Cleaning House

Conservative trinitarian theologians ought to take these corrections to the doctrines of the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ as their new starting point. They should see where it leads and stop looking over their shoulder at another era that served as the foundation of the current one which is superior (Hebrews 11:40). The Spirit is immeasurably better than the law, according to Paul (Galatians 5:18). Surely this relates to the superiority of the way of salvation and the way of living in the NT compared to the OT, but the superiority of the new applies to absolutely everything. Indeed, in Galatians, Paul is talking about the new creation (Galatians 6:15). Trinitarian theologians ought to turn themselves into theologians of the new creation. Believers are now led by the living Holy Spirit who lives in them as His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Theologians must put aside any tendency to harmonize OT monotheism with NT teaching about the divinity of the Spirit and the preexistent divinity of Christ Jesus. The one God in the OT and in the NT is the Father. OT believers knew nothing about this. It is NT teaching. The divine and preexistent Son and the Holy Spirit were not known yet in the OT. Revelation is progressive. It was the experience of the apostles and the other believers in the NT, and it is now the experience of believers worldwide, that the Father, the glorified Lord, and the Spirit reveal themselves to us directly. This is the crux of the issue in understanding properly the difference between OT monotheism and the NT testimony about the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Believers all over the world will give their own accounts of how God the Father has revealed His presence to them. This is true also of how the Lord Jesus shows himself to us in the present time. It is also true concerning the presence of the Spirit within us, and how He reveals the will of God for us right now.

No formula exists for how this happens to believers all over the world in our time. God the Father is free and does as He wishes, and everything He does is perfect. He reveals His presence directly to believers in many ways-- in prayer, in nature, in moments of solitude, if (not when) we resist the devil's temptations (James 4:7-8), any way He wants. A good example of the freedom of God in revealing Himself to believers is the revelation of His presence to Elijah on Horeb (1 Kings 19). God reveals His presence something like this to believers now, but one would have to ask them about their experience. Such accounts are found very rarely in the NT. Jesus' baptism is one example. The Apostle John says that John the Baptist testified to hearing God speak to him (John 1:32-33). God the Father also manifested Himself to Stephen when he was stoned (Acts 7:55). The Lord revealed himself (after his ascension) on rare occasions, as he did for example to Stephen, and to Saul and Ananias (Acts 9), and to the Apostle John (Revelation 1), and to Paul (Galatians 1:11-12). Believers now will have their own accounts of how the Father and the Lord have made their presence known to them.

It is vital to understand that in the NT era, it is the Holy Spirit within us who provides divine revelation that is continual. The Apostle John was "in the Spirit" when the Lord revealed himself to John (Revelation 1:10). The Spirit engages in a very broad variety of activities within all believers which include teaching, guiding, counseling, comforting, helping, interceding, warning, prompting, convicting, and reminding us (John 14:26; John 14:16; John 16:8-11; John 16:13; Acts 20:23; Romans 8:26; et al.). The Lord called the Spirit our advocate and the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17). No formula exists for how He reveals the will of God to us. And if (not when) we keep the Lord's commands, especially his paramount command to love one another, he shows himself to us (John 14:21). No formula exists for how the Lord shows himself to believers if they obey his commands.

Now we can see the stunning plan of our God that has caused the progress of revelation from OT monotheism to the NT testimony about the Father, the Lord, and the Spirit. God Almighty hid the very existence of the Lord and the Spirit until the time was right to reveal them. This was the plan of our God.

But some have been so worried about what they imagine as contradictory testimony between the OT and the NT if we do not establish the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are mysteriously one God. On the contrary, we are merely observing the progress of revelation. Paul is very clear that the one God is the Father-- in both Testaments. This statement does not deny the preexistent divinity of the Son or the divinity of the Spirit, but it does show the preeminence of the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity obscures the significance of Paul's testimony that the one God is the Father. That testimony points clearly to the Father's preeminence.

