

Chapter Four

Contemporary Models of Spirituality: Bringing the Text to Life

Progressive sanctification has been defined as “That gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which he delivers us from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.”¹ How the Holy Spirit actually accomplishes this transformation, however, and what our participation in this transformation must be, has resulted in a variety of popular models explaining Christian spirituality. Before we begin our own investigation, I thought it would be helpful to evaluate several models of sanctification that are popular today.

Over the last several centuries Christian thinkers and theologians have attempted to provide working models for understanding what the Bible teaches about the daily operation of the Holy Spirit with our spirit and the cooperation that leads to godliness. As a part of our introduction, we now focus upon several predominant spiritual-life models in an attempt to better understand Christian spirituality and the message of the Scripture and how God intends to bring the message of the biblical text to life.

Models Of Sanctification

In today’s theological setting there are several proposed models designed to clarify and present the biblical dynamics for spiritual life. Since the Reformation these spiritual-life models have stood the test of time and are embraced by various sectors of the Christian world. Recently these models have been presented and discussed in several published collections.² With a quick overview of the more popular views, there seems to be basic similarities among the models that have allowed us to place several of these models into two primary groupings. The first group I like to call “second-event” models. The second grouping is simply entitled “steady growth.” Below we will present each model and make a brief evaluation as to their biblical feasibility.

‘Second Event’ Models of Sanctification

There are several popular contemporary models for spiritual growth that focus upon a necessary ‘crisis of faith’ or event for true spirituality to begin. These faith-crises, in turn, lead the Christian to passionately pursue God leading to a “second divine event” qualifying the believer to experience God in a new and empowering way. This new experience, rather than focus on

¹Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved By Grace* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 192.

²Two such collections available are: Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988; *Five Views On Sanctification*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

salvation, directs one's faith toward spiritual maturity (sanctification). With this renewed commitment in faith in this second work of grace, the Christian begins to experience God leading the believer to develop into a mature follower of Christ. In the next several pages we will review and evaluate these two-tiered, or second event models, attempting to discover whether these models represent a biblically normative prescription for spirituality or simply describing the experience of some. With each model we will review its history, distinctives, as well as evaluate some of the model's biblical strengths and weaknesses.

Entire sanctification: Wesleyan Methodist

The history of entire sanctification: Among other things, John Wesley (1703- 1791), left us a legacy of the passion for a holy life. Wesley, founder of Methodism and what would become the Methodist church, is largely credited with the beginnings of the entire sanctification model for Christian living.

While Wesley's driving desire was due, in part and in contrast to, the post-Reformation ritualism of his day, it was because of his pursuit of personal holiness that Wesley left an indelible theological mark. And it was, one might add, Wesley's passion for personal holiness that led to his crisis of faith. As a result of a variety of trials and experiences³, Wesley concluded that true experiential holiness occurred for the believer by means of a second work of grace. For Wesley, experiential (progressive) sanctification was possible only as the Christian experiences a crisis of faith which prompts a full surrender to God. This second event in the believer's life culminates in the spiritual experience known as entire sanctification, that is, the removal of sin, "properly"⁴ called such. Upon experiencing this second sanctifying event, the Christian, according to Wesley, was now prepared to pursue a spiritual life in which love could be perfected.

Wesley's idea of entire sanctification developed and spread through Methodism and the ensuing Holiness movement. After Wesley, Charles Finney popularized the entire sanctification model through his Brush Arbor meetings in the early and mid 1800's. Today the Missionary Church, Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal Holiness Churches, and various Methodist branches subscribe to Wesley's model of entire sanctification.

Distinctives to entire sanctification: The entire sanctification perspective begins with the new birth. Once born again, the Christian, in due course, is impressed by God to be holy. With this God-given desire to be holy comes the struggle for holiness. Out of this struggle against sin comes the second crisis of faith. This second crisis is not a crisis regarding salvation, but a crisis for sanctification. According to the Wesleyan view, resulting from this "crisis," the Christian surrenders in faith to God the Holy Spirit. With this surrender the Spirit removes sin and imparts love. This removal of what Wesley called "formal" sin occurs when the Christian believes God for sanctification. Melvin E. Dieter writes

[Wesley] believed that there was freedom from the dominion of sin for every Christian... and that God's grace was always moving the believer to a life of greater peace, happiness,

³J. D. Douglas, gen. ed.. *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), s.v. "Wesley, John," by A. Skevington Wood. Wood recounts Wesley joining the "Holy Club," traveling from England to Georgia, experiencing conversion in the company of German Moravians, and experiencing various hardships while settling upon his life work, "to reform the nation [England] particularly the Church, and to spread Scriptural holiness over the land." Ibid.

⁴Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 285.

and love. There was a remedy for the sickness of systemic sinfulness: namely, *entire sanctification*—a personal and definitive work of God’s sanctifying grace by which the war within oneself might cease and the heart be fully released from rebellion into wholehearted love for God and others.⁵

Thus, the Christian is made ‘perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). God’s love, apart from sin, fills the heart and initiates a new and sinless experience in the life of the believer (1 John 3:9; 4:18). The believer, so sanctified, begins an unimpeded experience in genuine spiritual growth. Wesley states, “a Christian is so far perfect so as not to commit sin.”⁶ The Christian, perfected in love, is, according to Wesley, “...freed from evil thought and evil tempers.”⁷ Thus, Christians are instantaneously sanctified by faith. The Christian who experiences this second work of grace is rid of all “formal” evil, Colossians 2:11-15, and is now filled with pure love that is free from the stain of sin (i.e., no sinful motives).⁸ As Dieter summarizes, “The Christian’s life is designed under grace to be a progressive movement from the new birth to entire sanctification and perfection in love.”⁹

Strengths and weaknesses with entire sanctification: As we evaluate this first perspective about Christian spirituality it should be noted that there are several features with the Wesleyan view that are commendable.¹⁰ First, Wesley’s model begins, as Jesus told Nicodemus, with the new birth, John 3:3. Second, because of this divine work of regeneration, sanctification wholly depends upon a work of God. We do not sanctify ourselves. Additionally, sanctification takes place because of a response in faith to God’s grace according to God’s provisions for holiness, 2 Peter 1:3-7. Fourth, the entire sanctification model stresses that our transformation moves us to fulfill Christ’s command to love, that is, God’s sanctifying grace leads the Christian to fulfill the Law of Christ, 1 John 3:23. Finally, the Wesleyan view is commendable because there is a strong emphasis regarding our desire personal holiness, a love for communion with God, and a dedication to good works.

There are, however, certain weaknesses to the Wesleyan model. First, while sanctification is entirely God’s work, the work of entire sanctification promised in this model seems biblically unfounded. There are no explicit statements in the Bible indicating that progressive sanctification leads to the eradication of sins’ presence. Understanding 1 John 3:9 to promise the complete removal of sin seems unwarranted, even in the context of First John. Earlier in the same epistle John tells his readers “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,”¹¹ 1 John 4:8 (consider 1 John 1:8—2:1).

A second weakness in Wesleyan model has to do with its understanding about the nature of sin in a believer’s life. The ideas of “proper” and/or “improper” sin, as Wesley phrased it, does

⁵Melvin E. Dieter, “The Wesleyan Perspective,” in *Five Views On Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 19.

