

THE TRIANGLE OF CHRISTIAN PIETY

1 Corinthians 13 describes the triangle of Piety. Every Christian has his own kind of Piety that comes from his biases, character, talents, and values. He will tend to do his Christian life in his own way. When it comes to worship and ministry, however, he will lean to a particular style. Jesus had three disciples with their own peculiar pieties. We call these three pieties the Triangle of Christian Piety. The three disciples represent the three extremes, and all of us fit within these extremes—thus, the name Triangle of Christian Piety¹

1. Love is essential. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

1 Corinthians

13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

13:2 And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

- a. Faith without love is worthless for the minister. 1 Corinthians 13:1-2
- b. Works without love is worthless for the minister. 1 Corinthians 13:3

God says clearly that love is essential. The love being discussed here is the *agape* kind of love that is sacrificial. That kind of love is basically a definition of the *kenosis*. The *kenosis* is the sacrifice, the self-denial, the going down, and that is basically what *agape* love is. It is a unilateral sacrifice for the welfare of others, not for your own welfare. As welfare for the other person, *Agape* love is essential to make faith and good works profitable. Faith and good works, though good things, need *agape* in order to be profitable to the one who had the faith and does the good works.

2. Love is effectual. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

1 Corinthians

13:4 Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

- a. Pride is denied by love. 1 Corinthians 13:4
- b. Evil is resisted and truth is accepted by love. 1 Corinthians 13:5-6
- c. Love enables endurance. 1 Corinthians 13:7

I want you to see something about truth's being accepted (2b). Many times truth is hard to accept. We deny it, and we fight against it. We do a lot of mental tricks to put it down or separate ourselves from it. Love, however, is sacrificial, and when you have

¹ Dr. John Kiwiet, my major professor, taught me this theological model. As an aside, Dr. Kiwiet is

that *kenotic* pilgrimage with the idea of self-sacrificing, it makes you much more easily accepting of the truth because you do not have an axe to grind, and you are not trying to create your own truth.

Love, is sacrificial. It is a selflessness, and when you are selfless, you can accept the truth even when it cuts, even if it goes against your pet things. The truth can be received because of love. It helps me to know that love has an actual part in the acceptance of truth (faith).

3. Love is eternal. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

1 Corinthians

13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away.

13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity

- a. Knowledge and prophecy are partial. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10
- b. A child's knowledge and words serve as an illustration of the temporary nature of knowledge and prophecy. 1 Corinthians 13:11
- c. Temporal knowledge is mediate knowledge, whereas eschatological knowledge will be immediate. 1 Corinthians 13:12
- d. The present Piety is faith, hope, and love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

I want to go back to subpart 3.c. which is mediate versus immediate knowledge. If you had mediate knowledge of me, it would be through a medium. That medium could be my writings or my speakings or such things. Immediate knowledge is without a medium. It is knowledge that is inside of your soul. It is even closer than first hand.

We have mediate knowledge of God right now, and that mediate knowledge comes through Scripture and testimonies and that sort of thing. There is going to come a time when we will see Him in the same way that He sees us. He sees us immediately. There is no medium through which He sees us. We see Him through a glass darkly, and that glass darkly is because there is a medium involved. We have help, aids, to see Him, but even when we see Him, it is not an immediate seeing.

Partly, what we have in the marriage relationship is an immediate physical knowledge between a man and a woman because there is a one-flesh relationship. That is an immediate knowledge at the physical level but not at the spiritual level. You can get a deeper glimpse of your spouse, but you cannot see the heart immediately. You can only see the heart of another person mediately before we get to heaven.

Our knowledge of Christ is mostly mediated. However, there is the encounter that we have with Him that is immediate because it is spirit to spirit. Over in the illumination part of Revelation, we have the conviction and the understanding. In that

conviction part there is an immediate encounter, but that immediate encounter is only partial because it comes in the understanding and not in sight.

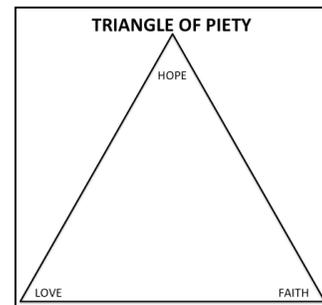
In the eschaton, there is going to be an immediate knowing that is going to surpass even the spiritual encounter that you have with Jesus today. We will know just as we are known,² and that points to an exciting time in your future life. You know how you hunger and thirst after God? You are coming to a time when that hunger and thirst will be met. The one-flesh concept of marriage previews the one-spirit idea in our future marriage to Jesus. I am in Him, and He is in me, and I am going to know Him as He knows me. You cannot even imagine, but try to think along these lines because you are going to know Him in the same way He knows you now. As the song goes: “We can only imagine!”

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives right now, is immediate but partial. You recognize His voice because you know Him. But your knowledge is not yet complete. You will not know Him as He knows you until we come to the eschaton. You know how right now you have fellowship with God that just thrills you so much that you can hardly wait until the next time? When we get to the eschaton, that thrill is going to be surpassed, and it is going to be continuous.

PRESENT PIETY

Present Piety is composed of faith, hope, and love. All three elements of Piety should be balanced in our lives (see Piety 1).

Piety is a good, doctrinal word, but we have attached a lot of baggage to it over the centuries. The most notable baggage is that to be pious now means a self-righteous approach to Christianity. That is not what Piety means. Piety is your approach to your Christian pilgrimage. Piety includes the *kenosis*, love, transcendence, and holiness the moral quality. All of these things enter into Piety. Piety would be the larger umbrella term for the *character* of your pilgrimage, your peculiar approach to Christianity.



Piety 1

Piety is described in the last verse of 1 Corinthians 13 which says that now there are faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love because it is eternal. Faith and hope drop away, but right now they are present, and they are essential for a good doctrine of Piety and a good way to do your pilgrimage.

