

THE PENTECOST

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Cover photo: European Starling from Vancouver, B.C.

Above photo: Larabee State Park, Washington

In this issue we will look at something called Pietism. What is Pietism? Journey with us as we examine one of the most important Christian movements in history which gave rise to revivalism and evangelicalism.

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What does it mean to be a Christian? Is it merely scheduled activities such as going to church on Sunday? Romans 2:28 reads, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." So likewise is a person a Christian by the inward change that the Holy Spirit brings to their lives. We will delve into this much deeper, which I trust will bless you.

Ramona Stevens

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PIETISM

You either love it or you hate it, Pietism. Historians and theologians usually speak of Pietism as a Christian movement that began in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and continued, with growing significance, into the eighteenth century. Pietism was controversial because it so directly challenged the spirituality of many who encountered it in its day. It continues to challenge those throughout time who will study it. Those who malign Pietism usually identify it with emotionalism, subjectivism, mysticism, asceticism, legalism, individualism, separatism and other-worldliness.¹ Those who love Pietism associate it with integrity, holiness, sanctification and genuine Christianity. One author has said that Pietism represents one of the “wellsprings of new life in the church” and contributes to those who “are in the vanguard of what might be considered radical or revolutionary Christianity.”²

It is considered to be an incredibly important development in Protestant faith.³ Why? It is because of the direction that it has carried Protestant thought and practice, and for the evangelicalism which took form as a result of it. Pietism called for a living spirituality and insisted that traditional religious form could in no way substitute for spiritual conversion and experiential Christianity. It maintained that a true Christian was a Christian by experience, not just by religion or mental assent to a set of tenets. It maintained that a Christian's personal spiritual life was more important than his institutional church life. It strengthened the idea of a pastor's office as being a sacred calling from God and challenged those who looked on it as merely a middle-class profession. It moved beyond using the Scriptures for schematic debates to using the Scriptures to challenge people on their integrity and commitment to God. Pietists believed in the importance of worship and added fresh new hymns to their churches corporate services. They didn't like scripted prayers but, instead, detached public prayer from its liturgical form and prayed concerning present needs. As well, they refuted the idea that the clergy alone were priests and argued that every Christian was a priest. They took this further and introduced the idea of family-worship into Christian

homes. Also, they wrote devotional material and encouraged daily Bible reading. They were very socially active, introducing a variety of programs to aid the poor and struggling. Lastly, they were some of the main ones influencing the missions thrust and spiritual awakening of their day.⁴

How did this awakening, of not only missions but also of true spirituality, come about? In the years following Martin Luther's death in 1546, the Lutheran church was divided over many controversies. There were raging debates over doctrines, such as, works and their relation to salvation, the spiritual function of sacraments, sin, the essence of man and justification. The debates were carried out in a deeply scholastic way which appealed to, and was followed by, the theologically educated. To these doctrinal debates the Pietists reacted negatively. They felt that the Church was drifting away from the important issues of spiritual experience, holiness, piety and spiritual and social service.

If the Church at large was drifting away from piety, the Pietists were determined to go the other way. Many of them hoped to, by God's grace, turn the direction of the Church back towards a more spiritual experience and way of life. Many opposed them, but others related to their message and came onside. Pietism may have begun in German kingdoms, but it soon spread to Holland, Switzerland, Scandinavia and America. The Pietist spirit came to many Christians and revitalized the Church. In this magazine, we will look briefly at the history of this movement, both in Europe and America, and discuss what Pietism is.

Like every spiritual movement, Pietism has a history. However, with Pietism, it is not easy to pinpoint its beginning. It spanned many different churches, crossing denominational barriers. Some have identified it as a movement within Lutheranism, English Puritanism or Dutch Reformed circles and, yet, others from these traditions have sought to distance their denominations from Pietism.

Some date Pietism back to the 1500s, tracing it to Johann Arndt (1555-1621). Arndt was born in 1555, the same year that the

Peace of Augsburg was signed, a treaty that was supposed to bring peace and religious freedom to many Europeans by allowing Lutheranism legal status within the Holy Roman Empire. The son of a village pastor, John Arndt grew up living most of his childhood and youth years in Ballenstedt (today Germany). Europe was not a friendly place at this time and Arndt grew up in times of political war and theological controversy.