⁶Outler, *John Wesley*, 267.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 269. Outler cites Wesley, “He [the sanctified Christian] is purified from pride, for Christ is lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will or desire, for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word, for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering.” Ibid.

⁹Dieter, “The Wesleyan Perspective,” 27.

¹⁰As with all our evaluations (pro or con) in this chapter, none are exhaustive. We simply attempt to stress some salient points.

not appear anywhere in Scripture. Throughout the Bible the powerful impact of sin's presence in a person's life is never qualified or categorized. In fact, if we are to understand Paul referring to himself as made of flesh sold into sin's bondage, Romans 7:14 tells us that sin is more than one's behavior.¹¹

Finally, while a faith response to God describes the expected and proper Christian response regarding our spiritual lives, Galatians 2:20; 5:6, our faith response to God needs to be directed toward that which God has clearly promised. Since entire sanctification in this life does not seem to be God's promise. Faith in God for the complete removal of sin's presence can only lead to a misrepresentation of sin and/or disappointment in the believer's life.

Holy Spirit Baptism: Pentecostal; Assembly of God

A second two-tiered model for sanctification has been made popular through various Pentecostal and Assembly of God churches. Again, we will review the history and some specific beliefs of this view along with a brief evaluation.

History of Holy Spirit baptism sanctification: At the turn of the twentieth century the idea of a distinct baptism of the Holy Spirit after salvation emerged within Protestant evangelicalism. In 1901 at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, students concluded that Acts 2:4 specifically applied for today. As a result, a revival swept over the campus. Just a few years later (1906), at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California, a holiness preacher from Texas watched as his efforts produced several Pentecostal churches. From these inauspicious beginnings the modern Pentecostal-charismatic movement began. Today these groups represent nearly 25% of the world's known church members. With this movement came some distinct ideas about Christian spirituality. The formalization of these distinct ideas can be traced through the Assemblies of God.

In Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914, the General Council of the Assemblies of God was formed. Two years later a doctrinal statement was adopted to distinguish themselves from Holiness Pentecostals and to delineate their position on the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Today the Pentecostal/charismatic movement generally considers the second baptism of the Spirit as an integral factor for Christian sanctification. As it would be impractical, for our purposes to evaluate each splinter group that has formed over the years since, it is with the Assembly of God position that we will focus our discussion.

Distinctives to Holy Spirit baptism sanctification: For the most part, the Assembly of God maintains that positional sanctification (who we are in Christ) is complete at new birth. According to this model, when a person is regenerate that person is united with Christ. The Christian, however, struggles with sin until they come to believe that God will send the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This second expression of faith precedes the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This "second" baptism is understood to provide power for Christian living and service. In general, the Assembly of God churches adhere to the belief that God initially baptizes "by" the Holy Spirit to produce the beginnings of growth, 1 Corinthians 12:13. Upon faith in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, however, Jesus Christ baptizes the Christian who fully surrenders to God. This second baptism is said to be

¹¹Romans 7:14 reads, "but I am of the flesh, sold under sin." Sin, while "condemned by God in the flesh," Romans 8:3, is not removed from the flesh. Sin, in Paul's letters, is both an attitude, activity, and an active entity which receives its power to kill from the commandment(s), 1 Corinthians 15:56.

“in” the Holy Spirit. This fullness of the Spirit empowers the believer for service and further maturity. The “baptism ‘in’ the Spirit is not, of itself, a sanctifying act, but leads to a life of fullness, power, and service. Baptism in the Spirit is the door into a growing relationship with the Spirit.”¹² From the point of new birth the Christian must mortify the deeds of the flesh, Colossians 3:3-10; Romans 8:13. Through one’s crisis of faith dealing with sin and inadequacies of service, the Christian, by full surrender in faith, receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabling the believer to live triumphantly.

While the Holiness Pentecostals believe in entire sanctification (similar to the Wesleyan view) along with a subsequent baptism ‘in’ the Holy Spirit, the Charismatics (Assembly of God) hold to a normal progress in one’s fight against sin until a full surrender is made to the Lord. With this full surrender to Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ baptizes that Christian in the Holy Spirit resulting in the divine ability to love and serve God completely. Sin’s presence, according to this last view, is never removed until the resurrection, but the Christian experiences a purity that “resists and overcomes temptation,” is “filled with the graces and power of the Spirit,” and “a life lived in fellowship with God and Christ, Gal 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 1:10,11; 1 John 1:7; James 4:7; 1 Corinthians 10:13.”¹³

Strengths and weaknesses with Holy Spirit baptism sanctification: As with the Wesleyan model, the Holy Spirit baptism view has several strengths. First, in addition to the necessity of regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptism model emphasizes a continued reliance upon the Holy Spirit for personal sanctification. Correctly speaking, only the Spirit of God can provide the power necessary for proper spirituality and growth, see Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16. Second, the Holy Spirit baptism model stresses the importance of the finished work of Christ and the Word of God. Only Christ has provided the way for man to have a personal relationship with God, see Romans 7:24-25. In addition, the Word of God (Scripture) provides the sure communication between God and man, facilitating both our moment-to-moment relatedness to God and the transformative catalyst in this relationship. Finally, the Holy Spirit baptism view insists upon the continual progress in holiness throughout the life of the Christian. While there is the second event (the baptism “in” the Holy Spirit for spiritual empowerment), the struggle against sin and the pursuit of godliness is a lifelong endeavor.¹⁴

Among the several weaknesses found within the Holy Spirit baptism model, only one needs mentioning here. First, and most importantly, is the questionability as to whether the New Testament ever presents the baptism in (or by) the Spirit as an act of God after the new birth experience. Admittedly, the Acts narrative, appears to authenticate the notion that believers may receive the Holy Spirit after expressing faith in Christ. The Samaritans, Acts 8:14-17 and John’s disciples at Ephesus, Acts 19:1-6, all receive the Holy Spirit subsequent to faith.¹⁵ With closer

¹²Stanley M. Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” in *Five Views On Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 132.

¹³Ibid., 135.

¹⁴ Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” *Five Views*, 132. Horton notes, “However, it should be recognized that since the baptism in the Spirit is not of itself a sanctifying experience, those who are newly baptized in the Spirit need to press on all the more as they cooperate with the Spirit in His sanctifying work.” Ibid.

