

INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1914, as the “Christmas truce” was spreading among the soldiers along the Western Front, Eddi awoke in his German home to the smell of pine and incense and to the sight of a small pile of gifts stacked beside the family’s Christmas tree. Tucked away among the wooden horses and toy soldiers was a book of three children’s stories given to him by Frau Bufo. That evening, as he read his way through the tales of an adventurous missionary and a heroic slave emancipator, Eddi came to a small biography of the German Lutheran Pietist August Hermann Francke (1663–1727). The appearance of the biography may have come as a surprise to the boy. Francke had neither traveled to distant lands as a missionary nor risked his life freeing slaves, but the author reassured him that Francke’s work was itself heroic, bringing “with it diverse and restorative fruit that reached into the furthest circles [of people].”¹ As Eddi leafed through the biography, he was told that almost 225 years earlier, in the waning winter of 1689, Francke entered the university city of Leipzig and began in earnest to seek the renewal of the Lutheran church. And much as in the previous stories in the book, Francke’s efforts were initially met with derision and ridicule. Church leaders, the author claimed, bullied Francke and his followers with the newly coined pejorative name “Pietist.”²

The biography of August Hermann Francke found in Eddi’s collection of children’s stories follows a tradition of ascribing the rise of Pietism as a religious reform movement to the challenges Francke encountered in Leipzig. This tradition has long been shown to offer too narrow an interpretation of Pietism, but the portrayal of Francke in the children’s book serves as a reminder of his and his ministries’ continued importance in defining German Lutheran Pietism in its blossomed form. The maturity that Francke brought to Pietism has led scholars to compare his work to that of Philipp Melancthon and even the New Testament figure Saint Paul.³ More accurately, Francke was at

the center of what Ryoko Mori calls the “second wave” of German Pietism.⁴ As we will see, his own ministry in Leipzig in the late 1680s began to embody and bring greater visibility and weight to Pietism, which represents one of the most important Protestant movements since the Reformation.⁵

This study recognizes Francke’s importance to the history of Pietism and primarily attends to his sacramental theology as a springboard into understanding the contours of, and influences upon, his thought and life. The Protestant sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, especially in the Lutheran tradition, provide interpretive ecclesiological categories by which we may make a historical-theological analysis of overarching dogmatic constructions and their specific development over space and time.⁶ Preached and practiced in the midst of Sunday worship, the sacraments are what historian Robert Orsi calls “abundant events,” heightened by religious expectations and dogmatic claims concerning divine promises.⁷ Framed by the standards set forth in the Augsburg Confession (Articles 7–10), the Lutheran sacraments, as means of God’s special grace “administered in conformity with the divine Word,” implicitly communicate major themes of salvation.⁸ As Francke articulated his views concerning baptism and the Lord’s Supper, he inevitably addressed his core Pietist beliefs. Thus, this work offers a rich depiction of Francke’s conversion-driven theology and how it shaped his views of the sacraments and the church.

By approaching Francke’s thought from the theological perspective of the sacraments, we are also able to interpret, build upon, and extend the work of scholars like Erhard Peschke and more recently Markus Matthias, Veronika Albrecht-Birkner, and Udo Sträter, who have sought to shed light on Francke’s social context and those who influenced his thought.⁹ In the following, we will see that Francke’s commitment to his conversion theology gave him an appreciation for controversial figures, such as the Rostock pastor Theophil Großgebauer (1627–1661), and led him to adopt Reformed-leaning theological language. Furthermore, this study interprets and extensively engages Francke’s sermons and writings, breaking a relative silence in English-speaking research on the theology of Francke, who Erich Beyreuther claims offered one of “the most important and influential forms of genuine Pietism.”¹⁰

