

KESWICK THEOLOGY: A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN THE EARLY KESWICK MOVEMENT¹

by
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Large swaths of modern fundamentalism and evangelicalism chronologically separate the point when believers (1) first experience justification and (2) begin progressive sanctification. This is evident, for example, in the way many believers share their salvation testimony: “I was saved when I was eight years old, and I surrendered to Christ when I was twelve.” Or, “I accepted Christ as my Savior when I was eight years old, and I accepted Christ as my Lord when I was twelve.” This state of affairs reflects the influence of Keswick³ theology.

Keswick is a small town in the scenic Lake District of northwest England. Since 1875, it has hosted a weeklong meeting in July for the Keswick Convention. In this essay “the early Keswick movement” refers to a movement⁴ from 1875 to 1920⁵ that was (1) conservatively evangelical; (2) based on and distinguished by the belief that the majority

¹This article is a lightly edited manuscript from the 2008 William R. Rice Lecture Series, delivered on March 19, 2008 at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (available at <http://dbts.edu/5-1/5-14.asp#08>). It condenses Andrew David Naselli’s “Keswick Theology: A Historical and Theological Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement, 1875–1920” (Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 2006). This article contains about 80% fewer words than the dissertation, omitting the vast majority of the footnotes and most severely truncating the surveys of Keswick’s history and theology.

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³Pronounced “KEH-zick.” The “w” in “Keswick” is silent.

⁴This definition adheres to David F. Wells’s criteria for a movement: “Movements must exhibit three characteristics: (1) there must be a commonly owned direction, (2) there must be a common basis on which that direction is owned, and (3) there must be an *esprit* that informs and motivates those who are thus joined in their common cause” (*No Place for Truth: or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], p. 8).

⁵Beginning in the 1920s, a transformation began in which the Keswick Convention’s view of sanctification shifted from the view promoted by the leaders of the early convention. William Graham Scroggie (1877–1958) led this theological transformation to a view of sanctification closer to the Reformed view.

of Christians are living in defeat and that the secret to living the victorious Christian life is consecration followed by Spirit-filling; and (3) stimulated by annual conventions at Keswick, England, and literature by its propagators. “Keswick theology” refers to the view of sanctification shared by the prominent propagators of the early Keswick movement.⁶

This article’s thesis is that Keswick theology’s view of sanctification is theologically erroneous. It surveys the history and theology of the Keswick movement from the years 1875 to 1920 and then analyzes its theology, defending the Reformed view of sanctification.⁷

I. A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE EARLY KESWICK MOVEMENT

Since no theological movement exists in a vacuum, this section traces significant leaders of major movements and institutions that influenced Keswick theology (forerunners) or were influenced by it (successors) as well as Keswick’s primary proponents (propagators).

FORERUNNERS

Wesleyan perfectionism influenced the holiness movement, which in turn influenced the early Keswick movement primarily through the higher life movement as well as Methodist and Oberlin perfectionism (see fig. 1 below).

Wesleyan Perfectionism: Perfect Love Toward God and Man

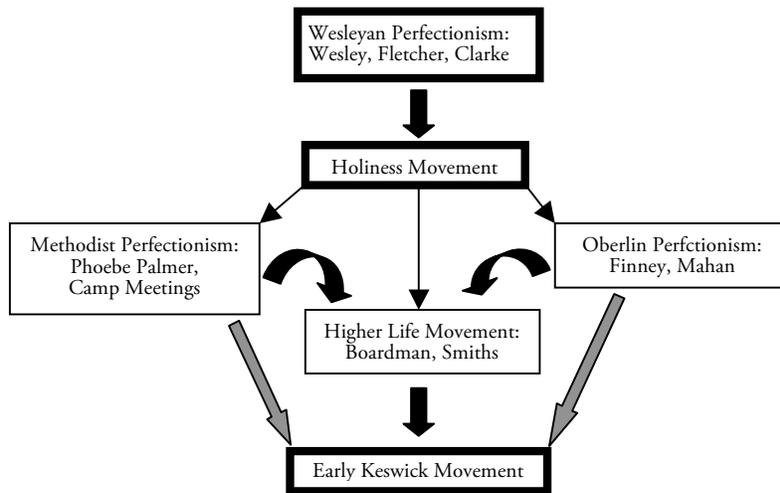
Wesleyan perfectionism influenced Keswick theology, so it is not surprising that Wesleyan theologians note similarities between the Wesleyan and Keswick views of sanctification.⁸ John Wesley (1703–91) established Christian perfection, carefully qualifying that it is not

⁶For a survey and lengthy bibliography of books, articles, and dissertations and theses that chronicle the early Keswick movement’s history or analyze its theology, see Naselli, “Keswick Theology,” pp. 11–35, 285–387.

⁷See this article’s appendix, “Charts of Five Views of Sanctification.” For an overview of eight major views of sanctification with a case for the Reformed view, see Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), pp. 385–429.

⁸Everett L. Cattell, “Keswick and Wesleyan Contemporary Positions,” in *Insights into Holiness: Discussions of Holiness by Fifteen Leading Scholars of the Wesleyan Persuasion*, ed. Kenneth E. Geiger (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1962), p. 269; Melvin E. Dieter, “Response to McQuilkin,” in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 184–86. McQuilkin, author of “The Keswick Perspective” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, likewise responds favorably to Dieter’s presentation of the Wesleyan view (pp. 53–55).

Figure 1. Influences on the early Keswick movement



absolute sinless perfection.⁹ Wesley modifies “perfection” with the adjective “Christian” to stress that only Christians could experience this kind of perfection, which is different than Adamic perfection, angelic perfection, or God’s unique, absolute perfection. This qualification hinges on Wesley’s narrow definition of sin as “a voluntary transgression of a known law.” He limits “sin” to only *intentional* sinful acts. He admits that “the best of men” commit “involuntary transgressions” for which they need Christ’s atonement, but such people may still properly be called “perfect” or “sinless.”¹⁰ When sin is defined accordingly, Wesley does not object to the term “sinless perfection,” but he refrains from using it to avoid confusion.¹¹

Wesley uses various terms to describe this second work of grace: Christian perfection, salvation from all [willful] sin, entire sanctification, perfect love (1 John 4:18), holiness, purity of intention, full salvation, second blessing, second rest, and dedicating all the life to God. Its essence is unreserved love for God with one’s whole being and, consequently, love for fellow humans. This complete sanctification

⁹“A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the Year 1725, to the Year 1777,” in *The Works of John Wesley* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 11:375, 442.

¹⁰Ibid., 11:396; cf. 376, 378.

¹¹Ibid., 11:396, 418, 442.

occurs instantaneously at a point in time subsequent to one's justification, but God's gradual working both precedes and follows it.¹²

Wesley's primary contribution to the doctrine of sanctification is that he is the father of widespread evangelical views that separate justification and sanctification in a way that the Reformed view does not. Wesley's followers further developed his doctrine of Christian perfection, and several key leaders such as Palmer and Mahan emphasized the crisis of sanctification as opposed to Wesley's emphasis on the subsequent process (process-crisis-*process*). This gradual shift emphasizing the crisis began with John William Fletcher (1729–85), who used Spirit-baptism language for Christian perfection, and was followed by Adam Clarke (1762–1832), who emphasized the crisis of Christian perfection to a greater degree than both Wesley and Fletcher. The holiness movement modified the views of Wesley, Fletcher, and Clarke by placing an even stronger emphasis on the crisis of Christian perfection.

The Holiness Movement: Modified Wesleyan Perfectionism

The blending of Wesleyan perfectionism and American revivalism produced the holiness movement,¹³ which began in 1835 with Phoebe Palmer's participation in the Tuesday meetings. The three most significant movements within the holiness movement were Methodist perfectionism, Oberlin perfectionism, and the higher life movement.

Methodist Perfectionism: Emphasis on the Crisis of Christian Perfection

Though it claimed to follow Wesley's perfectionism, Methodist perfectionism placed a nearly exclusive emphasis on the crisis of Christian perfection rather than the subsequent process. This shift in emphasis is due primarily to Phoebe Worrall Palmer (1807–74), who despite her claim to propagate Wesley's teaching, modified it considerably by following the innovations of Fletcher and Clarke. The emphasis of her teaching, known as "altar theology," is that there is "a shorter way" to holiness.

Besides Palmer's written works, the most significant vehicle through which her "altar theology" spread rapidly was the holiness camp meetings, which were re-popularized in America in 1867. These

¹²Ibid., 11:380, 441–42. In *Five Views on Sanctification*, Dieter repeatedly highlights "the crisis moment of entire sanctification" (p. 19), which he calls "the post-justification process-crisis-process continuum that Wesley had described" (p. 42).

¹³Donald W. Dayton, *American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction* (Wilmore, KY: B. L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1971), p. 26; Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1980), pp. 3, 61.

camp meetings “institutionalized” Palmer’s doctrine of sanctification, and the early Keswick Convention became “in some ways a British equivalent of the camp meeting movement.”¹⁴

Oberlin Perfectionism: The Perfection of a Human’s Autonomous Free Will

Oberlin perfectionism views holiness as the perfection of a human’s autonomous free will. Its primary propagators were Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875), Oberlin College’s first theology professor (1835–66) and second president (1851–66), and Asa Mahan (1799–1889), Oberlin’s first president (1835–50). It is remarkably similar to Wesleyan perfectionism. Both Finney and Mahan limit Christian perfection to a believer’s intention to obey the moral law, and both view Spirit-baptism as the crisis subsequent to justification that begins Christian perfection. Finney views sanctification as the entire consecration of a person’s autonomous free will to obey the moral law, and Mahan stresses Spirit-baptism as the post-regeneration crisis of Christian perfection even more than Finney. Mahan led the transition from Methodist and Oberlin perfectionism to the ecumenical higher life movement and prepared the way for the Keswick movement.

The Higher Life Movement: Immediate Sanctification by Faith, Transdenominational

The higher life movement began with the publication of William E. Boardman’s immensely popular and influential *The Higher Christian Life* in 1858 and dissolved with Robert Pearsall Smith’s removal from public ministry in 1875. It was transdenominational and not primarily Methodist, and it combined emphases from Wesleyan, Methodist, and Oberlin perfectionism, modifying their doctrine of sanctification with terminology that did not offend non-Methodists.

For William Edwin Boardman (1810–86), who professed to be justified at eighteen and sanctified at thirty-two, the essence of the higher Christian life is a temporal separation of justification from sanctification.¹⁵ He began and led the higher life movement for over a decade until he was overshadowed by a husband-wife team in the early 1870s: Robert Pearsall Smith (1827–98) and Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911).

Robert and Hannah zealously spread their crisis experiences with others through personal conversations, public speaking, and most

¹⁴Timothy L. Smith, *Called unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes* (Kansas City: Nazarene, 1962), p. 24.

¹⁵*The Higher Christian Life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1858), pp. 116–17, 141; cf. 47, 53, 57, 62–63.

enduringly through Hannah's writing. The message of her most influential book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, is essentially two-fold: "entire surrender" or "entire abandonment" (i.e., "let go") and "absolute faith" (i.e., "let God").¹⁶ Foundational to her message is a disjunction between justification and sanctification, which explains the nature of her appeals to believers to surrender to the Lord, who "is able to save you fully, now, in this life, from the power and dominion of sin."¹⁷ Only *some* believers experience this special deliverance, which she identifies with Spirit-baptism.¹⁸ Interestingly, although Hannah's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* endures as a devotional "classic," Robert and Hannah Smith did not have "happy" lives.¹⁹

The higher life movement was the immediate predecessor to the Keswick movement. Its series of conventions and other meetings spawned the Keswick Convention, and Keswick historians acknowledge this connection and revere the Smiths and their teaching.²⁰

PROPAGATORS

A survey of Keswick theology's propagators cannot comprehensively cover the dozens of people who preached and taught at the Keswick Convention from 1875 to 1920. This survey highlights sixteen outstanding figures: eight were convention leaders, and the other eight also were (and are) well-known proponents of Keswick theology. All of them experienced a crisis in which they entered the rest of faith.

¹⁶*The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, rev. and enlarged ed. (Boston: Christian Witness, 1885), pp. 44, 50.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 237, 240–41, 243, 249, 253.

¹⁹The Smith family experienced a series of sad events, including the following: (1) At the height of his success as a higher life revivalist, Robert fell doctrinally and morally, nearly destroying the entire Keswick movement. (2) Robert and Hannah's deteriorating marriage declined even further. Hannah's intense feminism and independence, Robert's manic-depressive nature, and Robert's persistence in unrepentant adultery all contributed to a very unhappy marriage. (3) Robert apostatized and became an agnostic. (4) Hannah apostatized. She lost interest in the higher life, rejoined the Quakers in 1886, and embraced universalism and religious pluralism.

²⁰Cf. A. T. Pierson, *Keswick Movement in Precept and Practice* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1903), p. 14; J. B. Figgis, *Keswick from Within* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1914), pp. vii, 10–4, 58–61, 173; W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Literature of Keswick," in *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Methods and Its Men*, ed. C. F. Harford (London: Marshall Brothers, 1907), p. 224; Herbert F. Stevenson, "Keswick and Its Message," in *Keswick's Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention, 1875–1957*, ed. Herbert F. Stevenson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), p. 14.

Eight Leaders of the Early Keswick Convention

1–2. Thomas Dundas Harford-Battersby (1823–83) and Robert Wilson (1824–1905) were Keswick's founders. Canon Harford-Battersby and Wilson, his close Quaker friend, attended the Oxford Convention (1874), a higher life meeting led by R. P. Smith, and Harford-Battersby experienced his crisis. They next attended the Brighton Convention (1875), which stirred them so greatly that they decided to hold a similar meeting in their hometown of Keswick just three weeks later.²¹ R. P. Smith agreed to serve as the chairman of the Keswick meeting, but his doctrinal and moral fall required him to cancel, giving Harford-Battersby just two or three days notice before visitors arrived in Keswick for the meeting. Harford-Battersby served as the chairman, a position he continued until his death in 1883. Wilson, who later served as Keswick's third chairman, unselfishly took care of the logistical details such as preparing the tent for the meeting.

