

Doctrine and Faith

Have you ever been sitting at a sidewalk cafe and observed people walking by or driving by? Interesting to observe other people and what they are doing. You can become an observer of human life. What motivates them? Are they happy or sad?

Have you watched as college students believe in Jesus Christ as savior? Notice how some are excited about their new life? Some continue to be excited and want to learn about God and their relationship to Him. They study the Bible with great joy and diligence. There are answers to mankind's "eternal" questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? What is our purpose? What happens when we die? With the right teacher, they may continue in joy by walking by faith. Others slowly wander away from faith, encumbered with the cares of daily life. Lack of walking by faith.

One of the concepts I emphasize in my teaching is doctrine plus faith. One of the passages I often include in my lessons is Hebrews 4:1-2. It refers to a narrative from the Old Testament. The Children of Israel cried out to God to take them out of Egypt. Yet, once out, having seen the miracle of crossing the Red Sea, they reverted back to worship of pagan gods.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

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Ever since the Garden of Eden, there has been the problem of promises and commands from God that mankind left unclaimed. God is constantly trying to bless us. The problem, as stated in Hebrews chapter 4, is that believers fail to apply faith to the promise. We fail to obey. And that is, if the believers even know of the promises and commands. Where doctrine is taught, attendance tends to be lean. It requires mental effort and a certain amount of self-discipline. In its place is substituted emotion. Or worse, doctrines of demons. Sometimes this may be called faith. But faith in what? Without doctrine there is no spiritual dynamic. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve applied faith to what Satan told them with disastrous results. Faith in the wrong object.

At the end of Romans chapter 1 and continuing into Romans chapter 2 there is the alternative to the faith that is obedience. No doctrine. No faith.

Some churches, primarily Bible Churches, teach doctrine. Academic information is great. But it doesn't get the believer to God's "rest." That requires doctrine plus faith. Some churches do emphasize the importance of doctrine plus faith. But not many. Young people today seem to want lots of music to substitute for doctrine.

Today megachurches attract young people with music, activities and group participation. But where is the doctrine? Where is the walking by faith?

From Robby Dean. The Ephesian quote is the background to Robby Dean's comments:

Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

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Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

“So this gives us a foundation of what Christ has provided for His body that we might grow to spiritual maturity because that’s the endgame. Christ is not interested in us staying as diaper babies which unfortunately is true for a lot of churches. One of the most significant observations I heard made about 30 years ago at a pastor’s conference was Dr. Earl Radmacher who at that time was the chancellor of Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary. Now, he is with the Lord. But he made the observation that the Church is the world’s largest nursery. And the nursery workers, that is the pastors, don’t have a clue how to get the babies out of diapers. And that’s true. Most churches have no vision for developing the sheep into mature Christian saints. And it is sad that they don’t know how to do this. They put the emphasis on a lot of the wrong things instead of what the Scripture teaches.¹”

There is a relatively new movement called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). I mentioned it last week in reference to a book I am reading, “American Evangelicals for Trump,” by André Gagné.

¹ <https://www.deanbible.org/bible-class-listing/message/139-the-apostles-and-prophets-b> (transcribed from the audio)

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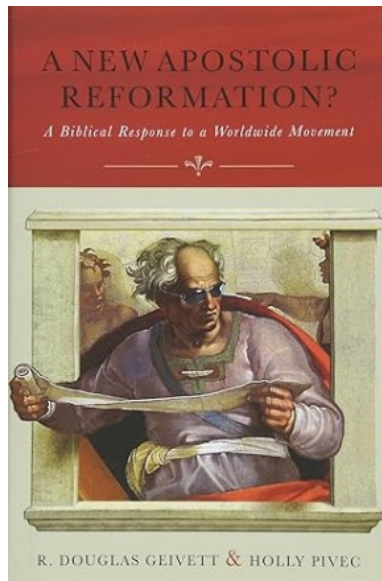


I wish to comment further on NAR this week. The first quote is from Robby Dean:

