

**CHAPTER SEVEN:
CULTIVATING A THEOTIC SPIRITUALITY OF BEING EMBEDDED WITH
CHRIST IN THE FATHER THROUGH THE ADVANCE INSTALLMENT OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

I. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two of this study showed that the Scriptures give a firm biblical basis for cultivating a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It showed that the nature of this life is a covenantal life that is restored and deepened by the incarnation and embraced through repentance and faith. Moreover, it illustrated that this life is enriched by the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper and embraces every aspect of life. Furthermore, it demonstrated that this life is a mysterious life that transcends human understanding. In addition, it showed that the significance of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit involves being identified with Christ, living in Christ and Christ living in the believer, being conformed to Christ and resting in Christ.

Chapter three of this study showed that what Calvin taught enriched our understanding of what was discovered in chapter two. Of particular interest is what Calvin taught regarding believers becoming partakers of God's divine nature. According to Calvin, this is an ontological union with God that is a sort of deification (*quasi deificari*). Not that believers share in the essence of God, but they share in the properties of this essence. For Calvin, this is the greatest possible blessing a believer can receive.

Because deification or theosis is an important theme in patristic and Eastern Orthodox theology, chapter four of this study gave an *historical* theological review through church history and showed how deification or theosis was argued, nuanced, understood and applied. It noted that for Irenaeus, deification is the effect of the incarnation, life and death upon the

body and spirit of those incorporated into the body of Christ by faith. For Palamas, deification is genuine immersion in the presence or the energies of God and is facilitated through constant prayer, especially the Jesus prayer. For Daniélou, deification includes being drawn into the life of the Trinity and being interpenetrated with this Trinitarian life through the ministry of the church. For Luther, deification is realized through faith because through faith Christ and a believer ontologically become one so that Christ Himself lives in and through the believer. For Wesley, deification renews a believer's spiritual senses and has the potential to entirely sanctify him already in this life. This sanctification works like a leaven in society. For Pinnock, deification is the special work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, chapter four showed that cultivating a theotic spirituality of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is important because the whole process of salvation has its origin and goal in union with Christ, making union with Christ the integrative doctrine of salvation. Yet, even though this is so, it is not often given an explicit treatment in popular post-Reformational Evangelical Systematic theologies. One possible reason for this omission is that Evangelicalism and Western theology in general concentrated more heavily on the forensic and objective (contra subjective) aspects of systematization. A second reason could be a general reluctance to address anything deemed to be too mystical. Yet, Calvin considered union with Christ to be of the greatest importance and deification to be the greatest possible blessing. In fact, union with Christ involved deification and leads to deification. Thus, chapter noted:

Theosis, in part, may be thought of as a summary term for the subjective, relational nature of salvation. This emphasis on the subjective aspects of salvation is precisely where Pinnock and I perceive a deficiency in Reformed thought. Whereas justification and satisfaction refer to the forensic *appeasement* of God such that created humans might be positionally 'clean' in God's eyes, theosis encompasses the subjective

aspects of the *ordo salutis*—regeneration, sanctification, and glorification—and explains each as the sole work of God. Each of these I construe as subspecies of theosis such that we might even rename them, respectively: *inaugural theosis*, *progressive theosis*, and *consummative theosis*.¹

Chapter five showed how what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters could be used to design a ten-week learning experience to help Christians move from dis-embedded, self-generated lives to God-generated lives of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It did so in the following manner. First, it identified the possible forms of detachment in the present reality and suggests possible reasons for this detachment. Second, drawing on what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters of this study, it defined a biblical/theological solution to the experience of these possible forms of detachment. Third, it identified learning activities to help people move from these possible forms of detachment to embracing a theotic spirituality of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it defined outcomes the learning experience hopes will occur and why these are the desired ones.

Chapter six presented the results of each individual lesson and applied these results to the individual hypothesis of each lesson. Moreover it presented the overall results of the learning experience and a breakdown of these overall results and applied these overall results and breakdown to the general hypothesis of this study. In both cases, evaluation and analysis of the data was done and conclusions were drawn.

