

NOT WARFIELD OR SCOFIELD: CHAFER'S BIBLICAL MODEL OF SANCTIFICATION

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## NOT WARFIELD OR SCOFIELD: CHAFER'S BIBLICAL MODEL OF SANCTIFICATION

To the historically-informed theologian steeped in the traditions of his forbears, novelty in theological discourse is generally unwelcome. Systematic ideologies develop in the studies and writings of pastor-scholars, but they tend to assume a fortress-like resilience in the theoretical realm of academe. Proponents of such a system can at times find their schoolhouse to be a fortress under perpetual siege. Any refinements or changes, often proposed as improvements on the traditional system, are met quickly and summarily as though they were the attacks of the Vandal hordes on the bastions of orthodoxy. As the ministry of the Apostle Paul demonstrates, we are indeed responsible to defend the Faith against destructive, false teaching if we would equip others to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...."

Unquestionably one of the greatest Reformed defenders of the Word in the early 20th Century was the last giant of the Princeton theology, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield. As an advocate of the inerrancy of the Scriptures he was peerless in an age characterized by scholarly drift and apostasy. Warfield's now famous attack on Lewis Sperry Chafer for *He That is Spiritual* was indeed as heavy a criticism from as respected a source as Chafer could possibly have received. Positively for Chafer, he could have asked no better refining fire than the very incisive mind of B.B. Warfield. Warfield's review of Chafer's work and Chafer's response to Warfield constitute a brief "two-views" look at the doctrine of the Christian way of life or experiential sanctification from within the conservative community of their day. The practical need to systematize this area of the biblical revelation is obvious for any Christian who seriously wants to please God in his walk. On the other hand, the great disparity in theological systems on this matter shows how daunting a task such a categorical analysis poses to the Bible believing theologian.

The year was 1918 and the hopes of utopian post-millennialism were seriously in question after 8.5 million men had died or were dying of their wounds sustained in the War to End All Wars. Apparently man was not going to usher in the peace of the Kingdom anytime soon. In fact, the destitution of man's ability to solve any of his problems was as evident as it had ever been. The theological writing career of then forty-seven year old L.S. Chafer was beginning to gain momentum, and his publication of a "little book" on practical Christian living caused quite a stir. Warfield, who lived through the Civil War as an adolescent, was nearing the end of his ministry, for he would die three years later in 1921 at the age of sixty-nine. His 1919 review article of *He That is Spiritual*<sup>1</sup> very clearly demonstrated the mutual exclusivity of Chafer's largely inductive approach<sup>2</sup> to the theology of sanctification and the long-settled, deductive dogmas of the Reformed tradition. Not only did Warfield denounce Chafer's model as not making the grade of Reformed theology but he went much further by suggesting that he was at least partially Keswick or as Warfield understood the issue, Arminian. The review was typical Warfield in all his clear, incisive, and succinct thoroughness, and Chafer all too happily

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, "Review of *He That Is Spiritual*," *Princeton Theological Review* 17, no. 2 (1919): 322-327.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce A. Baker, "The Theological Method of Lewis Sperry Chafer," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 5, no. 1 (2001): 58.

responded in the public forum of theological writing by including a sizeable footnote in the next print edition of the book.<sup>3</sup>

Exploring the historical interaction between Warfield and Chafer on the topic of the believer's sanctification is a helpful way to observe some of the salient differences between Chafer's view and the Reformed view. It would be difficult to find a better technician to compare *He That is Spiritual* with the Reformed tradition; by Chafer's own admission there was no greater theologian at the time than B.B. Warfield.<sup>4</sup> The kinds of distinctions Warfield made display in stark relief the modifications that Chafer proposed to the Reformed understanding of the doctrine. The summary charge from Warfield would be that Chafer advocated an Arminian position in the form of the "Higher Life" teachings. Warfield was an expert on Christian perfectionism and he saw Chafer's work as an unmistakably tainted by it.<sup>5</sup> This examination will conclude that Chafer's views did not really conform as closely to the Keswick or Higher Life teachings as either Warfield or Chafer's Keswick friends would propose. Ultimately, Chafer's view should be seen as sufficiently distinct from both the Reformed and the Keswick schools to merit its own category.

## **Warfield's Critique and Chafer's Response**

### **Warfield's Summary Argument**

The ringing sound of theological artillery begins Warfield's five-page summary denouncement of Chafer, a rising star in evangelicalism nearly twenty years his junior. "Mr. Chafer is in the unfortunate and, one would think, very uncomfortable, condition of having two inconsistent systems of religion struggling together in his mind."<sup>6</sup> The rebuking tone thus established, Warfield would develop this thesis by demonstrating his reasoning that the Higher Life teaching is just an avenue to the taint of Arminianism. Thus he started by saying Chafer was trying to unite the systems of Calvin and Wesley together, and this was supposedly

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967), 67.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Lecture #1: Introduction to the Believer's Responsibility* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1948-1951, accessed 25 February 2011); available from [www.raystedman.org/mp3/4301.mp3](http://www.raystedman.org/mp3/4301.mp3).

<sup>5</sup> The terms *Higher Life*, *Victorious Life*, and *Keswick* all represent the same school of teachings on the doctrine of sanctification. Keswick, England is the specific place where these teachings have been most popularized due to the famous Keswick Conferences beginning in 1874. Admittedly, it is difficult to perfectly classify Keswick teachings. Reformed theologians tend to focus on the Keswick teaching of two kinds of Christians, i.e. carnal and spiritual. People close to the movement who do not consider themselves Keswick would argue, at least in Chafer's case, that the main characteristic of Keswick is the mystical dependence upon the risen Christ for spiritual victory. Keswick teachers themselves tend to argue that Keswick theology is indistinguishable from Keswick convention methodology with the "spiritual clinic" model of bringing a believer to full surrender through the crisis experience of the "second blessing."