Arndt, viewing this controversy, did not see any relevance of scholastic argumentation to Christian practice of virtue and devotion. At age twenty-two, Arndt studied medicine at the university at Helmstedt. He soon discontinued this course and took up religious studies in Wittenberg, Strasbourg and Basel. In 1583, he married Anna Wagner and in the next year was pastoring in the village of Badeborn. He also pastored in Eisleben and went on to become the general superintendent of his denomination. He was known for his powerful preaching and also for his written work, *True Christianity*.⁵ Arndt most frequently preached on the new life in Christ and taught that, in every Christian's life, there should be a point at which worldliness has been forsaken and dedication has been made to following God in all things. He also stressed the importance of loving both God and one's neighbor.⁶

Arndt was different from many other ministers of his day. He was fascinated with the mystical union between Christ and the Church. He taught about finding peace with God.⁷ According to Arndt, genuine Christianity was comprised of living faith and demonstrated Godliness and the fruits of righteousness.⁹ This living faith was preceded by godly sorrow through which a person's heart is broken and made contrite. He maintained that true repentance flowed out of the inner depths of a person's heart and that this resulted in a change in a person's heart, mind and affections, conforming him to Christ and His holy Gospel. Arndt insisted that theology was not merely a science or rhetoric but, rather, was to be a living experience and practice.¹⁰

Arndt referred to this transformation as new birth. This new birth transformed men and women from being children of wrath into children of grace and blessedness. It, in fact, made

them new creatures which now were renewed and had holy affection. This comes about by the Holy Spirit using the word of God to awaken faith in the hearts of men and women.¹¹ In this transformation men and women are forgiven of their many sins and are united with God.

Arndt taught that in this new life the Christian was sanctified.¹⁴ How does this new life relate to the Bible? Arndt maintained that this was the whole purpose for God giving us the Bible in the first place. The Bible was not to be handled as a dead letter but, rather, it was a living seed that was to be planted inside of a person and allowed to grow, creating a completely new inner man. He likened this also to the flood by which God cleansed the earth in the days of Noah. Arndt said, that the flood must happen in us. The flesh must die by drowning.¹⁵ In short, Arndt saw the Old Testament accounts as having a New Testament application to the Christian. The Old Testament was filled with types and shadows which represented the new spirituality that God was calling men and women to in Christ.

Arndt understood the new birth and Christian growth to be the restoring of the image of God within man. He comments on how God originally created man in God's image. Arndt relates the image of God to be divine holiness, righteousness and goodness. He taught that through the fall, man lost this image but through redemption, man can gain back the image of God. He maintained that the human soul was like a mirror which should shine back the image of God. To do this, a person's soul should be as clean as possible. He taught that the purer a person's soul was the easier it was to see the image of God in that person.¹⁷ Arndt made it clear that man was not God but, rather, could be in God's image.¹⁸ Arndt died in 1621.

While some trace Pietism to Arndt, others believe that its most significant beginnings were with its two most influential early ministers, Philip Jacob Spener, (1635-1705), and Auguste Hermann Francke, (1663-1727). In 1635, Philip Jacob Spener was born in the village of Rappoltsweiler (presently Germany) in the upper Alsace area of the Rhine Valley, close to Colmar, France. His household was Lutheran. As a youth, he was known to be intelligent, sensitive, mature and pious. He was

also known for the strong attraction that he had for heaven. He studied philosophy at Strasbourg Academy. Here he also learned Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. In 1653, he obtained his Master's Degree. He moved on from studying philosophy to studying theology and he was known on campus for his withdrawn and disciplined life.

A pastoral position in Strasbourg was offered to Spener and he wrestled with the decision of whether, or not, to spend his life either teaching or preaching. A friend convinced him that if Spener accepted the pastorate, it would ruin his academic career. Consequently, he turned down the position. In 1663, another opportunity to pastor was opened to him and this time he accepted and was soon ordained in the Lutheran Church. Spener went on to pursue a Doctorate in Theology, which he obtained in 1664. On the same day that he received his doctorate, he married.

Now, as a pastor, Spener preached on a variety of controversial themes. He taught that all believers were priests. He insisted that the title of priest did not belong only to the clergy but, rather, to every Christian.²⁰ He maintained that the Christian was a priest who offered up spiritual sacrifices, rather than bodily sacrifices.