The authors of the NT never present a teaching like the traditional doctrine of the Trinity because no problem existed in their minds. The NT writers did not think that believers should seek to side-step the stumbling block of the NT gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). One aspect of the stumbling block is its polytheism. It is inevitable that the question of Jesus' identity must be raised by those who hear the NT gospel. The answer of faith is that he was the preexistent and divine Son of God who laid aside His divinity completely and became a human being, the Messiah, to die for our sins. Those who do not believe the good news of the NT may raise the charge of polytheism. The charge should not be resisted or evaded. The charge is valid. However, the polytheism of the Father, Son, and Spirit is indeed the truth, whereas the pagan polytheistic systems are false.

The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly a rationalization to evade the charge of polytheism. Such an evasion is improper. It is a refusal to stand firmly and speak the truth of the NT gospel regardless of how that gospel is received (Acts 4:1-31; 5:12-32). So trinitarian theologians, and the churches, have improperly demanded that believers just accept the doctrine of the Trinity. This is a clear call to the churches to purify their doctrine and proclaim the good news, uncorrupted, in a spirit of faith and obedience like the apostles did as recorded in Acts 4-5.

Now we can see the reason for the change from OT monotheism to the NT testimony about the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The change shows in stark relief the basis of our salvation. The Lord's words on the cross point distinctly to this: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). The identity of the Lord as the preexistent and divine Son of God remained hidden to human beings until after the death and resurrection of the Lord because this is indeed the basis of the Lord's death as the substitutionary atonement for sin. The incognito of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement are inseparably linked. It was necessary for the Lord's full identity to be hidden from everybody, both Jews and Gentiles, so that they would be ignorant of what they were doing when they put the Lord to death. God Almighty kept the Lord's full identity a secret for a reason, and his existence and the existence of the Spirit in the OT era were hidden for a reason. Everybody was ignorant about what truly happened when the Lord died, and so Jews and Gentiles fall under the umbrella of God's grace, and the substitutionary atonement for sin provided by the death of our obedient Lord justifies our salvation (Ephesians 1:7-10).

Anyone who sees a problem with the difference between OT monotheism and NT testimony about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is being distracted from the real purpose of the OT teaching. The writers of the OT point to the one God because the ancients had a propensity for idolatry. This is what the oneness of God in scripture addresses-- in both Testaments (Deuteronomy 5:6-10; 6:4-9; 11:13-21; 11:26-29; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6). Obscuring this fact by seeing OT monotheism as the reason to engage in discussions about the doctrine of the Trinity is most hurtful to the individual and to the churches because we moderns have the same propensity as the ancients. The outward form of our idolatry is not the same as the ancients. No, the devil has become creative about his presentation to us of idols to worship in place of our God. Our idols

consist of things like power, prestige, pleasure, personal attainments, knowledge, wealth, sexual desires, and others. Idolatry is participation with demons according to Paul (1 Corinthians 10:20). This is certainly true for us. The demons have not gone on vacation at this time, nor have they gone to sleep. We should not obscure this problem. Both Testaments put great emphasis on the one God who is a jealous God. According to Paul, we must flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14). The urgency of these words alludes to Joseph's response to the sexual advance of Potiphar's wife, when Joseph just ran (Genesis 39:12).

Believers in Jesus Christ should now be focused on the revelation of the Father directly to us, which happens in many ways since He is free and since life is complicated for us because of our sin, but it happens primarily when He draws near to us if (not when) we submit to Him and resist the devil's temptations (James 4:7-8). The Father wants us to resist temptation! He is waiting on the edge of His throne for us to do it! And if (not when) we do, He draws near to us. We should resist temptation like the Lord did in the wilderness (Luke 4). The Lord spoke audibly to the devil and cited the scriptures to contradict the devil's lies and temptations. We can rebuke the devil audibly also when we are in solitude. Another good example of this, besides the Lord, is Martin Luther. The Father also draws near to us in prayer and many other ways as well. He is free. The Lord Jesus shows himself to us if (not when) we obey his commands (John 14:21). In this same verse, it is also observed that the Father shows His love to us if (not when) we obey the Lord's commands. And the Spirit lives in us and we do know Him (John 14:17). Paul tells us to live by the Spirit and sow to the Spirit (Galatians 5:16; 6:8). So, our focus ought to be on maintaining our fellowship with God, with the Lord, and with the Spirit. We do this by resisting temptation, obeying the Lord's commands, and keeping in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and sowing seed to Him (Galatians 6:7-10).

