

## THE DISJUNCTION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

by  
William W. Combs\*

In the sixteenth century the Protestant Reformation succeeded in recovering the doctrine of salvation from the errors of Roman Catholicism. The mature thinking of the Reformation culminated in the Westminster Confession (1646). This “noblest of all Evangelical creeds,” as Baptist historian William L. Lumpkin described it, was adopted by English Baptists with necessary Baptist modifications as the Second London Baptist Confession (1689).<sup>1</sup> This most important Baptist Confession was then adopted, with slight modification, in America as the Philadelphia Baptist Confession (1742).<sup>2</sup> The Second London Baptist Confession was updated by Charles Spurgeon in 1855 and became the basic statement of his theology.<sup>3</sup> The Confession was embraced by most regular Baptist churches in 19th century America. The section on sanctification reads:

1. Those who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having had a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, are then further sanctified in a very real and personal way. Because of the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, and by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed. The different lusts of the body of sin are increasingly weakened and mortified, and Christ’s people are increasingly quickened and strengthened in all saving

---

\*Dr. Combs is Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, MI.

<sup>1</sup>*Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago: Judson Press, 1959), p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), p. 648.

graces, to practice all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

2. This sanctification extends throughout the whole person, yet it remains imperfect in this life. Some remnants of corruption live on in every part, and from this arises a continuous war between irreconcilable parties—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.
3. In this war, although the remaining corruption for a time may greatly prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes. And so the saints grow in grace perfecting holiness in the fear of God; pressing after a heavenly life in evangelical obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in His Word, has prescribed to them.<sup>4</sup>

We should note several important points in this understanding of sanctification:

1. Sanctification begins at the moment of conversion with the creation of “a new heart and a new spirit.” That this is some sort of initial sanctification is indicated by the words “are then further sanctified.”
2. The essence of this initial or past sanctification is that “the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed.”
3. The “further” or present sanctification is a process in which the “different lusts of the body of sin are increasingly weakened and mortified” and believers “are increasingly quickened and strengthened in all saving graces.”
4. Present sanctification means that the sinful tendencies in the believer are gradually being mitigated—“different lusts of the body of sin are increasingly weakened”—and righteous tendencies are gradually being “strengthened” so that “the regenerate part [gradually] overcomes.”
5. “Sanctification...remains imperfect in this life” so that within all believers there “arises a continuous war between irreconcilable parties—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”
6. Sanctification is not automatic in the life of the believer, but it is inevitable since “although the remaining corruption for a time may greatly prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes.”

This commonly accepted view of sanctification was challenged by

---

<sup>4</sup>Available online at <http://www.gty.org/~phil/creeds/bcof.htm#part13> (cited 30 April 2001).

John Wesley in the eighteenth century. He in turn influenced a whole host of theological movements, especially in the nineteenth century. Many of these same teachings are commonly propagated in fundamental and evangelical churches and schools. I will attempt to trace the development of these teachings from the time of Wesley to the present day and then seek to evaluate them in light of Scripture.

### WESLEY AND HIS SUCCESSORS

The doctrine of sanctification, as it is taught and understood in much of contemporary fundamentalism and evangelicalism, has been profoundly influenced by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. He came up with the novel idea of a “second transforming work of grace, distinct from and ordinarily subsequent to the new birth (conversion).”<sup>5</sup> This doctrine of “Christian perfectionism,” with some modifications, was fully embraced by his followers, especially in America. I will attempt to demonstrate how Wesley’s view of sanctification has been transmitted to our day through the influence of important individuals and movements, particularly Charles Finney and Asa Mahan, Phoebe Palmer, the Higher Life Movement, and the Keswick (the “w” is silent) or Victorious Life Movement. It is mainly through this last movement, especially in the form propagated by Dallas Theological Seminary, that fundamentalism and evangelicalism have been most deeply impacted.

#### Wesleyan Perfectionism

John Wesley (1703–1791), though ordained in the Anglican Church, developed a distinct doctrine of sanctification that he called “Christian perfection,” “perfect love” (1 John 4:18), “entire sanctification,” or “full salvation.” Later Wesleyans, though not Wesley himself, called it the “second blessing.”<sup>6</sup> Wesley’s viewpoint, set forth in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*,<sup>7</sup> was profoundly influenced by several books from the Catholic and Anglican mystical traditions such as William Law’s *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (1726).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984), p. 132.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>7</sup>The first edition was published in 1766 and the 4th and final edition in 1777.

<sup>8</sup>Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 2; R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 314. Wesley admits these influences in his “Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” in vol. 11 of *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (reprint of 1872 ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), pp. 366–67. See also Robert G.

Of course, Wesley believed that his view was entirely biblical.<sup>9</sup> As early as 1733 he preached a sermon on “Circumcision of the Heart” (Rom 2:29) in which he defined “Christian perfection” as “that habitual disposition of the soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, ‘from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit;’ and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being so ‘renewed in the image of our mind,’ as to be ‘perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.’”<sup>10</sup> According to Wesley, Matthew 5:48 commands perfection (“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”), so it must be attainable in this life.<sup>11</sup> Wesley believed that a sanctified “Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin”<sup>12</sup> and did not object to describing the sanctified Christian as “sinless.”<sup>13</sup>

This perfection is not absolute but only relative, consisting in freedom from willful sin of known divine law. Wesley refused to call anything sin except a voluntary transgression of a known law.<sup>14</sup> Thus a “perfect” Christian is still subject to mistakes and involuntary transgressions. Nevertheless, Wesley willingly called the sanctified Christian sinless. Though he believed others in his own lifetime had reached this state of perfection, Wesley never claimed he had, though he urged all Christians to strive for it.

This work of entire sanctification happens instantly by “a simple act of faith.”<sup>15</sup> “The crisis of entire sanctification, negatively, eliminates all sinful desires from the heart (e.g., pride, envy, jealousy, anger, lust), destroys inbred moral depravity, and delivers from outward transgressions of the law. Positively, entire sanctification effects complete purity of intentions, tempers, and actions, stimulates perfect love of God and neighbor, and restores the moral *imago* in the soul.”<sup>16</sup> The assurance

---

Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of the scriptural passages used by Wesley, see W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), pp. 37–52.

<sup>10</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, 11:367.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:390.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:376.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:446.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:396.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:446.

