

## B. B. WARFIELD AND LEWIS S. CHAFER ON SANCTIFICATION

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Over the past decade evangelical theologians have authored a number of books advocating diverse and even divergent perspectives on the work of sanctification.<sup>1</sup> Among these competing models, perhaps the hardest fought battle has been between conventional Calvinism and what for lack of a better term might be called the Chaferian view.<sup>2</sup> These two approaches agree on a number of points: that sanctification involves both the sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit and the willing response of the individual believer, that the experience of sanctification is progressive, that sinless perfection is attained only in the glorified state of heaven and not in this present life, and that the believer is eternally secure from the moment of regeneration.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless several significant differences remain. Basic areas of disagreement include the relationship between justification and sanctification, the relationship between divine sovereignty and human participation in the process of sanctification, and the question of whether the believer has one or two natures.<sup>4</sup> Although these points have often been debated both Biblically and theologically, the influence of the historical background that shapes the rhetoric has generally been overlooked. A grasp of this context is crucial to a deeper understanding of the classic Reformed and the Chaferian approaches. To

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1984) 121–199; M. E. Dieter *et al.*, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (ed. D. L. Alexander; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> This label is given to the position associated with L. S. Chafer by C. C. Ryrie, “Contrasting Views on Sanctification,” *Walvoord: A Tribute* (ed. D. K. Campbell; Chicago: Moody, 1982) 191. Although many dispensationalists follow Chafer on sanctification, Walvoord’s expression “the Augustinian-Dispensational perspective” in his article in Dieter, *Five Views* 199–226, appears to be a misnomer, since there is little theological relationship between Chafer’s unique perspective on sanctification and his dispensational distinctives. One example of the battle between the Reformed view and the Chaferian view can be found in J. MacArthur, *The Gospel according to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); see especially his appeal to the Reformed tradition in his appendix 2 (pp. 221–237). MacArthur’s views were quickly challenged by Ryrie in *So Great Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989) and by Z. Hodges, *Absolutely Free* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). See also D. L. Bock, “A Review of *The Gospel according to Jesus*,” *BSac* 146 (January–March 1989) 21–40.

<sup>3</sup> These areas of agreement are acknowledged by both Walvoord and Hoekema (Dieter, *Five Views* 100–101, 230).

<sup>4</sup> These areas of debate are enumerated and treated from a Chaferian perspective in Ryrie, “Contrasting” 189–199. In the responses by Hoekema and Walvoord to each other’s views, however, the most predominant area of disagreement seems to be on the issue of the believer’s nature(s); see Dieter, *Five Views* 100–101, 230–231.

this end, a closer look at two figures who played vital roles in their development is in order.

The first is Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921), who in 1887 succeeded Archibald Alexander Hodge as professor of didactic and polemic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. The last of Old Princeton's champions of conservative Calvinism, Warfield did much to elucidate the Reformed perspective of sanctification, particularly through his polemics against the perfectionism of the "higher life" and Keswick movements.<sup>5</sup> The second is Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952), who in 1924 founded Dallas Theological Seminary, then called Evangelical Theological College, and for twenty-eight years served as its president. Chafer was chiefly responsible for clarifying dispensationalism's dogmatic framework, not only through his monumental *Systematic Theology*, the first consistently premillennial text of its type,<sup>6</sup> but also in earlier works in which he laid the foundation for later teaching on sanctification by dispensationalists such as John F. Walvoord, Charles C. Ryrie and J. Dwight Pentecost.<sup>7</sup> In fact the initial clash between Chafer's approach and the classic Reformed perspective on this point came with Warfield's 1919 critique of Chafer.<sup>8</sup> The watershed nature of this first encounter demonstrates the importance of a better understanding of the distinct historical contexts that shaped these two men's very different theological outlooks. Such scrutiny will not only deepen our grasp of the forces driving their disagreement but also demonstrate the extent to which that primal conflict continues to set the pattern for today's intraevangelical debate on sanctification.

#### I. LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER: EVANGELIST AND BIBLE TEACHER

Chafer attended Oberlin College from 1888 to 1891. Since he received little if any theological training there, studying primarily in the school's conservatory of music, it is doubtful that he was significantly influenced by Oberlin's revivalistic atmosphere and Arminian theology.<sup>9</sup> Although origi-

<sup>5</sup> See B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Perfectionism* (2 vols.; New York: Oxford University, 1931). The first volume mainly deals with German perfectionism as found among those theologians (e.g. Ritschl, Wernle, Clemen) who denied the traditional views of original sin. This has little relevance to our discussion. But in the second volume Warfield primarily dealt with perfectionism as it was found in England and the United States. Here he gave specific attention to the teachings of A. Mahan, C. Finney, Oberlin College, R. Pearsall and H. W. Smith, and C. G. Trumbull, among others. A condensed edition of this second volume was published as *Perfectionism* (ed. S. G. Craig; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (8 vols.; Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1947–48).

<sup>7</sup> L. S. Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (New York: Our Hope, 1918). For examples of dispensationalists who advocate Chafer's views on sanctification see J. F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) vi, 196–218; C. C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 186–191; J. D. Pentecost, *Pattern for Maturity* (Chicago: Moody, 1966) 127–130.

