

Recovering the Heart of Reformed Spirituality

A Mighty Fortress is our God

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never
failing;

Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills
prevailing:

For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us
woe;

His craft and power are great, and, armed with
cruel hate,

On earth is not his equal.

A Mighty Fortress is our God

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving
would be losing;

Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of
God's own choosing:

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is
He;

Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the
same,

And He must win the battle.

A Mighty Fortress is our God

And though this world, with devils filled, should
threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to
triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not
for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is
sure,
One little word shall fell him.

A Mighty Fortress is our God

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks
to them, abideth;

The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him
Who with us sideth:

Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;

The body they may kill: God's truth abideth
still,

His kingdom is forever.

Overview

- I. **Recap** of Reformed Spirituality
- II. **Recap** Heart of Reformed Spirituality
- III. **John Calvin** + Reformed Spirituality
- IV. **What happened?**

I. Recap Reformed Spirituality

A. Working definition of spirituality

- “spirituality” < *ruach*
 - spirit
 - breath
 - wind
- “spirituality” = what “**animates,**” provides “**breath**” or “**spirit**” for our life.
- “spirituality” = a way **seeing** and **living** life.

I. Recap Reformed Spirituality

B. **Origin:** the covenantal embrace of the Trinity

- love of the Father
- the grace of the Son
- the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Not: *our* embrace of the Trinity

II. Recap Reformed Spirituality

C. **Character:** walking with God as a covenant community

- loving the Father
- through union with Christ
- by keeping in step with the Spirit

Not: *objective* spirituality, but *subjective*

I. Recap Reformed Spirituality

D. **Posture:** fear-of-the-LORD

- in holy wonder and absolute attentiveness having our thoughts, emotions and behavior **synchronized** with the Trinity
- who is mysteriously present and active in creation (giving life), history (rescuing from sin and evil) and church (creating communities of love)

Not: a journey into **self**, but into **obedience**.

II. Reformed Spirituality

D. **Means:** subjective faith

- affirming with the mind
 - trusting with the heart
 - surrendering with the will
-
- ❖ **Not:** *self*-generated, but *God*-generated.
 - ❖ **See presentation # 3: Spiritual Disciplines**

II. Reformed Spirituality

E. Goal: glory of God

- revelatory = God on display
- responsive = worship of God

Not: *self*-focussed, but *God*-focussed.

I. Recap Reformed Spirituality

- **arises** from God's **subjective**, covenantal Trinitarian embrace
- **exists** in our **subjective**, covenantal, synchronized Trinitarian embrace
- **characterized** by **subjective** fear-of-the-LORD
- **experienced** through **subjectively** exercising faith
- **purpose** is to **subjectively** display God

Reformed Spirituality = **subjectively** living in sync with the Trinity through faith as a covenant community by **being God on display** in holy wonder and obedient attentiveness.



II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

A. Main Idea: mutual co-inhabiting

Subjectively living **with Christ in the Father**
through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

and

Subjectively having **Christ and the Father**
live in us through the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit

II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

B. Grounding Text

John 14:20

On that day you will realize that ***I am in my Father***, and ***you are in me***, and ***I am in you.***

II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

The church lives with Christ in the Father through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and thus **shares** in **God's Father-Son love.**

- **Father:** “My beloved Son”
- **Son:** “Abba, Father”
- **Spirit:** personal bond of fellowship

The church shares in God's Father-Son love

*Abba,
Father*



The church shares in God's Father-Son love foreshadowed in the Old Testament



II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

C. Nature of the co-inhabiting God's Father-Son love

Not like water and wine

Pantheistic merging



II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

C. Nature mutual co-inhabiting

Not like oil and water

Deistic detachment



II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

C. Nature of mutual co-inhabiting

Unconfused + unmixed

Undivided + unseparated

retention of own properties



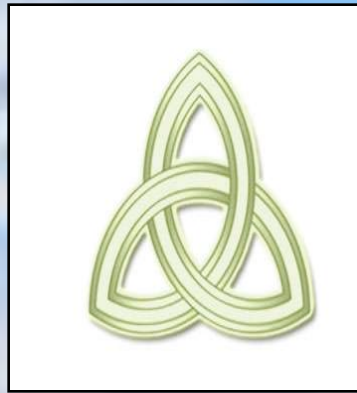
II. Recap Heart Reformed Spirituality

D. The grounding text **sheds light on other texts**

In him we **subjectively** live and move
and have our being (Acts 17:28)



Not pantheism



In Christ

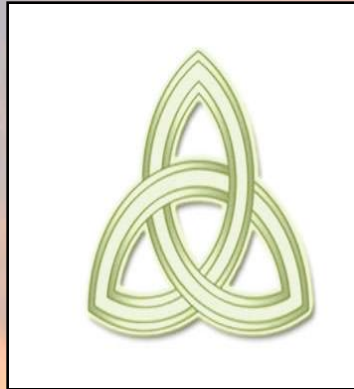


Not Deism

Subjectively becoming one spirit with Christ (1 Cor. 6:17)