Not only did Spener teach the priesthood of all believers, he also taught on the new birth. He maintained that spiritual new birth came from the creative activity of God, which was directly related to Christ's resurrection. He saw it as an awakening which was absolutely necessary for men and women to undergo. He taught that human sin was not like natural sickness, which could be treated with medicine, or like ignorance, which can be corrected with proper instruction. Instead, new birth was a complete transformation of the person, not a patching up but, rather, the creating of something new. He maintained that since God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, we need a spiritual nature to enter it. For Spener, there were three foundational truths inherent in the new birth. Firstly, faith is created in the heart. This meant that God enabled people to believe and people were to yield to this process. Secondly, forgiveness, justification and adoption are

all received by the believer. The new birth makes a person a child of God and this includes receiving the righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Thirdly, the new birth creates a new nature within the believer.²¹

As well as teaching on the new birth, Spener taught on the concept of spiritual enlightenment. He explained that just as the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit also enlightened people to understand them. In fact, without this enlightenment, the Scriptures could not be understood. He taught that the illumination of the Spirit and human ingenuity were as far apart as heaven was from earth.²² He taught that one should not read the Bible without first sincerely praying for the grace of the Holy Spirit. In response to being questioned about whether or not the Bible was too difficult for the uneducated to comprehend, Spener replied that even the Old Testament was given to instruct the simple. He instructed his hearers to lay aside worldly wisdom and to become like children when seeking an understanding of the Scriptures. When asked whether or not the Scriptures contained obscure material too deep for the uneducated, he again replied that the high things of Scripture were beyond the natural understanding of both the educated and the uneducated. Understanding the Scriptures was not a matter of education; it was a matter of humbly requesting and receiving enlightenment from God when studying them.

Just as it was possible to receive enlightenment from God, it was also possible for readers of the Bible to hinder and obstruct the enlightenment process. Spener explained that this happened when people read the Scriptures without sincerely praying and without a desire to obey God. Enlightenment is hindered when men trust their own reason above the Word of God, or if they try to use the Scriptures for their own glory or to attack others. Also, if they despise the things that Scripture states simply and clearly, they will not have enlightenment on its less simple and less clear points. They will not have enlightenment if they only focus on disputable passages for the purpose of debate, or if they use the Scriptures to inflate their pride, or if they regard themselves, alone, as being wise. Lastly,

if a person leads a carnal life, Spener maintains that the Holy Spirit cannot dwell within them and, therefore, Scripture reading would have no effect.²³

Spener was deeply concerned over what he saw as a lack of vitality in the churches of his day. He began controversial *collegia pietatis* or Christian renewal groups. His written work, *Pia Desideria*, became like a manual for Pietist reform. He saw his work as a continuation of the Reformation and he spoke out against worldliness in the church.²⁵

Auguste Hermann Francke was born on March 22, 1663, in the city of Lubeck. He is known as a leading figure within Pietism and his spiritual struggle and journey is typical of other Pietists. Francke was raised in an upper class Lutheran home. He had a very devout sister who would read Scripture to him daily. As Francke saw the sincere, humble and genuine faith that his sister lived, he was convicted of his own personal sins.²⁶ Options were open for him to pursue higher education and, in 1679, he attended university at Erfurt. In 1682, he moved to Hamburg where he studied Hebrew. Despite his outward Christian appearance, Francke says of himself that “the condition of my soul when I arrived at Hamburg was very bad and stained through and through with love of the world.”²⁷ He went on to obtain a Masters Degree from a school in Leipzig. Despite his outward success, Francke was empty inwardly. However, he had a wonderful new birth experience in the year of 1687.

Having experienced new birth, Francke preached on it. He taught that ministers needed to distinguish between those in their audience who were merely morally honest and those who were genuinely born again. Francke pointed out that when one experiences the new birth he is transformed and now loves the good that he once hated, hates the evil that he once loved, and has a saving faith instead of a dead faith. It is not enough to know about God intellectually. There is another kind of knowledge which most people miss altogether, and that is coming to understand God's grace through experiencing it.²⁸ Describing it this way, he said that a tree can't bear fruit unless sap is flowing on the inside of its roots. Similarly, people might

look religious in how they portray themselves but unless there is a new birth of spiritual life within themselves, they are like a sapless tree.²⁹ Francke acknowledged that mankind was fallen and inclined towards sin. However, he said that this would not serve as an excuse before God on Judgment Day. Instead, Christ has come to save us and if we yield to His saving work, He will spiritually awaken us.³⁰

As well as teaching on the new birth, Francke taught about the love of God. He had a revelation of it and this forever affected his message. He explained that it is Christ who first loved us.³²

So we see how early Pietist ministers such as John Arndt, Phillip Jacob Spenser, and Herman Franke challenged the church of their day with Biblical truths such as the born again experience and priesthood of all believers, helping the poor and experiencing Christianity. Pietists would not accept status quo religiously for Christian faith and they challenged us all to consider our faith.