<sup>6</sup> Warfield, "Review," 322.

explained by the two kinds of influence that surrounded him. On the one hand he was beset by "evangelicals" and good Reformed theologians from his standing as a member of the Presbyterian church. After all, his father was an ordained Presbyterian minister. On the other hand, he had fallen into an unfortunate "coterie" of later associates who were "Higher Life" advocates.<sup>7</sup> The matter of influence will actually help to show how little Chafer embraced Keswick's essential doctrines.

The way Warfield proceeded to demonstrate his charge of Chafer's Arminianism was to equate the teaching of *He That is Spiritual* with the teachings of Keswick. The route he took to make that identification was through word associations. Because Chafer used language in common "Higher Life" teachers whose writings had been en vogue for most of the previous fifty years, Warfield concluded that he must be advocating their doctrine. Words not to be used in describing the believer's spiritual life, according to Warfield's reasoning, include *carnal*, *spiritual*, *claim by faith*, *engaging the Spirit*, *yielding ourselves*, *known sin*, and *the life that is in Christ*. To Warfield these were all technical terms that indicated Chafer was in error, at least by association. Chafer's "Three Classes of Men" exposition of 1 Cor 2:9-3:3 as the starting point for the argument in *He That is Spiritual* was to Warfield easily dismissed as a "misreading."

However, within that short seven pages of Chafer's opening chapter he presents the entire rationale for his model of sanctification. Not entering into detail about how this foundational exegesis for his argument is at fault, Warfield quickly switched in his critique to his very capable deductive skills and isolated the main problem of Chafer's view in his eyes: to suggest that believers have any actual volitional responsibility or capability to obey God's commands is to suggest that God is not sovereign.

While this "quintessence of Arminianism" was the main contradiction to the Reformed view that Warfield defended, it was not the primary way he identified Chafer with the Higher Life movement. Neither, in fact, was his extensive examination of words Chafer used in common with W. E. Boardman and the Pearsall-Smiths.<sup>8</sup> The doctrine that most identified Chafer with Keswick theology in Warfield's reasoning was Chafer's notion that there could be two classes of Christians. This teaching alone was sufficient correspondence with Higher Life theology for Warfield so to characterize him. The teaching of two distinct categories of Christians is seen by some Reformed theologians as the main error of the Keswick model of Sanctification, and therefore its main distinctive feature. "Keswick's primary error is unbiblically separating Christians into two distinct categories."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> W.E. Boardman's *The Higher Christian Life* and Hannah Whittall (Pearsall-)Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* were the main writings that most clearly set forth the mystical doctrines of the Keswick movement.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew David Naselli, *Let Go and Let God? A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010), 296.

Any teaching that proposes the possibility believers can fail to successfully walk the walk of the Faith and are therefore seen to be carnal can expect to be categorized as Keswick or "Higher Life" or "Victorious Life" by Reformed theologians like Warfield.

Warfield conceded that Chafer's *He That is Spiritual* did not fully agree with the Victorious Life movement of the day but only to show the supposed contradiction that his system insists is there. This was a left-handed compliment from someone who had thoroughly investigated the Higher Life teachings of W.E. Boardman and the Pearsall-Smiths.<sup>10</sup>

Warfield allowed that Chafer did not agree with the Higher/Victorious Life tendency to Pentecostalism. He also conceded that Chafer did not like the real key terms of the Higher Life movement, like "second blessing," "second work of grace," or even "higher life." Nevertheless, Chafer's assertion that the Bible teaches two kinds of Christians was taken to mean that he adhered to the "second blessing" of Keswick theology nonetheless. Warfield saw this teaching as the ascendancy of Arminianism in his day because Chafer was proposing that believers have real decisions to make and responsibilities to fulfill in the progress of their sanctification. They had to choose to rely on the Spirit for His power over the sin nature. The system he offers in contrast to Chafer's view might be styled as "inevitable progressive perseverance." For Chafer the believer's growth was not inevitable, and one's assurance of salvation in the sense of final deliverance from hell was no indicator of success in the post-conversion walk.

### **The Twelve Charges in Warfield's Review**

Warfield's denouncement of *He That is Spiritual* can be outlined into twelve main charges in the sequence that he offered them. This outline will then highlight several components of Chafer's view of sanctification to help distinguish it from the Reformed view.

1. **Summary Charge:** Warfield accused Chafer of mixing Calvinism (God's Sovereignty) with Arminianism (human responsibility or capability). Perhaps the evident disdain with which he repeatedly levels this worst possible charge, i.e. the taint of Arminianism, was to dissuade all good Bible believing evangelicals from further reading his books. Perhaps the harsh strokes were meant to reprove Chafer and restore him to the Faith of the Westminster Divines. Speculation aside, Chafer received the criticism and was unrepentant.

2. **Demonstration:** Chafer uses Arminian-tainted Higher Life vocabulary. Warfield proved how thoroughly he had read *He That is Spiritual* by listing the many catch-phrases and buzzwords Chafer used in common with Higher Life teachers. That there are common strands between Keswick teachings and *He That is Spiritual* cannot be denied. An analysis of the common claim that Chafer's sanctification views are Keswick will follow this examination of Warfield's review of *He That is Spiritual*.

