look at the impact of their ideas—both positive and negative—since they are likely to have permeated our spiritual lives.

At the heart of the issue is this: What will replace the overthrown center? What happens when a 1500-year focus on three sources of authority—written word, creedal statements, and apostolic succession—are replaced by only the written word? What happens when you do away with belief centered in a unified hierarchical church, which administers sacraments and explains truth based on a unified tradition of interpreting scripture? What happens when the focus shifts to individuals developing an individual relationship with God not on their participation in the church?

### Personal Response

In regards to a Christian’s personal faith, pietism made a new focus on passionate love for Christ and becoming like him. Luther and Calvin had already rejected the Roman view of salvation as a gift of God through the

sacraments provided in the Church. They had focused on God’s activity and his sovereign granting of salvation through faith. They described justification in metaphors of a legal court. In contrast, Pietism focused more on what men had to do to be in relationship to God. Passion for God and experiencing God’s presence became primary. “How do I know I am saved? Am I living as God wants me to? What is the status of my heart and passions?”

Although concerned with obedience to God’s will, Luther and Calvin were most concerned that believers understood that they were justified by grace alone—not by works. Pietism re-emphasized the need for personal holiness. Although early leaders never claimed that works were required for salvation, their followers would often become very preoccupied with sanctification, the practice of becoming holy. At times, the focus on ethics, morality and proper living shifted the focus to the believer’s activity not God’s.

### Role of Scripture

This movement created a new focus on believers reading the Bible for themselves. They distributed Bibles so believers could read for themselves. In contrast to Luther’s focus of scripture read in communal settings led by a trained leader, Pietism proposed individuals reading and interpreting the Bible as a solitary endeavor—your private devotions. Scripture was read also for personal edification. “What does the passage mean and what application does it have for my faith today?” became the focus.

# Radical Discipleship

## Role of Church

The concept of the church would also be challenged. Luther and Calvin had challenged the role of a hierarchical external church providing grace through the sacraments. However, they never challenged the need for believers to be involved in the established formal church. They did not deny the sacraments administered by the church, but limited them to ones based on Holy Scripture and reassessed their role in salvation. The Magisterial Reformation also never challenged the 1000-year-old tradition of the relationship of the State to the Church. Pietism redefined believers understanding of church. Although not rejecting the established church, believers would meet together in house churches or cell groups. People would gather not based on formal external ecclesiastical structures but based on common belief. This led to believers uniting around shared beliefs ignoring external structure.

Emphasis was placed on Christian love and moral life. Believers were tired of the spiritual lifelessness, rigidity, and divisiveness of theologians obsessed with dogma and doctrine and defining orthodoxy. But without a central church to say what is orthodox, what do believers do when they read scripture differently? They split and form new bodies of believers. And if believers reject tradition as a guide, are all beliefs based on scripture of equal importance? How do you decide which beliefs are core and which are secondary?

## Preaching

Passion also was expressed in new forms. New devotional literature and hymns developed. Pietist preachers worried that people had become passive in their faith since they assumed that they were one of the elect and baptized into the church. Preaching was focused on repentance, dying to self, and living a Godly life, in an attempt to elicit a personal response from the listeners.

## Social Concern and Missions

Love for others was also a central feature. Evangelism and missions became central activities for believers. Their love for Christ led to an explosion of missionary endeavors at this time. In addition, a focus on loving one's neighbor led to social concerns. They worked in the areas of charity, education, orphanages, and homes for widows.

Opposing but vital forces have always shaped the Christian faith: justification by grace alone vs. holy living, individual relationship with God vs. Christians as part of the church catholic, being separate from the world vs. transforming the world, correct doctrine vs. emotional spiritual vitality. Pietism offers inspiring models and potential risks as it tried to follow Christ passionately.





## Step 5: Discuss the Issue

1. Can you recall a time when you felt “on fire” in your passion to pursue the Lord? How did you relate to the world around you?
2. The Anabaptists argued that our lives should be modeled on the teaching of scripture alone—an activity should not be a part of the church’s life if not taught in scripture. Do you agree? If not, how might you differ?
3. Have you been involved in churches where correct doctrine was the primary focus? Have you been involved in a church where emotional intensity in relationship to Christ was the central focus? What risks and benefits did you find? How did you attempt to find a balance?
4. If all Christians make decisions about their beliefs based on their reading of scripture, how is the Church anything more than people trying to find people of similar beliefs? What, if anything, is lost by this approach? How do we decide when a belief is important enough to leave a church or join a church?
5. Has this lesson convicted or reminded you of any changes you need to make in your life? How should your “radical discipleship” affect the way you live in your culture?
6. What elements in your church’s life and practice can you see in the reforms discussed in this lesson?
7. What lessons from Packer’s article do you feel challenged you? How could they be applied in your life? In your church?
8. Spickard and Cragg’s article points out that the Puritans were intensely intellectual. Yet evangelical Christians often distrust intellectualism as if it is opposed to faith. What is the true role of the intellect?



NOTES

## Issue Evaluation Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make brief comments on any of the following aspects of this issue:**

**Sound Bites and Case Studies** (Were any of these particularly helpful or unhelpful? Are there any quotes or scenarios you think we should add?):

**Study the Scriptures** (Were the passages selected appropriate? Are there other passages you might have added?):

**Consult Other Sources** (What were your overall impressions of the articles? Did they hold your interest? Were they instructive? Are there any you would drop or add?):

**Form a Response & Take Steps to Obey** (Were the exercises helpful and meaningful? Are there any you would drop or add?):

**Discuss the Issue** (Were any of the questions particularly unhelpful or especially helpful? Were they clear? Did your group discuss any issues that could be added to our list of questions?):

**Overall Impression of this Issue** (Please rate the issue 5= Outstanding, 1= Poor. Also include any general impressions or comments regarding this issue.):

1      2      3      4      5

**Corrections** (typos, grammatical errors, wrong passages, etc.):