¹⁵Stanley M. Horton, *Perspectives On Spirit Baptism*, Chad Owen Brand, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2004), 56-94. Horton provides an extensive treatment concerning the nature, evidences, and purposes of Spirit baptism. Ibid.

examination, however, it would seem the reception of the Holy Spirit is best explained as the unique expansion of the Abrahamic promises to the nations and to Old Testament saints (Acts 19). Further, each of these instances revolve around faith in Christ for salvation rather than a second faith in the sanctification process. Thus delayed, the advent of the indwelling Spirit seems, by context, to occur as a confirmation of God's salvific actions toward these three distinct groups. The unique advent of the Spirit seems to occur as a mark of authentication rather than sanctification. The idea, then, of a second baptism in the Spirit for the purposes of Holy living and service, seems to be derived from the Christian experience rather than the instructions of and obedience to any specific command found in Scripture. While more details regarding the baptism with the Spirit will be presented later, for now, let's suggest that the New Testament evidence best supports the idea that Holy Spirit baptism is an act carried out by Christ the moment a person believes in Christ as Savior, Luke 3:16; Romans 6:2-4. Further, we suggest that this divine act places every believer into vital union with Christ and with Christ's body, the Church, 1 Corinthians 12:13. Additionally, though an argument from silence, we also should note that any baptism "by" or "in" the Holy Spirit is never commanded. This lack of a command by the Apostles to the churches further brings into question whether a second baptism is prescriptive for spiritual living and service. If this second baptism "in" the Spirit was normative for Christian spirituality, one might expect that the New Testament would direct believers to seek this second work of grace. Finally, however, to admit that some have experienced a new or a renewed sense of enablement from God after seeking Him with a whole heart does not contradict Scripture. Most of us who desire to live for Christ have experienced episodes of renewal. Personal spiritual renewal should be a regular, if not daily, occurrence in our lives. The question remains, does Scripture mandate a second baptism in the Holy Spirit? This second blessing experience does not appear to be what occurred in Acts. Theirs, in each instance, was a "first" encounter blessing.

Exchanged life¹⁶: Keswick conference

A third model focusing upon a "second-event" or "faith crisis" for experiential holiness originated in Keswick, England in 1875. This view, called the Keswick model (for obvious reasons), emerged at conferences convening in Keswick, England, for the promotion of holiness and spirituality.

History of exchanged-life sanctification: In the decades following the revival of 1859 there were many who expressed frustration over the low level of spirituality among revival converts. In England, the Keswick conferences were convened to discuss and promote passion for spiritual life. No denomination or theological statement dominated the conferences, and, as a result, the Keswick model can be found in many different church traditions.¹⁷ The continued popularity of the Keswick position in the twentieth century can be attributed to the preaching, teaching, and writings of some well-known and popular Bible teachers such as Major Ian Thomas, Miles Stanford, Stephan Olford, Alan Redpath, Andrew Murray, and Watchman Nee, to mention a few. Today, Keswick perspectives and emphases can be found in a variety of spiritual life approaches.

¹⁶This category "exchanged life" is not the same as the number of ministries around the United States known by the same name, e.g., Exchanged Life Ministries, Dallas Texas, now renamed Operation 2:20.

¹⁷Personally, I was introduced to the Keswick view in 1971-73 while attending a Southern Baptist Church, though none of the Keswick guest speakers were Southern Baptist.

Distinctives of Keswick exchanged life sanctification: As with the previous views, the Keswick model for Christian growth insists upon the necessity of the new birth. Born again, the believer is justified, sanctified, and equipped to experience the indwelling life of Christ by the Spirit. Additionally, all those who are regenerate receive the Holy Spirit by whom they are positionally united and sanctified in Christ. This spiritual union connects the Christian both with Christ's death (the believer dies to the law) and resurrection (the believer lives through the resurrected life of Christ). Thus, with the Keswick model, spirituality is grounded upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. This union with Christ is considered the heart of New Testament spirituality. In being united with Christ, the life of the Holy Spirit becomes the means for the exchanged life whereby the Holy Spirit can live through the Christian for both godliness and effective service. Once the Christian is surrendered to God, the supernatural life of the Holy Spirit becomes Christ's life through the Christian providing the experience of the victory having already been won by the Savior. It is this matter of full surrender that distinguishes the Keswick model as a second event model for progressive sanctification. Being born again, united with Christ, and indwelt by the Spirit is not the full equation for proper growth and maturity. The Christian has to come to his spiritual senses. Until that time of spiritual trust and faith, the Keswick position emphasizes that the Christian experiences defeat. J. Robertson McQuilkin writes,

Average Christians behave like morally upright non-Christians. They yield to temptation more often than not, lusting when their body demands it, coveting when they do not have, taking credit for their accomplishments. The touchstone for their choices is self-interest, and though they have a love for God and others, it does not control their life. There is little change for the better; in fact, most church members do not expect much improvement and are little concerned by that prospect. Scripture is not exciting, prayer is perfunctory, and service in the church demonstrates little touch of the supernatural."¹⁸

Accordingly, the Keswick model grounds proper spiritual development upon the moment a Christian surrenders his life fully to God's will by faith. This act of faith (full surrender) is the point at which the Holy Spirit manifests the victorious Christ through the Christian (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6). "Faith is thus the key to appropriating God's provision for successful Christian living. We cannot live the Christian life until we have that provision; by faith we are justified and receive the life of the Spirit."¹⁹

The Keswick exchanged life model insists that by trusting in the finished work of Christ and the life of the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ through the believer becomes his daily experience. It is through the life of Christ that the Christian is able not to sin. Because the Christian has come to the place where they fully "rest" in the sufficiency of the indwelling Christ, the struggle against sin ceases. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, takes over, and the Christian rests in the supernatural ability of God to live the victorious life. A summary of the Keswick view for progressive sanctification is provided by Steven Barabas. He writes,

We believe the Word of God teaches that the normal Christian life is one of uniform sustained victory over known sin; and that no temptation is permitted to happen to us

¹⁸J. Robertson McQuilkin, "The Keswick Perspective", *Five Views*, 151-52.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 167.

without a way of escape being provided by God, so that we may be able to bear it. In Christ there is provided for every believer, victory, liberty, rest, and that this may be obtained not by a life-long struggle after an impossible ideal but by surrender of the individual to God, and the indwelling Holy Spirit.²⁰

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Keswick (exchanged life) Model: The Keswick model, in our estimation has much to commend itself. First, Jesus' death, resurrection, and present high priestly ministries are understood to furnish everything the Christian needs to experience the fullness of God. With this understanding the Keswick model stresses the believer's union with the all-sufficient Christ. Here, the Holy Spirit is noted as the divine Person who enlivens the Christian producing the life of Jesus in and through the believer. Other strong points with this model include the believer's "complete" status at new birth, the depiction of the average Christian as one that struggles with sin and righteousness, and portrayal of the normal Christian life as one of steady spiritual growth that heads toward a greater and greater likeness to Jesus Christ.

Weaknesses to the Keswick model include this view's insistence upon a second work of grace following a Christian's spiritual "crisis." This crisis and the ensuing second moment of faith is considered necessary for the Christian to enter the victorious life. As McQuilkin writes

For Christians who are experiencing a subnormal life, reentry into normal, supernatural Christian living is through the gate of surrender. For such a person, a normal, successful Christian experience is not the product of a gradual process... A decisive turning point is needed.²¹

Finally, the Keswick model tends to create a passive demeanor for spiritual success. A familiar phrase associated with this model is "letting go and letting God." Certainly, unconditional surrender and confident expectation should characterize the Christian mindset. We do "rest" (i.e., place confidence) in the finished provision of the cross. Letting the life of Christ control our lives, however, may be mistaken as being dangerously passive. The New Testament presents progressive sanctification being more than "[being] still and [letting] God be God." Throughout the New Testament believers are called to action. While it is true that "the just shall live by faith," Galatians 3:11, and that Paul affirmed, "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," Galatians 2:20, the verbal aspects of the present tense in these text indicate that Paul does not focus upon a "once-for-all" commitment of faith, but rather a life characterized in a moment-to-moment trust, what I prefer to call an "active" faith. The Christian model presented in Galatians 5:16, 25 is one in which the Christian "walks/lives" by the Spirit, "getting in line with the Spirit."²²

²⁰J. Robertson McQuilkin, "The Keswick Perspective," citing Steven Barabas, in *Five Views On Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 153-54.