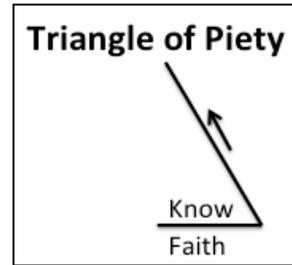
What you need to see is what these words mean and how the Lord did His Piety and how we do our Piety. Each Christian is different. You have a Piety that is peculiar to you, and if you are going to have good relationships with the peculiar people in your church, then you need to be able to see that there is a righteous normalcy about that peculiarity. We are not all alike. We make up the body of Christ, and there are a lot of differences in us, and each of us is peculiar in our own way.

² 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The solution to achieving fellowship is not to throw the peculiar one out, nor is it to conform. It is to rejoice in that peculiarity, and to let that person begin to bring those aspects into the corporate Piety. Each church has a corporate Piety.

Faith

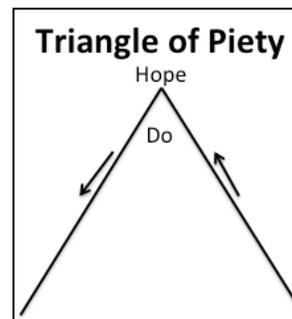
The first element of Piety is faith. Faith has to do with knowledge. You have to know something in order to believe it. Our understanding of faith is to believe something, but you have to “know” it first. Fear of God is the beginning of faith, but you first have to “know” God. So, I am going to attach “know” to faith in the Piety triangle (see Piety 1.1).



PIETY 1.1

Hope

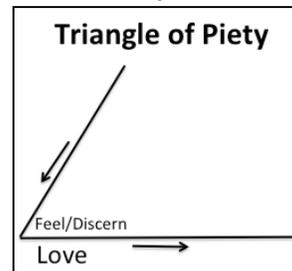
Now we move to hope, and hoping is the doing or the obedience part of the pilgrimage. So, I am going to attach “do” to hope in the piety triangle (see Piety 1.2). You have to know something in order to do it. You know first, then you do it, and then you feel as a result.



Piety 1.2

Love

Feel is not a bad word if it is not the basis of your theology. Feeling and discerning is the interpretation of love in the triangle of Piety. This love is not the “do” kind of love. It is the “result” of the “do.” Resultant love completes the cycle. So, I am attaching feel/discern to love in the piety triangle (see Piety 1.3). You start on the knowledge side of the Triangle of Piety by “knowing” the truth. Next, you “do” the truth that you know. Lastly, God confirms the truth through an expanded discernment that He gives you out of His confirming and affirming love (see Piety 2). Then you cycle around again, and you know more truth. You do that which you know, and God confirms you and gives you additional discernment that enables additional knowledge.

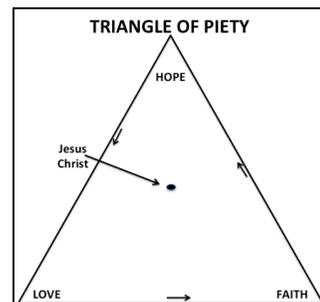


Piety 1.3

You can read the same Scripture as a child, and you read with some minuscule understanding, but you do that part which you know, and it is confirmed in you. Then God will give you more feeling of discernment. The next cycle on the same verse, you know more about it. You begin to implement new knowledge, and there is more confirmation and discernment given to you. You cycle around in the Piety triangle (spiraling up in Christian growth), and soon you can see the *kenosis* when many people cannot see it even when it is described to them in the book of Philipians. Why? They can’t see it because they are not doing that which they know.

BALANCED PIETY

The foregoing describes the doctrine of Piety, and if



Piety 2

you were to look at the Piety of Jesus Christ, He would be in the very center of this triangle, completely balanced (see Piety 2). He knows the mind of God. He does the will of God. God confirms in Him what He is doing, and He cycles through again and again and again. There is balance in His life with all three parts not skewed out of balance, but in perfect balance so that He is doing exactly what He knows. He is not doing just part of what He knows, but doing all of what He knows, and feeling confirmed by the Father and the Spirit to give Him additional information, additional charges, additional things to do.

When you do the truth that you know, you will feel confirmed and given additional discernment by God. Christian Piety is a growth cycle that we are to achieve by rotating through all three corners of Piety.

You need to see that we should begin at faith and proceed *counterclockwise* (see Piety 2) in the direction of hope and then love. You start with the Bible, something beyond you. When you know and believe a truth in the Bible, then you are responsible to do that truth, to shape your life around that truth. That is a counter-clockwise move on the piety model.

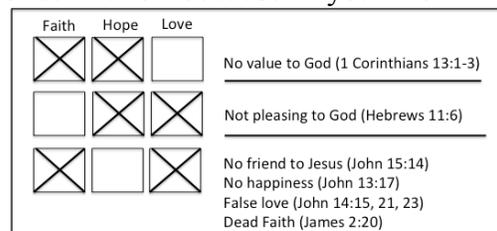
You can change the direction on this same Piety model, but you become liberal. If you start with love, then you are a liberal. If you start with what you feel, then you have a feeling hermeneutic, and you are back into Schleiermacher, and you do not have any objective standard truth. Even if you start with faith and go to love, your actions will result from what feels good. Then you will be operating out of feelings, and how you see the Word will be shaped according to your prejudices. The result will be that you will cycle through that Word again building prejudice upon prejudice.

We see this all the time in liberals and sometimes in ourselves. They have the right triangle, but the wrong direction. You need to see now that if you start with the Word of God, and study it, *know* it, and *do* it, God will confirm it in you and give you understanding and *discernment* so that you can grow. As long as you “*do*” what truth you know, God will give you growth.