3. James Elder Cumming (1830–1917) was Keswick's exemplar. The Scottish minister had a reputation of being rather irritable, but that changed when he experienced his crisis at Keswick in 1882. He returned to speak at Keswick for the next twenty-four consecutive years until 1906.

4. Evan Henry Hopkins (1837–1918) was Keswick's formative theologian. Hopkins experienced his higher life crisis of surrender and faith in 1873 when R. P. Smith and Boardman were informally speaking on the higher Christian life throughout England, and it was through one of Hopkins's messages at the Oxford Convention that Harford-Battersby entered the rest of faith and then founded the Keswick Convention.²² Hopkins did not attend the first Keswick Convention because he was occupied with replacing R. P. Smith as the new editor of *The Christian's Pathway to Power*, which he changed to *The Life of Faith*, but he appeared as a leader at the Keswick Convention for the next forty consecutive years (1876–1915). He was perhaps the single most respected and influential early Keswick leader, and he is unanimously recognized as the theologian of the early Keswick movement.

5. Hanmer William Webb-Peploe (1837–1923) was Keswick's orator. The Anglican clergyman experienced his higher life crisis in 1874, and he remained a regular, popular preacher at Keswick, speaking at twenty-eight Conventions.

²¹C. F. Harford and J. B. Harford, *Memoir of T. D. Harford-Battersby Together with Some Account of the Keswick Convention by Two of His Sons* (London: Seeley, 1890), pp. 161–85.

²²Alexander Smellie, *Evan Henry Hopkins: A Memoir* (London: Marshall Bros., 1920), pp. 72–75.

6. Handley Carr Glyn Moule (1841–1920) was Keswick’s scholar. He served as the principal of Ridley Hall in Cambridge (1880–99) and the Bishop of Durham (1901–20). He initially did not view the Keswick movement favorably, but he experienced his crisis of surrender and faith in 1884 after listening to Evan Hopkins. He spoke at the Keswick Convention a total of thirteen times, first in 1886 and last in 1919.

7. Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847–1929) was Keswick’s international ambassador. His first crisis experience occurred in 1884, and a second followed in 1887, illustrating the three steps he proclaimed that people should experience: (1) conversion, (2) consecration, and (3) the anointing of the Spirit. The Baptist minister spoke at the largely Anglican Keswick Convention twenty-six times, and he successfully spread the Keswick message to America and beyond.

8. Charles Armstrong Fox (1836–1900) was Keswick’s poet, his best-known poem being “The Marred Face.” Illness prevented Fox from speaking at the Keswick Convention until 1879, but he was then able to speak there every year through 1899 (except for 1897 because of illness). After his first convention, he gave the closing address on the final evening of each convention he attended.

Eight Other Prominent Propagators of Keswick Theology

Though the following eight people may not have been as prominent and regular speakers at the Keswick Convention as the eight mentioned above, they were highly influential in disseminating Keswick theology.

1. Andrew Murray (1828–1917) was Keswick’s foremost devotional author. He was “the Father of the Keswick Movement in South Africa,”²³ and he came to the Keswick Convention as a listener in 1882 and a speaker in 1895, when he was by far the most popular speaker. He authored over 250 books (all devotional).

2–3. James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) and Amy Wilson Carmichael (1867–1951) were Keswick’s foremost missionaries. The Keswick Convention began to focus on both consecration and missions beginning in 1886–87. Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, estimated that Keswick produced two-thirds of his missionaries. He experienced the higher life in 1869, and he visited Keswick in 1883 and 1887 and officially spoke in 1893. The first missionary whom the Keswick Convention supported was Amy Carmichael, the adopted daughter of Robert Wilson. She served in Japan for one year and in India for fifty-six.

²³W. M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message* (New York: Revell, n.d.), p. 170.

4. Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–79) was Keswick’s hymnist. After experiencing her crisis in 1873, she became known as “the consecration poet,” and she “thus was able before her early death to write those hymns indelibly identified with Keswick: *Like a river glorious is God’s perfect peace* [1878] and *Take my Life and let it be* [1874].”²⁴

5. Arthur Tappan Pierson (1837–1911) was Keswick’s American ambassador. He did not experience his higher life crisis that identified him with the Keswick movement until 1895. He spoke at eight Keswick Conventions from 1897 to 1909, and he promoted Keswick theology in his writing and preaching, spreading it at key conferences such as Northfield.

6–8. William Henry Griffith Thomas (1861–1924), Charles Gallaudet Trumbull (1872–1941), and Robert Crawford McQuilkin (1886–1952) were Keswick’s leaders of the victorious life movement, which was the American version of the Keswick movement. It began in 1913 and continued for decades, so it does not figure prominently in the years of this historical survey (1875–1920). It began, however, within this survey’s timeframe and adhered to the basic theology of sanctification in the early Keswick movement, even though its conferences and writings were not officially connected with the Keswick Convention.

SUCCESSORS

Of particular interest is how the Keswick movement spawned the following four succeeding movements or institutions that have greatly influenced American evangelicalism. The theology of these movements is not identical with Keswick theology, and they have been influenced by far more than just Keswick theology. Keswick’s influence on them, however, is significant, as demonstrated by their similarities regarding sanctification.

Albert Benjamin Simpson (1844–1919): Founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance

A. B. Simpson founded two nondenominational mission agencies in 1887 that merged in 1897 as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which was not technically part of the holiness movement but was sympathetic with it. Simpson, who authored over one hundred books, experienced his higher life crisis in 1874 by reading Boardman’s *The Higher Christian Life*. His view of sanctification was similar to the Wesleyan and Keswick views (though he drew more on Catholic

²⁴J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story: The Authorized History of the Keswick Convention* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 16.

mysticism²⁵), and it significantly influenced Pentecostalism (though he did not believe that speaking in tongues is an evidence of the crisis).

Moody, Torrey, and Gray: Leaders of Moody Bible Institute

Moody Bible Institute's first three leaders enthusiastically broadcasted elements of Keswick theology.

1. Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–99) was in one sense both a forerunner and successor of Keswick theology. He indirectly influenced the early Keswick movement with his 1873–75 evangelistic meetings in England that plowed the soil for well-received higher life conferences and publications, and his later crusading emphasis on the necessity of a crisis experience subsequent to conversion reflects the influence of Keswick theology. He never entirely embraced Keswick theology, but he was publicly sympathetic with it and allowed it to spread at his popular Northfield Conferences. He passionately emphasized the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to conversion resulting in power for service, an emphasis continued by leaders such as A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, C. I. Scofield, R. A. Torrey, and James M. Gray.

2. Reuben Archer Torrey (1856–1928), one of Moody's closest friends, shared speaking platforms in America with many Keswick speakers, and he spoke at the Keswick Convention in 1904 on his most passionate subject: how to receive the baptism of the Spirit. Torrey further accented Moody's emphasis on Spirit-baptism as a post-regeneration crisis resulting in power for service, and he is the most frequently quoted non-Pentecostal in Pentecostal literature.

3. James Martin Gray (1851–1935) was sympathetic with Moody and Torrey's theology of sanctification, but he did not place Spirit-baptism subsequent to conversion as a separate experience. His view is the most similar to Keswick theology by emphasizing Spirit-filling as the secret key to victorious living and Spirit-anointing as the means for power in service.

***Pentecostalism: Product of Wesleyan Perfectionism,
the Holiness Movement, the Early Keswick
Movement, Simpson, Moody, and Torrey***

Theologically, Pentecostalism, which traditionally began at the turn of the twentieth century, maintains that believers should experience Spirit-baptism after conversion and initially demonstrate this by speaking in tongues. It also shares views on healing similar to those of W. E. Boardman, Andrew Murray, and A. B. Simpson.

²⁵William C. Kostlevy, "Simpson, A(lbert) B(enjamin)," *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement*, ed. William C. Kostlevy (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001), p. 233.

Historically, Pentecostalism is rooted in Wesleyan perfectionism (Wesley, Fletcher, and Clarke), Methodist perfectionism (Palmer and the camp meetings), Oberlin perfectionism (Finney and Mahan), the higher life movement (Boardman and the Smiths), the early Keswick movement (especially F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, A. T. Pierson, and A. J. Gordon), and the theology of A. B. Simpson, D. L. Moody, and R. A. Torrey. Common to all of these leaders and movements is the belief in two crisis events, one for conversion and one for a special sanctification, which are normally separated chronologically. Keswick was a crucial element in the formation of Pentecostalism, which subsequently dwarfed Keswick in size and evangelical influence.

***Dallas Theological Seminary: Bastion of the
Chaferian View of Sanctification***

The Keswick and Chaferian views of sanctification are similar but not identical. The Keswick view predated and highly influenced the Chaferian view, which is named after Lewis Sperry Chafer, who co-founded Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) in 1924. DTS is probably the most influential factor for the prevalence of a Keswick-like view of sanctification in modern fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

1. Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921) is especially significant to DTS's theology of sanctification because of his close, father-like relationship with Chafer. His famous reference Bible “more or less canonized Keswick teachings,”²⁶ which he embraced while departing from the language of Moody, Torrey, and Meyer, insisting that Spirit-baptism occurs at conversion for all NT believers.

2. Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952), who zealously spread victorious life teaching, divides all human beings into three distinct categories: natural (unregenerate), carnal (regenerate but characterized by an unregenerate lifestyle), and spiritual (regenerate and Spirit-filled).²⁷ People may experience “two great spiritual changes”: “the change from the ‘natural’ man to the saved man, and the change from the ‘carnal’ man to the ‘spiritual’ man.”²⁸

3. John Flipse Walvoord (1910–2002), who served in leadership roles at DTS from 1935 until his death, perpetuates Chafer's Keswick-like view of sanctification. Carnal believers must surrender “once and for all” by accepting Christ “as Lord,” resulting in the start of

²⁶George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 79.

²⁷Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Wheaton: Van Kampen, 1918), pp. 3, 9, 12–13, 35, 39–81.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 13.

“progressive sanctification.”²⁹ He agrees with the Keswick perspective in *Five Views on Sanctification*, qualifying that the only point that could use more clarity is to distinguish Spirit-baptism as a once-for-all act at conversion and Spirit-filling as the secret “means of transforming the Christian life.”³⁰

4. Charles Caldwell Ryrie (1925–), an influential DTS professor (1953–58, 1962–83), likewise promotes a Keswick-like view of sanctification by emphasizing “dedication,” a once-for-all-time crisis that is never repeated and transitions believers from being carnal to spiritual.³¹ Like his predecessors, he sharply contrasts Spirit-filling with Spirit-baptism, and he strongly denies that Christ must be Lord to be Savior.³²

II. A THEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE EARLY KESWICK MOVEMENT

This section attempts to do what some Keswick historians say cannot be done: define Keswick theology. Some claim that Keswick theology is impossible to define authoritatively, partly because the convention lacked a doctrinal statement and was an unstructured, non-denominational group of diverse Christians. Defining Keswick theology, however, is a necessary prerequisite for analyzing it, and it is possible given this essay’s qualified definition of “Keswick theology” (“the view of sanctification shared by the prominent propagators of the early Keswick movement”) since its prominent propagators from 1875 to 1920 shared a common theology of sanctification. This theological survey, based on key primary sources,³³ has five divisions in

²⁹Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 197–98, 219–20; cf. 211.

³⁰Walvoord, “Response to McQuilkin,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, pp. 194–95; see 101, 215–22; cf. 236–37.

³¹Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), pp. 64, 75–83, 182–91. See also Ryrie’s “Contrasting Views on Sanctification,” in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982), pp. 189–200.

³²Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, pp. 113, 169–81; cf. 186–87. Ryrie is well known for his role in the so-called “Lordship salvation” controversy. The controversy in 1919 between Chafer and Warfield repeated itself in the 1950s with Steven Barabas (Keswick) and John Murray (Reformed) and again in the 1980s and 90s with Charles Ryrie (Chaferian) and John F. MacArthur Jr. (Reformed). Donald L. Ketcham correctly concludes that the basis for Ryrie’s and Zane Hodges’s distinction between “salvation” and “discipleship” is Chafer’s adoption and adaptation of Keswick theology, namely, his categories of “carnal” and “spiritual” believers (“The Lordship Salvation Debate: Its Nature, Causes, and Significance” [Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1995], pp. 343–47; cf. 328).

³³It gives particular weight to Evan Hopkins’s *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life* (1884; reprint; Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1991), the most authoritative primary source on Keswick theology.

accordance with the five days of sequential, progressive teaching at a typical early Keswick Convention.³⁴

Table 1. "A spiritual clinic": the early Keswick Convention's progressive teaching

DAY 1: MON.	DAY 2: TUES.	DAY 3: WED.	DAY 4: THURS.	DAY 5: FRI.
The diagnosis: sin	The cure: God's provision for victorious Christian living	The crisis for the cure: consecration	The prescription: Spirit-filling	The mission: powerful Christian service (esp. foreign missions) ³⁵

DAY 1. THE DIAGNOSIS: SIN

Sin is an indwelling tendency or law that can be counteracted but never eradicated. Counteraction is the only means of victory over sin. The law of the Spirit in Christ (Rom 8:2) counteracts the law of sin in the believer (Rom 7:23) when the believer abides in Christ, similar to how fire counteracts iron's blackness, coldness, and hardness when the iron abides in the fire. While Keswick proponents reject what they understand as sinless perfection, they strongly affirm the possibility of living without "known sin." The decisive factor in successful counteraction is free will, namely, whether believers allow the Holy Spirit to counteract their sinful nature.

DAY 2. THE CURE: GOD'S PROVISION FOR VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING

Fundamental Proposition: There Are Two Categories of Christians

The cure for sin is based on the fundamental proposition that there are two categories of Christians. See table 2 below,³⁶ which uses Keswick's own labels.

³⁴Summaries of Keswick theology written after 1950 generally follow Barabas's well-organized outline in *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1952), which compares the meetings to "a spiritual clinic" (p. 30), but this survey follows it only roughly and at times differs from Barabas in both organization and content.

