Methodism's indebtedness to continental Pietism, though often neglected, has been fairly well established. Martin Schmidt has shown the importance of Pietism to the spiritual development of John Wesley. F. Ernest Stoeffler and W. R. Ward have both located the origins of the 18th century Methodist re-vivals in the Pietist movements which swept continental Protestantism in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Steven O'Malley has focused scholarly attention on the Pietist roots of the Evangelical United Brethren traditions within United Methodism. Generally these connections are made to Pietism's churchly (and more respectable) forms which emanated from Halle and Herrnhut during the 17th and 18th centuries. With regard to one source of German-American Methodism (the Evangelical Association), the connection is better made to more radical forms—those with sectarian and chiliastic leanings.

Martin Schrag, in his essay, "The Impact of Pietism Upon the Mennonites in Early American Christianity," draws a common distinction between "church-related Pietism" and "radical Pietism." Church-related Pietists, such as the Spener-Halle movement, worked within the framework of orthodox Protestant theology and established churches.1 Schrag has argued that both Philip William Otterbein and Martin Boehm fall most neatly into this category of Pietists. "When Otterbein and Boehm began their work, they had no intention of starting a new denomination. They sought to transform individuals and thus revitalize the church, not actualize a new church."2

Radical Pietism, on the other hands has been defined by Chauncey David Ensign as "That branch of the pietistic movement in Germany, which emphasized separatistic, sectarian and mystical elements, particularly those originating in Boehmenism."3 Most scholars who have studied radical Pietism

2 Schrag, 85.
3 Chauncey David Ensign, "Radical German Pietism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1955), quoted by Schrag, 79. Jakob Boehm (1575–1624), a lay theologian from Görlitz, Germany, whose combination of mysticism, alchemy, and Lutheran theology, received through direct illumination, was influential throughout the seventeenth century, especially in spiritualist and quietist circles. Boehm proclaimed universal restoration with individual, social, and spiritual rebirth.
in the context of American Christianity have focused on intentional communities, such as Ephrata, Oneida, Amana, Zoar, and Harmony/Economy. Few scholars have drawn attention to the important links between radical Pietism and non-communal American revivalist traditions. The lineage of the other half of the Evangelical United Brethren, the Evangelical Association, exemplified by the life and ministry of its first regular bishop John Seybert, demonstrates this link.

This essay looks at the first nineteen years of Seybert's unpublished *Journal*, up to his election as bishop, which reveals a movement surrounded by different forms of Pietism in the Pennsylvania wilderness and finding itself most at home with Pietism's radical wing. Seybert's ministry took radical forms including apocalyptic perfectionism, ecstatic worship, ambivalence toward the sacraments (especially baptism), and mystical spirituality. His reading included literature by radical Pietist authors or which dealt with radical themes. Finally, Seybert related positively to those religious groups with radical connections and even to communal sects (especially George Rapp's Economy/Harmony).

I

It is difficult to trace the ideological influences on the Association before Seybert. Any personal records Jacob Albright (1759–1808) may have left of the movement he founded have been lost. 4 His earliest biographer is fellow-itinerant George Miller, who, in 1810, drew up the Articles of Faith and Discipline of the Church. This biography, written in 1811, made no reference to any journal. 5 Instead, Miller narrated Albright's history as Albright "often told it to his friends, at sundry times and places." 6 The result is a typically Pietist testimony of conviction, conversion, growth in grace, calling, divine healing, and a blessed ministry, which lasted twelve years.

There is little to indicate whether Albright imbibed ideas from separatistic/radical Pietism. We know he left the Lutheran Church of his youth and eventually his Methodist class meeting to start an independent mission among the Germans. We have no record of motivations. Miller stated that

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4 Reuben Yeakel, *History of the Evangelical Association*, vol. 1 (Cleveland: Thomas and Mattill, 1894) states that Albright kept a journal, which has never been located. In a footnote (†) on p. 85 he writes, "His journal was lost after his decease. If we still had that treasure it would be of inestimable value."

