

The
Word
in the

Wilderness

POPULAR PIETY AND
THE MANUSCRIPT ARTS IN
EARLY PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICIAL STUDY GUIDE

Gehorchet euren Lehren und mache
verdruss. Bezahlet das ihr schuldig
und gieb wieder das was man euch gel
Tegner diejenigen die euch fluchen. W
Gutes denen die euch beleidiget haben.
Freundhafte in euren Religion und lieb
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Begnüget euch mit dem was euch der h
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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

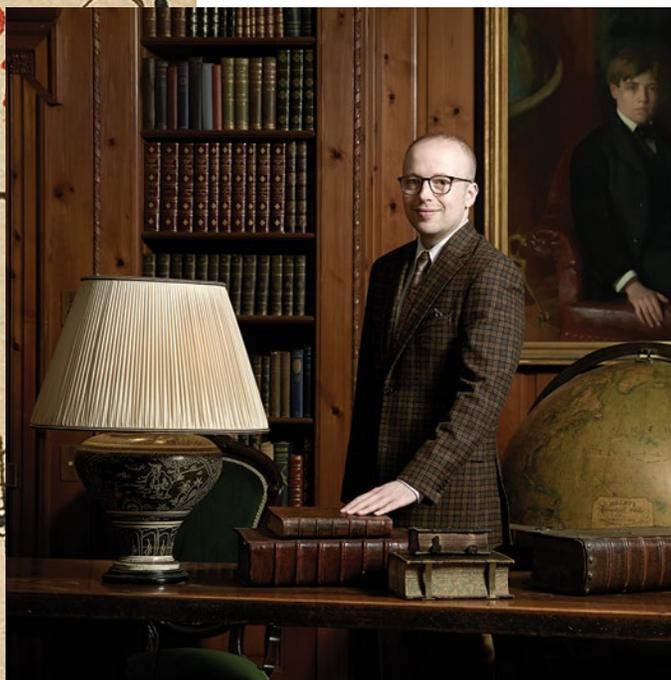
Welcome to *The Word in the Wilderness* Official Study Guide. This document will be of use to you whether you are reading the book by yourself, or as part of a book club or discussion group. The purpose of the guide is to offer some structure to your reading experience, link the contents of the book to useful resources including *Cloister Talk: The Pennsylvania German Material Texts Podcast*, and introduce you to other supporting content accessible at <https://www.wordinwilderness.com>.

Every effort was undertaken to make this study guide useful for readers regardless of geographic location by focusing on digital resources readily accessible online. You will find references to museum and library databases, as well as digitized historic books that will enhance the lessons offered in *The Word in the Wilderness*. The guide also suggests other books and articles for further reading, about which you may wish to inquire at your local library.

If you have any further questions or comments about *The Word in the Wilderness* or any of the enhanced content offered in this study guide, please feel free to contact me. Just visit <https://www.wordinwilderness.com/contact-the-author.html> to send me a message.

Thank you for your interest in the book, and happy reading!

DR. ALEXANDER LAWRENCE AMES,
author of *The Word in the Wilderness*



*Die Blümlein stehen hier
Gepflanzt aufs Papier:
Gott wolle selbst sie mahlen,
Begiessen und bestrahlen;
Das Herz sey seine Erd,
Und jedes Blümlein werd'
Zur Wahrheit, Krafft und Wesen,
In allen die sie lesen!*

TRANSLATION

“The little flowers stand here, planted upon the paper. May God Himself nurture them, water them, and send the sunshine. The heart will be their soil, and may every bloom become truth, power, and character for all who read them.”