Pantheism



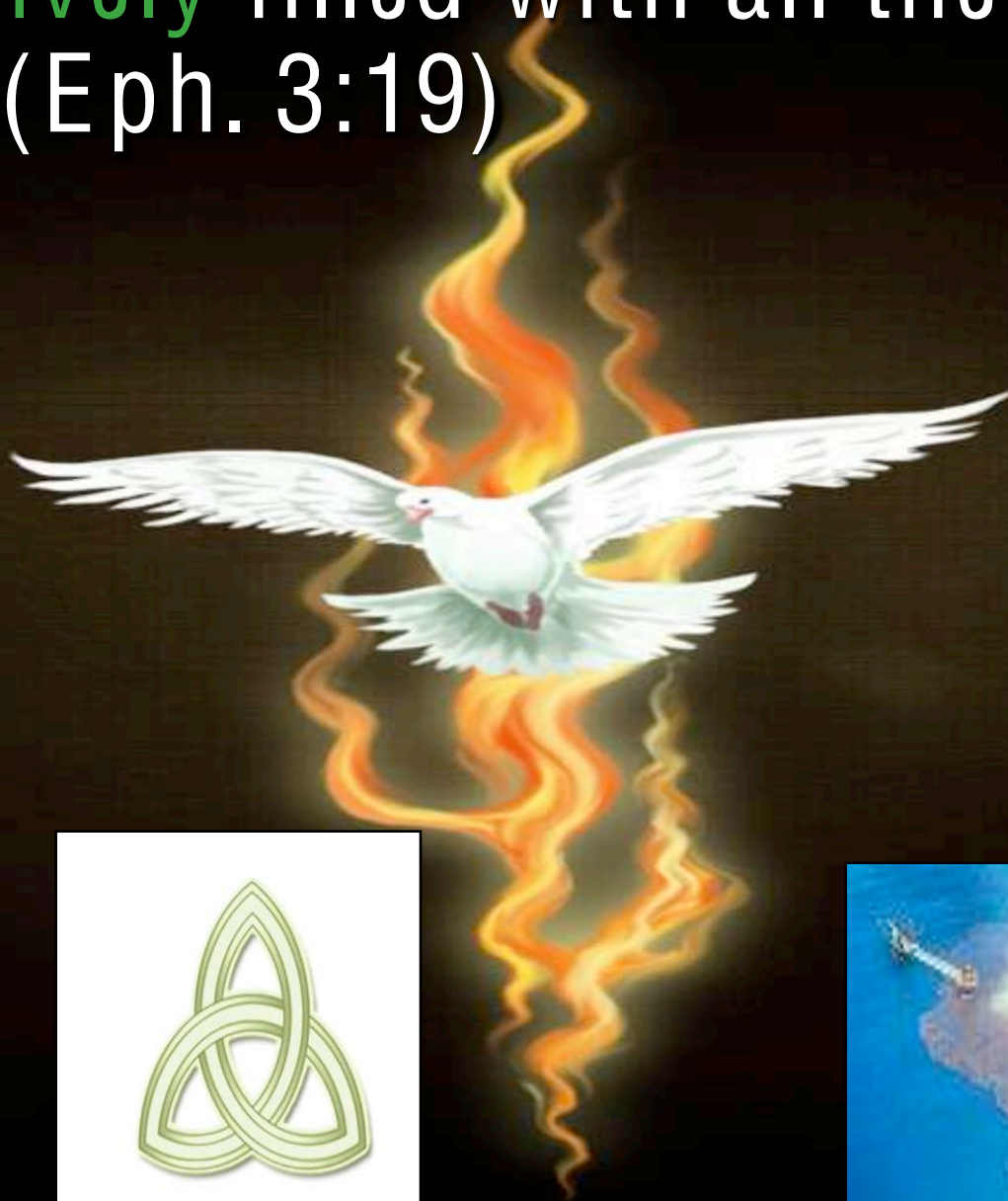
In Christ



Deism



Subjectively filled with all the fullness
of God (Eph. 3:19)



Subjectively becoming partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)



Pantheism



In Christ

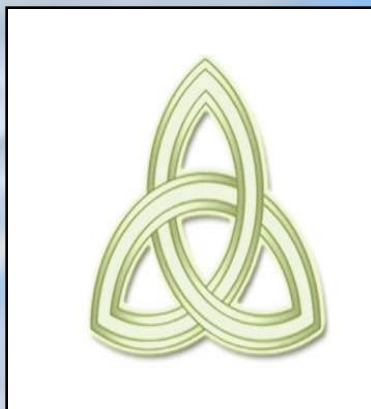


Deism

Subjectively living and moving and having
our being in the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:8)



Not pantheism



In Christ

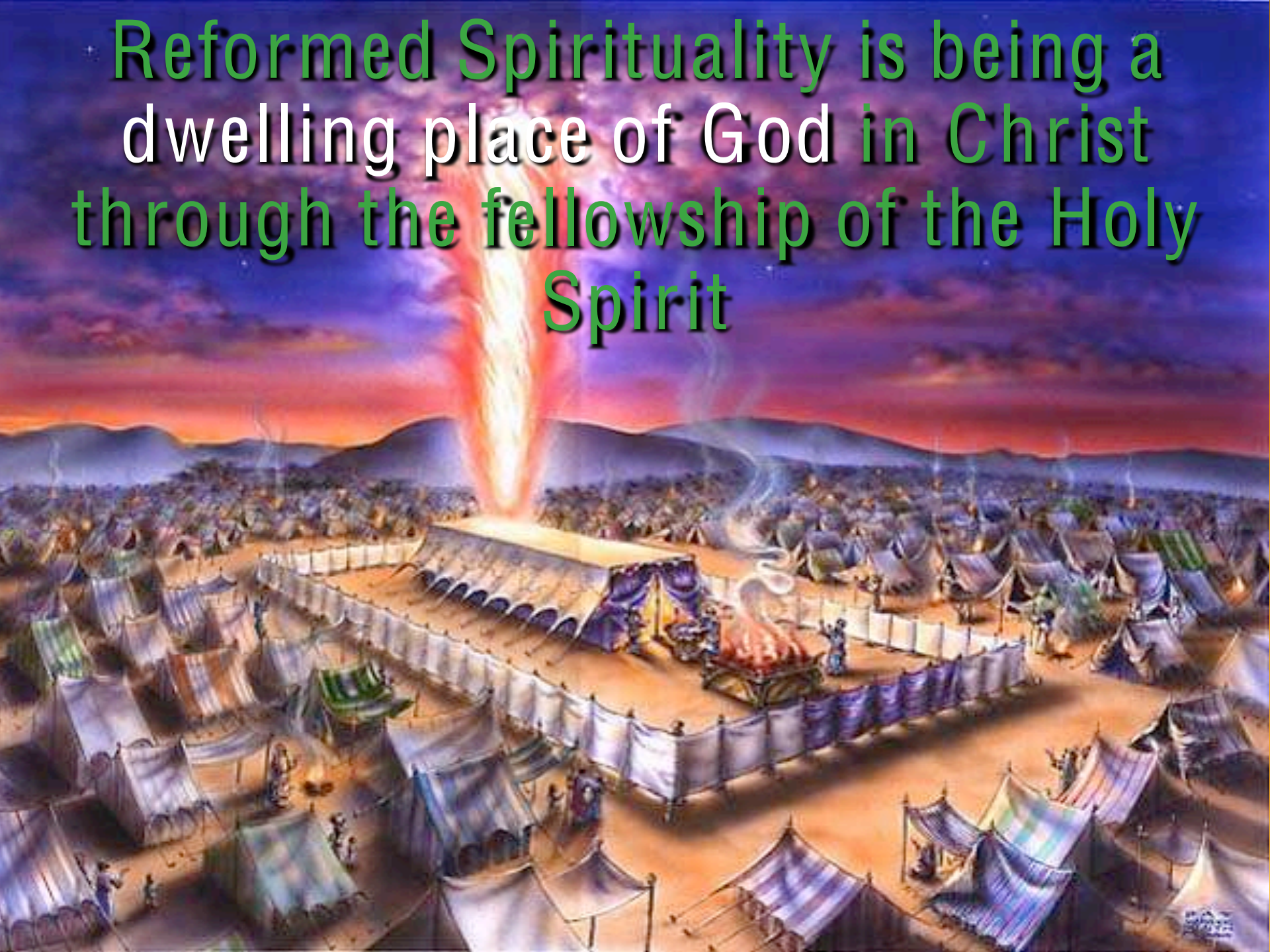


Not Deism

Reformed Spirituality = in Christ we
subjectively co-inhabit the Trinity as a
covenant community and subjectively live in
sync with them by being God on display in
holy wonder and obedient attentiveness