Here is what we do as a Baptist denomination. We know, we know, we study, go to Bible studies, and we get all this knowledge, and we parade it around, but what do we do? We go to another Bible study to get some more knowledge. We skip all of the doing part and jump over to the love corner, and say, “Oh, did you get the blessing?” “Oh, I got the blessing.” Then we go to the next Bible study and get some more blessing. We bounce back and forth like a ping-pong ball, and we never “do” a thing that we have known. Instead, we do only what feels good. Once you leave off the “do,” you have a perversion in your Piety, and you come under condemnation because if you know the truth and do not do it, to you it is sin.³

On the top level of Piety 3, you have faith and hope, but you have no love. Then the Bible indicates that your works have no value (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

On the second level you have hope and love, but you do not have any faith. This is not



Piety 3

³ James 4:17.

pleasing to God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”⁴

On the bottom level there is faith and love without hope. On this one there is a whole pile of problems. If hope is missing, you cannot be a friend of Jesus (John 15:14). There is no happiness (John 13:17). You have a false love if you do not have the obedience (John 14:15, 21, and 23). If you do not have the doing, then all that you can give Him is all of this present-day lip-service love. Your faith is dead (James 2:20). If you have all of the wonderful things under faith and love (you can memorize the whole Bible and sincerely rejoice in your salvation), but if you do not put the “do” to it, your Piety is worthless. It is dead faith. All of this lip service is worthless without the actual doing. There must be the doing part to complete this triangle of Piety

Let me give you a good example of what I am talking about—a youth group that I am familiar with had a foreign exchange student from China. He knew the Bible to the point of memorizing the book of Mark, but he hated Mark and thought it to be a bad book to be studying in the youth group. This kid is cold, but many of our church members are lukewarm because they do not do the Scriptures that they revere (see Revelation 3:15-16). Neither the Chinese kid nor many of our church members are doers of the Word. Thus, they are both examples of perverted pieties.

There is the promise in John 15 that Jesus will let us be His friends, and it goes something like this: You are no longer servants of mine because you have done everything that I have told you to do, and now I call you friends (John 15:15). Friendship with Jesus is an important thing, and that is what I want you to have. Friendship with Jesus must go beyond our lip-service Christianity!

John

15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

In this life you have the opportunity to be called a friend by Jesus, but it depends on your obeying Him. To be His friend requires that you be His servant-friend. You can be a servant only, and you can be a servant-friend, but you cannot be a friend only. Thus when He calls you servant, you are on the way to friendship. When He calls you friend, you are also His servant. Obedience is not only the key to being called a friend, but also it is the key to **knowing** what Jesus knows from the Father. You see obedience is the catalyst to completing the cycle. When you actually do what God has told you to do, there is the confirmation, giving you additional knowledge and insight into the mind of Christ, and no longer are you doing things for which you do not know the reason.

When you see a commandment in the Bible, and it has what you ought to do and what you ought not to do, the beginning of discipleship is obeying that commandment even though you may not understand the reason behind it. But as you begin to obey, His mind will come to you, and He will begin to tell you what His plan is. He only does that to friends. But you have to start off as a bondservant and obey regardless of understanding.

You do what you know. As long as you know it, you must do it. And as you do that, the completion of the cycle will come around, and He will give you additional

⁴ Hebrews 11:6.

knowledge and understanding, and that will expand your ability to get to a new level even in the same Scripture. He is going to give you additional Scriptures, and you are going to begin to grow exponentially. If you know a verse and you do that verse, He will give you additional understanding of that one verse. Pretty soon the mind of Christ begins to consume you. Pretty soon you begin to think like He does, and the *Missio Dei* becomes your mission because you are His friend. He says, “I came to seek and to save that which is lost.”⁵ You too will be seeking the saving of those who are lost because you are His friend.

It is important that our Christian Piety be completed. It needs to be balanced. The bad news is this: every one of us is peculiar. We are not as balanced as Jesus was. You know how a tire bumps along when it gets out of balance? Well, every one of us is bumping along. But if we are all bumping along together, pretty soon the whole begins to smooth out. You get all four tires out of balance, then when they are all bumping the same way, it gets very rough. But some of the time they bump in opposite ways, and the ride smoothes out because balance is achieved via opposing out-of-balances.

APOSTOLIC EXAMPLES OF PIETY

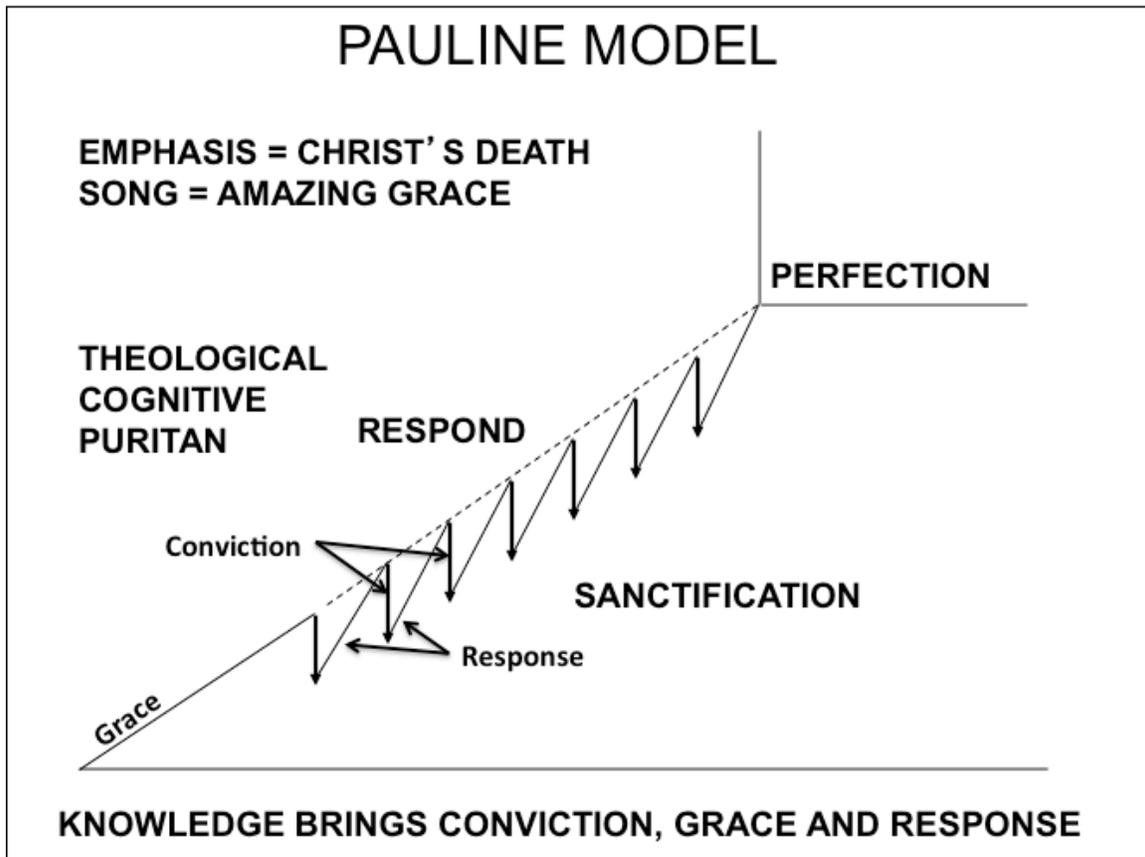
Now I want to show you the three kinds of Christian Piety exemplified by the three apostles who are good examples for understanding “out of balance.” These guys are out of balance, but they are closer to balance than we are. This serves to give us understanding of peculiar pieties that are out of balance.

