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Love and Emotions in Pietist Hymnography—From the Past to Us: Musical Examples

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze, through religious hymns in the German-speaking area from the early 18th century, the influence that the Pietist theological movement, starting from Philipp Jacob Spener's *Pia Desideria*, had on the centralization of the self in the Protestant religious world, through the introduction of personal feelings of love towards God. On the one hand, the origins of Pietism can already be traced back to the late 16th century in areas affected by the radical reforms of the Anabaptists. On the other hand, it is from the late 17th century and throughout the 18th century that this theological and spiritual movement destabilized orthodox Lutheranism in some symbolic cities of Protestant Germany, such as Frankfurt am Main, Halle, and the Duchy of Westphalia, up to Moravia. The extensive publication of hymnals and musical compendia for the use of individuals, lay groups (*collegia pietatis*), faith communities, and churches denotes a fervor and a desire to preach their way of "practicing" spirituality, which greatly contrasts with both orthodox Lutheranism and the prevailing rationalism in the religious and philosophical sphere in Germany of the mid-18th century. For the first time since the Reformation, Lutheranism saw the use, in the theology of the preached and sung Word, of personal feelings and emotions that connect the individual with God, who is made an object of individual as well as collective worship. This was one of the most significant accusations that came from the University of Wittenberg against Pietism, namely the shift of theological and spiritual focus from the centrality of God to the centrality of the self, which manifests its faith through the most intimate emotions and feelings. Through the analysis of some examples taken from hymnographic and theological production, centered on the individual feelings of the believer, this article focuses on how this influenced the religious revival movements that would pervade England and the United States of America for more than two centuries (from the First Great Awakening in the late 18th century to the Pentecostal movements of the 20th century), with a spotlight on Italian hymnody during the Risorgimento.

Keywords: congregational music studies; history of Christian music; church music; Pietism

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1. Introduction

Protestant churches, both due to their history and their theology, have music, and particularly singing, as one of the central and prominent aspects of their worship practices. The studies of theologian and musicologist Don E. Saliers highlight the awareness of this centrality of music in worship not only as a devotional and ritual factor but also as a theological expression of the community of believers: he believes, in fact, that any form of theological reflection aims for a faithful discourse on God, the world, and humanity, and he places emphasis on the possibility of a "musical theology" and a "theology of music". Liturgical theology has a strong interest in how hymns, psalms, canticles, and acclamations of the assembly in liturgy are both a theological and a musical practice. He considers this form of theology a central discipline in the reasoning about music (Saliers 2017, p. 61).

Thus, music in Protestant worship ascends to a theological moment, that is, a pedagogical moment or a moment of spiritual edification for the faithful. In the history of Christianity, as well as in other major monotheisms, the relationship between music and

the sacred and, more generally, music and religion has always been controversial. There are two main and succinct considerations regarding music in relation to Christianity:

- Music as a diabolical art, literally of the devil (from the Greek διαβάλλω (diaballo), meaning to put in between, to disunite), thus music is an instrument that comes between the ear that hears it and God;
- Conversely, music as a gift from God, the highest art of all that connects humankind with celestial harmony.

For these two different and opposing theses, exemplary thinkers and theologians can be identified in support of each since the early Christian period (Fubini 1976; Shiloah 2003).

In some writings of Ancient Israel, such as the *Sotah* (a Talmudic tractate from the period of Rabbinic Judaism), music is referred to as the "desolation of the house" or it is said that "the ear that listens to music should be cut off" (Shiloah 2003, p. 314). Clement of Alexandria (circa 150–circa 220) in his *Protrepticus pros Hellenas* fiercely opposed music, particularly musical instruments, accepting only the use of the lyre and the harp (the instruments of David), as other instruments "could bring to the ears of Christian listeners echoes of pagan festivities and the obscene theater" (Reese 1940, p. 61). Also in the *Protrepticus*, Clement denounces the enchanting potential of music and warns against its use as an instrument of deception, using the music of Orpheus as a primary example: he speaks of "skilled sorcery", "outrage against human life", and being "driven by the devil". In contrast, he presents the figure of David, who, with his singing and lyre, drives away demons from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14–23).

Much more favorable to music, in general, was Basil of Caesarea (329–379), who, always emphasizing the centrality of this subject in the *Book of Psalms*, states in his *Homily on the First Psalm* that "the psalm brings tranquility to the soul and moderates its unruliness" (Fubini 1976, p. 61), and then introduces the theme, which will resurface constantly in Christianity, of singing as a tool of edification on one hand and teaching on the other: "Oh, wise invention of the master who imagined that we could simultaneously sing and learn beneficial things, so that the doctrines are somehow more deeply imprinted on the mind" (idem).

