

# The Pietism of the New Evangelicals: A Confusion of Justification and Sanctification

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I gave my heart to Jesus, when I was just a child  
And though it seems like yesterday, it's been quite a while  
I called upon the Savior, I bowed my head and prayed,  
That's the best decision that I ever made.  
He is faithful. He still saves:  
Give your heart to Jesus, and He'll wash your sins away.<sup>1</sup>

Such are the lyrics of Ray Boltz' song entitled, "He Is Great." One might question who is the greater in the above - the pray-er or the pray-ee? Such are the lyrics in more than a few songs in contemporary Christian music. I feel blessed by recent Christian music as an alternative to the regular fanfare on secular stations, saturated with mushy love and sex. Others obviously feel as I do -what with Christian radio station bumper stickers next to the "Come to the WELS" on cars in our church and school parking lots. Thus, this look at Pietism in modern evangelistic thrusts is all the more timely for us pastors and our members to be informed and warned.

Pietism has not caused a confusion of Justification and Sanctification just among the New Evangelicals. The confusion is as old as Pietism itself. A brief review of Pietism's origin is in order to get a feel for what it actually entails. In defining Pietism we would first point out that it should never be confused with piety. Piety is to be the goal of all Christians of all time, as they live in faith on this earth. Any movement, whether religious or political (take communISM), with an "ism" appended to its name is usually the result of a reaction over against a state of affairs which has become intolerable. This helps us to understand the WHY of it. And because it is a reactionary movement, however, it almost inevitably goes to extremes.

The fathers of Pietism are generally thought to be the two Germans, Philip Jacob Spener (d.1705) and August Hermann Francke (d.1727). In an over-simplification of the issue we could quote E. W. Wendland: "Pietism was a reaction to the spiritual indifference, worldliness, and general lack of true piety which had infected the Lutheran Church in Germany in the Seventeenth Century."<sup>iii</sup> One non-Lutheran source was quite "evangelical" itself toward our Lutheran forefathers in its defining Pietism as a "movement in behalf of practical Christianity within the Lutheran Church in Germany in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries."<sup>iii</sup> In 1675 Spener published his *Pia Desideria* (pious wishes). It has been often stated that few books have exerted a greater influence on subsequent church history. His six main points therein for a program to improve the church hardly reads like Luther's Ninety-five Theses but here they are:

- 1) *Thought should be given to more extensive use of the Word of God.*
- 2) *Attention should be given to the establishment and diligent exercise of the universal priesthood of believers.*
- 3) *Christian faith must be put into action. For it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice.*
- 4) *We must beware of how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies.*
- 5) *In the schools and universities attention must be given to the moral development and moral training of future pastors.*
- 6) *Ministerial students should be taught to preach sermons aimed at the heart and directed toward the life of their hearers.*

Spener's proposals were at first received very favorably by most people. Three contributing factors are identified as giving rise to the warm reception his publication received:

- 1) **the devastating effect of the Thirty Years' War on the morality of the people: Germany's** buildings were in ruins, the fields were choked with weeds, and countless people (many of them orphaned children) were reduced to wandering, pillaging bands who would kill for a bite to eat. (Korean girls weren't the only ones sexually abused by warring soldiers.)
- 2) **the state-controlled church!** This was not new since the beginning of the Reformation 150 years before. But the religion of the prince, of necessity being the religion of the pauper, began to take its severe toll as leader and commoner practiced (or failed to practice) their religion, not out of religious conviction but for reasons of expediency.
- 3) to this we carefully add the "ism" word "**OrthodoxISM**" to our word Pietism. It is true that pastors and parishioners could have come to mistake a mere intellectual knowledge of carefully systematized doctrine ...for faith. A religious intellectualISM began to control many Lutheran classrooms and pulpits. "The humbler duties of preaching the Gospel and ministering to the spiritual needs of the people were often shunned," writes Pelikan, "in favor of the more glamorous field of theological debate."<sup>iv</sup>

Against this backdrop we can understand that many PIOUS, solid orthodox Lutherans would welcome Spener's reforms. However, as it became apparent what Spener wanted to accomplish, resistance grew. One of his more controversial courses of action toward Pietism was the introduction of the so-called "*collegia pietatis*" ("gathering of the pious"). These were private gatherings of the "better" members of his congregations for the purpose of Bible study and mutual edification. He hoped that these gatherings around God's Word would create pockets of God-fearing people in the state church congregations who would then work as a leaven for improving conditions in the church.