This chapter seeks to consolidate what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters, used to design a ten-week learning experience to help Christians move from dis-

¹ Gannon Murphy, *Consuming Glory: A Classical Defense of Divine-Human Relationality Against Open Theism* (Eugene, Ore: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 220

embedded, self-generated lives to God-generated lives of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit and field-tested in this learning experience. It does so by revisiting the ten aspects of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit and reshaping them with what was learned in the historical theological overview, the design of the workbook and the findings of the ten-week learning experience so that the contours of a theotic spirituality of living embedded with Christ in the Father begin to emerge.

II. THE CONTOURS OF A THEOTIC SPIRITUALITY²

A. An intimate, communal spirituality

This study noted that living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a covenant relationship. This means that living embedded with Christ in the Father is relationship that is enjoyed in community. Theologically, this is anchored in the fact that the three Persons of the Trinity live in community. Because the Scriptures compare this communal covenantal relationship to a marriage with the Trinity, this communal spirituality is also an intimate spirituality. Consequently, a theotic spirituality is by its very nature an intimate, communal spirituality.³

God gave his Word to his covenant community to nurture this communal intimacy. Thus, an intimate, communal theotic spirituality is primarily nurtured by the Scriptures. It is through the public reading, proclamation, singing and praying of the Scriptures that God's covenant community is nurtured in a theotic spirituality of intimately living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit and together enjoys

² Because of time constraints, only an initial impression of these contours can be offered at this time.

³ This is an important observation in the light of the individualistic, narcissistic culture of our time. It is also a theological antidote to innate individualism that lives in the heart of each person.

the intimacy of this relationship. But it is also through the personal reading, studying, memorizing, singing, praying and meditating on the Scriptures that members of God's covenant community enjoy the intimacy of this communal relationship themselves and in their social fellowship together.

This study noted that the Scriptures can be read in an informational and formational manner. It further highlighted that the Scriptures need the balanced interplay of informational and formational reading so that God can enter into the hearts of his people with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This is because formational reading of the Scriptures seek to move the text deeper into the depths of our being as the seed of regeneration, allow the text to control us as a womb (Luther), views the text as subject of the reading relationship or as Christ (Calvin) and is receptive and willing to yield to the text. It is in yielding to Christ who is embedded in the text that God's covenant community not only has objective, propositional, head knowledge about its intimate, communal relationship with the Trinity, but also has subjective, relational, heart knowledge of this intimate, communal, Trinitarian relationship. A theotic spirituality of communal intimacy pays attention to cultivating this subjective, relational, heart knowledge of members of God's covenant community through formational reading of the Scriptures because there appears to be a causal connection between informational reading of the Scriptures and experiencing affective distance in one's relationship with God and formational reading of the Scriptures and experiencing intimacy in one's relationship with God.

B. An ontological spirituality

This study noted that living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that is re-membered, re-embedded and

deepened by the incarnation. This means that living embedded in the life of the Trinity is a relationship that involves being deified by being ontologically embedded in the life of the Trinity. This is anthropologically possible because the Trinity created human beings with an inner self or soul in which they are able ontologically to embed themselves. In ontologically embedding themselves in the soul that harmoniously interpenetrates the body—perhaps somewhat like the Father, Son and Spirit harmoniously interpenetrate one another—the Trinity made a human being an image of itself that is affectively aware of the weight of its glory and manifests this glory by being God on display. This ontological embeddedness is impossible without the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.

This study noted that the human soul is multidimensional and highly mobile that has an “openness to the world” or “plasticity and adaptability” that enables it to engage reality in a meaningful manner. Yet, this “openness to the world” and “plasticity and adaptability” also enables the soul to erect walls, try to live on its own, become a victim of what goes on in itself, not be intentionally focused in the right direction, seek God in a consumerist manner and try to save itself instead of lose itself. Because the soul relationally dis-embedded itself from the God who ontologically embedded Himself in it, the soul is a wounded soul in constant need of re-embedding and healing. An ontological theotic spirituality pays attention to cultivating the health of the soul because there appears to be a causal connection between not having surrendered every dimension of the soul to God and not experiencing the ontological presence of God in one’s soul and outside one’s soul. This will include the nurture of the will—the mind acting upon the desires—because it primarily through the will that surrender to God takes place.