<sup>8</sup> B. B. Warfield, review of L. S. Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, in *Princeton Theological Review* 17 (April 1919) 322–327.

<sup>9</sup> His musical interest was reflected in his study of harmony, voice and piano. See J. D. Hannah, "The Early Years of Lewis Sperry Chafer," *BSac* 144 (January–March 1987) 10–11. For the most thorough and well-researched account of Chafer's early years see Hannah, *The Social and Intellectual History of the Evangelical Theological College* (dissertation; University of Texas at Dallas, 1988).

nally ordained in 1900 as a Congregational minister, Chafer's transfer in 1907 of his ministerial credentials to the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. certainly suggests his inclination toward a Reformed theological outlook. That his orientation was basically Calvinistic is confirmed by the heavy dependence of his *Systematic Theology* on Charles Hodge, evidenced not only by numerous quotations but even by Chafer's appropriation of Hodge's thematic structure. Chafer's close adherence to the Reformed tradition is particularly evident in the area of soteriology.<sup>10</sup> But Chafer's perspective on sanctification was shaped by three additional forces: his deep interest and involvement in evangelistic endeavors, his exposure to "victorious life" teachers during his years at the Northfield Bible conferences, and his close relationship with C. I. Scofield.

Chafer's deep commitment to evangelism was evident from the earliest days of his ministry. Beginning in 1890 he assisted in the evangelistic meetings of A. T. Reed, B. Faye Mills and D. L. Moody.<sup>11</sup> In 1897 Chafer undertook his first independent work as an evangelist, continuing to preach and sing in meetings of his own until 1914.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting the significance of this period was a volume he described as "the result of evangelistic experience and study covering a period of almost a score of years."<sup>13</sup> Chafer's extensive involvement with evangelistic meetings, and consequently with many of the popular revivalist preachers and evangelists active at the turn of the century, undoubtedly contributed to his critical concern about the nature of true evangelism. It is apparent from his writings that he felt some preachers were "misstating" the gospel by setting various human responses alongside simple belief as conditions of salvation.<sup>14</sup> For example, the evangelistic messages of Mills focused on the need for personal repentance and attacked card playing, gambling, intemperance and dancing.<sup>15</sup> Chafer felt that to incorporate repentance and personal morality into the gospel message was to add to the "terms of Salvation."<sup>16</sup> He insisted that God's only requirement of

<sup>10</sup> See J. R. Boles, *The Theology of Lewis Sperry Chafer in the Light of His Theological Method* (dissertation; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963) 64. Boles summarizes Chafer's eclectic theology by mentioning three elements that undergirded his dispensational formulations: his "Calvinistic orientation, pietistic emphasis and separatist teachings." Simply put, Chafer's soteriology was rooted in Calvinism and his ecclesiology and eschatology in the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah, "Early Years" 11.

<sup>12</sup> C. F. Lincoln, "Biographical Sketch of the Author," in Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 8.4.

<sup>13</sup> L. S. Chafer, *True Evangelism* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1911) iii.

<sup>14</sup> See L. S. Chafer, *Salvation* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1926) 45–53.

<sup>15</sup> W. G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism* (New York: Ronald, 1959) 336. It is possible that Chafer had Mills particularly in mind with his discussion in *True Evangelism* of "an undue emphasis upon methods in modern evangelism" (p. 9). Mills introduced many innovative techniques to late-nineteenth-century revivalism through his "District Combination Plan of Evangelism." This included local churches' careful planning of every detail of the meetings from finances and advertising to decision cards that provided a record of results. This highly structured method of revivalism became so prevalent by the early twentieth century that Chafer could say that it was "almost universal." Feeling that Mills and others were perverting the gospel, Chafer wrote: "Many methods of evangelism . . . have been employed in an effort to produce *visible* results, rather than to create a means by which sin-burdened souls may find rest and peace through a personal and intelligent faith in Christ as Savior" (*True Evangelism* 19).

<sup>16</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 3.371–393.

sinner was their faith and that preachers who supplemented this by demanding their public confession of Christ, surrender to God, or immediate change of behavior undermined the Bible's teaching on grace. This led Chafer to emphasize salvation as solely a work of God apart from any human effort and therefore to distinguish it from "experimental sanctification," which depended on the believer's "self-dedication" and "yieldedness to God."<sup>17</sup>

The second significant factor influencing Chafer's perspective of sanctification was his time at Northfield, Massachusetts. From 1901 to 1915 he was active in the music ministry at Northfield's Bible conferences where he absorbed the teaching of many nationally and internationally renowned speakers drawn there every summer, figures such as James Orr, R. A. Torrey, G. Campbell Morgan and W. H. Griffith Thomas.<sup>18</sup> The influence of these powerful exponents led Chafer to adapt much of his concept of sanctification from the "victorious life" movement they represented. Demonstrating their teaching's profound impact on him is an article he wrote in defense of the movement. Referring to these men, he argued:

An unprejudiced person can hardly attend their conferences and not be impressed with the fact that there is a Biblical emphasis placed on prayer, missions, evangelism, stewardship and every form of sound doctrine. From these gatherings transformed lives are going forth with the priceless power of the Holy Spirit upon them. It is a serious thing to condemn where God is so evidently blessing.<sup>19</sup>