³⁵The missionary meeting originally took place on Saturday mornings, which began officially in 1888. It moved to Friday mornings in the 1930s.

³⁶Cf. William W. Combs's shorter, similar chart labeled "second-blessing theology" ("The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 6 [Fall 2001]: 38).

Table 2. Keswick theology's two categories of Christians

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2
Justified but no crisis of sanctification	Justified and crisis of sanctification
Justification actual (factual); sanctification possible	Sanctification actual and experiential (functional)
Free from sin's penalty	Free from sin's power
First blessing	Second blessing (followed by more blessings)
First stage	Second stage
Average	Normal
Constant defeat	Constant victory
Expects defeat, surprised by victory	Expects victory, surprised by defeat
Carnal	Spiritual
Life in the flesh	Life in the Spirit
Not abiding in Christ	Abiding in Christ
Has life	Has life more abundantly
Spirit-indwelt	Spirit-baptized and Spirit-filled
Spirit-indwelt	Christ-indwelt
Christ is Savior	Christ is both Savior and Lord
Believer	Disciple
Out of fellowship/communion	In fellowship/communion
Headship: "in Christ" positionally	Fellowship: "in Christ" experientially
The self-life (Romans 7)	The Christ-life (Romans 8)
Spiritual bondage	Spiritual liberty
Duty-life	Love-life
Restless worry	Perfect peace and rest
Experientially pre-Pentecost	Experientially post-Pentecost
No power for service	Power for service
Virtual fruitlessness	Abundant fruitfulness
Stagnation	Perpetual freshness
Feebleness	Strength
Lower life	Higher life
Shallow life	Deeper life
Trying	Trusting
The life of struggle/works	The life/rest of faith
The unsurrendered life	The life of consecration
The life lacking blessing	The blessed life
Liberated from Egypt but still in the wilderness	In the land of Canaan
The Christian life as it ought not be	The Christian life as it ought to be

There are three distinct types of people: (1) non-Christians, (2) Christians in category 1, and (3) Christians in category 2. The Keswick Convention was to Christians in category 1 what evangelistic meetings were to non-Christians. The purpose of evangelistic meetings is for non-Christians to convert to Christians, and the purpose of the Keswick Convention is for Christians in category 1 to convert to category 2.

***Problem: Wrong Views on Sanctification
Result in Defeat (Category 1)***

Defeat characterizes the “average” believer because of wrong views on sanctification. Keswick rejects the following four views on sanctification, which, with the exception of the Wesleyan view, all emphasize a *struggle*.³⁷

1. *Automatic growth*: Sanctification is not automatic. Believers do not automatically progress in sanctification like programmed robots.³⁸ Such a view insufficiently accounts for Christian backsliding.

2. *Uniformly gradual growth*: Believers do not experience uniformly gradual growth, that is, growth that can be neither accelerated nor decelerated.

3. *Synergism*: Keswick rejects synergistic sanctification, that is, that the believer diligently uses the means of grace with God’s help (both God and the believer work). The Reformed view of sanctification, which advocates a gradual mortification of sin that is never complete until glorification, includes synergistic sanctification. Keswick instead affirms monergistic sanctification in which God does everything and the believer does nothing. The believer’s own strength is not only insufficient for sanctification, it is offensive to God.

4. *Eradication of the law of indwelling sin*: Keswick rejects the Wesleyan view (a complete, instantaneous eradication of the indwelling sin tendency) and the Reformed view (a gradual eradication or mortification never completed until glorification).

***Solution: Sanctification by Faith
Results in Victory (Category 2)***

The correct view is “sanctification by faith,” which results in victory.

1. The basis for sanctification is union with Christ, and Romans 6 is indisputably the key text. All believers are positionally united to

³⁷J. Elder Cumming provides the most systematic presentation of this in *Through the Eternal Spirit* (Chicago: Revell, 1896), pp. 154–63.

³⁸This is not the Reformed view (which Cumming appears to be refuting), but it may, unfortunately, be the practical mindset of some who profess (and misunderstand) the Reformed view.

Christ and, thus, possess the *possibility* of living the victorious Christian life.

2. The threefold-nature of sanctification is (1) crisis, (2) process, and (3) gift. Experiential sanctification is a gift that a believer must willingly receive; it begins with a crisis of consecration followed by a process, similar to stepping onto a train (crisis) and traveling on it (process). Believers must experience a crisis before the process even begins, and the aorist tense of “yield” in Romans 6 and 12 suggests a once-for-all-time act of self-surrender.

3. The means of sanctification is appropriating the gift by faith alone—not by effort or struggle. The key word for this is “appropriation,” and the popular phrases for the concept are “sanctification by faith” and “holiness by faith.” The difference between a believer’s position and appropriation of that position is like being poor despite having a large checking account as opposed to becoming rich by writing checks. God will enable believers to do what he commands, but unbelief limits God’s enabling. Although believers are unable to deliver themselves, God is also unable to deliver believers apart from their free will choosing God to deliver them. Their free will is also the only instrument that can keep allowing God to deliver them.

4. The result of sanctification is spiritual power. All believers are united to Christ, but they must appropriate this spiritual power through faith. Believers without the power of the Holy Spirit are like a train without an engine or like a power tool without electricity.

5. The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit, who imparts Christ to the believer. The Holy Spirit opposes a believer’s other indwelling power: the flesh (cf. Gal 5:16–18).

DAY 3. THE CRISIS FOR THE CURE: CONSECRATION

“No crisis before Wednesday” was a repeated saying at the early Keswick Conventions because the first two days laid the groundwork for the crisis of consecration. Since sanctification is a crisis followed by a process, Keswick proponents labor to explain how to experience the crisis so that the process may follow. “What are the conditions of this Victorious Life? Only two, and they are very simple. Surrender and faith. ‘Let go, and let God.’”³⁹ According to Moule, believers enter the higher life through a crisis experience: the “twin door” of “surrender and faith.”⁴⁰

³⁹Charles G. Trumbull, *Victory in Christ: Messages on the Victorious Life* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1959), p. 14.

⁴⁰J. C. Pollock (paraphrasing Moule), *The Keswick Story: The Authorized History of the Keswick Convention* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 74.

Step one is surrender: “Let go.” It is at this point in time that believers completely give themselves to Jesus as their Master. “Letting go” includes surrendering to God every habit, ambition, hope, loved one, possession, as well as oneself. Victory over sin that involves effort is merely a counterfeit victory.

Step two is faith: “Let God.” After this step, God is obligated to keep believers from sin’s power. Steps one and two combined equals “consecration.” The key is “trusting,” not “trying,” resting, not struggling.

DAY 4. THE PRESCRIPTION: SPIRIT-FILLING

The prescription for healthy growth and avoiding relapse is Spirit-filling, which begins the crisis of consecration and continues as long as believers maintain a condition of surrender and faith.⁴¹

1. *The recipients of Spirit-filling:* Spirit-filling is only for consecrated believers.

2. *The nature of Spirit-filling:* In the command “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18),⁴² the Spirit is the content of the filling. Water filling a container parallels the Spirit filling a believer, who must not “relapse” and experience “spiritual leakage,”⁴³ which requires “a refilling.”⁴⁴ Believers must continue to allow the Spirit to keep on filling them.

3. *The conditions of Spirit-filling:* Keswick proponents present overlapping lists of conditions that believers must meet in order to be Spirit-filled. These conditions include consecration (surrender and faith), confident appropriation, patience, holy desire, and cleansing from all known sin.

4. *The results of Spirit-filling:* Keswick proponents likewise present overlapping lists of the results of Spirit-filling. These results include Christ-likeness, deliverance from sin’s power, power for service (especially evangelism), assurance of salvation, consciousness of Christ’s presence, and detailed and direct guidance.

⁴¹The early Keswick proponents (including Hopkins) generally used “Spirit-filling” and “Spirit-baptism” terminology synonymously, but in the 1900s Keswick proponents gradually began to use Spirit-baptism terminology for what all believers experience at conversion and to reserve Spirit-filling terminology for what only some believers experience subsequent to conversion. This adjustment helped distinguish Keswick from Wesleyanism and Pentecostalism.

⁴²Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are my own translation.

⁴³Hopkins, *Law of Liberty*, p. 174.

⁴⁴F. B. Meyer, *Some Secrets of Christian Living* (London: Partridge, n.d), p. 42.

DAY 5. THE MISSION: POWERFUL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

This is less a “fifth stage” of Keswick teaching than it is an emphasized result from the first four “stages.” Powerful Christian service is the climactic result for a believer who has experienced a crisis of consecration followed by Spirit-filling. Such power evidences itself with fruit from soul-winning and foreign missions.

III. A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF KESWICK THEOLOGY

Keswick theology has at least four commendable characteristics.

1. Keswick theology affirms fundamental Protestant orthodoxy, including Scripture’s inspiration, inerrancy, and authority as well as the essential elements of the gospel.⁴⁵

2. Keswick theology exalts Christ and faith rather than self-dependence. This is in large measure what accounts for the genuine blessing believers experience through it.⁴⁶ It is healthy to emphasize appropriation, living by faith, and the danger of self-dependence, which reveals itself in prayerlessness, self-confidence, self-righteousness, and an inflated view of one’s usefulness without the Spirit’s enabling.⁴⁷

3. Keswick theology is warmly devotional. Many of the prominent proponents of Keswick theology were sincere, devout, godly men who were above reproach, and they commendably desired that believers be holy. They encouraged personal holiness, prayer, Bible study, and zeal for foreign missions.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Is Keswick theology “heresy”? The answer to that loaded question depends on the definition of “heresy,” which may be defined in three broad ways: (1) Any theological error: teaching that is incorrect to any degree; this is merely inaccurate. (2) Divisive theological error: teaching that is both incorrect to any degree and especially divisive; this is both inaccurate and destructive to the body of Christ. (3) Extreme theological error: teaching that denies essential elements of the gospel; this is both inaccurate and damning. A Christian can hold to the first and even the second, but not to the third. Theologians have generally used “heresy” in accordance with the third definition, and in this sense Keswick theology is not heresy.

⁴⁶Cf. B. B. Warfield, “The ‘Higher Life’ Movement,” in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 8:473.

⁴⁷Cf. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1984), 149.

⁴⁸The following two comments by advocates the Reformed view of sanctification are equally applicable to Keswick theology: (1) Albert N. Martin: “Frankly, I would rather be with a warm-hearted, woolly-headed ‘Wesleyan’ who thinks he needed and has had a second work of grace, but who is hungry for God, than the man who can sit for hours and prove that there is no such thing, and whose heart is as cold as a stone” (*Living the Christian Life* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1986], p. 28). (2) D. A. Carson: “Although I think it extremely dangerous to pursue a second blessing attested by tongues, I think it is no less dangerous not to pant after God at all, and to be satisfied

4. Keswick theology has a legacy of Christian service. Hudson Taylor, for example, was one of the most outstanding foreign missionaries in the modern missions movement, and many of the writings of H. C. G. Moule and W. H. Griffith Thomas, certainly the best theologians of the early Keswick movement, remain in print today because of their biblical insight. John Murray rightly observes,

When we think of the honoured names which have been associated with Keswick like those of Handley Moule, Webb-Peploe, Andrew Murray, A. T. Pierson, we have to reckon with a movement which enlisted the support of cultured and devoted servants of Christ and one hesitates to embark upon criticism. But the cause neither of truth nor of love is promoted by suppressing warranted criticism.⁴⁹

Some “warranted criticism” follows below because despite its positive elements, Keswick theology contains dangerous and serious errors. There are good reasons that stalwarts like Charles H. Spurgeon and J. C. Ryle did not speak at the Keswick Convention or promote Keswick theology. The following fifteen critiques, which advocate the Reformed view of sanctification and do not apply uniformly to all proponents of Keswick theology, are placed under three categories: historical, systematic, and practical theology.

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Although proponents of Keswick theology insist that the teaching is identical with the New Testament and is new in neither time nor kind,⁵⁰ Keswick theology is both historically and theologically novel. This does not inherently prove that it is theologically erroneous, but it does suggest that it deserves a heightened level of suspicion and scrutiny.

Critique 1. Age: New in Time—Relatively Recent

Keswick theology is a relatively recent evangelical system of sanctification.⁵¹ Its novelty should produce tentativeness about accepting it.

with a merely creedal Christianity that is kosher but complacent, orthodox but ossified, sound but soundly asleep” (*Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987], p. 160).

⁴⁹Review of Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 16 (1953): 80.

⁵⁰Attempting to refute the charge of historical novelty, many Keswick advocates claim that the Puritan Walter Marshall’s *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (1692) contains the essential elements of Keswick theology.

⁵¹Elements of Keswick theology have historical manifestations in multiple groups within eastern and western Christianities since the early centuries of the Church, and the elements even find expressions in groups considered heretical in the Middle Ages such as Cathari and monasticism. Keswick writers themselves believed they

Critique 2. Pedigree: New in Kind—Offspring of Wesleyanism and the Holiness Movement

Keswick’s pedigree raises questions about its theological accuracy. It is the offspring of Wesleyanism and the holiness movement, and a theology of sanctification derived from these movements is suspect.⁵²

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Critique 3. Fundamental Disjunction: Chronological Separation of Justification and Sanctification Resulting in Two Categories of Christians

Keswick theology divides Christians into two categories. This is the fundamental, linchpin issue of Keswick theology. Every other issue is secondary in comparison. The following five subheadings state what is true of all Christians on earth without exception.

All Christians Have Been and Are Being Sanctified (Romans 6)

Sanctification is distinct yet inseparable from justification (see table 3 below).

Table 3. Contrast between justification and progressive sanctification

	Justification	Progressive Sanctification
Quality	Instantly declared righteous	Gradually made righteous
	Objective, judicial (non-experiential): legal, forensic position	Subjective, experiential: daily experience
	External: outside the believer	Internal: inside the believer
	Christ’s righteousness imputed, received judicially	Christ’s righteousness imparted, worked out experientially
	Instantly removes sin’s guilt and penalty	Gradually removes sin’s pollution and power

perpetuated a historic emphasis, as illustrated by the steady stream of mystics whom they quote. With the onset of the nineteenth-century Keswick movement, however, these particular emphases concerning sanctification became widely accepted within mainstream evangelicalism.