²¹Ibid. 171.

²²Paul uses στοιχῶμεν in Galatians 5:25. This hortatory subjective "let us" carries the idea of "getting in line with"; "walk in the footsteps of"; "agree with." The believer, once led by the Spirit lives in cooperation with/agreement with/in line with the Holy Spirit. These concepts lend themselves to the idea of an active-faith relationship between the Christian and the Spirit.

Lordship-decision model: Popular Evangelical Spiritual Growth

A final example of ‘second event’ Christian spirituality I like to call the “Lordship²³—decision” model. Though not called “Lordship-decision” by its adherents, I have given this name primarily because, according to this view, true spiritual growth begins when the believer intentionally decides that Jesus Christ is Lord over his life. In making this decision, the Christian makes a once-for-all-time commitment to live according to God’s will (i.e., the directives of God’s Word) in all life’s choices and circumstances.

Over the past century, this view has been associated with and popularized through the teachings and writings of certain faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary.²⁴ Among these advocates are Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles C. Ryrie, and John F. Walvoord. Additionally, the Lordship-decision model gained popularity through a pamphlet published by Cru (formerly, Campus Crusade for Christ). This pamphlet (tract) depicts true spiritual growth taking place after a person places Christ on the throne of one’s heart, establishing Jesus as Lord whose will then governs all life’s choices.²⁵

History of Lordship-decision sanctification: The Lordship-decision model can be traced back to the writings of Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founding first-president of Dallas Theological Seminary. Chafer, trained at Oberlin College and while serving in the Presbyterian Church of the USA, was influenced by the “higher” life teachings of R.A. Torrey, W. Griffith Thomas, and C.I. Scofield. Subsequently, in 1918, Chafer wrote what some may consider a classic explanation of the Spirit-filled life entitled *He That Is Spiritual*. After the founding of Dallas Theological Seminary, the ideas presented by Chafer were popularized. The terminology associated with this model, also called the Augustinian-Dispensational view,²⁶ were disseminated by faculty and students alike.

Distinctives of Lordship-decision sanctification: As with each view previously presented, the Lordship-decision model holds to the important tenets of Christian spirituality. Regeneration, justification by faith, the sufficiency of Christ’s death and resurrection, and the indwelling necessary empowerment by the Holy Spirit are essentials for the Lordship-decision model. This model becomes distinct, however, through its presentation of the “three-man” paradigm regarding human spirituality from which a second-decision event becomes necessary.

²³Using the term “Lordship” may be confusing to some who are familiar with the Lordship/Free grace controversies. I am not using the term lordship here as a reference to this controversy which focuses upon on the nature of “saving” faith and the visible evidence of God’s grace. We will address this issue later in appropriate chapters.

²⁴Singling out Dallas Theological Seminary is done with the utmost respect for this institution. My undergraduate studied were under the care of professors who graduated from Dallas Seminary and my first Th.M. is from Dallas Theological Seminary. I cherish the heritage and the years of ministry this institute has afforded me over the years.

²⁵“Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?” is a pamphlet (tract) that describes three types of people, natural, carnal, and spiritual. The natural person has yet to receive Christ. The carnal Christian lives for self and in the energy of human strength. The spiritual person is the one who confesses his sins, gives Christ full reign over the life one lives, and asks, by faith, to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This last person, the spiritual man, experiences God’s presence and enablement because a Lordship decision has been made.

²⁶Stanley N. Gundry, series ed. *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 197-226. The essay by John F. Walvoord presenting this position is entitled “Augustinian-Dispensational View.” The designation, “Augustinian,” according to Walvoord, has to do with this view’s basic agreement with Augustine’s view of residing sin in a Christian’s life, (pp. 201-09); “dispensational” relating to the new relationship believers have with God by the Holy Spirit since Pentecost (pp. 209-220). Ibid.

To begin with, the Lordship-decision model categorizes the unbelieving individual as the “natural man,” consider 1 Corinthians 2:14. This person is “unregenerate, or spiritually unchanged.”²⁷ At conversion, however, God has prepared the individual for spiritual growth. At conversion the regenerate person is justified and united with Christ by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In addition to this vital union with the risen Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian providing the divine dynamic for spiritual maturation. The Christian can grow (Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18ff.; 1 Corinthians 2:16). This growth, however, is initially sporadic. The new Christian, the second of the three-man paradigm, is called the carnal Christian, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. The idea of the carnal Christian simply indicates that the new Christian is experientially immature and will express attitudes and behavior patterns reflecting the fallen world system. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes

Some Christians...are said to be “carnal” because they can receive only the milk of the Word, in contrast to the strong meat; they yield to envy, strife and divisions, and are walking as men, while the true child of God is expected to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, to “walk in love” (Ephesians 5:2), and to “keep the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3). Though saved, the carnal Christians are walking “according to the course of this world.” They are “carnal” because the flesh is dominating them (See Romans 7:14).²⁸

While, according to this model, progressive sanctification begins at the time of conversion, the maturation of the new believer advances slowly and is more often characterized by defeat, Romans 7:14-23. Chafer continues, “the ‘carnal’ Christian is also characterized by a ‘walk’ that is on the same plane as that of the ‘natural’ man.”²⁹ This description is like the other second-event models.

To rectify the problem of immaturity/carnality, the Christian comes to a singular place of decision, yielding ‘self-rights’ to the will/Word of God. This Lordship decision elevates the carnal Christian to the third, and final, classification, the spiritual man. According to the Lordship-decision model, deep and abiding maturation occurs when we make a complete surrender to Christ’s Lordship. “The Christian must wholly yield to God and enter at once a life of true surrender.”³⁰ As a result of this decision, the Christian, having fully surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, Romans 12:1-2, is now aligned with God’s purposes and it ready to live every moment in step with the Holy Spirit. This Lordship-decision elevates the Christian to a life characterized by victory. Charles C. Ryrie tells us,

The scriptural picture is an initial act of dedication which includes all of oneself for all of one’s life. This should never be taken back; therefore, when a dedicated person comes to a crossroads in life or faces a decision, he is not faced with deciding again whether or not he will do the will of God. This has already and forever been decided in that crisis dedication.³¹

15. ²⁷Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1976),

²⁸Chafer, 20.

²⁹Ibid. 21.

³⁰Ibid. 22.

³¹Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1976), 81.

For the Lordship-decision model, progressive sanctification moves forward according to the believers' relationship to God, sin, and the growth process after they present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Once this decision is made, this spiritual-life victory can be identified in that the believer begins to put away sinful habits and is progressively transformed by the Holy Spirit to model the attitude and behavior of our Lord Jesus Christ.³² The Christian, confessing and avoiding sin, now experiences intimate and transformative fellowship with God by means of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the growth process progresses as the yielded Christian progresses in knowledge of truth, devotion, and experience.