“Ecclesiology,” laments Hans Schneider, “has not been a favorite subject of research on Pietism.”¹¹ Roland Lehmann’s recent work on changing conceptions of the church in early Enlightenment thought touches on eighteenth-century Pietist formulations of church law and their relationship to the state, but there is still a relative dearth of scholarship available on Pietist ecclesiology.¹² By addressing Francke’s theology of the sacraments, the following

chapters not only contribute to a richer understanding of the nature of the church in his thought but also provide a case study for those who are seeking to paint a theological landscape of Lutheranism during a period in its history when some individuals and groups felt pressure to reinterpret traditional ecclesiological boundary markers.¹³ In the life of the early modern church, the sacraments played a dual role in defining the boundaries of the faithful community and reorienting those communities in new theological directions.¹⁴ Pietist figures like Francke, who relied more heavily on abstract concepts like religious conversion and rebirth to determine the identity of the Christian community, found themselves reaffirming the importance of the sacraments in the life of the church while at the same time reorienting the sacraments in a way that reflected their emphasis on a “church of the heart.” In this way, a study of Francke’s ecclesiology stretches James R. Gordon’s claim that eighteenth-century sacramental theologies reflect an attempt to “engage” and “situate” the sacraments within modernity.¹⁵ In Francke’s sacramental theology, we find otherwise. It appears ecclesiological developments that moved in the direction of modernity were initially influenced in part by theological innovations concerning the identities of the believer and the church, which were consistently communicated in the sacraments.¹⁶ Francke’s theology of the sacraments offers a view into eighteenth-century ecclesiological developments that departed from the dogmas of the Reformation and aided and abetted the rise of evangelicalism and global Protestantism.

After Francke’s conflicts in Leipzig, German Pietism became so synonymous with his activities and the “Francke Foundations” (*Franckeschen Stiftungen*)—a group of institutes or ministries originally known as the “Hallesche Waisenhaus” located just outside the city walls of Halle—that Francke functioned as both Pietism’s advocate and its guardian.¹⁷ As an advocate Francke reached out to English readers curious about Pietism during the first decade of the eighteenth century, providing an account of the founding of his institutes in a publication entitled *Pietas Hallensis*.¹⁸ It was, among other things, Francke’s attempt to offer a positive and lasting narrative of Pietism, and it quickly found a wider readership. In 1706 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge offered *Pietas Hallensis* to its transatlantic correspondents serving in the American colonies.¹⁹ At other moments, we find Francke acting as guardian of the movement, attempting to, as Kelly Whitmer claims, “salvage” the name Pietist.²⁰ In 1714, he wrote a letter to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), asking him to consider providing a positive word on behalf of the university in Halle so that, like the universities in Leipzig and Wittenberg, it might have access to students from eastern Europe. He assured Leibniz that “Pietism is nothing other than a name which

dishonest men give to these times of the study of sacred Scriptures and true piety.” These same men, Francke continues, frame Pietists as “incautious and credulous people.” Francke claimed that the name Pietist arose in Leipzig, and though Leibniz may have had doubts about its associations in light of its polemical and pejorative origins, Francke reminded him of what he had seen with his own eyes during his visit to Francke’s institutes. Francke insisted the students at the university were led “not only in good and solid scholarship, but also in all Christian humility and moderation.”²¹ They were trained to be good Pietists. Francke’s desire to promote and defend Pietism at all levels of society reflects his hope that the reform movement would bring about a renewal of the individual, church, and community. In light of these renewal efforts by Francke and his “spiritual father” Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), German Lutheran Pietism should be understood as having four defining characteristics: conventicles, personal Bible reading, rebirth, and chiliasm.²²

Spener is often called the “father” or “founder” of Pietism. His most recognized work, *Pia Desideria*, which initially appeared in 1675 as an introduction to a collection of Johann Arndt’s (1555–1621) sermons, was published separately later that year and quickly became the defining Pietist call to reform. Addressing the spiritual condition of the Lutheran three estates (household, church, and state), the *Pia Desideria* offers six suggestions that Spener hoped would bring renewal to a decadent church: (1) a “richer” use of Scripture in the daily lives of individuals, (2) the practice of the spiritual priesthood of all believers, (3) a renewed emphasis on the practice of Christianity, (4) a restraining from polemics within the church, (5) a reform of theological studies, and (6) a turn from verbose, theologically obtuse preaching toward a simpler form that emphasized faith and its fruits.²³ One of the key features of Spener’s reform plan is its commitment to the belief that renewal, both lay and clerical, turned on the question of the nature of faith. Spener believed Lutherans who had placed importance on what Sträter describes as a “legalistic,” hierarchical reform that begins with clerical renewal had missed the transformative power of true belief in the gospel, which would work from the ground up.²⁴

