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Defining 'Radical Pietism': The Case of Gottfried Arnold

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Although the modern study of Pietism, initiated to a large degree following the Second World War, has done much to eliminate many misconceptions concerning the movement, much work remains to be done on some critical issues related to that awakening.¹ In few places is this more needed than in the case of what has been called "Radical Pietism".² The term itself is a problem, since it is used to describe a wide range of disparate religious movements and individuals. Thus there exist Boehmists and Philadelphians, Mennonite, Schwenkfelders and others who trace their heritage back to the Radical Reformation (itself a problematic descriptor³) who in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries picked up and intensified Pietist discourse, making use of it as an apology for their own positions in the new religious climate and being changed by it accordingly.⁴ There exist as well groups and individuals—the Schwarzenau Brethren (Church of the Brethren)⁵ provide a good example—who initially formed within an established Christian body and separated from it.⁶ Finally there are many Pietists who, remaining within established forms of Lutheranism or the Reformed Church, were so strongly critical of the institutional structures to which they belonged that they moved or were forced by their rhetoric to the edges of their respective bodies and there appeared to flirt with separatism. Regularly the term "Radical Pietism" is ascribed to all these groups (and at times to others as well), suggesting a unity where one does not exist, bringing into existence as it were an entity which has no reality other than that of a generic term, and forcing upon Pietism itself configurations foreign to it. As a result there is a tendency to understand

the religious milieu at the close of the seventeenth century in terms of a “right-wing” institutionalised, scholastic Orthodoxy opposed by a Pietist Awakening, itself splintered to the “left” by a “Radical” fringe.

Gottfried Arnold as a “Radical”

The difficulties inherent in such an approach become immediately apparent when one turns to study the Lutheran church historian and poet, Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714).⁷ Arnold is consistently referred to as a “radical” and this designation has forced upon later reviewers of his life and work interpretive cruxes, the solutions to which require sweeping generalisations concerning his “baroque mentality” or questionable explanations for his supposed lack of integrity. Such solutions have in turn, when read back into the history of Pietism, served to prove the reality of a previously hypothesised “Radical” wing of the movement.

The problem can be best understood if one focusses on a single crucial period in Arnold’s career, extending over a two year period from the summer of 1699 to September 5, 1701. Trained in the scholastic forms of theology at Wittenberg, Arnold was early attracted to the study of church history and to the Pietist awakening, and on his graduation in 1689, felt called to the pastorate while being equally attracted to an academic career. He initially solved the dilemma by supporting himself as a tutor, participating actively in Lutheran Pietist conventicles, and continuing his research into early church history.

In 1695 he found himself in Quedlinburg where the Pietist conventicle was especially aggressive and fiercely opposed by local authorities. This political setting seems to have done much to intensify the central theme of his major work, *Die Erste Liebe: oder Wahre Abbildung der ersten Christen*, published the following year.⁸ Like so many books of the time, the title of *Die Erste Liebe* sums up the thesis of the book: The volume describes the “first love” of the pre-Constantinian church, from which the later church has departed; it is a “true portrayal of the first Christians according to their living faith and holy life as found in the earliest writings according to the truth of the primitive united Christian religion, and is directed to all lovers of historical truth (particularly of antiquity), is

practical, and is presented in a faithful and non-partisan (*unparteyisch*) manner.”

Die Erste Liebe was immediately popular and on the strength of the work, Arnold was offered a position in Church History at Giessen. In 1697, after much soul-searching, he accepted, but less than a year later he resigned, explaining his action in a confessional treatise which emphasized the Pietist distinction between those taught directly by God and the book-learned. For one so opposed to scholarly activities, Arnold's productivity at the time was striking.⁹ When he came to Giessen he was working on what was to be his most famous work, the *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*, a large study of the Christian Church from its beginnings to 1688. The first volume of the *Historie* appeared in 1699, the second the year following.¹⁰

The nonpartisanship which the title claimed for the work was far from its actuality. Nonpartisan it was in the sense that it was not written as a defense of any major institutional denomination, but it did maintain a very partisan support of all the heretical movements throughout the seventeen centuries it chronicled. Each of these it tended to describe in terms of the Pietist conventicles of the time: The true Christians are the reborn, awakened believers, attempting to bring new life into static institutions and rigid dogmatic systems as formulated by academic theologians and politically motivated clerics, both of whom attacked their opponents as “heretical”, a term which they themselves, according to Arnold, better deserved. Academic institutions represented for him the epitome of these desiccated structures and it was for that reason that he resigned from his position and began to associate more closely with those who in his own day were attacked by the Orthodox as heretics: Boehmists, Philadelphians, and others.