<sup>16</sup>Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books,

that one has been entirely sanctified is confirmed to him by the witness of the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> At first Wesley believed that no one who had obtained entire sanctification could lose it, but later he changed his mind based on his observation of those he was certain were at one time perfect but later obviously fell from that state. Nevertheless, he believed they could instantly reclaim it.<sup>18</sup>

The man whom Wesley wanted to be his successor, John Fletcher (1729–1785), strongly defended Wesley’s doctrine of perfectionism, but commonly spoke of the experience as the “baptism” or “filling of the Holy Spirit.” Apparently, he was the first to tie the experience to Pentecost.<sup>19</sup>

### Charles Finney and Asa Mahan

Wesleyan perfectionism was promoted heavily by the founder of the Methodist Church in America, Francis Asbury (1745–1816), but perfectionist doctrine also found its way into other groups outside the Methodist Church. Charles Finney (1792–1875) and his colleague at Oberlin College, Asa Mahan (1799–1889), adopted the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. “They taught a doctrine of perfectionism made possible by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which empowered and perfected the will of the believer to act in conformity with the will of God. Though not denying Wesley’s emphasis on perfect love as moral perfection, Oberlin theology emphasized perfection of the will—the voluntary and conscious action of Christians.”<sup>20</sup> Like Wesley, Oberlin theology held that there is no sin except in voluntary transgression of known law. This entire sanctification was to be obtained by an instantaneous act of faith. Mahan taught that there were thus two kinds of Christians: a lower kind who had received only justification—the carnal Christian, and a higher kind who had also received sanctification—the spiritual Christian.<sup>21</sup>

“Finney’s role in the Methodist perfectionist movement could be

---

1977), p. 391.

<sup>17</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, 11:420.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:426–27.

<sup>19</sup>John A. Knight, “John Fletcher’s Influence on the Development of Wesleyan Theology in America,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (Spring 1978): 27.

<sup>20</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. “Perfectionism,” by R. J. Green, p. 892.

<sup>21</sup>B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), pp. 67, 107. This is a condensed edition of vol. 2 of Warfield’s *Studies in Perfectionism* (New York: Oxford, 1931).

described as both influenced by and influencing the Methodists. For all of his protestations of originality, there is little doubt that either Finney or Mahan would have conceived of a perfectionist theology without the influence of the Methodist tradition. In return, Finney, and the Oberlin faculty, gave further stimulation to the holiness movements with American and British Methodism.<sup>22</sup> An example of this two-way influence is seen in the correlation of entire sanctification and the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit. While it is true that John Fletcher had made the same connection, Methodists in the early nineteenth century were not expressing entire sanctification in those terms. But with the success of the Oberlin theology, this terminology was quickly adopted by the Methodists, beginning about 1840.<sup>23</sup>

### Phoebe Palmer

Perfectionist teaching among Methodists began to wane in the early part of the nineteenth century, but received a catalyst from a Methodist lay couple, Phoebe (1807–1874) and Walter Palmer. In 1835 Phoebe Palmer's sister began a weekly prayer meeting known as the "Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness." In 1837 Phoebe herself received "entire sanctification," and in 1840 she and her husband embarked on an itinerant ministry that eventually took them throughout the United States, Canada, and the British Isles, spreading their newfound faith. Her book *The Way of Holiness* (1843) and her periodical *The Guide to Holiness* (first called *The Guide to Christian Perfection*) were influential in identifying these perfectionist teachings as the Holiness Movement.

Mrs. Palmer simplified and popularized Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification. First, she, like other Methodists after 1840, followed the Oberlin Theology and John Fletcher in their identification of entire sanctification with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> Second, she emphasized that entire sanctification was also an endowment of divine power for service, linking holiness with power.<sup>25</sup> Finally, she devised a

---

<sup>22</sup>Leo P. Hirrel, "Assessing the Influence of Religious Ideas: Charles Finney's Perfectionism"; available online at <http://members.aol.com/leohirrel/finney> (cited 5 May 2001).

<sup>23</sup>Timothy L. Smith, "The Doctrine of the Sanctifying Spirit: Charles G. Finney's Synthesis of Wesleyan and Covenant Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (Spring 1978): 106.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Charles E. White, "Phoebe Palmer and the Development of Pentecostal Pneumatology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (Spring–Fall 1988): 201.

simple method for receiving entire sanctification. She reasoned from Jesus' words that "the altar sanctifies the gift" (Matt 23:19), and Exodus 29:37 says that whatever touches the altar is holy. Therefore, if one places himself on the altar (Rom 12:1), God would be required to make that one holy—entire sanctification. "Thus entire consecration guarantees entire sanctification."<sup>26</sup> "Her 'altar theology' reduced the quest for sanctification to a simple three-step process: (1) consecrating oneself entirely to God; (2) believing God keeps his promise to sanctify what is consecrated; and (3) bearing witness to what God has done. Her theology was adopted by holiness denominations such as the Wesleyan Methodists, the Free Methodists and the Church of the Nazarene, as well as the Salvation Army and the Keswick Movement in England."<sup>27</sup>

### The Higher Life Movement

The Higher Life Movement was simply a part of the Holiness Movement, mostly outside of Methodist circles. William E. Boardman (1810–1886), a Presbyterian minister, succeeded in opening the doors of non-Methodist churches to Holiness teaching through his ministry and especially his book *The Higher Christian Life* (1858). Boardman had been influenced by the writings of Finney and Mahan as well as Phoebe Palmer's "Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness."<sup>28</sup> Like all Holiness advocates, Boardman believed in a "full salvation" or "second conversion" that is separated into two distinct parts—justification and sanctification—which are received by two distinct acts of faith.<sup>29</sup> Later in his life Boardman identified this second work of grace as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> Higher Life teachers moved away from the Wesleyan view that sin is eradicated from the believer in the second blessing, preferring to speak of the believer's dominion or victory over sin that results in deliverance from all conscious sinning.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>27</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "Palmer, Phoebe Worrall," by C. E. White, p. 861.

<sup>28</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "Boardman, William Edwin," by W. S. Gunter, p. 170.

<sup>29</sup>*The Higher Christian Life* (reprint of 1858 ed.; New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), pp. vi–vii, 94.

<sup>30</sup>In his 1875 book *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*. Cf. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 229, n. 39.

<sup>31</sup>Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 238.

Also instrumental in spreading Holiness teaching outside Methodist circles, especially in Europe, were Robert Pearsall Smith (1827–1899) and his wife, Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911). They were both from Quaker homes, though Robert spent much of his early life as a Presbyterian. They claimed the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1867 through Methodist influence. In 1873 they were in England for a series of meetings with William E. Boardman and Asa Mahan that produced large results for the Holiness cause. Mr. Smith had very successful meetings on the continent as well. “So overwhelming was the response to his message that he returned saying that all of Europe was ‘at my feet.’”<sup>32</sup> In 1875 Mrs. Smith produced her widely read *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*.

Warfield argues that Mrs. Smith’s teachings are filled with Quaker concepts.<sup>33</sup> She brought a quietism, and extreme passivity—letting go and letting God—to the second blessing. She describes the “Higher Christian Life” as “an entire surrender to the Lord, and a perfect trust in Him, resulting in victory over sin and inward rest of soul.”<sup>34</sup> In this state the believer is free from any conscious transgression of God’s law, certainly a “Happy Life.”

### The Keswick (Victorious Life) Movement

The Keswick movement is an outgrowth of a series of breakfast meetings designed to promote Holiness teaching during Dwight L. Moody’s 1873 London campaign. These meetings were led by Robert and Hannah Smith and included other Holiness leaders like William E. Boardman and Asa Mahan. The spirit of these meetings was continued by the Broadlands conference in 1874 and a meeting at Oxford a few weeks later. An even larger meeting was held at Brighton from May 29 to June 7, 1875. Moody threw his support behind it and said: “Let us lift up our hearts to seek earnestly a blessing on the great Convention that is now being held in Brighton, perhaps the most important meeting ever gathered.”<sup>35</sup> One of the converts to the Victorious

---

<sup>32</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. “Smith, Robert Pearsall,” by W. S. Gunter, p. 1098.