Paul

The first model is that of Paul. Paul is in the faith/know corner, the beginning point. We are going to get to the top of the suspended cliff that is called perfection (see Piety 4 on the next page). Our Pauline Christian Piety is based on knowledge. Knowledge brings conviction. You know something, *i.e.* you read the Bible, and it is like a dagger in the heart. This is the Pauline Piety. You read—you get the dagger in the heart, the conviction (see the downward bold arrows on the chart). When you are convicted, you respond to remove that problem in your life (the line that moves back up to a new level on the dashed line leading to perfection). That response which is enabled by God’s grace then gives you a move up the Piety chain. You are going all the way up to the top, to the end, to perfection. At each interim point you attain a respite of rest and satisfaction, but then you get another conviction (the downward arrow) that is demanding another response. Pauline Piety is a series of convictions and responses, which all begin with knowledge.

The conviction occurs when you read something in the Bible or you hear a testimony, and you say, “Oh, my, I am not like that. I am not doing that part.” There is a dagger in the heart, and you say, “Okay, I need to change and start doing that part.” Maybe it is witnessing or doing Bible reading or prayer or whatever—but conviction and response result. Iterations of conviction and response form the process of sanctification.

⁵ Luke 19:10



Piety 4

Pauline sanctification that is built around conviction and response became the holiness movement. This Piety is one in which you are responding to the dagger in the heart, over and over. The sword of the Spirit cuts into you, and you change to get rid of that conviction. You may have a short period of comfort, but then, bang, here comes that dagger in the heart again. You have another problem, and you respond to that one. After each response, you feel like you are alive now. And then it is not very long until you get hit again with another problem, and you have to clean that up. Everyone of us who are in the Pauline model are all the time getting a dagger in the heart, and all the time responding to get some relief.

You need to see that this piety begins with knowing something. That “something” is the Word of God. It comes mainly through studying the Scriptures, but it can come also through a proclamation or through a testimony.

Many times this kind of person is one that can be convicted just on a testimony. Somebody can say, “I have been reading the Bible one hour each day.” The Pauline Christian may think, “Well, I have not been reading the Bible that much.” The next thing you know there is a change, and that Pauline person will then begin to read the Bible one hour each day as a response to that conviction.

A song that goes with the Pauline model is *Amazing Grace*, which contains that famous phrase, “A wretch like me.” That critical self-perception is displayed in the

downward moves. These downward moves are convictions of the Holy Spirit, and you suddenly see yourself as being a wretch. You respond upwardly in reaction and get rid of that terrible conviction, and then you are a wretch again with the coming on of the next conviction. It continues over and over and over again. That song then begins to play out to us what it feels like to be in the Pauline model. This is a cognitive model based around knowing.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Pauline Model.

Strengths

1. Studious.
2. Scripture knowledge. Their studies of the Bible are extensive. They know the Scripture.
3. Problem solvers. Their knowledge equips them with life's solutions.
4. Pure lifestyles. They are always under conviction, and thus cleaning up their own personal lives. Long ago they called this the puritan model.
5. Good teachers. Their expansive knowledge equips them with the substance of teaching.
6. Miracles happen around them. Miracles follow faith. The faith model puts the Pauline Christian in the center of miraculous happenings.
7. Wisdom is a Pauline characteristic. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. These saints fear God's rejection, and they are always striving to please Him.