John Chrysostom (circa 350–407) added another element to this evolving musical thought in relation to Christian worship, which would also recur frequently during the Middle Ages and beyond: the healing power of singing psalms, used as a shield against Satan. Singing psalms constitutes "a protection against Satan during festivals, who is always trying to ensnare" (Shiloah 2003, p. 330). John Chrysostom also adopted the concept of the educational aspect of singing as a direct gift from God, who gave humankind this instrument to use against humanity's own indolence to elevate praises and soften the soul; John Chrysostom also introduced the idea of the non-sacred use of singing as a means of escape from the anxieties and labors of work (Fubini 1976, pp. 61–62).

Another thinker on the concept of music and Christian ritual was Boethius (circa 475–circa 525), who, with his *De Institutione Musica*, is considered the most important and influential Christian theologian to have dealt with music (Bertoglio 2020).

This brings us to Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who, both in *De Musica* and in the *Confessions*, praises the art of music and devotional and ritual singing. Taking the example of the Ambrosian rite, Augustine defined singing as a means to prevent people from drifting away from the church due to the boredom of the rite (Augustine of Hippo 1998, pp. 411–12), an argument fully embraced by Luther in 1524. But still, in *Book IX* of the *Confessions*, the Church Father exemplified a dilemma that Christianity would carry until the Protestant Reformation on one side and the Council of Trent on the other, that is, Augustine tried to understand to what extent beautiful singing is praise of God or does not border on personal pleasure. He transitions from praising the work of singing for his own personal edification to fearing sinning for the pleasure of music.

This dichotomous thinking about music in Augustine's rites and private devotional practice has enormously influenced Protestantism's position on the matter, particularly in the thought of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and the Pietist movement.

> "Pietism is essentially practical Christianity. Spener himself defines theology as *habitus practicus*: it is not just a science but a life; it is the practice of Christianity, not just a school of thought. A theological faculty should not only train specialists but primarily create true Christians; it should not only impart knowledge to future ministers but teach them 'the practice of faith and life'. For the Pietist, practice is more important than piety, or rather the practice of piety (*praxis pietatis*), piety that becomes practice. Christianity does not consist of knowing but of doing; it is not *gnosis* but *agápe*. The level of your Christianity is shown in what you do, not in what you know. Knowledge, one day, will be abolished, but faith, hope, and love remain, and the greatest of these is love, which does not consist of thoughts and words but of deeds and truth: one approaches the truth by doing it, not by thinking it. Pietism, therefore, does not seek to console but to mobilize; it does not preach retreat from the world but a Christianly recognizable presence in it". (Ricca 1986)

The words of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13), which Paolo Ricca, an important Italian Reformed theologian, echoes in his writing, provide one of the main starting points of Pietist thought that led Philipp Jacob Spener (1635–1705) to write his *Pia Desideria* in 1675, which is now regarded as the founding text of the Pietistic movement (Osculati 1986). Over the centuries, Pietism has experienced mixed fortunes, almost always negative, as evidenced by the study by Olson and Collins Winn (2015), such as the accusation of misleading the conduct of the faithful with excessive attitudes, allowing emotions to overshadow theology. Spener explains his vision of the Christian's duties towards God, commenting on John 3, 16–21 and John 4, 47–54, namely, "Faith is the work of God and has as its object God himself in his love for mankind; to spiritual knowledge, it adds assent and trust in God" (Osculati 1990). Despite solid theological foundations (Spener was a theologian, academic, and pastor), the Pietist movement never managed to engage in high-level dialogue with orthodox Lutheranism. Over the centuries, Pietists have been attacked from various sides and on multiple aspects, from Enlightenment thinkers to orthodox Lutherans in the 18th century, and later by great theologians in the next two centuries, such as Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth. The theological and ecclesiological aspects that most caused these sometimes very harsh reactions range from the focus that Pietists placed on emotions, their extremization of the personal nature of faith, and the emphasis on the relationship between God and the human being and between human beings, to manifestations of trance and possession, up to the concept of the believer's individualism.