<sup>33</sup>Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 248.

<sup>34</sup>Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* (reprint ed., n.p.: Revell, 1952), p. 37.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1952), p. 23. Moody had his own baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1871 (Stanley N. Gundry, *Love Them In: The Proclamation Theology of D. L. Moody* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1976], p. 47). Gundry claims that Moody was actually unhappy with the eradicationist claims of Holiness

Life at these meetings was Rev. T. D. Harford-Battersby, Vicar of St. John's, Keswick, a parish in the lake district of northwest England. He organized a conference for July of 1875 that was held in a tent on his church grounds with about three or four hundred attending. Annual Keswick conferences have been held each summer ever since, though there is apparently little attention given to "Keswick" teaching today.<sup>36</sup>

Robert Pearsall Smith was supposed to lead the first Keswick conference, but shortly before it was to begin, he was forced to drop out due to what was apparently an indiscretion with a young woman in a hotel room.<sup>37</sup> He and his wife returned to America, and he retired from public life. Smith's place was filled by H. W. Webb-Peploe, a Church of England clergyman. He "dominated the Keswick movement...for almost fifty years and did a great deal to define the Keswick teaching. Especially important was Webb-Peploe's firm opposition to Methodist-type perfectionism. He and his fellow representatives of the Keswick position objected to the recent Wesleyan views which taught the eradication of the sinful nature in this life."<sup>38</sup> Instead, Keswick teaching has generally affirmed a *counteraction* of the old and new natures. However, Keswick did not distance itself from its Holiness roots. Sloan's 1935 history of the movement, produced under the supervision of the Trustees of the Keswick convention, clearly claims Robert and Hannah Smith as two of Keswick's earliest leaders and identifies their second-blessing experience as a Keswick one.<sup>39</sup>

Keswick teaching was first spread in America through Moody's Northfield Conferences in Massachusetts. In 1910 Charles G. Trumbull, the editor of the *Sunday School Times*, became a convert to Keswick beliefs, and he used his editorial energies to promote Keswick teaching in America. He along with his assistant at the *Sunday School*

---

teachers like Robert Pearsall Smith and ultimately found himself more in sympathy with the Keswick understanding of the second blessing (pp. 159–60). R. A. Torrey held beliefs that were in essential agreement with Keswick. See his *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (reprint of 1910 ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), pp. 171–246.

<sup>36</sup>David Bebbington suggests Keswick Conventions lost their distinctive "Keswick" teaching in the 1960s (*Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* [Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000], p. 90).

<sup>37</sup>George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 77.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Walter B. Sloan, *These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935), p. 13. The same view of the Smiths is presented by Barabas (pp. 16–24), whose *So Great Salvation* has received the imprimatur of the Keswick leadership.

*Times*, Robert C. McQuilkin (founded Columbia Bible College in 1923), began an “American Keswick” conference in 1913, which permanently settled at Keswick Grove, New Jersey in 1923.

Though Keswick teaching agrees with Holiness teaching that sanctification comes as a crisis experience separate from justification (“holiness through faith”), it moved away from the idea that the believer’s tendency to sin is extinguished or eradicated, but, as we have noted, is merely counteracted by the Holy Spirit. Though some who were associated with the movement (e.g., Moody and R. A. Torrey) continued to use the Holiness terminology “baptism of the Holy Spirit” for the second work of grace, most Keswick teachers have preferred the term *filling*. This filling produces “a life of victory over conscious sin.”<sup>40</sup> There are two types of Christians in Keswick teaching. The “average” or “carnal” Christian behaves much like an unbeliever. Keswick conventions are “spiritual clinics”<sup>41</sup> designed to turn the average, carnal Christian into a “normal” or “spiritual” Christian, one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. This transformation from the carnal to the spiritual Christian takes place not by a long struggle but by a simple, single act of faith. “Trumbull argues that the secret to the victorious life is for the Christian to make an unconditioned and absolute surrender to God in faith. One must not strive for spiritual victory; rather one must simply ‘Let go, and let God!’”<sup>42</sup> H. C. G. Moule, probably Keswick’s best theologian, described this state of victory for the believer as “a blessed and wakeful Quietism.”<sup>43</sup>

It appears that Keswick teaching was the first to describe the second blessing as surrendering to Christ’s Lordship. Barabas explains:

Very many Christians at conversion know almost nothing of taking Christ to be their Master. They take Jesus to take away their sin; to bring them to heaven; to help them when they pray; but they never think of saying that they are no more going to have their own will, and that Jesus must have their will every hour. And there is real need...to put one’s whole life under the management of Jesus.... As the divine Potter He cannot shape the human vessel unless it is committed into His hands and remains unresistingly and quietly there. If we are to be used by Him in the performance of His will, the supreme and undivided Lordship of Jesus Christ must be a fact in our lives.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 99.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>42</sup>Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, p. 398.

<sup>43</sup>*Veni Creator* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), p. 197; quoted in Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 275.

<sup>44</sup>Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 112. See also Ruth Paxson, *Life on the Highest*

Well-known Keswick speaker W. Graham Scroggie observed: “There are multitudes of Christians who do not know Christ as Lord, as Master of the whole life; and if I understand the innermost significance of the Keswick movement, it is to expound this matter and to press it upon those who attend.”<sup>45</sup>

Most fundamental and evangelical Christians today probably have little contact with writings of John Wesley and most of the movements I have described that followed him, but the writings of many in the Keswick tradition are still commonly available and read. Well-known names associated with Keswick include A. T. Pierson, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, H. C. G. Moule, W. H. Griffith Thomas, C. I. Scofield, J. Hudson Taylor, Charles G. Trumbull, J. Oswald Sanders, W. Graham Scroggie, Robert C. McQuilkin, J. Robertson McQuilkin, Alan Redpath, Ruth Paxson, and W. Ian Thomas. Higher Life and Keswick theology is commonly seen in lines of many hymns: “Perfection submission—all is at rest” and “Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?”

### SUMMARY OF TEACHING

All of the previous movements, whose existence can be traced to Wesley’s doctrine of entire, instantaneous sanctification, have a number of elements in common:<sup>46</sup>

1. Justification and sanctification are distinguished from one another as two separate gifts and are each obtained by two separate acts of faith.
2. Though this instantaneous sanctification is a complete sanctification, it does not actually bring freedom from all sin but only freedom from sinning or freedom from conscious sinning or freedom from the commission of known sins.
3. This sanctification is not a stable condition, but one that must be continuously maintained moment by moment, and if lost can, nevertheless, be recovered instantaneously.