Weaknesses

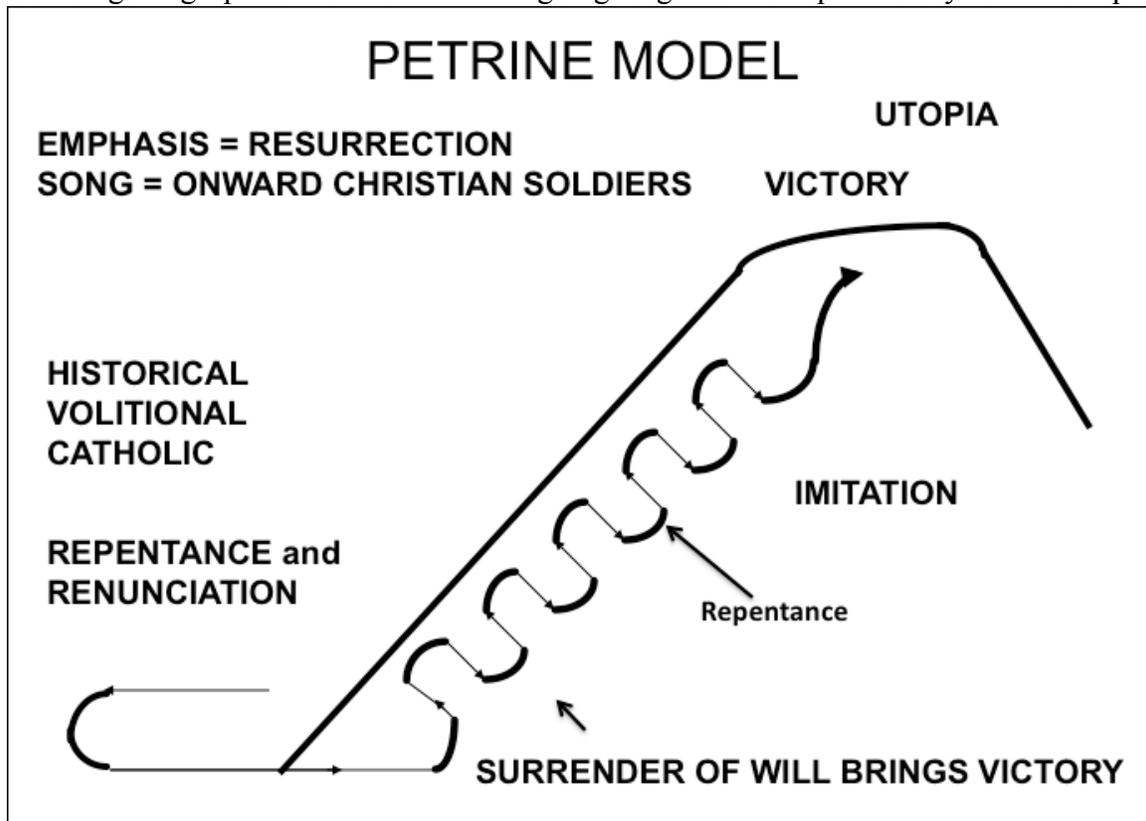
1. Tend to be content with knowledge alone. The Pauline saint can plainly see the growing gap between his knowledge and that of other saints.
2. Tend toward intellectual pride. Because they know much more than others they can be easily susceptible to pride.
3. Tend to not soil their hands. The Pauline saint will tend to do the thinking and directing others doing the work.
4. Tend to study problems too long. The Pauline saint will be uncomfortable with anything that he cannot wrap his mind around completely.
5. Tend to be rebaptized and to rededicate often. The recurring convictions will tend to convince them that they are not saved. They can confuse conviction with lack of salvation.
6. Elitists. Because of their pride, they can easily exclude the common saints and begin to form cliques of "worthy" companions thinking that everybody else is wrong or does not know enough.
7. Tend to be self-centered. Their lives revolve around "their" convictions.

Peter

The Petrine model is pictured in Piety 5. Under the Petrine model, we start with a large mountain. A person is walking along in life, and then he changes directions and starts walking up this mountain. There is a series of changing directions. These reversals of direction are the repentances. You are heading in one direction, and then the Lord turns you, and tells you to go in a different direction.

Don't be confused. The upward movement in the Piety models has to do with difficulty and spiritual growth. In the *kenosis*, up in our lifetimes means earthly gains in status, material, pleasure, and ease, but down means eternal gains via earthly sacrifice.

The Petrine Piety is one in which your life starts in a direction. You are moving in a straight path until God turns you toward heaven (repentance is each turn on Piety 5), and then you walk until the Lord turns you again. It is continuous changes of direction, but you never change direction on your own. You are always trudging along with the idea of getting up the mountain: "I am going to get to the top. Victory is at the top!"



Piety 5

You are going to achieve this climb, but you never direct your own path. God acts on you to get you to make all of these changes of direction.

All the pieties are good. The Pauline Piety is a good model, but it is Paul's model. This one is Peter's model, and some of you are under the Petrine model of Piety even though you may not know it.

It is possible to have a little of all of them. You want to have a balance of all three, but none of us have that perfect balance. We are all bumping along like tires out of balance because there is a dominant piety in our lives. You will recognize what that dominance is in this lesson, and you should begin to adjust by moving into the areas of the other models in order to achieve a little more balance.

The Petrine model is the one in which the person is striving to follow the Lord. The Lord is going, and you discern which direction He is going, then you go in that

direction until there is a turn of your path by God. It is not an “I think I will turn.” There is something that is overwhelming that turns you. Once you turn, you are dedicated to following that path until God turns you again. You are continually turning, but trudging on the straight and narrow winding path up the mountain.

Certainly, you will see some of the hope/doing of Peter’s piety in Paul’s life, but the faith model is dominant in Paul. Paul, even with his out of balance toward the faith corner, is still more balanced that we are. That neither means that Paul does not have some of Peter’s model in his piety, nor means that Peter does not have some of Paul’s model in his piety. There is however a dominant piety in each of us that allows us fit together to behave as the whole body of Christ. However, if we don’t understand that each of has an innate peculiarity, we will not seek some balance. Even worse, we will create conflict with our demands of uniformity.

In Petrine Piety there is continuous action. It does not matter what you know. You are going forward! You have your cross, you are in self-denial mode, and you are going forward. Sometimes you are going in the wrong direction because you do not know the right direction.

Peter whipped the sword out and whacked the guy’s ear off, and Jesus criticized the act, and put the ear back on!⁶ Jesus changed the direction Peter was going in. Peter was ready to whack the guy’s head off. That is the Petrine model. He is going to do something. He is the one that dove into the water and swam to shore. He walked on the water. He is the one that says, “You are not going to wash my feet,” until Jesus said, “Well, I will have nothing to do with you.” “Well, wash all of me then!”

Petrine songs are *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Victory in Jesus*. Any time you are dealing with a militaristic theme or a victory theme, you are in the Petrine model. If you are preaching a Scripture that is Petrine in nature, then you ought to choose the songs that fit that Petrine model.

You Petrines never stop. You are all the time walking up the mountain. The Petrine model does not depend upon knowledge. Once you launch out, it is on a minuscule amount of knowledge, and you will walk for the rest of eternity on that minuscule knowledge until God comes along and says, “You are going the wrong direction. Turn.” Some of us, however, are hard to get turned.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Petrine model.

