

## Turning Point #10: Pietism and Conversion of the Wesleys



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*I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.*

—John Wesley

# I. A Historical Faith

## A. Continental "Pietism"

- *Philipp Jakob Spener*  
(1635–1705 CE)



- *Collegia pietatis* ("pious assembly")

### Spener on Mutual Sharing in Christian Assemblies

In his *Pia Desideria* Spener proposed a conservative form of the small-group meeting that would (in many variations) become standard among pietists and evangelicals:

[I]t would perhaps not be inexpedient . . . to reintroduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings. In addition to our customary services with preaching, other assemblies would also be held in the manner in which Paul describes them in I Corinthians 14:26–40. One person would not rise to preach . . . , but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would . . . speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgment of the rest, doing all this in such a way as to avoid disorder and strife. This might conveniently be done by having several ministers (in places where a number of them live in a town) meet together or by having several members of a congregation who have a fair knowledge of God or desire to

increase their knowledge meet under the leadership of a minister, take up the Holy Scriptures, read aloud from them, and fraternally discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all. Anybody who is not satisfied with his understanding of a matter should be permitted to express his doubts and seek further explanation. . . . Then all that has been contributed, insofar as it accords with the sense of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, should be carefully considered by the rest, especially by the ordained ministers, and applied to the edification of the whole meeting. Everything should be arranged with an eye to the glory of God, to the spiritual growth of the participants, and therefore also to their limitations. Any threat of meddlesomeness, quarrelsomeness, self-seeking, or something else of this sort should be guarded against and tactfully cut off especially by the preachers who retain leadership in these meetings.<sup>1</sup>

1. Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 89–90.

- *Pia Desideria* ("desired piety"—written in 1675 CE)

- *Six Proposals for Reform*

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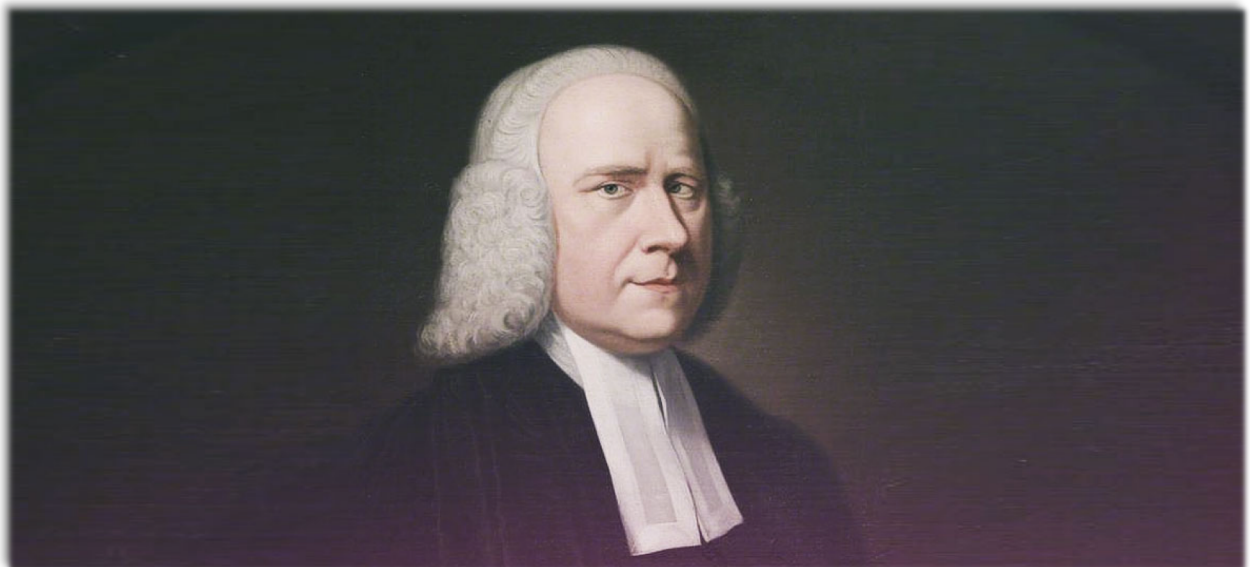
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- *August Francke and Johann Bengel*

- *Pietism: Commitments and Potential Pitfalls?*

## B. English "Methodists": John and Charles Wesley

- *"Submitting to be more vile" (John Wesley)*
  
- *Preserving—and adjusting—the Reformation Message*





## C. Pietistic Evangelicals into the Future

- *Retrieving the Protestant Past...*
  
- *Seeking a more Genuine Christianity...*



## II. The Interpretation of Scripture

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because **he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.** He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

—Luke 4:18–19

And can it be, that I should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died he for me, who caused his pain?  
For me, who him to death pursued?

Amazing love, how can it be  
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me

—Charles Wesley



### III. Love of God & Love of Neighbor (Matt. 22)

What do these people, places, or events teach me about God?

What do these teach me about myself?

What can I do differently this next week based on something I've learned tonight?



#### IV. Thought(s) for Next Session

*Read and meditate on these texts—and how they relate to one another—before our next session.*

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

—Matthew 6:19–21

“Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up.”

—Galatians 6:7–9

# Session #10: Primary Sources