Though John Wesley invented the doctrine of a second,

---

*Plain*, 3 vols. in one (Chicago: Moody Press, 1928), 2:119–23; and Stephen C. Brown, “A Thematic Comparison of the Keswick, Chaferian, and Reformed Views of Sanctification,” Th.M. thesis (Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1985), pp. 25–27.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), pp. 173–74.

<sup>46</sup>Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 351.

sanctifying work of grace, he never identified it with believer's acceptance of Christ's lordship. But as the method of receiving this second work of grace was explained as an act of dedication or surrender by Phoebe Palmer and those who followed her lead in the Higher Life and Keswick Movements, eventually those in the latter movement identified this dedication with making Christ Lord of one's life. But this nonlordship view of conversion was not fully developed until the rise of the Dallas theology.

### THE DALLAS SEMINARY THEOLOGY

Though some of today's Christians have been exposed to second-blessing theology by way of Keswick teaching directly, most have been more immediately impacted through the theology of Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952) and especially as his views have been propagated by the seminary he founded—Dallas Theological Seminary. Chafer attended Oberlin College, but his major theological influence came from his association with C. I. Scofield, whom he met in 1901 while Scofield was teaching at Moody's Northfield Training School.<sup>47</sup> At the Northfield Bible conferences Chafer's perspective on sanctification was shaped by various Victorious Life teachers he heard there.<sup>48</sup> Later, with the help of W. H. Griffith Thomas, Chafer started Dallas Theological Seminary (originally Evangelical Theological College) in 1924, the theology of which was distinctively Keswick.<sup>49</sup>

Keswick theology has continued to teach that the second blessing results in the believer living a life of "uniform sustained victory over

---

<sup>47</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "Chafer, Lewis Sperry," by J. D. Hannah, p. 238. See also John D. Hannah, "The Early Years of Lewis Sperry Chafer," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (January–March 1987): 16–23.

<sup>48</sup>Randall Gleason, "B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification," *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 40 (June 1997): 243.

<sup>49</sup>*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "Chafer, Lewis Sperry," p. 238. This is the opinion of Hannah, who is chairman of the church history department at Dallas. In a 1987 volume contrasting five supposedly different views on sanctification, John F. Walvoord, who followed Chafer as president of Dallas Seminary, presents what he calls the Augustinian-dispensational view. In his critique of Walvoord's Dallas view, J. Robertson McQuilkin, who writes the Keswick view, says: "Many Keswick teachers and the basic Keswick approach are in harmony with John Walvoord's presentation" ("Response to Walvoord," in *Five Views on Sanctification* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], p. 236). And similarly, after reviewing McQuilkin's presentation of the Keswick view, Walvoord writes: "Those holding to the Augustinian-dispensational perspective on sanctification will find little with which they need to take issue in J. Robertson McQuilkin's presentation of the Keswick perspective" ("Response to McQuilkin," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, p. 194).

known sin.”<sup>50</sup> The same or similar teaching is found in Chafer’s *He That Is Spiritual*, published in 1918.<sup>51</sup> But, more important, what Dallas Theology shares with Keswick and all second-blessing theologies going back to Wesley himself is a distinction between justification and sanctification as separate works of grace. However, Charles Ryrie, who taught theology at Dallas for many years, denies this distinction. Instead, he contrasts what he calls the “Chaferian view” with the Victorious Life view, which Ryrie admits makes such a distinction. Ryrie argues: “Strictly speaking, there is little difference between the Reformed and Chaferian views of the relationship between justification and sanctification, though there are some distinctions in emphasis.”<sup>52</sup> Later he explains what this “little difference” is between the two: “The Reformed view considers justification and sanctification inseparable yet distinct, whereas the Chaferian view sees justification and sanctification as distinct, yet inseparable.”<sup>53</sup> What distinction he intends is unclear since it would appear that both of these formulations are saying the same thing.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of Ryrie’s denials to the contrary, the Chaferian view does indeed sharply separate justification from progressive sanctification, making the latter a second work of grace, separate from justification.<sup>55</sup> William D. Lawrence, whose dissertation Ryrie supervised, candidly distinguishes between “saving faith” (justification) and “sanctifying faith.”<sup>56</sup> From the time of Phoebe Palmer’s “altar theology” forward, second-blessing advocates have universally argued for the need of a crisis act of dedication or surrender, essential for progressive sanctification. And Ryrie agrees: “There is perhaps no more important matter in

---

<sup>50</sup>J. Robertson McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, p. 153.

<sup>51</sup>Revision of 1918 ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967.

<sup>52</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, “Contrasting Views on Sanctification,” in *Walvoord: A Tribute* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 193.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>54</sup>Joseph C. Dillow, for example, who supports the view of Chafer and Ryrie and opposes the Reformed view, nevertheless, describes the Reformed view with the same language Ryrie uses for the Chaferian view—“justification and sanctification are distinct but inseparable” (*Reign of the Servant Kings* [Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992], p. 147).

<sup>55</sup>Interestingly, Dallas graduate Randall Gleason admits “Chafer did indeed separate justification from progressive sanctification” (“B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification,” p. 251).

<sup>56</sup>“New Testament Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ,” Th.D. dissertation (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), pp. 90–96.

relation to the spiritual life than dedication.”<sup>57</sup> “Before any lasting progress can be made on the road of spiritual living, the believer must be a dedicated person.... It is the basic foundation for sanctification.”<sup>58</sup> Referring to Romans 12:1, he says: “First of all there must be an initial, decisive and crisis presentation. This is represented in the Greek by the aorist infinitive used here and reinforced by the aorist imperative in Romans 6:13b.... Therefore, the presentation of body is a single, irrevocable act of surrender rather than a series of repeated acts of dedication.”<sup>59</sup>

Until the believer has experienced this single, one-time act of dedication, he may be justified, but there can be no real spiritual progress—no sanctification. This is because (as no one would deny) the ministry of the Holy Spirit is essential to sanctification, or as Ryrie observes: “Control by the Spirit is a necessary part of spirituality.”<sup>60</sup> And, according to Ryrie, “without initial dedication there can be no real experience of this vital ministry. Thus dedication is a prerequisite for being filled with the Spirit,”<sup>61</sup> allowing the work of progressive sanctification to begin.

The Dallas theology’s separation of justification from sanctification also means that it rejects Christ’s Lordship in conversion because it is only at the time of the believer’s one-time act of dedication that he submits to the Lordship of Christ. The current controversy over lordship salvation seems to have begun in 1959 when Dallas graduate and former professor Everett F. Harrison argued against the lordship view in a debate with John R. Stott in the September issue of *Eternity Magazine*.<sup>62</sup> Ten years later, Charles C. Ryrie, in his book *Balancing the Christian Life*, drew a line in the sand between the lordship and

---

<sup>57</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 75.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 79. For the same view of Rom 12:1, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1966), pp. 129–30 [originally titled *Pattern for Maturity* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964)]; and Lawrence, “The New Testament Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ,” p. 197.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 13. Similarly, Ryrie’s teacher, John F. Walvoord, says that “the filling of the Spirit is the secret of sanctification” (“Response to Hoekema,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, p. 101).