One early Pietist who believed in the thorough cleansing of the heart was Henrietta Catherine von Gersdorf (1656-1726), a baroness in Bohemia. She hosted and assisted Pietists and also began projects for the caring of widows, orphans and the underprivileged. She is also known for assuming the care of her grandson, Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), and for exposing him to Pietist teaching. Although a member of the Austrian nobility, Zinzendorf became more interested in theology than in politics. He, somewhat reluctantly, became a political leader in the court of Saxony. After acquiring an estate, he opened it as a haven for refugee Hussites from Bohemia and Moravia. A community of faith was formed and Zinzendorf himself did much preaching and worked among them. They were called Moravians and were known for their twenty-four-hour-a-day communal prayer watch, their evangelical preaching, their missionary zeal and their pietism.³³

What did Zinzendorf preach? He preached the new birth. Zinzendorf explained that a man or woman first undergoes sorrow over his or her sins and then responds to the Gospel and is reborn.

For Zinzendorf, faith in Christ and love for Christ were virtually synonymous. He taught that the one who is truly born again will automatically love Christ. This was a sign of conversion.

Zinzendorf and the Moravians were also known for their important influence on the life of John Wesley (1703-1791). Wesley was the fifteenth child of the Anglican minister, Samuel Wesley, and his wife Susanna.³⁵ He followed his father's footsteps into the ministry. Despite his zealous religious activity during his early ministry years, Wesley lacked a personal experience of Christian conversion. He knew this, and this fact created tremendous frustration within him. Once, while traveling from America to Europe, Wesley found himself on a small ship with Moravian missionaries. He was unsettled by the rough sea conditions, unlike the Moravians who seemed so at ease. This left quite an impression upon Wesley and for the next two-and-a-half years he met with them and learned from them. These events led up to Wesley's own conversion experience in Aldersgate, London, in 1738. ³⁶ Revival broke out in Wesley's ministry and his followers became known as Methodists. Methodism itself could be regarded as one massive Pietist movement which spread like wildfire throughout Britain and North America in the 1700s, and beyond. Having said this, Methodist Pietism should be considered as its own distinctive form of Pietism. By 1844, Methodism had become the largest religious body in the United States, exceeding a million members and eleven thousand preachers. ³⁷ Wesley preached over 40,000 sermons in his lifetime and traveled an average of 4,000 miles annually. ³⁸

Pietism was not only in Europe but it spread to America and its influence in America was huge. Many churches in the New World were revitalized by the new spiritual emphasis and spiritual experience that came with Pietism. Many experienced a deepening of devotion to God. New hymnals and devotional material were created and distributed. Christianity was carried into home life, strengthening families. People felt a new sense of responsibility to their communities, especially to those who were less fortunate among them. In addition to this, Pietism

worked to break down much of the sectarian division that existed between protestant groups. Pietism sought a peaceful healing for the Church as a whole.

Lutherans came to the New World. In 1638, the colony of New Sweden was established on the Delaware River and a small number of Swedish pioneers made it their home. The Dutch also set up a colony in 1625 on the Hudson River. German settlers came also, at first in small numbers, but then in larger numbers between 1710 and the American Revolution. Many of these were Lutheran. One problem that they faced was that there was a great shortage of ministers who were willing to move to the New World. However, there was one religious group that was very willing to come and fill the positions, the Pietists. Many Pietists had experienced persecution in Europe. Now, in the New World, they had greater freedom and could make a new start. Pietist Lutherans faced the challenges of frontier life. Many times their congregation was spread over large areas and pastors made many house calls. They became known for asking those they visited about their souls and for searching for the fruit of true conversion in their lives. They also became known for the attention that they gave to the sick and dying. ³⁹