The publication of the *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* initiated a controversy which occupied Arnold until his death 14 years later and which continued for some time thereafter.¹¹ It was exacerbated to a large degree by the appearance in 1700 of his *Das Geheimniss der göttlichen Sophia* and the appended collection *Poetische Lob- und Liebes-Sprüche*.¹² The former appeared to accept Boehmist-Philadelphian doctrines of the mystical appropriation of divine wisdom

and celibacy and the latter made use of the mystical spiritualist and separatistic poetry of the Schwenkfelder, Daniel Sudermann.¹³ Little wonder then that on September 5, 1701 Arnold shocked his Boehmist correspondents and his Orthodox opponents by marrying and accepting a Lutheran pastorate in Allstedt.

How was one to explain such an action? His opponents for the most part scoffed cynically. His Boehmist defenders had greater difficulty. Johann George Gichtel, the Amsterdam Boehmist with whom Arnold had carried on a close correspondence, hoped for a time that the marriage was of "brother to sister" like that of some others within the movement,¹⁴ but his hopes were dashed with the birth of Arnold's first child. What both his avid Boehmist defenders and his fiercest opponents had in common was that, in spite of his own comments to the contrary, they understood Arnold's life and work as progressively leading toward separation from the Lutheran tradition and they read the *Sophia* and the associated poetic materials as supporting Boehmist Sophia mysticism. Interpreted in this light, September, 1701 could mark nothing else than a complete reversal of his developing position, and could be explained only by attacking his personal integrity or his psychological stability.

In 1923 Erich Seeberg attempted to interpret the 1701 move in a different light.¹⁵ Seeberg focussed on this period of Arnold's life in introducing his monumental study of the *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*. Like many before him, Seeberg emphasized the Boehmist-Quietist influences on Arnold at the time and, as a result, the radical nature of the break which occurred. The break was the second of two major ones which Seeberg noted in Arnold's life (the first being his conversion to Pietism in 1683) and reflected for him Arnold's "baroque personality", which is able to accept and indeed relishes in radical juxtapositions and paradoxes in reality generally and in personal life in particular. Such patterns are exemplified in the poetry and art of the baroque period, Seeberg pointed out, and can mark equally as well the spirituality of the period.

There may well be a simpler way of viewing Arnold's decision and action in 1701, however. Because one is a "baroque character" does not mean that one's life must necessarily be

shattered by paradoxical change or that if such change is evident, one is thereby a baroque character, politically opportunistic, or mentally unstable. If an integral development can be seen in Arnold's life prior to his marriage and acceptance of a pastorate, might not one better view the development in such a way as to include the "radical" shift of 1701? What occurs, in fact, is that if one approaches the study of Arnold's life as that of a mature, thoughtful Pietist Christian and not of an erratic "sick" soul, much of his life, particularly the events of September 1701, and what has been called his "Radical Pietism" can be understood in a much different light.

If one needs to seek in Arnold a spiritual "crisis" (and it is not always useful to pose historical questions within contemporary psychological frameworks), the most obvious place to begin is with Arnold's vocational concerns as they arose in his late teens and early twenties. As early as 1683 Spener had pointed out to him the importance of the pastoral vocation and as a reborn Christian in the midst of a fallen Christendom (as he saw it), such a vocation would have been and was primary in his thought. For Pietists all believers were spiritual priests¹⁶ and the first and primary task of the priest in this model was the care of souls, the pastoral office, an office not to be prepared for or practised by means of academic study in learned halls, but directed to the begetting, nurturing, and edification of new lives in Christ.