⁵²Keswick theology synthesized the Reformed view with the more recent Wesleyan-holiness view. The Keswick view is closer to the Reformed view than pure Wesleyanism is to the Reformed view, but on the whole it is closer to the Wesleyan view than it is to the Reformed view; it is essentially a modified form of Wesleyanism and the holiness movement.

	Does not change character	Gradually transforms character
Quantity	All believers share same legal standing	Believers at different stages of growth
Duration	A single, instantaneous completed act: once-for-all-time, never repeated	A continuing process: gradual, maturing, lifelong

Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone. God's grace through the power of his Spirit ensures that the same faith that justifies a believer also sanctifies a believer. There are three tenses of sanctification, and the focus of this section concerns the relationship of justification to sanctification's present tense (see table 4 below).⁵³

Table 4. The three tenses of sanctification

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Initial sanctification (occurs simultaneously with justification and regeneration)	Progressive sanctification	Perfect, complete, or final sanctification (i.e., glorification)
"I am (or <i>have been</i>) sanctified."	"I am being sanctified."	"I will be sanctified."
Sets a believer apart positionally from sin's penalty and/or experientially from his "old man" in Adam (Rom 6; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 10:10, 14)	Sets a believer apart from sin's power and practice (John 17:17; 2 Cor 3:18; 7:1; Phil 1:6)	Sets a believer apart from sin's presence and possibility (Rom 8:29–30; Phil 3:21; 1 Thess 3:12–13; Jude 24)

Keswick theology chronologically separates justification from progressive sanctification by emphasizing a crisis of consecration subsequent to justification that enables genuine progressive sanctification. This essentially divides Christ as one whom people can "take" as their Justifier without "taking" him as their Sanctifier.⁵⁴ From the moment

⁵³Although theologians advocating the Reformed view agree that initial sanctification sets believers apart for God, they hold one of three major views on its nature: (1) positional, (2) definitive, or (3) both. The first view, which Keswick theology also embraces, essentially joins initial sanctification with justification, emphasizing that it is only positional. The second view sees no positional aspect to sanctification at all and views initial sanctification and regeneration as two sides of the same coin: the death of the old man and birth of the new man. This view emphasizes that initial sanctification is experientially actual and definitive or once-for-all-time. The third view harmonizes the first two by viewing initial sanctification as both positional and experiential.

⁵⁴D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Living the Christian Life"—New Developments in the 18th and 19th-Century Teaching," in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 322.

of justification, progressive sanctification is experientially actual for all believers, not merely potential or possible.

This theme permeates the entire New Testament, and it occurs most strikingly in Romans 5–8, which explains the results of obtaining God’s righteousness: reconciliation (chap. 5), liberation from the dominating power of sin (chap. 6), freedom from the law (chap. 7), and security or assurance under the reign of grace (chap. 8). Romans 6 is the key chapter in the Bible on sanctification, and it declares that all believers without exception inevitably “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Believers are new people serving a new Master; sin is no longer their master. “The whole point of Romans 6” is that “God not only frees us from sin’s penalty (justification), but he frees us from sin’s tyranny as well (sanctification).”⁵⁵ “A major flaw” with Keswick theology’s interpretation of Romans 6 is that “Paul is not telling believers *how* a justified person can lead a holy life, but *why he must* lead a holy life.”⁵⁶

All Christians Are Spiritual; None Are Permanently Carnal (1 Cor 2:6–3:4)

All people are in one of two categories variously contrasted as unregenerate or regenerate, unconverted or converted, unbelievers or believers. In 1 Cor 2:14–15, Paul describes people in those two universal categories as either ψυχικός or πνευματικός. One who is ψυχικός is natural or unspiritual, that is, he does not have the Spirit (cf. Jude 19). One who is πνευματικός is spiritual, that is, he has the Spirit.

Paul then rebukes the Corinthian believers for not acting like who they are (1 Cor 3:1–4). Paul calls the Corinthians “carnal,” but the question is whether “spiritual” (πνευματικός) and “carnal” (σάρκινος and σαρκικός) are two distinct, exclusive categories into which believers fit. Based on the way the Corinthians were acting, Paul could not address them as who they actually were. Although they were people having the Spirit, they were acting like people not having the Spirit because people having the Spirit characteristically live a certain way.⁵⁷ That is Paul’s point for addressing them this way. Paul is not setting forth three categories into which all people fall: natural, spiritual, and carnal. Ψυχικός people characteristically act in a σάρκινος and σαρκικός way. The reverse is true as well: those who live in a

⁵⁵John F. MacArthur Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word, 1993), p. 121.

⁵⁶Combs, “Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification,” p. 34.

⁵⁷Pall *calls* the Corinthians fleshly specifically because of their factionalism. Their carnality does not necessarily extend equally to every area of their lives, nor does it characterize their entire lifestyle. In this sense one could say that all believers prior to their glorification are fleshly to some degree in some areas but not characteristically so overall.

characteristically fleshly way are unbelievers. Believers may temporarily live in a fleshly way, but believers by definition live in a characteristically righteous way. There is not a permanent category called “carnal Christians” in which fruitless, fleshly professing believers may fit throughout their entire “Christian” life.

All Christians Are Spirit-Baptized at Regeneration (1 Cor 12:13)

The New Testament mentions Spirit-baptism only eleven times. The central text is 1 Corinthians 12:13. John the Baptist predicted that it would occur (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33); Jesus guaranteed it that it would occur (Acts 1:5; cf. Luke 11:13; John 7:37–39; 14–17; Luke 24:49); Peter affirmed that it did occur (Acts 11:16); and Paul explained its theological significance (Rom 6:1–4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12).⁵⁸ Spirit-baptism is Christ’s judicial, non-experiential placing of church-age believers in the Holy Spirit at regeneration, thereby placing them into the body of Christ. There are three key issues with reference to Keswick theology.

1. *Subjects of Spirit-baptism:* All believers in the church age experience Spirit-baptism. First, 1 Corinthians 12:13 clearly states, “we⁵⁹ were all [πάντες] baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all [πάντες] made to drink of one Spirit.” The body of Christ to which Paul refers is universal; it is not limited to the local body of believers in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). Second, Ephesians 4:5 refers to “one baptism” as something that is universal among believers. Third, the NT does not command or exhort believers to receive Spirit-baptism.

2. *Timing of Spirit-baptism:* Spirit-baptism occurs at regeneration and never occurs again (1 Cor 12:13). Like justification, it is judicial, positional, and non-experiential. Since believers cannot experience a second Spirit-baptism, they should not seek it. Citing examples in Acts as proof for receiving Spirit-baptism subsequent to regeneration is questionable at best because the Acts narrative, by virtue of its literary genre and transitional character, is more descriptive than normative.

3. *Results of Spirit-baptism:* Spirit-baptism is not an experience subsequent to conversion that results in increased power, nor is it synonymous with Spirit-filling. There are at least three significant results of Spirit-baptism: membership into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13); union with Christ (Gal 3:27) in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:1–4; Col 2:12; cf. Gal 2:20); and union with

⁵⁸All five of Paul’s references are debated as to whether they refer to Spirit-baptism or water-baptism, and some claim that 1 Peter 3:21 is a twelfth reference to Spirit-baptism.

⁵⁹An emphatic pronoun: ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν.

other church-age believers (John 17:21–23; Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12).

All Christians Abide in Christ to Various Degrees (John 15:1–10; 1–2 John)

Largely due to the influence of Keswick theology, many believers yearn to become believers who abide in Christ, an experience that they view as a deeper, more intimate resting in Jesus that is a second tier in the Christian life. Keswick's assumption is that only some believers abide: those who do not abide are carnal believers, and those who abide are spiritual or Spirit-filled believers. The dominant Reformed view is that all believers characteristically abide to some degree and that the concept is nearly synonymous with perseverance.

John 15:1–10 is the *locus classicus* for abiding, and the key issue is the identification of the fruitless branch in verses 2 and 6. Keswick and Chaferian advocates generally identify the fruitless branch as a carnal believer whom the Father either tenderly nurtures or severely chastises, but Reformed advocates generally identify the fruitless branch as a professing believer who evidences that his connection to Christ is superficial and experiences eternal damnation.

1. *Jesus' metaphor for abiding (John 15:1–6)*: Table 5 displays the items that the images in Jesus' metaphor illustrate as well as the point of similarity between each item and image.

Table 5. The components of Jesus' metaphor in John 15

1. ITEM	2. IMAGE	3. POINT OF SIMILARITY
a. Jesus	The true vine	The exclusive source of fruitfulness
b. God the Father	The vinedresser	Ensures increased fruitfulness
c. Those connected to Jesus: 1. Judas: counterfeit believers 2. 11 disciples: genuine believers	Branches: 1. fruitless branches 2. fruitful branches	Connection to the source of fruitfulness: 1. non-vital connection 2. vital connection
d. Jesus' words	Pruning knife [<i>implied</i>]	Means of cleansing to increase fruitfulness
e. What believers produce	Fruit	Product of vital connection
f. How believers produce it	Remaining vitally connected	Abiding

a. *Exclusivity as the source of fruitfulness*: A vine pours life into its branches, and this is the only way its branches can be fruitful. Jesus is

“the true vine” (15:1) in contrast to disobedient Israel (cf. Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1–2).

b. *Ensuring increased fruitfulness:* A vinedresser increases the fruitfulness of the vine by pruning it, that is, removing dead branches or stems and superfluous or undesired parts. Verse 2 contains a word play: αἶρει (“he takes away” or “removes”) and καθαίρει (“he prunes”). In the context of Jesus’ black-and-white metaphor, αἶρει must refer to removal from the vine (cf. 15:2 with 15:6).⁶⁰

c. *Connection, whether non-vital or vital:* Every unfruitful branch connected to the vine (ἐν ἐμοὶ, “in Me,” 15:2) is removed, thrown away, dried up, gathered, cast into the fire, and burned (15:6). Unfruitful branches evidence a non-vital connection to the vine. As Jesus spoke these words to his eleven disciples, Judas was evidencing his superficial connection to Jesus (cf. 13:1–2, 10–11, 26–30). In contrast to Judas, the eleven disciples were fruitful and clean.⁶¹ Judas represents spurious believers superficially connected to Jesus, and the eleven disciples represent genuine believers vitally connected to Jesus.

d. *The means or instrument of cleansing to increase fruitfulness:* Verses 2 and 3 employ another word play: καθαίρει (“he prunes”) and καθαροί (“clean”). The branches are not washed with water; they are pruned with a knife. The vinedresser personally gives careful attention to each fruitful branch, and he cuts or snips off parts of fruitful branches so that they will bear more fruit. Though some may think of God’s pruning instrument as uncomfortable experiences or trials, Jesus’ metaphor identifies the instrument as God’s words. The Father’s instrument for pruning the eleven disciples was Jesus’ words. His instrument for pruning all believers in general is his words as recorded in Scripture. Every branch that bears fruit experiences the vinedresser’s pruning, and every believer experiences the Father’s pruning by his words.

e. *The product of vital connection:* Jesus mentions καρπός (“fruit”) six times (15:2 [3x], 4–5, 8). He refers to no fruit (15:2, 4), fruit (15:2), more fruit (15:2), and much fruit (15:5, 8).

f. *Abiding:* Branches that produce fruit evidence a vital connection to the vine. Professing believers who do not produce fruit (e.g., Judas) evidence a non-vital connection to Jesus, and believers producing fruit

⁶⁰Some argue that αἶρει means “he lifts up” and pictures the vinedresser tenderly nurturing unfruitful branches by propping them up to receive direct sunlight. Others argue that αἶρει means “he lifts up” in the sense that the Father lifts up carnal believers to heaven by chastising them with physical death.

⁶¹Jesus tells the eleven disciples “You are clean [καθαροί] already” (15:3), excluding Judas, the unfruitful branch. Earlier this same evening, Jesus told the disciples, “You are clean [καθαροί],” but he added, “but not all [of you]” (13:10) because he knew Judas would betray him (13:11).

(e.g., the eleven disciples) evidence a vital connection to Jesus. Abiding is necessary for fruitfulness.

2. *Jesus' command to abide (John 15:4a)*: Μένω occurs ten times in 15:4–10 (15:4 [3x], 5–6, 7 [2x], 9, 10 [2x]) and is implied twice (15:4–5). Jesus' first use of μένω, however, does not define abiding. He commands it: "Abide in Me, and I in you" (15:4a). This command has at least three implications. First, believers are already vitally connected to Jesus. Second, believers must maintain their vital connection to Jesus; it is a non-optional responsibility. Third, believers are equally required and responsible for Jesus to abide in them. Commands such as this are a God-ordained means for the believer's perseverance.

3. *Jesus' reasons for abiding (John 15:4–6)*: Jesus gives three reasons that the eleven disciples should abide in him: (1) Fruitfulness is impossible apart from abiding in Jesus (15:4–5). (2) Abiding results in fruitfulness (15:5). (3) Failing to abide results in eternal damnation (15:6). The burned branch refers to people who superficially appear to be attached to Jesus but are not vitally attached to him (1 John 2:19; cf. Matt 7:15–23; Rom 9:6; 11:20; Phil 3:18–19). All genuine believers are fruitful (cf. Matt 7:16–17; Rom 6; Eph 2:10; James 2:14–26). The fruitful believers in John 15 do not represent Spirit-filled believers in contrast to non-Spirit-filled believers. Fruitless branches represent counterfeit, professing believers who experience eternal damnation.