As well as spreading through the influence of Methodists, Pietism spread in a large way in America through the Mennonites. Pietism gained significant influence within the Mennonite Church, so much so that Mennonite historian, Cornelius Krahn, has said, "No other single religious movement has had such an impact on the Mennonites in all countries with the exception of the Netherlands as Pietism."⁴⁰ In the state of Pennsylvania two Pietist leaders, in particular, had significant influence upon and through, the colonial Mennonites. They were Philip W. Otterbein and Martin Boehm. In the late 1600s Mennonites were coming to America, fleeing persecution in Europe. It is estimated that three-to-five thousand Mennonites made this journey and very many of them settled in Pennsylvania, developing farming communities. ⁴¹

To these communities, and others, came the fiery preaching of

Otterbein and Boehm. Otterbein was not a Mennonite but, rather, a German Reformed Pietist. He came to America in 1752 and began preaching in Pennsylvania and Maryland. He passionately called his hearers to turn from “cold formality” to the “life and power of faith.”⁴² He preached extemporaneously with messages aimed at the heart. In his meetings, many people would be found mourning and weeping over sin and judgment.⁴³ Although he was not a Mennonite, his influence extended into Mennonite communities, largely through his close association with Boehm.

Martin Boehm, not to be confused with Jacob Boehme, had begun to have great influence on and through the Mennonites, beginning in 1758 when he experienced a spiritual conversion. Prior to this, he had been serving as a minister within that denomination. After his conversion, Boehm began preaching about the new life, new faith and new love that he was now experiencing. He taught that men everywhere must repent, and that “this repentance must be accompanied by a Godly sorrow, deeply felt, and that there can be no rest, no peace, no hope and no faith without it.”⁴⁴ Some were repelled by his preaching while others embraced it and experienced conversion. Boehm was made a bishop in the Mennonite church. He preached in churches, homes and large meetings, and did not restrict his gatherings to Sundays. Despite the impact that he was having, many opposed him and he was eventually excommunicated from the Mennonite Church.⁴⁵

Moravians came to America as well, in small numbers. Their first settlement was in Georgia, in 1735. Zinzendorf was experiencing troubles back home and the security of the community of Herrnhut was in question. He was considering transplanting the entire group to Georgia but they had a difficult time establishing themselves in the New World. The initial group consisted of ten men. They set up a cabin, planted crops and prepared for a second colony of Moravian immigrants to join them. Their pacifist stand made them unpopular as they were caught in the middle of a conflict between the English and the Spaniards. Their colony, which had grown to thirty, dwindled to twelve. However, it was the

second group of colonizers coming from Moravia to Georgia who met John Wesley and were used of God in Wesley's journey to faith. Some of the Moravians had moved to Pennsylvania and Zinzendorf made plans for another colony. He dreamed of setting up more than a colony. He wanted to bring together Christian German immigrants from many backgrounds into a unified partnership of believers. Zinzendorf himself decided to come to the New World and stayed for fourteen months. With a team of men, he launched three expeditions to the Indians. They baptized converts and, by 1748, there were 500 Indians who were a part of the Moravian mission. By 1748, Moravian Pietists had thirty communities in the New World.⁴⁶

Moravian Pietists did not only evangelize in America, in early history they had found converts in Russia among a German-speaking people group there. Beginning in 1866, the Russian government started really pressuring the German-speaking people within its borders. They wanted to russianize all of Russia. Many persecuted chose to leave in search of religious and general freedom. Between 1898 and 1904, German-speaking Russians immigrating to the United States numbered 41,000. Many of these were Pietists. One writer, commenting on Brethren German-speaking Russian immigrants of this time, said that “They had been born and reared in the fields of Pietism.”⁴⁷ Mighty revivals broke out among them. Services ran late into the night with multitudes seeking God and crying out in repentant prayer. One series of revival meetings in Hosmer, South Dakota, in the winter of 1923 was described this way:

People came regularly every evening, even from distances of over 30 miles. The church was always packed to its utmost capacity, and many had to be turned away. The services did not begin until seven o'clock, but many arrived at five o'clock in order to find even standing room. People stood six and eight deep in the rear of the church. The aisles, the entrance, the front of the church, and even the platform, were jammed to the last inch of space. The

*speakers never dared gesticulate too much for fear of hitting the people who stood behind them, beside them, or in front of them near the pulpit. All about there was deep searching for spiritual things. The meetings continued for seven weeks, during which 'the Lord gathered unto himself one hundred fifty-seven converts.'*⁴⁸