> "Pietism's essence is individual conversion, individual sanctification, individual salvation, thus it is individualism, and it is especially so in the sense that it is individualistic consciously and intentionally". (Busch 2004)

The fundamental points outlined by Spener, later adopted by German and Anglo-Saxon Pietism in subsequent decades, emerged from the recognition of the spiritual impoverishment of the German Evangelical Church. These points include targeted and intensive Bible study; the re-evaluation of the role of the laity in contrast to the pastoral body; the superiority of action over theological study; the renunciation of a spirit of controversy; more practical and less theological training of pastors; and the prioritization of edifying preaching over intellectual preaching (Bouchard 2006).

2. Love: A Word, a Feeling, a Theology

Starting from the writings of Spener and extending to the more extreme works of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), love, understood in its multiple meanings of ἀγάπη (agàpe) and ἐρως (èros), has risen to a dominant position in Pietist thought and spirituality. Given the importance that the study of the treatise *Imitatio Christi* (15th century) had for the Pietists, love for God and neighbor often became the main topic of the collegia pietatis meetings. Indeed, "it is worth noting the centrality of the divine as the highest good to which the human soul must adhere, detaching itself from all created

goods. [. . .] The human spirit can find its true foundation and peace by immersing itself in the light of the divine, abandoning itself to its love. [. . .] If even once you had completely penetrated the heart of Jesus and tasted just a little of his burning love, then you would not care at all about your comfort or discomfort" (Osculati 1990).

The love relationship between the believer's soul and Christ is at the center of this theological perspective. Jesus is the Friend and the source of all good, as the texts of two hymns of the Revival rooted in overseas Pietist theology tell us, "*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*" and "*Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*". The goal of the good Christian becomes the search for love for Jesus in their own heart, as we read in "*Precious Name*". But even more, it is the cross of Christ that must be both desired and loved, with love for it being so great as to completely overshadow the world, as exemplified in the hymn "*The Old Rugged Cross*".

Beyond hymnography, personal spirituality, and theology, Pietism has also greatly influenced the way entire communities live. Starting in 1722, Count von Zinzendorf began to host refugees from nearby Moravia in his estates in Lusatia at Berthelsdorf after they fled persecution for their Protestant faith. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) had established the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*. As Moravia was under the direct rule of the Catholic and imperial House of Habsburg, with the intensification of religious repressions, some Moravians decided to enter the territories controlled by Zinzendorf to seek asylum. With them, the Count founded a community called Herrnhut (literally "the Lord's protection"), and in 1727, by promulgating the Statutes, he officially inaugurated the life of this civic and religious community, which is still today the center of the Moravian Church. The common life regulating this village was based on the law of the New Testament, as expressed in Matthew 22, 34–40.

The example of Herrnhut and the Moravian Brethren has influenced, over time, both Protestant Christianity in the United States, primarily in Pennsylvania from the 1740s (Olson and Collins Winn 2015), and the ecumenical approach of European evangelical churches.

> "The term *Gemeine*, finally, signifies for Zinzendorf the spiritual brotherhood of all true believers across all confessional and denominational lines. This invisible body can become partially visible in a local Gemeine when true believers unite in fellowship. Zinzendorf is convinced that all who belong to Christ, even if they come from different churches, yearn for such fellowship". (Vogt 2005)

The pietist spirituality of Herrnhut, and more generally of the collegia pietatis that developed in Germany between the late seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, found expression in various devotional forms such as prayer, biblical reflections, states of exaltation and ecstasy, poetry, and song. It is to the latter that we specifically refer to in this article.

> "Song and music, which very often accompanied the daily lives of the colony, expressed the joyful union of the brothers with Christ in all states of his humanity: in his childhood, in his suffering, in his work, in his hunger and thirst, in his prayer, in his death, in his humiliation, and in his glory". (Osculati 1990)

3. Formative and Hymnographic Examples

3.1. Introductions

Since the Reformation of Martin Luther (Wittenberg 1517), music and song have held a peculiar centrality in the worship and spiritual life of believers. The reformer himself referred to the importance of music in worship with these words: "und also das Güte mit Lust" (and thus the goodness with pleasure), as young people were to be aware that worshiping God is not only a duty of a good Christian but also a moment during which they can live their individual freedom under the stern yet loving gaze of God (Sfredda 2010).

This theological conception of music and song was embraced by proponents of Pietism (such as Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf, and others) and was particularly fundamental for certain communities. Since the early years of the development of Pietist movements in Germany, there has been a proliferation of poetic and musical compositions, followed by

the publication of hymnals in cities such as Halle, Frankfurt, Berlin, and small villages like Herrnhut. Composers and poets such as Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen (1670–1739), Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769), Johann Jakob Schütz (1640–1690), and Christian Friedrich Richter (1676–1711) wrote, composed, and published hymnals that were not only used within the various *collegia pietatis* in Germany, but were also translated and exported to different parts of the world, including the neighboring Netherlands, Denmark, and the Kingdom of England, as well as the United States of America and missions in Canada and India.