5 Albright was born in 1759 in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, was catechized and joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church, was married in 1785, and moved to Lancaster County. Miller states that little was known of this part of his life "since Jacob Albright did not leave a written documentation thereof and personally never talked much concerning his temporal affairs and early life." George Miller, *Jacob Albright* (Reading, PA: John Ritter and Company, 1811), translated by George Epp (1959), 1.

6 Miller, 1.
Albright converted over 300, "whom he led into the saving experience of Jesus Christ," and closed with an exhortation to fellow ministers to "be diligent to observe every rule of our discipline as an introduction to the holy scriptures which promise the blessing of God upon all godly living."

We have considerable information about the first elected bishop of the Association, John Seybert. His journal, begun when he entered the itineracy, is nearly a daily account of his ministry. Seybert accepted an appointment "as an itinerant minister in the Lord's vineyard" in 1820. His parents were Lutherans who, after a spiritual quest, found a company "of pious converted people" and experienced conversion around 1804, when John was thirteen. For the next two years, the Seybert household became a place of frequent prayer meetings. Seybert wrote, "the influence of the Holy Spirit of God became occasionally irresistible. . . . Whenever I attended the meetings of God's people, my good resolutions were greatly strengthened, my convictions deepened and, like Peter, I wept bitterly on such occasions." But he never felt himself converted.

In March, 1806, Seybert's father died. About "13 months after," his mother deserted him and his brother, to join the radical Pietist Harmony Society founded by George Rapp. This change of circumstances made Seybert's spiritual life "a barren waste and howling wilderness" for about three years. He was awakened by the preaching of Mattias Betz, a preacher in connection with the Association, and began a religious journey which culminated in his conversion ("tief ins ewige Leben hinein bekehrt") on June 21, 1810—one month after the first German language camp-meeting in America, organized by the Association near New Berlin, Pennsylvania. Seybert joined "Albright's People." He worked as a cooper, took care of his brother, and gradually was given more spiritual responsibility as a class leader. Concerning his call to the ministry, Seybert wrote:

For sometime I had felt a deep inward constraint to preach the Gospel, but on account of my sense of unfitness, I was very careful not to mention it to anyone, and went on quietly. Without any solicitation on my part, the brethren received me into the ministry as a local probationer. This was in 1819, and I made my first attempt to preach with 1 John 3:8-9 for a text.  

1Miller, 11.  
2Miller, 13.  
4Seybert, Introduction.  
5John Seybert as translated and quoted by S. P. Spreng, The Life and Labors of John Seybert: First Bishop of the Evangelical Association (Cleveland: Lauer and Mattill, 1888), 16-17.  
6Spreng, 24.  
7Ammon Stapleton, Flashlights on Evangelical History (York, PA: by author, 1908), 18.  
8Seybert, Introduction. Seybert's choice of text indicates the importance of perfectionism at this early stage in his ministry.
In 1820, he began to itinerate as an evangelist, traveling as a vehicle for revival throughout central and western Pennsylvania. He was elected the first bishop under the Association Discipline in 1839.

II

Many of the themes common to radical Pietists found their way into Seybert’s ministry. Heinrich Muhlenberg, the Pietist apostle to the Lutherans in America, described the Ephrata Brethren, a radical Pietist sect, to his patrons in Halle saying, “Little is required of converts beyond the memorization of a couple of verses in the Revelation of St. John pertaining to Babylon and the beast and the whore.” Similar accusations could be leveled at Seybert. He preached nearly every day once he began to itinerate, and rarely went a week without preaching from the book of Revelation. His journal is full of short entries, like this one from 1823, “The appointment was at Dundor’s. I preached from Rev. 21:23–25 and John Miller exhorted.” An entry from 1835 is almost identical. “The service was at Kobel’s where I preached from Rev. 2:16, 17.” In larger revival meetings, invariably someone preached from an apocalyptic text. “In the forenoon I preached from 1 Peter 2:21–22, which was followed by observing the Lord’s Supper in blessing. Joseph Saylor preached from Rev. 22:17 in the afternoon with effect.” Seybert often chose apocalyptic passages in Old Testament prophets, especially Daniel, and he had no reservations about preaching from the Apocrypha.