Another movement to rise out of Pietism was the Brethren movement. Although not officially called the Church Of The Brethren until 1908, their roots go back deep in Church history. Prior to the amalgamation of most Brethren into this denomination, they were known as New Baptists, Dompelaars, Tumplers, Dunkers and German Baptist Brethren. Some Brethren historians date their beginnings back very far in Church history, associating them with Waldenians. While some Brethren historians have argued against having Pietist roots, their position is hard to maintain. Church historian, Donald F. Durbaugh, says that “Brethren rootage in Pietism is irrefutable.”⁴⁹ Early in the eighteenth century, numbers of German Christians were disenchanted with their religious organizations and began meeting outside of them for worship. Religious persecution drove them to Pietist regions of Germany where they had more freedom to practice their faith; counties such as Wittgenstein became havens. The majority of German Brethren in the eighteenth century migrated to America, many settling in Pennsylvania.⁵⁰

Having looked briefly at the history of Pietism, and the different streams through which it flowed, both in Europe and America, we now ask, “What did Pietists believe?” Keeping in mind that Pietists were spread throughout numerous denominations, with varying theological backgrounds, there were still some central things that they held in common and taught. For one, they regarded the Church world as being largely backslidden and in need of reviving. In the 1500s, Protestantism, with great struggle, had risen out of the Reformation. At that time, significant gains were made in bringing many seeking souls out from under the domination of the Catholic Church. The stranglehold had been broken and

space was now made for men and women to discover, by faith, the great truths of the Bible, free from the manipulation of the Vatican. The Reformation was followed by the devastating Thirty Years War, in which the monarchies of Europe chose sides and used both Catholicism and Protestantism as excuses for military conquest. The war had taken a terrible toll upon European societies. Morale was low, poverty was everywhere and, within the Church, the flame of true spirituality was flickering low.⁵¹ Against this backdrop, Pietists began preaching a message which soberly and honestly addressed the spiritual bankruptcy of the churches to which they belonged. At the same time, they carried a message of hope which was born out of the personal experience of having their lives changed through repentance and faith in Christ. They saw themselves as continuers of the Reformation. They acknowledged that gains were made during the Reformation, but that this was no time to stop reforming the Church. They believed that the Church must be continually reformed until it reaches its pristine, Apostolic state.

In attempting to reach this Apostolic state, Pietism branched out into two major forms, radical Pietism and moderate Pietism. Radical Pietists commonly believed the organized churches of their day represented Babylon The Great and that Christian men and women should break away from them and start over. However, Pietists like Spener spoke out against this trend. He published a writing called *Der Klagen uber das verdorbene Christenhum Missbrauch und rechter Gebrauch* and in it argued that it was wrong to conclude on the basis of the Church's faults that her teachings were false, that she wasn't the true Church, and that we were justified in separating from her.⁵² He said that “It would indeed be going entirely too far to identify our church with Babel on account of the offenses which we have mentioned.”⁵³ Instead of being overly critical, Spener argued that “. . . we should be urged on by our love of the church and the glory of God to make improvements, fulfill the longings of godly, and open wide to the erring the gates to a knowledge of the truth”⁵⁴ As one studies their history, it seems that Pietists were often persecuted, largely because of their fiery holiness preaching and their vehement insistence that

men and women, whether churchmen or secular, must undergo a spiritual conversion, a spiritual new birth, in order to belong to God's Kingdom.

Pietists affirmed that faith does not consist of intellectual assent to theological positions but, rather, was when someone rested their heart in The Almighty.⁵⁵ This resting is an actual experience of conversion in which all sins of the heart, mouth and hand are cleaned away. The convert is brought into union with Christ and is now a spiritual creature.⁵⁶ Spener taught that religion was an affair of the heart.⁵⁷ Pietists argued that no amount of theological study could compensate for this all-important experience. They taught that this experience was an awakening, which could not occur apart from the working of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ Francke taught that this awakening was critical for, to be a Christian, one must “have a true sense of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in our Souls and know experimentally [experientially], that God of a truth has erected His kingdom in our Souls, which consists in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁹ Pietists also taught that there was a visible and an invisible Church.⁶⁰ The invisible Church is comprised of those who have undergone spiritual conversion and are, therefore, true Christians.

