

Definition of Pietism

As for "Pietism," it has been said with good reason that the term has not always been employed in the same sense. With Schneckenburger, we understand it to mean the unhealthy phenomenon which appeared within the Lutheran Church toward the end of the 17th century and was prominent in the first half of the 18th century. The essence of this Pietism was that it led men to base their state of grace before God on inner experiences of the human heart, contrition, "faith," internal renewal, etc., instead of basing it on the grace earned by Christ and offered by Him in the objective means of grace. Schneckenburger rightly sees in the subjectivity a transition to Reformed territory. Some of the Pietists plainly had a good intention. With a "heartfelt," "living" Christianity they wanted to oppose the externalism which unfortunately had become rampant in the Lutheran Church and made an *opus operatum* (*reception of benefits by doing the work apart from faith*) of the use of the divinely appointed means of grace. But unhappily they belonged to the class of reformers who do not know how to bring about a true reformation of the Church. Instead of confining themselves to condemning the misuse of the means of grace on the part of the carnally secure, they impugned also the right use which the contrite sinners were to make of those means. Every poor sinner who, with a heart terrified by the Law, seeks for the grace of God is to be guided directly to the Word of the Gospel and the Sacraments, in which God proffers the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ to the sinner without attaching any subjective condition, i.e., stipulation as to man's inner state. In so far as Pietism did not point poor sinners directly to the means of grace, but led them to reflect on their own inward state to determine whether their contrition was profound enough and their faith of the right caliber, it actually denied the complete reconciliation by Christ (the *satisfactio vicaria*), robbed justifying faith of its true object, and thus injured personal Christianity in its foundation and Christian piety in its very essence. The reflection on their own inner state, to which the carnally secure are to be admonished and which belongs to the preaching of the Law, the Pietists enjoined upon the poor, terrified sinners, to whom the Gospel is to be preached. Thus Pietism turned into the channel common to the Reformed and the Papists. (Christian Dogmatics, III, The Means of Grace, by Francis Pieper p.174-175)

History of Pietism

Pietism was a movement in the late 17th and early 18th centuries as a backlash to scholastic orthodoxy. Some thought this orthodoxy emphasized scholasticism over the practice of Christian living. As such it was called "dead orthodoxy." Doctrine and dogma replaced love for neighbor. The Thirty Years' War was a main contributor, in that people were frustrated with doctrine. The Thirty Years' War was the result of strong religious convictions mixing with political strategies and agendas. It was a war fought because of religious persecution and oppression, but the politicians used it as a means to further their agendas. Europe was devastated economically afterwards, and spiritually bankrupt. The populace no longer cared about doctrine; they wanted to be left alone. Pietism eschews doctrine for action, and emphasizes an ongoing "maturing" sanctification that makes itself evident in a person's life. An emotionalism and a Reformed-influenced measuring of one's personal faith and holiness eventually crept in then, as it does now.

Lutheran Confessions

--"For all service of God that is chosen and instituted by men to obtain righteousness and God's grace without the command and authority of God is opposed to God and the holy Gospel

and contrary to God's command. So Christ himself says in Matt. 15, 9: *In vain do they worship Me with the commandments of men*. St Paul also teaches everywhere that one is not to seek righteousness in the precepts and services invented by men but that righteousness and godliness (*piety*) in God's sight come from faith and trust when we believe that God receives us into his favor for the sake of Christ, his only Son. (Augsburg Confession, XXVII, 36-37)

--False also is this, that men are accounted righteous before God because of the righteousness of reason [works and external piety]. (Apology, IV. Justification, 28)

--If that were done, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to train men by whom land and people might be improved, and likewise well-educated citizens, chaste and domestic wives, who afterwards would rear godly children and servants. Here consider now what deadly injury you are doing if you be negligent and fail on your part to bring up your child to usefulness and piety, and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you be otherwise pious and holy. And because this is disregarded, God so fearfully punishes the world that there is no discipline, government, or peace, of which we all complain, but do not see that it is our fault; for as we train them, we have spoiled and disobedient children and subjects (Large Catechism, 4th Commandment, 175-177)

--That our righteousness before God consists not only in the sole obedience and merit of Christ, but in our renewal and our own piety in which we walk before God; which they, for the most part, base upon their own peculiar ordinances and self-chosen spirituality, as upon a new sort of monkery. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, XII, 10)

Small Catechism

In the Preface to the Small Catechism, dated September 19, 1529, Johannes Sauromannus writes: "Every one is of the opinion that it is clearly the best thing from early youth carefully and diligently to instruct the boys in the principles of Christian piety. And since I believe that of all the elementary books of the theologians of this age none are better adapted for this purpose than those of Dr. Martin Luther, I have rendered into Latin the booklet of this man which is called the Small Catechism, hoping that it might be given to the boys to be learned as soon as they enter the Latin school."