<sup>61</sup>*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 83. For the same viewpoint, see John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (reprint of 1958 ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), pp. 197–98.

<sup>62</sup>“Must Christ Be Lord to Be Savior?” Harrison took the “No” position (pp. 14, 16, 48) and Stott the “Yes” position (pp. 15, 17–18, 36–37).

nonlordship views when, in also arguing against the lordship view, he dogmatically stated: “The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal 1:6–9), and this is a very serious matter.”<sup>63</sup> But the debate erupted into a firestorm with the publication of John F. MacArthur’s *The Gospel According to Jesus* in 1988 and the replies by Ryrie (*So Great Salvation*) and Zane C. Hodges (*Absolutely Free!*) a year later. Besides Harrison, Ryrie, and Hodges, numerous other Dallas graduates have arisen to speak out against lordship salvation, including Arthur L. Farstad,<sup>64</sup> Robert P. Lightner,<sup>65</sup> G. Michael Cocoris,<sup>66</sup> Earl D. Radmacher,<sup>67</sup> Roy B. Zuck,<sup>68</sup> Manfred E. Kober,<sup>69</sup> Thomas G. Lewellen,<sup>70</sup> Livingston Blauvelt, Jr.,<sup>71</sup> Renald Showers,<sup>72</sup> Ernest Pickering,<sup>73</sup> Joseph Dillow,<sup>74</sup> Charles C. Bing,<sup>75</sup> William D. Lawrence,<sup>76</sup> J. Hampton Keathley III,<sup>77</sup> and Robert N.

---

<sup>63</sup>p. 170.

<sup>64</sup>“We Believe: Jesus is Lord,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 2 (Spring 1989): 3–43.

<sup>65</sup>*Sin, the Savior, and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1991), pp. 200–214.

<sup>66</sup>*Lordship Salvation: Is It Biblical?* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1983).

<sup>67</sup>“First Response to ‘Faith According to the Apostle James’ by John F. MacArthur, Jr.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (March 1990): 35–41.

<sup>68</sup>“Cheap Grace,” *Kindred Spirit*, Summer 1989, pp. 4–7.

<sup>69</sup>“Lordship Salvation: A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?” Part 1, *Faith Pulpit*, March 1989; “Lordship Salvation: A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?” Part 2, *Faith Pulpit*, April/May 1989. *Faith Pulpit* is a publication of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, Ankeny, IA.

<sup>70</sup>“Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught Throughout Church History?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (January–March 1990): 54–68.

<sup>71</sup>“Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (January–March 1986): 37–45.

<sup>72</sup>“The Trouble with Lordship Salvation.” *Word of Life 1990 Annual*, 6:1. Published by Word of Life Fellowship, Schroon Lake, NY.

<sup>73</sup>*Lordship Salvation* (Minneapolis, MN: Central Baptist Theological Seminary, n.d.).

<sup>74</sup>*The Reign of the Servant Kings*.

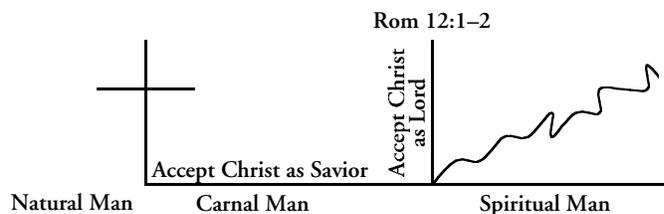
<sup>75</sup>“Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response,” Th.D. dissertation (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991).

<sup>76</sup>“New Testament Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ.”

<sup>77</sup>“Common Assaults on the Gospel”; available online at <http://www.bible.org/studies/splife/evang/assaults.htm> (cited 13 July 2001).

Wilkin.<sup>78</sup> It would not be surprising, then, to learn that the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, was himself a foe of the lordship view.<sup>79</sup> While it might be argued that one could come to the nonlordship position by an independent study and correlation of Scripture, this is apparently not the case with those individuals mentioned above. They have been obviously influenced by the Chaferian soteriology they were taught at Dallas, which was further developed by new generations of Dallas professors like Ryrie and Hodges. The current nonlordship position is primarily the product of Dallas theology.

The Dallas theology's separation of justification from sanctification can also be seen in its division of Christians into two categories—carnal and spiritual. These categories have been part of second-blessing terminology going back at least to Asa Mahan. During his twenty-eight years as president of Dallas, Chafer began each school year with a week of lectures “on the basic requirement for effective seminary study found in yielding to the Holy Spirit,”<sup>80</sup> which set forth the basic distinction between the carnal and spiritual Christian. The carnal Christian has experienced “salvation” from “the guilt and penalty of sin,” in other words, justification, but he still needs “a distinct form of salvation” from “bond-servitude to sin.”<sup>81</sup> “The child of God does not need to yield to temptation” when he reaches the higher plane of the spiritual man.<sup>82</sup> Thus, all believers are in the category of carnal Christian until they experience the once-for-all crisis dedication that moves them to the higher plane of spiritual Christian and as a result are initially filled with the Spirit and Christ becomes Lord of their lives. It is at this point that progressive sanctification really begins. This view of sanctification is illustrated by the chart below, which



<sup>78</sup> *Confident in Christ* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), pp. 179–86.

<sup>79</sup> “The Saving Work of the Triune God: The Terms of Salvation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107 (October–December 1950): 389–419.

<sup>80</sup> John F. Walvoord, forward to *He That Is Spiritual*, n.p.

<sup>81</sup> Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, p. 134.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

is essentially the same as Ryrie's own chart depicting his position.<sup>83</sup>

Warfield concluded that the teaching of Chafer and those like him "is indistinguishable from what is ordinarily understood by the doctrine of 'second blessing,' 'a second work of grace,' 'the higher life.'"<sup>84</sup>

### EVALUATION OF SECOND-BLESSING THEOLOGY

In all the movements that I have described, from John Wesley forward, there is without question a genuine desire to promote greater Christian holiness, and that is much to be admired. Certainly, when reading the writings of those identified with just the Keswick movement, for example, one is struck by the godliness and devotion to Christ on the part of these saints. No one can question their godly motives. However, I believe in their quest for holiness they have taken a wrong turn into John Wesley's laboratory. Though many have lived lives of progressive holiness, they have sometimes sought invalid experiences that the Scriptures do not authorize and have incorrectly described their own genuine experiences of God's grace. More problematic is their promotion of a way of holiness that does not square with the biblical text, which can make it more difficult for some believers to make true progress in their sanctification.<sup>85</sup>

#### Justification and Sanctification

A genuine desire for holiness along with a general dissatisfaction with their own spiritual experience has led many to follow in the steps of Wesley and seek an additional experience beyond their conversion that would deliver them from their daily struggles with sin. They have looked for a Higher, Happy, and Victorious life where one can be at rest, "the heart rest of those who have learned the secret of perfect and constant victory over temptation."<sup>86</sup> However, this search is inherently defective since it is based, as I have generally noted, on an unbiblical disjunction between justification and progressive sanctification. But justification and progressive sanctification cannot be divided such that a believer may have one without the other.