The man with the greatest impact on Chafer, however, was Scofield, then pastor of the Trinitarian Congregational Church of Northfield and director of the Northfield Training School.<sup>20</sup> Chafer later recalled Scofield's profound influence on him while he had studied at his school in the fall of 1901:

Until that time I had never heard a real teacher. . . . My first hearing Dr. Scofield was at a morning Bible class at the Bible School. He was teaching the sixth chapter of Romans. I am free to confess that it seemed to me at the close that I had seen more vital truth in God's Word in that one hour than I had seen in all my life before. It was a crisis for me. I was captured for life.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, much of Chafer's theological orientation can be attributed to his prolonged association with Scofield. Scofield's own apprenticeship under the eminent Presbyterian pastor James H. Brookes, instrumental in the early spread of dispensationalism, accounts for some of his own theological bent.<sup>22</sup> This possibly explains why Chafer, under Scofield's influence, found no prob-

<sup>17</sup> L. S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Chicago: Moody, 1926) 182.

<sup>18</sup> See W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Victorious Life," *BSac* 76 (July–October 1919) 267–268, 455–467. In these articles Griffith Thomas defended the essentially Augustinian character of the "victorious life" movement against the attacks of Warfield.

<sup>19</sup> L. S. Chafer, "Are Victorious Life Teachers 'Side Tracked?'," *Presbyterian Standard* 60 (April 7, 1920) 8.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah, "Early Years" 17.

<sup>21</sup> L. S. Chafer, "What I Learned from Dr. Scofield," *The Sunday School Times* (March 4, 1922) 120.

<sup>22</sup> J. J. Richards, *The Promise of Dawn: The Eschatology of Lewis Sperry Chafer* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991) 67.

lem in changing his ordination to the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. It certainly helps explain the strong commitment to Reformed theology reflected in his *Systematic Theology*. Although one first thinks of Chafer's dependence on Scofield in the area of eschatology,<sup>23</sup> a side-by-side comparison of both men's writings show that Scofield's influence extended to Chafer's concept of sanctification as well. For example, Chafer's distinction between the believer's old and new natures directly corresponds to Scofield's view.<sup>24</sup> Some have gone so far as to say that *He That Is Spiritual* was simply Chafer's elaboration of what he had learned from Scofield.<sup>25</sup> John Hannah concludes:

As the subsequent intertwining of their lives suggests, Scofield and Chafer became as father and son in the ministry; indeed it can readily be argued that Chafer systematized and institutionalized Scofield's thoughts and attitudes in the Evangelical Theological College, renamed in 1936 Dallas Theological Seminary.<sup>26</sup>

## II. BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD:

### REFORMED THEOLOGIAN AND PRINCETON APOLOGIST

Warfield's religious and theological background is much more straightforward than that of Chafer. As a student and then a professor at Princeton, he was deeply rooted in the Old School Presbyterianism of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge and A. A. Hodge. He joined these stalwarts in championing the Reformed tradition as expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Like them, he was thoroughly committed to the defense of orthodox Calvinism against Arminian inroads.

Unlike his Princeton predecessors, though, Warfield largely restricted his ecclesiastical activities to the intellectual sphere. The time he devoted to caring for his invalid wife often made it impossible for him to attend the annual Presbyterian General Assembly. Instead he kept Americans abreast of contemporary liberal scholarship's attacks on orthodoxy through the countless reviews and essays that poured from his pen.<sup>27</sup> Mark Noll observes:

His scholarship was precise, careful, wide ranging, penetrating, and especially well-grounded in scientific literature. With these scholarly resources, he labored might and main to restrain the rising tide of liberalism, especially as it affected the Old Princeton doctrine of Scripture. Warfield read more widely,

<sup>23</sup> See Richards' excellent treatment of Scofield's influence upon Chafer (ibid. 68–82). It is interesting, however, that in Richards' final analysis he argues that it was through a rigorous personal study of the Bible that Chafer arrived at his conclusions concerning eschatology (ibid. 82–88).

<sup>24</sup> Compare Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 6.270–272, with C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Fincastle: Scripture Truth, 1896) 44 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Richards, *Promise* 69.

<sup>26</sup> Hannah, "Early Years" 18.

<sup>27</sup> W. A. Hoffecker, "Benjamin B. Warfield," *Reformed Theology in America* (ed. D. F. Wells; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 69.

possessed more skill in languages, and displayed sharper dialectical powers

than any of his three notable predecessors. Yet perhaps because of the nature of his times—with the rise of the university, the increasing specialization and fragmentation of knowledge—his thought seems less comprehensive, less the work of a churchman in society than a theologian in the academy.<sup>28</sup>