But instead these little churches within the church caused all kinds of problems. PharisaISM developed. For the members of these groups began to consider themselves to be better than the other members of the congregation who weren't participating. Instead of working as a leaven to promote ethics and morality they became disruptive, splitting churches as they separated themselves from those they considered to be unconverted or second class Christians. Later on, pietists actually attempted to classify people according to their growth in sanctification (remember this for later in our look at New Evangelicals!).

Spener's successor as the leader of Pietism was August Hermann Francke(1663-1727). A gifted language student, he became a professor at the University of Halle. One of his most unfortunate contributions to Pietism was what he spoke of as a profound conversion experience while working on a sermon. Among us there are many stories to be told of strange things that happened while working on sermons, but hopefully nothing like this:

*Required to preach on John 20:31 he wished to present the distinction between a true living faith and an imagined faith built on authority and custom. His reflection on this drove him to examine his own inner condition, the truth of God and the reliability of the Bible. In the midst of the deep existential crisis and imploring prayers consequential to this reflection, he felt himself reborn. He had personally experienced the central point of all Pietistic thinking and aspiration -- rebirth. He fell to his knees and thanked God as he had never before in his whole life. "Everything was decided; now for the first time he began to be a real, convinced, resolute, selfless and clear sighted Christian."<sup>v</sup>*

Francke's rebirth experience had an important effect on the later development of Pietism,...as late as PTL Club(stay tuned!).

Pietism has numerous identifying characteristics. We will especially note its confusion of justification and sanctification. Here we list a number of characteristics directly or indirectly related:

- 1) *The Lutheran Order of Service began to be regarded as an ossified relic of Pre-Reformation times, and ex corde prayers took precedence over the "legalistic strait jacket" of prescribed prayers, which impeded the free outpouring of a devout heart.*
- 2) *Sentimental Gospel Hymns replaced the confessional Lutheran hymns.*
- 3) *Private confession and particularly the pronouncement of absolution by the pastor were bitterly opposed, since it was claimed to presuppose a judgment as to the true repentance of an individual. "The confessional chair is the devil's chair," it was declared.<sup>vi</sup> Public absolution in Services also didn't fare well with Pietism.*
- 4) *Bible study groups and prayer meeting groups resulted in a neglect of the importance of the regular service of worship.*
- 5) *Adiaphora were not recognized since anything that did not contribute towards spiritual edification was classed as directly harmful: card playing, dancing, theater-going, etc. were vigorously condemned as inherently sinful, and even all humor, fiction, and play was frowned upon as unbecoming to a pious soul.*
- 6) *Secular studies were despised and the daily parochial school-curriculum consisted of as many as six hours of religious instruction.*
- 7) *Confirmation was stressed to the extent that every baptized child was looked upon as having fallen from the state of baptismal grace, necessitating this conscious pledge on the part of the individual as a completion of the efficacy of this covenant.*
- 8) *Unionism and enthusiasm flourished and soon became apparent everywhere, for if personal piety was of utmost importance, doctrinal differences were of secondary consequence. (We will note this too in the New Evangelicals!)*

By the end of this list you may well have come to the conclusion that Pietism had little redeeming quality. Was there anything good that Pietism may have accomplished?

*What about the 187 children in Francke's orphanage? What about the 2,000 or more students enrolled at the University of Halle at the time of his death? What about the many charitable and educational institutions which he founded and for which he refused any state support? Yes, what about the revival of missionary spirit, which caused men to go out from Halle into all parts of the world with a zeal for missions - not only ministers of the Gospel, but men of all professions? What about the consecrated example of Count Zinzendorf, a later pietistic leader, who gave his estates, his titles, his efforts in one of the noblest examples of sacrifice?<sup>vii</sup>*

Conversely, if Pietism does accomplish "great good," does this leave conservative, "dead orthodoxy," as little more than a dirty job that someone has to do? Yet, before we get too excited and return home vowing to reform our local congregations into pietistic strongholds, think again about that WELS pastor-shuddering religious experience of Francke and note: **the real distinguishing difference between confessional LutheranISM and Pietism is religious objectivism as opposed to religious subjectivism.**

The subjectivism manifests itself primarily in the confusion of justification and sanctification.