Strengths and weaknesses of Lordship decision sanctification: As with each model, there are many positive aspects to the Lordship-decision model. First, in the Lordship-decision model, the work of Christ is complete. God, through Christ, has provided everything a believer needs to live a godly life, 2 Peter 1:3-4. Second, the Holy Spirit is the strength for daily Christian living. Progressive sanctification only takes place through the Christian's cooperation with the indwelling Holy Spirit, Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16. Additionally, true spiritual progress is experienced only as the Christian cooperates with the leading of the Holy Spirit, which alone leads to biblical maturity. Finally, though implied above, the image of Christ (Christian maturity) is achieved progressively, albeit incompletely, during this lifetime of the Christian. Ultimate sanctification (glorification) only occurs after the resurrection.³³

While there is much to commend this view there are several weaknesses with this, or any other two-tiered model. First, the insistence that the Christian becomes the spiritual man upon a one-time acceptance the Lordship of Christ in his life seems to assume something about the New Covenant model for spirituality that is not strictly true. While the New Testament talks about the natural man, the immature Christian, and those who are mature in their faith, the New Testament does not portray any "jump" into spirituality as normative. Rather, every Christian, complete in Christ, Colossians 2:10, is expected to live out their position in Christ in a moment-to-moment faith/trust dependent upon the sufficiency of the indwelling Spirit. This dependency rests/trust Christ because of this full and complete status. Second, the fail-safe addendum that the Lordship-decision be a once-for-all commitment, both betrays the model, which allows for failure, and the testimony of the New Testament, in which we read about the post-Pentecost Christian leaders failing, learning, and progressing incrementally throughout their lives. Consider, for example, Paul's statement in Philippians 4:12 "I have learned the secret of contentment," and Peter's carnal response to Jewish pressures in Galatians 2:11. These instances, and other testimonies recorded in Acts lend credence to a single, steady growth commitment for spiritual maturity.

Final thoughts regarding second-event models

It would seem at this juncture that I am opposed to crises events that catapult a Christian to a greater commitment to Christ. Nothing could be further from my thinking. My spiritual journey

³²Ryrie indicates that this singular decision to make Christ Lord of our lives results in separation from this evil age and transformation toward Christlikeness, *Ibid.*, 80-81.

³³Gundry, series ed. *Five Views on Sanctification*, Walvoord, "The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective," 225. "Though Christians can have relative perfection in this life and can often manifest godliness in a significant way, the degree of their perfection is limited until they stand in God's presence in heaven." *Ibid.* 225.

has, by God's design, a number of crises that prompt me to assess my life and commitment to Christ. In assessing second-event models we are not insisting that an individual cannot or would not experience a crisis that moves his or her spiritual life into a greater commitment. I could testify that I have these crises regularly, and certainly, many testimonials assure us that life-crises impact our spiritual commitments. A crisis, or series of life crises leading to greater commitments and deeper spiritual experiences, even seems to be the testimony of some of the individuals in the Bible (e.g., Saul's conversion, Acts 9; Peter's denials and rededication; Paul's testimony about a "thorn in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 12:7-10). Our evaluation simply asks, "Does the New Testament *prescribe* the second-event as normative and necessary for spiritual growth?" It seems, even with a casual glance, that spiritual growth takes place through a moment-to-moment faith relationship with God through Christ by the Holy Spirit. I'd say more about this now, but then, that's what this entire course-study is about.

'Steady Growth' Models

A second category of spiritual life models we might call "steady growth." While not denying personal crisis can lead to spiritual change, these models stress that the spiritual life is to be carried out on a moment-to-moment, daily basis, beginning from the moment of conversion. The steady growth models understand the biblical record pointing toward a steady, albeit, imperfect, progress toward Christlikeness.

Under the steady growth category, we are presenting two models. First, after considerable deliberation with myself, I thought it would be important to include a brief look at what should be called sacramentalism.³⁴ And then, finally, the Reformed model for Christian sanctification, or, perhaps better named, the perseverance model. I call this the perseverance model in that this perspective understands that God's redemptive grace also leads its recipient to an inevitable authentic Christlike lifestyle. While I imagine that adherents to each of these models would take exception to being grouped together, the similarity connecting them is the steady, daily, progress toward a rich and spiritual Christian experience.

Sacramentalism: *Ex Opere Operato* ("from the work done")³⁵ and other variations.

Technically, sacramentalism is not a model for Christian spirituality. Rather, sacramentalism represents a theological understanding about how God's transforming grace in Christ enlivens the believer resulting in transformational spiritual living. I am mentioning sacramentalism because I believe it represents an ongoing perspective among many Christians, namely, that by participating in various religious traditions/practices God confers life-changing, even salvific, grace.

The history and meaning of sacramentalism. In chapter three we discussed the history of the sacrament. For our present purposes we need only a brief review.

³⁴ Under the idea of Sacramental model are several major groups. Rather than specifically addressing the Roman Church, the Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, as well as similar evangelical ecclesiastical-theological representatives, I am attempting to qualify these groups as having a similar stress on the essential effectiveness of the sacrament for proper spirituality.

³⁵Walter A Elwell, ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), s.v. "Ex Opere Operato."

To begin with, the New Testament singles out the practices of baptism and the Lord Supper as the visible proclamation³⁶ of the redemptive work and message of Christ. By the second century, however, the early church fathers began to speak in ways that allowed for efficacious grace to be attributed to these rites. Consider this citation from Justin's First Apology

This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus.³⁷

Justin the Martyr seems to indicate that both baptism and the Lord's Supper had some inherent salvific or transformational efficacy. This notion of efficacy became more apparent as theological expression progressed through the first five centuries. Finally, certain tensions within the church (e.g., the Donatist controversies) necessitated the clarification the church's thinking regarding these rites. By the fifth century, through the writings of Augustine of Hippo, the idea of the sacrament was codified. Greg R. Allison tells us,

Augustine's fifth-century contributions to the theology of the sacraments was determinative for the church for centuries to come. He defined a sacrament generally as an outward and visible sign of an invisible yet genuine grace. Furthermore, the sacraments are effective by their own inherent nature in conferring this grace *ex opera operato*—literally, by the work performed.... this meant, for Augustine, that even when heretics baptize, serve the Lord's supper, and perform other such actions, God's grace is effectively and specifically channeled through those sacraments. For this reason, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are necessary for salvation.³⁸

From the fifth century up to the Reformation (sixteenth century) the idea of sacrament as a means of spiritual transformation remained relatively unchallenged. With the Reformation, however, the idea of sacrament moved from an inherent quality embedded in the activity of the rite to the activity coupled with the faith of the recipient. Accordingly, with the Reformation, the sacrament has been understood as efficacious only when carried out in faith. Allison states "the Protestant theology of the sacraments emphasizes the necessity of the Holy Spirit, the Word of

³⁶Regarding the Lord's Supper, for example, consider 1 Corinthians 11:26 "For whenever you eat this bread and you drink the cup, the death of the Lord you proclaim (καταγγέλλετε) until which He comes." Author's translation. The language associated with baptism also lends itself to salvific efficacy, consider Acts 22:16 "get up, be baptized and wash away your sins (ἀναστὰς βάπτισαι καὶ ἀπόλυσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου); and Acts 2:38.