---

<sup>83</sup>See *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 187.

<sup>84</sup>B. B. Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual*, by Lewis S. Chafer, in *Princeton Theological Review* 17 (April 1919), reprinted in Michael Horton, ed., *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), p. 213.

<sup>85</sup>See, for example, the testimony of J. I. Packer (*Keep in Step with the Spirit*, pp. 157–58).

<sup>86</sup>Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 95.

The passage that most clearly demonstrates the unbreakable bond between justification and sanctification is Romans 6. Warfield wisely observed: “The whole sixth chapter of Romans, for example, was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together; that we cannot have the one without having the other; that, to use its own figurative language, dying with Christ and living with Christ are integral elements in one indisintegrable salvation.”<sup>87</sup> Yet it is ironic that Romans 6 is commonly used as a key text, if not the key text, to justify the need for a new, crisis experience beyond conversion itself.<sup>88</sup> There Paul says that “we...are dead to sin” (v. 2), or, more properly, “we died to sin”<sup>89</sup>; and in v. 6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Then, from Paul’s exhortation in v. 13, “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God,” a formula is deduced for entry into the life of victory by the simple act of reckoning—“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). Thus, this death to sin is seen as something only *potential* in the justified person that must be realized or “reckoned” by faith.<sup>90</sup>

There is a major flaw with this interpretation of Romans 6, for Paul is not telling believers *how* a justified person can lead a holy life, but *why he must* lead a holy life. The question that begins Romans 6, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” is a false inference that Paul recognizes one might draw from his statement in the last part

---

<sup>87</sup>*Perfectionism*, p. 356.

<sup>88</sup>According to Hannah Whitall Smith, Rom 6:6 was the text used to bring her husband, Robert, into the Higher Life (See Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 18). It is admittedly the key passage behind Keswick teaching. See Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 89; and Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 146.

<sup>89</sup>The aorist tense verb ἀπεθάνομεν does not indicate a state, “we are dead,” but a past, completed act, “we died.”

<sup>90</sup>Speaking of Rom 6, Ryrie says, “What our Lord has done makes it possible to live the Christian life,” and referring to the breaking of sin’s power because of the believer’s union with Christ, he concludes, “we may choose whether or not to enjoy its benefits” (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 56). Also commenting on the believer’s death to sin in Rom 6, Keswick writer W. Ian Thomas says: “However, just as the death of Christ *for* you is only *potential* until by a deliberate and voluntary *act* of faith you appropriate its efficacy for your redemption, so *your* death *with* Christ is only potential unless by a deliberate and voluntary *attitude* of faith you appropriate its efficacy for your sanctification” (*The Mystery of Godliness* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964], p. 137).

of 5:20: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The apostle’s statement might be misinterpreted to mean that God is somehow bound to bestow more grace while we remain willfully in the state of sin. Paul’s answer to the question “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” is that the justified person *cannot* “continue in sin” because he has “died to sin” (v. 2). To “continue in sin” means to have a lifestyle of sin—the life of the unbeliever. This is not possible because the justified person has “died to sin,” which means, according to the promise of v. 14, that the justified person is no longer under the dominion of sin (“For sin shall not have dominion over you”). This death to sin does not mean that the justified person is sinless or that he is insensitive to sin’s enticements, rather that he is delivered from the absolute tyranny of sin; sin’s power as a dominating, ruling power is broken; the believer is no longer a slave to sin: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (vv. 17–18). Paul’s contrast in Romans 6 is between the justified person, who is a slave to righteousness (v. 18), and the unbeliever, who is a slave to sin (v. 17).

In vv. 3–4 Paul says that this death to sin took place at conversion: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Since the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized believers, Paul can use the Roman believer’s own experience of water baptism as a kind of shorthand for the conversion experience as a whole. Thus Paul is saying that there is a fundamental distinction between the unbeliever and the believer as a result of conversion that is beyond a change in legal status—justification, but that also affects the person. As Murray notes:

The freedom from the dominion of sin of which Paul speaks is the *actual* possession of every one who is united to Christ. It is not merely *positional* victory which every believer has secured.... This victory is received by faith in Christ and in effectual calling. It is not achieved by process or by prolonged effort directed to that end. It is the once-for-all gift of God’s grace in uniting us to Christ in virtue of his death and resurrection. But it is not simply positional, far less is it potential; it is actual. And because it is actual it is experimental. To speak of freedom from the dominion of sin in terms other than the actual as, if we will, experimental is to indulge in an abstraction which has no relevance to the question at issue. It is true that there are differing degrees in which the implications of this freedom from the dominion of sin are realized in experience. In other words, there are differing degrees in which the “reckoning” to which Paul exhorts in Romans 6 is applied and brought to expression in the life and experience

of believers. But the victory over sin is not secured by the “reckoning”; it is secured by virtue of union with Christ in that initial faith comprised in effectual calling and is therefore the possession of every believer, however tardy may be his advance in the path of sanctification. Reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive to God is not the act of faith whereby victory is achieved; this reckoning is the reflex act and presupposes the deliverance of which Paul speaks in Romans 6:4.<sup>91</sup>

What Paul is describing in Romans 6 is not a second work of grace but the initial work of grace in the believer, which brings about a transformation so enormous that it can be described as death and resurrection—death to sin and new life in Christ. This death to sin that Paul describes in Romans 6 is the actual experience of all regenerate persons and fundamentally distinguishes them from the unsaved, who are under the dominion of sin. While the justified person must still battle sin, he is not under sin’s lordship, and his fundamental disposition in life is toward holiness (Rom 6:4). Paul’s point in Romans 6 is that Christ’s death and our union with him secures not only our justification but also our sanctification. “Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.”<sup>92</sup>

Though the Scriptures urge the dedication and continual surrender of Christians to their Lord, and dedication is part of sanctification, they provide no basis for a once-for-all act of dedication to make Christ Lord of one’s life in order to begin the process of progressive sanctification. Ryrie and others, as we previously noted, appeal to the Greek aorist tense in verses like Romans 12:1 (“present”) and Romans 6:13 (“yield”). But this is a misunderstanding and abuse of the aorist.<sup>93</sup> No Greek grammar has ever suggested that the aorist tense means once-for-all action though it has been undoubtedly a popular and widespread misconception. This once-for-all idea of the aorist makes nonsense out of countless texts. When Paul told the Corinthians to “glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:2), the aorist imperative “glorify” does not mean that the apostle only wanted them to do it one time. Neither does the aorist imperative “preach” indicate that Paul wanted Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Tim 4:2) only once.

---

<sup>91</sup>John Murray, review of *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention*, by Steven Barabas, in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 4 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 284.

<sup>92</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.16.1, in John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 20:798.

<sup>93</sup>See the corrective by Frank Stagg, “The Abused Aorist,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (June 1972): 222–31; and D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) pp. 68–73.