*Spener believed that the reformation of Luther in the field of doctrine needed completion in a reformation in the field of Christian life. In his zeal to achieve that goal, however, he lost sight of a basic Lutheran principle: the fact that man finds not in himself, but outside of himself in the Gospel and the Sacraments, the basic assurance that he is a child of God and an heir of eternal salvation.<sup>viii</sup>*

Instead of the means of grace being the unshakable foundation of faith, the pietist looks to the shifting sand of a subjective emotional experience.

By assignment in this paper we are to get to NEW EVANGELICALISM. We have gotten as far as reviewing Lutheran Pietism and how it led into erroneous confusion of justification and sanctification. From here we would like to dwell upon that confusion of justification and sanctification by many evangelicals in general, and then focus on the unique twist NEW Evangelicals put on the whole matter of Pietism.

The doctrine of justification (God has declared sinners not guilty for Jesus' sake) was for Luther the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. What Jesus has done for us is all-important. The central teaching of the Scriptures is that God loved this world of sinners so much that He sent His Son to be our substitute, to live a perfect life and to suffer and die in our place.

Pietism changes the emphasis from what Christ has done *for* us to what Christ does *in* us. Holy living is emphasized instead of the forgiveness of sins. Theology and practice center on sanctification (the work of the Holy Spirit in leading us to do good works) rather than on justification. With the switch in emphasis to sanctification and good works come legalISM and the confounding of sanctification and justification, law and gospel. "Give your heart to Jesus, and He'll wash your sins away," went the lyrics at the beginning of this paper. It sounds like good Spener: "As the faith which alone justifies us and makes holy is inseparable from good works, so no one will be justified other than those who are intent upon sanctification."<sup>ix</sup> Instead of saying that those who are justified are also sanctified, Spener makes justification dependent on sanctification: on one's desire for sanctification.

Good works have no part in our justification. They are the result of our justification. They have no part in saving us. Good works show our thanks for all that God has done for us: *It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*" (Eph 2:8-10). Good works have no part in saving us, yet Christians will DO good works because that is what we were created for. Unless we keep justification and sanctification in their proper relationship, salvation by grace alone is destroyed. That is exactly what happens in much of modern evangelism.

Pietistic confusion of justification and sanctification leads to:

- 1) Use of the law in a legalistic way, emphasizing the third use of the law instead of the first (that of a mirror).

In my ministry out in Connecticut, our church played in the "Greater Hartford Evangelical Church Softball League." I got to know some of the guys quite well, running into them at contemporary Christian music concerts, among other things. Once at a Creation Science seminar I saw a familiar face from softball. I inquired how things were going at his church. The man was all excited. His congregation had just taken the "leap of faith" in banning (along with all alcohol use) smoking by its members. Needless to say, we follow a different procedure in discouraging the "habit." In a church softball league in which we played in Michigan, shorts were not allowed for either men's or women's games. Not modesty, but legalism ruled.

- 2) Evangelicals also tend to use the law to rail against the gross sins of society, instead of convicting the hearers of their own sinfulness. Such preaching tends to turn people into Pharisees rather than crushed sinners.
- 3) Many evangelicals set themselves and their hearers up for the fall of a weak Christian (consider many big name media personalities!) by not appreciating that good works are the **fruit** of Faith. The only way to promote truly good works in the eyes of the Lord is to promote faith. The Bible teaches that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rm13:10). The law commands us to love, but it cannot produce love in our lives. The Gospel, the message of God's forgiving love for sinners, can. For "we love because He first loved us"(I Jn 4:19). When the sinner realizes that in Jesus all of his sins are

forgiven, his heart will automatically overflow with love and the desire to thank the God Who has shown him so much mercy.