4. *Jesus' explanation of abiding (John 15:7–10)*: After giving reasons for abiding, Jesus explains what it means to abide. (1) Jesus explains what it means for him to abide in believers. Τὰ ῥήματά μου (15:7a) explains the second part of Jesus' command in 15:4: Jesus abides in believers when his specific utterances (ῥήματα) abide in believers (cf. 6:63; 8:31; 14:10). (2) Jesus explains the result of his abiding in believers (15:7b–8). When believers internalize Jesus' individual utterances, they will make scripturally informed requests, and God will answer them (cf. 14:13–14). The "fruit" in this context is the answers to those prayers (15:8). Bearing much fruit in this way glorifies God the Father and evidences that one is Jesus' disciple. (3) Jesus explains what it means for believers to abide in him. "Abide in My love" (15:9) specifies what Jesus is commanding in 15:4, and 15:10 clarifies that Jesus abides in believers when his words abide in them and that believers abide in Jesus when they obey his words. Abiding in Jesus is obeying Jesus (cf. 1 John 3:24). Thus, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (15:4) means "Obey My words, and let My words remain in you." Jesus abides in believers to the degree that his words abide in them, and believers abide in Jesus to the degree that they obey his words. Every believer abides in Jesus to some degree, resulting in different degrees of fruitfulness.

5. *Mένω in 1 John*: Μένω occurs twenty-four times in 1 John. As with John 15, 1 John is not distinguishing between an abiding, Spirit-filled believer and a non-abiding, carnal believer. Such a view wrongly interprets μένω as an activity that only some believers do (cf. 2:14, 19, 24; 3:6, 9, 24; 4:12–16).

6. *Mένω in 2 John*: Μένω occurs three times in 2 John (vv. 2, 9). People who do not remain in Christ's teaching are unbelievers. John describes two categories of people: believers and unbelievers. An "unbelieving believer" or "non-abiding believer" is a self-contradictory concept that is inconsistent with John's writings.

All Christians Are Spirit-Filled to Various Degrees (Eph 5:18)

Spirit-filling occurs only once in Paul's letters: πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι (Eph 5:18).

1. *The meaning of πληροῦσθε (be filled)*: Negatively, the best way to contrast Spirit-filling is by analyzing the contrast in the first half of Eph 5:18: "Do not get drunk with wine." Alcohol strongly influences a person, particularly when that person is drunk. A person who is normally timid and soft-spoken may become bold and outspoken when "under the influence" of alcohol. A drunk person is characterized by debauchery. Positively, being filled is parallel to being strongly influenced. That is the point of the analogy. Many theologians on both sides of the issue define being filled as being "controlled." This emphasizes the "strongly" aspect of "strongly influenced," but it does not seem to be the best terminology because "controlled" is too strong. To some, "controlled" communicates absolute or total control. "Strongly influenced" is more precise because there are degrees of drunkenness. If the Spirit "totally controls" a believer, then the implication is that the believer will be completely sinless. It seems most prudent, however, to avoid that implication by avoiding that terminology.⁶² Just as believers are responsible not to let alcohol influence them, so they are responsible to permit the Spirit to influence them.

2. *The meaning of ἐν πνεύματι (with/by the Spirit)*: Assuming that Paul refers to the Holy Spirit rather than a human spirit, the main issue is whether ἐν πνεύματι (dative case) indicates content or means (see table 6 below).

⁶²Cf. Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), pp. 195, 204.

Table 6. Illustrations of the difference between
a dative of content and means

CONTENT	MEANS
Fill a pool with water	Fill a pool with a hose
Fill a tire with air	Fill a tire with an air-compressor
Fill one's stomach with food and liquid	Fill one's stomach with eating and drinking utensils
Fill a tooth's cavity with amalgam or composite	Fill a tooth's cavity with dental tools
Fill a person <i>with</i> the Spirit	Fill a person <i>by</i> the Spirit

Eph 5:18 is unique from the other fourteen times that the NT refers to the filling or fullness of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is not a genitive of content. Rather πνεύματι is in the dative case as the object of the preposition ἐν. Nowhere else in the NT does this construction indicate content. Rather it indicates means, instrumentality, or personal agency. The translation “Be filled *with* the Spirit” implies that the Spirit is the content of the filling. A better translation is “Be filled *by* the Spirit.” This communicates that the Spirit is the personal Agent or means of the filling.

3. *The meaning of πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι*: The Spirit is the means influencing a believer, but Eph 5:18 does not say what the content is. A helpful way to discover this is to examine the occurrences of πληρόω in Ephesians (1:22–23; 3:19; 4:10; 5:18). “Believers are to be filled *by* Christ *by means of* the Spirit *with* the content of the fullness of God.”⁶³

4. *Results of Spirit-filling (Eph 5:19–21)*: Believers can verify that they are being filled by the Spirit with the character of God by comparing their lives with the five result participles in Eph 5:19–21.⁶⁴ (See table 7 below, which places these result participles in bold.) The degree to which these results are evident is the degree to which the Spirit is influencing believers. In Eph 5:22–6:9, Paul develops the result of submitting to one another in household relationships.

⁶³Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 375.

⁶⁴Wallace explains, “Result participles are invariably present participles that follow the main verb; as well, the idea of result here would suggest that the way in which one measures his/her success in fulfilling the command of 5:18 is by the participles that follow” (*Greek Grammar*, p. 639).

Table 7. The results of being filled by the Spirit (Eph 5:19–21)

RESULT	GNT	TRANSLATION
1. Fellowship: to one another	λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς	speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
2. Worship: to the Lord	καὶ ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ,	and singing and making music with your heart to the Lord ,
3. Gratitude: to God	εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί.	always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Submission: to one another	ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,	Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ,

5. *The means of Spirit-filling (Col 3:16)*: Col 3:16ff. lists results that are virtually identical to Eph 5:19ff, but in Col 3:16 the initial command before the results is different: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you.” That is parallel to the command, “Be continually filled by the Spirit.” Thus, the word of Christ richly dwelling in believers is the means for letting the Spirit strongly influence them with God’s character.

6. *The subjects of Spirit-filling—all believers*: Are all believers filled by the Spirit? Some say No. The assumption for some is that believers are either completely filled or empty. It seems more accurate to say that all believers are influenced by the Spirit (i.e., the word of Christ is dwelling in them) to some degree. It is not all or nothing. The issue is not whether a believer has all of the Spirit because a believer received the indivisible person of the Spirit at regeneration. The issue is whether the Spirit has all of the believer. Being Spirit-filled is not like turning on a light by flipping a toggle switch. Rather, it is like a dimmer switch that is always on; sometimes the light is bright, and sometimes it is not so bright.

7. *Explanation of the nature of imperatives*: Some reject or have not even considered the possibility that all believers are filled by the Spirit to various degrees because they assume that a command issued to believers indicates that believers either completely obey or disobey it. Of the 1,442 second-person imperatives in the NT, the majority have a black-and-white nature, but some commands—particularly some addressed to believers—fit in a different category. The imperatives in table 8 below illustrate that obedience and disobedience are not like a toggle switch but more like a dimmer switch: believers obey some commands to various degrees. With reference to commands that are broad and all-encompassing (e.g., “Glorify God”), believers obey them

to various degrees *in various areas*. The believer's obedience to these imperatives is much more multifaceted than a black-and-white obedience paradigm, especially since some of these commands are characteristically true of all believers to various degrees (John 15:4; Rom 12:2; Gal 5:13, 16; Eph 5:18. 1 John 2:15).⁶⁵

Table 8. Imperatives that believers obey to various degrees

REF.	TRANSLATION
Matt 28:19	...make disciples of all nations....
1 Cor 6:20	...glorify God with your body.
1 Cor 10:31	...do all things for the glory of God.
1 Cor 15:34	...stop sinning!
Eph 4:32	Be kind to one another....
Eph 5:1	...be imitators of God....
Eph 5:2	...walk in love....
Eph 5:8	...walk as children of light.
Eph 5:15	...look carefully how you walk....
Eph 5:17	...understand what the will of the Lord [is].
Eph 5:25	Husbands, love your wives....
Eph 6:10 ⁶⁶	...be strengthened by the Lord and by the strength of His power.
Phil 2:5	Have this attitude among yourselves that also [was] in Christ Jesus....
Phil 3:1 (cf. 4:4)	...rejoice in the Lord.
1 Thess 5:11	...encourage one another and build up each other, just as you also are doing. [Paul commands the Thessalonians to do what they are already doing.]

⁶⁵Warning: The impact these commands should have on believers is parallel to the impact of passages commanding believers to persevere (e.g., 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 2:12; Heb 3:12–15; 12:14; Jude 21). God enables all genuine believers to persevere, so all believers will persevere. Believers, however, must never rationalize, “Since I am already a believer, I am persevering by definition, so I do not need to be concerned about obeying those commands.” That kind of logic deserves a Pauline *μη γένωτο* because such commands are a God-ordained means of grace for believers to continue persevering. Similarly, commands such as “Love one another,” “Abide in me,” and “Be filled by the Spirit” are a God-ordained means of grace for believers to continue maturing in their relationship with God. Such commands should always convict believers and spur them to greater levels of obedience regardless of their level of maturity. Believers must never rationalize, “Since I am already obeying this command to a certain degree, I do not need to be concerned about obeying it to a greater degree.” That kind of logic likewise deserves a Pauline *μη γένωτο*.

⁶⁶It is significant that Ephesians 5:18 occurs in the context of these broad, sweeping commands in Ephesians 4–6. Cf. Col 3:1–2, 18–19, 23; 4:2.

1 Thess 5:16–18	Always rejoice; constantly pray; in everything give thanks.
1 Tim 6:12	Fight the good fight of the faith....
1 Pet 1:15	...like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] conduct....

***Critique 4. A Form of Perfectionism:
Shallow and Incomplete View of the
Christian’s Relationship to Sin***

Calling Keswick theology a form of perfectionism does not mean that it advocates *sinless* perfection. Perfectionism has several shades, with Pelagianism as one of the worst and most consistent forms on one end and Keswick theology as one of the best on the other end. The gradations between include Roman Catholicism, Wesleyan perfectionism, and the holiness movement. The common denominator for all these views is that they redefine sin and/or God’s standard of holiness. Although Keswick theology’s view of sin is the best of these, it still advocates—despite its protests to the contrary—a shallow and incomplete view of the Christian’s relationship to sin, and for that reason it may legitimately be labeled a form of perfectionism.

**Continuous Counteraction (Keswick) vs.
Gradual Mortification (Reformed)**

The Wesleyan view advocates the instantaneous eradication of sin; the Keswick view the continuous counteraction of sin; and the Reformed view the gradual mortification of sin and a gradual transformation of believers, which is essentially the gradual restoration of the image of God in them. This gradual process is not complete until glorification. Furthermore, it is not uniformly gradual; that is, it excludes neither growth spurts nor periods of decline. The key difference between the Keswick and Reformed views is what happens to the whole believer. According to the Keswick view, the believer’s sinful part is statically bad until glorification; according to the Reformed view, sanctification transforms the whole person so that believers progressively—though not completely—triumph over their sinfulness. Before proceeding further along this line, it is necessary to discuss the sinful “part” of the believer.

Old Man vs. New Man; Old Nature vs. New Nature

Ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος (“the old man”; Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9, KJV) was the believer’s whole unregenerate person in Adam. Ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος (“the new man”; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10, KJV) is the believer’s whole regenerate person in Christ. The primary difference between the two is whom they serve: the old man served sin, and the

new man serves Jesus. One reason that theologians have disagreed on the identity of the “old man” is their interpretation of the infinitives in Ephesians 4:22–24: ἀποθέσθαι (“to put off”), ἀνανεοῦσθαι (“to be renewed”), and ἐνδύσασθαι (“to put on”). Some translations render them as imperatival: “Put off...the old man...be renewed...put on the new man” (KJV; cf. RSV, NASB, NET). Other translations render them as explanatory or exegetical, that is, indicatives in indirect discourse with the controlling verb ἐδιδάχθητε (Eph 4:21): “You were taught...to put off your old self...to be made new...and to put on the new self” (NIV; cf. ESV, HCSB, NKJV, NRSV). The latter translation conveys that the putting off and putting on were a past event. Both translations are grammatically possible, but the latter is preferable grammatically, contextually, and theologically, especially when compared with Col 3:9–10 and Rom 6:6.

The old man had only one nature, but the new man is significantly more complex. Some proponents of the Reformed view insist that the believer has only one nature, and others describe the believer as having two natures. The difference, however, is essentially a matter of semantics that depends on the usage of “nature.”⁶⁷ One-nature advocates reject two-nature terminology largely because some two-nature advocates (Keswick and Chaferian ones) use two-nature terminology in a way that reflects their misunderstanding of regeneration and sanctification. When “nature” is defined not as a person but as a complex of attributes, the two-nature view is perfectly compatible with the Reformed view (cf. Eph 2:3; 2 Pet 1:4).⁶⁸ (See table 9 below.)

Table 9. The nature of the old man, new man, old nature, and new nature

PERSON OR THING	NATURE: A COMPLEX OF ATTRIBUTES
1. Ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος (the old man/self): the whole unregenerate person	Sin reigns as his master (Rom 6). He is totally depraved. He is characterized by sin. At conversion the believer puts off ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος (Col 3:9; Eph 4:22), who was crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6).
2. Ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος (the new man/self): the whole regenerate person	Though he still struggles with sin (Gal 5:16–26; 1 Pet 2:11; Rom 7:14–25?), Jesus the Messiah (not sin) reigns as his Master (Romans 6). He is still depraved but not <i>totally</i> depraved; he is <i>genuinely</i> new but not <i>totally</i> new. He is characterized by righteousness. The believer puts on ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος at conversion (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24).

⁶⁷William W. Combs, “Does the Believer Have One Nature or Two?” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 2 (1997): 81.

⁶⁸Ibid., 82–103.

2a. The old/sinful/ depraved nature (σάρξ, flesh) of a regenerate person	Its disposition is toward sin. The Spirit and believer progressively mortify its sinful deeds (i.e., <i>mortification</i> ; Rom 8:13; Col 3:5–9; Eph 4:25ff.). It never improves (Rom 8:7). As the believer matures, he increasingly realizes how wicked it is.
2b. The new nature of a regenerate person	Its disposition is toward holiness. The Spirit and believer progressively cultivate and nourish it (i.e., <i>vivification</i>).

