

A more extensive use of the word of God among us

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Preacher: Dr. Bruce Hindmarsh

[0 : 00] I tried to win the prize today for the longest title that I think we've had for Learners' Exchange. It's this phrase from Philip Jacob Spainer, a more extensive use of the Word of God among us.

And then I think on your calendar, the subtitle was, How German Pietists Unleash the Bible for Lay People. My subtitle on your handout is just, Philip Jacob Spainer's Big Idea.

So we're going to look a little bit at German Pietism in the 17th century. But first of all, I'd like to begin with Scripture. I feel like church history is a great place to go to for wisdom.

But in order to preach, you've got to go back to Scripture. So just beginning with the Word of God, Colossians 3.16, a common verse that I'm sure many of you know well.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

[1 : 08] This passage, I think, speaks of the Word of God as central to our life together as Christians, our life together as Christians here at St. John's.

The Word of God living, dwelling, inhabiting us as people and us as Christians and our community life together. This is to be our experience that we live richly, deeply, and fully in the Word of God and it lives in us.

But notice in this verse that it says that the Word of God dwells in us as we teach one another. Allelous is the Greek word that Paul is fond of using, one another.

So many things he says happen one another amongst ourselves. We don't just depend upon the clergy to teach the Word of God.

But if the Word of God is to dwell richly among us, we teach one another. We admonish one another in the sense that the Word of God is also used to amend our lives, to correct our lives.

[2 : 10] It's not just information that is transferred to us. Somehow teaching doesn't just terminate in information, but it must terminate in transformation. And then in multiple ways, we teach, we admonish, we even sing the Word of God to each other.

So this is a kind of grounding text for us this morning. I'd like to look at this movement in Germany about three and a half centuries ago and to see how the teaching of Colossians 3.16 was realized in a whole series of practical proposals for the church that led really to a profound renewal of all of Christendom.

That's a large claim to make, but I think it's true. I think the impact of these proposals really changed Christendom. There are epochs in church history, and this, I think, is one of them.

And as we go through it, I think you'll see surprising, really astonishing parallels. You can't, I mean, history moves on and times change, and history never repeats itself exactly. But sometimes it just seems astonishing when you connect the dots to see how one period has parallels to another.

And I think this is one of those periods. There's also a bit of a personal connection for me this morning. I'm enjoying kind of thinking about pietism and working on pietism a little bit. It makes me wish I had German and spoke German.

[3 : 32] And we, this summer, at the end of the summer, our family flew to Prague and drove from Prague to Amsterdam. And what I was doing in terms of my research was, a lot of my research is on the 18th century.

We're going to talk about the 17th century this morning. But I was retracing two trips. One was east-west, and one was sort of west-to-east. The west-to-east trip was John Wesley in 1738 after his conversion at Aldersgate when he said his heart was strangely warmed.

He had encountered the Moravians, and he felt like he wanted to go see them for himself. And so he took ship to Rotterdam, and then he traveled all the way to eastern Germany, to Upper Lusatia, where Germany kind of pokes into a little pocket there by Poland and the Czech Republic to this little community called Harenhut to meet the Moravians.

And so in reverse order, we were kind of tracing his journey. But it was also a different kind of journey in the sense that there was a group of eastern European refugees who traveled from the Czech Republic to Upper Lusatia and found safe haven with Count Zinzendorf at Harenhut and their experience renewal.

And there are connections here to pietism because Zinzendorf had been formed within a pietist milieu. And then when Zinzendorf was expelled from Upper Lusatia, he established another community in the west at Harenhut near Frankfurt.

[5 : 08] And so we traveled, we visited Harenhut, we visited Harenhut, and then when Harenhut collapsed and Zinzendorf had to leave there, moved north up the Rhine to the new Moravian community.

The center became Neu-Vied and then ultimately Zeist near Utrecht, which was the kind of center for spreading, for missionary work of the Moravians. That's where a lot of the missionaries went out from to Greenland, to the Caribbean, to South Africa.

So we were kind of following this renewal movement that began in Central Europe and moved gradually west and also aware of Wesley's journey as he moved from west to east.

So when I planned the trip, I had Wesley's journal, sort of 1738 in one hand, and my mouse and Google Earth together next. I'm planning this trip.

So anyways, I'm all interested in things pietist and Moravian right now, and that's a kind of personal connection, as well as the work of a scholar named Reg Ward, a fellow in England, he's in his 80s, and we brought him in for a conference in Washington, D.C.

[6 : 16] just this January. But in his late 70s and 80s, he's written three big books, just astonishing, like really big, important books, that are really showing the importance of Anglo-German connections to the rise of evangelicalism in the North Atlantic world.

And Reg's work is dense, difficult, but really important, and so I've been thinking about Reg's work as well. So let's dive in a little bit to German pietism, a spiritual renewal movement in the established church.

And what are the origins here for pietism? Well, after the reformations of the 16th century, there followed a period which in general terms, and I think this is true throughout Europe, a period of confessional debate.

In a sense, when the church is territorial, when the state is confessional, the state articulates beliefs that it defends, and the church understands itself to occupy a certain territory, the stage is set for conflict.

And there's a lot of mapping of identity in detailed theological statements as Lutherans rush to articulate all of what they believe in contradistinction, to define themselves over against Catholics, over against the Reformed.