Like many radical Pietists, for Seybert history stood on the brink of God’s judgment. Natural phenomena were signs of the times. He noted oddities in weather, the behavior of animals, and the heavens—recording such phenomena as eclipses of the moon. A hail storm was of apocalyptic significance.

Much damage was done to the corn and buckwheat fields. Also, many thousand window panes were broken. In some windows, not even one pane remained whole. It was reported that in a small town, Quakerstown, about 2000 window panes were destroyed, meaning (Wisdom 5:18) “the zeal of God puts on armor and the creature prepares for the kingdoms.”

His worldview was dualistic and separatistic. In 1824, Seybert recorded “little hope for conversions. The people who are Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic are very hard hearted, indifferent, and ungodly.” When some of them were antagonistic toward Seybert’s followers, he wrote, “Here one can really

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"Seybert, October 20, 1823.

"Seybert, November 4, 1835.

"Seybert, September 20, 1835.

"Seybert, August 4, 1823."
see how, according to Rev. 13:11, the beast shall arise from the earth, a picture of Protestantism, while the voice of the dragon is boisterously announced in the spirit of murder.”20 After an episode of opposition from the Lutheran church, Seybert commented that “it has always been the case that from such spiritless whoring temples, God’s people, and the sincerely true witnesses, are exposed and do suffer the severest persecution.”21

Denominations stemming from the magisterial reformation were not truly Christian. Oppressive and corrupted, they were a hindrance to the work of God.

How necessary then it is that those who confess to be Christian show it in their walk and deeds, so that the name of Jesus is not reviled among the baptized and unbaptized heathen. The unchristian conduct of Church members has from the beginning done more damage and hindered the work of conversion as all the bloody persecutions of the religion of Christ, and more poisonous than all the literature of the anti-Christ.22

In an entry where he mentioned a book by radical pietist Gottfried Arnold, Seybert recorded an encounter with an “unconverted Lutheran” who considered the Association “of the devil.” He quickly corrected the man by comparing the discipline of the two fellowships.

‘But among the Lutherans such ungodly people like swearers, Sabbath breakers, blasphemers, and various other sort of sinners are allowed within their circle and not separated from them.’ So I tore to pieces the godless conduct of this false Church.23

Seybert did all he could to win souls away from such fellowships. When he preached to such a group of “hard hearted, bold, ungodly sinners (the fruit of unconverted ministers and parents)” he pulled out all the stops. “I preached with all the might of body and soul to this unrighteous group of a frightful eternal damnation. The hymn which I selected to begin the service was How Dreadful It is that Man Does Not Consider the Pain of Hell.”24 Converts who remained in such churches were in danger. They were “not asleep in Babel, though in prison.”25 A man named Kitzmiller, in traditional Pietist fashion, tried to remain in his Lutheran church and improve it. Seybert wrote, “Finally he was driven out and away from his Babel. He united with our church and . . . lives a godly life.”26

The clergy of these denominations were evil, at least by association, and often responsible for the persecution inflicted on God’s people, including Seybert.

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20Seybert, January 13, 1824.
21Seybert, August 12, 1822.
22Seybert, January 9, 1825.
23Seybert, March 2, 1821.
24Seybert, February 10, 1821. This particular hymn appears in the 1817 Evangelical Hymnal as number 486, under the heading “Of Eternal Damnation.” Its German title is “Erschecklidi ist es, daß man nicht der hollen pein betrachtet.”
25Seybert, March 14, 1825.
26Seybert, February 9, 1836.
The devil, prince of darkness has several Protestant hypocrites and belly servants, who Jesus, in Matthew 7:15, describes as wearing sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves, going about and making a fearful howl so that people should be on their guard and careful because false prophets have come. Not only are these greedy dogs, according to Isaiah 56:11, but also the largest number of them are an ungodly group of Lutherans, well trained in swearing and drinking and in name reformed. They are Sabbath breakers, liars, followers of the devil and prayerless in their family life.27

In Philadelphia, after listening to a sermon by a minister named Helfenstein, Seybert gave his highest praise for such clergy. He wrote, "In my judgement he gave one of the best and, for Christians, the most edifying sermon that I ever heard from a Babel minister in Babylon."28

In revivals, he made use of apocalyptic imagery which often brought people to conviction and allowed a release of spiritual power.