³⁷Cyril C. Richardson, ed. *Early Christian Fathers* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996), s.v. Justin Martyr, "Apology" I. 66.

³⁸Greg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Joh S. Feinberg, Gen. ed. Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 322. Allison cites Augustine's, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants*, 1.33, "No one will enter his kingdom who is not born again of water and the Spirit; nor will anyone attain salvation and eternal life except in his kingdom—because the one who does not believe in the Son, and does not eat his flesh, will not have life, but the wrath of God remains on him." Ibid.

God, and faith in conjunction with baptism and the Lord's Supper." With this in mind, Louis Berkhof writes, "According to this view the external sign becomes a means employed by the Holy Spirit in the communication of divine grace."³⁹

The evaluation of sacramentalism as a means of spirituality. Gordon T. Smith correctly summarizes the history of sacramentalism stating,

The church has over the centuries invested extraordinary energy in debating how effective the sacraments actually are; whether they are a means of grace; and whether the crucial factor is the faith of the church, the faith of the Christian who participates, or, in some cases, the power of the elements themselves (water, bread, or wine) when consecrated by a priest or pastor.⁴⁰

Adding to this debate is not the intention of our discussion. Our intention is that we continue to answer the singular question, "Is the model or view being considered prescribed by the text of Scripture?" For those who see the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as efficacious the answer to this question is "yes!" "Yes, Scripture prescribes these practices for spiritual vitality." For those who understand the practices as memorials/proclamations, the answer is "no."

While certain texts in the New Testament (see above as well as such passages as John 6:53)) have been central to any discussion regarding sacramentalism, the biblical text, when the context deals with things necessary for salvation and spiritual living, does not include any mention of these or other rituals as God's prescription for spiritual vitality. It may be the experience of some that their lives are enriched through the participation in both baptism and the Lord's Supper (just as a crisis may be used by God to draw us closer to the Lord), but we find little evidence in the writings of the Apostles that these, or other ecclesiastical practices are necessary for spiritual transformation. To the contrary, Paul mentions that he was not involved with the baptisms of many converts, 1 Corinthians 1:14. Furthermore, upon discussing the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, nothing is mentioned that hints of a sacramental reality. The proclamation of Christ's death through the eucharist seems best understood as an act of remembrance, 11:25-26.

The Perseverance Model: God works therefore I work.

Our final contemporary spiritual growth model is appropriately called the Perseverance model. Here we discover that the theology governing this view understands God's elective, regenerating grace as that which unfailingly produces spiritual perseverance in sanctification until the end of this life. As with each previous perspective, the Perseverance model transcends any one ecclesiastical tradition.

History of the Perseverance model of sanctification: To trace the history of this "steady growth" model for progressive sanctification we should begin at the Reformation. Further, we will also trace

³⁹L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1941), 618.

⁴⁰Glen G. Scorgie, Gen. ed. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, M: Zondervan, 2011), s.v. "Sacramentalism" by Gordon T. Smith.

the beginnings of the Reformed⁴¹ model back to the works of Augustine (d. 430) as it was Augustine's writings that heavily influenced John Calvin⁴² and John Calvin provided the most influential voice shaping Reformed theology.

Augustine's spirituality was "life in the Holy Spirit."⁴³ For Augustine the Spirit of God administered God's grace enabling the believer to conform to the image of Christ, the perfect image of the Father. While, in Augustine's understanding, God offered sanctifying grace through the Church, the believer's transformation was daily and progressive. "The spirituality Augustine lived and taught was nothing other than the integration of one's Christian beliefs with one's daily life. In all three aspects—individual, communal, institutional—it is biblical and evangelical, therefore both incarnational and eschatological."⁴⁴

From Augustine through the Reformation, particularly John Calvin, and finally through the later Post Reformation thinkers, this model, along with its variations and nuances, has prevailed as a primary spiritual life paradigm and influence in Western Christianity. In attempting to capture the scope of this influence, John A. Vissers summarily writes,

Reformed spirituality begins with Zwingli and Bullinger in Zurich, extends to Calvin and his successors in Geneva, and includes, among others, English Puritans, Scottish Presbyterians, Dutch Calvinists, and in America, Jonathon Edwards and New England Puritanism, the Old Princeton School, and the Mercersburg Theologians.⁴⁵

Along with the initial traditions mentioned by Vissers, we can safely say that in today's landscape the Reformed ideas to Christian spirituality can be found in the teachings of many baptist, brethren, and independent Bible churches. This proliferation can, in part, be attributed to the many confessions that specify the Reformed/perseverance model for sanctification. Some examples of these confessions include the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Canons of Dort (the Five articles against the Remonstrants) 1618-19, and the Westminster Confession (1643-47). Present day evangelical Christianity has, in many respects, been incubated in these and other doctrinal traditions, and it is the Reformed model ideals that resonate in the hearts and lives of many believers.

Distinctives of the Perseverance model of sanctification: It has been said, according to the Perseverance model, that "two features are central to sanctification: Jesus Christ himself is our

⁴¹W.S. Reid, "The Reformed Tradition," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 921-22 "The term "Reformed" is used to distinguish the Calvinistic from the Lutheran and the Anabaptist traditions. The Reformed tradition finds its roots in the theology of Ulrich Zwingli, the first reformer in Zurich, and John Calvin of Geneva, who in his biblical commentaries, his pamphlets, but especially in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, developed a Protestant theology." Ibid.

⁴²A casual read of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* reveals Calvin's continual references to the works of Augustine. For Calvin, Augustine represented the voice of Christian theological tradition. Citing Augustine along with the testimony of Scripture allowed Calvin to support his views as being both biblical and in keeping with the Church.

⁴³Mary T. Clark, "Spirituality," in *Augustine Through The Ages: An Encyclopedia* Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 814.

⁴⁴Ibid., 815.

⁴⁵John A. Vissers, "Reformed (Calvinist) Spirituality," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Glen G. Scorgie, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 711.

sanctification or holiness (1 Cor 1:30); and it is through union with Christ that sanctification is accomplished in us.”⁴⁶ There is, however, more than two important ideas to this model.

First, the Perseverance model correctly insists that the beginning point in a person’s true spirituality (sanctification) begins with regeneration. While any human being may engage in good and profitable works (even works commanded by the Word of God) it is understood that the unregenerate individuals do these works from the wrong spiritual vantage point (Westminster Confession 14.7).