Reformed Spirituality is being a
dwelling place of God in Christ
through the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit



IV. John Calvin and Reformed Spirituality



Overview

- I. Calvin's normative paradigm
- II. Some theological themes

I. Calvin's normative paradigm

“It is however, evident that throughout his discussion of the relation of **God and humanity** Calvin regards a **single paradigm as normative**.

The paradigm in question is that made available by the **incarnation**, specifically **the union without fusion** of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.

Time and time again, Calvin appeals to the Christologically grounded formula, ***distinctio sed non separatio***; at this point, two ideas maybe ***distinguished*** but not ***separated***.”

Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 149.

I. Calvin's normative paradigm

union without fusion of divinity + humanity

distinct but not separated



II. Themes: God and creation (1)

- Creation is **dependent** upon God to sustain and uphold it.
- God uses so-called **second causes** such as the heavenly bodies, angels and human beings and institutions to sustain and uphold creation.
- Yet, God is never ***separated*** from these second causes, but always ***united*** to them by some sort of “**secret influence**” or “**secret infusion.**”

God and creation united by some
sort of “secret influence” or
“secret infusion”



II. Themes: God and creation (2)

- God is ***united*** to to creation by some sort of “**secret influence**” or “**secret infusion.**”
- Thus, creation is a “**theatre of God’s glory**” and a “**mirror of divinity.**”

The “theatre of God’s glory” and “mirror of divinity”



II. Themes: God and the church

“When Paul said that we are **flesh of the flesh of Christ** (Eph. 5:30-31), he adds at once: ‘This is a mystery’ (Eph. 5:32).

“For Paul did not mean to tell in what sense Adam uttered the words, but to set forth under the figure and likeness of marriage the holy union that makes us **one with Christ.**”

The church = one flesh with Christ



II. Themes: God and the soul (1)

The soul is a person's **immaterial** self that animates and governs his life.

The supernatural gift of knowledge, holiness and righteousness is **engraved** upon the soul.

The soul is made for communion with God and is constantly **searching** for God, first **moving towards** God and then **resting in** God.



The soul moving towards
God and resting in Him



II. Themes: God and the soul (2)

Having encouraged his readers not to **rack their brains** about God, but rather to **contemplate** Him in his works, Calvin writes,

“We must therefore admit in God’s individual works—but especially in them as a whole—that God’s powers are actually represented as in **a painting**.”

Thereby the whole of mankind is **invited** and **attracted** to recognition of him, and from this to true and complete happiness.”

The soul contemplating God



II. Themes: God and the incarnation

The Son of **God** became the Son of *man* “to impart **what was his to us**, and to make what was **his by nature ours by grace**.”

“Let us then mark that **the end** of the gospel is, to render us eventually **conformable** to God, and, if we may so speak, **to deify** us [*quasi deificari*].”

For Calvin *participation in God's divine nature* is **the greatest possible blessing**.

The incarnation = our human nature has been forever joined to **Christ's divine nature**