There came a melting power from heaven upon the people and where the text refers to "terrible as an army with banners," I applied that to the coming of Jesus in Judgement. And he shall come with many thousand holy angels to judge the ungodly, and a destructive fire goes before him, ushering in a day that shall burn like a furnace. And then there was a trembling and weeping among the people. One sister began to shout.

Every description of a successful meeting described the Spirit’s effect on the community, which was always enthusiastic.

A young brother in Christ... told me... [that] as I was preaching there came a blue dark mist over him, but as he was about to examine it closely, there came like a flash of lightning such a blessing upon him that he sprang to his feet leaping, shouting and glorifying God.29

At one meeting, "we had a glorious time shouting and praising God, also weeping and heavenly joyful laughter took place."30 Seybert recorded visiting a woman "of high age and very weak." "We prayed together and both widows were overjoyed with blessings, and Mrs. Becker broke out in a heavenly laughter and leaped about joyful in the Lord."31 Even Seybert "during a meeting when several were so filled with the love of God" became possessed "of a peculiar spiritual joy that [he] broke out in loud laughter."32

The Spirit did not always pick the most opportune times to affect people.

During the baptismal service, the power of God came mightily on the young men. One of them became so enthused that he pulled me [Seybert] with him down in the water and he became unconscious and was taken out of the stream by the brethren where he lay for a while unconscious.33

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27 Seybert, February 21, 1821.
28 Seybert, October 27, 1823.
29 Seybert, September 28, 1823.
30 Seybert, December 16, 1827.
31 Seybert, February 8, 1836.
32 Seybert, June 24, 1829.
33 Seybert, July 20, 1837.
Though not unusual for camp-meeting religion, Seybert's descriptions of the Spirit are reminiscent of such radical Pietists as the "Inspired" in Germany who were known for their ecstatic worship.  

Seybert's attitude toward outward sacraments is also revealing. George Rapp's Harmonist community "held that baptism and foot washing [were] not necessary. But the Lord's Supper [was] held in high regard." Similarly, Seybert "observed Holy Communion in memory of Christ's sufferings and death as our Redeemer," but was ambivalent toward baptism. When he first confronted child baptism, he was less than enthusiastic. He performed the rite, but his theology was far from sacramental.

It was desired of me that I baptize a child. At first, it seemed a difficult task to perform, but I considered what results might follow if I do not baptize the child, for the parents were not connected with our church. The mother had many opportunities to have her child baptized by unconverted ministers, and yet she desired it to be done by a converted minister. So I thought this would awaken in them an interest and love toward us, and later they might be converted if I baptized the child. And if I did not baptize it, they possibly might be set against our church and as the child was yet in its innocency and through the sufferings and death of Christ was brought into the fellowship of the saints, I could not see that any injury or harm might come to the child if it were joined or annexed through outward baptism and so I baptized the child.

Though Seybert believed in original sin, it was apparently not at issue in infant baptism.

Seybert performed baptisms of all kinds. Neither the age of the recipient, nor the method of administration mattered (though he seems always to have used the Trinitarian formula).

A baptismal service was then held when one brother and four sisters were baptized in Walnut Creek, four of them in the water and one sister at the water out of the stream, viz.: John Hershey, 3 times forward under the water. Catherine Weidel in the water, with water (pouring), John Miller and his wife in the water with water, their daughter Catherine at the water out of the stream.