August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) was the Pietist who, perhaps more than anyone else, left a tangible and lasting impact on German society and culture. A theologian and educator, he established an institute for poor children in Glaucha, a small village located just outside the southern gate of the city of Halle that remained an autonomous municipality until 1817, in 1695. His model of an institute for children and youth became, over time, one of the most widely adopted, even during his lifetime, according to Douglas Shantz.

> "From the beginning, Francke was inspired not primarily by a vision of care of the needy but by a pedagogical philosophy that he described as 'guiding the children to true godliness and Christian intelligence'. This philosophy was eventually realized in a school program with multiple educational institutions, including schools for orphans and the poor, a Latin school, and the exclusive *Pädagogium Regium*, an elector's school. Francke's foundations in Halle were justly described as 'a school city'. The schools' reputation and progressive program attracted children from all over Europe. By the fall of 1706, 989 children were enrolled in the schools; of these, 122 were orphans". (Shantz 2013)

In these new and progressive programs, two fundamental educational moments for Francke were never lacking: the study of the Bible and singing, during which God's love for humanity and love among humans—understood as affection, friendship, and respect—were emphasized. In the seventeenth century, religious practice and education played a crucial role in the upbringing of Dutch orphans. The day was punctuated by five designated prayer times: in the morning when the children awoke, at each of the three meal times, and before bedtime. During meals, a section from the Bible, catechism, or a devotional book was read aloud. Occasionally, an older child would take on the reading. Additionally, there was the singing of psalms and hymns. On Sundays, the children participated in church services, with designated seating set aside specifically for them (Shantz 2013).

Another of the most interesting educational insights that Francke introduced into his students' curriculum was the use of the Baroque flute, which he considered a low-cost musical instrument that was quick to learn and especially useful for reproducing unfamiliar melodies to be learned and then sung. The success of this insight is still evident today in school music education programs.

3.2. Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen

Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen (1670–1739) was Francke's assistant at his institutes and a prolific poet as well as a theologian and pastor. However, his most significant activity was as the curator of the most important hymnals and collections of songs for the Pietist conventicles. Some notable examples include *ieiches Gesang-Buch den Kern alter und neuer Lieder: wie auch die Noten der unbekannten Melodeyen* (Halle 1704) and *Neues geistreiches Gesang-Buch* (Halle 1714). Both collections were reprinted and republished numerous times over the years, with the most significant edition dating back to 1741, containing 1581 hymns with 709 different melodies. In 1736, Freylinghausen's collections were also adopted as a model by the official Lutheran Church (Johann Sebastian Bach participated in the Leipzig edition, Basso 1983). The hymns collected by Freylinghausen are often composed in the typical form of the Lutheran chorale, as adopted into Evangelical Pietism. The *barform* is a musical structure of very simple design: A A B. It has been used since classical Greek poetry (strophe, antistrophe, and epode) and later in the Middle Ages by German singers (the Minnesänger and Meistersinger). Musically, it consists of a first phrase A repeated

twice, followed by a phrase B; often, hymns conclude with a restatement of A, creating a variant structure known as *Reprisen-B*: A A B A.

As an example of Freylinghausen's hymnography, we present some stanzas from the hymn *Der du bist α und ω, Anfang und Ende*, which highlight the centrality of love and the emotions believers experience before Jesus:

1. Dis ist der brunn aus welchem herzestossen,
Was mich in meiner wallfahrt, frh̓ und spat,
An seel und leib, jemals erquicket hat,
Der sich hat stromweis über mich ergossen,
Daß ich den augenblick nicht nennen kan,
Da mir nicht wäre daraus guts gethan.
2. Gelobet sey, O Herrscher, diese liebe
Die sonderlich auch im verstrichnen jahr
Mich armen staub, der deß unwürdig war.
So merklichspüren lassen ihre triebe;
Ich stelle mich dafür in meinem sinn
Dir, grosser Gott, leibst zum dakopfer hin.
3. O denke nicht an der vergangnen zeiten
Gemachte viel un überhäufte schuld,
Laß deine gnad und milde Vaterbuld,
Zu meinem trost in Christo sie bespreiten:
Was ich gelebet hab, das decke zu;
Was ich noch leben soll, regiere du.
4. Erneure mich, der du machst alles neue,
Das alte laß von nun an untergehn,
Laß heiligkeit an dessen stelle stehn,
Die neue creatur mich stets erfreue:
Der Geist aus dir berändre sinn und muth,
Nur dich zu lieben als das höchste gut.