- 4) Many Evangelicals, NEW included, also fail to come to grips with, if not outright denying of, Original Sin. Because of this, they refuse to see the expediency of infant baptism - substituting "dedication." Many evangelicals cannot accept the total depravity of man and what that would mean to making a decision for Christ. They might speak of unregenerate man being in a "wounded state" which complicates things, but still leaves most(?) quite capable of choosing Christ.
- 5) They also show a confusion as to the fact that a Christian is at the same time both a saint and a sinner (This will have special implications for the New Evangelicals!) They therefore can easily have an unrealistic optimISM for sanctification which borders on perfectionISM. There is no real appreciation for the struggle between the Old Adam and the New Man in the Christian which St. Paul describes in Romans 7:18-19.

Pietistic evangelism from Spener to modern times shifts the emphasis from the objective truths of God's Word to subjective experience, and from a theocentric (God-centered) system to an anthropocentric (man-centered) system. It boils down to being more concerned about what God does **in** us than about what God has done **for** us. There is a denial of objective or universal justification (the fact that God declared the whole world innocent when Jesus died on the cross) and a conditioning of God's forgiveness on man's behavior or reception of grace: "Give your heart to Jesus, and He'll wash your sins away!" Being "born again" is more important than justification, and their doctrine of regeneration is synergistic.

Ironically, in much of evangelism today is an outspokenness for the inerrancy of Scriptures, while at the same time a practice of unionistic bedfellowing with others who hold to far different beliefs. I don't believe that among evangelicals there is quite the pharisaic attitude toward Roman Catholics that there was a decade and a half ago. In my earlier years in the ministry evangelicals I knew and more evangelical writings were quite firm on all Roman Catholics being heathen. Billy Graham's conferences with the pope have taken some of the wind out of evangelicals' Catholic bashing. The pro-life movement has also brought many Catholics and evangelicals into a common cause. Furthermore, a contingent of CatholicISM going charismatic hasn't hurt relationships with evangelicals either.

During the early eighties the aforementioned Connecticut softball league teams thought nothing of praying with the Mormon team, but perished the thought of admitting Catholics to the league. Over seven seasons that flip-flopped, though not without some of my own politicking as to what Mormons actually believe. Indeed, our WELS players refusing to pray with all the other teams before games made for considerable hard feelings, while making our point that they might well reexamine their unionistic practices. Yet it remained for our sanctification shining through in good sportsmanship to make possible the many friendships which formed through the years.

But back to the point: to us ecumenicISM on the part of evangelicals who make such hoopla about Bible study seems contradictory. I have been of the conviction for many years that much of their dynamite enthusiasm for the Scriptures grows out a subconscious effort to compensate for the lack of the sacraments. Elevating prayer to a means of grace ("pray Jesus into your heart") hasn't satisfied this longing for what God in His wisdom has provided us. But Pietists and evangelicals have changed the marks of the Church from the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments to right living. In other words, the Church isn't necessarily where the Gospel is proclaimed, but where people are living correctly.

Still another error to be pointed out before we proceed to our focus on new evangelicals is that Pietism and evangelicals try to make the invisible church visible. The church is invisible because it contains only believers and we cannot look into anyone's heart to see if he truly is a believer or not. We cannot see the "church," but know that it is present whenever and wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. But with the Pietists of

old, evangelicals want to determine who is a true believer and who is not by establishing a subjective standard of outward behavior. The following statement about Francke will shortly be paralleled with the New Evangelicals' philosophy:

*There was a shift in thinking of the church as the communion of those who are righteous by faith to those who are ethically righteous, who have a "living Christianity"... Francke operated with the concept of a three-way division of the congregation. The largest group ... was constituted of those who had the form of godliness but lacked its substance. It is difficult to avoid the impression that he was denying the faith of those who did not meet his standard of how the Christian **lives** ... The second group ... consisted of those who had made a beginning but were not yet fully committed. In modern parlance they had not yet made a "decision for Christ," a phrase which Francke would not have found offensive. The smallest group, fully committed to Francke's norms, constituted the "true" church ... Whether he realized it or not, he was trying to make the invisible Church visible.<sup>x</sup>*