3. **Concession:** Yet he does not go as far as they with their mystical tendencies and their main teaching of perfectionism. Why this does not sufficiently distinguish Chafer from the Higher Life teaching to which Warfield referred is very important to his overall denouncement.

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<sup>10</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 8: Perfectionism, Part Two* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008).

The issue of human responsibility was for Warfield the category-defining doctrine. Saying Higher Life was a way to say "Arminian."

4. **Main Identification with Keswick: *He That is Spiritual* teaches that there are two kinds of Christians, as in 1 Cor 2:9-3:3.** One of the main defining doctrines of the Keswick conferences--perhaps even the major impetus for this movement of teaching believers how to live as opposed to evangelizing unbelievers--was that there is more to the believer's walk than being saved by grace through the initial act of faith. There were other doctrines strongly advocated by the Keswick teachers which derive from clear statements in Scripture. It is beyond doubt that they were Trinitarian, of course, but even closer to the issue of sanctification was their view that God alone works what pleases Him in and through a believer. Neither of these doctrines by themselves would bring the charge of a Keswick association. To be Trinitarian is not necessarily to be Keswick. But to be Keswick is definitely to be Trinitarian. In the same kind of reasoning, the teaching of two kinds of Christians from the testimony of Paul in 1 Cor 2-3 is not necessarily Keswick either, though they held to this doctrine in common with Chafer.

5. **Soteriology:** Warfield accused Chafer of being Arminian because he taught that man has responsible interaction with God in both justification and sanctification.<sup>11</sup>

6. **"Perfectionist" Hamartiology:** Despite Chafer's claims to the contrary, Warfield accused him of being a "perfectionist" of the "suppressionist" stripe. This meant that Chafer believed in the possibility of a sin-free experience in the Christian life under the power of the Holy Spirit. Chafer taught that when a believer was walking by the Spirit he could not "produce the desire of the flesh," and his conclusion was based upon his plain-sense reading of Galatians 5:16.<sup>12</sup>

7. **Hamartiology Interfaced with Sovereignty:** The control of the Spirit over the sin nature would preclude a believer's ability to sin, yet Chafer held that believers could and do choose to reject this ministry. In short: God provides perfect possibilities; man is responsible for his imperfect acquisition of those possibilities into reality by faith adjustment to God's Spirit. This is what Warfield meant by the "quintessence of Arminianism."<sup>13</sup>

8. **Status Quo Spirituality vs. Progressive Growth:** Warfield understood Chafer to say that in God's provision it is possible for a believer not to sin, but no one actualizes that possibility consistently. Here is where it becomes evident that Chafer's model and Warfield's are using the same language to talk about different things. Warfield quoted Chafer: "The Christian may realize *at once* the heavenly virtues of Christ." This statement expresses a vital point of distinction. Chafer was saying that at any given point even an immature, new believer can be experientially adjusted to God's holiness through the filling of the Spirit. At any point in a Christian's walk he can and should be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand it is

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<sup>11</sup> Warfield, "Review," 324.

<sup>12</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 96.

<sup>13</sup> Warfield, "Review," 324.

<sup>14</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 43.

also possible that even a very mature believer reject that work and grieve or quench Him (1 Thes 5:18, Eph 4:31).<sup>15</sup> Warfield erroneously equated Chafer's idea of instantaneous status quo as somehow replacing the biblical model of *progression* or *growth* into the likeness of Christ, which the Reformed tradition so ably upholds. Chafer held that both are true. There is a status or "state" that Chafer thought of as spirituality, and there is a progression of maturity within that state. The former is John's fellowship with God in 1 John 1; the latter is growth within the fellowship, as in 2 Peter 3:18.

**9. The Control of Sin in the Believer's Life:** Chafer held that for a believer not to walk according to the flesh there were only two possibilities. Either God *eradicated* the sin nature at the new birth as the "Holiness Movement" taught, or the Holy Spirit exercised a hobbling control over it in the Christian's submissive walk. Chafer said it must be the latter; a Christian will not function in the flesh if he is walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Warfield said that the Spirit controls or restrains the flesh now with inevitable progressive eradication through the Christian's course of life.<sup>16</sup> Again the distinction between the two men on this matter resolves to the issue of whether the control of the Spirit over the flesh is inevitable or optional.

**10. Two Natures:** Chafer held that there were two natures in the believer, which, Warfield reasoned, somehow must mean that there is no regeneration. If the old nature has not been remade or regenerated into the new, then Warfield argued there was nothing renewed at conversion. Chafer's claim that regeneration is the addition of a new nature so that a believer has two natures was unacceptable to Warfield.

**11. Exegesis:** In a strong but very subtle, nonchalant way Warfield demonstrated that he considered Chafer to be bombastic and to make unsupportable interpretive leaps.<sup>17</sup> The attack was an attempt to discredit Chafer's constant appeal to exegetical conclusions in the Scriptures by one who represented a rational approach. This charge from Warfield highlights a key to the difference between the two men. Specifically Warfield took issue with Chafer's insight on Romans 5:5, that he had read into the Text more than was there. He disagreed with Chafer's view, but it had nothing to do with the argument over sanctification. If Chafer was a bad exegete the main basis for his argumentation would collapse. Without expectation of fully grasping the infinite logical ramifications, Chafer earnestly believed that his hard labor of exegesis had delivered a biblical pneumatology and related doctrines.