As a reborn believer Arnold was to function first and foremost as a pastor. Yet he found himself on his graduation strongly attracted to an academic life. The tension would trouble him throughout his career, but he consistently solved it by directing all his academic work to explicitly "practical" pastoral purposes. His numerous editions, historical studies, poetic and sermon collections, and theological studies were all concerned with awakening and strengthening faith in individuals and the church of his day and serving as apologetic tools for his Pietist fellow-believers. To this purpose he brought whatever seemed of use to him to the setting in which he found himself. For the academics he compiled "revisionary" histories, for the reborn he compiled collections of spiritual texts for edification and meditation, prayer books and "spirit-inspired" poetry. If medieval or early modern Catholic texts appeared helpful to his purposes, he used them "in spite of the darkness

of the times in which they were composed” and if Boehmist, Philadelphian, or Quietist discourse was dominant in some circles with which he was concerned, he was at ease in adapting it in the same way as he adapted Patristic, medieval, Anabaptist and mystical spiritualist materials, to further his Lutheran Pietist gospel.

The Secret of the Divine Sophia

Since attention has been often directed to Arnold’s use of Boehmist discourse in the period here under consideration, a review of his *Das Geheimniss der göttlichen Sophia*, his most clearly “Boehmist” composition, is particularly warranted, since if the book is in fact Boehmist in its intention and execution, Arnold’s later marriage and pastorate do mark a significant “break” in his life.

The book is a relatively brief (some 180 pages) overview of the doctrine of divine wisdom. Following a preface in which Arnold establishes the context for his study, a first chapter comments on reasons for the lack of interest in the topic and a second on the importance of the theme as well as the significance of the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom. The development of the argument through the remaining chapters can be best outlined as follows:

Chapter three treats the eternal source of Wisdom and the life of eternal Wisdom in God,
 chapter four its essence,
 chapter five the relationship between Wisdom and Christ,
 chapter six Sophia and virginity,
 chapter seven unity and distinction in Sophia,
 chapter eight the beginning and initial call of Wisdom in human beings,
 chapter nine the general means to achieve Wisdom,
 chapter ten the special means for union with divine Sophia,
 chapter eleven obedience to Wisdom,
 chapter twelve the fear of and pure love for Wisdom,
 chapter thirteen the first actions of Wisdom in the soul,
 chapter fourteen Wisdom’s secret teaching,
 chapter fifteen Wisdom’s union with and spiritual birth of her children,

chapter sixteen the development and behaviour of the children of Sophia,
 chapter seventeen the spiritual marriage with Sophia,
 chapter eighteen the fruits of the divine Sophia and especially the spiritual wisdom which it gives,
 chapter nineteen Wisdom’s working of praxis in life,
 chapter twenty to twenty-four the fruits of Wisdom,
 chapter twenty-five Wisdom’s activities in the external world of creatures.

The list of the contents given above makes the two-fold division of the work immediately evident. Chapters one to seven treat major issues relating to the theme and chapters eight to the end trace Sophia’s life in the believer from the initial call to her final fruits and effects through the believer on the world at large.

Without doubt, if one reads the *Sophia* in a Boehmist or Philadelphian context or from a supposed “history” of Sophia mysticism beginning in the Hebrew Bible and extending through apocryphal and Gnostic literature via the Kabbalah down to the seventeenth century,¹⁷ there is much in the work to support the contention that Arnold’s position is non-Lutheran and separatistic. Indeed, from such a perspective the sixth chapter of the work can be read as a defense of celibacy for all true lovers of the chaste virgin Sophia and the fifteenth appears to support a doctrine of mystical union out of keeping with Lutheranism.

But, in spite of his associations with Boehmists and Philadelphians at the time (and these are indeed far fewer than is often suggested), the context within which Arnold writes the *Sophia* is a Lutheran one, and if the reader comes to the work with this, rather than a Boehmist, context in mind, the work is seen to be much more unified and the argument more consistent than if viewed as a Boehmist text. Throughout the *Sophia*, as a result, Arnold emphasises the absolute need for God’s grace in the new birth and the continuing spiritual life of the believer, avoiding any suggestion of a natural human potential capable of reaching by its own means ecstatic union with the divine. Moreover, he consistently insists that wisdom is to be understood in a fully christological sense and is not a hypostacised separate entity as some Boehmists suggested.