C. A receptive spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that is personally embraced through repentance and faith. This means that living embedded in the Trinity is a receptive spirituality. This study has also shown that the fundamental posture of the Son towards the Father is one of receptivity in which He perpetually receives the life of the Father into Himself. This means that the fundamental posture of the life of faith is also one of receptivity towards the Trinity.

Receptivity is primarily a feminine characteristic. Yet, while fundamentally a feminine characteristic, this does not mean that receptivity comes natural to females. The essence of the Fall into sin for Eve was her unwillingness to be receptive to the life God had promised to continue to give her. Instead, she acted like a male who tends to charge ahead instead of wait, lead instead of follow, use common sense instead of trust intuition, form instead of be formed.

Since receptivity does not come naturally to either male or female, receptivity is a characteristic that needs to be nurtured. Because receptivity is the basic posture of faith, faith looks to the Trinity and receives the Trinity into itself so that through faith the Trinity and believers become ontologically one (Luther and Calvin). Through the receptivity of faith, believers and the Trinity become so ontologically one that the Trinity becomes the subject of the believing person (Luther and Calvin).

When the Trinity and the believer ontologically become one through faith, the believer receives the noticing and thinking mind of Christ who has the mind of the Father. It is this noticing and thinking mind of Christ that instills knowledge into the mind of the believer that, in turn, generates knowledge of God and of oneself (Calvin).

Because human beings, be they male or female, all have a tendency to charge and lead when they should wait and follow, use common sense instead of trust, do instead of watch, a theotic spirituality of receptivity pays attention to developing this feminine characteristic of receptivity and integrating it into the other characteristics of the soul because there may be a causal connection between lack of receptivity and experiencing one's faith as being self-generated or receptivity and experiencing one's faith to be God-generated.

D. A contemplative spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that is enriched by the sacraments. This means that living embedded in the Trinity is a contemplative spirituality. This study has also shown that because God has embedded Himself in the works of his hands, the works of his hands manifest the weight of his glory. Consequently, the fundamental receptive posture of faith turns faith not only into a new way of knowing, but also into a new way of seeing (Calvin). This gives eyes to faith through which we are "sweetly allured" to behold the glory of God in the works of his hands and contemplate this glory of God.

God allures us to behold his glory also in the proclamation of the Word. Thus, the Word of God is never just meant to be heard as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of beholding his glory and contemplating on this glory (Calvin). The same is true to the sacraments. As God manifests his creative glory in his works of creation, so He manifests the glory of Christ in his work of re-creation and re-embedding. God gave his sacraments to his church for the sake of beholding and contemplating the glory of Christ and in beholding this glory be transformed into it. This contemplation is necessary for spiritual growth (Calvin), A theotic spirituality will nurture the art of contemplation because there appears to be a causal

connection between communicating with God in a more visual manner and experiencing the closeness of God in and around us.

E. A public spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that affects every aspect of life. This means that living embedded in the Trinity is a public spirituality. This public nature of a theotic spirituality is theologically anchored into the nature of God Himself. God Himself is a “public” God because He is a God who is love and love is always “public” in the sense that it radiates out from itself. Consequently, the Scriptures show us the three Persons of the Trinity irradiating their love for one another to one another. Moreover, the Father sends the Son to open up this circle of love through the Spirit to his covenant community. Through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, the Father makes room for his covenant community in the Trinitarian circle of love and interpenetrates his covenant community with this life of love with a view to joining the movement or dance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the work of their hands.⁴ In this way, God’s covenant community is able to enter into and interpenetrate this life of the world together with the interpenetrating work of the Trinity in this world.

Consequently, by its very nature the Christian life of love is a public life that always irradiates out from itself into its environment and interpenetrates this environment. A theotic spirituality will cultivate this public nature of faith because there seems to be a causal connection between considering the Christian faith to be primarily about one’s own salvation and lack of irradiation to one’s faith.

⁴ Thus, this is a joining of the economic dance of the Trinity, not their immanent dance.