Several significant elements of Warfield's background contributed to his concept of sanctification and thus ultimately to his conflict with Chafer. The first of these was his unyielding commitment to Presbyterian confessionalism. Conservative Presbyterianism's constituency was drawn largely from Americans of Scottish and Scotch-Irish ancestry. The symbols of this tradition were the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, from the day in 1729 when America's infant Presbyterian Church officially adopted the *Westminster Confession* as its creed, good Scotch-Irish Presbyterians embraced every detail of its uncompromising Calvinism. Such was certainly the case in the Kentucky home where Warfield himself was raised. Among Presbyterians of that era it was common for children to memorize all 107 answers of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* by the age of ten. Young Warfield bettered this, apparently committing them to memory by the age of six.<sup>30</sup> Reflecting the influence of Scottish common-sense philosophy, the conservative Presbyterian tradition tended to view truth in terms of precisely stated propositions. This viewpoint was easily extended to embrace the *Westminster Confession* as well as the Scriptures it summarized. Since from this perspective truth was a stable entity best expressed in written language, the authority of the Bible became supremely important. Moreover Old School Presbyterians "insisted that the Westminster standards represented as closely as was humanly possible the system of doctrine contained in Scripture."<sup>31</sup> Because they saw the *Westminster Confession* as having almost a direct correspondence to the truth, it was natural for conservative Presbyterians to emphasize adherence to it alongside *sola Scriptura*. From the founding of the seminary, Princeton's theologians had served the Old School Presbyterians by stressing this distinctive view of truth. The result was that the Princetonians held to a very static view of doctrine. This was exemplified by Francis L. Patton's boast at the seminary's 1912 centennial celebration that its theological orientation "is exactly the same as it was a hundred years ago."<sup>32</sup> Sydney Ahlstrom's summary of the Princeton theology emphasizes three elements: "an almost absolutely rigidified Biblicalism," "a reliance on the Common sense Realists of Scotland" and a strong commitment to the Reformed confessions.<sup>33</sup> The firmness with which Old Prince-

<sup>28</sup> *The Princeton Theology 1812–1921* (ed. M. A. Noll; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 15.

<sup>29</sup> G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University, 1980) 109. My indebtedness to Marsden is great, especially on the nature of conservative Presbyterianism in Warfield's day.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 110.

ton's theologians held to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was a principal characteristic of Warfield's theological outlook.

It is important that we see how Warfield's Presbyterian confessionalism affected his theological method. This influence is subtly reflected in the inaugural address he delivered on his assumption from A. A. Hodge of Princeton's chair of didactic and polemic theology. A condensed version of this speech appeared in an article in which Warfield outlined the five-step process of his "Theological Encyclopedia" (i.e. theological method): (1) apologetical theology, (2) exegetical theology, (3) historical theology, (4) Biblical theology and (5) systematic theology. Each of these built on what had come before, resulting in a theology that was, in Warfield's words, based on "an inductive study of the facts conveyed in [the] written revelation."<sup>34</sup> It might seem that his theological methodology was indeed an objective, even "scientific," evaluation of the "facts" of Scripture. In practice, however, its findings were greatly affected by his Presbyterian creedalism. We see this particularly in his concept of "progressive orthodoxy." Although Warfield recognized theology as "progressive," this was only to the extent that it built "on the basis of the already ascertained truth."<sup>35</sup> Thus he was willing to accept theological development not through incremental differentiation but only by means of addition to what already had been established. When he stated that once theology had "been corrected and assimilated, these truths are to remain accepted," he clearly had in mind the Princetonians' view of Reformation doctrine as expressed in the *Westminster Confession*.<sup>36</sup> Craig Blaising points out the weakness of this concept of doctrinal development:

Theories that attempt to account for development merely in the addition of doctrine (with no alteration in any expression and no subtraction of doctrine) or merely in deductive elaboration of earlier doctrinal principles (thus no real change and the associated problem of credal tyranny) are inadequate to account for the actual historical phenomenon of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy develops not only by addition and elaboration but also with some occasional adjustment and alteration in the expression, explanation, or definition of doctrine. It also develops with occasional restructuring of the systematic relationship of doctrines. And it must be admitted that competing systems of doctrine have coexisted within the stream of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Hoeffcker, "Warfield" 61. Note also C. Hodge's boast "that during the many years of his pre-eminence at Princeton that institution had never brought forward a single original thought." See F. H. Foster, *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1907) 432.

<sup>33</sup> S. E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A Historical Survey," *The Shaping of American Religion* (ed. J. W. Smith and A. L. Jamison; Princeton: Princeton University, 1961) 263; see also Ahlstrom, *Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices from Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) 45–48, 251–292.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. B. B. Warfield, "The Idea of Systematic Theology," *The Princeton Theology* (ed. Noll) 256.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 257.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 258.

<sup>37</sup> C. A. Blaising, "Doctrinal Development in Orthodoxy," *BSac* 145 (April 1988) 137.