While the *Pia Desideria* had broad public appeal, Spener’s pastoral work in Frankfurt added an essential social element to the larger Pietist movement that reflected his ground-up concern for lay renewal. With the help of local lawyer Johann Jacob Schütz (1640–1690), who Andreas Deppermann argues was an “initiator and cofounder” of Pietism, Spener began holding conventicles, or private gatherings of like-minded believers, called *collegia pietatis*.²⁵ Conventicles constitute an important convergence in Pietism where Spener’s central reform ideas were put into practice, forming what Mori calls “the

most important basis of the activities of Pietists.²⁶ This *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (“church within the church”) that formed in the context of private gatherings was to be a source of a broader reform of the household, the church, and the state—a reforming expectation that distinguished Pietism from earlier Lutheran reform plans.²⁷

This is not to say that these Pietist conventicles arose purely out of Spener’s innovative thought. As Frederick Herzog notes, “[Pietism] did not spring from German Lutheranism like Athena from the head of Zeus.”²⁸ The early conventicles in Frankfurt also reflected the influence of French separatist pastor Jean de Labadie (1610–1674), whose writings Schütz and other members of Spener’s conventicle had introduced.²⁹ Nevertheless, Wallmann rightly claims that Labadie brought something more like a “chime” than a “new melody” to Spener’s efforts.³⁰ In his own ministry, Labadie was disposed toward separation from the institutionalized church, first from French Catholicism and then from the Dutch Reformed, due in part to the belief that introducing small group gatherings would recover what he thought was a purer, primitive church. Thus conventicles—which, Strom and Lehmann note, inherently “departed from traditional Reformation theology”—were often met with suspicion by the Lutheran church authorities.³¹ Spener, mindful of this distrust, initially confined discussions in his Frankfurt conventicles to German and English devotional literature, which were common forms of edification in the Lutheran church at that time. Only as the meetings matured, did members begin to focus on interpreting specific biblical passages.³² Despite Spener’s cautiousness, Labadie’s separatist influence upon Schütz and others of the Frankfurt conventicle proved too strong. Spener and Schütz eventually parted ways, the former embodying what has been labeled by some scholars as “confessional” or “churchly/ecclesial” Pietism and the latter becoming the father of “radical” Pietism.³³

Personal Bible reading encouraged by Pietists inside and outside the context of conventicles reflected their desire to recover Luther’s teaching on the priesthood of all believers. Strom and Lehmann remind us that the doctrine “disappeared almost entirely from Lutheran discourse in the later sixteenth century. A few radicals and reformers earlier in the seventeenth century suggested its revival, but Spener was the first major theologian to give it such renewed prominence.”³⁴ Pietists like Spener wed individual, personal access to Scripture and its meaning to a common priestly access to the knowledge of God that came through faith in Christ. This “common priesthood” was bestowed on any believer, regardless of vocation, and could serve as a theological tool to dismantle ecclesiastical and social authority systems.³⁵ Sociological reasons for a recovery of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers

are many. The Thirty Years' War had left a trail of crises in its wake. Beyond the devastation of lives lost in the war, there were frustrations and fears associated with various economic hardships and environmental changes.³⁶ In one of his reform plans, Francke complained the "disorder" and "abuses" that arose from the Thirty Years' War were not appeased by the Peace of Westphalia; rather they continued to plague the German church of his day.³⁷ In an attempt to correct previous ecclesiastical failings, Pietism became, as Hans Schneider calls it, a "Bible movement" and enlisted laity as the priests of reform.³⁸

These Pietist reformers have often been contrasted in historiography with what Francke often labeled a "decadent" church led by Lutheran Orthodoxy. Recent research has corrected this reading to show that seventeenth-century Lutheran Orthodoxy carried with it many of the reforming and devotional sensibilities of the Pietists.³⁹ However, Pietism went beyond common Orthodox reform ideas. Peter Schicketanz is correct in claiming Pietism grew up "in the lap of orthodoxy," but it quickly grew uncomfortable with its seat.⁴⁰ As will be seen in the case of Francke, Pietist innovations would rub against cultural and social norms. Some Pietists, meeting in small groups and affirming their place as "priests" and "children of God," would eventually call into question the accepted social hierarchy of their churches and towns. Others would find moments to challenge norms of public worship, and in doing so challenge religious practices that had shaped everyday life. The willingness of Pietists to push up against and stretch the expectations of social life can be explained in part by the influence of conventicles, personal Bible reading, and a retrieval of Luther's teaching on the priesthood of all believers, but according to Wallmann there were two other "new interests" that distinguished Pietists from their Lutheran Orthodox counterparts: rebirth and chiliasm.⁴¹