Now! Based on all which has gone before - let us turn our attention directly to the New Evangelicals! The news in the "born again" world has to trouble evangelicals. A recent survey of Americans by George Gallup, Jr., showed that the vast majority of Americans claim to be "born again" Christians. Still the surveyor was lucky to find a surveyee claiming to be born again who was able to name a single one of the Ten Commandments. "We are becoming a nation of 'born again' heathens!" was poor Mr. Gallup's lamentable conclusion. Likewise, pollster and researcher George Barna in his recently published book entitled, *What Americans Believe*, says that he found only 23% of born again or evangelical Christians strongly disagreed with the statement, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct."<sup>xi</sup>

Already back in 1978 two studies conducted by the Institute for Church Growth indicated that mass evangelism (Billy Graham style) is not an effective way of promoting increases in church membership. Of the hundreds of thousands of "decisions for Christ" registered by the Campus Crusade effort, 97 of every 100 were never incorporated into a church.<sup>xii</sup>

In my ministry I have had the experience of dealing with a member's wife who had bounced from church to church in evangelical circles over the years, spending more time out of than in churches. (She had no interest in ours however?!) The last I witnessed to her she had no intention of ever trying another church again. I asked this "ready-Scripture-quoting" "born again" what she thought of facing her Maker and Redeemer one day and trying to explain to Him how she dealt with Hebrews 10:25-27 ("Let us not forsake..."). Also, what would Christ say of her failure to share this "new life" she enjoyed with all the world, as is done for the most part through church affiliation. She smugly stated that Judgment Day would be an uncomfortable experience for her - but that Jesus would HAVE to let her into heaven because she had been, you guessed it, born again!

New Evangelicalism seeks to deal with the embarrassment of all the unregenerate "born agains" out there. Have no fear! Pietism comes through with an out: Classify all those religious people! Francke would be proud of the New Evangelicals' concept that there are three kinds of people in this world: **Heathen people**, **carnal Christians**, and **Spirit-filled Christians!** (or heathen, believers, and disciples!)

This too is part of the confusion of justification and sanctification - unique in terminology with the New Evangelicals. This terminology seeks to deal with the problem of the Christian old man and new man, with the fact that we still have clinging to us that old beast inherited from father Adam. We know that the Christian life involves seeking, in the power of God and by the motivation of the Gospel, to drown the old Adam and by daily contrition and repentance to walk in newness of life.

In this struggle it is true that one Christian is stronger than another in his faith and life. One has reached a higher level of sanctification than has the other. One is far more eager to witness, is more diligent in prayer, is more liberal in his offerings to the Lord, is far more helpful to his neighbor. Furthermore, it is true that at one time a Christian feels much stronger in faith than at another. Today he feels so much more plagued by the

pressures and inclinations of his sinful flesh whereas yesterday he felt so close to God and so empowered by the Spirit, so conscious of His indwelling.

But there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who are Christian and those who are not, those who have the Spirit of God and those who do not. The Scriptures themselves remind us: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His"(Ro 8:9). No Christian is without the Spirit, and no Christian is completely filled with the Spirit.

New Evangelicals point to I Corinthians 3:1 as the basis for their claim for different classifications of Christians: "You are yet carnal" -KJV ("people of the world" - GWN). Here St. Paul is speaking to a faction in the church at Corinth whom He also calls "babies in Christ."(same verse). In this instance they are acting carnally, according to their old Adam, their sinful flesh. The Apostle however has no intention of making for classifications, of designating different levels of Christian people. We are Christian people or we are not - based on the grace of God in Christ, not any degree of Christian. Justification and sanctification take a beating if it is any other way!

Dallas Willard is an associate professor at the secular University of Southern California, in Los Angeles. In an October 10, 1980, issue of *Christianity Today*, he wrote an article entitled, "Discipleship: for Super-Christians only?" His main thesis is that "The anemic influence of Christians reflects their contemporary notion of conversion apart from obedience."