“You have a heretical movement today that is called the New Apostolic Reformation. And it is very very sad because you find a lot of the people that are associated with that to be extremely focused on politics. Yet we are not having an apostolic reformation. As we’ll see this morning there has been no apostle since the death of the apostle John in approximately 95, 96 AD. And yet, many of these individuals are out there. And they are often linked with dominion theology and post-millennial theology and theonomy which emphasizes bringing back the Mosaic Law for today. And there are a lot of problems with all those things. The New Apostolic Reformation isn’t restricted to a denomination or a particular group. It’s just sort of a fluid group. There actually is an outstanding book that has been written about this on the New Apostolic Reformation, written by a couple of graduates from Talbot Seminary and Biola. And its outstanding. And it indicates what a lot of the problems are. And one of the problems that I had during the previous presidential administration was a large number of those, not everyone, but a large number of those

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who were a part of the so called Christian Council or Evangelical Council that surrounded President Trump all bought into the New Apostolic Reformation. Now not everyone did but a number of them did. And as I always say, we have to remember that a right thing done in a wrong way or for a wrong reason is wrong. Only a right thing done for the right reason and the right way is right. And this was extremely troublesome to me when I understood just how theologically flaky and heretical some of those people were that surrounded the president. Now not all of them. Franklin Graham and Robert Jeffers up at First Baptist in Dallas and several others were fairly solid. But a large number were very fringe, at best. OK. So we have to understand some of these particular issues.²”



Both books that are referenced are available on Amazon.com. They are also available in Kindle format.

Andy Woods of Sugarland Bible Church says this briefly concerning the New Apostolic Reformation:

“The definition of “apostle” has become very important in our day, because we now have the New Apostolic Reformation. You’ve heard of

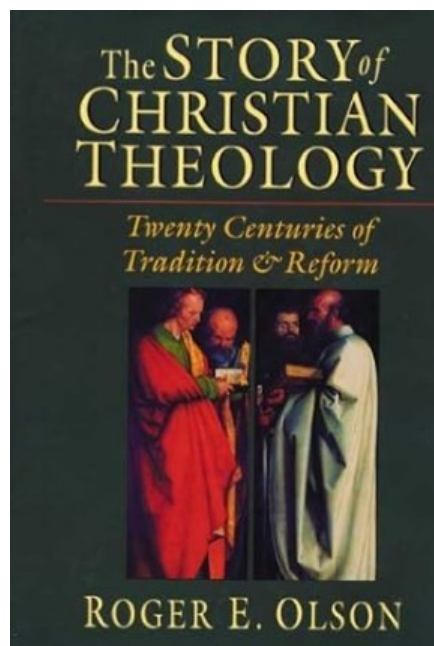
² <https://www.deanbible.org/bible-class-listing/message/139-the-apostles-and-prophets-b> (transcribed from the audio)

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this, right? The NAR. It is centered there in Bethel Church in Redding, California. Their whole movement is centered around the fact that today we have modern-day apostles.”

“If you have modern-day apostles, then the canon of Scripture can’t be closed. Because it’s the Lord Who gave the apostles the authority to pen His Word. So the moment you open the door to modern-day apostles, you are also opening the door to what we would call an open canon of Scripture.³”

Renewal movements are nothing new. In fact, the Charismatic, Pentecostal and “NAR” are perhaps an outgrowth of Pietism. When Christianity is centered around theologians arguing over points of doctrine instead of promoting spiritual life in believers, then some take note and decide that a renewal is in order. Luther rose up against a corrupt Catholic hierarchy. Pietism rose up because the Protestant Reformation, in some minds, was not complete. What follows are some quotes taken from the book “The Story of Christian Theology.” It is also available from Amazon.



³ <https://slbc.org/sermon/2-peter-003-grow-up/>

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“Pietism was a renewal movement that aimed at a completion of the Protestant Reformation begun by Martin Luther. Its major thinkers and leaders were Lutheran clergy who gave wholehearted assent to the main Protestant principles of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia et fides* and the priesthood of all believers. Seldom if ever did they break with the primary confessional statements of the Lutheran heritage. They held up Luther as a great hero and quoted him often, even if they neglected some of his distinctive ideas such as the hidden God. The basic thrust of Pietism was that the Lutheran Reformation had been an excellent beginning of a renewal movement left incomplete. "Pietism reiterated the motif that the reformation of doctrine which had been initiated by Luther must be consummated by a new reformation of life."⁴”

...