[7 : 43] And the Reformed do the same, Anglicans do the same, the Catholics do the same. And there is increasing self-definition, theological debate, controversy.

This is a period of scholasticism. In some periods, it seems like the impulse is for Christians to say, how can we reduce this to its essentials, to find an axiom that kind of summarizes what we really believe or encapsulates it.

In other periods, it seems like the impulse is to say, how can we exhaust the implications of this and map this out in all of its detail? Well, this seems to be a period in which there's a huge scholastic sort of impulse.

And indeed, there's a need for educated pastors. One of the real concerns in the Reformation for educated pastors is the pastor who's educated who's going to be able to protect his flock from error and be able to discern the truth over against superstition.

So there's educated pastors, controversy, disputants. But in the midst of this, in the midst of controversy, and this is important for us to remember today, Christianity can often be distorted.

[8 : 55] And when you begin to think that the whole way of being Christians is somehow to defend the faith through argument. And there's a sense for many folk in this period that Christianity had become a matter of correct belief, of moral rectitude, of going to church and sacrament and of affiliating with a kind of true belief.

And there was anxiety about this on the part of more and more folk that somehow the spirit of true Christianity have been lost in the middle of all this. And of course, in the middle of the 17th century, what some of this wrangling will lead to is the wars of religion, is what Reg in one of his books calls that Europe was led to confessional Armageddon.

When finally, at the end of the day, you look down the end of a gun in order to defend your faith. And in the midst of this, there's folks who are groping towards another understanding of faith or towards a renewal of true Christianity.

And the key figure here in the German context is a fellow named Johann or John Arndt. Born in 1555, died in 1621.

He's a Lutheran theologian, a pastor, a writer, and he publishes a book called True Christianity. Initially, it sort of has four books or subsections.

[10 : 17] Later, he adds another two, partly to defend himself and correct misunderstandings. And this book, True Christianity, took off.

It was, dare I say, the knowing God of its generation. It went through 95 editions up to the year 1740.

From 1605 to 1740, it was translated into, catch this, Latin, English, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, French, Czech, Russian, and even Icelandic.

This was a popular book. For many German Lutherans, beside their bed, they would have their Bible and Johann Arndt. There were places where art was read and preached from publicly.

Some areas of Württemberg, there were more copies of True Christianity by Johann Arndt than there were Bibles. And some people had to be reminded and scolded for neglecting reading the Bible to read art.

[11 : 23] This is a popular book, right? Every now and then there are books like this that just make a huge impact. It seems somehow to perfectly express and stimulate what became known in Germany as the movement for piety in the 17th century.

The devotional movement, the movement for devotion. And it tapped into this vein of people that were really concerned with what was going on in the church and said that the problem was not apprehending Christianity but appropriating it.

It wasn't just understanding it. That wasn't the big problem. The big problem was living it. This movement for piety, I should say, in the 17th century would draw on Arndt hugely but also on a huge number of English Puritan devotional works that were translated into Germany.

English Puritan literature was a literature of prestige in Germany in the 17th century. So I know Maxine was here and talked a bit about Pilgrim's Progress. Pilgrim's Progress was hugely popular in Germany and Bunyan was a Protestant hero in the 17th century in Germany.

Philip Jacob Spiener we'll talk about in a moment read Richard Baxter, read John Bunyan, read the practice of piety and these important Puritan works.

[12 : 43] So they aren't just two isolated movements. There are Anglo-German connections. So what did Arndt say? I read this book in John Wesley's Abridgment with ten students at Regent this week and we sat together and chatted about the book after reading it and it really is a fascinating book.

Essentially, Arndt affirms Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. He wants to affirm the saving work of Christ for us. All that Christ has done on our behalf to rescue us without any merit on our part to rescue us from our sin.

But, he wants to urge his readers to recognize that the Christ whose work is for us is the same Christ who takes up a work in us. The Christ who works for us to save us also takes up residence within us and begins a work of renovation or renewal of the image of God within us.

The renewal of the inner person and this will involve faith and repentance, involve contemplating the life of Christ with the desire to become more like him and it involves deepening intimacy and communion with Christ.

And he works this out over the course. I think book one is the book of scripture, book two is the book of the life of Christ, book three is the book of conscience and he kind of walks you through this with close personal address.

[14 : 11] his project also involved turning back to reappropriate many medieval devotional and mystical works. So here he's one of the first Protestants in a sense to return to return to the Theologia Germanica and Thomas Ecampus and some of these devotional works and try to graft them on to a kind of Protestant theology and to talk about going on and going deeper and integrating this into a kind of Lutheran framework.

So that's Arndt. Arndt in a sense is going to be a key text and Arndt doesn't start pietism but he's key in what we call this movement for piety in the period.

Two more figures just to introduce the movement and then we'll get to Spaner's big book. Spaner is the one with whom we associate pietism sort of capital P as a movement within the Lutheran church.