It is vital to realize that the direct revelation of our God to us, and the direct revelation of the Lord to us, as stunning and as important as they are, point to something that is even more important, if the reader can entertain such an amazing thought. The direct revelation to us of the Father and the Lord reminds us that the Father and the Lord are with us always. It is crucial that we live our lives in view of this reality. The Spirit also indwells us as His temple and is with us always as our Helper. This cannot be stressed enough.

The reader will notice that I have abandoned the scholarly use of the third person in favor of the first person. The first person is better because this topic is intensely personal to many people.

Keeping in step with the Spirit carries the image of marching with the Spirit, a disciplined walk in life with the Spirit who lives in us. Sowing seed to him involves doing good things for all people. Both statements also point to the spiritual disciplines and practices that must characterize our lives as Christians. These include resisting temptation, loving others, prayer, worship, confessing our sin to God, study of the scriptures, and others. Now our vision of life in the Spirit is widening into a broad and rich variety of activities that lead to spiritual growth and good works by the grace of the Father, the Lord, and the Spirit. More will be said about this when the spiritual practices are presented in detail.

Conservative theologians need to give up the idea that all of scripture is revelation. The only parts of scripture that are revelatory are the prophetic portions of both the NT and the OT (Revelation 1:1-3). This can be a stumbling block. The Father, the Lord, and the Spirit reveal their presence directly to us in the present time. The Spirit lives in us, and we know Him (John 14:17). This satisfies our need and desire for continual revelation. Again, the Spirit who lives in us fulfills our need and desire for continual revelation. We ought to stop grieving the Spirit and quenching His fire by our sin (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Spirit is immeasurably superior to the scripture because it is the Spirit who interprets and applies the scripture properly for us. He is with us always engaging in teaching, guiding, counseling, comforting, warning, interceding, prompting, convicting, and reminding us. Conservative theologians need to stop substituting scripture for the

Spirit. This is what the doctrine of the revelatory nature of all of scripture does. We must put the proper focus on the Spirit who lives in us, and who uses the scripture to teach and guide us. The scripture is a tool of the Spirit. The tool is not on the same level as the Holy Spirit; it is a tool. The Spirit also performs His work in us through other means besides the scriptures. He employs any means He wishes to teach and guide us. However, scripture is used by the Spirit often, especially when we deliberately study the scriptures in dependance upon the Spirit (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:14). It is the Holy Spirit who lives in us, and we do know Him. It is time to start taking Jesus' teaching to heart. Our focus must be on the Spirit who lives in us.

All of scripture is not revelation. This is not to minimize the importance of scripture. It is vital. It is used by the Spirit, but it is the Spirit Himself who reveals the Father's will for us. The doctrine of the revelatory nature of all of scripture must go. It is false teaching. Indeed, many stumbling blocks exist for conservative theologians and other people in the conservative churches. We are in danger of becoming just like the Israelites who were with Moses. They whined and complained and engaged in idolatry even though God was right there (e.g. Exodus 32). We have the Holy Spirit as a gift from our God. He lives in us, and we do know Him. The Holy Spirit is our indispensable Teacher and Guide. He is our Helper and He is with us always. Indeed, we are His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). He fulfills our need and desire for continual revelation. This is why the Lord put such emphasis on the Spirit in the Gospel of John.

Ideas are not revelation unless they come to human beings from the Father. This can occur through a New Testament prophet like Agabus, mediated by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-14). The revelation of ideas also occurs continually (repeatedly/often) through the Spirit in His teaching, counseling, guiding, warning, prompting, comforting, helping, interceding, convicting, and reminding us. (And the Lord himself revealed to Paul the gospel that Paul preached, according to Galatians 1:11-12.) The doctrine of the Trinity is also an idea. It is a speculative one that people made up to unnecessarily harmonize OT monotheism with NT testimony about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity obscures the true nature and reality of revelation. We have a different scriptural testimony about the one God now, compared to the OT. The new scriptural testimony is that the one God is the Father. Revelation has progressed from the OT era. In the present, it is the Father who reveals His presence to us. It is the Lord who shows himself to us if we keep his commands. It is the Spirit who lives in us, and we do know Him. The Spirit engages in many activities on our behalf to reveal the will of the Father to us. How can I speak more clearly? The doctrine of the Trinity is a distraction from what is vital to all believers, which is the revelation of the Father to us, the Lord's act of showing himself to us, and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. This is the true nature and reality of revelation.