Translation: (1) This is the spring from which have welled forth, in my pilgrimage, early and late, refreshing both soul and body, which has poured over me like a stream, so that I cannot name the moment when it did not do me good. (2) Praise be, O Ruler, to this love, which especially in the past year made me, poor dust unworthy of it, feel its effects so noticeably; in my thoughts, I offer myself as a thank-offering to You, great God. (3) O do not remember the times gone by with their many accumulated debts; let Your grace and merciful fatherly love spread over them for my comfort in Christ: cover what I have lived, and guide what I am yet to live. (4) Renew me, You who make all things new; let the old henceforth pass away, and let holiness take its place, may the new creature always delight me: may the Spirit from You change my mind and courage, to love only You as the highest good.

3.3. Gerhard Tersteegen

Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769) was a German writer, poet, and hymnologist, he was born in the Protestant town of Moers (under the rule of Orange-Nassau). His spiritual quest led him to embrace the most radical Pietist currents, developing a profound devotional and spiritual sensitivity. He composed and published one of the most interesting collections of hymns of that time: *Das geistliche Blumengärtlein*. From this collection comes the hymn *Gott ist gegenwärtig: lasset uns anbeten*.

In the stanzas of this hymn, Tersteegen focuses on several central themes of Pietist theology: the first stanza addresses the fear with which believers should approach God. The second stanza, referencing numerous biblical verses that deal with the believer's struggle between God and Mammon (Gospel of Mark 10, 23; Gospel of Luke 18, 24), emphasizes the importance of giving glory to God alone, a fundamental principle of

historical Protestantism. The third and fourth stanzas introduce a description of God, for His praise and worship, following the examples of psalms of praise. The fifth stanza returns attention to the individual believer, who, speaking in the first person, expresses to God the prayer to make oneself pure and prepared to receive His grace. Finally, the sixth stanza declares the believer's love for God, a purified and definitive love.

1. Gott ist gegenwärtig; lasset uns anbeten,
Und in Ehrfurcht vor ihn treten!
Gott ist in der Mitte; alles in uns schweige
Und sich innigst vor ihm beuge!
Wer ihn kennt, Wer ihn nennt,
Schlagt die Augen nieder.
Kommt, ergebt euch wieder!
2. Wir entsagen willig allen Eitelkeiten,
Aller Erdenlust und Freuden;
Da liegt unser Wille, Seele, Leib und Leben
Dir zum Eigentum ergeben.
Du allein Sollst es sein,
Unser Gott und Herre,
Dir gebührt die Ehre.
3. Luft, die alles füllet, drin wir immer schweben,
Aller Dinge Grund und Leben.
Meer ohn' Grund und Ende, Wunder aller Wunder,
Ich senk mich in dich hinunter.
Ich in dir, Du in mir,
Laß mich ganz verschwinden,
Dich nur sehn und finden!
4. Du durchdringest alles; laß dein schönstes Lichte,
Herr, berühren mein Gesichte!
Wie die zarten Blumen willig sich entfalten
Und der Sonne stille halten,
Laß mich so Still und froh
Deine Strahlen fassen
Und dich wirken lassen!
5. Mache mich einfältig, innig, abgeschieden,
Sanfte und im stillen Frieden,
Mach mich reines Herzens, daß ich deine Klarheit
Schauen mag in Geist und Wahrheit.
Laß mein Herz Überwärts
Wie ein Adler schweben
Und in dir nur leben!
6. Herr, komm in mir wohnen, laß mein'Geist auf Erden
Dir ein Heiligtum noch werden;
Komm, du nahes Wesen, dich in mir verkläre,
Daß ich dich stets lieb'und ehre!
Wo ich geh', Sitz und steh',
Laß mich dich erblicken
Und vor dir mich bücken!