**12. Justification and Sanctification Distinct:** Chafer separated justification from sanctification as two distinct works of God. This area of difference between Warfield and Chafer is probably the most important difference between Reformed and Chaferian sanctification. The Reformed theologians tend to rationalize from presumed knowns, like the meaning of "salvation" or "sanctification." If these are settled terms that always mean the same things, then the deductions are straightforward. On the other hand, the inductive tendency in Chafer and other dispensationalists attempts to allow even these sacred words to be given their

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 70-95.

<sup>16</sup> Warfield, "Review," 325. Notice that "the flesh" did not mean a person's old nature to Warfield.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

meaning in their contexts. Doing so presents at least four different meanings for "save" and at least three different meanings for "sanctify" as these ideas relate to believers in the New Testament. The simplest way of demonstrating the method that produces a distinct justification sanctification from experiential or post-conversion sanctification is to examine the Greek terms' tenses.

### Chafer's Response

Other writers have interacted with this famous castigation by Warfield.<sup>18</sup> However, the best insights will come from Dr. Chafer himself in his footnote response and subsequent writing on the doctrine of sanctification. The time in which this challenge came was significant in that Chafer had the bulk of his fruitful ministry ahead of him. In 1924 he would found Dallas Theological Seminary and produce through the ensuing twenty years of journal writing what would become the first dispensational systematic theology. This rebuke in 1919 did not come to a man who was undeveloped in his understandings of the Scriptures, and *He That Is Spiritual* has seen several editions since this first reception from the halls of the evangelical scholarship.

The footnote in *He That is Spiritual* stretches across two pages and takes up the vast majority of their space.<sup>19</sup> Out of the twelve charges outlined above, which rather helpfully point out the rudiments of Chafer's model of experiential sanctification, he selected two main items to rebuff: first is the question of God's Sovereignty and the believer's responsibility, and second is the idea of carnal versus spiritual Christians. Significantly, the charges of similitude with Higher Life theology are not really addressed except in the carnality issue. The charge of Arminianism received the bulk of Chafer's attention, as it was for him a heavy claim. After Chafer's death, C.F. Lincoln concluded in his biographical sketch that Chafer's *Systematic Theology* was "unabridged, Calvinistic, premillennial, and dispensational."<sup>20</sup>

In Chafer's published defense against Warfield we gain particular insight into what sort of Calvinist Chafer really was. He went along with Dort and Westminster as long as he understood the system to be an accurate presentation of the Scriptural doctrines. Conversely, his writing did not give a wide berth around their dictates when his aim was exposition of the Text that might contradict them. Therefore Warfield's Calvinistic sensibilities were affronted at the words, "The Christian will always be filled while he is making the work of the Spirit possible in

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<sup>18</sup> Randall Gleason, "B.B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 2 (1997). Baker." Gary W. Johnson, "Warfield, Chafer, and the Reformed Tradition: A Question of Historical Perspective," *Reformation and Revival* 6, no. 2 (1997). John D. Hannah, "The "Thomas" In the W. H. Griffith Thomas Memorial Lectureship," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163, no. 649 (2006). William A. Combs, "The Disjunction between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 6, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>19</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 67-68.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Originally Published: Dallas, Tex. : Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-1948. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 8:6.

his life."<sup>21</sup> This statement and others like it was the basis for the charge of Arminianism, as they appear to make God's undertakings somehow dependent on human choices.

In a way, perhaps Chafer's response to Warfield did represent a combination of two systems of theology. He began by affirming the sovereignty of God both in "eternal purpose" and its "realization." However "between" these aspects of God's determined program there was "sufficient latitude for some exercise of the human will."<sup>22</sup> Chafer suggested that the Scriptures present these two seemingly contradictory realities with "equal emphasis," and the perceived contradiction is an indication of man's "finite mind."<sup>23</sup> One may note that this is a scriptural argument more than a rational or deductive one. It is evident in this exchange that as of 1919, Chafer would be content to surrender his claim to perceived rational consistency for the sake of faithfulness to the Text as he understood it. Chafer demonstrated his point about the believer's responsibility using Scripture references that teach God's sovereign choice in salvation and sanctification as well as man's responsibility to believe or obey.<sup>24</sup> He assumed that an imperative "injunction" implies human responsibility and even capability to obey, even if it is divinely enabled. For Chafer, to overemphasize the sovereignty of God was to be "fatalistic" and disregard "much Scripture." On the other hand, to overemphasize the responsibility of the human will was to "dethrone God."

His suggestion is therefore that a "hyper-Calvinistic" system which he believed Warfield represented<sup>25</sup> and an Arminian system which truly held that God was subordinate to man's choices were both out of harmony with the Scriptures. There were elements of both systems that he saw in the Text, so Warfield's charge of the mixture is close. Warfield's problem, at least in Chafer's analysis, was that he assumed rational supremacy of his system and seemed to place the deductive Reformed construct above the Text itself. Chafer summarized his view combining God's sovereignty with man's will this way: "Though the will be moved upon by the enabling power of God, spirituality, according to God's word is made to depend upon that divinely-enabled human choice; Romans 12:1, 2; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and 1 John 1:9 being sufficient evidence."<sup>26</sup>

Chafer's stance, at least in his reckoning, was settled by his higher loyalty to the God of the Scriptures: "To state that spirituality is made possible, on the human side, by well-defined

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<sup>21</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 67-68.

<sup>24</sup> John 6:44 cf. 12:32, Acts 16:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Romans 6:13, 12:1-2, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, and 1 John 1:9.