He's a Lutheran pastor and under his leadership the general movement for piety becomes a more specific organized movement in the church and the most important way that this was expressed organizationally was the small house group devotional meetings small group Bible studies and it was from the pulpit in Frankfurt in the autumn of 1669 that he proposed this and Frankfurt was a very divided city religiously and very difficult to know how to proceed to see reform happen and from the pulpit he advocates wouldn't it be a good thing if on a Sunday some of you got together in your homes and gathered somebody read from the Bible and somebody else commented on how they understood it and it sounds just so basic to us today but it's absolutely revolutionary advocating these house groups they were sometimes called *collegia pietatis* little colleges of piety they would come to be called *ecclesiola in ecclesia* or a small church within the big church and this was the kind of infrastructure for pietism and it takes off so you see what's going on here you've got a state church an established church a church that is what the German called a *Volkskirchen* or *Landiskirchen* a church of the people a church of the culture a church of the land and for a lot of people it's it's about nominal Christianity being a Christian in name only going to church and sacrament and doing no harm it's about rectitude public propriety and Spaner says if this is going to become real it's got to among other things like literally get into your homes it's got to get into your life and he wants to see the word of God somehow moving pressing beyond that kind of public rectitude into something more radical and indeed it does become radical it's clear now historians have made have done sort of a fair bit of work on what's what went on in Frankfurt that Spaner was responding to and organizing a movement that was grassroots it wasn't just that he initiated it there's a lawyer named John or Johann Schutz and a woman named Anna von Sherman who were key movers at

Frankfurt lay people John Schutz was a lawyer and Anna Sherman and others were involved in getting these house churches house groups going and some of them in Frankfurt became much more radical and sheered off into separatism into prophecy and denouncing the Lutheran church as Babel there was lots of Babel storming and claims to special illumination of the spirit so this movement in its origins also illustrates some of the dangers that can happen with some kind of house groups and in 1682 Spaner Drewlein expelled the radicals and made it clear that church pietism would be orthodox and non-separatist and so that's where we get the origins of pietism as a kind of church party or a more organized movement not just a movement for piety in general so more on Spaner in a moment and his big book his big idea

[18:36] August Hermann Franca in the next generation is the real radical organizer an astonishing person he lived large he was a kind of John Wesley sort of figure with his energy and for all that he accomplished he was also a tremendous institution builder and Halle in kind of the middle of Germany pretty much right in the middle if you kind of stuck your finger in the middle of the map was just on the other side of the line into the DDR and but Halle was the center for a number of institutions and we stopped at Halle this summer and saw the Franca Stiftungen the kind of foundations they often call it the orphanage because there was a charitable work there an orphanage but it's a whole astonishing complex of buildings there that there was there was a university there was a medical dispensary that supplied medicines and for much of Europe there was a printing press that there was all sorts of things going on that came out of pietism all sorts of social works and social concerns that he had organized there as well as from there they kind of initiated a whole network of pietism reforms in other places so much so that the charitable work and the institutions at Halle became a kind of model for other people to aspire to so when

George Whitefield the English evangelical preacher went to Georgia what did he try to establish there he tried to establish an orphanage and a kind of little holla John Wesley did the same up at Newcastle upon Tyne there's a way that even Howell Harris' little program in Trevecca into Wales was similar many people trying to establish these kinds of centers and imitate them well a part of the background to this is what Spanier called the hope of better times is the Lutheran Orthodox which would align themselves sort of against pietists often used the preaching of the end times the imminent end times and the coming of judgment any time around the corner the coming return of Christ the coming of judgment as a kind of scourge to try to reform their people and for Spanier he had the sense not of this imminent return of judgment as a threat but the hope of better times the sense that the

Lord would return but that there was this kind of space into the future in which things could be better than they were today and he was a great student of church history and he recognized the word of God had brought great reforms earlier the church could be renewed he was a great student of Luther and it was in this spirit of hopefulness that things actually can be done tomorrow can be better than today that the Halla institutions were born Pietism would in due course foster Zinzendorf and the Moravians and through them influence Wesley and English Methodism they would also influence English Evangelicalism directly by example and by other sorts of contacts and so there's a way that many of the movement for piety itself and many of the actual practical reforms such as these small groups have an enormous impact going forward into

English Evangelicalism in the North Atlantic world but with that as just a kind of background to this movement let's look a little bit at Spanier's big book and ultimately where I want to go with this just at the end is I call it WWST WWJD is what would Spanier think is let's let Spanier evaluate us and our life together at St.

John's in terms of his five big proposals this book *Pia Desideria* or *Pious Longings* Heartfelt Longings subtitled kind of the piety for which we devoutly wish began as a preface to a new edition of Johann John Art's sermons a series of kind of lectionary sermons and it was just a preface in I think 1674 1675 but it caused such a sensation that within six months it was printed as its own as a small book and came to be the kind of banner book for pietism it kind of carried the freight and Spaner it has three sections Spaner analyzes where we're at and then there's a section where he talks about things can be better a hope for better times and then he has a series of proposals and part of what I want to do is read you just some of the different sorts of things that he has to say so he analyzes the defects as he sees it presently in civil government in rulers in society defects among the clergy among whom he includes himself defects among the common people and he says for example talking about the clergy what they take to be faith and what is the ground of their teaching is by no means that true faith which is awakened through the word of

[24 : 25] God by the illumination witness and sealing of the Holy Spirit he says I am alarmed and ashamed whenever I think of the fact that the teaching of an earnest inner godliness is so unfamiliar and strange to some people that those who zealously cultivate such godliness can hardly escape being suspected as secret papists the Baiglians or Quakers they must be a part of some sort of sect if they are concerned about godliness and he critiques the clergy for not preaching this faith and repentance he says not a few of the clergy seem to stake almost everything on polemics on argument they think that everything has turned out very well if only they know how to give an answer to the error of the papists the reformed or the Anabaptists and they pay no attention to the fruits of those articles of faith which we presumably still hold in common so you can see the continuity with somebody like Johann Arndt concerned for real religion not just in name only not just controversial theology so likewise when he comes to critique the common people the pew not just the pulpit he says it would be difficult to find even a small number of real and true disciples of