F. A subjective spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that is mysterious. This means that living embedded in the Trinity is a subjective spirituality. This study has also shown that the Scriptures refer to God's plan of salvation as a mystery or a secret. There are two aspects to the word *mystery*: a Jewish historical aspect and a Greek subjective aspect, both aspects usually being present with the Jewish historical aspect frequently being dominant. When the Scriptures speaks about the mystery of the gospel being Christ in the church or Christ and the church being one flesh like husband and wife in marriage are one flesh, this subjective aspect of the word *mystery* is clearly present.

This subjective aspect to the word *mystery* shows us that the Christian life is mysterious in the sense that it transcends our understanding. It is something that is sometimes more felt than comprehended (Calvin). This is also true for the "secret impulse" of the ontological presence of the Spirit of God in our lives (Calvin). Moreover, this is true for the advance installment of the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are children of God and calling out in our hearts, "Abba, Father." This, too, is often something that is more subjectively experienced than objectively understood.

A theotic spirituality will cultivate this subjective side to being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It will do this by seeing the objective, propositional content of the Christian faith as a manifestation of the glory of Father in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit that the Father has given to the church to "sweetly allure" her to behold the weight of his glory in Christ and be transformed into its likeness. Thus, a theotic spirituality will cultivate an initiation culture in the church

that seeks to move the members of the church from objectivity to subjectivity, from proposition to relation, from the correctness of the known to the mystery of the unknown. A theotic spirituality will place a high premium on this subjective spirituality because there appears to be a causal connection between considering the gospel to be primarily about right beliefs and right doctrine and not experiencing the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered. The fact that the participant's cognitive knowledge about the Christian life was considerably higher than their experiential knowledge of this life only underscores the need for this movement towards subjectivity.⁵

G. An incarnational spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that involves being identified with Christ. This means that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the Spirit is an incarnational spirituality that embodies God's glorious hope for this world.

Jesus Himself embodied the Father's glorious hope for the world by entering into the story of being re-membered and re-embedded into the Trinitarian life by resisting the principalities and powers of his day that opposed the healing of humankind. Jesus embodied the Father's glorious hope for the world by joining his Father on his journey of re-membering and re-embedding and subverting the principalities and powers that opposed this re-membering and re-embedding. He embodied the Father's hope by liberating those who were oppressed and assisting the poor. Jesus embodied God's glorious hope for the world with his prophetic witness, his vulnerability and his shepherding the flock of God and seeking the sheep who were lost.

⁵ See appendix 8.

Jesus continues to do this from heaven through his church. Thus, if the church wants to embody or incarnate Jesus as God's glorious hope for this world and manifest to the world what being what being re-membered and re-embedded into the life of the Father looks like, she would do well to participate with Jesus in this mission of re-membering and re-embedding and embody God's divine nature as He did and be part of a new movement that is rolling towards the new heaven and new earth where all things will be made right and where Christ is all in all. In doing so, the church is the image of God by embodying the glory of God just as Jesus was the image of God and embodied the glory of God. It is this glory of God that is the ultimate hope for the world.

A theotic spirituality will cultivate this embodied or incarnational spirituality because there appears to be a causal connection between not embodying Jesus by setting up signs of the enduring, eschatological kingdom of God and experiencing that the hope the Christian faith has to offer the world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world.

H. An embedded spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that involves being in Christ and Christ being in his body This means that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the Spirit is an embedded spirituality.

The church is able to embody or incarnate Christ because she is in Christ and Christ is in her. With the Fall into sin, humankind dis-membered and dis-embedded itself from the Trinity. The Father rescued his covenant community from this dis-membered, dis-embedded life by sending his Son to become a member of the human race and re-membering her into his body and thus re-embedding her into Himself through the advance installment of the Holy

Spirit. Consequently, as the three Persons of the Trinity mutually inhabit one another, so Christ and the church now mutually inhabit one another too. Moreover, this life of mutual indwelling entails that the church is where Christ is and that the real action is where the church is.

This embodiment of the Father through mutual indwelling or embeddedness occurs through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit who is the *arrabon*, the advance installment, deposit or pledge of more ontological indwelling to come. As such, He pulls the ontological life of the future into the present in an ontological manner so that we see, hear, taste, touch and smell its love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentles and self-control.