Inductive though Warfield's theological method may have been, ultimately his conclusions were always passed through the grid of his Presbyterian confessionalism. Strongly committed to the *Confession's* detailed description of sanctification, Warfield objected to the innovations in that area offered by Chafer.<sup>38</sup> Warfield specifically faulted Chafer as a Presbyterian minister on his failure to adhere to "the Confession of Faith."<sup>39</sup>

A second factor affecting Warfield's criticism of Chafer's model of sanctification was his role as that generation's leading apologist for Reformed orthodoxy. Old Princeton's version of Calvinist doctrine faced the fire of a host of ecclesiastical adversaries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The evolutionary speculations of contemporary scientists and the new methods of Biblical criticism emanating from Tübingen and elsewhere threatened the Princetonians' view of Biblical authority. Even within their own denomination, "Progressive" Presbyterians like Charles A. Briggs and Henry Preserved Smith attacked Hodge and Warfield's view of Biblical inerrancy. In the Netherlands, Princeton's traditional reliance on rationalism in defense of Christianity was contested by conservative Calvinists like Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck in favor of a more presuppositional apologetic.<sup>40</sup> Forced to respond to these assaults on Old School Presbyterianism's theological tenets, Warfield found it necessary to maintain a defensive posture in much of what he wrote. Like Charles Hodge and A. A. Hodge before him, he hammered out his apologetic in the course of countless polemical articles he penned for journals, dictionaries and encyclopedias. His last defense of Princeton theology was in the area of sanctification:

When the Keswick conferences came to Princeton, from 1916 to 1918, they were entering the lair of the aging lion of strict Presbyterian orthodoxy, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield of Princeton Theological Seminary. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Warfield was not in the least distracted by the popularity, success, or practical results of a doctrine. True to the Princeton tradition, he spotted a major doctrinal innovation and pounced. During the next several years, in a series of sharp and condescending criticisms, Warfield attempted to tear apart once and for all innovative holiness teachings of every sort.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) summarizes the Reformed doctrine of sanctification: "They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. . . . Although the remaining corruption, for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfect in holiness in the fear of God." See P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1977) 3:629-630.

<sup>39</sup> Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual* (1918) 323.

<sup>40</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism* 115.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 98.

This is significant because Warfield's hostility toward anything that appeared to be contrary to the tenets of Princeton-style Calvinism eventually came to be directed at the teachings of Chafer.

A third factor shaping Warfield's response to Chafer was his critical concern at the "perfectionistic" and even Pelagian tendencies of the "higher life" movement flowing from the teaching of W. E. Boardman and later developed by Hannah Whitall Smith.<sup>42</sup> Two articles by Warfield were among a series of critiques he composed between 1918 and 1921.<sup>43</sup> With these articles he called to account "victorious life" teachers like Charles G. Trumbull for dividing salvation into two stages entered into by two distinct acts of faith.<sup>44</sup> Warfield observed that such a distinction necessarily resulted in "two kinds of Christians."<sup>45</sup> Moreover he argued that this emphasis on what amounted to a second conversion inevitably led to the teaching "that when we accept Christ for sanctification, we not only make our sanctification certain but obtain it at once."<sup>46</sup> He criticized W. H. Griffith Thomas for his concept of "counteraction," arguing that this failed to take into account the "process of the eradication of the old nature."<sup>47</sup> Warfield concluded that the doctrine emanating from these "victorious life" teachers was a "most ingenious form of perfectionism" and, indeed, outright Pelagianism.<sup>48</sup> As a Calvinist apologist he was poised to attack such expressions of Arminianism, no matter how subtle, wherever they might be found. Naturally, when he read in Chafer's *He That Is Spiritual* views he had already condemned in the writings of Boardman, Smith, Trumbull and others, it followed that he must condemn Chafer as well.<sup>49</sup>

Several observations arise from a comparison of these two men's backgrounds. First of all, they were both rooted in the Reformed tradition, though to varying degrees. Warfield's commitment to the Reformed tradition came first, while for Chafer this was never more than secondary. Chafer's overarching loyalty was to the teaching of Scofield and others active in the Bible-conference movement. Second, Warfield and Chafer saw the theological crisis of their day from sharply differing perspectives. Chafer's primary concern was with the abuses of revivalist preachers who were "adding to the terms of Salvation" by emphasizing repentance and moral reform. War-

<sup>42</sup> H. W. Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1970). This book is regarded as the classic presentation of Keswick teaching and was instrumental in the spread of the "victorious life" movement that began at the first annual Convention for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life held at Keswick, England, in 1875.

<sup>43</sup> B. B. Warfield, "The 'Higher Life' Movement," *Princeton Theological Review* 16 (1918) 572–622; 17 (1919) 37–86, reprinted in *Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974) 216–311, and "The Victorious Life," *Princeton Theological Review* 16 (1918) 321–373, reprinted in *Perfectionism* 349–399.

<sup>44</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism* 227, 355.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 234.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 238.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 370–371.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 242, 396–397.

<sup>49</sup> Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual* 322, 324.

field was more disturbed at dogmatic innovations that rejected Reformed confessionalism and thus appeared to threaten Old Princeton's doctrinal underpinnings. Since he judged Chafer's response to the revivalists' abuses to involve just such an innovation in the area of sanctification, their clash was inevitable.