Finally, although rhetorically shaping his work by the Pietist dualism which separates those born of the Spirit and taught by the Spirit from the book-learned, Arnold does not, as do mystical spiritualist treatises, break the spirit off from the letter.

In all these ways and in many others Arnold remains firmly within the framework of Lutheran Pietism, and does not take up a separatist Boehmism which he must later recant. His concern from the beginning was that of the pastor and teacher. As long as academic pursuits appeared to serve his purposes he followed them and was even willing to accept a professorship. He resigned from the position at Giessen when he felt himself co-opted by a life opposed to this primary task.

The Prefatory Notes

The nature of that primary task is never unclear in his mind, although he recognized that it may be so for readers of the *Sophia* and dedicates the Preface to clarifying the issue. "It is my hope," he writes in his opening sentence of the *Sophia*, "that every understanding person will be able to see the purpose of the present work" (Vorrede, 1; 7).¹⁸ The work is written so that his reader may gain, in typical Pietist fashion, greater experiential knowledge (*erkenntnisz*), certitude, and experience (*erfahrung*) through the work "in so far as grace is made available" (Vorrede, 1; cf. 9:4-11).

By this approach Arnold follows the pattern he established in *Die Erste Liebe* and the *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*: To truly understand the Scriptures and the history of the church one must be reborn and as reborn one will have the inner testimony of the spirit on which to rely. The Spirit's inner testimony is primary, but Arnold does not reject thereby the outer word. It is only in the outer word that the internal testimony of the Spirit can speak, and therefore it is important that all the outer exterior testimony be made available. The long forgotten and often suppressed texts of the early and medieval church, the writings of those declared to be heretics are to be printed and promulgated so that the Spirit can speak through them. And all the best historical critical tools must be used in editing these—the texts must be the texts as they were "originally" written, great attention must be given to the letter¹⁹—but it is not to the letter that the attention is finally

to be directed. The critical tools and the scholarly apparatus is merely a first step in providing the possibilities for the Spirit to speak. The final concern must always be the practical results in piety which arise from the reading of such texts.

Because the Spirit is one, the Spirit’s testimony will be one and all “true” texts read will, as a result, be in agreement with the text at the beginning of Christian history, the Bible. The *Sophia*, Arnold therefore points out, has been written with close reliance on the Scriptures, and what has been discovered is that “not only has the eternal God and Father sought to reveal his Son Jesus Christ and to clarify him according to all these wonders, but that also *in this particularly* divine Wisdom has made itself powerfully manifest through her secret working” (italics mine; Vorrede, 2). Quite properly Arnold points out that he is among the first of modern writers to take up the subject in a full treatise, but by doing so he does not intend to hypostacise Wisdom as a “person” separate from the Trinity (Vorrede, 11). “From the very beginning in the writings of the earliest Christians I found how Jesus Christ was called and was the wisdom of the Father, and I have acknowledged, seen and tasted this same person as the true light and the only master and the precious way, indeed, as substantial truth (*selbständige wahrheit*)” (Vorrede, 5).

The manner in which *selbständige wahrheit* is subordinated in this passage must be carefully noted. In Boehmist and mystical spiritualist texts the adjective *selbständig* can come close to meaning *wesentlich*, and truth, even as tied to Christ (usually understood as glorified in a celestial body), is lifted as a result by such texts into a region beyond the paths of *viatores*, into a superior supernatural realm attainable by rigorous ascetic exercise. Arnold has no such notion of a “rising up”. His concept of truth as wisdom is not of an objective entity to be attained by a chaste and celibate lover, but of a guide, an illumination (“light”), a master teacher, a direction (“precious way”), seen only as the “person” Jesus and seen only through the faith “acknowledgement” of that person. The rhetoric of “tasting” is shaped by this formula, not by that of ecstatic mystic union.