A theotic spirituality will cultivate this embedded spirituality because there appears to be a causal connection between placing more emphasis on what Christ did *for* us than on what He does *in* us and feeling ontologically detached or dis-embedded from God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

I. A God-generated spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that involves being conformed to Christ. This means that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit entails that Christ is not only the pattern of our conformity, but also its source.

In his high priestly prayer, Jesus says to his Father that He has given eternal life to those the Father has given Him. In the same prayer, He also says He has given the glory (*doksan*) which the Father has given Him to his church that she may be one as He and the Father are one. The implication is unmistakable. Eternal life given to the church is the glory

being mutually indwelt by the Father and the Son through advance installment of the Holy Spirit just as the Father and the Son are mutually indwelt through the bond of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, when the Scriptures speak about Christ dwelling in the church as the hope of glory, they mean that the eschatological mutual indwelling is pulled forward into the present and experienced in the advance installment (*arrabon*) of the Holy Spirit.⁶ This mutual indwelling involves being partakers (*koinonoi*) of the divine nature and is the same as sharing the love the Father has for the Son and the Son has for the Father through the *arrabon* of the Holy Spirit.

If the church wants to be embedded intentionally in this Father-Son love through faith, she needs to perpetually manifest the basic receptive posture of faith just as the Son perpetually does towards his Father. Thus, just as the Son is perpetually generated by the Father through the bond of the Spirit, so members of the church who intentionally are embedded in this Father-Son relationship through faith are perpetually generated by the Father because they are embedded in the Son through the advance installment of the Spirit. This has everything to do with what the Scriptures call the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.

This constant, wise, fear-of-the-Lord posture of receptivity to the generating life of the Father in the Son through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit belongs to the offense (*skandalon*) of the gospel.⁷ Just as waiting for God's time, God's way, God's strength was an offense to Eve, so waiting for God's time, God's way and God's strength can become an offense to the church. Just as Eve did not want to remain receptive to what God

⁶ For more on the Spirit as the *arrabon*, see Hendrikus Berkhof, "De Geest als voorshot," in Jean-Dacques Suurmond (ed.), *'Och, ware het gehele volk profeten!': Charismatisch-theologische teksten* (Zoetermeer, Meinema, 1992), 69-84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

would give her as a gift coming from outside and above her through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, so the church is continually tempted to not want to remain perpetually receptive to what God promises to give her as a gift coming from outside and above her through the *arrabon* of the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Spirit cannot be impatiently manipulated, but has to be patiently waited for and received. That belongs to the mystery of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Although females do not have a monopoly on this receptive posture, by nature it belongs more to the their constitution than the male constitution. The fact that the learning experience moved a much greater percentage of females into an increased awareness and experience of a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit does not appear to be an isolated, haphazard incident, but a confirmation of a genetic disposition that is more disposed to receptivity than males.⁸

A theotic spirituality will cultivate a receptive, God-generated spirituality of praying daily to be filled with the advance installment of the Holy Spirit as the *source* of its life of conformity because there appears to be causal connection between not experiencing the affective awareness of the first installment of the Holy Spirit and not praying to be filled with this first installment. Thus, this theotic spirituality will cultivate the practice of listening prayer.

⁸ It is noteworthy that the seventh lesson of the learning experience focusing on representing God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit significantly moved 55% of the males and only 25% of the females to an increased experience of being the eschatological presence of God in the world. On the one hand, this appears to confirm the thesis that males tend to take the initiative and push while females tend to react and receive. On the other hand, it highlights the possibility that if some of the activities had been designed in such a way as to encourage contemplation leading intentional, external activity (i.e. from the inside out), the males may have scored better than they did with regard to an increased awareness and experience of a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

J. A prepared spirituality

This study noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a relationship that involves resting in Christ. This means that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is prepared spirituality.

Karl Barth rightly noted that humankind began its work with a day of rest, not work. This rest points back to the Sabbath rest God Himself took on the seventh day and points forward to the Sabbath rest at the consummation of human history. Jesus embodied this eschatological rest and pulls it forward into the present. Thus, all God's covenant community needs for cultivating a theotic spirituality has already been prepared by the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

Eugene Peterson sums up well what this involves for theotic spirituality when he writes:

Sabbath is not primarily about us or how it benefits us; it is about God and how God forms us. It is not, in the first place, about what we do or don't do; it is about God completing and resting and blessing and sanctifying. These are all things that we don't know much about; they are beyond us but not beyond our recognition and participation. But it does mean stopping and being quiet long enough to see, open-eyed with wonder—resurrection wonder. As we stand or sit in surprised and open receptivity to what is beyond us, what we cannot control, we cultivate the fear-of-the-LORD. Our souls are formed by what we cannot work up or take charge of: We respond and enter into what the resurrection of Jesus continues to do on the foundations of creation, our work and workplace.