### III. DIFFERENCES ON JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

One fundamental difference between Warfield and Chafer was in their conception of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Warfield saw salvation as a unitary event.<sup>50</sup> In his view, justification and sanctification were joined in such a way that to experience one necessarily involved experiencing the other:

The whole sixth chapter of Romans . . . was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together; that we cannot have the one without having the other; that, to use its own figurative language, dying with Christ and living with Christ are integral elements in one indisintegrable salvation.<sup>51</sup>

He believed that a division between justification and sanctification necessarily led to unfortunate consequences: a convergence with the Arminian doctrine that sanctification is primarily a work of man, the conception of two distinct classes or tiers of Christians one above the other, and claims about the necessity of a second crisis experience.<sup>52</sup> Warfield found the idea of two classes of believers in Chafer's concept of the "carnal" Christian who could become "spiritual" through "a real adjustment of the Spirit." This Warfield regarded as "indistinguishable from what is ordinarily understood by the doctrine of a 'second blessing,' 'second work of grace,' [or] 'the higher life.'"<sup>53</sup> He concluded that such a stratification inevitably led to the idea of a crisis experience as the necessary means of elevation from one stratum to the other.

Unlike Warfield, Chafer made a temporal or experiential bifurcation between justification and sanctification. This can be seen in two ways. First, he drew a sharp distinction between justification and progressive sanctification. In Chafer's view, sanctification had three distinct aspects: (1) positional sanctification, based on the believer's position in Christ, by which he stands righteous and accepted before God; (2) experimental sanctification, a "moment-by-moment victory" over sin that results from a "self-determined separation unto God"; and (3) ultimate sanctification, "which is related to our

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 326.

<sup>51</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism* 356.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 231–238, 358–360.

<sup>53</sup> Warfield writes concerning Chafer's treatment of 2 Corinthians 3: "Here [Chafer] finds three classes of men contrasted, the 'natural' or unregenerated man and the 'carnal' and 'spiritual' men, both of whom are regenerated, but the latter of whom lives on a higher plane. 'There are two great spiritual changes which are possible to human experience,' he writes (p. 8),—'the change from the "natural" man to the saved man, and the change from the "carnal" man to the "spiritual" man. The former is divinely accomplished when there is a real faith in Christ; the latter is accomplished when there is a real adjustment to the Spirit' (review of *He That Is Spiritual* 323).

final perfection, [that] will be ours in the glory.”<sup>54</sup> According to Chafer, positional sanctification was essentially the same as justification. Concerning it he wrote: “This position bears no relationship to the believer’s daily life more than that it should inspire him to holy living.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, “as positional sanctification is absolutely dissociated from the daily life, so experiential sanctification is absolutely dissociated from the position in Christ.”<sup>56</sup> Although Ryrie claims that “the Chaferian view sees justification and sanctification as distinct, yet inseparable,”<sup>57</sup> the fact is that by dissociating positional from experiential sanctification in this way Chafer did indeed separate justification from progressive sanctification.

Second, this bifurcation is evident in his provision for a time interval between conversion and the beginning of progressive sanctification by making the latter conditioned on the believer’s “yieldedness.”<sup>58</sup> Chafer affirmed the possibility of an instantaneous transition from “carnal” to “Spiritual” Christianity:

A Christian can and should be spiritual from the moment he is saved. Spirituality, which is the unhindered manifestations of the Spirit in life, is provided to the full for all believers who “confess” their sins, “yield” to God, and “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” When these conditions are complied with, the results are immediate; for no process is indicated. Jacob, an Old Testament type, was completely changed in one night.<sup>59</sup>

Describing the believer’s yieldedness to God in terms of Paul’s words for the dedication of the body in Rom 12:1–2, Chafer declared: “Dedication, if done at all as God would have it, hardly needs to be done over. In other words, dedication is an all-determining act and not a process.”<sup>60</sup> Thus Chafer’s system, shaped by his sympathy for the teachings of the “victorious life” movement, featured a crisis that led to the once-for-all dedication of one’s life to God. Following their mentor, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie and Dwight Pentecost agree that this dedication is “a yielding to God which is accomplished once for all.”<sup>61</sup> Again, insisting on the absolute necessity of such dedication if a believer is to experience victory over sin while suggesting a time interval between the believer’s conversion and his arrival at this state of yieldedness draws a temporal distinction between justification and progressive sanctification. Such a two-stage, crisis-oriented view of sanctification stands in sharp contrast to the unity of salvation that Warfield emphasized.

<sup>54</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* 180–185.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 181.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 182.

<sup>57</sup> Ryrie, “Contrasting” 194.

<sup>58</sup> A time gap can clearly be seen in Ryrie’s illustration of the balanced Christian life (*Balancing* 187).

<sup>59</sup> Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1943) 80 n.

<sup>60</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 6.254–255.

<sup>61</sup> Walvoord, *Holy Spirit* 197; Ryrie, *Balancing* 79, 187; Pentecost, *Pattern* 129–130.