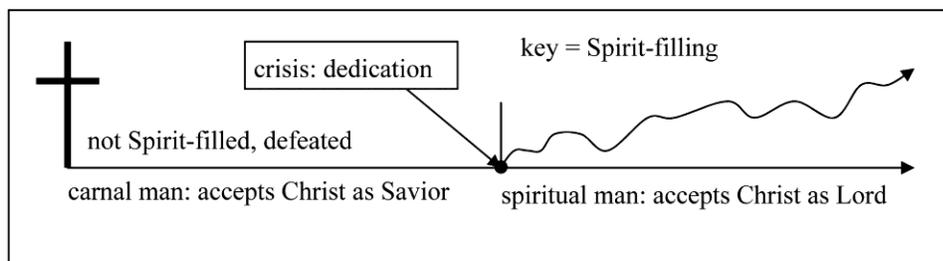
<sup>25</sup> Chafer, "Lecture 1."

<sup>26</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 67

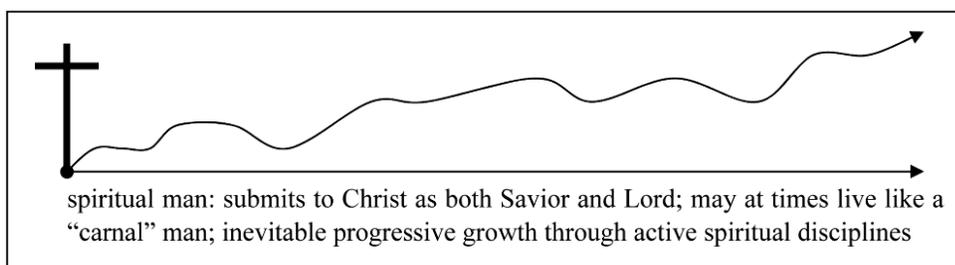
human acts and attitudes may seem 'a quite terrible expression' (to quote [Warfield]) as viewed by an **arbitrary theological theory**; however it is evidently biblical."<sup>27</sup>

In contrast with the ultimate debate of theology proper and biblical anthropology as expressed in Reformed and Arminian soteriology, Chafer's remarks in support of his view of the two kinds of Christians was relatively brief. His perceived biblical position on which he based his main theological defense was the bastion from which he defended this "two kinds of Christians" idea. After all, the exposition of Chapter 1 of *He That is Spiritual* was apparently not addressed by Warfield to his satisfaction. He quoted Warfield's rational argumentation and then rejected it for want of exegetical or expositional support in the Text. Chafer then concluded with an explanation of the difference between Christian growth and spirituality. Spirituality is seen as a status quo, a possession of power and enablement from God the Spirit. Christian growth or maturity is a progression in the believer's life. The two are intimately related but seen as distinct matters.

Here is where Reformed critics of Chafer's understanding of sanctification fail to understand what he was saying. Below are two helpful charts that show a Reformed theologian's understanding of Chaferian sanctification and the Reformed model.<sup>28</sup>



Chaferian Sanctification



Reformed Sanctification

<sup>27</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 68, emphasis added.

<sup>28</sup> Naselli, *Let Go*, 305.

The only difference between the two diagrams is the time gap between salvation and dedication in the "Chaferian" model. The proposed diagram of Chaferian sanctification shows a definite event, like a second blessing, which Chafer rejected.<sup>29</sup> Chafer did not hold to a second work of grace in the believer's life which would start him on the path to "inevitable progressive perseverance." Admittedly Chafer's model would be hard to diagram on this timeline graph because fellowship with God is a status quo, and spiritual growth is progressive. Perhaps the Reformed model would work if the line were dotted and represented the believer's time in fellowship with God. The diagram would be difficult for another reason: for Chafer, a Christian's maturation is not inevitable.

### **Summary Distinctives for Chaferian Sanctification**

Warfield's thorough, albeit pejorative, treatment of Chafer's work has helped surface some of the salient features of Chafer's model of sanctification, which overlaps with his views on theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. First, Chafer held that without contradicting His own sovereignty, God had so mightily determined and decreed reality that man was capable of responsible interaction with Him. Perhaps this is the most important distinctive in Chafer's whole theological system, as it explains the need for the dispensations, viewing history as a presentation of God's interactions with His responsible creatures who will inevitably fail unless they trust Him and obey His commands. This God-ordained capacity for responsible interaction from human beings is not a fully-developed departure from Dortian Calvinism in Chafer's view of the justification "phase" of salvation, but it was very much in play for Chafer's model of post-conversion life.

The fact of a believer's responsibility to choose and obey after conversion, as Chafer understood it, leads to his second major departure from the Westminster view of sanctification represented by Warfield: that the "tenses of salvation" in the Scriptures require a distinction between justification, or initial salvation, and sanctification. Chafer called the Bible's testimony concerning the believer's post-conversion walk "life truth."<sup>30</sup>

This distinction between justification or positional sanctification and the post-conversion life, expressed here as experiential sanctification, is not only an observation of the New Testament Scriptures in the very Greek tenses of the pertinent words like "save," (SOZO, σώζω) or "sanctify," (HAGGIAZO, αἱγιαζω). Naturally the Word of God is sufficient, but we should not shrink back from its obvious connection to universal, inescapable facts of God's reality. We human beings, confined as we are in time and space, must acknowledge that there was a period before we believed initially unto eternal life, and certain things became irrevocably true for us at that point that were not true before. This we often call "salvation" and rightly see it as a work of God's sovereign grace. The inevitable question that the facts of life require us to

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<sup>29</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:162. For a clear statement affirming the "tenses of salvation" see *Ibid.*, 3:6.

ask is, "now what?" After that moment of initial faith and the new birth, there is the rest of one's life which one must live. It is this obvious fact of the universal experience of believers that forces us to the Scriptures and only the Scriptures if we would know with objective certainty the answer to the very Reformed question, "How now shall we live?" Chafer's willingness to systematize the very Scriptural difference between initial faith and subsequent praxis was an advance on Westminster Calvinism that he and his associates believed the Bible required him to make.