“More careful and precise scholars of theological history, however, restrict Pietism (capital P) to a specific movement within German Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that had lasting effects and left a significant legacy for later Protestant Christianity. Those modern Christians who follow in the footsteps of the leaders of that reform and renewal movement are truly pietists in this historical sense.”

“It never was and is not today a specific denomination or even a movement with a headquarters. Rather, Pietism was and is a "spirit" or "ethos" more than any socially perceptible form.”⁵”

...

4 Olson, R.E. (1999). *The Story of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, Il.: Intervarsity Press page 473-474. The quote is from Brown, D.W. (1978). *Understanding Pietism*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. page 83.

5 Olson, R.E. (1999). *The Story of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, Il.: Intervarsity Press page 474.

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“What was and is the distinctive note of Protestant Pietism? One modern interpreter identifies it by saying that "Pietism stressed personal religious experience, especially repentance (the experience of one's own unworthiness before God and of one's own need for grace) and sanctification (the experience of personal growth in holiness, involving progress towards complete or perfect fulfillment of God's intention).⁶”

...

“Pietism was a movement that arose within the context of Lutheran orthodoxy, which many Pietists came to refer to as “dead orthodoxy.” To them, at least, there seemed to be no real spiritual life in it.⁷”

That is a problem today. Too many churches are “dead.” The excitement from being saved is gone. Procedure and pedantic doctrines rule the church services. Christianity is about life. At the point of believing in Jesus Christ as Savior, a person gains everlasting life. LIFE. That is salvation phase 1. But salvation phase 2, the Christian life is lived by walking in faith dependence on the Holy Spirit guided by Bible information through which Jesus points to the Father. It is in that relationship with God the Father that there is great excitement. At any time, day or night, a believer can barge into the throne room of God the Father and ask for help. As Jesus said, “You have not because you ask not.”

...

**James 4:2 You lust and do not have; so you
commit murder. You are envious and cannot
obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not
have because you do not ask.**

6 Olson, R.E. (1999). The Story of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press page 474.

7 Olson, R.E. (1999). The Story of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press page 477.

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James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

“They wished to identify authentic Christianity more in terms of genuine experience of inward transformation by God's Spirit. For them, then, the true criteria of authentic Christianity were orthopathy (right feelings) and orthopraxy (right living) along with orthodoxy (right believing) For Pietists, the three can never be separated. Furthermore, they believed and argued that the most reliable means of ensuring orthodoxy were by promoting orthopathy and orthopraxy. Right experience and right living would inevitably lead to right believing.⁸”

This is backwards. Believing in the right doctrine and applying it to ones life produces right living.

My view is that doctrine plus faith leads to right relationship with God. There is great excitement, perhaps emotion, from seeing God's work in a believer's life.

...

Jump forward to today.

“The New Apostolic Reformation incorporated many of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostals and Charismatics, which have been present in Charismatic Christianity in the United States for over a century.⁹”

“Since the early 2000s, he (Lance Wallnau) has worked at formulating a strategy of societal transformation which he calls the “Seven Mountain Mandate.” The objective is to influence the spheres of religion, education, business, government, arts and entertainment, media, and the family. The culmination of this vision is nothing less than the

⁸ Olson, R.E. (1999). *The Story of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, Il.: Intervarsity Press page 477.

⁹ André Gagné (2023). *American Evangelicals for Trump*. Taylor & Francis. Page 6

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establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, conforming to a literal interpretation of the Our Father prayer: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6.10)¹⁰."

There is a difference between that theology and that taught in Bible Churches: Things will get progressively worse on earth. Then the rapture of all believers. The restraining power of the Holy Spirit is removed. Satan then imposes his rule on earth as never before. It takes Jesus Christ's Second Advent to straighten history. Only then will there be "perfect environment" starting with only believers.