Translation: (1) God is present; let us worship and approach Him in reverence! God is in our midst; let everything within us be silent and bow deeply before Him! Those who know Him, who call upon Him, lower their eyes. Come, let us submit ourselves once more! (2) We willingly renounce all vanities, all earthly desires and joys; our will, soul, body, and life lie here surrendered to You as Your possession. You alone shall be our God and Lord; to You belongs the honor. (3) Air that fills everything, in which we constantly

float, foundation and life of all things. Sea without bottom or end, wonder of all wonders, I sink down into You. I in You, You in me, let me wholly disappear, seeing and finding only You! (4) You penetrate everything; let Your most beautiful light, Lord, touch my face! Like delicate flowers willingly unfolding and silently holding to the sun, let me grasp Your rays so quietly and joyfully, and let You work through me! (5) Make me simple, intimate, withdrawn, gentle, and in quiet peace; make my heart pure so that I may see Your clarity in spirit and truth. Let my heart soar upwards like an eagle and live only in You! (6) Lord, come dwell within me; let my spirit on earth become a sanctuary for You. Come, You near Presence, glorify Yourself in me so that I may always love and honor You! Wherever I walk, sit, and stand, let me behold You and bow before You!

3.4. Johann Jakob Schütz

Johann Jakob Schütz (1640–1690) was born in 1640 in Frankfurt. He was a lawyer and hymnologist, credited with some of the most significant hymns later collected by Freylinghausen in his hymnals (1705, 1714). Here we present, in the famous English version translated by Frances Elizabeth Cox in 1864, his *Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above*, composed in 1675.

In this hymn, as in that of Tersteegen, we find a reference to the greatness and omnipotence of God expressed in the opening lines. However, Schütz's text emphasizes praise more prominently, focusing on the dominion of God over the heavens, creation, power, love, and the believer's salvation. It echoes the psalms, particularly in the fourth stanza with a clear reference to Psalm 34, and also reflects Christian eschatology. The fifth stanza introduces a novel theme for its historical context: the love of a maternal God, a protective and gentle love. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth stanzas, we encounter the pattern of the psalms again, with the return of vigilant paternal love of God, praises, and references to the Gospel (for example, Jesus calming the storm, Gospel of Matthew 8, 23–27).

1. Sing praise to God who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul He fills,
and every faithless murmur stills;
to God all praise and glory!
2. The angel host, O King of kings,
Thy praise for ever telling,
in earth and sky all living things
beneath thy shadow dwelling,
Adore the wisdom which could span,
and power which formed creation' plan;
to God all praise and glory!
3. What God's almighty power hath made
His gracious mercy keepeth;
by morning glow or evening shade,
His watchful eye ne'er sleepeth:
within the Kingdom of his might,
Lo! all is just and all is right:
to God all praise and glory!
4. I cried to God in my distress,
in mercy, hear my calling!
My Saviour saw my helplessness,
and kept my feet from falling;
for this, Lord, thanks and praise to Thee!
Praise God, I say, praise God with me!
To God all praise and glory!

5. The Lord is never far away,
Throughout all grief distressing
an ever-present help and stay,
our peace and joy and blessing.
As with a mother's tender hand,
He leads his own, his chosen band;
to God all praise and glory!
6. When every earthly hope is flown
from sorrow's sons and daughters,
our Father from his heavenly throne
beholds the troubled waters;
and at his Word the storm is stayed
which made his children's hearts afraid;
to God all praise and glory!
7. Then all my toilsome way along
I sing aloud Thy praises,
that all may hear the grateful song
my voice unwearied raises:
be joyful in the Lord, my heart!
Both soul and body bear your part!
To God all praise and glory!
8. Ye who name Christ's holy name
give God all praise and glory;
let all who know God's power proclaim
aloud the wondrous story!
Cast each false idol from its throne,
and worship God, and God alone!
To God all praise and glory!

3.5. Christian Friedrich Richter

Christian Friedrich Richter (1676–1711) was born in Sorau in 1676. He later studied in Halle, where he was converted to Pietistic Lutheranism by August Hermann Francke. Besides serving as the physician at Francke's orphanage, he wrote numerous treatises on spiritual edification and more than twenty sacred hymns. Among these, the most famous, also well-regarded in Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, is "God Whom I As Love Have Known", included both in Freylinghausen's German hymnals (n. 647 in the edition of 1714, Halle 1714) and in English and American hymnals, this hymn appears in at least four editions of hymnals in English: *Hymns of the Ages* (Boston 1859); *Lyra Germanica* (New York 1856); *Lyra Germanica* (Grand Rapids 1861); and *The Soldier's Manual of Devotion, or Book of Common Prayer* (Philadelphia 1847).

Richter's text is part of the Pietist repertoire that faced opposition from Reformed theologians in the 20th century. The description of God's love is distinctly different from contemporary Protestant hymnody, whether Lutheran or Reformed. It immediately strikes with its somber narrative of a God who, to make His love known to the believer, compels the believer to live in distress, pain, and constant suffering, almost like an 18th-century Job. The afflictions are seen as stemming from and indicative of God's love, designed to deepen the believer's love for their God, who is the source of both pain and love: "Suffering is my gain [. . .] suffering is my worship now". The entire text is an anthem to God's love manifested through harsh punishments and sufferings to purify the believer's heart.