The greatest possible blessing

The incarnation foreshadowed in the Old Testament



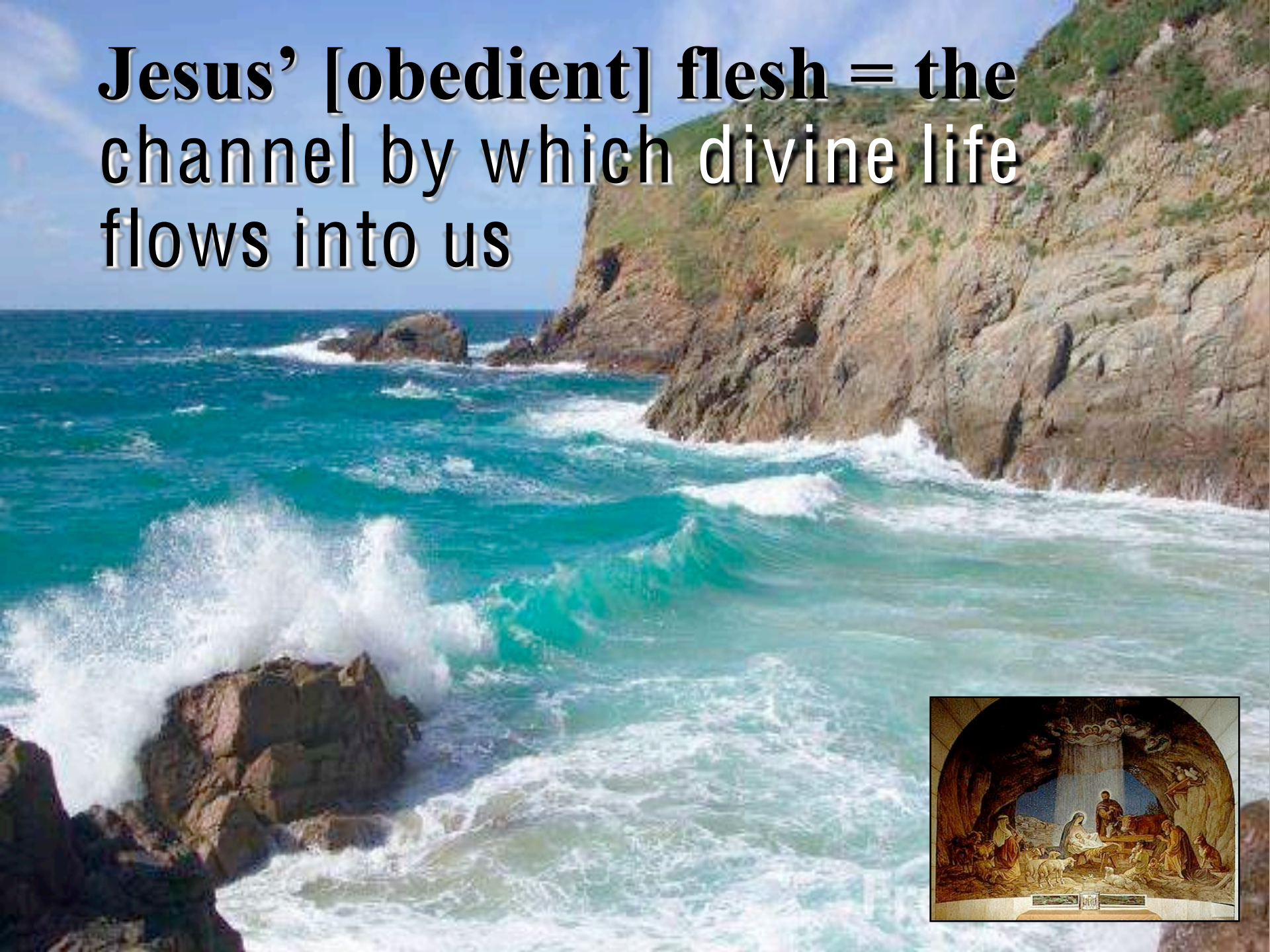
II. Themes: God and the ascended Christ

As **his body** was raised up above all the heavens, so **his power** and **energy** were diffused and spread beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth [cf. L.D. 18].

Thus, “**the [obedient] flesh of Christ** is like **a rich and inexhaustible fountain** that pours into us the life springing forth from the **Godhead** itself.”

It is “‘**the channel**’ by which **the divine life** flows into us.”

**Jesus' [obedient] flesh = the
channel by which divine life
flows into us**



Jesus obedient flesh = the channel
through which divine life flows into
the church foreshadowed in the Old
Testament



II. Themes: God's divine life = his Father-Son love

“We ought therefore **to cast our eyes on Christ**, in whom will be found the testimony and pledge of the love of God; for **the love of God** was fully **poured out on him**, that **from him** it might **flow to his members**.”

“It is an invaluable privilege of faith, that we know that **Christ was loved by the Father** on our account, that we might be **made partakers of the same love**, and might enjoy it for ever.”

God's divine life = his Father-Son love

*Abba,
Father*



II. Themes: God's Father-Son love *must* subjectively dwell within us

“ . . . we must understand that as long as Christ remains **outside** of us, and we are **separated** from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race **remains useless** and of **no value** for us.

Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to **become ours** and **to dwell within us [through the Holy Spirit].”**

God's Father-Son love *must*
subjectively dwell within us



God's Father-Son love *must*
subjectively dwell with us
foreshadowed in the Old Testament

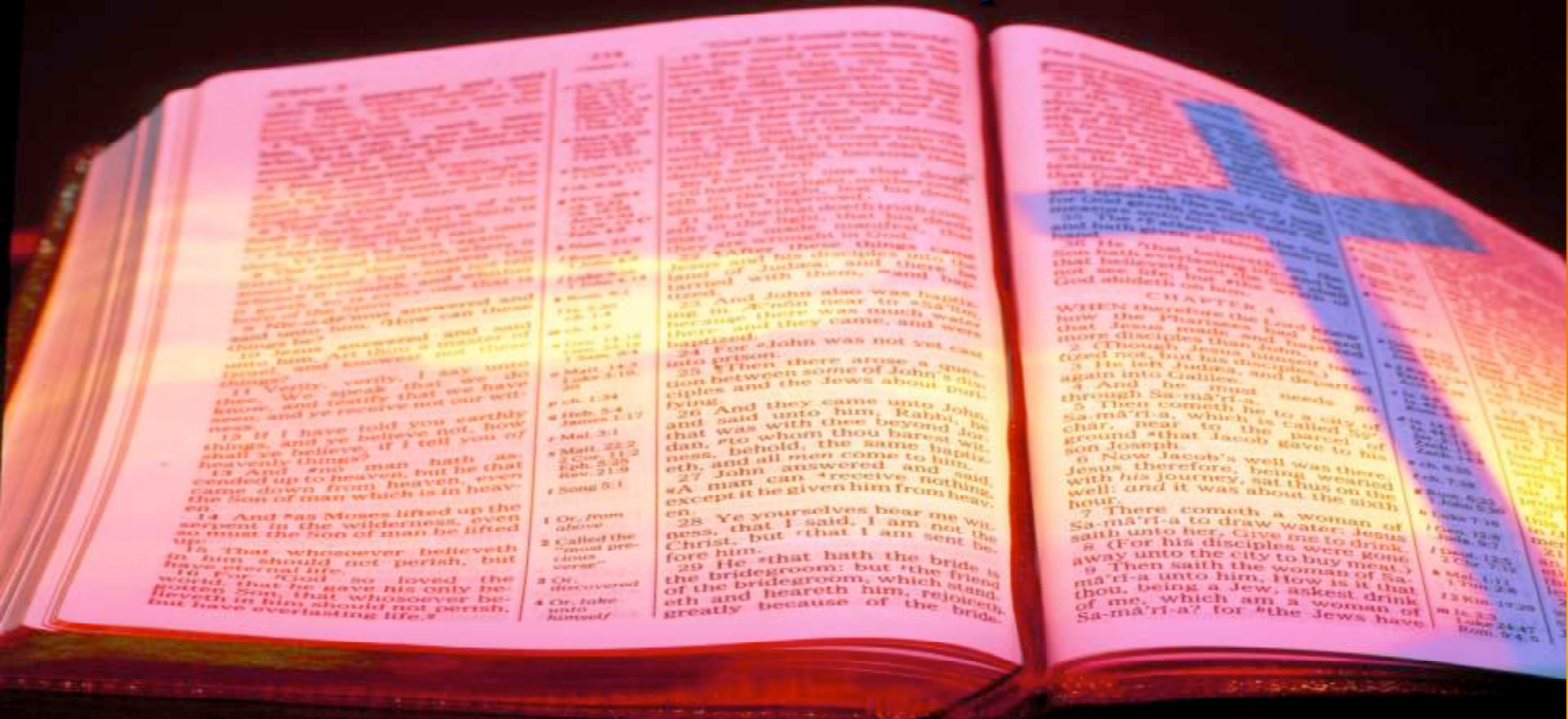


II. Themes: God's Father-Son love and the Scriptures

“This, then, is the true knowledge of Christ, if we receive him as he is offered by the Father; namely, **clothed with his gospel** . . .

[For] we say that **the Word itself**, however it be imparted to us, is like **a mirror** in which faith may **contemplate** God.”