Christ among the great mass of nominal Christians so his great concern is Christian in name only and simply going to church and sacrament but no sense of inward transformation so I say the second section he goes on to talk about a hope of better times his confidence that the word of God can make a difference and the possibility of renewal he's not just Jeremiah doom and gloom kind of preaching that my goodness things are getting worse and worse and it used to be so good and now it's so bad and he's not just kind of stuck there his sense is it can be different it really can be different tomorrow than it is today this is a big deal that he has that hopefulness in the word of God and as I say he's a good student of church history and so he has lots to draw on to look at previous renewal movements so then the third section and this is the section that really I think is powerful carries with it carries five proposals really the sort of the fifth maybe sort of a sixth proposal under the fifth one but five proposals and it's quite practical it's sort of a track for the times and so in a sense he's not doing in this book what Johann

Arndt does you read Johann Arndt and it's devotional you want to stop you want to pray you want to be led into a deeper communion with Christ you want to think about repentance and you're sort of led into the presence of God prayerfully this is not a devotional book this is a book sort of advocating practical reforms that will lead to devotion and there's five big ones the first one is really Bible studies advocating Bible studies and this is where he uses this phrase a more extensive use of the word of God among us he wanted to see some of Luther's ideas reprinted he felt like in arguing over Luther's theological legacy they'd lost the spirit of Luther which was his confidence in the word of God and his sense was okay the word of God we maybe have good preaching we have sort of orthodox theology but we somehow need to see what are some practical ways we can see the word of God released among us more effectively moving in our midst this is this

Colossians 3:16 sense the word of God dwelling richly among us and he says how could we see that and one idea he has is that there's some lay people who are literate who don't read and so we can have services some public services in which we just read systematically through book by book through the Bible and maybe somebody will explain it a little bit but we'll actually have public readings of scripture he talks extensively about what it means to read the Bible privately at home but between public and private he has this intermediate idea of house groups and here's what he says here about house groups remember he'd also advocate this from the pulpit in Frankfurt in 1669 earlier but here he says it would not perhaps be inexpedient I think that means he thinks it would be good to reintroduce the ancient and apostolical kind of church meetings in addition to our customary services with preaching other assemblies would also be held in the manner which Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 14 one person would not rise to preach although this practice would of course be continued at other times but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would also speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgment of the rest doing all of this in such ways to avoid disorder and strife someone would take up the holy scriptures read aloud from them and then you'd fraternally as brothers discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all

I mean isn't it kind of fun to hear somebody describing something that hopefully most of us take as so commonplace having a bible study you know and he just he proposes this as a way to see the word of God more effectively distributed among us more richly dwelling among us and from this point forward in evangelical religion across the North Atlantic world there will be small groups the cell the koinonia the devotional group the bible study the alpha course whatever you want to call it from this point forward this is one of the things that will be a feature whether in Germany whether in the Netherlands whether in England whether in New England wherever evangelical religion spreads there will be small groups I want to come back to that a little bit at the end secondly lay ministry lay ministry this is another area where he goes back to

[31 : 01] Luther because Luther had talked in different places in the Babylonian captivity of the church and freedom of the christian he talked in different places about the priesthood of all believers and about mutual ministry one to the other and about not simply depending upon a kind of separate caste set apart from the common stock of christians but an exercise of the spiritual priesthood one to the other and this is something else that Spader goes back to and says why don't we actually see this practiced practiced more among us and he he talks quite a lot about what it means for this to be practiced in the home and in everyday life that prayers he says thanksgivings good works generosity called almsgiving teaching the bible exhorting chastising converting edifying that we do this to each other I think this is what Paul is saying that we teach and admonish one another we want to actually see the word of God taught as content but also as transformation so that language that sounds harsh to us of admonishing but actually it means that we're actually concerned that it correct our lives and he says this should happen especially to those under his own roof so he's talking to the house holder saying this needs to happen in the home again not just in public not just in church not just in general but also in particular so one of his concerns is again to see lay people released to minister and I think it's no secret that in established churches in mainline churches in

Anglican churches one of the weaknesses of Anglican churches can be lay ministry can be lay ministry is seeing lay people released to use their gifts to see ministry existing not simply in office but also in gifting and that as God has gifted the people of God so these gifts are to be released and used and used among us and in a real body life together including as Spader says in our homes so Bible studies lay ministries secondly accountable Christian friendships and in this third proposal his real concern he says knowledge of Christianity is not enough getting this theme coming through again and again knowledge is not enough he says for Christianity exists rather a practice so he's concerned to see practice but it's a short section and here his main way he applies this is in what I'm calling accountable

Christian friendships so I think what this is this is a democratization of the idea of spiritual direction listen to how he puts it for this purpose in order to see Christianity as not just knowledge but practice for this purpose he says as well as for the sake of Christian growth in general it may be useful if those who have earnestly resolved to walk in the way of the Lord would enter into a confidential relationship with their confessor or some other judicious and enlightened Christian and would regularly report to him how they live what opportunities they have had to practice Christian love and how they have employed or neglected them this should be done with the intention of discovering what is amiss and securing such an individual's counsel and instruction as to what ought now to be done there should be a firm resolution to follow such advice at all times unless something is expected that is quite clearly contrary to