After Paul has laid out all the wonderful benefits of God's salvation to the Romans, it would be natural for the apostle to urge his readers at the beginning of chapter 12 to dedicate themselves to God in light of his gracious acts, but there is nothing that would suggest that this was to be a once-for-all action, never to be repeated. Paul urges the Romans to yield themselves to God in 6:13, not in order to bring about a second work of grace but because of the past sanctifying work of God in their conversion. Because the dominion of sin has been broken, the Roman believers are now able for the first time in their lives not to yield their members "as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" but, instead, to yield their "members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

As the second-blessing theology of John Wesley progressed in time to produce the Keswick movement and to be adopted at Dallas Seminary, there was a tendency in evangelicalism, based on the separation of justification from sanctification inherent in the system, to minimize the divine effects of initial conversion and to apply all the transformational qualities of the believer's salvation to the second work of grace. Any real change in the believer's character must await his surrendering to Christ's Lordship. Everything that happens at conversion is only positional—justification, positional sanctification. Even regeneration is reduced to nothing more than a ticket to heaven—eternal life, but with no real moral character to it. Faith is not a gift but simply a human decision to accept the ticket to heaven.<sup>94</sup> Thus, God does practically nothing *to* the believer at conversion; anything God does *to* the believer must wait for his surrender to Christ's Lordship. Although the Scriptures actually know of only two *distinct* classes of men—believers and unbelievers, second-blessing theology has created the need for three classes since believers must be divided into two *distinct* classes—those who have only the ticket to heaven and those who have made Christ Lord of their lives. Therefore, biblical terms (see the table on p. 38) that actually apply in some degree to all believers have been wrested from their original contexts and in many cases made to apply only to those who have become partakers of the second work of grace.

---

<sup>94</sup>Speaking of the woman of Samaria in John 4, Hodges says: It must be emphasized that there is no call here for surrender, submission, acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship, or anything else of this kind. A gift is being offered to one totally unworthy of God's favor. And to get it, the woman is required to make no spiritual commitment whatsoever" (Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* [Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1981], p. 14). Thus, it comes as no surprise that Hodges tells us that faith is not a gift (*Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989], p. 219).

1st WORK OF GRACE	2nd WORK OF GRACE
Christ as Savior	Christ as Lord
Believer	Disciple
Carnal	Spiritual
Out of Fellowship	In Fellowship
Eternal Life	Abundant Life
Spirit Indwelt	Spirit Filled or Baptized
	Overcomer
	Abiding in Christ
	Perseverance
	Repentance

### The Carnal Christian

As early as Asa Mahan the terms *carnal* and *spiritual* have been used to differentiate two categories of Christians: the simply justified believer and the one who has also received the second blessing, the one who has surrendered his life to Christ. These terms come from 1 Corinthians 2:14–3:4.

<sup>14</sup>But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup>But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. <sup>16</sup>For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. <sup>1</sup>And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. <sup>3</sup>For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? <sup>4</sup>For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

This passage is part of a larger context that begins back at 1:10 in which Paul is dealing with one of the problems in the Corinthian church that involved divisions among the believers. One reason for these divisions was that the Corinthians had a wrong view of the gospel. They thought of it as some sort of Greek “wisdom” (σοφία), similar to the various Greek philosophies common in the first century that were designed to appeal to human reason. But Paul says, “No,” the gospel is in fact “foolishness.” “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1:18), and “we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1:23). However, beginning at 2:6 Paul takes a turn in his letter: “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” Although there is a genuine sense in which the gospel is foolishness, it is only so

to one group of people, unbelievers. To believers the gospel receives a different evaluation—it is wisdom. Paul had already hinted at this in chapter 1: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1:23–24). The gospel that Paul preached was indeed wisdom, but, as he argues in 2:6–16, it can only be recognized as such by those who have the Spirit.

The contrast in 2:6–16 is between two groups or categories: the unsaved, who do not understand the wisdom in the gospel, and the saved, who do. What divides these two groups is the Spirit. First we are told in 2:14 that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” The “natural man” is the Greek word ψυχικός, which the standard Greek lexicon defines as “one who lives on the purely material plane, without being touched by the Spirit of God.”<sup>95</sup> We are helped here in our understanding of this term by its use in Jude 19: “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” A ψυχικός man does not have the Spirit. So we can say that the natural man is the unregenerate man because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9).

Paul says that the natural man “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*.” The natural man, the man without the Spirit, rejects God’s truth; he is openly hostile to it and is unable to see its significance. The reason for this response is made clear in the last part of v. 14: “because they are spiritually discerned.” The phrase “spiritually discerned” does not refer to a kind of interpretation that is “spiritual.” The word “spiritually” is an adverb derived from the word “spiritual” in v. 15. It means “by means of the Spirit,” that is, “by means of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>96</sup> “The things that come from the Spirit of God” can only be “discerned” by means of that same Spirit. But the natural man cannot understand, he cannot discern correctly the significance and implications of biblical truth because he is spiritually defective—he is not equipped for the task—he lacks the one essential ingredient—the Spirit of God. The natural man is spiritually dead; he has no spiritual life.

In contrast to the natural man of v. 14, Paul says, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man” (v. 15).

---

<sup>95</sup>BAGD, s.v. “ψυχικός,” p. 869.

<sup>96</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 117.

“He that is spiritual” is the translation of a single Greek word πνευματικός. It literally means something like “pertaining to the Spirit” and is commonly translated “spiritual.”<sup>97</sup> But in Paul’s language, the spiritual man is simply the person who has the Spirit in contrast to the natural man, who does not. Everything in chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians clearly indicates that Paul is looking at two classes of people, and only two. Paul views the Corinthians as “spiritual” people in that they have the Spirit, in spite of their problems. In our common Christian parlance, we may speak of a spiritual Christian or we may say that one Christian is more spiritual than another. But that is not how Paul uses the term πνευματικός—ever. In Paul’s language it is redundant to speak of a spiritual Christian. To be spiritual, to have the Spirit, is to be a Christian, pure and simple. It would be proper to translate πνευματικός as “the man with the Spirit,” or the Spirit-man. That is the only contrast we find here—man with or without the Holy Spirit—the natural man and the Spirit-man.

In contrast to the natural man, “he that is spiritual judgeth all things.” The word *judge*, ἀνακρίνω, used twice in v. 15, is same word translated “discern” in v. 14. Whereas the natural man cannot correctly discern spiritual truth, the Spirit-man can; in fact, he “discerns all things.” We should not get carried away with Paul’s “all things.” Many times Paul’s “all things” is limited by the immediate context, as it is here. For instance in Philippians 4:13, that well-known text, Paul says he can do “all things” through Christ. But in the context that does not mean that he could do anything and that nothing was beyond his power. No, the “all things” in Philippians 4:13 is limited to the preceding verse, where “all things” refers to being able to cope with all the extremes of adversity and prosperity that he encountered. So also here in v. 15, “all things” are the things pertaining to salvation, as the previous context of this chapter makes clear. Paul’s point is that the man with the Spirit has what is necessary to discern the significance of God’s truth. He is not limited like the natural man, but can discern “all things” pertaining to salvation.