But Arnold is not primarily concerned with separating himself from Boehmist ideas of Wisdom in his *Sophia*; he does not

see Boehmists and Philadelphians as threats to “true Christianity”, and although he may have been somewhat naive in his reading of the relationships between this tradition and that of his Lutheran faith and of the results of his use of Boehmist language, he is not to be charged with taking up a heretical position. Rather, in typical Pietist fashion, he levels his attack on the worldly wise scholastics, who, from his point of view, have reduced truth to the verbal acknowledgement of carefully honed dogmatic formulae and the willing enslavement to contentious theological pedants. Wisdom comes to all those reborn through the gift of the Spirit, not by the exercise of reason. Reason can raise many counter arguments (Vorrede, 9), its discussions are inevitably empty, and its life is one of hypocrisy and scorn (Vorrede, 23–25).

Reason can only attend to the earthly, the creaturely, and it has continually built up idols to itself because of this direction (Vorrede, 11-12). For it Wisdom becomes objective, a form written in stone, but true Wisdom is something else: It is not a knowledge of truth but a knowing truly and in a living fashion, a knowing of God and God’s Son both of whom with the Spirit dwell at the same time in the knower. Knowing is verbal, not substantive; truth is adverbial, living; the person known is the knowing itself, and leads to greater understanding (“Wann denn iemand Gott und seinen Sohn warhafftig und lebendig erkannt und in sich wohnend hat/ der beliebe ferner diese erklärung und bekänntnisz zu vernehmen” [Vorrede, 13]).

To such true Wisdom the believer is to give his or her heart (Vorrede, 28). Wisdom is “a divinely given drive and tug and those who resolve to follow it, and under this direction to go in one way will discover in both practice and experience that their scruples will disappear and that their minds will be made firm in a joyous certitude” (Vorrede, 17). This “drive and tug”, the Spirit of Wisdom, is a “seed lying within”, “a small spark of secret desire for their origin” (Vorrede, 21). Once again one must be on one’s guard not to interpret Arnold’s words aside from his Lutheran context. The spark is not the inner castle as it is in Rhenish or Spanish mysticism. It is better understood as an inspiration, an inciting of the heart, the seat of desire, to God, not as a place in the depths of the soul where one can turn by ascetic self-denial and become one with the divine as it is in itself. Wisdom is the understanding and act of turning

the heart towards the source from which it itself comes. And for those who do resolve to turn their hearts in this direction the result is not a union with the divine outside of the body and beyond this world—not a raising up into a third heaven—but an experience “of how much God loves human beings and what a great fortune has been given them... who fell so low” (Vorrede, 21).

Wisdom is thus a knowledge of one’s own sin and of God’s love for one in spite of this sin: it is the wisdom framed first clearly in the new birth experience and widened in the devotional life thereafter. The wisdom of which Arnold is speaking is a wisdom which acknowledges the truth of the central Pietist principles. His call in the *Sophia* is not in this sense any different than his call in *Die Erste Liebe* four years earlier or his call in the parallel study of medieval mystics, the *Wahre Abbildung des Inwendigen Christenthums*, which he wrote in his “orthodox” position as the properly instituted Inspector and First Pastor of Perleberg nine years later.²⁰ He was not a baroque figure in the sense that his life was a pastiche of radically separated parts, but he was baroque in his exuberant delight in adapting differing rhetorics to ornament the facade of a single building.

Union with Sophia

For the reader who casually takes up Arnold’s *Sophia* without keeping his central Pietist concern with repentance and the new birth in mind the shape of the work as indicated above can be misconstrued. From a reading of the chapter headings alone it will initially appear that Arnold is outlining the metaphysical structure of Wisdom in the first seven chapters and then describing the procedure by which one can progress toward mystical union with her in the remaining ones. This is far from Arnold’s purpose, however. His taking up of the theme of wisdom, as he makes clear in his first chapter, is not under the influence of his reading earlier mystical texts, although he does refer to them and is concerned that they be understood (1.13). The reasons why divine Wisdom remains unknown and despised among human beings is that far too many have given themselves over in their fallenness to a concern with earthly matters; they have taken up what can only be grasped by human reason and God is beyond such reason. As a result they

have despised divine Wisdom and established a false rational wisdom in its place (1.9). He too once allowed himself, he states, to be guided “under the appearance of wisdom in the same foolishness through common school-learning and characteristic natural curiosity” (1.11). But he escaped from this with the aid of Wisdom herself. Wisdom’s inner testimony came first, but again Arnold does not reject the significance of the outer word—the spirit of Wisdom led him to the precious treasure “partly through the clear words of Scripture and partly by the earliest Christian teachers” (1.12). The importance of the Lutheran emphasis on the written and preached word thus remains in his work; Arnold is no mystical spiritualist.