God's will and so on but I think what he's saying again is that is not only Bible studies not only lay ministry but all of us must have some intimate confidential accountable Christian friendship where there's somebody who can speak into our lives who knows us and who can say do you know what I think in this area Bruce you're not walking the way God would want you to walk who knows how I treat my wife how I treat my kids who can challenge me are you reading the scripture daily what's happening in your life of prayer but that we are all meant to have an accountable Christian friendship he said an enlightened and judicious Christian in other words just somebody trustworthy doesn't have to be an elite spiritual director of some sort but we need to be known and we need to be accountable and so I think again within the broader evangelical movement even today how much at every level from popular movements like promise keepers to the renewal of spiritual direction how much people are hungry for this people want to be known and for this their faith to work out in the context of friendship

Bible studies lay ministry accountable Christian friendships fourthly and I found it hard to kind of capture this in a phrase but I said exemplary religious controversies his period was one of huge controversy not just Catholics Reformed or Calvinists and Lutherans but also all of these other prophetic movements and separatist movements radical movements of all sorts and he acknowledges the need and how important controversy is you need to enter into controversy and into dispute you need to argue you need to defend the faith but he says and this is the way this section begins we must beware how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies with unbelievers or heretics half believers and he says and in this section he numbers his advice but one of the first thing he says before arguing confirm yourself in the truth and

[37:17] I think what he means by that is that the truth is to be defended but that's not the only thing you do with truth right the only thing you do with truth is not just to defend it you seek to live it so in other words the first thing you need to do with truth is to confirm yourself in it that the first importance of truth is that we teach it to each other and we try to actually live within it but then he says before disputing pray for the airing pray for the one you're arguing with and so he says this is the first step when you're going to engage in controversy public controversy private controversy you pray for the good of the airing secondly he talks about setting an example in your own life and then he says point out with a modest but firm presentation of the truth we profess how this is based on the simplicity of Christ's teaching I think what he means is when you argue bring it back to the gospel bring it back to the main and plain things of

Christ's this is not just angels on the head of a pin bring it back to the gospel then he says practice a heartfelt love toward all unbelievers and heretics there must be love and then finally and this is a direct quotation in this section from Johann Arndt he says don't stake everything on argumentation at the end of the day it doesn't all depend upon argument let me read a little bit unbattled our situation is as a church today in the fifth place he says if there is any prospect of a union of most of the confessions among Christians aware that Christians are divided any possibility of Christians reuniting the primary way of achieving it and the one that God would bless most would perhaps be this that we do not stake everything on argumentation for the present disposition of men's minds which are filled by as much fleshly as spiritual zeal makes disputation often fruitless it is true that the defense of the truth and hence also of argumentation which is a part of it must continue in the church together with other things instituted to build it up before us are the holy examples of

Christ the apostles and their successors who engaged in disputation that is vigorously refuted opposing errors and defended the truth the Christian church would be plunged into the greatest danger if anybody wished to remove and repudiate this necessary use of the spiritual sword of the word of God in so far as its use against false teaching is concerned so the last thing he's saying is that you don't need to argue he's saying you do need to argue and argue well nevertheless he says I adhere to the splendidly demonstrated assertion of our sainted art in his true Christianity quote purity of doctrine of the word of God is maintained not only by disputation and writing many books but also by true repentance and holiness of life and then he goes on to talk about that how an unchristian life leads to false doctrine hardness of heart and blindness is one of the best testimonies one of the best ways to argue he says is repentance and holiness of life and so

I think that's part of what he means by what we're calling exemplary religious controversies is that there is love there is example and there is a living of the truth in holiness of life and then fifthly his fifth proposal is for a reformation or reformed way of training the next generation of church leaders he wants to see a whole change in the way we go about doing theological education and the way we do seminary the way we train clergy and church leaders theological schools he said ought to be recognized from the outward life of the students to be nurseries of the church for all estates that is lay people clergy nurseries of the church and here's the phrase workshops of the holy spirit not a great phrase theological seminaries ought to be workshops of the holy spirit of the holy spirit and let me tell you reading this section is powerfully convicting for a professor at a theological college because he has a lot of very direct words to professors and he talks about how professors must be he says more concerned that they impress upon their students that study without piety is worthless than they are concerned merely about academic life that they need from time to time to confront individual students about these things let me

I see that I've written down most of the quotations in this section because this is sort of home truth speaking to me here he professors could accomplish a great deal here by their example if they would conduct themselves as men who have died into the world in everything would seek not their own glory gain or pleasure but rather the glory of their God and the salvation of those entrusted to them and would accommodate all their studies writing of books lessons lectures disputations and other activities to this end it's not about a tenure track job it's not about what journal you publish in it's not about status it's not about anything like that it's finally in the end about the glory of God and the salvation of those entrusted to them students should unceasingly have it impressed upon them that holy life is not of less consequence than diligence and study indeed that study without piety is worthless and then he says it would be especially helpful if you notice how he says it all just like this little proposal it would be nice if it would be especially helpful if the professor would pay attention to the life as well as the studies of students entrusted to them and would from time to time speak to those who need to be spoken to they must perceive that because of their oh he talks about those who are he says engaged in riotous living tiffing bragging boasting of academic preeminence they must be perceived that because of their behavior they are looked down upon by their teachers that their splendid talents and good academic record do not help by themselves and that they are regarded as persons who will do harm in proportion to the gifts that they receive he's saying you know as a professor don't just kind of give your attention and affection and spend all your time with the students who are really bright but who are setting a terrible moral example he says that's no good on the other hand professors should openly and expressly show those who lead a godly life even if they are behind others in their studies how dear they are to their teachers and how very much they are to be preferred to the others you can see he's saying you need to be careful where you give the nod he's saying you know that you can you can communicate an awful lot it is certain that a young man who fervently loves God although adorned with limited gifts will be much more useful to the church of God with his meager talent and academic achievement than a vain and worldly fool with double doctor's degree who is very clever but has not been taught of God