Two Major Problems with Keswick's View of Sin in the Believer

1. *Keswick misunderstands the nature of the flesh.* Keswick's error is not in speaking of two natures in the believer but in *how* it speaks of those natures, namely, its view of the sinful nature or flesh (see 2a in table 9). Like the Chaferian view, the Keswick view incorrectly understands the flesh to be an equally powerful nature alongside the believer's new nature: both natures are unchanging entities within the believer, and only one is in total control at any given moment. Thus, the flesh either controls the believer or is counteracted by the Spirit. According to Keswick theology, a believer in "category 1" lives "in the flesh." It is all or nothing. Believers are either "in the flesh" or "in the Spirit."

The NT uses σάρξ ("flesh") in many different senses. All humans live in the σάρξ in the sense that they indwell physical bodies (cf. 2 Cor 10:3; Phil 1:22, 24). The most theologically loaded use, however, is Paul's ethical one. The σάρξ is the realm in which unbelievers live (Rom 7:5; 8:4, 9; Eph 2:3; 1 John 2:15–16). Believers do not live in the σάρξ in that sense because people who live in the σάρξ fail to inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19–21). Believers do, however, struggle with the σάρξ until their glorification (Gal 5:16–17, 24; cf. 1 Pet 2:11; Rom 7:18, 25). The σάρξ is not an equal opponent to the Spirit, who opposes the σάρξ and ultimately triumphs over it. Rather, the σάρξ is the believer's disposition toward sin, and the believer and the Spirit progressively mortify its sinful deeds.

2. *Keswick rejects gradual transformation by gradual mortification.* Keswick's error is not in recognizing that sin remains in the believer but in its solution for dealing with that sin, namely, counteraction. Keswick views the believer as having two natures, each incapable of improvement or growth. Proponents of the Reformed view affirm that the Spirit does not merely counteract sin in believers, leaving the sin principle completely untouched. The Spirit transforms the whole believer—not just one part of him. Rather than merely counteracting sin, the Spirit gradually transforms the believer by restoring the image of God in him and gradually mortifying sin.

Keswick's view of deliverance from sin is incomplete because those who are freed from "known" sin are not really freed from sin. This is "an imperfect perfection, perfect only to the Christian's consciousness."⁶⁹ Keswick's motivation to live above all sin is commendable, but doing so before glorification is impossible because sin is not limited to external acts. It permeates a fallen human's entire being. Human hearts are deceitful and desperately sick *beyond cure* (Jer 17:9).

Even Christians will never be entirely free from sin's effects until glorification. God does not help the believer to be holy by counteracting sin as a hot air balloon counteracts gravity. Rather, God progressively makes the whole believer holy, that is, conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit's power, the believer progressively mortifies sins while simultaneously cultivating and nourishing holiness (Rom 8:13; 2 Thess 2:13). This is a gradual, lifelong progress. This does not imply that the more believers mature, the less they struggle with sin, although they certainly will struggle less with particular types of sins. A proper view of sin makes believers aware of just how sinful they are and how far short they fall of God's holiness. That is why church history is replete with examples of godly people who became increasingly aware of their sinfulness and God's holiness as they matured as Christians. The relationship between the maturity of Christians and their awareness of their sinfulness is proportional: the more Christians grow by means of grace, the more sensitive they become to their sinfulness; the more holy they become, the more they see their own sinfulness.⁷⁰

Critique 5. A Form of Quietism: Emphasis on Passivity, Not Activity

Quietism has several shades, with the Roman Catholic movement from the 1600s as one of the worst on one end and Keswick theology as one of the best on the other end.⁷¹ The common denominator for these views is that they advocate passivity for the believer in sanctification. Packer explains that quietism

holds that all initiatives on our part, of any sort, are the energy of the flesh; that God will move us, if at all, by inner promptings and constraints that are recognizably not thoughts and impulses of our own; and that we should always be seeking the annihilation of our selfhood so that divine

⁶⁹Warfield, "The 'Higher Life' Movement," 8:527; cf. 545–47.

⁷⁰Paul himself increasingly realized his own sinfulness: he referred to himself as "the least of the apostles" (1 Cor 15:9), then "the very least of all saints" (Eph 3:8), and finally, the "foremost" of "sinners" (1 Tim 1:15).

⁷¹The largest quietistic influence on the Keswick movement is due to Robert and Hannah Smith, both birthright Quakers. Hannah's quietism clearly reflects Quaker doctrine. Robert Wilson, cofounder of the Keswick Convention, was also a Quaker.

life may flow freely through our physical frames.... Passivity means conscious inaction—in this case [i.e., with Keswick theology], inner inaction. A call to passivity—conscientious, consecrated passivity—has sometimes been read into certain biblical texts, but it cannot be read out of any of them.... The Christian's motto should not be "Let go and let God" but "Trust God and get going!"⁷²

Keswick theology's quietism is evident in the slogan "Let go and let God," emphasizing passivity rather than activity. Victorious Christian living is "the Christ-life" in which Christ literally lives the Christian's life for him. Though not all Keswick proponents emphasized passivity to the same degree, the cumulative emphasis of their teaching is that the process of sanctification depends entirely on God apart from the Christian's active participation. This emphasis, however, directly contradicts the NT's emphasis on the responsibility of believers to be active in their sanctification, namely, to "trust and obey."

1. *Sanctification involves a lifelong struggle.* Gal 5:16–26 is the clearest passage describing the believer's lifelong struggle with sin. The struggle between the believer's flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:16–17) is "a struggle between the believer's old and new natures."⁷³ The most controversial passage, however, is Rom 7:14–25. Reformed advocates reject the Keswick view that the believer should progress from Romans 7 ("category 1") to Romans 8 ("category 2"), but they hold three major views on the interpretation of the ἐγώ in Romans 7.⁷⁴ Most advocates of the Reformed view have held that Romans 7 is autobiographical and that the ἐγώ refers to Paul as a mature believer. This would mean that Rom 7:14–25 describes the same struggle as Gal 5:16–17 and 1 Pet 2:11. Regardless of which view proponents of the Reformed view hold on Romans 7, they are unanimous that believers actively struggle with an internal sin principle until their glorification.

2. *Sanctification requires active effort.* Not only does sanctification involve active effort, the NT emphasizes the believer's responsibility to be active. The NT indissolubly joins the indicative and imperative, but quietism separates them. The indicative-imperative motif in the NT challenges believers to become what they are.⁷⁵ The Christian life

⁷²Keep in Step with the Spirit, pp. 155–57.

⁷³Combs, "One Nature or Two?" p. 92.

⁷⁴(1) Christian experience: The ἐγώ is Paul as a mature believer, representing all believers at every developmental stage; this conflict parallels Gal 5:16–17. (2) Pre-Christian experience: The ἐγώ is Paul as an unregenerate Jew, representing unbelievers trying to earn salvation by self-effort (keeping the law). (3) Christian or pre-Christian experience: The ἐγώ is anyone trying to please God by self-effort (keeping the law); the law is unable to transform human existence.

⁷⁵Cf. Rom 6:6 with 6:11; 6:14 with 6:12; 6:18 with 6:19; Gal 3:27 with Rom 13:14; Gal 5:24 with Rom 13:14; 1 Cor 5:7b with 5:7a.

requires effort,⁷⁶ which Paul portrays as warfare.⁷⁷ Keswick claims to advocate “sanctification by faith,” which is an excellent phrase summarizing the means of a believer’s sanctification and used by proponents of the Reformed view as well. The latter, however, use the phrase differently from Keswick proponents. The Reformed view emphasizes the active obedience of faith rather than a passive resting. A more precise and less misunderstood phrase than “sanctification by faith” is “sanctification by believing and obeying the word” (cf. John 17:17, 19).

Critique 6. A Form of Pelagianism: The Believer’s Free Will Autonomously Starts and Stops Sanctification

Calling Keswick theology a form of Pelagianism does not mean that it is as bad as pure Pelagianism, which historic orthodoxy rightly views as heresy. The essence of Pelagianism is its exaltation of man’s autonomous free will and inherent ability to obey any of God’s commands apart from God’s help. Pelagianism is based on unorthodox presuppositions about the nature of God and humans and results in autosoterism.⁷⁸ Its fundamental axioms include its rejection of total depravity and affirmation that human responsibility necessarily implies ability. That is, *ought* implies *can*: if God commands humans to do something (e.g., “repent and believe” or “be perfect”), then humans must possess the inherent ability to obey that command. Though not to the extreme of Oberlin perfectionism, Keswick theology emphasizes the free will of believers and exalts their responsibility over God’s sovereignty in sanctification. Keswick theology is a Pelagian-like exaltation of the believer’s will because the starting and stopping of living in “category 2” *ultimately* depends on the believer’s will. Ultimately, believers alone are in control of their sanctification.

1. *The believer’s will is not autonomously free.* This issue is parallel to whether an unbeliever’s will is free to repent and believe. Historically, Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther exemplify the scriptural response to Pelagianism. Augustine, contrary to Pelagius, believed that the nature of humans is totally depraved and unable to do anything to contribute to their salvation. Luther, contrary to Erasmus, believed that the nature of a human’s will is like a beast in bondage either to Satan or to God. The will of humans is free only in the sense that they are free

⁷⁶E.g., Rom 12–13; 1 Cor 9:24; 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:13–17; Eph 4–6; Phil 3:12–17; 4:4–9; Col 3:1–4:6; 1 Thess 5:8–22; 1 Tim 4:7–10; 6:11–12; Heb 12:1–3, 14–15; 1 Pet 1:13–25; 2:11–18; 2 Pet 1:5–7; 3:14–18.

⁷⁷E.g., Eph 6:10–18; 1 Tim 6:12.

⁷⁸Autosoterism is “the doctrine that man is the author of his own salvation, or that he is saved chiefly on the ground of his own merit and obedience” (Alan Cairns, “Autosoterism,” *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 3rd ed. [Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002], p. 49).

to act according to their nature.⁷⁹ Unbelievers are *totally* depraved in the sense that depravity affects their entire being (Gen 6:5; Isa 1:6; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10–18; Eph 4:17–19), including their mind (Rom 8:5–7; 1 Cor 2:14; Titus 1:15), will (John 8:34), and body (Rom 8:10; Eph 4:19). Total *depravity* describes the human condition, and total *inability* describes the result of that condition (John 1:13; Eph 4:18 and Ezek 36:26; 2 Tim 2:26; Rom 6:17, 20; 8:7–8; 2 Cor 4:4). Unregenerate humans are incapable of obeying the gospel (Matt 7:18; John 8:43–44; 14:17; Rom 8:7–8; 1 Cor 2:14), and their conversion is entirely a work of God (Matt 11:27; John 6:44, 65; James 1:18). Regeneration transforms their will and enables them to come willingly to Christ. Regeneration is the act whereby God through the Holy Spirit by means of his Word instantaneously imparts spiritual life to the spiritually dead (John 1:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18). It is a spiritual resurrection (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13), birth (John 3:3–8), and creation (2 Cor 5:17). This does not mean, however, that humans are not responsible to obey the gospel because God may command humans to do what they cannot do by themselves (cf. Lev. 18:5 with Gal 3:12). Human inability and responsibility are mysteriously compatible.

With reference to sanctification, believers are not *totally* depraved, but they are still depraved as evidenced by their sinfulness. Nor is their will free to choose anything; they are free to act only according to their nature as “new” selves. The nature of the “new self” is complex because it includes both an old and new nature, but God ensures that the new self is progressively sanctified. Just as regeneration is not based on a human’s free will, neither is sanctification. Someone much bigger is at work orchestrating the entire salvation “package.” God foreknew, predestinated, and chose individual believers before he created the world, and he sovereignly completes what he started, culminating in their glorification (Rom 8:29–30). Jesus is both “the Founder and Perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2).

2. *Synergism: The believer works because God works.* The previous section on quietism addresses the error of emphasizing passivity. This section addresses an opposite error of emphasizing one’s ability to be effectively passive in sanctification. Keswick theology affirms a monergistic view of sanctification, namely, God does all the work and the believer is passive—with one crucial condition: the believer must choose to let God work. This is why Keswick theology is simultaneously guilty of both quietism and Pelagianism. In this sense Keswick encourages believers to view God as a power tool that they just “plug in” so that he does all the work. The Achilles heel of Keswick theology is the question, “Who is responsible for the believer’s subsequent sin: Christ or

⁷⁹The Reformed view advocates determinism, compatibilism, and the liberty of spontaneity (or the freedom of self-determination).

the believer?” No one would say the former; it must be the believer. Ironically, once the believer has surrendered himself completely to the indwelling Christ, he still has the inherent ability to un-surrender himself and take control back—an explanation that defies logic. Without such an explanation, however, the indwelling Christ would be responsible for the believer’s sin. Placing such ultimate control in the believer resembles both “Pelagianism” and “magic.”⁸⁰

The contrast between the Reformed and Keswick views is drastic. J. I. Packer asserts that according to the Reformed view, “The Holy Spirit uses my faith and obedience (which he himself first works in me) to sanctify me,” but according to the Keswick view, “I use the Holy Spirit (whom God puts at my disposal) to sanctify myself.” Keswick’s view, Packer concludes, “is not merely unscriptural; it is irreligious.” “It is *Pelagian*; for, in effect, it makes the Christian the employer, and the Holy Spirit the employee, in the work of sanctification.”⁸¹ Ironically, this is done while emphasizing utter passivity.

A monergistic view of regeneration is biblical, but a monergistic view of sanctification is not (cf. Phil 2:12–13; Col 1:29; 2 Pet 1:3–8). The NT emphasizes synergism, namely, both God and the believer are active in sanctification. “Sanctification is inevitable, though it is not automatic; it involves our ‘responsible participation.’”⁸² Although humans participate, God, who began the process, is the one who energizes believers and guarantees the completion of that process. John Murray states the relationship well with his comments on Phil 2:12–13:

God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us, not the willing to the exclusion of the doing and not the doing to the exclusion of the willing, but both the willing and the doing.... The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God.... Sanctification is the sanctification of persons, and persons are not machines.⁸³

⁸⁰B. B. Warfield, “The Victorious Life,” in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 8:608–10. J. I. Packer heartily agrees that Keswick theology replaces “Pelagian activism” with “Pelagian quietism” and is “little better than magic” (“Keswick and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 27 [July–Sept. 1955]: 154, 160–62).

