

## Consensus

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# Lutheran pietism

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## FOREWORD

Among Lutherans Pietism has always been an emotional issue. From Spener and his opponents through Hans Nielsen Hauge through Albrecht Ritschl's *Geschichte des Pietismus* to recent revisionist works on Pietism in early American Lutheranism, Pietism has always seemed to be either loved or hated. It is difficult to say why the movement has generated so much heat over the centuries, but generate heat it has.

In recent years the study of Pietism has also begun to generate more reasoned and careful scholarship. Historians such as F. Ernest Stoeffler have begun the task of building a body of research which enables the contemporary student of Lutheran history to gain a more complete view of who the Pietists were and what impact they have had on theology and practice. Two of the studies in this issue of *Consensus* fall into that category. Richard Muller, a historian of seventeenth century Protestant theology who is currently professor of historical theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, has contributed a study of the methodology of Johann Jacob Rambach, a prominent Pietist systematic theologian, which explores the connection between Orthodoxy and Pietism—supposed sworn enemies whose theology was really not all that different. Peter Erb, Professor of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University who has been one of the leaders in the effort to bring a balanced view to the study of Pietism, explores similar themes in his reassessment of how “radical” the so-called Radical Pietists such as Gottfried Arnold really were. To give another perspective, the editor has contributed an article questioning the place of Johann Arndt in the development of Lutheran theology and piety.

Also important is the influence of Pietism on the practice of Lutheran Christianity. No doubt the most influential person in establishing the Lutheran church in North America is Henry

Melchior Muhlenberg, graduate of the University of Halle and avowed Pietist. John Kleiner of Lutheran Theological Seminary, who has been hard at work translating Muhlenberg's correspondence, shares some of the results of that labour with us in his translation and analysis of a letter from Muhlenberg to Baroness Wilhelmine Sophie von Münchhausen. Donald Nevile, Pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Pickering, Ontario, addresses the impact of Pietism on Lutheran worship in his contribution.

This issue is not intended to be either an attack on or defense of Pietism, but to raise issues in the interpretation of Pietism and to indicate some of the scope of contemporary Pietist studies. The editor and writers hope that we will give our readers some new insights into the complex movement known as Pietism and stimulate further research and study.

This issue focuses on German Pietism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which is hardly the complete picture. Lutheranism in Canada has been profoundly shaped by Scandinavian Pietism of the nineteenth century, and perhaps we can devote a future issue of *Consensus* to this area of our heritage. In the meantime, may what we have been able to do here encourage you to delve deeper.

Robert A. Kelly