Arnold does use the term “essence” (*wesen*) to describe Wisdom. It is “eternal essence which with the Holy Trinity existed before all visible and invisible creatures and it will remain in all eternity” (3.4). As such it is not something to be attained by the creature, but is nevertheless the eternal root and cause in which the creature finds rest and security since “by it God reveals himself. This revelation or this outflowing of eternal Wisdom from God rules over all God’s activities in the holiest harmony and intelligence; she dwells in the eye of God and her will goes out along with the desire of God so that everything is wisely ordered” (3.7–8). Wisdom is not to be grasped by human energy. Proverbs 11:6 indicates that the Lord gives it graciously and that it is not a material possession but experiential knowledge and understanding (*erkenntnisz und verstand*) (3.9).

Such understanding it is which characterises the depths of Wisdom (4.1), which presses us with humbled hearts to consider its wonders (4.2). Wisdom is a mystery into which we look; it is the believer’s direction towards the final and eternal divine order and an illumination for the believer of that order. Thus, many of those taught directly by God refer to it as “a clear beam or light of God, a pure and bright clarity and power which proceeds from the eye of his eternity directly” (4.7). As such, Arnold goes on to point out, directly opposing Boehmist teaching, it far outdistances the power of reason which seeks to know whether “Wisdom is some special person in addition to the three persons of the Trinity” (4.9). Such a doctrine he firmly rejects.

As a “being” Wisdom is most closely associated with the Son Jesus Christ; “the spirit of Christ and the spirit of Wisdom are not two separate spirits, but a single spirit and an indivisible essence which continually reveals itself in simple obedience” (5.3). Only once Arnold has established this integrity between Christ and Wisdom does he go on to further reflection on Wisdom’s nature: “For those who seek more deeply into the matter and penetrate into its mysteries a remarkable distinction does appear...For God seeks to encourage the soul to greater care and love and to bring it to a further grade in its purification after it has been for some time in union (*vereinigung*) and walk with Jesus Christ” (4.4). His words here seem to suggest a doctrine of human possibility out of keeping with the Lutheran emphasis on the creature as remaining a sinner at the same time as justified.

The final phrases of his comment on the union with Christ, however, make his intention at this point in his argument and elsewhere clear. “All characteristics, activities, and marks of Wisdom are to be ascribed to the Son of God and his Spirit” (4.6). What is ascribed to wisdom is the “clear and undivided experiential knowledge *erkänntnisz*”) (4.6) which arises *out of the faith-union with Christ*. In fine “churchly” and “Lutheran” Pietist fashion he continues:

This time or period manifests itself in the soul chiefly and power of the Father in the Law, in repentance, and in a tug to the Son as well as under the Gospel and the Kingdom of the love of Jesus...Then Sophia grasps us closer yet and brings her purifying and purging fire into the soul, makes complete the spiritual temple of the new power of love from the humanity of Jesus who came into the soul with all the birth pains, and establishes her fire and hearth within and makes a place for the essential descent of the Holy Spirit (5.7).

This passage is reflective of Arnold’s theology as maintained throughout the *Sophia* and of the sources of that theology. The Lutheran rhetoric of Law and Gospel is not fitted in to assure his readers of his loyalty to that tradition; it and other Lutheran themes are central to the argument throughout the work. And the Law-Gospel formula, with the concurrent and primary emphasis on repentance (*Busse*), the new birth (*im zug zum Sohne*), and the practice of piety (*[der] Tempelbau des neuen kraft-liebes*), is fashioned in a Pietist manner no more “radical” than that of a Spener or a Francke. The *Sophia* is

written by a loyal Lutheran who may well, as he later admitted, have not guarded his language carefully enough and, in his attack on those fellow-Lutherans whom he saw as maintaining positions which he felt would destroy the "truth of the Gospel", have denounced them in separatistic words, but whose theology was fully shaped by his Lutheran commitment. It is the Boehmist rhetoric, almost entirely absent with the exception of the term *Sophia*, which is "fitted in".