Luther on Piety

--"The person must in all cases first by good and pious before he can do good works." (St.L. XIX: 1003)

--"Whoever believes in Christ, believes that He was born for us, died, was buried and raised again from the dead, he is regenerated, or born anew. He is a new man, for now he has thoughts which no Papist or Turk ever had.... If you continue in this faith, the Holy Ghost is there and baptizes you, strengthens and increases your faith, puts a new understanding into your heart, and awakens in you holy and new thoughts and affections, so that you begin to love God and refrain from all wicked actions, and do from your heart what God would have you do, and love your neighbor, and shun anger, hatred, and envy." (St.L. VII: 1862).

--"...Our teaching that good works do not make a sinner pious, do not blot out sins, do not reconcile God." (St.L XIV: 310f)

--"The evil foe and the world hate Christians not because they are sinners and stumble and fall occasionally. No, both the devil and the world could well tolerate that and would be well satisfied with them. But the fact that Christians hold to the Word in faith, that they put their hope in the Son of God, comfort themselves with His death and resurrection, fear God and desire to live according to His will, earnestly desire that through their confession others may come to the knowledge of God and faith, this the devil and the world cannot endure." (St. L XIII: 434ff)

25. Pietism

- had its beginning in the Lutheran Church in the 17th Century
- though started by a Lutheran pastor, its theological roots are thoroughly Reformed.
- Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria* (Pious wishes), published in 1675 was heavily influenced by Reformed beliefs.

Pietism was

- a reaction from a country exhausted by the Thirty Years War
- a response to the perceived dead orthodoxism and lack of piety in the church
- a response to an over-intellectualization of religion.
- a response to "I can live anyway I want and it doesn't make any difference as long as I believe the right things."

Pietism

- advocated a mysticism (an experience that is confined to the mind and primarily an emotional event).
- relied on subjective experiences and emotions.
- emphasized the importance of separation and small group meetings for the purpose of Bible-study and mutual edification, called conventicles or *collegia pietatis*.
- demphasized the public ministry in favor of the universal priesthood of all believers (the laity got into areas it did not belong)
- emphasized sanctification over justification.
- was disappointed with the slowness of the Gospel, and therefore emphasized the third use of the law.
- shunted the true means of Grace and replaced it with prayer as a means of achieving God's grace.
- said that you need to know the exact hour of your "break through" (Gnadendurchbruch) (which we know as "born again").
- viewed the Bible primarily as a source of encouragement, warning and consolation.
- replaced "head knowledge" with "heart knowledge"
- viewed the pastor not as the "minister of the Word of God" but the example of spiritual life.
- The Order of Service was viewed as a relic that impeded the free outpouring of a devout heart.
- emphasized ex-corde in place of liturgical prayer
- replaced confessional Lutheran hymnody with Sentimental Gospel-hymns.
- did not recognize adiaphora so that anything which did not contribute toward spiritual edification was classed as directly harmful.
- despised the acquiring of secular knowledge
- viewed the rite of confirmation viewed as a renewal of the baptismal vow
- first just neglected doctrinal, but later viewed it as indifferent
- viewed a doctrines important based on the effect it had on the lives of those who held it.
- down played differences between Lutheran and Reformed
- paved the way for the coming of unionism and ecumenism

Spread of Pietism:

--Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria*(Pious wishes), 1675

--August Hermann Franke(1663-1727), Spener's chief disciple who trained some 6,000 pastors at the University of Halle.

Radical Pietism - developed into a fanatical mystical form of religion combined with a critique of church doctrine by using the principles of rationalism. The rationalistic ideas reached their peak in the Age of Reason.

Intermediate Pietism - Count Nicholaus von Zinzendorf(1700-60) who developed a completely subjective highly emotional theology that centered on the contemplation of the wounds of Christ. In 1727 He organized the Moravian Brethern, a highly evangelistic movement with strong missionary emphasis. In 1734, Zinzendorf was ordained as a Lutheran minister and three years later was consecrated as a Moravian bishop. In this way he developed the first union church.

Intermediate Pietism - John Wesley who had served as a missionary in Georgia from 1735 - 1738 with almost a complete lack of success, came under the influence of Zinzendorf. Wesley traveled with some Moravian missionaries on their way to Georgia. Their faith during an intense storm impressed him. Later he became sure of his own salvation while listening to a reading of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans concerning justification by faith at a Moravian prayer meeting on May 24, 1735 at Aldersgate Chapel in London. Wesley made the dramatic emotional response an essential ingredient for certainty of faith and salvation.

Milder Pietism - just look around in the Lutheran church.