What did matter was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Seven [baptized people] were all filled with a great measure of the Spirit during baptism and began to shout and praise God... It was just like as if the heavens were opened over us, and God's blessing like a downpour of rain came over us." This focus on

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35 Seybert, November 4, 1827.
36 Seybert, August 18, 1821.
37 Seybert, July 8, 1822.
38 Seybert, March 18, 1824. Seybert recorded an argument with a man who denied that we "inherit sin from Adam," and taught death as sleep until judgment and annihilationism. "This man, aside from his error possessed a peculiar oddity, so that he would not be convinced by the truth."
39 Seybert, September 8, 1833.
40 Seybert, July 6, 1828.
inner baptism prevented Seybert from taking a dogmatic stance on outer baptism. He believed limiting baptism to adults, and requiring rebaptism, was detrimental to the cause of Christ, not because infants should legitimately receive the rite, but because dogmatic proscription of it put too much emphasis on the rite. Such emphasis would lead people astray.

Then a minister named Schmeis came among them, teaching that they must be baptized, even though they were already baptized, and led them away from the inner experience of conversion to the outer experience of baptism. . . . As he led them away from their inner experience of conversion, many of them lost their first love to God, fell from grace, and went back to the world and the devil.41

Inner mystical spirituality was important in Seybert’s own piety. God, as in apostolic times, communicated to Seybert through dreams. These revelations, often quite vivid, had meaning though he was not always sure what.42 On many occasions, Seybert interpreted his dreams as predictions of the future. After describing a successful meeting, he told of a dream in which he met travelers on the road. “I asked them if they loved the Lord and they answered, ‘yes.’ Then I asked them if they had received him before this time and then there was a leaping and shouting unto the Lord. This dream of mine very definitely came into fulfillment.”43 At another time he “had a very pleasant dream, as though I was at a stream wherein there were many fish and I had caught a very large fish. At that service I received four people, Germans, into Church membership.”44

III

Despite the somewhat hagiographic portrait of Seybert loading his cart full of books for the West in 1842, his journal reveals neither a “Christian man of letters,” nor prolific reader.45 Seybert did read, however, and the literature

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*Seybert, April 17, 1826.
*Seybert, July 2, 1831. That night I had a remarkable dream. It seems as though I was traveling on the side of a high and steep mountain, finally becoming so steep as a wall, perpendicular up and down. My horse, which I was about to mount, was hanging downward, and only a handbreadth was between me and death. It was impossible to turn back. There was but one way to save my life, and that was to go forward. Finally after an anxious frightened feeling, the mountain disappeared and my horse brought me into a roomy building. I was happy the fear and danger was over. I believe that dream was significant and had a meaning.
*Seybert, August 15, 1823.
*Seybert, February 14, 1830.
*Seybert’s anti-intellectual bias apparently caused problems for the founding of educational institutions. In 1858 he signed a statement which reads, “At the request of Daniel Kreamer, the collector of Union Seminary in New Berlin, the undersigned certifies that he is not against good schools, and that he also purposes to do something for the support of scientific culture, in case his circumstances will better warrant it.” John Seybert Papers, United Methodist Church Archives, Madison, NJ.
he mentioned confirms that he was shaped by the radical wing of Pietism. While the number of works is not large, they tend either to be by authors directly connected to the radical wing of Pietism or deal with themes common in radical circles.

In 1821, he purchased "a book from Seib with the title Gottfried Arnold's Portrait of the First Christians." This book was significant for radical Pietists in Europe. Its author, Gottfried Arnold, began his theological career at the orthodox university at Wittenberg. He moved to Dresden and absorbed the Spener's Pietism. Later, in Quedlinburg, he drifted into radical mystical Pietism. Arnold is perhaps most famous for his Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie (1699–1700) which opposed doctrinally orthodox interpretations of history, and instead took a favorable view of sectarian/heretical movements. Most likely Seybert was referring to Arnold's Die Erste Liebe (1696) which depicted the primitive Church as a golden age from which later ages fell, and also reflected Arnold's hostility to dogma and ecclesiasticism.