[44 : 57] I don't think in the end he's driving a wedge between these two he wants to see scholarship and piety together scholarship and prayer united he talks about education being personalized being personalized to understand the backgrounds of your students what they're going into what their challenges will be and he says students should be encouraged not just to read controversial literature not just to read argumentative theology but also to read devotional literature he says they should read Arnott they should read Thomas and Kempis they should read the Teal and he's actually specifying devotional books that they should be reading and he says students should be given concrete suggestions not only about gaining information but also how to do meditation self-examination how to resist temptation and these should be the subjects of studying as well to this end he says you can see how again and again he goes back to small groups there should be small groups of students sometimes under the guidance of a professor ultimately they may be able just to meet on their own and keep each other accountable for these things and then the way that he finishes up this section is he goes on to talk about sermons and how students should be taught to preach sermons what kind of sermons they should preach and again he says that he talks about bungling preachers and how ridiculous preaching is when people have only been taught controversial theology he says that students need to be taught to preach sermons that are not self-displayed are not just rational argument but that reach the inner man the inner person all sermons he said should be aimed at this and this really is his segue because remember this book is an introduction to a series of sermons right to a series of lectionary sermons and so the way he ends the book is by talking about preaching that really reaches the heart well what a barn burner of a book very very practical practical proposals and just as we conclude here thinking about the relevance of all this the last section

I just say St. John Shaughnessy 2008 what would Spainer think and in many ways I think we can be grateful for the effective use of the word of God among us we're an Anglican church this is a mainline mainstream church descended from kind of a church established by law and custom and kind of English Volkskirchen and yet within this Anglican church we see an awful lot of what Spainer is talking about so Bible studies I was profoundly encouraged a few weeks back I went and preached some Latin sermons at the cathedral in Birmingham Alabama Anglican cathedral here's an Anglican cathedral and I went and met with one of the small groups including some new Christians and folks who just renewed their faith we chatted Louis and Kathy and we talked about their faith in Christ and they're part of the small group 80 small groups 80 home group Bible studies in this

Anglican cathedral isn't that wonderful isn't that wonderful I think we have 20 to 25 house groups that meet at St. John's and I think Janet Hobbes is organizing those and Jim Sullivan is organizing the ones in connection with the evening service but brothers and sisters wouldn't it be wonderful if people felt like in coming to St.

John's that you don't come to St. John's for more than a couple of months before you're encouraged to join a house group that's where people know you that's where you're known and where you can love and serve and where the word of God you can talk about really how it is touching your life in particular we led and were part of a small group for five years in Oxford it was a wonderful group town and gown as they say in Oxford it was sort of a university and city young and old seekers young college students and a woman Alder Vitole in her 80s that we'd pick up and drive to the small group it was international it was sort of a group where you couldn't even have a sniffle and there'd be a casserole at the door people learn to love and care for one another and it was a place where we would study the Bible and then talk about life and I think let's pray together maybe some of you this morning would be challenged to say you know what

I'm going to start a small group I'm going to go talk to Jan and start a small group because we want to see this happening more at St. John's I think that'd be wonderful we have these Bible studies that the young people are involved in every Friday night just amazing what we've seen happen at St. John's come here sometime on a Friday night and just see this entire church buzzing with young people from junior high through high school in small group Bible studies and loving it and having a great time and some of us have begun to meet a couple years ago as dads and as fathers of teenagers while our kids are studying the Bible we're studying the Bible together and something wonderful happens as you do it in real time you're studying the Bible and then somebody loses a job and you begin to talk about what it means for the Bible to enter into that experience somebody else somebody's spouse gets cancer and you begin to pray about that and talk about that the more effective use of the Word of God among us this is a Bible believing and Bible preaching church but we could use more small groups more Bible studies lay ministry again I think we see so much happening at St. John's and it's fantastic but even more our clergy are very very overstretched there's no reason why in the context of small group

[50 : 53] Bible studies and house groups an awful lot of visitation visiting the sick caring for people caring for people who are grieving a lot of pastoral care can just happen as lay people as our gifts are released and released for service so we thank God in each of these areas for what's happening and I think Spader would say we could do more accountable Christian friendships and again we've raised that issue but maybe there's somebody that you would approach to say why would we be together for coffee every fortnight every two weeks and just talk about what's happening in our lives together and how we're doing and open ourselves up to each other to ask pointed questions about how we're doing exemplary religious controversies I feel very grateful that in the midst of the Anglican crisis that we're in Sunday by Sunday the way the word of God is used in the pulpit is for us to grow and to learn the pulpit is not a bully pulpit that's just used to criticize people and of course we need to deal with false teaching and that's happening at all sorts of levels but I just feel like the church is exemplary and I'm very grateful for the way we enter into controversy but let's heed what