The doctrines of the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ were presented very clearly in the Athanasian Creed. That creed presents statements that are quite clearly contradictory to scripture. After stating in quite a bit of detail the conception of the Trinity, the Creed says (at the end of the first main section) that none of the Persons of the Trinity is greater or lesser than another. This statement is in direct contradiction to John 14:28 where Jesus teaches that the Father is greater than him. The Athanasian Creed says also (toward the beginning) that the three Persons of the Trinity are equal, and this statement is repeated later (at the end of the first main section). This is a direct contradiction to Philippians 2:6-7 which says that the Lord did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself of his equality with the Father. The Creed then specifically contradicts the concept of the transformation of the divine Son into a human being, which is the basic concept that has been presented as correct. Please look carefully at this statement toward the end of the Athanasian Creed, translated in various ways from Latin (it speaks of the "conversion of the Godhead/deity/divinity into flesh"). So, around 500 CE some people held the idea of Christ's eternal divinity before his conception in Mary, and his humanity after it.

The Athanasian Creed closes with three more erroneous statements. It says that Jesus suffered for our salvation. It then implies that Jesus descended into hell before he was raised from the dead, but after he suffered. And finally, it presents the thought that unbelievers who come under the judgment of God will be exposed to fire forever. First, Jesus suffered, died, and rose to life for our salvation. The writers' failure to identify our Lord's death and resurrection as the basis of our salvation is a frightful omission. Second, the idea that Jesus descended into hell before his resurrection is a strange speculation. The Lord's dead body was in the tomb for three days, after which he was raised from the dead. The writers of the Creed exhibit an erroneous understanding of 1 Peter 3:18-22. The Lord's preaching to the spirits in prison (verse 19) takes place through the Spirit after Jesus' resurrection, not before it. The Lord was made alive by the Spirit first (verse 18). This refers to the Lord's resurrection. And third, the assertion that unbelievers will be punished in fire forever reveals an erroneous understanding of Matthew 25:41. In this verse, Jesus teaches that eternal fire has been prepared for the devil and his angels, and that the ungodly will go into the same fire. John, in Revelation 20:10, corroborates Jesus' reference to the eternal punishment of the devil in eternal fire. Satan, along with the beast and the false prophet in John's vision, are consigned to eternal torment in the lake of burning sulfur. But the Apostle John says just after this statement, in 20:14-15, that the lake of fire is the second death for human beings. The "second death" is God's final act of judgment on all ungodly human beings, including all those who have already died in all times, who will be raised to appear before God for final judgment (Revelation 20:11-13). Consequently, the punishment for Satan and his angels is not the same as it is for human beings. The punishment for human beings is the second death, which is to be thrown into the lake of fire (verse 15). The ungodly will die in the lake of fire, but Satan and his angels will be punished forever in it. Consequently, the teaching of the Creed, that the ungodly will be exposed to fire forever, is not the teaching of the scripture. It should be noted that the beast and the false prophet of John's vision (Rev. 13) cannot be interpreted as human beings because their punishment in Revelation 20:10 is the same as Satan's. It must be concluded that these figures in John's vision are demonic beings. We conclude that the accumulated errors in the Athanasian Creed show the imprecision and even the recklessness of the authors.

The Athanasian Creed says at the beginning that nobody can be saved unless they adhere to the teaching of the Creed in its entirety. So, the writers claim that their teaching is completely correct and that God's final judgment is linked to belief in the Athanasian Creed. This assertion shows the foolishness of the writers.