Second, as mentioned, the Perseverance model stresses a believer’s union with Christ. As Christ himself stands as the believer’s ultimate sanctification, so all that God has provided through Christ becomes the believer’s experiential position through this spiritual union. Further, the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit brings about our union with Christ. “The coming of the Spirit (‘baptism with the Spirit’) on the Day of Pentecost is the means by which the disciples are united to Christ.”⁴⁷

Importantly, our union with Christ unites us with Christ’s death (through which we are made dead to and, therefore, freed from sin) and with Christ’s resurrection (by which we are made alive together in and with Christ). This living union is the new creation. Sanctification, then, becomes the practical outworking of what it means “to belong to the new creation in Christ.”⁴⁸

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Perseverance model is that every facet of the believer’s life, from our initial faith to our final destination, is understood as God’s work.⁴⁹ While there are variations among those who hold this view regarding some of the particulars, generally speaking, in the Perseverance model, that God grants faith regenerating the lost so that he might believe; God sets the believer apart positionally which results in the process of sanctification; and, finally, God renews the Christian into His likeness through a continual process generated by the Holy Spirit. As sovereign grace regenerated the elect unto salvation so this same grace (justification and sanctification are a part of the same saving act) inevitably results in godliness and lasting fruitfulness (perseverance).⁵⁰ Salvation, from beginning to end, is solely an act of God. Simply stated, the Perseverance model postulates, “God works therefore I work.”⁵¹ Even before the moment a person is regenerate, God’s presence has a sanctifying affect upon an individual by means of an irresistible transforming grace, Ephesians 2:4-10; Philippians 2:13. The genuine believer responds to the various life situations by means of grace manifesting a steady improvement in the rigors of Christian living. The result of Perseverance sanctification is that true Christians establish and fulfill the law, Romans 13:8-10. In fulfilling God’s Law, the Christian life

⁴⁶Sinclair B. Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, Donald L. Alexander, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 48.

⁴⁷Ibid., 51.

⁴⁸Ibid., 60.

⁴⁹R. C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 115-216. Sproul offers a very representative and readable presentation of Reformed soteriology.

⁵⁰Sproule. *Grace Unknown*. “Were the Bible to say nothing about perseverance, what it says about God’s electing grace would be sufficient to convince us about perseverance.” Ibid., 210.

⁵¹John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 149. “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.” Ibid.

progressively imitates the dispositions and moral qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ, Ephesians 5:1-2.

Man's response and responsibility in the process of Christian spirituality is understood as our faithful cooperation with the grace God has proffered. The believer is responsible by faith to obey God by putting away the deeds of the flesh and living out the will of God, Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:5. The Christian is responsible to live out his union with Christ through an exercise of faith, Ephesians 3:17; Romans 6:12. Anthony A. Hoekema notes,

Summing up, we may say that sanctification is a supernatural work of God in which the believer is active. The more active we are in sanctification, the more sure we are that the energizing power that enables us to be active is the power of God.⁵²

Finally, the Perseverance "steady growth" model identifies God's primary means of this sovereign saving and sanctifying grace. Ferguson singles out four avenues through which God's sanctifying grace comes to us. These avenues are the Word of God, the providences of God, the fellowship (community) of faith, and the sacraments (limited to baptism and the Lord's Supper).⁵³ By God's grace, abundantly ours through these means, the Christian finds God's energizing abilities to establish and fulfill the law and imitate the moral qualities of Jesus Christ.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Perseverance model of sanctification: So much about the Perseverance model commends itself that any criticism is offered with kindness and care. The strengths within this model are many. For example, the importance concerning our union with Christ by the Holy Spirit is an essential factor in Christian spirituality. Other models certainly do not deny this reality but the perseverance model rightly insists that our union is vital for any transformation to take place. Second, this "steady growth" model correctly insists that every facet of a believer's spiritual life requires the inner working of the Holy Spirit administering God's transformative grace. The only way to engage the power of indwelling sin and the divine directives to fulfill the Law of Christ is by grace by the Spirit, Romans 6:12-14; 8:13. Finally, the Perseverance model's identification of God's appointed "means" of grace (as identified by Sinclair B. Ferguson above) represents a plausible means by which the Holy Spirit administers transformation in our lives.⁵⁴

As with any model its strength may also become its weakness. While we admire and agree with the Perseverance view's insistence upon grace as the means for sanctification, the nature of this grace raises a few questions. In the Reformed theological system God's saving grace also sanctifies, that is, God's act of justification guarantees and results in progressive sanctification.

⁵²Hoekema, *Saved By Grace*, 202.

⁵³Ferguson, *Christian Spirituality*, 67-74. Ferguson is careful to nuance his view of the sacraments stating, "The sacraments can never be separated from the Word of God. Nor do the sacraments provide sanctifying grace from Christ which is not available to us in the message of the Scriptures. It is the same grace we receive, because it is the same Christ who is held out to us. Both Scripture and sacraments point to the same Lord." Ibid. 73.

⁵⁴While Ferguson included the sacraments as a means of grace, I do not subscribe to the theology of sacramentalism as having Scriptural plausibility. I, however, in the spirit of unity would generalize the notion of the sacraments to be the personal fellowship believers may enjoy with God. This fellowship includes worship in spirit and truth, prayer, and living in step with the Holy Spirit's leading. It is through our communion with God that we experience God's enlivening grace. This communion with God, for many, can be experienced through various corporate rites in worship.

With this union of justifying and sanctifying grace, our progress in godliness serves as the test for genuine faith. According to this model, Progressive sanctification is inevitable for those who are regenerate. Yet, what entails in our personal life is vague. Even good works, which may be a result of the flesh (human effort), cannot qualify a person's righteous standing before God, consider Matthew 7:21-23.⁵⁵ Assurance of one's salvation becomes as vague as the standards held authenticating Christian maturity.

A second weakness in most Perseverance presentations about progressive sanctification is a vagueness regarding the filling of the Holy Spirit. Since the Spirit administers grace and initiates our response toward God, the personal aspect of our relatedness with the indwelling Holy Spirit rarely is described. The usual assumption is, if you are prompted toward God the Holy Spirit is at work and we should obey. If we are not prompted toward God, the Holy Spirit is not at work. The Perseverance model, by intrinsically connecting justification and sanctification, on one hand, unwittingly relegates discussions about Christian spirituality to an academic exercise and, on the other hand, creates a sense of introspection leading to a greater sense of spiritual failure, rather than a singular confidence in Christ's merits and life.⁵⁶ To this introspection we can add the intrinsic question about the origin of and one's motive for any good work.

Finally, God's irresistible salvific grace being also God's irresistible sanctifying grace leaves us with a sense of spiritual frustration. Not only does our salvation come under the scrutiny of the progress of our spiritual growth (rather than the object of our faith), but the growth itself becomes subject to an undefined sense of maturity.⁵⁷ Can any 'good work' be assumed to have its origin with God's grace? All spiritual activity, admittedly, cannot be attributed to God's sanctifying grace (consider the 'works' for God in certain sects of Second Temple Judaism). So, while God "is the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of His good pleasure," (Philippians 2:13), we are also to "continue working out [our] salvation with awe and reverence", (Philippians 2:12).⁵⁸ Hence, personal sanctification seems to be both the work of God and the willing cooperation of the believer. There seems to be a positive response to God's grace necessary for progressive spiritual growth to take place. And, it seems, from the testimony of Scripture, that

⁵⁵Matthew describes those who "call upon the Lord," who "prophesy," and did "many powerful deeds" in Christ's name, and yet Jesus declares He "never knew" them. Good works and Christian service are not fool-proof evidences of the genuineness of one's faith.