In my readings, I have noted that some Muslims believe they will bring in a perfect world ruled by the "Mahdi." Jews believe in the Kingdom brought in by the Messiah. Unfortunately, they do not realize that "Jacob's Sorrows" or what we call the Tribulation comes first. Some Christians believe that it is necessary for them to bring in the Kingdom. They are all wrong. Jesus Christ is the only one that can bring in the Kingdom in which He rules.

So back to Pietism. Let us briefly look at the four people who had the greatest influence in developing pietism.

There were four major figures in Pietism.

"Johann Arndt (or Arnd; 27 December 1555 – 11 May 1621) was a German Lutheran theologian who wrote several influential books of devotional Christianity. Although reflective of the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, he is seen as a forerunner of Pietism, a movement within Lutheranism that gained strength in the late 17th century."¹¹

¹⁰ André Gagné (2023). American Evangelicals for Trump. Taylor & Francis. Page 18

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Arndt

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The most important impact Johann Arndt had was through a book titled “True Christianity.” Because of the invention and use of the printing press, ideas could circulate more or less freely through society.

“Philipp Jakob Spener (23 January 1635 – 5 February 1705)[1] was a German Lutheran theologian who essentially founded what became known as Pietism. He was later dubbed the "Father of Pietism". A prolific writer, his two main works, *Pia desideria* (1675) and *Allgemeine Gottesgelehrtheit* (1680), were published while he was the chief pastor in the Lutheran Church at Frankfurt.¹²”

“August Hermann Francke (German: [ˈaʊ̯gʊst ˈhɛʁ.mən ˈfʁaŋkə] ⓘ; 22 March 1663 – 8 June 1727) was a German Lutheran clergyman, theologian, philanthropist, and Biblical scholar. His evangelistic fervour and pietism got him expelled as lecturer from the universities of Dresden and Leipzig and as deacon from Erfurt. In 1691 he found his calling at the University of Halle, where he turned towards the education of underprivileged children; he founded an orphan asylum, a Latin school, a German school (or burgher school), a Gynaeceum, the first Protestant higher girls school, and a seminary for training teachers. Francke's schools provided a prototype, which greatly influenced later German education.¹³”

“Nikolaus Ludwig, Reichsgraf von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf (26 May 1700 – 9 May 1760) was a German religious and social reformer, bishop of the Moravian Church, founder of the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine, Christian mission pioneer and a major figure of 18th-century Protestantism.¹⁴”

Luther → Johann Arndt

Johann Arndt → Philipp Jakob Spener → August Hermann Francke → Nikolaus Ludwig Von Zinzendorf

12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Spener

13 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Hermann_Francke

14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaus_Zinzendorf

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I conclude today's lesson by quoting from Johann Arndt's "True Christianity." Here is the first paragraph of his preface to his book:

“Christian Reader! That the holy Gospel is subjected, in our age, to a great and shameful abuse, is fully proved by the ungodly and impenitent life of those who loudly boast of Christ and of his word, while their unchristian life resembles that of persons who dwell in a land of heathens and not of Christians. Such an ungodly course of conduct furnished me with an occasion for writing this Treatise; it was my object to show to plain readers wherein true Christianity consists, namely, in the exhibition of a true, living, and active faith, which manifests itself in genuine godliness and the fruits of righteousness. I desired to show that we bear the name of Christians, not only because we ought to believe in Christ, but also because the name implies that we live in Christ, and that He lives in us. I further desired to show that true repentance proceeds from the inmost centre of the heart; that the heart, mind, and affections must be changed; that we must be conformed to Christ and His holy Gospel; and that we must be renewed by the word of God, and become new creatures. For even as every seed produces fruit of a like nature, so the word of God must daily produce in us new spiritual fruits. If we become new creatures by faith, we must live in accordance with our new birth. In a word, Adam must die, and Christ must live, in us. It is not sufficient to acquire a knowledge of the word of God; it is also our duty to obey it practically, with life and power.¹⁵”

¹⁵ <https://archive.org/details/truechristianity34736gut/page/n1/mode/2up>