Spader says beware in the midst of controversy how your faith can become distorted but it's also by repentance and holiness of life that we defend the gospel and then finally the reformed training of church leaders as I was thinking about this I was thinking how wonderful this artisan program this is exactly what's going on I think Spader would go this is fantastic this is exactly what this is about is people who are being trained up as church leaders and being trained up not just to kind of know facts about the bible but being trained up and in the way that he talks about in a very personal education where scholarship and theology and piety are held together and I think that's true I hope that's true also at Regent College it's certainly been a great concern at Regent College that we be we talk about this a lot as faculty about how it could be the sort of place in which spirituality and theology belong together and there's always more we can do and ways we can look to improve in those directions and Spader certainly points us points us in those directions too so finally we just come back to the verse that we began with

Colossians 3.16 let me read this again let the word of Christ dwell in you richly richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing hymns psalms hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God so Spader's big idea was pretty big and it's had a huge impact across across Christendom and I think we can continue to learn from that learn from that today so what a nice stop there and just there's time for any questions or comments you'd all like to make yeah I'd like your comment about the small groups I mean really some of them I think are underutilized but that may be because it takes a while for a sense of community to develop in a group where people are willing to take the risk of talking about the real things not just the right things you know what I mean yeah we have had difficulties with this in St. John's there were 36 small groups when I joined this church a lot of years ago and I think one of the things that happened is that we got more cliff dwellers in terms of people living in apartments but small living rooms that wouldn't accommodate very many people and two things happened to compensate for this which I think you need to work into the equation of how many small groups we've got here one is Bronwyn and the women at 10 to operate in small groups once you get there and the other one is Central Focus which Neil started in response to the number of people that couldn't be accommodated in the existing small groups and didn't have the ability to form their own and they have

I think six or eight small groups going there with definite leadership and a definite group it's the same one week after week that you would go to so there is a chance to go a little bit further than just studying the Bible and I would like you to add those statistics to your 20 fair enough and I think in the spirit of Spainer you notice part of what he's doing is creativity it's just sort of saying let the word of God dwell on you richly and he's saying wouldn't it be good if we did this or this or this and I think it may be the exigencies of a kind of of not being a community church but more like a downtown church means there's things like things like this where as you say cliff dwellers I like that it may be that it may be that it's really small groups so just two or three that are gathering together and I think there's all sorts of possibilities and I think all those things you mentioned like women at 10 and central focus are in the spirit are in the same spirit of this so mea culpa yeah how much pietism survives in Germany today?

that's a really good question I really have no idea is there anybody here who knows I mean pietism has had all sorts of twists and turns and has had a huge impact also in Scandinavian countries and would be the background for the covenant church in North America and so on but pietism today yeah quite a large population of the Mennonites in Germany who came from Russia were influenced by pietism yeah yeah that's right yeah I really appreciate you talk thank you two questions one perhaps to be controversial could you say maybe how Spain would think about the transfer of small groups from meeting in the home to the church structure the church building whether because you had said part of making this real is putting it in your home and I can say that you can say that in regard to relationship like we want this in the home you know your relationship structures but maybe the actual place of the home as a meeting place and secondly under accountable

[57 : 37] Christian friendships if he's granted this doesn't have to be like a spiritual director relationship but did he see these as reciprocal relationships or was it I'm accountable to this person without a reciprocal accountability he doesn't say a whole lot about kind of the church building but what is true is he kind of pushes out in this direction of small groups and then he has to kind of pull back and kind of fence it a bit and there because small groups are also been you know you see the possibilities and the dangers of small groups both in early pietism with the way in which these groups shear off into this kind of radicalism and into these prophetic and other extremes and so does he pull some of them in centrally into the church into the church building I'm not sure about home versus church building certainly the things he says about seeing the word of God in the household he's very concerned in terms of families and the house that it kind of happened there but he does also pull back begin to regulate you know clergy are involved in supervising these groups and so on there's this wonderful phrase that William Cooper the English evangelical poet used in a letter where he talked about he said lay agency this wasn't exactly his phrase but lay initiative taken up with great reluctance is lay down with even more you know that this initiative once begun actually in many cases became problematic and had to be regulated and so on but but so

I don't know and even in terms of spiritual direction and that kind of mutual accountability I read you the whole of what he said like this is so brief that's the whole of what he said about that and so Luther still acknowledged the place for a I think this was in Freedom of the Christian but the place for a a spiritual a spiritual friend or indeed a spiritual confessor that that sometimes it helps especially with certain kinds of sins to be able to have another person be able to say out loud that Christ has forgiven you go and sin no more and not just even though we have the freedom of access to be able to have that with another person so I don't think in terms of my what I've read in Spain I don't know that he addresses that directly about whether that's a mutual relationship or whether that's a matter of a junior approaching a senior Christian yeah with this current you talked about sort of loving your enemy and loving that we have to love through all that and I find that seems to be quite a difficult thing certainly as people in the church they become quite so warlike if you like about it all and I don't