The Nicene Creed (381 CE) was adopted at the First Council of Constantinople more than a century before the writing of the Athanasian Creed. The Nicene Creed does not present a trinitarian doctrine or a doctrine of Christ that conceives of him as simultaneously divine and human. Please examine the text of the Nicene Creed carefully. It begins by identifying the one God as the Father, and the one Lord as Jesus Christ. It presents the Son as divine before the incarnation, of "one substance" with the Father, who then became a human being by being born of the virgin Mary. No reference to the simultaneous divinity and humanity of Christ is observed. The Nicene Creed is simpler than the Athanasian Creed. Many theologians, however, have tended to read their own trinitarian and Christological conceptions into the text of the Nicene Creed. They do this just like they read their own conceptions into the text of scripture. The Nicene Creed is certainly a straightforwardly scriptural presentation of Christian doctrine. The Athanasian Creed, on the other hand, is a travesty, but it represents the doctrine of millions of professing Christians worldwide.

Since it is time to clean house, some names need to be named. The Reformed and Lutheran churches worldwide are in error on several counts. The doctrine of the Trinity is chief among these. Calvin himself dealt with the issue, but it is obvious that even he was a captive of tradition. So was Luther. Authentic solutions to the problems posed by the doctrine of the Trinity were not evident to

either of these individuals. I am not denying the greatness of these theologians or the brilliance of their overall work. But they were wrong at this point. Furthermore, neither the Reformed nor the Lutheran churches have an excuse for failing to bring the shoddy and reckless work of the writers of the Athanasian Creed under severe criticism for the multiple errors that were presented as the truth in that document. The Reformed and Lutheran churches have much work to do now to rectify their errors. This is about obeying Paul's command to watch our doctrine rigorously and purify it in a spirit of alertness (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). The Reformed and Lutheran churches have not done this. It is never too late to get going.

The Roman Catholic Church is in the same boat as the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

Many evangelical churches in America have similar deficiencies. Evangelical churches and theologians have sought to separate themselves from fundamentalism, but many haven't advanced one millimeter toward that goal. They have refused to consider any criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore, the doctrines of inerrancy and the revelatory nature of all of scripture have been criticized by several evangelical theologians (Bernard Ramm, Donald Bloesch, et al.), but many other evangelical theologians and churches in America have never bothered to take even a small step back from their positions and reconsider these doctrines. Many evangelical theologians and churches have failed to do what Paul instructed Timothy to do. And so, they stand in the same spot as American fundamentalists stood in the first half of the 20th century.

It will be shown in the chapter titled "The Lion" that the doctrines of inerrancy and the revelatory nature of all of scripture are denials of the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is why these doctrines need to be laid aside. More criticism is forthcoming. Constructive doctrine and theology about the Holy Spirit will also be identified that have a weighty bearing on these doctrines as well.

Other mainline churches in America and around the world are in the same boat as the Reformed, Lutheran, and evangelical churches. Their doctrine is far from pristine. It is time to clean it up. If they refuse, they are disobedient to Paul's command to Christian ministers to keep their doctrine pure.

A brief word about Arminian theology is in order. Arminianism side-steps biblical teaching and the believer's experience. Arminian individuals would do well to remember the Lord's words, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, and your fruit remains" (John 15:16, author's rendering).

The Arminian focus on human free will is a serious error because it elevates free will above the grace of God. In my view, Arminius was the father of modern liberal theology, albeit prior to the Enlightenment and before Schleiermacher who explicitly elevated our feelings/experience above faith. Arminius elevated free will above the grace of God. He shared the same penchant for anthropocentric analysis that was promoted by Pelagius before him, and by Schleiermacher after him. Liberal theology and the theology of Arminius are anthropocentric, not theocentric. Arminius' position was a fundamental failure to believe that God has determined to be gracious to us.

Paul did not deny human free will. Neither did Calvin. Human free will is simply assumed by Paul, as it was by Calvin, and it takes its proper place in the context of the primacy of grace and the theological freedom which has been gifted to us (e.g., Gal. 5). Human free will is assumed to be operative along with the theological freedom of which Paul speaks in Galatians 5:1. Paul's commands to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit in Galatians 5:16 and 5:25 assume the operation of our free will. Resisting the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:16) also requires us to exercise our free will. But for Paul (as for Calvin) this exercise follows upon the gifts of grace and theological freedom which have been lavished upon us by the work of Christ Jesus in setting us free (Gal. 5:1).