⁸¹“Keswick and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” pp. 162, 166.

⁸²Combs, “Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification,” p. 43; cf. 44.

⁸³*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 148–50.

***Critique 7. Disproportionate Emphasis on
Practical Holiness: Doctrine Minimized***

The Keswick Convention was nondenominational and emphasized unity as expressed by its motto, “All one in Christ Jesus.” Its primary concern was helping believers to be holy. Its strong emphasis on practical holiness, however, was accompanied by a minimization of doctrine. Keswick proponents so exalted the devotional and mystical aspects of Christian living that they in turn disparaged theology, which is reflected in the literature the movement produced.

Pitting doctrine against devotion is a false dichotomy because God intends them to go together. They are not mutually exclusive; one without the other is incomplete.⁸⁴ Both must be present but to various degrees, and the level of those degrees is the issue. Truth is truth proportionally: what one emphasizes and deemphasizes is significant. Keswick theology emphasizes practical holiness in the lives of individual believers. That is good. It errs primarily by emphasizing a crisis of consecration and Spirit-filling, both of which are based on a theologically errant premise that chronologically separates justification and sanctification. That is the essential message of Keswick, and it neither proportionately nor accurately reflects the NT’s emphasis on Christian living.

***Critique 8. Eisegesis: Aorist-Tense Fallacy
and Allegorical Hermeneutics***

Two significant eisegetical errors stand out in Keswick theology.

1. Keswick theology is guilty of the aorist-tense fallacy, namely, the assumption that the aorist tense indicates punctiliar action. This assumption is common in Keswick literature, especially with reference to proof texts for the crisis of consecration (e.g., Rom 6:13 and 12:1). The adherents at that time were admittedly working with a less-developed understanding of the aorist tense, but the syntactical understanding then did not require that the aorist tense be punctiliar. Standard Greek grammars as well as recent studies on verbal aspect deny that the aorist tense must or even usually refers to point-in-time action, affirming instead that the aorist tense is the default tense that communicates in the most general way possible.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Warfield strikes an outstanding balance in five articles reprinted in his *Selected Shorter Writings*, 2 vols., ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970, 1973), listed here chronologically: “Authority, Intellect, Heart,” 2:668–71; “The Indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the Preacher,” 2:280–8; “Spiritual Culture in the Theological Seminary,” 2:468–96; “The Religious Life of Theological Students,” 1:411–25; “The Purpose of the Seminary,” 1:374–8.

⁸⁵See Andrew David Naselli, “A Brief Introduction to Verbal Aspect Theory in New Testament Greek,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 12 (2007): 17–28.

2. Keswick theology is guilty of employing allegorical hermeneutics, especially in narrative literature, to make theological points regarding the Christian life.⁸⁶ The most prominent example of allegorical hermeneutics is the classic illustration of Harford-Battersby's conversion to the deeper life through Evan Hopkins's sermon on the nobleman (John 4:46–50) in which Hopkins distinguished between the nobleman's "seeking faith" and "resting faith."

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Critique 9. Nonlordship Salvation: Comforts Spurious "Christians" with False Assurance

Keswick theology (unintentionally) undermines the doctrines of perseverance and assurance⁸⁷ by dividing Christians into two distinct categories.

Perseverance is the teaching that genuine believers can neither totally nor finally fall away from the faith (i.e., sound doctrine and good works) but will certainly continue (i.e., persevere) in the faith to the end and be eternally saved (Col 1:22–23; Heb 3:14). The areas in which believers must persevere include their personal faith (John 8:31; 1 John 4:15; 5:1, 4; Heb 3:14; 6:11; 10:22; Jude 21), sound doctrine (John 7:17; Col 1:22–23; 1 John 4:6), and good works (John 10:27; Eph 2:10). The warning passages in Scripture are a God-ordained means for believers to persevere. Both believers and unbelievers must beware of false faith.⁸⁸ Professing believers with false assurance inevitably end up in hell contrary to their expectation (Matt 7:21–23). All believers will persevere in the faith.

Assurance, on the other hand, is the realization or personal knowledge of genuine believers that they certainly possess eternal life. There are levels of assurance. Not all believers have it, and some believers are

⁸⁶D. M. Lloyd-Jones discerns, "Instead of expounding the great New Testament texts, they so often started with their theory and illustrated it by means of Old Testament characters and stories. You will find that so often their texts were Old Testament texts. Indeed their method of teaching was based on the use of illustrations rather than on exposition of Scripture. An inevitable result was that they virtually ignored everything that had been taught on the subject of sanctification during the previous eighteen centuries. That is not merely my statement. Many of them boasted of this" ("Living the Christian Life," p. 321).

⁸⁷Preservation, also called eternal security, is related to but distinct from perseverance and assurance. Preservation is God's sovereign work of spiritually keeping all genuine believers safe in their salvation by means of his graciously enabling their perseverance in repentance and faith (John 6:39; 10:27–30; Rom 8:31–39; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:8–9; Eph 4:30; Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23–24; 2 Thess 3:3; Heb 7:23–25; 1 Pet 1:5; 1 John 5:18). It is positional and unchanging. All believers are eternally secure.

⁸⁸Cf. 1 Cor 15:2; 2 Cor 6:1; the five "warning passages" in Hebrews 2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 5:12–6:20; 10:26–39; 12:15–29; cf. Col 1:21–23; 2 Tim 2:11–12.

more sure of it than others. It is both objective and subjective (cf. Rom 15:4).

The basis of assurance is objective. It is based solely on Christ's finished cross work as revealed in the word of God. Direct biblical statements are an objective basis for assurance (John 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom 8:31–39; 10:9–13; Heb 13:5) because they are as sure as the character of God. Other salvation doctrines are an indirect objective basis for assurance, including election, regeneration, redemption, union with Christ, the intercession of Christ, the nature of eternal life, and perseverance.

The means of assurance is subjective. The Holy Spirit's ongoing work in a believer's life is a subjective means of assurance; he seals, indwells, leads, and influences believers. Perseverance in the faith is also a subjective means of assurance that evidences a believer's salvation. Believers live characteristically righteous lifestyles (1 John 2:3–6, 15–17, 29; 3:3, 6–10, 24; 5:4, 18) and love one another (1 John 2:9–11, 15, 19; 3:14–18; 4:7–8, 12, 16, 20–21; 5:1–3).

A major problem with Keswick theology is that rather than causing professing believers to examine themselves to see whether they are genuine believers persevering in the faith, it exhorts them to move from category 1 to category 2. An unintentional result of dividing Christians into two distinct categories (e.g., making “carnal Christians” a permanent category) is that it may have a comforting, soothing effect on professing believers who are not actually genuine believers by giving them a false assurance of salvation. This tends to happen particularly when such professing believers are involved in habitual sins that should cause them to question whether they are really genuine believers. Furthermore, affirming two classes of Christians “makes the biblical commands to exercise church discipline difficult or impossible to apply” and misses “the scriptural emphasis upon the oneness of the body of Christ.”⁸⁹

Critique 10. Methodology: Superficial Formulas for Instantaneous Sanctification

Keswick sermons and writings are characterized by humanly devised multi-step formulas, and their various formulas seldom perfectly agree with each other. The formulas are superficial because they are unrealistic and do not reflect accurate exegesis. The formulaic approach is common probably because of its appeal for simplifying applications. It may also appear like a shortcut to instant victory that fulfils a genuine longing for holiness. Such formulas appeal especially to believers

⁸⁹Kenneth Kantzer, “A Reformed View of Sanctification,” in *Free and Fulfilled: Victorious Living in the 21st Century*, ed. J. Robertson McQuilkin (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), p. 217.

who are impatient with their struggle with sin and want immediate deliverance from it.

Critique 11. A Form of Eudaemonism: Self-Centered Pursuit to Experience Happiness

The Oxford Dictionary defines “eudaemonism” (or “eudemonism”) as “a system of ethics that bases moral value on the likelihood of actions producing happiness.” It is not morally wrong for a believer to desire to be happy. Such a desire is universal to humankind. What is morally wrong is when a person selfishly desires to be happy, that is, when the pursuit for happiness is self-centered rather than God-centered. John Piper, a self-professed “Christian hedonist,” has argued that believers can and should pursue happiness in a God-centered way because their “chief end is to glorify God *by* enjoying him forever.”⁹⁰ Keswick theology, however, is characterized by a self-centered pursuit for happiness.⁹¹

Keswick’s form of eudaemonism was most apparent in its earliest years because of the influence of Hannah Whitall Smith, who revealingly titled her classic book *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*. Keswick theology appeals to people by offering an instant solution to their average, lower, shallow Christian lives, which are characterized by constant defeat, spiritual bondage, duty, restless worry, no power for service, stagnation, feebleness, struggle, and little or no blessing. Based on a limited view of holiness, Keswick theology offers to relieve believers from their uncomfortable conscience by showing them how to avoid moral failure and experience a happy, restful, victorious life. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains from a pastoral perspective the negative results of Keswick’s eudaemonism:

A further consequence of this type of teaching with its emphasis upon joy and happiness and particular experiences is that it directs the attention over-much to the subjective states and moods and feelings, and thereby often leads to excessive introspection and morbidity. How often does the minister have to deal with such people! They feel that they have lost something, or they are trying to recapture some former experience, or else they are waiting or longing for some experience which has never yet come to them, but which they have heard of in the case of others. Their interest is entirely in themselves. Their talk is solely of receiving and never of giving.... Poor souls! If only they could lose themselves in the objectivity of

⁹⁰See, e.g., Piper’s *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, rev. and expanded ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003).

⁹¹David D. Sceats observes, “The Keswick system is eudaemonistic, and like all such systems, it is experience which lies at its centre” (“Perfectionism and the Keswick Convention, 1875–1900” [M.A. thesis, University of Bristol, 1970], p. 58; cf. 57).

the New Testament, their subjective states would soon take care of themselves.⁹²

***Critique 12. Result: Dependency on Experiences
at Special Holiness Meetings***

The Keswick Convention saw itself as a spiritual clinic for believers, but many of the same patients consistently returned. One reason for this recurrence, which is related to Keswick's eudaemonism, is that many believers developed a dependency on what they experienced at special holiness meetings. This is similar to what some refer to as a "camp decision," a short-lived commitment that a person makes in an emotionally charged atmosphere. Once again, Lloyd-Jones's pastoral explanation is insightful:

This type of teaching tends to make people dependent upon meetings and the particular atmosphere of certain meetings. Having surrendered at first in the highly charged emotional atmosphere of a meeting, and having received the blessing, they subsequently seemed to lose it, and were unable to regain it until they found themselves once more in the same atmosphere. This process is repeated several times and often leads to a type of life strangely comparable to that of an electric battery which constantly runs down and has to be re-charged by a dynamo. Religious meetings and gatherings are invaluable aids to the Christian life, but when we live by them and become entirely dependent upon them and begin to think that we must wait for them before we can live the Christian life as we ought to live it, they become the very snare of the devil.⁹³

On a smaller scale, this phenomenon often repeats itself in public invitations or altar calls that some preachers regularly give to believers immediately after their sermons, not just at special holiness meetings. The same tender-hearted believers often respond repeatedly to such appeals, which develops a mindset that real sanctification takes place when one makes a definite decision (e.g., "reconsecration," "rededication") in that type of setting. This approach seems counterproductive because it does not train believers to pursue steady, progressive growth through scriptural means such as diligent Bible study and persevering prayer.

⁹²*Christ Our Sanctification* (London: InterVarsity, 1948), pp. 18–19. Lloyd-Jones classifies Keswick theology as *psychological* perfectionism because "these people were primarily concerned about happiness. Of course happiness is a product of holiness; but their primary concern was with happiness. As a result they become guilty of faulty exposition of Scripture" ("Living the Christian Life," pp. 320–21).

⁹³*Christ Our Sanctification*, p. 19.

***Critique 13. Result for the “Haves”:
Elitism—Pride and Divisiveness***

Keswick theology fosters elitism among believers. It schismatically divides believers into the “haves” and the “have-nots,” those who experientially know the “secret” and those who do not. This unhealthy division is inevitable and often leads to spiritual pride for those who claim to be Spirit-filled in contrast to most other Christians. This is not a blanket accusation that all Keswick adherents are proud elitists. The teaching, however, attracts some with that bent and nurtures in others what Packer calls “the sense of superiority that comes of thinking one knows esoteric secrets; the inward-looking, anti-intellectual prickliness; the smug complacency that uses *peace, joy, rest, and blessing* as its buzz-words.”⁹⁴ Philip L. Smuland explains, “A certain sense of elitism and superiority is unavoidable when a Christian thinks he knows esoteric spiritual secrets.”⁹⁵ Keswick theology’s sharp separation between “category 1” and “category 2” Christians is dangerous because it tends to encourage those who view themselves in “category 2” to develop an elitist mindset, which is fueled by pride and results in divisiveness.

***Critique 14. Result for the “Have-Nots”:
Disillusionment and Frustration***

Keswick theology ultimately disillusiones believers in their progressive sanctification because living free from known sin (when sin is understood biblically) is impossible prior to glorification. In other words, it presents an unattainable standard. Believers who become entangled in Keswick theology because of their genuine longing for holiness often become frustrated and dangerously disillusioned resulting in spiritually brutal experiences. They may tend toward morbid introspection and repeat what Smuland calls “an endless cycle that looks something like the following”:

- 1) I need to be victorious.
- 2) If I consecrate myself, I will be victorious.
- 3) I now consecrate myself.
- 4) I am not victorious, therefore I did not consecrate myself sufficiently.
- 5) Go back to number one....

DYSFUNCTIONAL LIVING: In the final analysis, Christians who remain in the Higher Life “syndrome” must eventually distort reality. The truth is that they are *not* victorious over sin and that they are *not* all that holy. If they refuse to accept this fact, they must redefine such things as sin, righteousness, maturity, repentance, revival, and even the Gospel

⁹⁴*Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 152.