Strengths

1. Petrine people get things done. These saints are the doers in the church. When they see the need for something to be done, they just do it.
2. They are not hypocritical. Their beliefs and their actions match. What you see is what you get. They do what they know to do.
3. They are friends with Christ when they are correct. Christ calls those who obey Him friends. When the Petrine saint’s actions line up with the Lord’s commandments, the saint puts himself in line to be a friend to Christ.
4. They are world changers. It is the “doer” who impacts the world. Martin Luther was a Petrine type in his doings, but a Pauline also in his repetitive convictions.

⁶ Matthew 26:51-52.

5. They have a lively faith. Faith without works is dead (James 2:20). The Petrine saint focuses on works. When those works are the results of beliefs that are true, then their faith is proven to be alive.

Weaknesses

1. Burnout. Since the Petrine saint will do the work, the others will not only let him, but will call on him because they can count on an easy “Yes, I will do it.”
2. Impatient. The Petrine saint does not understand inactivity: “Go to seminary? Not me; I am going to be out ministering.”
3. They make work out of play. You go to play a baseball game or something, and the Petrine guy will say, “We need to clean up this field! We need to pull the weeds and all that before we can play baseball.”
4. They make a lot of mistakes. The doers are always the ones that make mistakes.
5. They have liberal tendencies. Usually they are not doing out of a theological base. They are doing because that seems to be the right thing to do. The Petrine Christian does not put in much time studying.
6. They are legalists. This saint wants a code, a concrete list of things to do so they can get about doing them so that they can check them off.
7. They tend towards church idolatry. Petrines tend to prefer high church worship with a lot of vertical authority between them and God. The general Piety of Roman Catholicism is Petrine.
8. They are lonely. Most saints do not want to work all the time, so they tend to avoid this saint. The exception occurs when the Petrine saint is carnal (self-indulgent) and wants to play all the time. Others will join him for short periods of time. The scenario will be like a tag team then in which one from another Piety model will play with the Petrine carnal saint, get tired of playing, leave and be replaced with a fresh player.

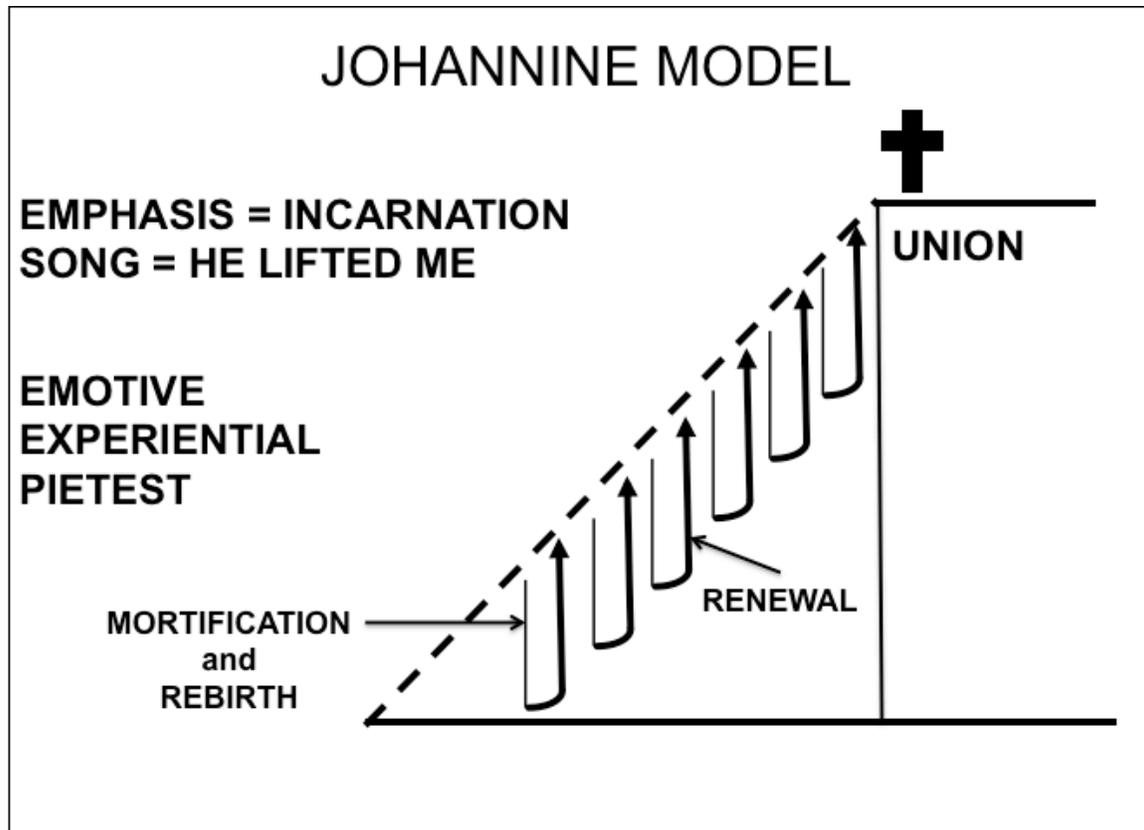
John

The third model of Piety is Johannine. We have a cliff-like place at the top, and union with the Lord where you are going to be brought into His bosom occurs there (see Piety 6 on the next page). There is a line, but it is a tendency line (dashed line), not an actual line in which you are going to walk. You are on this line, and you fall in helplessness. God then lifts you up. Then you fall again, and God lifts you back up to the line. This series of falls or mortifications or self-crucifyings begins a response by God to begin to lift you up through a renewal to a higher plane of life.

You say, “I cannot do this,” and you cannot. Only God can do this, and it is like falling back into the arms of the Lord, and He lifts you up to a higher plane, gives you a quality of life that is higher than where you were when you fell. There is a series of falls and being lifted up. This is the Johannine model.