## IV. SOVEREIGNTY VERSUS HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

One further observation should be made on the contrast between Warfield's and Chafer's views on the respective roles of God and man in the process of sanctification. Chafer emphasized more the place of human responsibility and the necessity of human activity by making sanctification dependent on the believer's initiative in meeting the condition of yieldedness. It was this initial surrender to the filling of the Holy Spirit that made possible the Spirit's further work in sanctification.<sup>62</sup> Warfield claimed to have discovered a form of Arminianism in Chafer's teaching that "salvation from the power of sin must be claimed by faith."<sup>63</sup> Such substitution of "faith" for "the Pelagian works," he argued, made faith itself a work and left sanctification still dependent on man rather than God.<sup>64</sup> He vehemently disagreed with Chafer's assertion that God only makes sanctification possible, leaving its actualization dependent on the believer's will. Such thinking, he insisted, "subjects the gracious working of God to human determination" and thus is "the quintessence of Arminianism."<sup>65</sup> Against this, Warfield emphasized God's sovereignty by making victory over sin the inevitable result of the progressive action of irresistible grace in the believer's life:

Our wills, being the expression of our hearts, continually more and more dying to sin and more and more living to holiness, under the renewing action of the Christ dwelling within us by his Spirit, can never from the beginning of His gracious renewal of them resist Christ fatally, and will progressively resist Him less and less until, our hearts having made through and through good, our wills will do only righteousness.<sup>66</sup>

Further, against Chafer's two-tier Christianity Warfield argued that all Christians are actually at various stages of the same process, advancing "towards the one goal to which all are bound and at which all shall arrive."<sup>67</sup>

## V. REGENERATION: ONE NATURE OR TWO?

Warfield and Chafer differed as well in their understanding of regeneration. Warfield believed the soul of man to include "dispositions" that come before moral actions, determining whether these be evil or good. God originally created Adam with holy dispositions, but these were lost through the fall. Consequently Warfield defined regeneration as above all else the restoration of these original dispositions:

In regeneration God recreates the governing dispositions of the regenerate man's heart holy. Regeneration is therefore essentially the communication of a new spiritual life, and is properly called a "new birth." . . . As to its efficient

<sup>62</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual* (1918) 78.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

<sup>64</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism* 396.

<sup>65</sup> Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual* 324.

<sup>66</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism* 390.

<sup>67</sup> Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual* 327.

cause: It is effected by divine power acting supernaturally and immediately upon the soul, quickening it to spiritual life, and implanting gracious principles of action. . . . As to man's action: Conversion instantly follows, as the change of action consequent upon the change of character, and consists in repentance, faith, holy obedience, etc.<sup>68</sup>

By thus re-creating human nature, regeneration restored its ability to obey God.

On the other hand, Chafer understood regeneration to be the "impartation of life," resulting in the "acquisition of the nature of God."<sup>69</sup> He explained: "Having thus been born of God, [the believer] has partaken of the divine nature and that nature is never said to be removed or disannulled."<sup>70</sup> Thus Chafer thought of regeneration as the addition of a new nature rather than the re-creation of the old: "It is more than a transformation of the old: it is a regeneration, or creation, of something wholly new which is possessed in conjunction with the old nature so long as we are in this body. The presence of two opposing natures (not two personalities) in one individual results in conflict."<sup>71</sup> Chafer received this concept from Scofield, who explained: "Regeneration is a creation, not a mere transformation: the beginning in [of] a new thing, not the change of an old. As we received human nature by natural generation, so do we receive the divine nature by regeneration."<sup>72</sup> Criticizing this notion, Warfield claimed that it led to the absurd conclusion that "the saved man that is left is not at all the old man that was to be saved, but a new man that had never needed any saving."<sup>73</sup>

#### VI. COUNTERACTION OR GRADUAL ERADICATION?

The issue of whether the believer has one nature or two was critical to both Warfield's and Chafer's understanding of sanctification's course. For Chafer, experiential sanctification progressed little by little as the believer's new nature counteracted the old. Yieldedness made it possible for the Holy Spirit present via this new nature to defeat the sinful nature that remained, even though the latter could never be totally expunged. Warfield considered this theory of counteraction to be inadequate for two reasons. First, it failed to account for the effects of regeneration on the sinful nature, since it left "the 'principle of sin' in [the believer] unaltered and in full activity."<sup>74</sup> Second, it failed to explain how two natures could coexist in one person. Commenting on this, Warfield reasoned:

<sup>68</sup> B. B. Warfield, "Regeneration," *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (ed. J. E. Meeter; Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973) 2.323.

<sup>69</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 6.106–108.

<sup>70</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* 192.

<sup>71</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual* (1918) 142.

<sup>72</sup> Scofield, *Rightly Dividing* 47.

<sup>73</sup> Warfield, review of *He That Is Spiritual* 325.

<sup>74</sup> Warfield, *Perfectionism* 370.

At any rate it belongs ineradicably to “the Christian” to turn on the old carnal nature, or the new Spiritual nature, as he may choose, and let it act for him. Who this “Christian” is who possesses this power it is a little puzzling to make out. He cannot do anything good—and presumably, therefore, would never turn on the Spirit in control. He cannot be the new Spiritual nature, for this new Spiritual nature cannot do anything evil—and this “Christian” “may choose to walk after the flesh.” Is he possibly some third nature? We hope not, because two absolutely antagonistic and noncommunicating natures seem enough to be in one man. The only alternative seems, however, to be that he is no nature at all—just a nonentity: and then we do not see how he can turn on anything.<sup>75</sup>

To the contrary, Warfield insisted on the gradual eradication of the sin principle in the life of the believer as the old nature was re-created through regeneration. Although the sin principle remained, it was in the process of being supplanted as the believer’s nature became less and less sinful and more and more holy. Reacting to Griffith Thomas, Warfield wrote:

