

## Francke, August Hermann

Bernd Oberdorfer

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### Francke, August Hermann

August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) was a Lutheran-Pietist theologian, pedagogue, and social reformer. Francke, the son of a jurist, was born in Lübeck and spent his childhood in Gotha. He was early destined for spiritual office, as well as for scholarship, studying in Erfurt and Kiel (1679-82), Hamburg (1682), and Leipzig (from 1684). In 1685 he received his master of philosophy degree on the basis of a work on Hebrew grammar and acquired authorization to teach. As a counter to instructional theology that was reduced largely to → dogmatics, in 1686 he founded the *Collegium philobiblicum*, focused on reading and interpreting biblical pericopes in the original languages. In 1687 Francke translated two writings by the Spanish mystic M. Molinos, though only partially did he identify with the content of these writings. In the same year Francke went through a severe crisis of faith, leading him to doubt the existence of God. This crisis, which he later interpreted as the result of his previous intellectualism, was resolved through a direct experience of → conversion (§1). Thereafter Francke distanced himself from Lutheran → orthodoxy.

Influenced by P. J. Spener (1635-1705), who had attended the *Collegium philobiblicum* in 1687 and yet had criticized it as being too remote and scholarly, Francke conducted *Collegia biblica* for edification in Leipzig homes beginning in 1689. Although these *collegia* resulted in an awakening among students and the city's inhabitants, they also raised suspicions on the part of orthodox professors and clergy. After an investigation instigated by J. B. Carpzov II, in which the → Enlightenment thinker C. Thomasius came to his defense, Francke was dismissed from his teaching post in 1690. Although he accepted a pastorate in Erfurt, this too was soon taken from him because of, among other things, his contacts with radical-pietistic and church-reform groups in the vicinity. Through Spener's contacts, he received a pastorate in Glaucha, Brandenburg, at the end of 1691 and a professorship for Greek and Oriental languages in nearby Halle. Through → catechism instruction and → church discipline, Francke began to renew the neglected → congregation, combining instruction in faith with social and educational reforms.

In 1695 Francke founded a school for the poor, followed quickly by a citizen's school, a boarding school with a higher school for sons of the nobility, a Latin school for sons of the citizenry, and also a school for daughters of the upper classes (which did not last long). In the same year, Francke began to

take in foster children, also establishing a house for them. From this house an orphanage ultimately developed, the cornerstone for its new edifice being laid in 1698. Here Francke engaged students as caretakers and teachers in order to expand their faith and life experiences and to focus their studies on actual practice; from 1698, Francke was also professor of theology, in which capacity he also became engaged in reforming the course of theological studies (→ Theological Education).

From the beginning, Francke's → pedagogical thinking was both admired and criticized. It included such concepts as support of the gifted, the combination of theory and practical work, life experiences, instruction in modern foreign languages, comprehensive behavioral control (involving "breaking the individual will"), the discrediting of leisure, the dominance of the utilitarian, and methodological rigorism in both faith and education (so the criticism of Thomasius). It was, however, quite successful, and found support in none other than Frederick William I, king of Prussia, who, influenced by Francke, announced universal compulsory education in 1717. The *Seminarium selectum praeceptorum*, which Francke assembled from gifted teacher-students, is generally viewed as the beginning of organized teacher training in Germany.

By establishing a bookstore with its own printing press and publishing company, as well as a pharmaceutical business, Francke was able to make the Glaucha Institutes, which were initially dependent on donations, to a large extent economically independent. He understood the Halle Institutes as the germ cell of a "general reformation of the world." This idea contains the inner basis of Francke's extensive writing and ecumenical activity (writings for → edification, Bible publications, correspondence, dispatch of students, and support for foreign missions, esp. in India).

Despite a certain measure of conceptual and personal proximity, the Enlightenment remained alien to Francke, and in 1723 he supported the expulsion of the → rationalist philosopher C. Wolff from Halle. Francke's comprehensive life work exerted immeasurable influence, especially on the understanding of schools and → education, Christian social welfare, → mission, and devotional styles.

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BERND OBERDORFER