Calvin's theology of "tulips" in the *Institutes* is biblically founded. Could his discussion of our ongoing sanctification requiring obedience to the Holy Spirit and to the commands of Christ

Jesus be better? Yes. Could it be expanded? Yes. But he gave attention to these matters in Book III of the *Institutes*. It is certainly true that better discussions on these matters were provided by followers of Calvin (e.g., John Owen).

The Arminian teaching that Christians can lose their salvation ignores the extensive testimony of the scripture on the matter. One instance of this testimony is Ephesians 1:13-14 which states that the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing believers' inheritance. Paul's teaching on the matter is very straightforward. Arminius thought that the free will of a tiny speck of dust can prevail over the will, power, and grace of God Almighty. The good news is that we do not do so because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (Eph. 1:13-14).

Arminian theologians have failed to comprehend the stunning and loving dynamics of the believer's experience. The faithfulness of our God to us, when we fail Him at our very core, is what preserves us and indeed moves us to spiritual growth and good works, even works that are greater than the Lord's by the Lord's grace (John 14:12). Arminian theology has evaluated inaccurately what human beings can really do by their own free will. By our own free will, nobody-- absolutely no one-- would escape the final judgment of God. Arminian individuals need to take a step back and reconsider their position. By our own free will, none of us ultimately chooses what is right. The one who denies this has seemingly not experienced the faithful love of God which He expresses through His grace. It is the grace of God alone that saves us. It is grace that rises above our free choices. It is God's love for us that preserves our life. Arminian theologians have not understood this stunning love or its power.

Also, Arminian theologians need to stop imagining that the proper and effective pursuit of holiness requires a theological basis that ultimately puts human free will above the grace of God. It is the grace of God that is decisive in our lives. Calvin's emphasis on the primacy of grace is correct. And Calvin and his followers like John Owen clearly emphasize the necessity of taking action to pursue holiness. Arminian theologians have imagined that their theology is the only authentic basis for pursuing holiness. Quite to the contrary, the emphasis of Arminius and his followers on the finality of human free will is a grave error. It leads to a litany of errors. This is a clear call to Arminian individuals and churches to abandon their error and firmly hold to the scriptural focus on the grace of God.

The grace of our God leads to our submission to the Father and resisting the devil (James 4:1-7). When we falter, the Father increases His grace toward us (James 4:6). The Father's grace always prevails (Romans 8:38-39). Arminius did not believe it.

Arminian theologians appear to have never thought about Peter's denials of the Lord. The Lord graciously reinstated Peter (John 21). The apostle went on to do works that were even greater than the Lord's by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). This fulfilled the Lord's promise that believers would do the works of the Lord and even greater works than his by his grace (John 14:12-14). The triumph of the Christian is guaranteed by the grace and the power of our God, of our Lord, and of the Holy Spirit. Much more will be said about the Christian life when the topics of spiritual practices and resisting temptation are discussed in detail.

The theology of many in the Wesleyan-Arminian holiness tradition and other holiness churches-- to make provision for being afraid of losing our salvation-- is seriously in error. The biblical texts about fearing God in both testaments and fearing Christ Jesus in the NT (e.g., Proverbs 9:10, Ecclesiastes 12:13, 2 Corinthians 5:11, Philippians 2:12, Colossians 3:22, Revelation 14:7, et al.) have nothing to do with believers being afraid of losing their salvation. The biblical writers are pointing to a proper fear of being disciplined by a God who is indeed jealous for His people, and by Christ Jesus who is jealous for the honor of his Father. John records Jesus' words about this in Revelation 3:19-22. The Lord's discipline occurs because of the Lord's love. It is like the discipline of a father toward his child; the father still loves the child that he disciplines. Such discipline is

necessary for children, as it is with believers (Hebrews 12:7-11). Just like children love their father but fear his discipline, so believers love the Lord, and their God, even as they fear their discipline. This is the fear, which is proper, to which the writers of the scriptures point. Those who point to a fear of losing our salvation have ignored this teaching in the scriptures, and it seems that they have never experienced the discipline of the Lord for their sin. This is a clear call to many churches in the holiness traditions to clean up their doctrine.