[The seventh chapter of Romans] depicts for us the process of the eradication of the old nature. Dr. Thomas reads it statistically and sees it merely a “deadly warfare between the two natures”; which, he affirms, “does not represent the normal Christian life of sanctification.” . . . What is really in the chapter is Divine grace warring against, and not merely counteracting but eradicating, the natural evil of sin.<sup>76</sup>

Hoekema captures the essence of Warfield’s view in his statement that the believer’s nature “is *genuinely* new, though not yet *totally* new.”<sup>77</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Although it should be clear by now that neither Chafer’s nor Warfield’s perspective on sanctification is without its share of deficiencies, a brief summary of the most important of these is in order. First, reacting to the abuses of various turn-of-the-century revivalists, Chafer appears to have overemphasized the discontinuity between justification and sanctification. Furthermore, reflecting the influence of the “victorious life” movement he advocated a once-for-all, crisis-oriented approach that led to a differentiation between “have” and “have-not” Christians. But these ideas require making a temporal distinction between justification and progressive sanctification that cannot be supported from Scripture. In fact, far from sundering them the Bible treats these two as complementary aspects of a single larger reality (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11). To imagine that a person can be justified without any change for the better in his condition demonstrates a deficient view of both justification and sanctification. Though these are to be distinguished in meaning, they are not to be divided in time—that is, there can be no dis-

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 374.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 372.

<sup>77</sup> Dieter, *Five Views* 81.

inction in time between the experience of justification and the onset of progressive sanctification.

Second, Chafer seems to have underestimated regeneration's transforming power, as evidenced by his claim that a believer could truly be "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) and yet remain a "carnal Christian" without any change in character: "The 'carnal' Christian is . . . characterized by a 'walk' that is on the same plane as that of the 'natural' [i.e. unsaved] man."<sup>78</sup> As with justification, to imagine that a person can be regenerate without showing any change for the better in his character demonstrates a defective view of regeneration itself. Paul's statement to the Corinthians, "We all . . . are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18), indicates that even the "carnal" Corinthians were experiencing some measure of spiritual growth.

Finally, both Chafer and Warfield failed to provide for a proper balance between divine initiative and human response in the experience of sanctification. Warfield minimized the element of human responsibility by making sanctification almost exclusively the sovereign act of God. But if humans are not responsible for their own sanctification in at least some small measure, the Biblical exhortations to godly living appear meaningless. In highlighting the Reformed stress on the divine initiative, Warfield missed the equally Reformed emphasis on the role of human faith and the need for diligence if sanctification is actually to progress.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, Chafer undermined this very element of divine sovereignty by making sanctification contingent on a person's willingness to yield to God. A proper view of sanctification must mediate between God's initiative and man's response. To this end it might be helpful to distinguish between the certainty of spiritual growth and its degree. The former is guaranteed by the sovereign grace of God brought to bear by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The latter is determined by the believer in cooperation with dependence on the Spirit. Every Christian must experience some measure of spiritual growth, as noted above, but the pace of this may be inconsistent and its degree widely varied from one person to the next.

This comparison of Chafer and Warfield has clearly demonstrated the extent to which their discordant perspectives on sanctification were deter-

<sup>78</sup> Chafer, *Spiritual* (1918) 12.

<sup>79</sup> For example, note J. Owen's (1616–1683) delicate balance of the need for human diligence and the utter reliance on the divine initiator in sanctification. If human diligence is neglected, sanctification can wither or decay. Owen acknowledged "that there may be, that there are in many, great decays in grace and holiness; that the work of sanctification goeth back in them, and that it may be, universally and for a long season. . . . If we indulge unto any actings of sin, especially when known and grown frequent, . . . [or] if we neglect the use of the best means for the constant mortification of sin . . . there is, and will be increased, a universal decay in holiness. . . . If the work of holiness be such a progressive, thriving work in its own nature; if the design of the Holy Ghost, in the use of means, be to carry it on in us, and increase it more and more unto a perfect measure; then is our diligence still to be continued to the same end and purpose: for hereon depend our growth and thriving" (*The Works of John Owen* [ed. W. Goold; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968] 3.404–405).

mined by their very different life experiences and their role as apologists for divergent theological traditions. One thing that ought to be evident as well is the archetypal nature of their early clash, casting the mold and setting the tone for the ongoing debate over sanctification between their respective traditions. Today, 75 years later, instead of endlessly repeating the same rhetoric they themselves used it may be more profitable to strive for a fresh understanding of mutual concerns. Recent works jointly authored by representatives of the opposing camps are a first step in that direction.<sup>80</sup> But

<sup>80</sup> E.g. Dieter *et al.*, *Five Views; Christian Spirituality* (ed. Alexander).

more progress is needed if there is to be an irenic interchange of ideas that can sharpen insights and correct deficiencies in the various theologies of sanctification. This study has identified several such weaknesses in the positions of both Chafer and Warfield.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> My thanks go to my professors Fred Howe and John Hannah, and especially to my friend and colleague George Harper for his numerous comments and editorial suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.