The third major distinctive of Chafer's view of sanctification in contrast to the Reformed position was an observation of many passages of Scripture and a logical consequence of the first two propositions above. If believers are responsible for their choice to obey or disobey God, and there is a distinction between positional sanctification and experiential sanctification, then it is possible for believers to fail in the latter phase of life. This idea is totally unacceptable to the Reformed way of thinking because it would contradict the Reformed understanding of the sovereignty of God if man is responsible for his free action. Thus Chafer's view of "two kinds of Christians" is both the fruit of inductive exegesis of the Scriptures and a rationally consistent deduction from his other key distinctives. On the inductive side, which is where the campaign should be waged, there is Chafer's observation of passages like 1 Cor 2-3, where the (positionally) sanctified Corinthians (1:2) are yet carnal (3:3). On the rational side, responsible, free agents are free to fail and responsible for it.

Chafer's view of anthropology posed a fourth major distinctive in his view of sanctification: two natures in the Christian. Warfield showed how this view does not fit the rational mold of the Reformed system, but Chafer's position on this was much more a function of exegesis than of rational deduction. He found himself forced to deal with Romans 7:14-25 and Galatians 5:16. "I" is the problem in Romans 7, and the flesh is still a problem for the Galatians. In fact, for the Galatians it is such a problem that Paul can say they "received the Spirit" (3:3) and yet they have become "severed from Christ" (5:4). Intellectual honesty for Chafer and others of his association like C. I. Scofield and W. H. Griffith-Thomas was to suspend the rational, even intuitive correlations that would hamper faithful exegesis long enough to hear what the passages actually taught. This difference in method is a subtle matter of priorities; Chafer was more suspicious of human reason than Warfield, and Warfield was less sure of Chafer's exegesis than Chafer.

One cannot rightly assess Chafer's view of the Christian life without concern for his dispensational scheme. The Reformed approach to sanctification primarily features an appeal to the Ten Commandments in the Mosaic Law. This was totally unacceptable to Chafer and other dispensationalists who, despite many different views on the overall scheme of the ages, could agree at least that the Church is a totally distinct entity from Israel.<sup>31</sup> For Chafer and other dispensationalists, that "big distinction" is an inevitable consequence of the First Advent of the Lord Jesus with His finished Work, Resurrection, and Glorification at the Father's right hand. There could be no "Filling of the Spirit" available to all believers until Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit to baptize all believers. The Filling of the Spirit, to be experienced by all believers

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<sup>31</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:167.

according to Ephesians 5:18, is Chafer's key ingredient for Church Age sanctification. What a Spirit-filled Christian can do is far above and beyond what an Old Testament saint could do. The capabilities and responsibilities are totally distinct. In that sense, the average Christian life is to be a "higher life" than was possible for Israel before the Incarnation. Chafer saw the appeal to the works of the Law as a transgression of Galatians 4, a going back to the slavery of pre-adoption minority.

### **How Keswick was Chafer?**

Warfield's analysis is very helpful in isolating how the Chaferian and Reformed Sanctification models differ. It is not very helpful in understanding the relationship between Chafer's and the Keswick model. Obviously Warfield saw in Chafer's "Arminianism" a sufficient correspondence to make the identification of Chafer as Keswick. However, one should hear Chafer out on this matter before drawing too hasty a conclusion. The question of one's Keswick affiliations in Chafer's generation is a particularly difficult matter to characterize because Keswick theology is difficult to categorize.

By design, according to advocates of the movement, the Keswick conference was not about bringing anything new or controversial to the pulpit.<sup>32</sup> Sectarian doctrines as they then existed were not of interest in the Keswick conferences, and speakers came from all different theological persuasions. For example, the formulators of the distinctive Keswick teachings and with whom Chafer disagreed, were from irreconcilably diverse denominations. W.E. Boardman who popularized "Higher Life" teaching with the publication of *The Higher Christian Life* in 1859 was technically a Presbyterian, first of the New School as of 1852 and later of the Old School in 1855.<sup>33</sup> The other writer who most dramatically defined the Keswick model of sanctification was a formerly Quaker woman named Hannah Whitall Smith. Smith settled down to a Wesleyan model of sanctification from which she developed her mystical *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* in 1875.

### **Keswick is Non-Denominational**

The effort of the Keswick approach, then, was trans-denominational. The revivalist movement first caught on in England with the success of D. L. Moody and Ira Sankey's evangelistic campaign in 1873-1874.<sup>34</sup> This first-wave of non-denominational evangelistic fervor was brought life and energy into the English-speaking church just as the late 19th Century liberalism was catching on among scholars. The people wanted spiritually-empowered

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<sup>32</sup> Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 29.

<sup>33</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism*, 466.

<sup>34</sup> Barabas, *So Great*, 15.

communication as their pastors and theologians were preparing to deny them all things supernatural. Chafer saw this non-denominationalism not as a repudiation of the Reformation but in clear agreement with Paul's denouncement of the carnal tendency to divide the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 3. "Denominationally unattached" was Chafer's watchword for Dallas Theological Seminary, and in that way he was a product of his times. But this did not mean he held to Keswick teachings on the "second blessing" or "higher life."