A brief word about the charismatic and Pentecostal churches worldwide is necessary. The Pentecostal and charismatic churches have done the Church a service in pointing strongly to the power of the Holy Spirit. But numerous abuses have occurred in these churches and so the need for discernment, through the Spirit, is evident when considering the teaching in these churches. All the criticisms thus far of the evangelical churches apply to the Pentecostal and charismatic churches because these churches largely adopted evangelical theology and then defined their own distinctives. The criticism of Arminianism applies to many of these churches since they have adopted a Wesleyan-Arminian, or Arminian, perspective on holiness.

The Holy Spirit is active in countless ways in our time. He is engaged in a new creation, according to Paul (Galatians 6:15). The power of the Spirit has been presented in this study thus far in as personal and dynamic a way as possible. We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit, according to Paul (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Paul dropped a nuclear bomb when he declared this. All believers need to come to terms with what this means.

It is by the Spirit that we grow in love and do good works like the Lord did, by the grace of our God, of the Lord, and of the Spirit. It is also the Spirit who alerts us to the lies and temptations of the devil and spurs us on to resist the liar (Galatians 5:16-17). Love and resisting temptation are the greatest spiritual disciplines, as will be shown more fully in the chapters on spiritual practices and resisting temptation.

The Christian life is miraculous, through and through. The Spirit will help us to see this. We are surrounded by the grace of God. We are surrounded by His love. We are protected from the devil by the Lord. And the Spirit leads us daily, every day, all day long, in our whole life and faith. This is the proper focus of the theology of the Holy Spirit. I would never deny the reality of miraculous phenomena or the importance of the exercise of all the gifts of the Spirit for the benefit of the church. Several charismatic and Pentecostal theologians have stressed this recently, and we agree (e.g., Sam Storms, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 2020). The spiritual gifts, however, are only one way that we exercise our love. The horizons of love stretch far beyond the exercise of spiritual gifts in the churches. I ask the readers in the Pentecostal and charismatic persuasions to consider the present study carefully, to see what you might glean about the power of the Holy Spirit in our whole life.

The Spirit moves like the wind (John 3:8). If we have learned anything about our God, and about the Spirit, and about the Lord, it is that they are free, and they are full of surprises. This is what the event at Pentecost in Acts 2 teaches us. This is what we learn by our own experience also. I hope that readers in the charismatic/Pentecostal traditions will consider thoughtfully how they might improve their own perspective on the power of the Spirit.

I will be blunt about something. The two large Pentecostal denominations that originated because of the work of William Seymour on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, namely COGIC (Church of God in Christ, 1907) and a few years later Assemblies of God (1914), lost their grip on their definitive spiritual contribution to modern church life in America. COGIC, for a few years, showed an exemplary (Spirit-led) manifestation of interracial worship and church life. This was also characteristic of William Seymour's church in Los Angeles (1906). A great work of the Holy Spirit in America was observed in the early years of the 20th century. This should have been the primary focus of COGIC when they reflected on the great power of the Holy Spirit in their churches. But this

perspective was lost and Assemblies of God arose out of COGIC as a church for white Pentecostals, only a few years after COGIC was established.

The primary miracle in COGIC was tossed aside. (Interracial unity was a miracle because it arose out of the spiritual regeneration of the people.) The thing worth fighting for was abandoned. The church should have fought hard for the repeal of Jim Crow laws in the state legislatures. Jim Crow laws made it very difficult to conduct an interracial church ministry. The American Civil War was fought over the issue of racial equality, and the results of that war should have made it obvious to every believer in Christ that the Jim Crow laws were simply foolish. A very great amount of blood was spilled in the American Civil War fighting against slavery.

The U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld Jim Crow in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), could have been sought to reconsider that decision. COGIC could have pursued a court case in the U.S. Supreme Court. In such a case, one issue would have stood out: Did hundreds of thousands of Americans die for nothing in the Civil War? The Court did not see the answer until the 1960s. Courts can be stupid.