In 1824, Seybert received a book through Jacob Kolk entitled "Lorenzo's Journal," and then recounted how God miraculously provided the money for its purchase. This could have been either Life and Travels of Lorenzo Dow (1804) or Short Account of a Long Travel (1823), both of which Dow wrote in journal form. Dow, the organizer of the Primitive Methodist Church in England and free-lance itinerant in America, was perhaps not a radical Pietist, but was certainly a radical as well as a restorationist. He never accepted the restraints of conference membership, and his eccentricities as a revivalist earned him the nickname, "crazy Dow."

Seybert showed interest in Quietist literature. On July 20, 1824, he wrote of "the glorious work of Madam Gujon and her Bible interpretations. That which relates to the inner life consists of ten volumes by Brada, the preacher, is sold at $4.50." Seybert was referring to Les Torrens spirituels, written between 1713–1715. Madam Jeanne-Marie Guyon, a French mystical writer, a Quietist, believed that true Christians strive for pure, wholly disinterested love. Having reached this level, there is no need for sacraments or the Church as an institution. Her ideas, though in a French Catholic context, were closely related to Protestant radical Pietism.

Not surprisingly, Seybert's reading included explications of the apocalypse. On June 17, 1825, while staying at the home of Methodist class leader George Merck, Seybert "purchased eight books relating to the revelation of Jesus Christ, written by a pious man named Ignaz Romer, with the title, The Secret of Evil Revealed." The full title of this book may be translated, "The

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"Seybert, March 2, 1821.
"Seybert, February 8, 1824.
"Seybert, July 20, 1824.
"Seybert, June 17, 1825. The German title of this book is Das Geheimniss der Bosheit bis auf den Grund aufgedeckt; nebst Anzeige des Rettungsmittel der Kirche. In einer Erklärung der Offenbarung Jesu Christi an Johannes (Lancaster, PA: Heinrich & Benjamin Griller, 1809)."
Mystery of the Origins of Evil Revealed; Next, Announcement of the Church's Means of Salvation, in an Explanation of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John." This book echoes many of the themes common to radical pietists, especially holy living and freedom of conscience. The absence of the latter being one reason for the absence of the former.

It begins with several introductions to different audiences, the first being to the Protestant "bishop" (Antistes) of Zurich, from which the author evidently emigrated to Pennsylvania. The author then explicated the book of Revelation with reference to the history of the Church and contemporary events in ways radical Pietists would find congenial. For example, the first beast out of the sea mentioned in Revelation 12 is, not surprisingly, the Catholic Church which took the throne of Pagan religion when it became a coercive state institution. This beast received its fatal wound from the Reformation. It recovered because the Reformation churches were unfaithful, also resorting to the state. The Reformation churches are the second beast from the earth (chapter 13) with its two horns (Luther and Calvin). Seybert's enthusiasm for these themes is demonstrated again on October 29. After preaching services, Seybert "went home with George Merck . . . and purchased six books from him, entitled The Secret of Evil Exposed, an exposition of the book of Revelation by Ignaz Romer."

Holiness and perfection were themes common to radical and non-radical Pietists, and to Seybert. In 1835, the Association "decided to order a book with the title "Fletcher's Introduction" and have it translated into the German language." Later that same year Seybert noted, "We began our journey to Lebanon to attend a committee meeting whose purpose it is to examine a written sermon by W. W. Orwig on 'The Possibility and Necessity to become Entirely Free From Sin in this World', based on 1 John 3:4, which we found to be alright." When the Association began to publish more seriously in 1836, Seybert was a major participant. In 1837, he "traveled to New Berlin, Union County, as a member to attend a committee meeting to investigate and examine a book on 'To Follow Jesus' of which Thomas van Kempis is the author."
The religious groups with whom Seybert associated indicate his radical proclivities. We have already seen Seybert's antagonism toward those denominations connected with the magisterial Reformation. With others, he was more friendly. He ministered with Anabaptists. At one meeting, after Seybert preached, "Christian Hershey, a River Brethren minister also had come and he followed with the exhortation, as did the Mennonite minister, Nissel, also. We ministers of three different denominations conducted the services in brotherly love and peace." Seybert related particularly well to both River Brethren and Dunkers, which have ties to radical Pietism. Other Anabaptist fellowships were mixed. Allowed to use a Mennonite facility for a preaching service, he clarified, "because some of the Mennonites are converted, they opened [their] church for our meetings." On another occasion he described the community of Petersburg where "the people were mainly Mennonites, some Lutherans and a few Universalists. But as a whole, all are unconverted, impenitent, careless and secure."