The song is *He Lifted Me*. Under this model, God does it all. All you have to do is fall, let go. You have heard “Let go and let God.” That is the Johannine model of Piety. When you relax and fall into His hands, then He does it all. He changes you and lifts you up to a higher plane. You see this model does not have a lot of doing; it is very passive. God does all the doing in it.

If you blend this model with the Petrine model, then God is actually the one that is carrying the cross as you are trudging along. He is providing you with His strength to carry the cross. You begin to blend all three of these pieties together, and you have a good and whole balanced-piety



Piety 6

Strengths and weaknesses of the Johannine model.

Strengths

1. **Patience.** These people are quite patient in contrast to the impatient Petrine saint, because their focus is on the person rather than the task. The development of the person doing a task is more important to them than the task being done perfectly. They are nurturers, encouragers, exhorters, and comforters. For the most part, they fill support positions rather than leadership positions because they are willing to do the less desirable, mundane, behind-the-scenes ministries. They make excellent child-care workers, children's ministers, hospital and homebound care givers, hostesses, etc. Their goal in ministry is to meet needs via service.
2. **Peacemakers.** Relationships and personal experience are prime for the Johannine. They are very discerning because they are people-focused. They strive for reconciliation and harmony in relationships and in their environment. They are the arbiters when issues arise, seeking to help each party understand the other's perspective. They strive for harmony in their own relationships and are quick to say, "I'm sorry."

3. Generous. These people give, give, and give. Love and feelings generate giving. They give of their time, energy, emotions, and material goods because their focus is on the person.
4. Sympathetic/Empathetic. Johannines care how you feel. Feelings are at the center of their Piety If you are feeling wounded and persecuted, they don't just say "get over it" or quote Scripture to you. They identify with your pain and seek to encourage and exhort. Likewise, they rejoice and celebrate with you when good things happen. They are sensitive and easily offended, and are probably the least understood and least appreciated of the three models.
5. Comforters. Again, Johannines empathize with you during troubling times. They "share" your burden and seek ways to cheer and encourage you through the circumstances. They are the cheerleader types who are always assuring you that things will get better.
6. Merciful. These people are rescuers because they are so keenly aware of the Lord's mercy to them. Just as the Lord rescues them and lifts them up, they desire to be merciful to others.
7. Worship. Johannines make worship services interesting. This is one area in which they seem to be the leaders in the church. Charismatics tend to be in this model. Johannines are emotion/feeling driven, and music appeals to the emotions. What they hear impacts them much more than the other two models. They are moved by music that paints a picture, personal testimonies, and sermons that speak of God's love. They also need to hear "Thank you" and "I'm sorry" because that motivates them to keep going.

Weaknesses

1. Emotionalism. When depending on feelings, the emotions become supreme because they generate feelings.
2. No assurance of salvation. Since salvation depends upon feeling saved, when that feeling is lost, so is salvation. The person fluctuates along with his feelings. This model is based on feeling.
3. "Missed a blessing." There is introversion: what blessing is in it for me? Petrine is what can I do? Pauline is what can I know? The Johannine is what did I miss? This person will always let you know that you missed a blessing when you miss a service.
4. Easily led astray. They tend to accept what is taught by those in authority (teacher/clergy). So, if perverted doctrine is being espoused they are more susceptible to buying into it. Example: God doesn't want you to suffer. However, the truth is that sacrifice does not always feel good, but it is always required by the *kenosis*.
5. They tend to hinder the Lord's work. The "doing" and the "knowing" are pushed aside by the "feelers," who are sidetracked by someone who "needs" them. Details also sidetrack them.
6. Intolerant. The feelings-based people are usually intolerant of others who do not raise their hands upon cue or do not do as they do in their excitement.
7. Peacemaking to the extreme.

You can see here that one of the strengths becomes a weakness in these guys. That strength is that they are peacemakers. They tend to bring people together by

excluding what separates, but, on the other hand, if it is an emotional-based theology that unites the church, they will demand lock-step in the emotional-based theology: “You did not feel that? Then there is something wrong with you.”

The other two types of saints have a difficult time understanding Johannines. Peter would understand the *kenosis*. He would jump right on that. “Yeah, I’ll carry the cross. Where is it?”

I have seen and experienced a progression of these pieties in my life and the lives of others. A new Christian starting out Johannine may easily change to Pauline when they find that they have a lack of Scriptural knowledge. Also some seniors are Pauline now, but when they started out, they were the Petrine, went on missions and did a lot of other things.

In this age where Existentialism is pervasive, everywhere you go you are being inundated with that feelings-based philosophy. When a feelings-based philosopher is converted, he is going to be a feelings-based theologian, and that is a Johannine Piety

We must have all three pieties in the church. You are going to have natural Johannines in your church, and that is not a bad thing in and of itself if we can blend the three pieties together into a functional whole.

We are going to address the issue of mixing pieties, but it is important for us, as theologians, to begin to add variety to our own lives so that we move into those other corners of the triangle in order to gain a little more balance in our pieties.

Johannine Weaknesses (Continued)

8. They have a passive Christian walk. The Johannine saint will play Christian music, goose-bump music, throughout the day and think they are really getting close to God. They tend to think that if you get some more goose bumps, and you begin to swoon, then you are there, close to God.
9. They lack understanding. Knowledge and understanding are intuited or “felt.”
10. They are showoffs. Whatever gives them a good feeling draws them. They like to express how they feel by an outward show of their emotions.
11. They are otherworldly floaters. They just float around listening to music and weeping, laughing, and rejoicing.
12. They have a tendency towards liberalism because liberalism comes from a feelings-based theology.

Let me give you an illustration of the three pieties. I went to preach a weeklong revival, and when I pulled into the parking lot, I discovered that they had the Campers On Mission there who were going to build a recreation hall and an education wing on the church.

When I drove in and looked at these people, I could pick them out quite easily. On the hood of a pickup truck they had the blueprints all laid out. A group of men were standing around it with their coffee. They were talking and nodding and planning what needed to be done. They were Pauline saints, looking at the blue prints.

