

Baltic Mission?

Halle Pietism and the Moravians in the Baltics in the long 18th century

1. -3. June

National Library of Latvia, Riga

Organizer: National Library of Latvia, Riga, Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia,
Francke Foundations in Halle, Interdisciplinary Centre for Pietism Research at the Martin-
Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg

Call for Papers

500 years ago, it was Luther's Reformation that enabled the printing and publishing of books in the Latvian and Estonian languages. This event of significant importance for Baltic social and cultural history in turn enabled the 18th century reform of the Reformation by Halle Pietists and Moravians in Livonia.

Unlike Enlightenment research, which in recent years has presented significant and multi-faceted studies on the Enlightenment in the Baltic, this cultural area has hardly been explored by researchers of Pietism.

Therefore, this international conference, jointly organized by the National Library of Latvia, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia, the Francke Foundations in Halle and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Pietism Research at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, aims to address the fields of activity of Halle Pietism and the Moravians in the Baltic region / in Livonia in the long 18th century from a comparative perspective.

Of particular interest are the interactions on the ground between the various religious, social and political groups: Lutheran Orthodoxy, Russian Orthodoxy (since 1721), the Pietists from Halle, the Moravians, the proponents of the Enlightenment, the ruling noble families, the townspeople (especially in Riga, Dorpat and Reval) as well as the dependent subjects, and the rural population in particular. Thematically differently accentuated comparisons are intended to shed light on how, where, when and for what purpose Halle Pietism and the Moravians

worked in the Baltics and how and by whom or through what the Pietists from Halle and the Moravians were influenced locally.

While the conference cannot attempt to fully explore the setting outlined above, it aims to increase visibility of the topic in international and interdisciplinary research on Pietism and the 18th century with contributions focusing on primary source material.

Against this backdrop, the conference will focus on the following topics and questions:

Training and preparation of the Halle and Moravian actors: How did the modelling and shaping of a professional Pietist identity take place – in Halle as well as in Herrnhut? Were there clearly formulated and justified mandates for the activities in the Baltics? Were the people from Halle and Herrnhut sent off by their home institutions or had they been requested from the Baltic?

The living environments in the Baltic: How did their activities take shape on the ground? Did the Pietists become involved in rural and urban societies – for example through sociabilities or private circles? Did they fulfill the expectations and tasks placed upon them? How long did they stay in the Baltics and what careers did they pursue (in the church and school system, in aristocratic families, in administration, etc.)? Were they involved in any conflicts and if so, with whom? Did they report on their activities and thereby also on 'the' Baltic culture – and if so: Were there any reactions to this (internally or in the public sphere)? Did the actors in the Baltics receive support from Halle and Herrnhut not only in conflict situations, but also in the case of inner struggle, illness or financial difficulties? Who financed their missionary work? How did Halle Pietists and Moravians perceive each other in the Baltics? How did both parties find out about each other? What was reported to whom? How were the encounters with both the elite and the (dependent) people perceived, interpreted and documented?

Language as the key to success: What were the religious starting points and basis for the Halle Pietists and the Moravians among the extremely heterogeneous population, especially since large parts of the Baltic (Livonian) population knew neither how to read nor how to write? What media, pedagogical and communicative strategies were used to gain access to the illiterate and dependent classes? What role did handwritten and reproduced texts, printing and printed occasional writings play? What significance did translations, knowledge practices (dictionaries) and language systematisation (grammar) have for enabling written and oral communication? To what extent could and did the people of Halle make use of the

foundations laid by theologian Johann Fischer during the Swedish rule: on his founding of schools, on his establishment of a publishing house and a printing press, on the promotion of translations as well as on his interest in the Latvian language in general?

Speech and writing: Which mediation strategies and media were used in achieving literacy? What was the relationship between writing and speaking, between spoken and printed sermons? Did singing, and thus hymnbooks, play a special role in edification, language acquisition and thus in congregational formation?

The problem of serfdom: How did the Halle Pietists and the Moravians position themselves regarding to serfdom? Was the Baltic region regarded and "farmed" as a kind of colonial space – or can tendencies and positions towards questioning the system of serfdom be discerned? Can a history of Pietism in the Baltic be written from a postcolonial perspective?

The political culture: How was the Ukaz of 1743, pronounced by Tsarina Elisabeth, and with it the ban on missions, meetings and publications for the Moravians, justified and carried out? What consequences did the general ban on the Moravians have for the competitors from Halle? How did the Hallensians present the disputes with the incriminated Moravians and vice versa? How were the Tsarist orders enforced and how was their enforcement monitored? Did the local clergy play a role in the towns and villages? Did the clergy collaborate with the tsarist administration and judiciary? Were specific individuals denounced – if so, by whom and in what way? What other individuals and means of regulation came into play? And how did the re-admission of the Moravians after Zinzendorf's death in 1760 affect their appearance, their actions and their relationship with the people of Halle?

The role of economics: What significance did economic issues play for the activities of the Hallensians and the Moravians in the Baltic? Was the Baltic region, also with its connections to Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark, understood as a trade market to generate financial profits? And if so, through which products? And how were the buying and selling of religious and spiritual products connected to the economy, how the sale of spiritual and material goods: Salvation – books – medicines?

The school and university system: How did education, schools and universities develop in the Baltics and Livonia in the context of the various influences described above? What role did the work of court masters and informers in bourgeois and aristocratic families play in relation to institutional education at elementary and secondary schools? How did Enlightenment scholars compare with the efforts of Halle and Herrnhut to educate the Livonian population?

What institutional and media efforts did they make? What role did science or knowledge practices play, such as the build-up of collections, the publication of scientific treatises (for example in the context of physico-theology and natural history) and exchange in learned circles?

The appearance of Enlightenment: Did the Halle Pietists and the Moravians have to fear a blatant loss of significance for their pious concepts and educational practices in the face of the consolidation of the Enlightenment? How did they react to trends towards secularisation? What was their relationship to new societies such as Masonic lodges or reading societies?

Competition, coexistence, cooperation, inter-confessionalism: Overall, the following questions have to be considered: Were the representatives of the Enlightenment and Lutheran Orthodoxy perceived as adversaries and competitors or as allies by the Hallensians and the Moravians? Did the Hallensians and Moravians voluntarily or involuntarily close ranks out of strategic necessity against the efforts of the Enlightenment thinkers, also in theology ("neology"), to get closer to the people in the context of political, educational and economic emancipatory endeavours ("popular enlightenment")?

Centre and "periphery": How were the networks of the Halle Pietists and the Moravians structured for their missionary and economic activities in the Baltic region and beyond? Did they remain oriented towards the centres or did independent networks develop in the regions, i.e. also in the Baltic, which were less closely related to Halle and Herrnhut but rather shaped by local conditions and actors?

The question of mission: Can the engagement of the Halle Pietists and the Moravians be considered as missions or missionary activity, respectively? What was the self-understanding of Halle Pietists and Moravians regarding their activities? How did they themselves describe their own actions? Moreover, how are their activities and their self-understanding to be located in the current discussions about the concept of mission? This leads to another fundamental question: Are the two movements at all comparable in their goals and approaches?

The conference languages are Latvian, German and English.

Please submit an exposé of max. 3,000 characters including title and content description of the planned presentation as well as a CV (no longer than one page). Deadline is 26. August 2022.

The organizing institutions will strive to reimburse travel expenses.

Please send your exposé as well as further enquiries to

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