

Evangelical Theologies

I. Confessional vs. Evangelical Theology

A. Types of Conservative Theology

1. Confessional: Centered on church ministry
2. Evangelical: Centered on conversion experience
3. What is central to the Christian life?
 - a. Nurture in the Christian faith (confessional)
 - b. Conversion (evangelical)

B. Comparison

Confessional

Christian nurture by Word, sacrament, & catechism

Safeguards: Confessions & examination

Strict subscription to confessions

Assumption of Spirit's work in sacramental ministry to the church

Strongly church/denominationally oriented

Evangelical

Experiential conversion

Safeguard: Orthodox but stress on true piety

Loose subscription (if any)

Need for Spirit-anointed preaching & ministry

Open to interdenominational, "parachurch" ministry

II. Pietism

A. Origins

1. "Piety" = how one lives the Christian life; Pietism was a call to a new way of living and practicing the Christian life
2. Forerunners
 - a. Puritanism: Conversion, vital piety
 - b. Dutch Second Reformation
3. Arose in the late 1600s/early 1700s
 - a. Began in state Lutheran churches of Germany
 - b. Reaction to "dead orthodoxy" allegedly represented by era of Lutheran orthodoxy

B. Leaders

1. Johann Arndt
 - a. Forerunner of Pietism
 - b. *True Christianity* contended that people were now free of fear (purgatory, etc.) but had no awe of God
2. Philipp Spener
 - a. Father of Pietism
 - b. *Collegia pietatis* (gatherings to promote piety)
 - 1) Expression of the priesthood of all believers
 - 2) Often called *ecclesiola in ecclesia* ("little churches within the church")
 - c. *Pia Desideria* ("Pious Desires"): Most significant work
3. August Francke
 - a. Organizer of Pietism
 - b. Taught at University of Halle, newly founded under Pietist influence, a center for Pietist teaching and missions
 - c. Regeneration "is the very ground upon which Christianity stands"
4. Nicholas von Zinzendorf

- a. “Rich young ruler who said yes” for his unusual dedication to Christ
 - b. “Blood and wounds” theology
 - 1) Large emphasis on the sufferings of Christ
 - 2) Called for meditation on His wounds, singing hymns about it (“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness”)
 - c. Established the Moravian Brethren at his estate
 - 1) Developed from Hussite movement in Bohemia
 - 2) Early leaders in missions
 - 3) Overtly ecumenical
- C. Tenets
- 1. “Completing” the Reformation by developing subjective side of Christian life
 - 2. Distinct conversion experience not related to baptism
 - 3. Stress on regeneration over justification
 - a. Not a denial of justification but rather a shifting of emphasis
 - b. Move from legal language (“forensic justification”) to biological language (“new birth,” “feeding on the Word,” “growth in grace”)
 - 4. Stress on priesthood of believers (e.g., stress on personal reading of Scripture)
 - 5. Vital Christianity
 - a. A visible Christianity (visible holiness)
 - b. An active Christianity (e.g., charitable work such as orphanages)
 - c. An evangelistic Christianity (missions, Great Commission)
 - 6. Summary: Emphasis on the subjective aspect of the Christian life
- D. Criticisms
- 1. Downgrading doctrine
 - a. Charged w/ downplaying doctrine in favor of experience
 - b. Were orthodox Christians but did critique scholastic Lutheran orthodoxy
 - c. Tendency to subordinate doctrine to experience
 - 2. Bypassing the church
 - a. Charged w/ having little doctrine of the church & violating church practice & discipline
 - b. Were a corrective to inclusive state churches
 - c. But “little churches within the church” can lead to division and hyper-piety
 - 3. Lack of social concern
 - a. Charged w/ being so concerned with individual piety that they manifested little social concern
 - b. Did have a social conscience, but it was usually in work of charity (e.g., orphanages) rather than social reform
 - 4. Emotionalism
 - a. Charged w/ creating a Christianity relying on emotion more than any other quality (e.g., basis of assurance)
 - b. Somewhat overstated—Pietists would hardly seem “emotional” by today’s standards and were a reaction to coldness
 - c. Genuine danger, however, of emphasizing the subjective
 - 5. Remained in state church

III. Methodism

- A. Nature
 - 1. British version of Pietism

2. Originally a form of piety, both Calvinistic and Arminian
 - a. Wesleyan Methodism
 - b. Calvinistic Methodism (e.g., Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, Huntington Connexion, Whitefield)
3. Common traits of all Methodism
 - a. Vital relationship w/ Christ as central experience of the Christian life
 - b. Spirit-anointed preaching
 - c. Small group fellowship
 - d. Stress on conversion and holy living
- B. George Whitefield
 1. Evangelical Calvinism
 - a. Rejected hyper-Calvinism
 - b. Overtly evangelistic (developed office of an evangelist)
 - c. Stress on “experimental religion”: Centrality of regeneration
 - d. Interdenominational
 2. Profound effect on Evangelical Anglicanism (Augustus Toplady, John Newton, J. C. Ryle)
- C. John Wesley
 1. Revival of Evangelical Arminianism
 - a. Agreement w/ Calvinism
 - 1) Ascribing all good to God’s grace
 - 2) Denying natural free will prior to grace
 - 3) Excluding all merit from man
 - b. Rejection of Calvinism
 - 1) Absolute predestination
 - 2) Irresistible grace
 - 3) Perseverance of the saints: Taught assurance but possibility of falling from grace
 - c. Insisted on prevenient grace for all
 2. Christian Perfection
 - a. Taught entire sanctification (Christian perfection)
 - b. Important distinctions
 - 1) Sin: voluntary transgression of a known
 - 2) “Mistakes” & involuntary transgressions were not sins
 - 3) Both sins & mistakes require an atonement
 - c. “Perfection” consisted of reaching a state of sanctification in which one was free of all conscious sin
 - d. Qualifications
 - 1) Entire sanctification could be lost
 - 2) One could grow further in grace
 3. Scripture
 - a. Cited by both sides on inerrancy debate
 - 1) “A man of one book”
 - 2) Many Wesleyans reject inerrancy as inherently inconsistent with their theology
 - b. Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Four touchstones of authority (*not* directly from Wesley)
 - 1) Scripture

- 2) Reason
 - 3) Tradition
 - 4) Experience
- c. Question: Are all equal or last three to be used in interpreting Scripture?
- 1) Wesley seemed to regard the latter three as guidelines
 - 2) Later Wesleyans have not necessarily subordinated Scripture, but they have elevated the latter three

IV. Jonathan Edwards & New England Theology—discussed separately