While the teaching on spiritual conversion took an important place in Pietism, it was communicated with the Pietist's deep belief in personal holiness. They taught that conversion was the conversion of an unholy person into a holy person. He boldly proclaimed that Christ was not only to be received as priest but also honored as king.⁶² Pietists zealously denounced “the vulgarity, brutality and coarseness of the masses as well as the prevalence of immorality in high places of church and state.”⁶³

As well as emphasizing the importance of holiness, Pietists also placed great emphasis on the supremacy of the Bible in all things. One author has gone so far as to say that “wherever Biblical theology prevails over systematic theology, that is almost always due to the influence of Pietism.”⁶⁶ Pietists objected to how the scholastic community used the Bible mainly for intellectual exercises of crafting theology. Instead, they believed that the Bible was a precious gift from God to

man, given to warn, reprimand, edify, encourage, console and to lead men and women to God through repentance and change.⁶⁷ The study of the Bible was to be followed by a devotional application of what was learned.

Closely akin to Pietist emphasis on the importance of the Bible, was their emphasis on the importance of illumination. They believed that the mechanical study of the Scriptures was not enough to lead people into spiritual understanding. They taught that it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to take the truth of Scripture and make it real to seekers. Spener taught that true faith is “awakened through the word of God by the illumination, witness, and sealing of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸ While Pietists acknowledged that the unregenerate could apprehend some things in the Scriptures in a natural way, the deep internal meaning could only be understood with the help of the Holy Spirit, Who enlightens the mind.⁶⁹ Spener taught that human power and reason could only produce dead faith. However, the Holy Spirit could illuminate the minds of men and women and transform dead faith into living faith.⁷⁰

Another interesting feature that existed within Pietism was the concept of house churches. Not all Pietists worshipped in houses, but some did, and Pietists in the Netherlands were the first to refer to their renewal meetings as house church.⁷¹ In his preaching, Spener asked that wouldn't it be good if friends, when they were visiting each other, would, instead of playing cards or dice games, instead pull out a good spiritual book or review a sermon together. They should discuss divine mysteries, and whoever had the most revelation should share it with whoever was weak among them.⁷²

Of everything that Pietism has been criticized for, by historians, probably the most unfair criticism has been that Pietists were exclusively preoccupied with inward religion and ignored the world around them. To the contrary, Pietists were zealous in serving their fellow man and in obeying the Lord's Great Commission. They sought to better the living conditions of the poor, abolish slavery, reform the prison system, initiate educational reforms, break down class distinctions; they began philanthropic institutions and they fought for religious

liberty.⁷³ Under Francke's leadership, an orphanage was started along with a school for impoverished children, as well as two homes for widows, a hospital and a home for beggars. Free medicine for poor persons, free food for poor students, and visits for prison inmates were provided. His orphanage was one of the rare orphanages of his time where recipients were not housed with criminals and beggars. Nor were they used as cheap labor but, instead, they were offered education and medical assistance. Francke also pressured some in government to establish programs for the homeless and jobless.⁷⁴

So, while critics have dismissed Pietism as emotionalism, legalism and separatism, Pietism has a depth to it which should not be glossed over. From Arndt to Spener and Francke, to Henrietta Gersdorf and Zinzendorf, to John Wesley, and from Otterbein to Boehm, and others, Pietists called for a Christianity that involved spiritual conversion, love for God and man, and a thorough cleansing of the heart. They believed that the reformation of the Church must continue. They soberly and honestly addressed the spiritual bankruptcy of the church world around them, and brought a message of hope which was born out of real spiritual experience. They taught that religion was an affair of the heart, and that one could be brought into union with Christ and be made a spiritual creature. They taught that conversion was the conversion of an unholy person into a holy person. They affirmed the supremacy of the Bible. They placed great importance on the study of it, not in a mechanical way, but under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who is faithful to take the truth of Scripture and make it real to genuine seekers. Their message of hope and love was also lived out in practical ways as they reached out to those less fortunate than themselves. This is the depth of Pietism.