It seems he has observed a lot of "Christians" like the one I stated from my past ministry ...or is it the ones in our church whom we suspect of being only along for the ride?! Our strategy with those outside the church in particular has always been confrontationalISM. Does anyone still use the "Talk about the Savior" program: "If you were to die tonight and God were to ask, 'Why should I let you into My heaven...?'" From there the strategy was to work them into and through whatever we now call "Bible Information Class." Adult Confirmation was the sought-after end goal, or was it assimilation into the congregation?!

The Church Growth Movement goes hand in hand with how New Evangelicals now draw in whomever and then deal with them as "lesser Christians" in their midst. Dr. Harold John Ockenga carries the title "father of the New Evangelicals." He describes the New Evangelical thrust this way:

*The New Evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration. Instead of static front battles, the new theological war is one of movement. Instead of attack upon error the New Evangelicals proclaim the great historical doctrines of Christianity. The results have been phenomenal. The New Evangelical is willing to face the intellectual problems and meet them in the framework of modern learning. It stands doctrinally in the creeds and confessions of the church and grants liberty in minor areas when discussion is promoted on the basis of exegesis of Scripture.<sup>xiii</sup>*

This stands in stark contrast to our "old-fashioned" way of dealing with false teaching, misbelief, unbelief, and "error in morality." In dealing with one considered a brother Matthew 18 calls for confrontation, rebuke, and - not finding God-pleasing results -separation. New Evangelicals practice what they call "infiltration." Actually, their congregations are the ones who allow themselves to be infiltrated by prospects who are not tuned into their church.

Rev. Theodore Schubkegel, a Missouri Synod pastor, points out how such practice leads to toleration, cooperation, contamination, and capitulation to wrong by the church.<sup>xiv</sup> We need to be aware of such possibilities as we carry out our evangelism, to watch that we do not "short-course" prospects into fellowship with us, or capitulate on such as "close" communion before thorough instruction. Not just in our mission congregations where numbers are important statistically, but in our established congregations where our pastors might be looking to cut corners on their work-load, the temptation to gloss over basic truths of Scripture can make for greater problems later. Will the new member become grossly upset over our position on scouting? Will she show up at a congregational meeting expecting to vote? There are those who can be acknowledged as part of the body of Christ whose convictions do not allow for them to be part of our church body.

Our May 15, 1991, *Northwestern Lutheran* featured an article by our seminary professor David Valleskey regarding the Church Growth Movement. The professor points to a 12/17/90 *Newsweek* article on the return of baby boomers to churches. That article observed that "some of the least demanding churches are now in greatest demand." It noted further:

*In their efforts to accommodate, many clergy have simply airbrushed sin out of their language. Like politicians, they can only recognize mistakes which congregants are urged "to put behind them." Having substituted therapy for spiritual discernment, the appeal to a nurturing God Who helps His(or her) people cope. Heaven, by this creed, is never having to say no to yourself.*

The main point of Professor Valleskey's article is that Church Growth Movement books- such as "How to Grow a Church," "Ten Steps for Church Growth," "Church Growth: Strategies that Work," and "Leading Your Church to Growth," speak about how to make **A** church grow, more than addressing the real Christian concern of how to make **THE** Church grow. As washed out as Spener and Francke might have become on some Scriptural truths in their pursuit of Pietism and building the Church, I don't think they would be too excited about some things happening in the Church Growth Movement today.

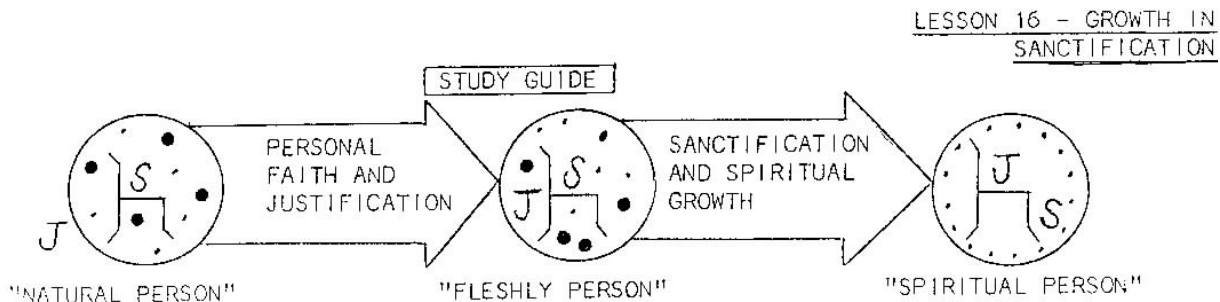
However, one New Evangelical saying they would surely bite at is, "**Put Jesus on the throne of your life.**" This exhortation is in place in the area of sanctification. This is, in fact, our daily resolve to put Jesus on the throne of our life, that He might be that One Whose love for us affects the way we spend our money, the way we live in our family circle, the way we choose our friends, the way in which we conduct our business, the very way in which life itself is lived. Yet we must be careful that we do not use this exhortation as some kind of prerequisite for finding the favor of God or as something that precedes saving faith or as that which constitutes conversion.