Christ clothed in the Scriptures

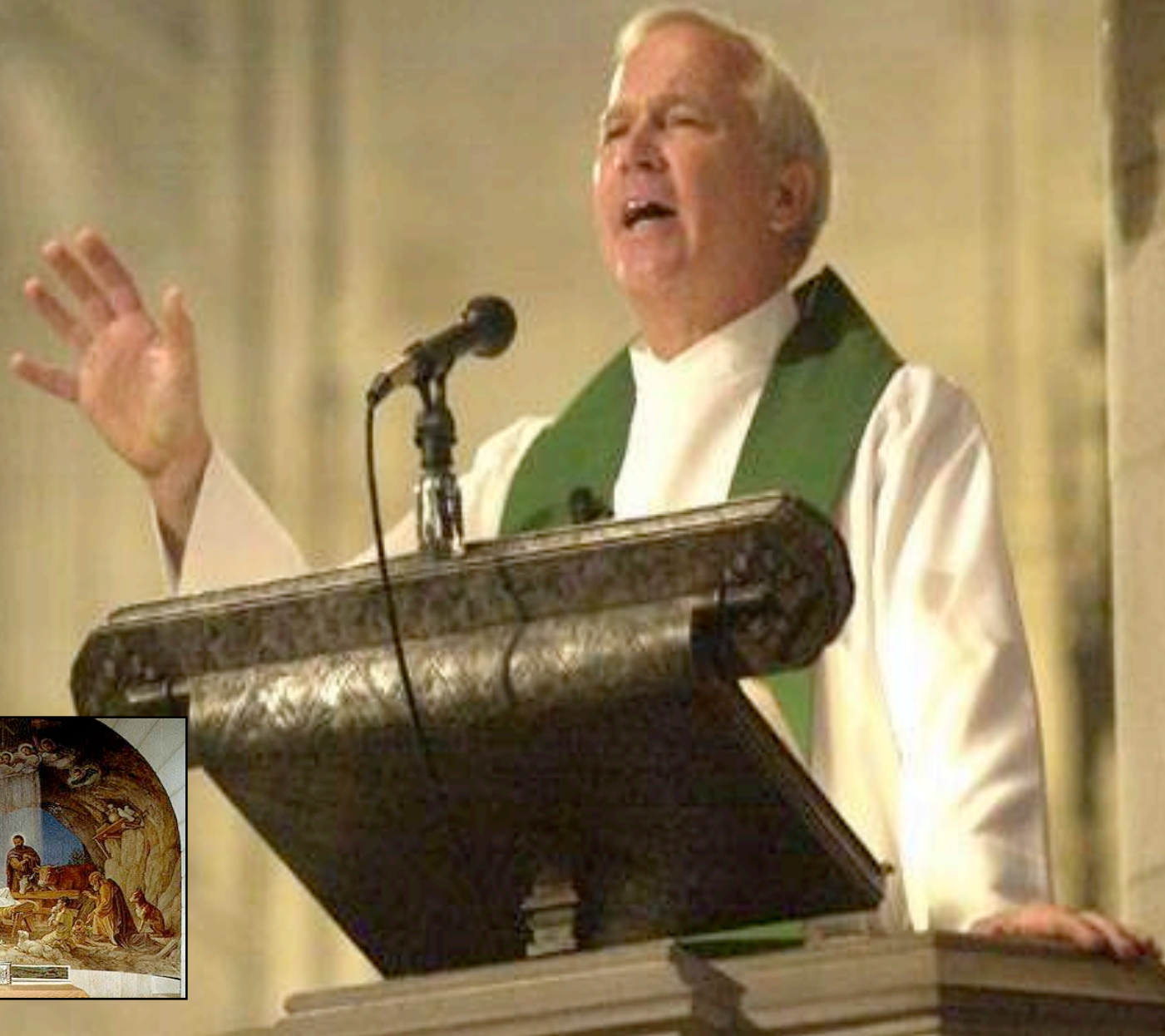


II. Theme: God's Father-Son love and preaching

Preaching does not merely point to Christ, but is the **coming among men and women of Christ Himself.**

In the preaching **Jesus Christ addresses us just as surely as He did in his day.**

Christ clothed in the preaching



II. Themes: God's Father-Son love and the sacrament of baptism

And just as the twig **draws substance and nourishment** from the root to which it is grafted, so those who receive baptism with right faith **truly feel the effective working of Christ's death** in the mortification of their flesh, **together with the working of his resurrection** in the vivification of the Spirit (Rom. 6:8).

The effective working of Christ's death and resurrection



II. Themes: God's Father-Son love and the Lord's Supper

The “chief function of the Sacrament . . . is to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that **his flesh is food** indeed and **his blood is drink** (John 6:56), which **feed us unto eternal life** (John 6:55).”

“ . . . just as **bread** when taken as food imparts vigor to the body,” so **the life of Jesus Christ Himself** passes into us.

God's Father-Son love and the Lord's Supper

The **Holy Spirit** is the One who brings about this life-giving fellowship

He does this “if we are **lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds**, to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom, **as the symbols invite us to him in his wholeness.**”

Consequently, **Christ** is not [physically] brought down to us, but **we** are lifted up to Him.

The life of Jesus passing into us



God's Father-Son love and the world

Infused with God's life, God's sons and daughters **embody** and **represent** Him in the **various spheres of life** God calls them to go.

In doing so, they will **work together with God**
In combating the forces of chaos and disorder
while at the same time **work together with**
Him for the redemption of society.