—Gerhard Teerstegen, *Geistliches Blumen-Gärtlein Inniger Seelen* (Germanton: Christoph Saur, 1747)



Calligraphy designs found throughout the study guide are adapted from Rockhill Artist, “Schreibbuch” [alphabet/writing book] for Jacob Krauthamel, Bedminster Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, ink and watercolor on paper, 1839. 2012.0036.003. Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

RELATED CLOISTER TALK
PODCAST EPISODES



Episode 1

The History of Studying Pennsylvania
Germans and Their Illuminated
Manuscripts

Preface

“THE QUILL IS MY PLOW”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the “quill is my plow” metaphor (pages xi-xiv in the book) was so meaningful for German-speaking calligraphers in the 1700s and 1800s?
- The preface states: “The book offers a proof of concept for the utility of interpreting the [Pennsylvania German] manuscripts as artifacts of American religious history.” What is the difference between description and interpretation? In what sense does one rely on the other, and do you think one of these tasks is more important than the other?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Have you ever encountered religious works of art in your daily life? What artworks strike you as especially meaningful, and how would you explain their cultural significance?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

A key theme in *The Word in the Wilderness* is the fluid relationship between printed and handwritten texts in the 1600–1800s. A useful article to read to provide some grounding in this idea is Harold Love, “Early Modern Print Culture: Assessing the Models,” *Parergon* 20: 1 (January, 2003): 45–64. Love discusses how to conceptualize change and continuity in text production and dissemination practices. If you are interested in the theoretical approaches adopted in *The Word in the Wilderness*, this article is highly recommended. You can purchase the article via the database Project Muse online; also, ask if your local public library can get a copy for you.

Many printed primary sources have been digitized and published on the Internet, making them much easier to access and read than in years past. One primary source referenced in the preface is seventeenth-century Anglican theologian James Ussher’s *A Method for Meditation* (1651). Explore a digital version of the British Library’s copy of the book, via Google Books: https://www.google.com/books/edition/A_Method_for_Meditation_or_a_Manual_of/sK5kAAAACAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1. You will find many of the other printed books referenced in *The Word in the Wilderness* accessible online as well.





Introduction

“PAGES OF A MYSTICAL CHARACTER: GERMAN MANUSCRIPTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- How are Pennsylvania German illuminated manuscripts traditionally understood and interpreted? (See page 5 in the book.) What new approach does the Introduction to *The Word in the Wilderness* offer?
- The Introduction offers four new concepts: the Pietist and sectarian paradigm (page 7), spiritual literacy (page 12), scribal authorship (page 12), and a five-part understanding of the Word in Pennsylvania German devotional life (page 10). How would you define these concepts? Do you think the concepts useful in (re-)interpreting Pennsylvania German manuscripts, and if so, why?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- The Introduction begins with a story about Samuel Pennypacker’s family Bible, discovered in an attic (page 4). Does your family have any heirloom books or antiques that have special meaning to you? Where did they come from, and what significance do they hold for you?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

Visit <https://www.wordinwilderness.com/events.html> to watch a recording of *The Word in the Wilderness* book launch hosted virtually by the German Society of Pennsylvania Library on July 19, 2020. The presentation offers a useful overview of the main argument of the book.

The introduction makes reference to Perry Miller’s famous essay and book *Errand Into the Wilderness*, which began life as a lecture delivered at the John Carter Brown Library in 1952 (see page 6). Read Miller’s original address, which has been digitized by the John Carter Brown Library and is accessible via the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/errandintowilder00mill_3.

Also worth exploring is Samuel Pennypacker’s wonderful book *Autobiography of a Pennsylvanian* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1918). You can find a digital copy via the Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/autobiographyap00penngoog>. Check the end notes in *The Word in the Wilderness* to locate specific passages in the book.

RELATED CLOISTER TALK PODCAST EPISODES



Episode 4

What is “Manuscript Culture”?
Reframing Pennsylvania German
Manuscript Studies as a Sub-field of
Book History