Evangelical Bible material on Philippians asks the student at the end of one of the chapters what he should do on the basis of Paul's words. The answer suggested was:

- 1) repent of your sins;
- 2) put Jesus on the throne of your life;
- 3) accept His pardon and forgiveness.<sup>xv</sup>

Notice the order: first, put Jesus on the throne of your life; THEN accept God's pardon. It doesn't happen that way, not if we are saved by grace through faith, not unless it is possible for those not yet regenerated to do good works.

Your comments on how the below illustration from a Lutheran catechetical instructional book applies to the above is suggested for discussion at the end of the paper reading:



New Evangelicalism "justifies" assimilation of "lessor Christians," or even heathen, into the congregation/church in the hope of gaining their audience to work on raising their level of Christianity/sanctification - maybe even including a conversion, "born again" experience. The January 13, 1992, *Christian News* photocopied three ads of a New Evangelical church in Elkton, Maryland. One ad read:



*LEAVE YOUR MONEY AT HOME! Pick up your keys and wallet. Take your driver's license out. Put your wallet down and bring your family to church. We are friendly and interested in you, not your money. Interesting and practical messages that can change your life.*

Another read:

*"REMEMBER WHEN..." a dime got you a cup of coffee, and not going to church got you another hour of sleep? Well, times have changed! An hour of church at Evangelical Presbyterian on Singerly Road will get you pumped up about life, and ... the coffee is on the house. Come join us for a cup and see for yourself. EXCITING WORSHIP AT 9:30AM - COFFEE AT 10:45AM.*

The third shows a young lady in her gym gear with the caption:

*WHY SETTLE FOR SLOWING THE CLOCK WHEN YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER? If you're serious about taking care of yourself, join us in church this Sunday! Experience a high impact spiritual workout for your **inner man** that is guaranteed to make a significant difference in your life ...Meet others like yourself who want to be in the best shape possible at The Evangelical Presbyterian Church ...and discover how you can get in shape, not just now, **BUT FOREVER!** Meet us at 9:30AM FOR THE WORKOUT OF ETERNITY! Mike Chastain, Pastor and "Work Out" Leader.<sup>xvi</sup>*

If the INNER MAN above is equated with the NEW MAN of the Christian, we see how the ad can well be a gross oversell of what the church has to offer the unbeliever, without conversion. What better does the Church have to offer those seeking something than the basic need of all men, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ?

In application for us one might sound a warning on the matter of "seeker services": Where do they fit into our style of worship and theology? Many share St. John's Evangelism Committee's concern (from Professor Valleskey's *NWL* article): "A growth pattern of our congregation over the last years shows we peaked sometime back, then leveled off for a few years, and have for some time now been in a slow but unmistakable descent."

But is the best strategy going big on drawing the unchurched in on our worship? ...maybe even reforming our worship to make it more palatable for those who wouldn't appreciate our heritage anyway? And, can we get sanctification out them (worship) before subjective justification has been worked by the Holy Spirit?

Certainly the factors coming to bear on the church today are not all that dissimilar from those which helped to spawn the pietistic movement in the first place. Tuned into many of the stresses under which the Church labors today, many evangelicals have been making hay on those circumstances for some time already.