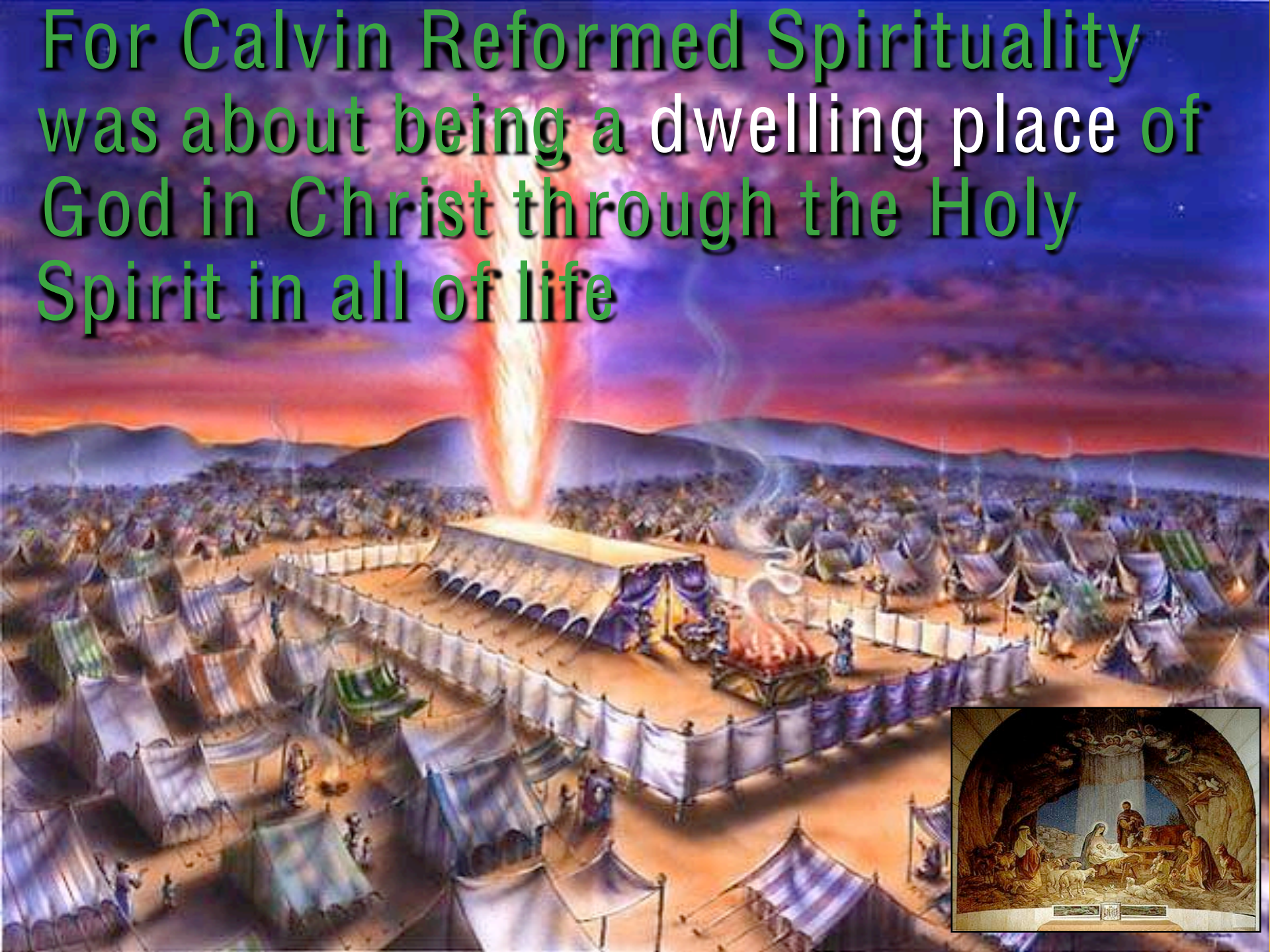
Reformed Spirituality is **working together** with Christ and **embodying** God's Father-Son love [= **God on display**] in the various spheres of life God calls to serve



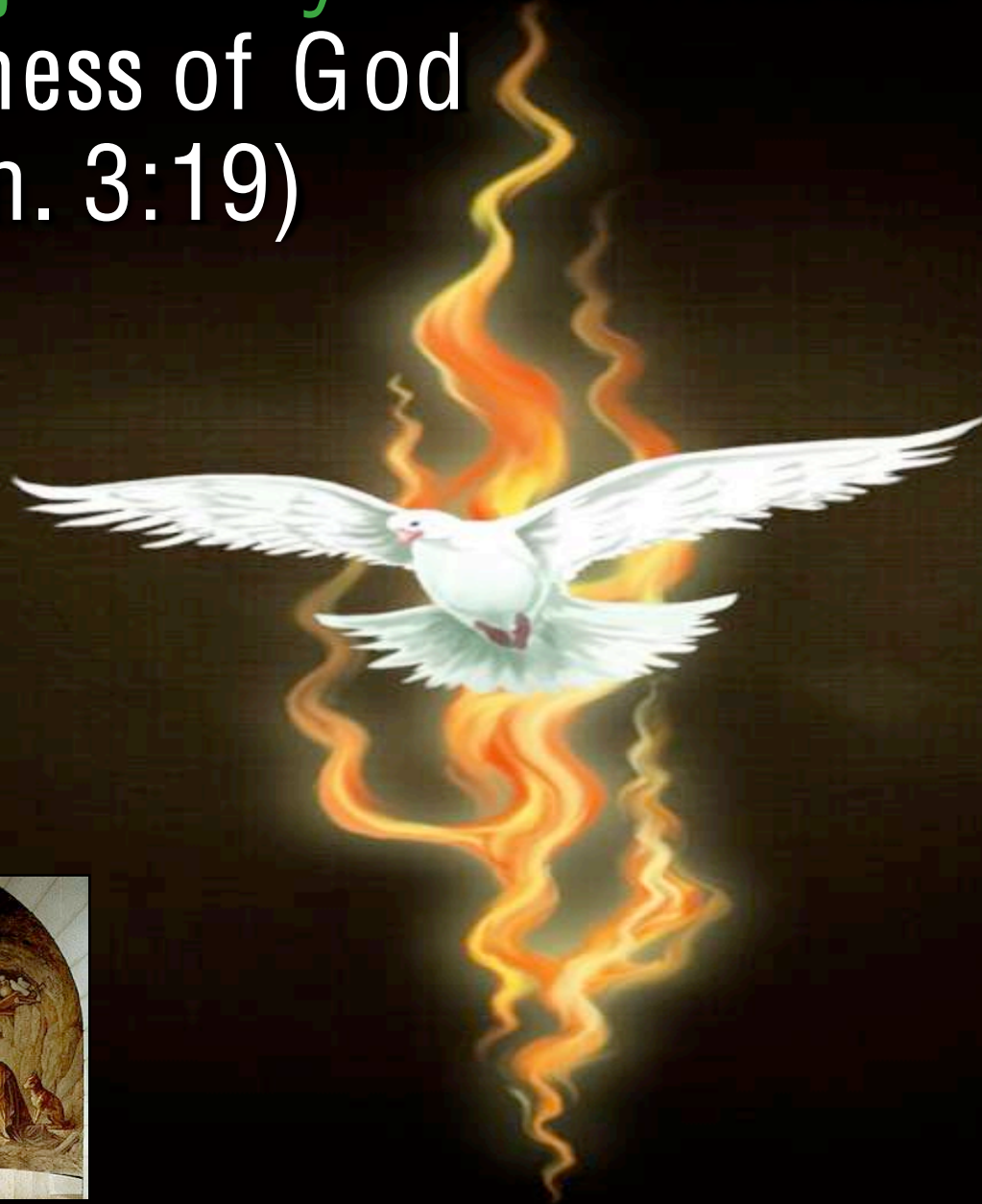
Summary: John Calvin and Reformed Spirituality