Chapter 1

“HEAVEN IS MY FATHERLAND’: MANUSCRIPT CULTURE IN AN AGE OF EVANGELICAL PIETY”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- What did the various Pennsylvania German religious groups have in common with other early European settlers of America, including the New England Puritans? In what ways were they different? (Review the sections “‘Captive to the Word’: The Germans and English in an Age of Evangelical Piety” and “German Protestants in a Quaker Colony: Devotional Life in a Pluralistic Society” to answer these questions.)
- Do you think the calligraphy and manuscript-illumination practices of the Pennsylvania Germans were grounded in their religious beliefs? Why or why not?
- In *The Word in the Wilderness*, the author avoids using the words “fraktur” and “frakturs” as terms to refer to the artworks under consideration, more often using the term “Pennsylvania German illuminated manuscripts.” Why do you think he does this?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Historian of New England Perry Miller found great value in studying New England “intensively and alone.” What does Pennsylvania’s early diverse religious heritage have to teach modern American society? Do you think modern Americans would be surprised by the religious diversity in early Pennsylvania? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

Chapter 1 references Henry Mercer’s 1897 address before the American Philosophical Society titled “The Survival of the Mediaeval Art of Illuminative Writing Among Pennsylvania Germans,” the first major work of scholarship on the subject. You may read the essay online via the Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/jstor-983391/page/n1/mode/2up>.

Stephen L. Longenecker’s book *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700 – 1850* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994) deserves to be widely read. It offers wonderful analysis of the religious history discussed in this chapter of *The Word in the Wilderness*. Inquire about it at your local library.

If you would like to read an easy-to-understand introduction to the German religious communities present in early Pennsylvania, explore Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Pennsylvania’s Crazy Quilt of German Religious Groups,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 68, no.1, Pennsylvania Germans, Part One (Winter 2001): 8-30. It is accessible via the database JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27774310>, or, inquire about it at your local library.

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The Pirate Bible: An Epic Tale of Looted Germantown Bibles, and What It Reveals About Pennsylvania German Religion in a Vast Atlantic World



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- ▶ **Episode 13**
A Lesson in Early Modern Linguistic Theory with Johann Merken, and Its Implications for the Study of Material Texts

Chapter 2

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LETTER’: CALLIGRAPHY AND SPIRITUALITY DURING THE LONG ERA OF MANUSCRIPTS

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- Chapter 2 lays out a new theory to explain the prevalence of spiritual calligraphy and manuscript-making among Pennsylvania Germans (page 65 in the book). What is the basic idea proposed in the chapter for why the manuscript arts made sense as devotional tools?
- A picture is worth a thousand words, as they say, and Chapter 2 is filled with images of manuscripts. Review the images on pages 70–81. In what ways are all of these images similar, and in what ways are they different? Taken as a group, what do these images suggest about the place of letters, words, and holy texts among the Pennsylvania Germans?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Chapter 2 describes how some Pennsylvania Germans seem to have used calligraphy, manuscript illumination, and engaging with ornamented texts as part of their devotional practices. What are other common forms of spiritual-devotional practices, both from history and our present day? Do they have anything in common with Pennsylvania German devotional practices of years ago?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

The Word in the Wilderness highlights the value of the discipline of intellectual history to the study of Pennsylvania German material texts. For more information on this discipline, read David A. Hollinger’s short article “American Intellectual History, 1907 – 2007,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 2, History and Historians Since 1907 (April, 2007): 14-17, accessible via the database JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25162110?origin=JSTOR-pdf>, or, inquire about it at your local library.

The Word in the Wilderness makes reference to several wonderful studies of the baroque. Read H. James Jensen’s book *The Muses’ Concord: Literature, Music, and the Visual Arts in the Baroque Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977) if you are interested in learning more on the subject.



RELATED CLOISTER TALK
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Episode 6

“The Root of Wisdom is to Fear the Lord”: Wisdom Literature and Pennsylvania German Manuscript Culture