COGIC had every reason to lead a fight to strike down Jim Crow laws. They should have gone to the U.S. Supreme Court over the matter. They did not fight hard enough in their early days. This should have been one of their missions. They did not embrace love firmly enough, which is the Lord's paramount command to believers, and is listed first in the fruit of the Holy Spirit by Paul in Galatians 5. COGIC should have fought for love, for true racial equality, in the Supreme Court. The formation of Assemblies of God was a travesty. It would be appropriate now for these two large denominations to reunite.

A brief criticism of American fundamentalism is also in order. The criticisms already offered concerning the conservative/evangelical churches apply to American fundamentalism also, but we offer three additional perspectives that are pertinent to the theology of American fundamentalism at present.

First, regarding the practice of biblical criticism, which has been opposed by some on the conservative side of the theological spectrum including some in the fundamentalist camp: Those who apply critical methods to the study of the Bible should be allowed to do their work. Such work is an analysis based on reason and evidence and can most certainly give rise to insights about scripture that are useful. The work of biblical criticism is like the work of natural scientists. Both can produce useful results. Both can produce results that are destructive to faith also, depending upon the presuppositions of the authors, but that is no reason to disallow them. Should we fear human reason? Listening to scripture by faith and in the power of the Spirit is primary. Biblical criticism must not be allowed to infringe upon that kind of study. The conservative/fundamentalist objection to biblical criticism that does this is correct. But the methods themselves, when they are simply analytic, are legitimate. It is quite true that faith cannot be made a slave to reason as it was in the position of Schleiermacher, who made faith a slave to feeling also. The demotion of faith is to be rejected. And none of the methods of biblical criticism can possibly be better than the common method of reading literature that we have all learned from our childhood and youth in school. More will be said about this in the chapter titled "The Lion."

Second, biologists (and others who adhere to evolutionary biology) are in error if they assert that theories and models of evolution show that God does not exist. The statement is an overstatement and cannot be justified rigorously. Christians should not sweat so profusely over such overstatements and then conclude that biologists have no real basis for forming evolutionary theories and models in the first place. The overstatement is simply an example of unbelief and Christians need to learn how to take such unbelief in stride without resorting to rationalistic/presuppositional/evidential defenses of Christian faith, like conservative apologists, or to strident opposition coupled with obscurantism and anti-intellectualism like some

fundamentalists. Biology, as an analytic methodology, must be allowed to run its course. If it appears, based on analysis, that evolution has been operative in the natural history of the earth, then let the theories/models of the evolutionists stand. The theories and models of biological evolution, like all scientific theories and models, are tentative and incomplete conceptions of nature. Let biologists keep working and let the theories/models change over time as they will inevitably do. The question of God's existence is beyond the scope of scientific inquiry which is properly confined to the analysis of the physical world. Therefore, science has nothing to say about God's existence. However, correcting the philosophical error of the evolutionist who asserts that the theories and models of evolution rule out the existence of God does nothing to help the errant individual make real spiritual progress. Progress is only made by a respectful witness to the individual of the death and resurrection of the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the individual's heart. The Spirit must reveal the truth about Jesus Christ and enable the individual to believe in him. Paul's advice is paramount (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

And third, fundamentalists must come to terms with the reality that the burning question of the relation of God's activity to the physical world is simply mysterious. What can be said is that God is free and does as He wishes. Nobody can understand how God works. This conditions our attitude toward the theories of biological evolution. While we must allow biologists to continue with their theoretical work, this does not mean that we should make a commitment to the theories and models of evolution. They are nowhere near good enough for anyone to be in the least committed to them. It is proper for Christians to simply state that we do not know how God created life. This is consistent not only with the theological truth that we cannot fathom how God works, but it is also consistent with the philosophical reality that scientific theories are always tentative and incomplete. This position may seem odd to some, but it is sound (and necessary) theologically, philosophically, and scientifically. Understanding this position does require careful inquiry into sound theology, philosophy, science, and the history of scientific revolutions, specifically the revolution from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. American fundamentalists must lay aside anti-intellectualism.

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