And he adds:

. . . I don't see any way out of it: if we are going to live appropriately in creation we must keep the Sabbath. We must stop running around long enough to see what he has done and is doing. We must shut up long enough to hear what he has said and is saying. All our ancestors agree that without

silence and stillness there is no spirituality, no God-attentive, God-responsive life.⁹

Calvin was on to this too when he wrote that one of the purposes of the Sabbath was to make up for lack of daily meditation.

This is, indeed the proper business of the whole life, in which men should daily exercise themselves, to consider the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, in this magnificent theatre of heaven and earth. But, lest men should prove less sedulously [diligent] attentive to it than they ought, every seventh day has been especially selected for the purpose of supplying what was wanting in daily meditation. . . that they, being released from all other business, might the more readily apply their minds to the Creator of the world.¹⁰

It is precisely in resting and contemplating God and how He blesses, sanctifies and forms his covenant community with quiet, open-eyed, fear-of-the-Lord wonder that this covenant community rests with Jesus at the bosom of the Father and feels the embrace of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Thus, resting with Christ in the Father though this advance installment of the Holy Spirit brings God's covenant community full circle. Because she is embraced by God's Father-Son love she can rest in this Father-Son love. The more she rests in this Father-Son love, the more she will surrender to it, embrace it in faith, see it in the sacraments, radiate it into the world and discover its mystery. Moreover, the more she rests in God's Father-Son love, the more she will find herself representing Christ, being embedded in Christ and being conformed to Christ. All this will be done being mindful of the Chalcedonian axiom: *distinctio sed non separatio*.

A theotic spirituality will cultivate this prepared spirituality because there appears to be a causal connection between experiencing restlessness in the Christian life and not being

⁹ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation about Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 116-18.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, Vol. 1, in *Calvin's Commentaries Volume I*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1989) 106.

intentionally conscious of the fact that the starting point of the Christian life is resting with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Thus, this theotic spirituality will cultivate the discipline of practising the presence of God.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT

This study has inspired various lines of questioning that would be beneficial to pursue in further study and development. First, suggestions for further study are made. Second, suggestions for further development are presented.

A. Suggestions for further study

This study has inspired the following nine suggestions for further study. They concern further study in being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit as this relates to the Trinity, tradition, culture, world religions, anthropology, gender, the church, spiritual formation and faith.

1. The Trinity

At the center of the universe is a relationship: Father, Son and Holy Spirit mutually inhabiting one another in a life of love. This divine, Trinitarian life is the gravitational center of life. Jesus' prayer for the church is that it may increasingly learn to live with Him in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit and thus find her gravitational center with Him in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 17:21, 26). Moreover, within this Trinitarian gravitational center of life, the Father has always been and always will be the Father of the Son and the Son always has and always will be the Son of the Father. Thus, living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit involves being embraced by, surrendering to, receiving, visualizing, radiating and

discovering this Father-Son love. Furthermore, it involves representing, being embedded with Christ, conforming to and resting in this Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It would be beneficial to explore to what extent past and current Trinitarian theology can develop these aspects of the motif of God's Father-Son love and to what extent these aspects of this motif can develop current Trinitarian theology.