- The **origin** of Reformed spirituality is **union with Christ** or **co-inhabiting God's Father-Son love through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit**
- The **nature** of union with Christ is **perichoretic** or **a union without fusion**
- The **character** of Reformed spirituality is essentially **subjective** or **embodying God's Father-Son love through the Holy Spirit**

For Calvin Reformed Spirituality
was about being a dwelling place of
God in Christ through the Holy
Spirit in all of life



Subjectively filled with all the
fullness of God
(Eph. 3:19)



Partakers of God's divine nature



The greatest possible blessing

IV. What happened?

Overview

A. The Ancient Church

B. Scholasticism

C. The Reformation

D. The Enlightenment

IV. What happened?

A. The Ancient Church

The theology of the ancient church was like **a complex web** of interrelated ideas.

Spirituality was **connected** to the whole-Trinity, creation, incarnation, death, resurrection, faith, church, worship, sacraments and the end times.



Spirituality and theology connected like
a web of interconnected ideas

Spirituality = *lived* theology



IV. What happened?

B. Scholasticism (1)

Scholasticism turned theology from a web of interrelated ideas into a **set of building blocks.**

Theology as a set of building blocks

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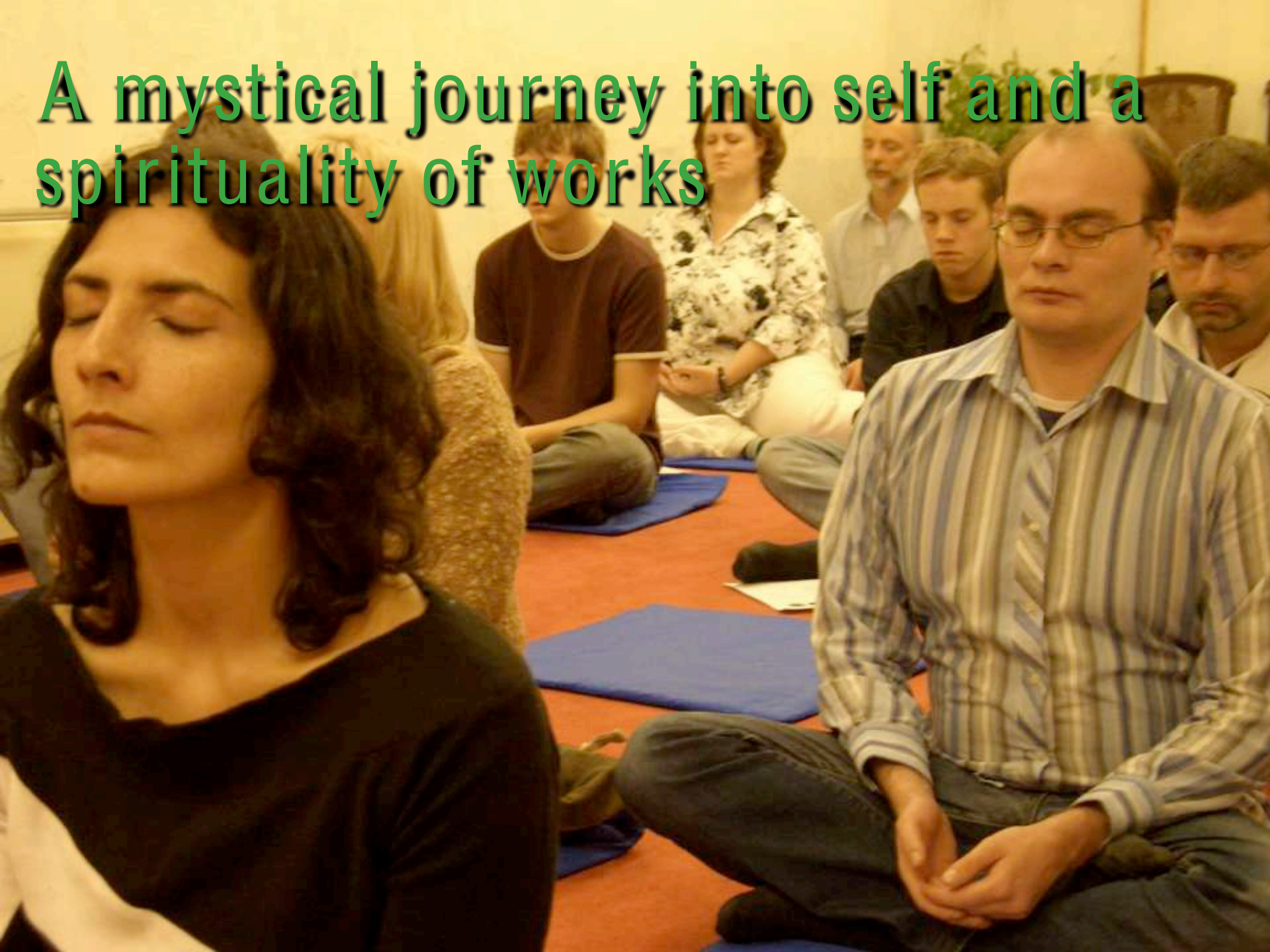
IV. What happened?

B. Scholasticism (2)

Scholastic theology separated **spirituality** from **the web of interrelated ideas** and made it into a separate discipline.