Johann Arndt, who should be understood as a primary Lutheran forerunner of German Pietism, provided what Strom and Lehmann call an "experiential piety" that was the melody of rebirth in the renewal movement, but we must keep in mind Pietists like Francke preached from a chorus of sources.⁴² They claimed personal reading of Scripture as their primary source, and other sources, like Luther's "Preface" to the book of Romans, helped create the symphony of the doctrine of "new creation." Spener and those who followed him used Luther's "Preface" to connect the regeneration of the inner person to a new life expressed in acts of charity. To this they added themes of sanctification and experimentalism found in English devotional literature, which had been purged of Calvinistic doctrines contrary to Lutheran confessions and distributed widely in the church. In rebirth, Pietists found the perfect interplay between passivity before God and activity before the world.

New birth was so prominent in Pietist writings that Martin Schmidt claims it should be seen as the central theme and driving force of the movement.⁴³ Spener and Francke's concern for rebirth should not lead us to oversimplify Pietism and misuse Ted Campbell's phrase "religion of the heart."⁴⁴ Pietists wed to their teaching on rebirth the belief that the awakening of the laity was the key to ecclesiastical and social reform.⁴⁵

The final mark of Pietism, an eschatology labeled chiliasm, grew out of and embodied basic themes of the renewal movement, and as a theological expression, chiliasm was one of the clearest Pietist contradictions of traditional Lutheran teaching. Spener's "more moderate" chiliasm, claim Strom and Lehmann, "foresaw a future in which Christ promised an imminent better state for the church on earth."⁴⁶ In various degrees, Pietists believed the return of Christ and God's judgment of the world would not be as sudden as the Lutheran confessions had expressed. This delay in Christ's return was an eschatological hope for Pietists. Before the Parousia there would be a renewal within the church and an expansion of the gospel. Spener's language of "hope for better times" found in *Pia Desideria* would be manifested in communities of the "children of God," in the mass conversion of the Jews as interpreted from Romans 11, and in revivals (*Erweckungen*) and the global expansion of the "true" church.⁴⁷ The ministries of Francke's institutes were a concrete expression of the expectation that conversion, rebirth, and Christian faithfulness would produce a transformed society that preceded the return of Christ and consummation of creation.

August Hermann Francke, as a second-generation Pietist, not only embodied these four theological marks of Pietism, but he gave them what Carl Hinrichs calls an "active vigor" and popularized them to a broader Christian world.⁴⁸ As mentioned above, Pietism was a Bible movement, and in its confessional, Protestant character, scholars have also described it as a "preaching movement."⁴⁹ Susan Karant-Nunn observes, "In the pulpit, [early modern] clergymen, however learned they might be, were confronted with the faces of their lay charges, and in those faces their neighbor. It lay upon the clergy to communicate precisely, in simple yet unmistakable terms, what the godly person should believe and how he should behave."⁵⁰ This was true of Francke's pastoral ministry, and thus his theology should be seen as a theology from the pulpit. His fundamental mode of popularizing Pietism was through preaching, and the key to arriving at core, structural elements—not to mention innovations—of Francke's theology is primarily through his sermons.⁵¹ Francke did not set out in his lifetime to write any major systematic theological treatises and at moments complained that he lacked the time to properly address theological issues within the church.⁵² Consequently, Francke's

theological “voice” is most clearly heard in his sermons. Given extemporaneously, his sermons come to us by way of his diligent students sitting at the front of the congregation copying his every preached word.⁵³ These sermons will be the primary sources from which we will construct Francke’s theology, and to these sermons we will add his reform plans, writings on education and the pastorate, tracts and polemical writings, and correspondence. By engaging this breadth of Francke’s writings we will be able to offer a historical-theological analysis of his theology that is not constrained by whether or not a sermon or letter made it to publication or by the confessional expectations often placed upon Francke’s public life and language. In recognition of the centrality of sermons in Francke’s theology, the following chapters are structured according to his own habit of preaching through Luther’s Small Catechism.