We haven't had a thirty years' war to disrupt home and family life, but even some of the staunchest Christian families seem to be falling in the war against Satan. Teenagers are being subjected to temptations of drugs and sex which make one shudder, and parents complain that they are powerless to do anything about it. Many parents themselves are far more interested in achieving financial success than in raising a family, even going so far as to delegate the rearing of their children to others while they seek their materialistic ends. The teachers even in our Christian schools complain of discipline problems and a lack of parental interest which would have been unheard of a generation ago. Mixed religion romances are becoming the rule, rather than the exception, with its "each one reach one" being the theme of our greatest adult confirmation source - as well as our losses.

We don't labor under the State-Church handicap, and yet we view the first love of the first generation become gradually dissipated in the second, third, and fourth generation. Children grow up in the church, as expected of them, become confirmed, and hold nominal membership once in high school and on into early adulthood. We begin to wonder how many "super Christians" we really have, when the divorce rate of our members has risen to the rate of the general population. Do we raise our children through Christian day school

and Lakeside in the true spirit of good-old "orthodoxism:" they graduate with a spiritual intellectualism, devoid of spiritual strength; know the doctrine of the law well - but can't seem to find the will to dispatch its duty?

There is a call for synod-wide spiritual renewal. But we won't find solutions in the New Evangelicalism. Will we learn from the mistakes of past Pietism and present evangelicals? Frustration, impatience, and irritation can easily lead to the legalism and attempts to force sanctification, as evident in them. But there are solutions. It starts with us. It begins with daily contrition and repentance. When we recognize how much God has forgiven us, we are less likely to deal legalistically with others. All of us are busy. But every day we need to study the Bible and gain an ever deeper appreciation of God's grace. The study of Scripture will help us keep our spiritual balance.

Pietistic evangelicalism sees the study of doctrine and at least some doctrines of the Bible as impractical if not downright embarrassing and problematic in gaining members. We will want to make the study of doctrine a priority too: personally, in study clubs, and at conferences. Sound doctrine builds the church, especially the proper use of law and gospel in our preaching, teaching and discipline. Ibid

Finally, there is a call for patience and to let God do things according to His timetable and plan. Pietistic evangelicalism really doesn't believe in the efficacy of the Scriptures. They always want to help God's Word along. Nothing can be more foolish. God's Word has the power to accomplish what He wants in our lives and in the lives of our people (Is 55:10-11).

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Ray Boltz, *Another Child To Hold* (musical recording album), (Nashville, TN: Diadem, Inc., 1991).

<sup>ii</sup> E. H. Wendland, "Present Day Pietism," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol 49, #1, January, 1952, p. 20.

<sup>iii</sup> Samuel M. Jackson & Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957) Vol IX, p.53.

<sup>iv</sup> Wendland, *op. cit.*, (from Jaroslav Pelikan, "From Luther to Kierkegaard"), p. 20.

<sup>v</sup> Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1983), p.151.

<sup>vi</sup> Wendland, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>vii</sup> Wendland, *op. cit.*, p. 26-27.

<sup>viii</sup> Wendland, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>ix</sup> Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 31.

<sup>x</sup> Richard D. Balge, "Pietism's Teaching on Church and Ministry," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol 82, #2, Fall, 1985, p.248.

<sup>xi</sup> Quoted in *Christian News*, (New Haven, MO), January 9, 1978: "Mass Evangelism Held Ineffective in Promoting Church Membership," (Religious News Service), January 3, 1978.

<sup>xii</sup> Quoted in James C. Dobson, *Focus on the Family Newsletter* (Colorado Springs, Colorado), December 1991, p. 1.

<sup>xiii</sup> Quoted in "The New Evangelicalism - Neutralism," *The Loyal Lutheran*, June 7, 1982 (from two lectures by Rev. Theodore Schubkegel, LC-MS pastor, Tacoma, Washington).

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid., p. 879, *Christian News Encyclopedia*, Vol II.

<sup>xv</sup> Karl L. Barth, "Cardinal Principles of Lutheranism and Evangelical Theology," *Concordia Journal*, March, 1981.

<sup>xvi</sup> "Church Growth Ads," *Christian News*, Vol 30, #2, January 13, 1992, p. 8.

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