This aspect of non-denominationalism is important to understand Chafer's views. He was not a partisan to any "camp" based on artificial associations and affiliations. His beloved Presbyterian denomination apparently taught him the hard lesson that doctrine was the basis for affiliation, as it slouched away in modernism on the one hand and rejected his dispensationalism on the other. That being the case, the Keswick teachers who indeed embraced views about sanctification that he rejected nevertheless shared much in common with him. He was a friend of theologians from many diverse viewpoints, often at great odds with his own. For example, Chafer reached out to J. Gresham Machen with advice and counsel as he was breaking from Princeton and leaving the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to start the Presbyterian Church of America in 1929.<sup>35</sup> He would count the leader of "American Keswick," Charles G. Trumbull as a dear "bosom friend" and fellow disciple of C. I. Scofield and yet completely disagree with him on the doctrine of sanctification.

Sometime between 1948-51, Chafer declared that he did not adhere to what he, from the inside the Bible Conference movement, would count as the chief teaching of the Keswick model:

*Now I've had a controversy for years with the Keswick Movement in this country. Charlie Trumbull<sup>36</sup> who was editor of the Sunday School Times was the head of that movement, and he was one of my closest bosom friends. And he knew very well that I did not hold what was taught in the Keswick Movement. He knew that. And yet the Keswick Movement adopted my little book on the spiritual life as the authentic and identified and recognized statement of the spiritual life. They accepted that **when I taught the very thing they didn't hold**. What did I teach? Well I taught that deliverance comes from the Third Person of the Godhead and not from the Second Person. And they just thoughtlessly, continually said that it was Jesus that delivered me; it isn't. Now I know I can do all things through Christ strengthening me, yes I know that. And I know He said, "Apart from Me, ye can do nothing." But when it comes to the great doctrine of deliverance from evil, it's always by the power of the indwelling Spirit. He is the deliverer. But on what ground can He do it? On the ground of something that Christ has done.<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen J. Nichols, "A Brief Exchange between Lewis Sperry Chafer and J. Gresham Machen," *Westminster Theological Journal* 62, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>36</sup> Trumbull was considered by most theologians to be the prime advocate for the Keswick teaching in America, under the title "The Victorious Life." See Warfield, *Perfectionism*, 563.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Lecture #3: Power to Overcome Evil, Subtopic Two: The Flesh* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1948-1951, accessed 25 February 2011); available from [www.raystedman.org/mp3/4303.mp3](http://www.raystedman.org/mp3/4303.mp3).

### Keswick Affiliates With Chafer

If the standard works on systematic theology are any indication, there was indeed a lack of teaching on practical Christian living at the end of the 19th Century, and the Keswick convention organizers were providing something to meet the popular demand. Chafer was also similarly inclined, as he stated in his rationale for his *Systematic Theology*.<sup>38</sup> The observation that something is missing or wrong does not mean that all observers will have identical proposed solutions.

If Boardman and Smith are any indication, Keswick tended to mysticism and so away from exacting exegesis. Therefore a book that makes exegetical, inductive arguments for doctrines that the Keswick people hold would be a good book to adopt as one's own. Yet, as Chafer says, the contents of *He That is Spiritual* were largely disregarded in favor of the mystical union with Christ view that Chafer saw as the defining characteristic of Keswick. Keswick's affiliation with Chafer and later John Walvoord is a recurring theme because there is much in common with the two movements.<sup>39</sup> But Chafer says the positions are different. It is noteworthy that Chafer is arguing a fairly specific point of contention, but for him the difference means he is not Keswick.

Thus, Chafer suffered from the assertion by his friends in Keswick that they were in agreement with him when they were not. On the other hand, he was characterized by Warfield as being in agreement with them when he was not. This becomes a study in how we categorize and systematize. At the level of Warfield's observation, perhaps there was enough in common to make the identification; but from Chafer's perspective, the differences were too great to categorize himself with them. It should not be missed that Chafer was so certain and insistent that Keswick teaching did not agree with his views on sanctification that thirty years after first publishing *He That is Spiritual* he was taking time in class at DTS to make that distinction very plain.

While it is common to find Keswick representatives like McQuilkin and Trumbull saying that they agree with the presentation of Chafer and Walvoord in their dispensational view of sanctification, there is evidence to the contrary. Of course Keswick theology can be difficult to define and categorize, but one Keswick writer who explained the history of the movement in a book published the year Chafer died made a strong statement about method. "The methods characteristic of the Keswick Convention are quite as important as what is actually taught there, and bear quite as distinct a stamp of peculiarity and individuality. Indeed it is doubtful if the teaching can be accurately understood and evaluated apart from a knowledge of the methods of the Convention. The two cannot be dissociated." This statement by Steven Barabas in *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* is distinctly separated from Chafer and Scofield when it came to their assessment of method. Keswick seems to propose a revivalist convention event that will bring a crisis dedication of surrender and faith from which a

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<sup>38</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:x.

<sup>39</sup> Melvin E. Dieter and others, *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 236.

believer will then emerge in the Higher Life. A scripted, five-day conference with little slogans like, "no crisis till Wednesday" as the distinct *method* of Keswick differs from both Chafer's and Scofield's methods for the filling of the Spirit.