In the last part of v. 15 Paul tells us that the spiritual man “is judged of no man.” Paul is saying that the man with the Spirit cannot be correctly discerned, appraised, or judged by the natural man. As someone has said, “The profane person cannot understand holiness; but the holy person can well understand the depths of evil.”<sup>98</sup> Those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God can discern all things, including

---

<sup>97</sup>BAGD, s.v. “πνευματικός,” p. 678.

<sup>98</sup>Fee, *Corinthians*, p. 118.

the one without the Spirit, the natural man; but the inverse is not possible.<sup>99</sup> The Christian can understand the sinner very well, but the sinner cannot fathom the Christian. Verse 16 gives scriptural support for the assertion of the last part of v. 15. Paul reworks Isaiah 40:13 in such a way that it serves as a rhetorical question, demanding the answer “No one.”<sup>100</sup> “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?” No one. Paul is thus asking the natural man how he can expect to understand God’s truth, and thereby pass judgment on the one who has the Spirit, when he does not have the mind of the Lord. “But,” in contrast to those who lack the Spirit and thereby do *not* know the mind of the Lord, Paul says, “we,” we Christians, “have the mind of Christ.” All Christians have “the mind of the Lord” because they have received the Spirit. All Christians can think God’s thoughts after him.

In 2:6–16 “spiritual” (πνευματικός) refers to one who has the Spirit, that is, all Christians. In 3:1 Paul says that he “could not speak” to the Corinthians as to spiritual men. He does not say the Corinthians are not spiritual, but that he could not speak to them as spiritual. The Corinthians are manifesting certain kinds of sinful behavior that are certainly unchristian, so one could say there is a sense in which they are “unspiritual,” not because they lack the Spirit but because they are thinking and living like unbelievers, who lack the Spirit.

The Corinthians are not thinking and acting like spiritual men, like true Christians should. Instead their behavior is characterized by carnality—they are “carnal.” The word “carnal,” σάρκινος, in v. 1 means “made of flesh”<sup>101</sup>—that is, merely human. Because the Corinthians had received the Spirit, Paul does not want to call the Corinthians ψυχικός even if they were acting that way. He avoids accusing them of not having the Spirit altogether, but at the same time he forces them to face up to their sinful condition.

So we conclude that in 1 Cor 2:14–3:4 Paul has only two categories in view: natural and spiritual. The carnal Christian is simply a genuine Christian (Spirit-man) temporarily gone astray. Ernest C. Reisinger observes: “I also recognize that there is a sense in which Christians may be said to be carnal but I must add that there are different degrees of carnality. Every Christian is carnal in some area of his life at many times in his life. And in every Christian ‘the flesh lusteth against

---

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>BAGD, s.v. “σάρκινος,” p. 743.

the Spirit' (Gal 5:17)."<sup>102</sup> Although a Christian can be called carnal, his whole spiritual life cannot be categorized as such; he cannot be put into the *category* of carnal Christian because there is no such category. Every single Christian can be called a carnal Christian because every single Christian is carnal to some degree, but there is no distinct category of carnal Christian. B. B. Warfield reminds us:

The remainders of the flesh in the Christian do not constitute his characteristic. He is in the Spirit and is walking, with however halting steps, by the Spirit; and it is to all Christians, not to some, that the great promise is given, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," and the great assurance is added, "Because ye are not under the law but under grace." He who believes in Jesus Christ is under grace, and his whole course, in its process and in its issue alike, is determined by grace, and therefore, having been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, he is surely being conformed to that image, God Himself seeing to it that he is not only called and justified but also glorified. You may find Christians at every stage of this process, for it is a process through which all must pass; but you will find none who will not in God's own good time and way pass through every stage of it. There are not two kinds of Christians, although there are Christians at every conceivable stage of advancement towards the one goal to which all are bound and at which all shall arrive.<sup>103</sup>

#### THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

Contrary to all forms of second-blessing theology, the Bible knows nothing of a second, once-for-all experience of sanctification that can be separated from the initial conversion experience of the believer. Because God is a holy God, he wants his people to be holy. As Peter says: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:15–16). The work of God that makes us holy is called sanctification. When most people speak of sanctification, they usually have in mind the more specific aspect of the doctrine called progressive sanctification, even though they may use only the simple term. Although the Second London Baptist Confession correctly sets forth the truth of progressive sanctification, it can be more succinctly defined as "that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which he delivers us from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live

---

<sup>102</sup>*What Should We Think of the Carnal Christian?* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), p. 8.

<sup>103</sup>Review of *He That Is Spiritual*, p. 218.

lives that are pleasing to him.”<sup>104</sup> In justification the guilt of sin is removed—the believer is declared righteous. But sanctification deals with the pollution of sin, “the corruption of our nature which is the result of sin and which, in turn, produces further sin.”<sup>105</sup> Thus, progressive sanctification is a process by which this pollution of sin is being removed; however, it will not be totally removed (completely eradicated) in this life.

Sanctification also affects our very nature. This is not a change of substance but a change in direction, a change in disposition. Whereas the unbeliever has only one direction, one disposition—toward sin and away from God—the believer is now a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17) with a new direction, a new disposition—toward God and holiness. All of this means that for the first time we are enabled to live lives that are pleasing to God. At the moment of justification a sinner is regenerated and his transformation begins: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). There is no such thing as justification that does not issue in sanctification. Sanctification is inevitable, though it is not automatic; it involves our “responsible participation.”

There *is* real victory over sin for all justified persons. It begins, as Romans 6 teaches, with the victory over the dominion of sin, which rules the unbeliever. But though it is a real and genuine (actual) victory, it is a qualified victory. There is no “life of victory over conscious sin” as Keswick theology would lead us to believe.<sup>106</sup> Unless sin has been completely eradicated, sin still indwells the believer and “the believer ought *always* to be conscious of it as such. To fail to be conscious of it amounts either to hypocrisy or self-deception. To have sin in us and not be conscious of it is itself grave sin; it is culpable ignorance or culpable ignoring. As long as sin remains in us there cannot be freedom from conscious sin, for the simple reason that in the person who is sensitive to the gravity of sin and to the demands of holiness this sin that remains is always reflected in consciousness.”<sup>107</sup> Since sin is not eradicated it will always produce conflict within the believer. The filling of the Holy Spirit does not lessen this conflict; on the contrary, he produces the conflict: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the

---

<sup>104</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 192.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>E.g., Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, p. 99.

<sup>107</sup>Murray, review of *So Great Salvation*, p. 283.

Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). This *normal* conflict within all believers is described by Paul in Romans 7:14ff.

It is up to us to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” because we know that “it is God which worketh in [us] both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phil 2:12–13). Sanctification is accomplished as we “mortify the deeds of the body”; but we cannot do it in our own power but “through the Spirit” (Rom 8:13). God works in us for our sanctification, and we work; but it is only *because* God works in us that we work.<sup>108</sup> Sanctification for the believer is inevitable: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). But sanctification is not automatic; it requires our strenuous participation, all the time battling the world, the flesh, and the devil, “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

---

<sup>108</sup>John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 149.