Among the proposed texts, this poetic composition features recurring keywords of a positive nature such as "love" (eight times), "pure" (three times), "sweet", and "peace", and negatively connoted words like "pain" (five times), "suffering" (five times), "plagues", and "moan".

1. God whom I as love have known,
Thou hast sickness laid on me,
And these pains are sent of Thee,
under which I burn and moan;
let them burn away the sin,
that too oft hath checked the love
wherewith Thou my heart wouldst move,
when Thy Spirit works within!
2. In my weakness be Thou strong,
be Thou sweet when I am sad,
let me still in Thee be glad,
Though my pains be keen and long.
All that plagues my body now,
all that wasteth me away,
pressing on me night and day,
love ordains, for Love art Thou!
3. Suffering is the work now sent,
nothing I can do but lie
suffering as the hours go by;
all my powers to this are bent.
Suffering is my gain; I bow
to my heavenly Father's will,
and receive it hushed and still;
suffering is my worship now.
4. God! I take it from Thy hand
as a sign of love, I know
Thou wouldst perfect me through woe,
till I pure before Thee stand.
All refreshment, all the food
given me for the body's need,
comes from Thee, who lov'st indeed,
comes from Thee, for Thou art good.
5. Let my soul beneath her load
faint not, through the o'er wearied flesh;
let her hourly drink afresh
love and peace from Thee, my God.
Let the body's pain and smart
Hinder not her flight to Thee,
nor the calm Thou givest me;
keep Thou up the sinking heart.
6. Grant me never to complain,
make me to Thy will resigned,
with a quiet, humble mind,
cheerful on my bed of pain.
In the flesh who suffers thus,
shall be purified from sin,
and the soul renewed within;
therefore pain is laid on us.
7. I commend to Thee my life,
and my body to the cross;
never let me think it loss
that I thus am freed from strife.
Wholly Thine; my faith is sure
whether life or death be mine,

I am safe if I am Thine;
for 'tis Love that makes me pure.

4. Pietistic Emotions in Italian Hymnody

Pietism and its influences, such as the Methodist movement of John Wesley, revival movements in the United States and England, and the Francophone Reveil, have not only altered theological perspectives by emphasizing individual sentiments and ecclesiological dynamics through modes like private house meetings (an ecclesiastical practice revived from the ancient Church, which enjoyed considerable success throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in Anglo-Saxon areas, England, and the USA), but also devotional practices and customs such as prayer and hymnody, even within the Italian context.

Protestant churches in Italy have had a particularly tumultuous history, marked by strong contrasts with the papacy from the 16th century through the Risorgimento period (Cantimori 1992; Tourn 1998a, 1998b; Bouchard 2001). Following the liberal era and the end of World War I, they experienced renewed challenges under fascism and with the Lateran Pacts of 1929, in particular, after the issuance of Circular Buffarini Guidi 600/158 in 1935 (Valenzi 2020). The Risorgimento period undoubtedly represented the peak of Italian Protestant hymnody, characterized by poetic and musical productions from various authors, including Teodorico Pietrocola Rossetti (1825–1883).

Rossetti was indeed a literary figure, poet, and translator, as well as an evangelical preacher associated with Mazzinian circles in London, where he lived in exile from 1851 to 1857. He is credited with significant translations of numerous hymns from the English and American Awakening repertoire, along with literary works such as the first Italian edition of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. In the hymn texts of Rossetti, as well as in his translations of English hymns, one can discern those emotional and sentimental elements influenced by Pietism within the evangelical world. These influences blossomed in Anglophone environments after the late 17th century. For example, in the hymn *Riguardate all'Agnello di Dio* ("Consider the Lamb of God", Rossetti 1867), we find verses such as "Cristo parla d'amor sulla croce" ("Christ speaks of love on the cross", stanza 2, line 3) and "All'amico dell'uom peccator" ("To the friend of the sinful man", stanza 3, line 4), which explicitly refer to Christ's love and his death on the cross for love's sake, as well as the concept of having Christ as a personal friend of the Christian individual. Moreover, the refrain of the hymn states "Alleluia, alleluia all'Agnello che morì sulla croce per me" ("Hallelujah, hallelujah, to the Lamb who died on the cross for me"), which also reflects a Pietistic thought (the centrality of the individual in relation to divine action on earth) that became central in the American Awakening and remains a cornerstone in evangelical circles today (Naso 2002).