As result, spirituality no longer was **contemplating** the works of the Trinity + obediently **living in sync** with the Trinity, but a **mystical journey into self and a spirituality of works.**

A mystical journey into self and a spirituality of works



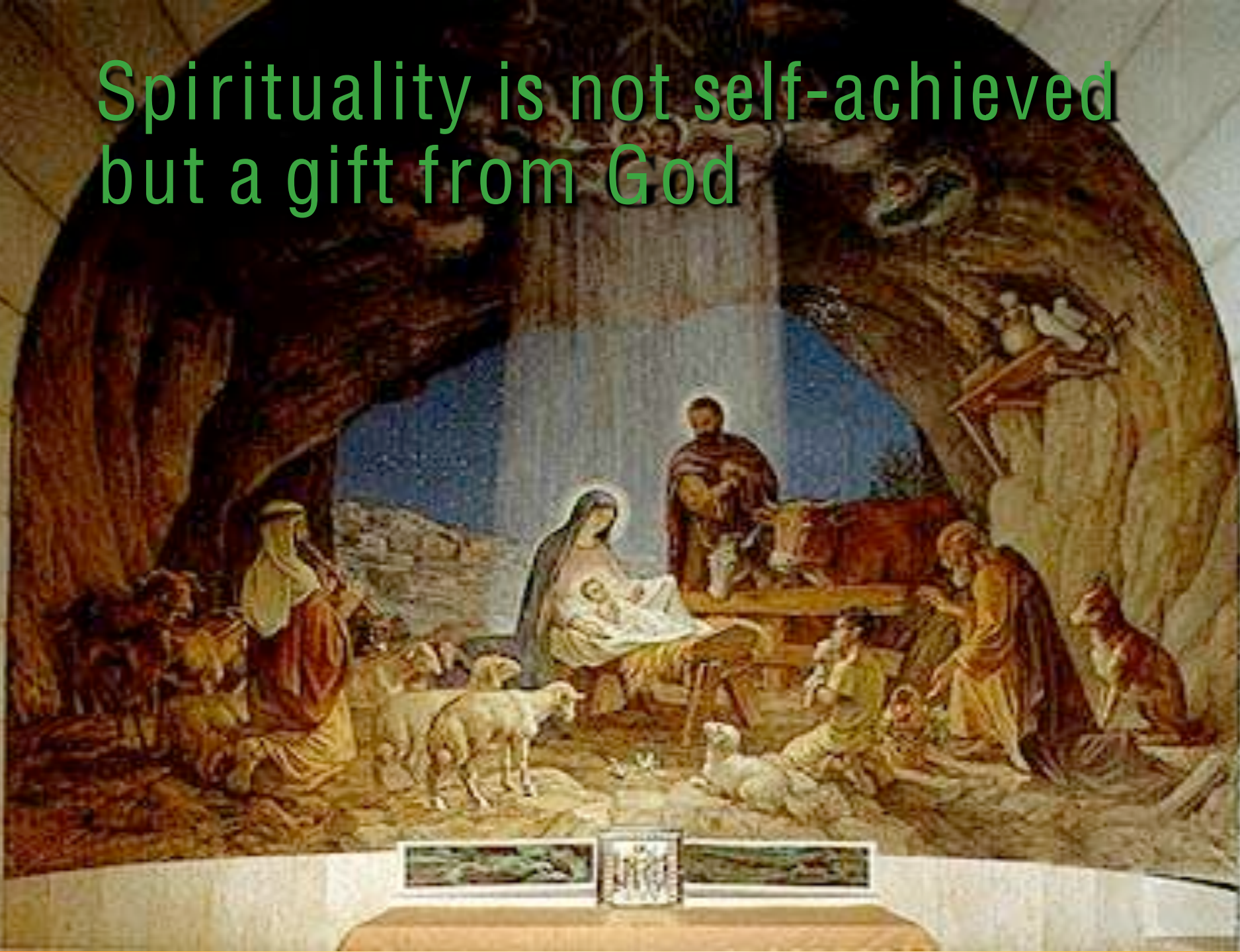
IV. What happened?

C. The Reformation (1)

A rediscovery that spirituality is not self achieved, but **a gift** from God

This gift from God is **his embrace of his church** in Christ through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality is not self-achieved
but a gift from God



IV. What happened?

C. The Reformation (2)

However spirituality was separated from a **relationally lived theology through union with Christ** and became rooted in **forensic justification** that did not encourage the mystery of contemplation of and participation with God, but turned into an **intellectual, non participatory spirituality**.

From contemplative, participatory spirituality to intellectual, non-participatory spirituality



Union with Christ



Forensic justification

IV. What happened?

D. The Enlightenment

A shift in emphasis from the whole to **the parts** and the **rational** and **scientific** study of the parts

A shift in emphasis from the subjective **I-Thou relationship** (lived theology + union with God) to an objective **I-It relationship** (facts and right belief)

Lived theology

I-Thou relationship with God

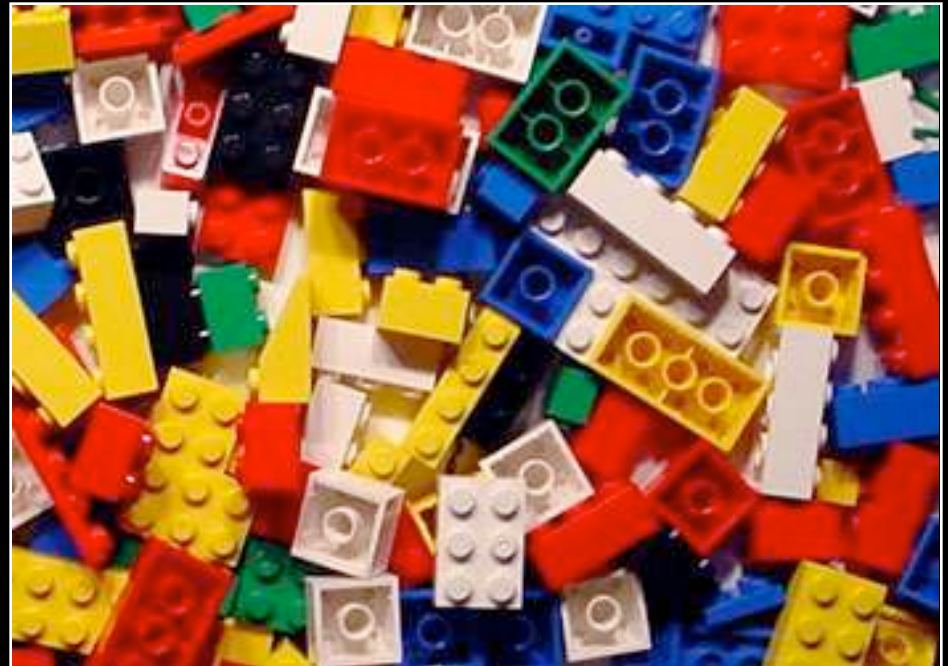


Facts and right belief

An I-It relationship with God



Discussion



The Church's One Foundation

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

The Church's One Foundation

She is from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

The Church's One Foundation

Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won,
With all her sons and daughters
Who, by the Master's hand
Led through the deathly waters,
Repose in Eden land.

The Church's One Foundation

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee:
There, past the border mountains,
Where in sweet vales the Bride
With Thee by living fountains
Forever shall abide!