Episode 9

Manuscripts in Focus: Penmanship Samples

Chapter 3

“WORSHIP ALWAYS THE SCRIPTURE’: TEACHING LITERACY AND PIOUS WISDOM IN GERMAN PENNSYLVANIA”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- After you read Chapter 3, refer back to Fig. 5 in the Introduction, “The Word in Pennsylvania German Devotional Life” (page 11 in the book). How do you think the penmanship sample fits into each one of the five points in the diagram? Refer to the descriptive text on page 10 for a review of the five points, and propose an interpretation of the penmanship sample manuscript form.
- Pennsylvania German penmanship samples are filled with inspirational quotes. What quotes—spiritual or otherwise—do you find inspirational?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- A society’s values are often reflected in its educational institutions and practices. What do you think future historians will write about American K-12 education as it is practiced in the 21st century?
- Recall that Pennsylvania German schoolteachers instructed their students to copy lines of pious text as they practiced their penmanship, to provide moral education in addition to penmanship training. If you were going to make school-age children copy out lines by hand as they practice their penmanship, what would you make them copy, and why?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

Interested in making a deeper investigation of the penmanship sample manuscript form? Read the article “Quill and Graver Bound: Frakturschrift Calligraphy, Devotional Manuscripts, and Penmanship Instruction in German Pennsylvania, 1755 – 1855,” published in *Winterthur Portfolio: A Journal of American Material Culture* 50:1 (Spring, 2016). You can find the article here: https://www.alexanderlawrenceames.com/uploads/7/0/7/6/70766925/alames_wp_spring2016.pdf.

Anyone interested in the history of literacy education in early America should read E. Jennifer Monaghan’s book *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press; Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 2005). Inquire about it at your local library.





Chapter 4

“INCENSE HILL: SONG, IMAGE, AND AMBIENT MANUSCRIPTS”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is a “paratext” (page 120 in the book)? How is the term used in *The Word in the Wilderness* to understand musical manuscripts?
- What was the role of music and hymn-singing in Pennsylvania German religious culture? How did hymn culture intersect with the Pennsylvania German interest in calligraphy and manuscript illumination?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Chapter 4 opens with a poem written by an Anglo-American who admired the pious and mystical world of Ephrata. Have you ever visited a place that deeply impressed you with its beauty, history, or spiritual significance? Where was it, and why did it make an impression on you?
- Why do you think music plays such a key role in so many religious and spiritual traditions?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

To learn more about Ephrata, read Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press; Ephrata: Pennsylvania German Society, 2003). Purchase the book at <http://www.psupress.org/> or inquire about it at your local library.

Musicologist and baritone Christopher Dylan Herbert recently released a beautiful and thought-provoking album titled *Voices in the Wilderness*, consisting of music composed at Ephrata. The album, which was recorded in the Saal at the Cloister, is both an important work of art and a unique example of historical scholarship. Listen to it on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/album/6iPkwxZsUaOEBY2zeB4gf0?si=V1W9G0fKTQSePlxU_VZS2A&nd=1.

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Episode 10

Manuscripts in Focus: Tune Books



RELATED *CLOISTER TALK*
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Episode 11

Manuscripts in Focus: Birth and
Baptismal Certificates

Chapter 5

“MARCHING TO ‘STEP AND TIME’: TEXT, COMMEMORATION, AND THE RITUALS OF EVERYDAY LIFE”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

- *The Word in the Wilderness* suggests that Pennsylvania German birth and baptism certificates were fundamentally different from the manuscript penmanship samples and tune books discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 (see page 137 in the book). How were they different? What similarities do all three varieties of documents share?
- The section of this chapter titled “Marching to ‘Step and Time’: The Decline of the Manuscript Tradition” (page 157) attempts to hypothesize reasons for manuscript culture’s eventual fading from cultural centrality in German Pennsylvania. What variables does the section identify as contributing to this change? Which variables do you think were most important?
- Let’s revisit a question posed earlier in this study guide. The preface to *The Word in the Wilderness* states: “The book offers a proof of concept for the utility of interpreting the [Pennsylvania German] manuscripts as artifacts of American religious history.” What is the difference between description and interpretation? How would you explain the relationship between description and interpretation as it is utilized in *The Word in the Wilderness*?