Not only does the section here under discussion give one an indication of Arnold's denominational loyalty and thereby force one to rethink the nature of his "radicalism"; it also requires that the reader rethink the too-simple divisions often made between Pietists and their scholastic opponents. Arnold's *Sophia* which attacks the schoolmen so rigorously is possible only because of the developments in the scientific study of church history which had been developed and taught to him by those schoolmen.²¹

Nor did Arnold separate himself from scholastic theology. As much as he praises the mystical theology of former times and its distinction from the scholastic theology of his own, he consistently reads mystical texts and their descriptions of the mystical union in the context of the Lutheran scholastic doctrine of the *unio mystica*. His discussions of union with the divine *Sophia* in *Das Geheimniz der göttlichen Sophia* follows this same pattern.

From Luther himself Lutheranism had made use of mystical vocabulary regarding the union of the human person with the Divine to refer to the faith-union of every believer with the Christ, a union which stands at the beginning of the Christian life and is not the gift to a very few at the peak of a pre-eminent life of ascetic virtue.²² From a temporal and human point of view this union stands at the centre of a series which outlines the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*), beginning with God's election and proceeding through call, illumination, conversion, regeneration, justification, mystical union, renovation, conservation, and glorification.

From the divine point of view, however, the *ordo* occurs in "a moment of time" or a "mathematical point"; all elements in the series are present in the faith-union, out of which, as the Pietists would emphasise, the actions of love for God and one's fellows arise. Arnold follows this pattern throughout his

Sophia, building chapters eight to the conclusion on the *ordo* as he would have learned it from scholastic teachers at Wittenberg, and placing his chapters on the “means” to union with *Sophia* and the union itself in this context. Thus chapter eight treats the equivalent of call, chapters nine to fourteen illumination through regeneration, chapters fifteen to seventeen justification and the *unio mystica*, and the remaining chapters renovation and the “steps” following. The fruits which result from the faith-union as Arnold outlines them in his later chapters are those which any Pietist of his day would have associated with the fruits of the life of the reborn and the fruits described under the topics of renovation, conservation, and glorification by the contemporary scholastics, he so fiercely attacked.

As a result one must take great care in ascribing a “radicalism” to Arnold out of keeping with his words and intentions. Clearly he did not always guard his language carefully enough, but even in his most “extreme” compositions he thinks and writes within an “orthodox” Lutheran framework. The terms he uses to discuss Wisdom in the *Sophia* for example might well lead one, on initial reflection, to think that Arnold is working within a theological structure more in keeping with late medieval or baroque Catholic or Boehmist piety, but even in the *Sophia*, using as it does a term often explicitly tied to such piety, Arnold goes out of his way throughout to uphold Lutheran positions on the depravity of the human creature, the human inability to achieve anything meritorious of salvation on one’s own, and the centrality of grace.

In addition he maintains throughout the work a primarily christological emphasis, interpreting all mystical terminology within the theological categories of the *ordo salutis* and the *unio mystica*. And when he comes to discuss wisdom as exemplified in the reborn believer, Arnold treats it, in typical Pietist fashion, in terms of the believer’s new experiential understanding of the will of God, love for the divine and neighbour, devotion, and practice of piety, acknowledging his commitment to the Lutheran tradition in which he had first experienced the Pietist awakening. If he is to be defined as “radical”, such a term can be used only to describe his ferocious rhetoric against the Orthodox, scholastic rationalists whom he believes to be controlling theological schools and church offices. Again and again he refers to such individuals as hypocritical “Pharisees”,

the *perushim*, those who (if he understood the etymology of the term) were the real “separatists” in the Lutheran community.