Chapters 1 and 2 offer two avenues of introduction to Francke. Chapter 1 presents the rise of Francke to prominence as a Pietist. It follows him from childhood until his pastorate in Glaucha, where he established himself as a “pastor theologian.” During his first years in Glaucha, and in those controversies surrounding his early ministry, we find Francke using the sacraments as tools to implement Pietist beliefs and practices in the life of his church. In the following chapter, we examine three important aspects of Francke’s theological system (biblicism, conversion, and social reform). These three aspects form what should be understood as the core of his broader religious thought and will inform our further discussion of his theology.

The remaining chapters take the shape of early modern catechism sermons. Chapter 3 uses Francke’s introductory sermon on the commonalities between the sacraments to provide a structured look at his teachings on spiritual ignorance, salvation, and the role of the sacraments as oaths in the Christian life. The sermon reveals the influence of English devotional literature on Francke’s theology and his tendency to define the sacraments in terms of the human condition. The chapter also lays the groundwork for an examination of Francke’s teachings on baptism and the Eucharist. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on Francke’s baptismal theology, first by showing that in the midst of affirming traditional trinitarian and Christological baptismal formulations, he was willing to use the example of Christ’s baptism to situate his baptismal teachings in the language of conversion and godly living. This is followed by an examination of how Francke’s teaching on rebirth and baptism related to Lutheran teachings on the two sides of the baptismal covenant and how his views of baptismal rebirth reflected the influence of the controversial pastor Theophil Großgebauer. We will see that Francke walked

a fine line in discussing rebirth in light of Lutheran teachings on baptismal regeneration.

Chapter 6 ushers us toward the Eucharist. In it we enter into a discussion of Francke's Pietist view of confessional practices at the end of the seventeenth century. In the midst of his attempts to reform confession, Francke critiqued the lack of "true" repentance in the communicant and the unfaithfulness in those clergy offering absolution. The improper confessional practices of parishioners and clergy undermined Francke's concern for a comfort that arises from the certainty of salvation. Chapter 7 focuses on Francke's language of individual worthiness in relation to the Lord's Supper. His recourse to various images to describe proper participation in the Eucharist offers us a platform to examine Francke's use of signs as proof of rebirth and the mystical language he adopted to describe worthy communicants.

The epilogue turns to Francke's conception of the believing community as the "church of the heart." Just as conversion and rebirth had so captivated his overarching religious thought that the sacraments were to be understood in light of them, so too the church's identity and its visible expression in worship were to reflect the centrality of being a "new creation." The conversion of individuals became the network, so to speak, which created the community of saints. Thus, the transformative religious experience that brought new life acted as the central identifier by which the church body was defined and upon which its functions were grounded. Reflecting upon Francke's view of the church, we come to see how his own theology of the sacraments provides a case study in the developing definition of the church, which in its various eighteenth-century expressions moved uncomfortably toward modernity.

By taking up August Hermann Francke's theology of the sacraments we are afforded a rich perspective into the contours of German Lutheran Pietism during a transatlantic period of influence in which Francke and other forefathers of evangelicalism, who held what W. R. Ward calls a "sense of international kinship," paved the way to the Awakenings, denominationalism, and modern Protestant theology.⁵⁴ Francke's own theology of the sacraments expresses his broader Pietist thought and, much like Jaroslav Pelikan's description of Luther, reveals "the link connecting the 'doctrine of the gospel' with the life of the Christian and of the church."⁵⁵ Luther recognized baptism and the Eucharist as, according to Robert Kolb, "the created, material means by which God gives the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation," and this understanding remained true for Francke's confessional context.⁵⁶ Francke did not merely preach on how to reform the church. He sought ways to improve the spiritual condition of his own parishioners. As he created

controversies for himself, barring some from the altar and exhorting others to bear “fruit” worthy of their calling, he also articulated a conversion theology that through his institutes would come to influence the Protestant church during a period when Christians encountered a variety of individualizing pressures. Therefore, the following study will grant insight into the relevance of Pietism in the transition from early modern to modern Christianity and help dispel previous notions that Pietism’s subjectivism made it unconcerned with doctrine and learning.⁵⁷