⁵⁶Vissers, "Reformed (Calvinist) Spirituality," 712. Vissers writes, "Reformed spirituality is often deeply introspective and marked by anxiety, brooding, and spiritual heaviness. Such an ethos is rooted in a particular appropriation of the doctrine of predestination and the desire for assurance of salvation...Spiritual disciplines in the Reformed tradition were never the means through which one earned salvation, but they often become the means through which one sought assurance of salvation." Ibid.

⁵⁷Alan P. Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works? The Role of Works in Salvation in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 333. In a necessary Reformed conclusion, Stanley writes, "Thus, even though works are necessary for salvation, the works themselves are only possible 'with God.' Works then are... 'inferior causes.' The possession of eternal life, says Calvin, 'is by means of good works...eternal life [is] a consequence of works.' We can rightly say then along with Augustine that at the time of final judgment God will 'crown not so much thy merits as *His own gifts*.'" Ibid., 334.

⁵⁸For the sake of our discussion I did not take exception to the interpretation and use of this passage. Many take Philippians 2:13 as a reference to personal sanctification. There is good contextual consideration, however, that the "salvation" mentioned in 2:12-13 refers to the Philippians' deliverance from persecution (consider Philippians 1:28-30). The Philippians' behavior (Philippians 2:1-5; 2:12-16) becomes evidence and means that their deliverance (salvation) from the opposition is God's presence at work in their midst.

the positive response to God's sanctifying grace may or may not occur in the life of a believer, consider 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 2:11; 3:1-4; 4:8-12.

Summary and Evaluation

With one exception, sacramentalism, we have overviewed several contemporary models for Christian spirituality that are popular today. We have categorized these models into two primary groupings, those models that insist upon a second event for proper spiritual development and two models that stress the completeness of Christ's work and the need for daily progress in spiritual growth. As part of our summary Let's look at a simple picture of these models.

The second event models

Each of the "second-event" models presented had much to commend themselves. All insisted that the spiritual journey formally begins with regeneration. Secondly, the Person and finished work of Christ was the sole object of saving faith. Third, the benefits of Christ were administered to the inner life of the Christian through personal union with Christ. Fourth, progressive sanctification was facilitated, on our part, by faith in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

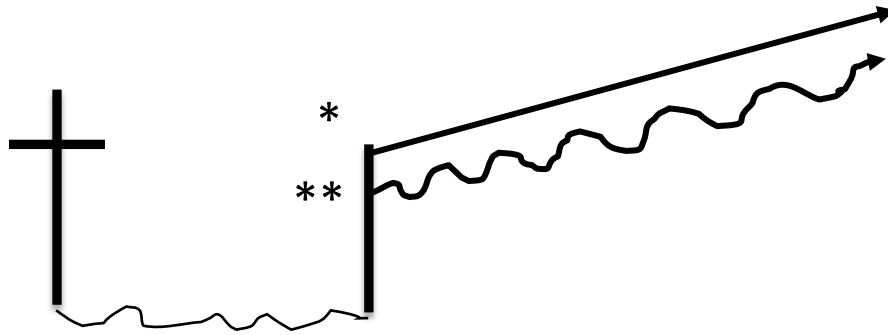
Second-event models, however, all prescribed a necessary crisis of faith. Admittedly, these crises moments describe what many Christians experience, but personal description and biblical prescription may often be two different things. Not finding a second event as normative in the New Testament, I contend that these models, though having much in common and much to commend themselves, generally fail to represent the biblically prescribed pattern for spirituality. Each of these models understand true (dynamic) spiritual progress to begin only after a second act of faith and dedication. And while the Bible certainly presents a number of testimonies demonstrating how life crises prompt spiritual renewal, our understanding of New Covenant spirituality indicates that those who are born-again are in the Spirit, Romans 8:9; are blessed with every spiritual blessing, Ephesians 1:3; and, are complete in Christ, Colossians 2:10. In fact, there are a number of passages that indicate that growth was expected without any mention of a faith/life crisis, again consider 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 and also Hebrews 5:12—6:3.

To conclude our assessment, I would like to provide a simple diagram depicting the second-event paradigm. Second-event models include the Wesleyan, holiness, charismatic, Keswick, and Lordship-decision traditions. The diagram below provides a simple illustration representing these models.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The diagram of the two-tiered models may be explained as following: The cross represents the moment of a person's conversion/regeneration. Level, jagged lines represent our lives before the 'second-event.' Inclined lines represent a life this is making progress becoming more like Christ.

* Wesleyan and holiness models understand this second event to result in "entire" sanctification (the eradication of the sin nature/the reality of sin in the believer's life). The Christian, free from the formal domination of sin, is able to perfect God's love through the power of the Holy Spirit.

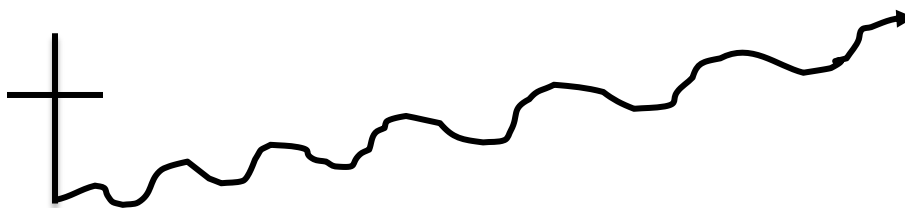
** charismatic, Keswick, and Lordship models understand this second event to result from and to a new dimension God's Spirit (charismatic), of faith (Keswick), and dedication (Lordship) that manifests itself through the steady progress in godliness. The Keswick model teaches a "faith-rest" in one's struggle against sin while the Lordship model stresses a new resolve within the Christian to maintain the daily vigil against sin and the pursuit of godliness.



‘Steady Growth’ Models of Sanctification

Assuming sacramentalism as a model for spiritual growth, both steady-growth models presented have a number of strengths to commend themselves. First, most sacramental models and the Perseverance model insist that regeneration is essential for true biblical spirituality. Both views insist that the Person and work of Christ are the sole focus for salvation. Third, both views insist upon the believer’s union with Christ as vital for any spiritual progression. Fourth, both views agree that one’s union with Christ is enlivened by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and, that apart from the indwelling power of the Spirit’s life there can be no true progressive sanctification (Christian spirituality). There are, however, some variations within these two groups that may define regeneration, union with Christ, and the enlivening work of the Holy Spirit differently than others of the same general category. For our purposes, the differences are set aside in order to emphasize that these models insist that spiritual development may begin immediately upon conversion because of the completeness of grace in Christ.

The following diagram simplistically illustrates the Sacramental and Reformed models for Christian spirituality and growth.



In reviewing these models, we must emphasize again that our investigation is not attempting to determine whether any of these models might represent someone’s personal experience. Rather, we are attempting to determine whether these models represent the normal understanding for Christian growth and spiritual life as presented in the New Testament. Each of the models presented in this chapter capture aspects of this new spiritual reality. Each of these models, in emphasizing certain experiential or theological suppositions, need to further

incorporate both the explicit and implicit message of the New Covenant regarding Christian spirituality. In the next and final chapter of our introduction we will outline our course of study by which we will attempt to arrive at another theologically plausible and biblically sound understanding about Christian spirituality.