Even in his translations, Rossetti maintains this theological framework, diverging from certain Italian Reformed circles, such as the Waldensian Church, reluctant to accept Pietistic and Awakening influences (Annarilli 2024). This can be seen in his translation of the famous hymn by Robert Lowry and Annie S. Hawks, *I need Thee every hour*. By comparing Rossetti's version with that of Ernesto Giampiccoli (the translation adopted by Waldensian hymnals), one can observe this divergence:

Original text verses 1 to 4:
I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Most gracious Lord,
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford.
Rossetti's Translation in Italian (and then a current English translation):
Bisogno ho di Te sempre, (I always need you)
benigno Salvator; (kind Savior)
soltanto la tua voce (only Your voice)
dà pace e calma al cuor. (gives peace and calm to the heart)
Giampiccoli's Translation in Italian (and then a current English translation):

La tua presenza brama (Your presence is longed)
quest'alma, o Salvator; (by this soul, o Savior)
Te sol domanda e chiama (it seeks and calls for You alone)
il debole mio cuor. (my weak heart)
Original text verses 25 to 28:
I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Most Holy One;
Oh, make me Thine indeed,
Thou blessed Son!
Rossetti's Translation in Italian (and then a current English translation):
Bisogno ho di Te sempre, (I always need You)
celeste Salvator; (heavenly Savior)
fammi sentir che sono (make me feel that I am)
davvero tuo, Signor. (truly yours, Lord)
Giampiccoli's Translation in Italian (and then a current English translation):
È vera ed inifita (Is true and infinite)
la pace che dai Tu; (the peace You give)
serena gioia, vita (serene joy, a life)
che non tramonta più. (that never fades)

In the first example, the emotional, "most gracious Lord", and intimate, "tender voice", aspects of God in Hawks' text are clear (refer to the theme of voice as an intimate aspect of the individual: Cavarero 2002; Adnams 2016; Facci and Garda 2021). In Rossetti's translation, both elements are preserved: "Kind Savior" and "only Your voice"; however, in Giampiccoli's translation, these elements are absent.

In the second example, the original verses by Hawks, as translated by Rossetti, are entirely replaced in Giampiccoli's translation. This stanza originally reflects the concept of belonging to God and vice versa, a notion of the individual's "appropriation" of divinity characteristic of Pietistic influence. This idea is omitted in the Reformed instances present in Giampiccoli's translation.

5. Conclusions

Feelings and emotions have been central to the devotional life of Pietists. Despite critical readings over the centuries regarding Pietism in general and the spiritual practices of its adherents (particularly the critiques by Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth), Protestant Christianity has witnessed how Pietist emphases on God's love for His people and human love for God and others have resurfaced repeatedly over time, across different spaces and denominations: from German Lutheranism in the late 17th to early 18th centuries to the English and American Methodist movement in the 18th and 19th centuries; and from the American Great Awakening Baptists of the 19th century to the Pentecostal currents of the 20th century, through to the liberal resurgence of evangelism in Italy during the Risorgimento, and into the neo-Pentecostalism and renewal movements within 21st-century Catholicism (MacArthur 1978; McGrath 1999, 2007).

The hymns cited as examples in this article have found new life and new ways of being sung by thousands of Christians worldwide for about four centuries now. The texts of Richter or Tersteegen resonate in Methodist hymns by Charles Wesley (for instance, when he composed *And Can It Be that I Should Gain* in 1738, referring to the wonderful love God had for His faithful, for whom He sent Jesus to die on the cross), or in Baptist hymns by Philip P. Bliss (who dedicated entire hymns to love, such as *Jesus Loves Even Me*). This tradition continues to the present day with exemplary Christian songwriting on love by various groups (such as musical acts like MercyMe or choirs like the West Coast Baptist Choir), worship leaders (Stuart and Keith Getty), and entire communities (like Hillsong). In this context, we remember the famous *How Deep the Father's Love For Us* composed by Stuart Townend in 1995.

The themes addressed by Townend in this hymn are common to the Pietistic hymnody discussed in this article: the fatherly love of God, the weight of personal sin, the struggle between God and the world within the believer's heart, and the acknowledgment of God's power over one's life, not excluding eschatological imagery and themes of praise.

1. How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss,
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.
2. Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life,
I know that it is finished.
3. I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart,
His wounds have paid my ransom.

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