### The Scofield Connection

It is a well-known fact of public record that Chafer was a protégé and successor to C. I. Scofield. He is on record as saying that the Scofield Reference Bible is "one of the greatest gifts of God to the Church in these last days."<sup>40</sup> Historians have well-noted the heavy influence upon Chafer from Scofield, even going so far as to say that "Chafer systematized and institutionalized Scofield's thoughts and attitudes."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Chaferian dispensationalism is directly derivative of Scofield's views espoused in the Reference Bible.

The tight bond between the two men being established, a comparison between Scofield's view of sanctification in *Plain Papers on the Holy Spirit*, from 1899 and that in Chafer's *He That is Spiritual* in 1918 will uncover a wide chasm between the two on the essential matter of praxis.<sup>42</sup> For both men, the central issue in living the Christian way of life was the power of the Holy Spirit in the specific ministry of filling, as opposed to indwelling or baptizing. This Chafer saw as strictly distinct from American Keswick of Trumbull's persuasion because the enablement is all of the Spirit, instead of mystical union with Christ. Both Scofield and Chafer list and elaborate upon the criteria for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Chafer's threefold criteria are especially distinct from Scofield's five requirements. Chafer had two negative requirements and one positive, based on clear injunctions in the Epistles. On the negative side, a believer must not quench (1 Thes 5:19) or grieve (Eph 4:30) the Holy Spirit. The positive requirement is dependence upon the Spirit, which Chafer understood to be the meaning of "walk by means of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:16. This is direct activity on the part of the believer regarding the Third Person of the Trinity.

In contrast, Scofield was still very Keswick-sounding in his criteria to be filled with the Spirit. Chafer had obviously affirmed Scofield's two negative criteria, for they are common to both men. But the positive requirements Scofield put forth are "yielding," "faith," and "prayer." Scofield was specific about what these things meant. Yielding was, as with Chafer, a dedication of self to the will of God per Romans 6:13 and 12:1. Neither writer describes a "second blessing" or "crisis," but Scofield was explicit that we are to yield *to Christ* through the power of the Spirit, with our responsible portion of the transaction being assent.<sup>43</sup> Both writers

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<sup>40</sup> Chafer, "Lecture 1."

<sup>41</sup> John D. Hannah, "The Early Years of Lewis Sperry Chafer," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144, no. 573 (1987).

<sup>42</sup> C. I. Scofield, *Plain, Papers on the Holy Spirit* [book on-line] (Wholesome Words, 2005, accessed 20 February 2011); available from <http://www.wholesomewords.org/etexts/scofield/scofield1.pdf>; Internet. Of special value in seeing how Scofield differed from Chafer on the Filling of the Spirit is the fourth chapter, "The Filling with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

say that re-consecration (Scofield) and rededication (Chafer) are unnecessary.<sup>44</sup> When Scofield said faith was necessary to the filling of the Spirit, he meant very specifically that we are to "trust in [Christ] as the alone bestower of the Spirit."<sup>45</sup> Then Scofield's correlations are with the Lord's promises to send the Spirit in John 7:37-39. One might imagine Chafer asking, "What about the indwelling of the Spirit we have already received upon faith in Christ for our salvation?" This idea of faith in Christ for the filling of the Spirit is certainly Keswick but not at all Chaferian.

The third of Scofield's criteria was prayer. Chafer would say that all Christian prayer is to be directed to the Father in the name of the Son in the power of the Spirit. Scofield's criterion is prayer to the *Son* for the Filling of the Spirit. Chafer is helpfully clear on this doctrine: "Prayer for the Spirit's filling is an error of great proportions and indicates a misunderstanding of the conditions which now obtain. The Spirit's filling does not await the influence of prayer. God is not withholding this blessing until He is prevailed upon or some reluctance on His part is broken down. He awaits the requisite human adjustments. In other words, He is waiting for the believer to yield all to Him."<sup>46</sup>

### Conclusion

If one begins with Warfield's perspective, he will classify Chafer's model of sanctification as Higher Life and Arminian. Processing Warfield's objections with Chafer's teaching in *He That is Spiritual* gives a very clear distinction between what Chafer taught and what the Westminster covenantalists believed concerning the believer's walk. Doing so demonstrates the difference between Reformed and Chaferian sanctification. Chafer was more willing to submit his system to the inductive dictates of Scripture because he believed man's reasoning ability was finite, compared to God's infinite wisdom revealed in Scripture. As helpful as Warfield's critique was, it does not suffice to allow him to categorize Chafer's model as Keswick. As demonstrated, the criteria for defining Keswick theology depend upon who is making the assessment.

Warfield saw that Chafer taught about "two kinds of Christians" and said "Keswick." Chafer saw in Keswick a mystical deliverance through Christ as opposed to the Filling of the Spirit and said, "not biblical." Here we benefit from the historical assessment both from within and from without the Keswick movement to see that Chafer's model of sanctification was influenced by his Reformed roots, his theologian associates (including Keswick speakers), and especially his mentor, C.I. Scofield. But when Chafer finished systematizing and correlating, building upon the work Scofield had bequeathed to him, he had an altogether distinct systematic presentation from those who had preceded him. A believer's security is not compromised by human responsibility; the problem of sin is not to be eschewed in favor of humanistic optimism; and tradition does not trump the Text. Rather, the Holy Spirit enables a believer to live in his

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 12. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:255.

<sup>45</sup> Scofield, *Plain Papers*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:232.

post-conversion walk according to his irrevocable, exalted position in Christ. By the Spirit of God, the sons of God may "walk in the light." Of all the influences that produced this theological construct, nothing was higher or more beautiful to Chafer than the Word of God.

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