2. Tradition

According to this study, the Eastern Orthodox tradition of deification or theosis influenced the central motif of the renewal of the image of God in John Wesley's theology. It would be beneficial to explore to what extent deification or theosis can further develop the concept of living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit than this study has done. Moreover, the new Finnish interpretation of Luther has argued that Luther understood justification by faith as including the gift of the real presence of Christ in the life of the believer so that the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus, it would also be beneficial to explore whether this new Finnish interpretation of Luther is correct and, if so, how it can bring the Eastern Orthodox and Western traditions together on the doctrine of salvation.¹¹

3. Culture

At one time, humankind was quite confident in finding the answer to who it is, why it is here and where it is going within itself. Within our contemporary culture, this confidence

¹¹ See, e.g., John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias (ed.), *A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1992.); see also David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004). In this connection, it would also be beneficial to explore to what extent the African concept of vital participation relates to theosis. See, for instance, V. Mulago who writes, "We are convinced that the Bantu principle of vital participation can become the basis of a specifically African theological structure." Hartmunt Schönherr comments on this with, "[This] is the Orthodox concept contextualized for Africa." Cited by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Union with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2004), 2.

is increasingly waning. For some, this fading confidence has even led to a nihilistic, disengaged, fragmented understanding of oneself. Because the context of this study was experiencing one's identity by being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit within a narrow segment of the Reformed tradition in particular and Christianity in general, no study was made concerning the relevance of a God-generated life for today's postmodern culture. It would, however, be beneficial to explore how understanding one's identity as being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit can serve as a potential point of contact in helping our postmodern culture find a healing and cohesive center for one's personal and communal life in this Christological center.

4. World Religions

All major world religions in one way or another agree that the deepest desire of humankind is to get into contact with and live in union with God. What has been labeled as the New Age Movement is a manifestation of this ultimate human desire as well. This is understandable because the Fall into sin involved humankind's detachment or dis-embedding itself from God. Thus, it should not surprise us that humankind's religions concern themselves with the question of what the way back to God is so that it can live in union with God. According to this study, the way back to God and living in union with Him is through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit who connects us to Jesus Christ and enables us through faith to live with Him in the Father. It would be beneficial to explore to what extent living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit has served

and can serve as a potential point of contact between Christianity and the major world religions and spiritualities included under the label of the New Age Movement.¹²

5. Anthropology

Wesley suggested that because the grace of God is perceptible and a human being is a psychosomatic unity where mind and body work together, Christians should cultivate orthopathy, i.e., right feelings, affections and experience through which they consciously participate in the transforming grace or energy of God and have an encounter with God. Thus, for Wesley experience has sacramental significance because it is a sign and guarantee of a participation in the first fruits of the kingdom of heaven. Because Wesley did not want to distort the significance of feelings, affections and experience by absolutizing them or by attaching no value to them at all, he suggested that feelings, affections and experience are right (*ortho*) when they have their source in God, are transforming, social, rational, sacramental and teleological. It would be beneficial to explore how the place of feelings, affections and experience in the Christian life have been distorted either by absolutizing them or ignoring them and study how Wesley's criteria can be used to give a orthopathy a rightful place in cultivating a God-generated life of living embedded Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

6. Gender

In lesson three of the learning experience, typical male and female characteristics were discussed. It was suggested that males tend to take the initiative while females tend to react, males tend to reason more with their heads while females with their hearts and males tend to think more conceptually while females tend to think more associatively. Moreover, it

¹² See Karkkainen, 1-3, 133-34

was stated that receptivity was a typical female characteristic of the soul and that as a covenant community God sees us all as female. Needless to say, this part of lesson three caused quite a discussion. Thus, it would be beneficial to make a study of typical gender characteristics and how these characteristics tend to find expression in one's spirituality or life in the Spirit of Christ.

7. The Church

It is noteworthy how in "A Call to An Ancient Evangelical Future," the church has such a prominent place. After an article on the primacy of the Biblical narrative, the Call proceeds with articles on the Church as the continuation of God's narrative, the Church's theological reflection on God's narrative, the Church's worship as telling and enacting God's narrative, spiritual formation in the Church as embodying God's narrative and the Church's embodied life in the world. In the article on the Church as the continuation of God's narrative, the authors call Evangelicals "to turn away from individualism that makes the Church a mere addendum to God's redemptive plan."¹³ According to this study, life in Christ is a communal reality in which the individual members of the community personally participate. In the light of today's individualism that appears to make the church a mere addendum to God's redemptive plan, it would be beneficial to explore how living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit can help to restore the centrality of the church in God's redemptive plan.

8. Spiritual formation

In "The Call and Spiritual Formation," Frederica Mathewes-Green emphasized that spirituality isn't a concept found in the first millennium or anywhere in Eastern Christianity.