Another group, a short distance away, was pulling lumber off a truck, stacking it and just running around as busy as could be because they were Petrine saints. In another

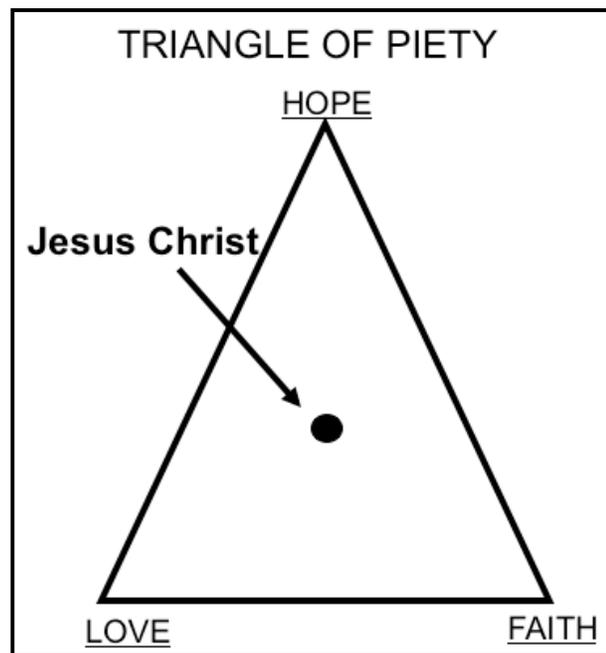
direction was another group, and they were sitting around a fire singing away—three distinct groups.

They were acting like what they are. Those that are singing are thinking, “All these others are spiritually dead because they are not over here singing and weeping and hugging and all that is going on in their group. The guys stacking the wood are wondering what is wrong with everybody; “We have work to do; we must get this wood stacked.” Those on the hood of that pickup were studying and thinking: “We have to figure out what the first step is. We might take the wrong step.”

Check this scenario: At Wednesday night dinner at church, a lady spills her tray on the floor. Some will immediately go to work cleaning up the spill (Petrine). Others will begin to console the victim (Johannine). Others will check into why the lady had the spill and warn others (Pauline).

Desired Piety

Now let me show you Jesus on this triangle. He is in the middle, perfectly balanced. He has equal amounts of everything in His life, and He is our model, and we are supposed to strive for balance (see Piety 7). However, we get out of balance with mostly faith (knowledge), or mostly hope (doing), or mostly love (feeling). I used to be mostly hope or do, but over the years I have begun to move into the faith direction. Sometimes I tend to move back up when I see urgency. If I read the Scripture like the Great White Throne Judgment or something like that, it spurs me to action, and then I am driving others to do likewise. It is “Come on. I am not going to let you stop; I am going to drag you out with me.” That is when I become Petrine in my Piety. With these two concentrations, I am weakest in the Johannine corner of the triangle.



Piety 7

My wife is Johannine, and she has helped me achieve some balance in my life. She is my walking cane to help me limp along. However some of you will be up in the hope/do corner where you are a doer, but a doer also with a secondary orientation and lastly a tertiary orientation. The Petrines will have some Pauline and some Johannine in their piety, but one of those will be secondary and the other will be tertiary. Each of us will have a primary, a secondary, and a tertiary. There are some that will be mostly in the love/feelings corner with a little bit of doing based upon your feelings. That is a liberal tendency, and you have to keep that in check. No matter where you are in this triangle, you need to try to get balance in your life in all three pieties.

I realize where I am, and I know where my lack of balance is because of my discomfort when I am in those areas of piety. However, I intentionally try to move into my areas of discomfort in order to gain more balance in my whole piety.

I have pushed myself to learn the names of all my students in all my classes. I ceased calling the roll because I learned the names of all students in my classes. I could look out and connect the faces to the names in the roll. That Johannine effort was part of trying to add some balance in my piety so that I did a job that was more like the one the Lord would do, but I had to go into my areas of weakness and discomfort in order to accomplish that.

You are going to have to do the same thing. You have to know where you reside and then move purposefully into your weak pieties. Sometimes I would let people lead my class in singing; sometimes I would allow a member give testimony or something in order to achieve unity or fellowship for the purpose of balance. It is important that we move into those areas where we are weak.

You will not “want” to move, but that is exactly what I am saying you “should” do. You have to move into the areas in which you are weak. Let us just say that you are mostly in the Pauline corner like a present-day *Gnostic*. We have a lot of these. A *Gnostic* does not do anything—they just know something. In order to achieve balance, a present-day *Gnostic* needs to do something, move into that area that is beyond the knowing. You are going to get your hands dirty. You have to go down there and pick up that lumber and stack it. You cannot just sit up there and point at a nice clean blueprint. You also need to go over and do some singing, too.

That singing part is very difficult for me, but I have to do those different things. What I want you to do is move into your area of discomfort in order to bring more balance to your Piety. But I also want you to see that you have peculiar people in your church. You have all three kinds, and all three have value to add to the corporate Piety. The mix will bring balance and harmony. Normally, if there is equal amount of each kind with no one dominant, you will have a balanced corporate Piety.

I want you to see the value of the individual imbalances and the need for corporate balance so that a member does not have to be like the person sitting next to him. You can be who you are. You leaders need to strive, however, for some balance in your Christian Piety. You are never going to get there, but strive for it. Go out for those other areas. Try to join the people in the other types and try to experience what they are experiencing. But do not demand conformity across the board in your church. God made the people there, and they have value to add to the corporate Piety. Do not try to change them, but you can begin to show them through your example of willing participation with those of the other pieties that they should be willing to do likewise and venture out also. The Johannines think they are the most venturesome, but they are not because they will not stay with something that does not feel good. Petrines will try anything if they think they are moving towards a goal. The Paulines won't try anything new without a motivating conviction.

It is important that you begin to recognize the individual pieties of your people. We can use these characteristics when selecting teachers, when selecting committee

members, when selecting worship leaders. Eventually, I hope that you will begin to see the connection of pieties with the spiritual gifts.