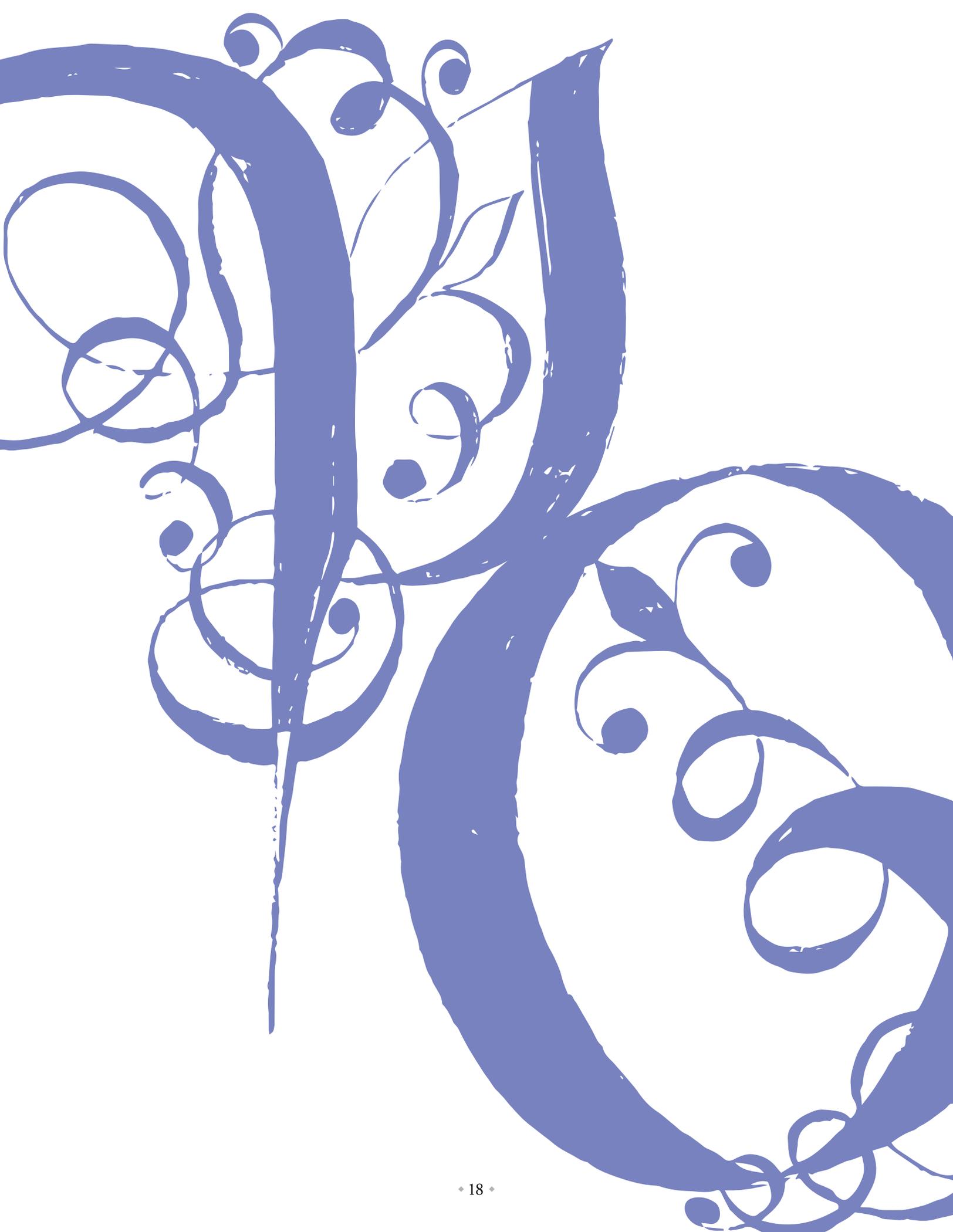
GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Do you record meaningful information about significant family events in a special place? Do you keep meaningful documents and mementos from special occasions in a safe place to preserve them? What are they, and why are they special?
- How has the prominence of handwriting changed in your own life, with the advent and increasing dominance of digital communication in recent decades?

ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

Visit the Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department’s “Pennsylvania German Fraktur and Manuscripts” digital collection at <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/collection/fraktur>. Browse the holdings of the collection to get a sense of the great breadth of manuscript art among the Pennsylvania Germans, in all of the various genres discussed in *The Word in the Wilderness*.

Don Yoder’s *The Pennsylvania German Broadside: A History and Guide* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005) offers a useful introduction to Pennsylvania German print culture that can inform the interpretation in this chapter of *The Word in the Wilderness*.



ACTIVITIES AND FURTHER READING

The Word in the Wilderness makes the case for a history of Pennsylvania German manuscripts grounded in material culture, visual culture, and religious history. Explore the works of leading scholars David Morgan and Sally M. Promey for insights on how to apply these academic fields to the topic. Two especially relevant works include:

David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Sally M. Promey, ed., *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

Continue exploring collections of Pennsylvania German books and manuscripts online! Visit the online collections of the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library here: <http://www.winterthur.org/collections/online-collections/>. Also check out the online collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art: <https://philamuseum.org/collections/search.html>. Try keyword searches for “fraktur” and “Pennsylvania German.”

RELATED CLOISTER TALK PODCAST EPISODES



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- ▶ **Episode 15**
“Errand Into the Wilderness”: What Pennsylvania German Illuminated Manuscripts Mean in American History
- ▶ **Episode 16**
Afternoon Tea with Alexander Lawrence Ames: Answering Your Questions about Writing *The Word in the Wilderness*, and a Life Spent in Libraries and Museums

Conclusion

“ERRAND INTO THE WILDERNESS’: MAKING MEANING FROM MANUSCRIPTS”

PRIVATE STUDY QUESTIONS

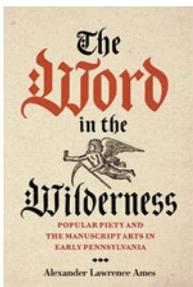
- Why do you think *The Word in the Wilderness* starts and ends with the story of Samuel Pennypacker? What is his significance to the topic under consideration in the book? What about his story surprises you?
- Do you think it is useful to study Pennsylvania German illuminated manuscripts in a comparative perspective that emphasizes the art form’s connection to European traditions and its relationship to the text practices of other groups in early America? Why or why not?
- *The Word in the Wilderness* ends with a quote from the famous German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher: “Christianity has created language. From its very beginning it has been a potentiating linguistic spirit.” How does this insight relate to the Pennsylvania Germans’ illuminated manuscript? Why do you think the quote appears in the book?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What has been the most interesting or meaningful thing you’ve learned from reading *The Word in the Wilderness*?
- What questions do you still have about Pennsylvania German illuminated manuscripts? How could you go about answering them?
- Pages 173–176 of *The Word in the Wilderness* offer a concluding statement on how best to interpret Pennsylvania German illuminated manuscripts. What do you think future studies of the topic should focus on?
- Look through all 35 images in *The Word in the Wilderness*. If you were tasked with creating a small museum exhibition of books and manuscripts to explain the meaning of calligraphy and manuscript illumination in Pennsylvania German culture, which would you choose, and why?



Johannes Bard, fraktur (writing sample), "Größeres Alphabet," Adams County, Pennsylvania, 1819-21, ink and watercolor on woven paper, 2011.0028.010, Gift of Nick and Jo Wilson, Courtesy of Winterthur Museum.

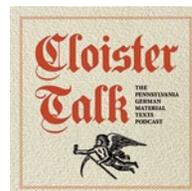


ORDER THE BOOK

The Word in the Wilderness: Popular Piety and the Manuscript Arts in Early Pennsylvania is available for purchase directly from the Pennsylvania State University Press (<http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-08590-6.html>).

Available now in hardcover and, starting in June, 2021, in paperback.

Visit <https://www.wordinwilderness.com/about-the-book.html> to learn about discounts on the book.



LISTEN TO THE PODCAST

Cloister Talk offers extended commentary on topics covered in *The Word in the Wilderness*, original content that builds on the themes of the book, and lively conversations with librarians, curators, historians, and other rare book and manuscript enthusiasts!

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