I just don't know how we deal with that we don't want to be pious to the point where we're holier than that one we're always sinners yeah it's not about a kind of phoniness that there's real a proper kind of a proper kind of I think what I like about what Spanier said is there's a kind of principled stance and argument but I think many times the problem comes when we symbolize the opponent when we symbolize somebody and they simply become a cipher that simply stands for or like we say we demonize them and I think at least we can pray for them I'm going to this he's not even in the country right now so I'll embarrass Michael Bentley in the midst of this dispute and even after the vote that happened at church was the response simply to go into battle against these people who are demonized well you know what Michael

Bentley did he phones up Peter the archdeacon I forget his last name Elliot he phones up Peter and he says can we meet together as friends and go out for a drink right and they're having this conversation on the phone and Peter says oh Michael yeah I've got to go he says I'm going to be on the air on CKNW with your wife in a few minutes right and he goes on CKNW and whoever the presenter was that comes out trying to you know get them fighting and before she can even get them fighting and introduces them Peter says hi Leslie I was just talking to your husband on the phone and I think again not to embarrass Michael but I think that to me symbolizes what we're talking about they disagree profoundly and openly but he's not just symbolizing and demonizing but there's an attempt at love and at reaching out even though Michael of all people is going to take a stand and acknowledge that we disagree so I think there's many ways that we'll all go wrong when we do this but yeah it's not just it can't just be sort of a piety that we speak where it becomes just a kind of gilded sort of pretense but yeah thank you for involvement this presentation yes wonderful applause applause applause

I just wondered if you'd comment on the thought that each of these five points is really a radical realization of the priesthood of all believers that's the essential point in relation to our structures in the Anglican church are we well structured in order to take advantage of this radical point irrespective of the present this needs no I think that's very perceptive and I think that is as I say Spanier was a keen scholar of Luther and the kind of time lag we're talking about here it'd be like today talking about let's say G.K.

[63 : 51] Chesterton right so in other words it takes scholarship and work to recover G.K. Chesterton today because there isn't just a living memory I mean there's a living memory but so Spanier is a scholar of Luther and he goes back to Luther and one of the things he sees is what's totally unrealized among us is the priesthood of all believers and so there's a way you could say all of this what he's advocating is the priesthood of all believers but I think it's also in connection with that a kind of democratization of the word of God is wanting to see the word of God as not just simply something we depend upon the clergy so it's sort of connected it's this mutual teaching of the word of God and this pressing of reformation from pulpit to pew and it does it releases tremendous energy as it does so I think in a monarchical church structure you can have monarchical synodical congregational church structures and I think each of them have their dangers and most churches today are sort of presblytional they have elements of representational government elements of sort of AGM kind of annual general meeting everybody weighing in and elements of executive even churches that have begun being just monarchical or just presbyteral or just congregational there's usually a blend of elements and I think that's happened over the years within Anglicanism but I think in a structure that has elements of being monarchical in terms of church government

I think it's a challenge to remind ourselves of this that as gospel people we want to reverence those who in the Lord are over us as governing by the word of God and respect those structures but those structures I think are meant to serve in precisely these ways that the word of God be released released sounds like the word of God is bound that the word of God that we allow the word of God to dwell in us richly I remember when I was working for Youth for Christ and we went to this convention where there's all these sessions and there was a session called Making the Word of God Come Alive and it was led by Ken Davis who had been a full-time stand-up comic and used to work for in fact he was on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson he had his own weird like he was an unbelievably funny guy and he became executive director of Youth for Christ in Florida so he's doing this session

Making the Bible Come Alive and so of course being the mature people we are we all went to that session because we thought it would be really funny and he did the entire session for an hour without a single joke even though he's unbelievably witty you could kind of see these jokes that he avoided he did the entire session straight and his thesis was the word of God didn't die you did the word of God doesn't need to be made to come alive you know his thesis was the word of God is alive and it's us that are dead and so it was kind of this big rebuke to us and so so I think from a mainline church or a church where there has been a powerful sense of civic connection like the Ankin Church there will always be a danger that we could slip into being a church where you can dissolve into the fabric and think of going to church and sacrament think of rectitude think of propriety think of appearances and I think that the challenge for us is

Spanier's challenge so I think Spanier's proposal is precisely why I think it can speak to us so much today it was specifically addressed to the same situation where the structures themselves aren't going to make it happen yeah the German pietists did they go as far as to hope for lay presidency over the communion and lay presidency over baptism in the church I found I'm a late convert I found the church a little bit neurotic over thinking in directions that may leave them with nothing to do did the German pietists ever address that yeah I don't know enough about pietism to know if within church pietism there was ever a movement towards lay presidency or certainly pietism

I think in some ways even more than the English movements evangelical movements pietism had this whole radical like radical pietism is a whole huge field and where it very quickly dissolves into all kinds of radical sectarian movements and Württemberg kind of south of Frankfurt was a huge area for radical pietism and certainly in those groups they take the lay priesthood to the extent where ministry exists entirely in gifting not office right and where there's all sorts of experiments that are much more radical than lay presidency I think I think that for Spanier and the church pietists they want to maintain sort of orthodox structures and practice and on the whole just continue with the practice of the Eucharist the practice of preaching and so on but they just want to add to that this ecclesial element the kind of small church element and that's what would distinguish them from the radicals whose proposals go in that direction and much more radical than that but whether within pietism within

[69 : 49] Lutheranism I just don't know enough about Lutheranism I told you I think probably everything that I do know about pietism in one hour so wait if you have had a change no no I'm just saying goodbye well thank you Bruce it's a wonderful subject oh you can thank you Thank you.