¹³ Webber and Kenyon, "A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" at <http://www.growcenter.org/AEFCall.htm>

As far as she can tell, what we today mean by *spirituality* is what St. Paul meant by *life in Christ*.¹⁴ If life in Christ is a communal reality in which the individual members of the community personally participate, then the church should have a prominent role in the spiritual formation of its members. Moreover, this spiritual formation should focus on cultivating a life in Christ or living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it would be beneficial to explore further to what extent the church is central in today's spiritual formation and to what extent this spiritual formation is an intentional formation into life embedded in Christ. This would also include Christian leadership formation.¹⁵

9. Faith

According to Luther, faith and Christ essentially or ontologically belong together. Consequently, faith ontologically communicates Christ to the believer and Christ gives faith its form or reality. This would appear to harmonize with Hebrews 11:1 where faith is described as the reality or *hypostasis* of our hope.¹⁶ The author had already said that Christ was the reality or *hypostasis* of God (Heb. 1:3). He had also already encouraged the believers to hold on to this reality or *hypostasis* (Heb. 3:14). It would appear that when he now says that faith is the reality or *hypostasis* of our hope, he is implying that faith communicates the reality of God in Christ to the believer or that Christ gives faith its form or reality

¹⁴ See Mathewes-Green, "The Call and Spiritual Formation," 3-4

¹⁵ Koert van Bekkum writes that Ted Haggard's fall into disgrace had everything to do with the celebrity culture fostered by the modern, management approach to leadership. Moreover, he does not like the term "leader" because it has overtones of the secular overtones of power and celebrity. He finds these secular overtones forbidden by Deut. 17 that speaks about future kings being forbidden to have lots of horses and women. These were the secular power symbols of that time. See Koert van Bekkum, in Tjerk de Reus and Ronald Westerbeek, "Op zoek naar leiders in de kerk?" at <http://www.cvkoers.nl:80/print.php?file=%2Fartikelen%2Fopening.php>.

¹⁶ For a well substantiated defense of this translation, see John C. Médaille, "Lost in the Translation: Hope and Hypostasis in Hebrews" at <http://www.medaille.com/hope%20and%20hypostasis%20in%20hebrews.pdf>

(*hypostasis*).¹⁷ Since the whole Christian life ought to be derivative of faith and not much has been written about these ontological, Christological dynamics, it would be beneficial to make a further study into this vital and crucial area of Christian experience, also as it pertains to living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit by faith.¹⁸

2. Suggestions for further development

The quantitative results of the questionnaire measuring the results the difference the 10-week learning experience made indicate a clear increase in understanding and desire to learn more about living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ The overall qualitative or narrative responses indicate that the learning experience had a substantial transformative effect on many of the participants. During the debriefing sessions, many participants expressed a desire to continue with learning experiences that would develop what had been learned so far.

I interpret this as a desire to move from an objective, propositional kind of spirituality to a more subjective, relational one. In other words, there appears to be a desire to learn more about and experience a theotic spirituality of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This study, the learning experience and

¹⁷ There appears to be a connection here to what Orthodox theology refers to as particular essence or *hypostasis*. See Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, *Freedom to Believe: Personhood and Freedom in Orthodox Christian Ontology* (Dewdney, BC: Synaxis Press, 2001), 5-12. It would be beneficial to explore this connection further.

¹⁸ In an email, Gordon Smith wrote “Lovelace’s book was a ‘spiritual theology’ . . . or a theology of the Christian life. Something is still needed in this area, particularly where the vital centre and focus would be the dynamics of faith. If we believe that faith is son central to authentic religious experience then it would follow that we would give the dynamics of faith more attention. Such a theology of the spiritual life would somehow show that (1) everything in the Christian is derivative of faith; and (2) that the whole of the Christian life is to be oriented around the development and purification of faith. So that preaching, for example, is not about getting the right behaviour . . . but rather about cultivating faith (and behaviour is then derivative of faith . . . and if it is not, then it is useless).”

¹⁹ See appendices 8 and 9.

my own spiritual journey have inspired me to continue to busy myself with the fostering and development of this theotic spirituality.