Shawn Stevens

ENDNOTES

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2. Donald Bloesch, *Wellsprings of Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 12-13.
3. Peter C. Erb, Ed. *Pietists Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), xiii.
4. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *Pietists Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), ix, x.
5. Mark H. Tuttle, ed., "Gallery, Thumbnail Sketches of Important Leaders in the Pietist Movement," *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 13.
6. *Ibid.*, 13.
7. Johann Arndt, *True Christianity* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1979), 14.
8. *Ibid.*, 14.
9. *Ibid.*, 21.
10. *Ibid.*, 21.
11. *Ibid.*, 37.
12. *Ibid.*, 45.
13. *Ibid.*, 46.
14. *Ibid.*, 47.
15. *Ibid.*, 49.
16. *Ibid.*, 50.
17. *Ibid.*, 29.
18. *Ibid.*, 30.
19. *Ibid.*, 184.
20. Philipp Jakob Spener, from "The Spiritual Priesthood : Briefly Described According to the Word of God in Seventy Questions and Answers, 1677" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 51.
21. K. James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener : Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986), 188-192.
22. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (USA: Fortress Press, 1964), 37.
23. Philipp Jakob Spener, from "The Spiritual Priesthood : Briefly Described According to the Word of God in Seventy Questions and Answers, 1677" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 58.
24. Philipp Jakob Spener, from "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures, 1694" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 72.
25. *Ibid.*, 13.
26. Gary R. Sattler, *Nobler Than the Angels, Lower Than a Worm: The Pietist View of the Individual in the Writings of Heinrich Muller and Auguste Hermann Francke* (U.S.A.: University Press of America, 1989), 2-4.
27. Auguste Hermann Francke, quoted in Gary R. Sattler, *Nobler Than the Angels, Lower Than a Worm: The Pietist View of the Individual in the Writings of Heinrich Muller and Auguste Hermann Francke* (U.S.A.: University Press of America, 1989), 8.
28. Auguste Hermann Francke, "On The Resurrection Of Our Lord" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 129.
29. Auguste Hermann Francke, "Following Christ 1702" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 138.
30. *Ibid* 141.

31. Auguste Hermann Francke, "The Foretaste of Eternal Life" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 154.
32. Auguste Hermann Francke, "A Letter to a Friend Concerning The Most Useful Way Of Preaching 1725" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 124.
33. *Ibid.*, 15.
34. Zinzendorf, "From nine public lectures 1746" in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Richard J. Payne et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 307.
35. R. G. Tuttle, "Wesley, John (1703-1791)," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid et al (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1241.
36. John R. Weinlick, "Moravianism in the American Colonies" in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 133.
37. Donald Durnbaugh, "The Flowering of Pietism in the Garden of America," in *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 26.
38. R. G. Tuttle, "Wesley, John (1703-1791)," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid et al (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1241.
39. Theodore G. Tappert, "The Influence Of Pietism In Colonial American Lutheranism" in *Continental*

Pietism and American Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 13-33.

40. "Pietism," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (1959), 176.
41. Martin H. Schrag, "The Impact of Pietism Upon the Mennonites in Early American Christianity" in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 75-76.
42. *Ibid.*, 80.
43. *Ibid.*, 81.
44. Martin Boehm, quoted in Martin H. Schrag, "The Impact of Pietism Upon the Mennonites in Early American Christianity" in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 82.
45. *Ibid.*, 82-84.
46. John R. Weinlick, "Moravianism in the American Colonies" in *Continental Pietism and American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 123-163.
47. George J. Eisenach, *Pietism and the Russian Germans in the United States* (Berne: The Berne Publishers, 1945), 150-161.
48. *Ibid.* 161.
49. Donald F. Dumbough, "The Brethren in Early American Church Life" in *Continental Pietism and American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 227.
50. *Ibid.* 222-265
51. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 18.
52. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (USA: Fortress Press, 1964), 20.
53. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (USA: Fortress Press, 1964), 71.
54. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (USA: Fortress Press, 1964), 75
55. Ernest Stoeffler, "Can These Bones Live?" in *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 12.
56. *Ibid.*, 12.
57. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 73.
58. Gary Sattler, "Moving on Many Fronts," in *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 20.
59. Auguste Hermann Francke, *Faith in Christ, Inconsistent with a Solicitous Concern about the Things of This World*, tr. Joseph Downing (London: Joseph Downing, 1909), 13.
60. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 35.
62. Philipp Jakob Spener, *Erste Geistliche Schrifften* (Frankfurt am Main: Zunner, 1699), 651.
63. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 19.
66. Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 285.
67. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 48.
68. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (U.S.A.:

Fortress, 1964), 46.

69. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 50.
70. *Ibid.*, 67.
71. Mark H. Tuttle, ed. *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 6.
72. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (USA: Fortress Press, 1964), 13.
73. Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nappanee: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 86-87.
74. Gary Sattler, "Moving on Many Fronts," in *Christian History*, 5 (1986): 22.

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In a quote, where a scripture is referred to in brackets but not quoted at all or not quoted fully I have added the words "see" in square brackets.