Seybert was glad to find "Pietist" communities, mostly because they would have laid the groundwork for revival. "Here are living 16 families, most of them are poor, who already in Europe were enlightened and suffered severe persecutions, and for conscience sake came to America. Some of them are Separatists and others are Pietists, and the outlook is good for conversions." However, such "Pietists" were often not radical enough.

I found great opposition from some of the older people who, already in Europe, had been enlightened and instructed, but yet were lukewarm and set themselves against the newly enlightened ways of earnest audible praying and would put a damper on it and have prayer exercises conducted in quiet. But as they failed in their purpose, some of them withdrew and became persecutors.

Among radical Pietists, Seybert was comfortable. One example is a reference, early in his ministry, to a preacher connected to Michael Hahn in Europe.

A strange minister had come there to stay overnight. I asked him to preach which he did, taking Revelation 3:12 as his text. I was glad for the privilege of hearing a sermon on that
text. He preached earnestly and it was a pleasure to hear him. His name is Mitchell and he lives in a community called Block House near the Allegheny Mountains. He told me of his conversion twenty-seven years ago, and that twenty years ago he was licensed to preach among the converted people in Europe of the Michael Hahn Society.

Hahn, who was born in Württemberg in 1758, began to proclaim his theological system of doctrine after having a series of visions. The world, ruined by sin, would be transformed into a spiritual body. His eschatology was highly developed, as were his teachings on the millennium, the expectation of Antichrist, and the restoration of all things. He urged complete separation and sanctification, and founded a society to this end.

The most obvious and intriguing evidence of Seybert's radical Pietist leanings is his connection to George Rapp's millennial utopian community, through his mother. Rapp was involved in a Pietist conventicle in his Reformed Church in Württemberg (also Seybert's mother's homeland). He withdrew, claiming its leader was too impure to lead. In 1785, he refused to attend worship or communion. A separatist group formed around this millen­nialist perfectionist vision, and refused to have their children baptized in the church. Persecution led to the group's immigration and the founding of a society called Harmony in western Pennsylvania which practiced communitarian living and (after 1807) celibacy. In 1819, the Society moved to southern Indiana, to New Harmony, and in 1824, back to Pennsylvania, renaming itself Economy.

The historiography of Seybert's connection to this group is interesting. In his introduction to his journals, probably written in preparation for publication, Seybert wrote contemptuously of "this millennium minded group who seemed to covet [our family] as was their custom. . . . So they soon had our mother accepting their way of serving God by leading her astray." Most historians of the Association followed Seybert. Bishop S. P. Spreng, in his 1888 biography of Seybert, used the incident of Seybert's mother's abandonment to write, "Such is the power of fanaticism, and such the unnatural influence and tendency of erroneous religious teaching. When men wrest the Scriptures, they do it to their own hurt." Other larger histories of the Association ignore the connection. W. W. Orwig's History of the Evangelical Association, published in 1858, and R. Yeakel's 1924 history make no mention of Seybert's mother or Rapp in their discussion of Seybert.