Notes

- ¹ Above all see the continuing bibliography in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* and the monograph series *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Pietismus* (Witten, Luther Verlag, 1968-). For earlier works see F. Ernst Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) and his *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) as well as my *Pietists* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).
- ² Without doubt Albrecht Ritschl's *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880-1886) and Max Goebel, *Geschichte des christlichen Lebens in der rheinisch-westphälischen evangelischen Kirche* (Coblenz: Carl Badeker, 1852-1860) had a significant impact on shaping modern views of Radical Pietism. See as well, however, David Ensign Chauncey, *Radical German Pietism (c. 1675-c. 1760)* (unpubl. Ph.D., Boston University School of Theology, 1955).
- ³ The complexities relating to this issue have grown significantly in recent years, but for a general overview of the matter see George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) 846 ff.
- ⁴ On the Boehmists Nils Thune, *The Boehmenists and the Philadelphians* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1948) remains useful. Although clearly polemical in its concerns, Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949) is of major importance for studying the relationship between Pietism and the Mennonites.
- ⁵ See above all, Donald F. Durnbaugh, *European Origins of the Brethren* (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1958).
- ⁶ Note in particular, Goebel's history for examples.
- ⁷ For a full bibliography on Arnold, see my *Pietists, Protestants, and Mysticism: Gottfried Arnold's Use of Late Medieval Spiritual Texts* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989).
- ⁸ Gottfried Arnold, *Die Erste Liebe Das ist: Wahre Abbildung Der Ersten Christen nach ihrem Lebendigen Glauben und Heiligen Leben, Aus der ältesten und bewährtesten Kirchen-Scribenten eigenen Zeugnissen, Exempeln und Reden nach der Wahrheit der Ersten eigene Christlichen Religion, allen Liebhabern der Historischen Wahrheit, und sonderlich der Antiquität, als in einer nützlichen Kirchen-Historie, treulich und unparteyisch entworfen: Worinnen zugleich Des Hn. William Cave Erstes Christentum nach Nothdurft erläutert wird...* Zu finden in Gottlieb Friedeburgs Buchhandlung Jm Jahre 1696.
- ⁹ In the period here under consideration Arnold wrote and edited 20 volumes in total.

- 10 Gottfried Arnold, *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie, Vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments Bisz auf das Jahr Christi 1688* (Franckfurt am Mayn, bey Thomas Fritschens seel. Erben, 1729).
- 11 The majority of the controversial literature is fully edited in the third volume of the Schaffhausen edition of the *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (Schaffhausen: Emanuel und Benedict Hürter, 1740-1742).
- 12 Gottfried Arnold, *Das Geheimniz der Göttlichen Sophia oder Weiszheit* (Leipzig: Bey Thomas Fritsch, 1700).
- 13 On Sudermann and his interest in mystical writings see Monica Pieper, *Daniel Sudermann (1550-ca. 1631) als Vertreter des mystischen Spiritualismus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985).
- 14 Such a relationship was maintained by Johann and Eleaonora Petersen. See Ritschl, II: 225-249.
- 15 See Seeberg's *Gottfried Arnold: Die Wissenschaft und die Mystik seiner Zeit* (Meerane i.S., 1923) and his introduction to his *Gottfried Arnold in Auswahl* (München, 1934).
- 16 Note the obvious pastoral concerns as expressed in Spener's *Pia desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) and his *The Spiritual Priesthood*, trans. A.G. Voigt (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1917).
- 17 On Sophia mysticism see Ernst Benz, "Gottfried Arnold's 'Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia' und seine Vorstellung in der christlichen Sophienlehre," *Jahrbuch der hessischen kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung* 18 (1967), 51-82 and the excellent introduction to Arnold's *Sophia* by Walter Nigg in the facsimile reprint of the work (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1963).
- 18 All references to the *Sophia* hereafter are to chapter and section number.
- 19 On Arnold's concern with "scientific history" note in particular the "Vorbericht" to his *Erste Liebe*.
- 20 For details on Boehme's view of Sophia see A. Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1929) passim.
- 21 On the development of historical studies at the time see Eduard Fuerter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (München und Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1911).
- 22 A full discussion of the background to this doctrine in Lutheranism and its development in the tradition is to be found in my *Pietists, Protestants, and Mysticism*, chapter three.