⁹⁵Introduction to H. A. Boardman’s *The “Higher Life” Doctrine of Sanctification, Tried by the Word of God* (1877; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1996), p. viii.

itself. Moreover, their view of themselves must continually be skewed. That can be the start of serious mental and emotional disaster. Christians must live and walk in *truth* about God and themselves.⁹⁶

For Albert N. Martin, the primary means of deliverance from disillusionment and frustration was J. C. Ryle's *Holiness*.⁹⁷ For J. I. Packer, it was John Owen.⁹⁸ Packer's testimony is moving.⁹⁹ Keswick theology frustrated the tender-hearted Packer as a young, recent convert in his pursuit to be holy. Packer recounts, "It didn't work and that was a deeply frustrating and depressing thing. It made me feel like a pariah, an outsider, and at the age of eighteen that was pretty burdensome. In fact, it was driving me crazy."¹⁰⁰ He testifies, "The reality of its [i.e., Keswick theology's] passivity program and its announced expectations, plus its insistence that any failure to find complete victory is entirely your fault, makes it very destructive."¹⁰¹ Packer felt like a "poor drug addict" desperately, unsuccessfully, and painfully trying "to walk through a brick wall." The explanation for his struggle, according to Keswick theology, was his "unwillingness to pay the entry fee," that is, not fully consecrating himself. "So all he could do was repeatedly re-consecrate himself, scraping the inside of his psyche till it was bruised and sore in order to track down still unyielded things by which the blessing was perhaps being blocked." His confusion, frustration, and pain grew as he kept "missing the bus." The pursuit was as futile as chasing a "will-o'-the-wisp." He felt like "a burned child" who "dreads

⁹⁶Ibid., p. x.

⁹⁷Martin, "The Theological Basis of Mortification," in *Sanctification: Growing in Grace*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2001), p. 86.

⁹⁸For me (though I certainly would not include myself in the company of Martin or Packer!), it was counsel from Michael W. Harding, expositional sermons by Mark A. Minnick, and writings by William W. Combs (as well as Michael P. V. Barrett, D. A. Carson, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Wayne Grudem, John F. MacArthur Jr., D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Rolland D. McCune, John Murray, John Owen, J. I. Packer, John Piper, Robert L. Reymond, J. C. Ryle, and B. B. Warfield).

⁹⁹Packer has recorded his testimony in several works: preface to the centenary ed. of J. C. Ryle's *Holiness* (Welwyn: Evangelical, 1979), pp. vii–viii; *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, pp. 157–58; cf. 111; introduction to John Owen's *Sin and Temptation: The Challenge of Personal Godliness*, ed. J. M. Houston (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1996), pp. xvii–xxx, esp. xxv–xxix. Cf. Alister McGrath, *J. I. Packer: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), pp. 22–26, 76–80; W. M. Zoba, "Knowing Packer: The Lonely Journey of a Passionate Puritan," *Christianity Today* 42:4 (April 6, 1998): 30–40, esp. 33; J. P. Greenman, "Packer, James Innell," *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen, David W. Bebbington, and Mark A. Noll (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003), p. 497; John H. Armstrong, "A Reformation & Revival Journal Interview with James I. Packer," *Reformation and Revival* 13:4 (2004): 163–96, esp. 166–69.

¹⁰⁰Armstrong, "Interview with James I. Packer," p. 169.

¹⁰¹Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 157.

the fire, and hatred of the cruel and tormenting unrealities of overheated holiness teaching remains in his heart to this day.”¹⁰² Packer concludes that Keswick’s message is depressing because it fails to eradicate any of the believer’s sin and is delusive because

it offers a greater measure of deliverance from sin than Scripture anywhere promises or the apostles themselves ever attained. This cannot but lead either to self-deception, in the case of those who profess to have entered into this blessing, or to disillusionment and despair, in the case of those who seek it but fail to find it.¹⁰³

Critique 15. Result: Misinterpretation of Personal Experiences

The above negative critiques raise an important question: How does one explain genuine transformation in believers who testify that it was because of Keswick theology? The answer is not to deny that genuine transformation occurred. The answer is that such people theologically misinterpret their personal experiences.¹⁰⁴ Some believers take such a large step of growth at one time that they remember it for years. The error is in calling a large step of growth a once-for-all-time “crisis” that enables “real” progressive sanctification to begin. Some believers experience multiple large steps of growth, and others experience more gradual steps.¹⁰⁵ A helpful analogy to this is that some people remember for years certain meals that they have eaten (e.g., a meal celebrating one’s twenty-fifth wedding anniversary), but cannot remember the majority of the meals they have eaten. This does not mean that they have failed to eat meals consistently; rather, it reveals that some meals were more memorable than others. Similarly, as believers experience gradual growth in holiness, some steps of spiritual growth may be more memorable than others.

Furthermore, some who hear Keswick theology do not process all of the theological inaccuracies, but benefit from the emphasis on Christ and faith rather than self-dependence. Others sincerely seek God with their whole being, and God graciously nurtures them.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 157–58, quoted from Packer’s preface to Ryle’s *Holiness*, in which Packer wrote his testimony in the third person.

¹⁰³“Keswick and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” p. 166.

¹⁰⁴See John Piper, “Letter to a Friend Concerning the So-Called ‘Lordship Salvation’ with a List of Scripture Passages on the Necessity of Obedience,” appendix in *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God’s Delight in Being God* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1991), pp. 279–305. Cf. MacArthur, *Faith Works*, p. 108; Combs, “Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification,” p. 33.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 752, 775–81.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, pp. 158–59. Packer concludes, “When Christians ask God to make them more like Jesus, through the Spirit’s power, he will do

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.¹⁰⁷

In light of the nature of Christian growth, Packer gives a pointed reminder:

Does any of this justify the inaccuracies of Keswick teaching? No. It is not much of a recommendation when all you can say is that this teaching may help you if you do not take its details too seriously. It is utterly damning to have to say, as in this case I think we must, that if you do take its details seriously, it will tend not to help you but to destroy you.¹⁰⁸

IV. CONCLUSION

This essay's thesis is that Keswick theology's view of sanctification is theologically erroneous. It surveys the history and theology of the Keswick movement from the years 1875 to 1920 and then analyzes its theology from the perspective of the Reformed view of sanctification. Keswick theology's primary error is unbiblically separating Christians into two distinct categories. It is commendable in several areas, but its negative features far outweigh its positive ones. Although it is not "heresy" in the sense of extreme theological error that denies essential elements of the gospel, its errors, which extend across the theological disciplines, are serious and dangerous.

V. APPLICATION: FIVE LESSONS FROM THIS STUDY

1. Although some Christian leaders embraced errant views on sanctification, they were godly men and Christian examples. Disagreeing with Wesleyan perfectionism and Keswick theology in no way questions the devotion to Christ by men such as John Wesley¹⁰⁹ and Hudson Taylor.

it, never mind what shortcomings appear in their theology" (pp. 163–64).

¹⁰⁷B. B. Warfield, review of Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, *Princeton Theological Review* 17 (1919): 327.

¹⁰⁸Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Iain H. Murray, "What Can We Learn from John Wesley?" chap. 5 in *The Old Evangelicalism: Old Truths for a New Awakening* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2005), pp. 135–65. It is significant that the Calvinist Charles Haddon Spurgeon compared his ministry next to Wesley's as a "farthing candle" next to the sun and that the Calvinist George Whitefield requested that Wesley preach the sermon at his funeral (Iain H. Murray, *Wesley and Men Who Followed* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2003], pp. 4, 78–80). Some Calvinists questioned whether Wesley was even converted, and one person "asked Whitefield if he expected to see Wesley in heaven, to which he replied: 'I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance we

2. Since Keswick theology is an errant view of sanctification, believers should avoid propagating it through books, articles, sermons, lectures, counseling, hymnody, and other means.

3. Believers should recognize the importance and practical value of the doctrine of sanctification. It is exoteric, not esoteric. It is for the masses, not just the minority. It directly applies to everyday life because one's understanding of sanctification correlates with the way a believer lives. Orthodoxy (accurate doctrine), orthopraxy (obedient living), and orthopathy (passionately engaged affections, i.e., loving God with one's entire being) are all necessary for believers. Right thinking, right living, and right feeling belong together.¹¹⁰

4. Since it is unlikely that all living believers will agree on their view of sanctification, believers should promote unity on this issue as much as possible. This does not involve overlooking important differences, but it does involve keeping such differences in perspective. After critiquing Keswick theology, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones issues a convicting challenge:

The things about which they [i.e., George Whitefield and John Wesley] agreed were more important, and they had much fellowship together during the last years of Whitefield's life. We must follow these men. There are these differences, and we must be clear about them. But let us examine ourselves. It is easy to denounce false holiness teaching; but what is your holiness teaching? Have you the same desire for holiness? These men suffered, and sacrificed much in order to be holy men. They may have been confused about doctrines at times, they may have confused "things that differ," but they were zealously concerned to be holy men of God, and many of them were concerned to have a holy and a pure church. There, we surely are with them, and agree with them; and if we criticize what they taught, let us make sure that we have, and can preach and practice, "a more excellent way."¹¹¹

5. Since the doctrine of sanctification is so important and practical, believers should actively pursue maturing in their understanding and practice of it. The goal of this essay is to survey and analyze Keswick theology—not to unpack in detail the Reformed view of sanctification. Many capable pastors and theologians have done the latter.¹¹² Believers

shall hardly get a sight of him!" (J. B. Wakeley, *Anecdotes of George Whitefield* [1876], p. 220; quoted in Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1980], p. 353).

¹¹⁰This reflects the axiom of Michael P. V. Barrett's *Complete in Him: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying the Gospel* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2000): "Right thinking about the gospel produces right living in the gospel" (p. 195, passim).

¹¹¹Lloyd-Jones, "Living the Christian Life," p. 325.

¹¹²See, for example (progressing from works that are more readable to those that are more challenging), John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*; C. J. Mahaney's writings,

should fan the flame of holiness that God keeps ablaze in their hearts, and Robert Murray McCheyne's prayer is a good place to start: "Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be."¹¹³

VI. APPENDIX: CHARTS OF FIVE VIEWS OF SANCTIFICATION

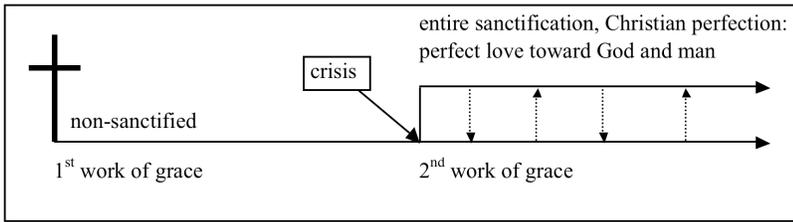
The following charts (pp. 66–67) attempt to clarify five views of sanctification, at the risk of oversimplifying them.¹¹⁴ The cross in each chart represents the point of a Christian's regeneration and conversion. The dotted arrows in the first three charts depict that the resultant state from the crisis may be repeatedly lost and recovered.

including *Living the Cross-Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006); Jerry Bridges's writings, including *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994) and *The Gospel for Real Life: Turning to the Liberating Power of the Cross...Every Day* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002); John Piper's writings, including *Desiring God, The Pleasures of God, The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in...Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2005), *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); Michael P. V. Barrett's *Complete in Him*; John F. MacArthur Jr.'s writings, including *Faith Works*; J. I. Packer's writings, including *Keep in Step with the Spirit, Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1992), and *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993); Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, esp. pp. 385–429, 510–16; John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), esp. pp. 141–50; David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, ed. D. A. Carson, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), esp. pp. 710–11, 756–59, 764–97; John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006); and Mark A. Snoeberger, "Definitive Sanctification: Threading a Path Between Legal Fiction and Works Righteousness" (Ph.D. diss., Baptist Bible Seminary in Clark Summit, PA, 2008). Thousands of sermons and lectures are also available as MP3s (see my recommendations at <http://AndyNaselli.com/theology/resources/mp3s>).

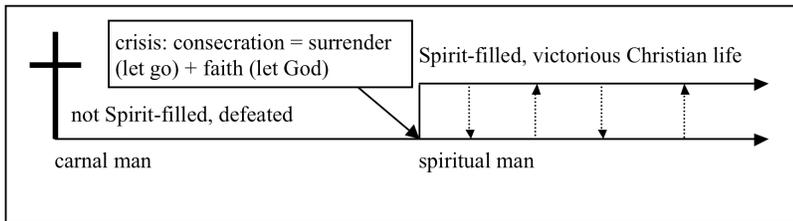
¹¹³Quoted in J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, p. 120.

¹¹⁴Adapted from Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), pp. 183–84, 187; and H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 111–13.

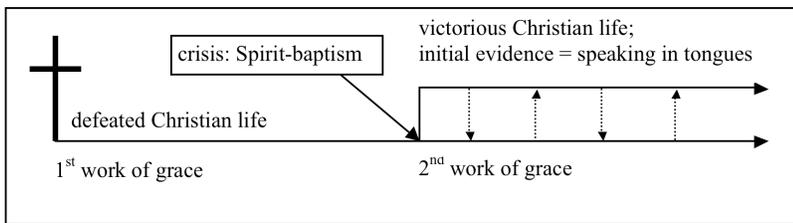
The Wesleyan View of Sanctification



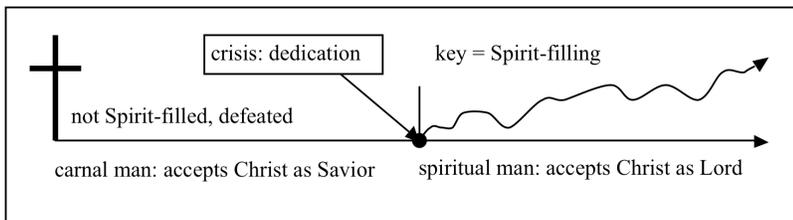
The Keswick View of Sanctification



The Pentecostal (Assemblies of God) View of Sanctification



The Chaferian View of Sanctification



The Reformed View of Sanctification