Given Seybert's introduction, his journal entries concerning his mother and Rapp's group are surprising. Seybert made several visits to the communities where his mother, as a part of Rapp's followers, had settled. Often he went to recuperate from the strains of itineracy. In 1823, Seybert "received a

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Seybert, November 11, 1821.
Seybert, Introduction. The original copy of this "Introduction" no longer exists. All that remains is its 1956 English translation.
"S. P. Spreng, The Life and Labors of John Seybert, First Bishop of the Evangelical Association (Cleveland: Lauer & Matill, Agents, 1888), 19."
letter from my aged, godly, yet living mother, who is in the Harmony in the state of Indiana, in George Rapp’s association. She desires that I visit her, and gave me kind sharp advice to do certain work in preparation of eternity.”

There is no indication that Seybert thought his mother deluded.

In 1827, after the Harmonists had moved back to Pennsylvania, Seybert visited his mother. He described the community, now called Economy, as a place "Where they all (like the Christians of Apostolic times, Acts 2:44-45) put all their possessions together, having all things in common." Their purpose is "to maintain a pure holy people, without spot, wrinkle, or blemish—a glorious church for the Lord.” And indeed, to his eye, “they are having success in their undertaking and God has been blessing them continuously.” On another visit he wrote.

The society consists of about 800 strong members, who are especially busy, folk, young in spirit, peaceful and friendly in their associations with one another. Above all, it is their main purpose to assist each other in getting ready for a happy eternity, earnestly devoting themselves to live a chaste life. Therefore they do not give themselves to marriage; and such who are married live together in continence.

In 1833, Seybert heard George Rapp himself preach “sharp and very serious.” The following day he preached from Isaiah 51. At the end of that visit he recorded, “I left Economie after I had been at mother’s for 5 days. We made each other farewell with tender hearts. My mother, as well as the others were very kind and considerate of me, and may God reward them.”

Seybert, it seems, was not the only member of the Association making connection with this utopian community. As Association members moved west they apparently often made use of the Harmonists, hospitality. During another visit to his mother he “met some of the brethren from my district who were there on their way to Ohio.” In all his visits Seybert never recorded anything overtly negative about the community. Each time he traveled there, he was “cordially received and cared for by [his mother] and the others.”

Seybert cooperated most regularly, and presumably shared a common religious vision, with the other emerging denominations of the Second Great Awakening, especially the United Brethren and Methodist Episcopal.

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65 Seybert, April 4, 1823.
66 Seybert, November 4, 1827.
67 Seybert, July 18, 1830.
68 Seybert, November 14, 1833.
69 Seybert, November 7, 1827.
70 Seybert, July 22, 1832.
71 These three organizations were major forces in revivalism. The Evangelical Association and the United Brethren formed the Evangelical United Brethren in 1946. They joined the Methodists to form the United Methodist Church in 1969.
Though tensions between these denominations did arise later, before 1839 nearly every camp meeting included clergy from each of these groups. After the closing of one such meeting, Seybert wrote:

> We took farewell of one another when floods of tears were shed in parting. There were 34 tents, about 22 of the Evangelical group, eight of the United Brethren, and four of the Methodists; and more than 20 ministers were present. 78

There was even a “church at Strassburg, Pennsylvania which was built by [the Association] and the Methodists jointly in York county.” 79

Seybert’s radicalism and that of the Association mellowed over time. After he was elected the first bishop of the Evangelical Association in 1839, Seybert focused increasingly on the institution. Tensions between the Association and other revivalist denominations appear more frequently. There are more references to church buildings, their size, and whether or not they have a tower. Shared missions with other churches, not simply in revivals, but in common causes such as temperance, drew the Association into wider politics and relations with magisterial churches.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Seybert’s early ministry was heavily influenced, if not defined, by categories of the radical wing of the Pietism. His preference for radical styles of ministry, contact with radical Pietist literature, and positive contact with clearly radical Pietist sects, demonstrate this. His election as first bishop of the Association indicates he was probably not alone. Furthermore, his association with other American Methodists, including Methodist Episcopal and United Brethren, should perhaps make us rethink the Pietist heritages of these groups and of United Methodism.

78 Seybert, August 11, 1827.
79 Seybert, June 2, 1823.