

DISPENSATIONAL SANCTIFICATION: A MISNOMER

by
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Since its inception, dispensationalism has offered a distinctive contribution to theological discussion. The fields of ecclesiology and eschatology have been significantly affected by dispensationalism's emphases. Hermeneutics has also been influenced as scholars have been forced to consider the question of the relationship between national Israel and the church. But does dispensationalism provide a distinctive contribution to other areas of theological inquiry such as the doctrine of God, sin, man, or salvation?

Some have argued that dispensationalism does relate to the doctrine of salvation and particularly to the scriptural teaching of sanctification. But the evidence we have found would appear to contradict this assertion. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that there is no organic connection between dispensationalism and sanctification. In order to support this thesis we will provide a survey of the discussion. This will be followed by a brief study of the definition of dispensationalism in order to determine whether or not dispensationalism's purview includes sanctification issues. Finally, we will seek to provide an analysis of the model of sanctification commonly referred to as "dispensational sanctification" by comparing and contrasting it with other models.

REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY

In order to support our thesis, we must provide an overview of the writings of those who do see an organic connection between dispensationalism and sanctification. These scholars include both dispensationalists and nondispensationalists. We do recognize there are also many dispensationalists and nondispensationalists who do not make a

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connection between dispensationalism and sanctification. But our goal here is intentionally limited to those dispensationalists and nondispensationalists who have connected dispensationalism with a model of sanctification calling it “dispensational sanctification.” We will survey these scholars and then inquire whether or not they agree as to the particular model of sanctification they are identifying as “dispensational sanctification.”

Dispensationalists

John Walvoord clearly stands out as one of the most prominent dispensational scholars of the twentieth century. When asked to contribute to a book dealing with sanctification in Zondervan’s Counterpoint Series, Walvoord entitled his chapter, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective.”² Walvoord never attempts to explain the connection between his view of sanctification and dispensationalism; he merely assumes it. He equates his “Augustinian-dispensational perspective” of sanctification with the teaching of Lewis Sperry Chafer.³

Another dispensationalist who uses the phrase “dispensational doctrine of sanctification,” is John Witmer. Like Walvoord he sees his viewpoint on the same plane as that espoused by Lewis Sperry Chafer.⁴

Nondispensationalists

In his *Primer on Dispensationalism*⁵ and in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*⁶ John Gerstner provides strong criticism of the “dispensational theory of sanctification.”⁷ He describes this theory by pointing to the sanctification teaching of two significant dispensationalists: John Nelson Darby and Lewis Sperry Chafer. One of Gerstner’s methodological errors in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (his later and more comprehensive book) involves his failure to provide a definition and description of dispensationalism. Without this necessary starting

²John F. Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 199–226.

³Ibid., pp. 223–24.

⁴John A. Witmer, “A Review of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (April–June 1992): 144.

⁵John H. Gerstner, *A Primer on Dispensationalism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), pp. 10–15.

⁶John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, 1991), pp. 231–50.

⁷Ibid., p. 243.

point he tends to pick and choose significant (and not-so-significant)⁸ dispensationalists as representative of dispensationalism's viewpoint regarding various aspects of theology. Because of this methodological error, Gerstner assumes a connection between dispensationalism and a particular model of sanctification, but he never demonstrates it. What is even more perplexing is that the two areas of theology most affected by dispensationalism (as will be seen below), eschatology and ecclesiology, are hardly touched upon at all.

Curtis Crenshaw suggests that dispensationalists differ from the Reformed view of sanctification by making the Christian the "boss" in the sanctification process rather than God.⁹ In this portion of his book Crenshaw is discussing the theological tendencies of dispensationalists and suggests that their view of sanctification (Chafer's and Ryrie's in this case)¹⁰ either accompanies dispensationalism or is inherent to its system.¹¹ It is apparent in the development of his argument that Crenshaw believes that Ryrie and Chafer's view of sanctification is inherent to dispensationalism. He traces this connection to dispensationalism's rejection of the present rule of Christ by means of the law; this rejection then leads to the idea of rejecting the Lordship of Christ in salvation; this leads to the teaching of the "carnal Christian," which is part of Ryrie and Chafer's sanctification teaching.¹²

Summary

Our survey has demonstrated that several dispensationalists and nondispensationalists have made the connection between dispensationalism and a particular model of sanctification. In every case we have seen the name of Lewis Sperry Chafer attached to this "dispensational sanctification." In fact, Charles Ryrie has chosen to label his own view of sanctification as "Chaferian"¹³; he does so in order to distinguish it

⁸Richard L. Mayhue, "Who is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner's *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*" (*The Master's Seminary Journal* 3 [Spring 1992]: 85), provides this helpful critique along with many others.

⁹Curtis I. Crenshaw and Grover E. Gunn III, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow* (Memphis, TN: Footstool Publications, 1985), p. 100.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 94–101. Crenshaw refers particularly to the views demonstrated by Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), and Charles C. Ryrie, "Contrasting Views on Sanctification," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), pp. 189–200.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

¹³Ryrie, "Contrasting Views," p. 191.

from the Keswick and Reformed models.¹⁴

Ryrie's chosen title for his view of sanctification is significant not only because of what it says about its origin but also because of what it does not say about its connection. Ryrie does not label his view as "dispensational."¹⁵ Coming from one who has authored the book considered by many as the standard work on dispensationalism (*Dispensationalism Today*¹⁶), this fact is quite important. For if someone who has worked so much on the essence and meaning of dispensationalism does not connect dispensationalism to his personal view of sanctification, further evaluation of this issue is necessary. This leads us to discuss the issue of definition to see whether or not the connection made by Walvoord, Witmer, Gerstner and Crenshaw can be sustained.

DISPENSATIONALISM DEFINED

Definition

As with any theological system, dispensationalism has experienced "systematization and development"¹⁷ during its relatively short history. For this reason we will primarily concentrate on more recent efforts made in the area of definition.

Lewis Sperry Chafer summarizes dispensationalism in this way: "Throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity."¹⁸

¹⁴We will provide more information on each of the sanctification models below.

¹⁵At this point we should say that the majority of authors who have supported or criticized dispensationalism through the years mirror Ryrie's perspective. We did find some significant scholars, particularly Walvoord and Gerstner, who link dispensationalism with a particular model of sanctification. But the majority of authors consulted for the present paper mention no connection at all. One will notice that Ryrie's discussion of sanctification appears in an article about that subject ("Contrasting Views") rather than in the books he has written about dispensationalism (see note 10).

¹⁶Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966). We should also mention Ryrie's later work: *Dispensationalism*, revised and expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).

¹⁷Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 9. This fact is widely acknowledged by nearly every student of dispensationalism. See Robert Saucy, "The Crucial Issue Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Systems," *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (Fall 1986): 149, and Craig A. Blaising, "Developing Dispensationalism Part 2 (of 2 parts): Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (July–September 1988): 254–55.

¹⁸Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Dispensationalism* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936), p. 107.

Charles Ryrie boils down dispensationalism into three essential distinctives that he calls the *sine qua non*: 1) a distinction between national Israel and the church; 2) a hermeneutical method of literal interpretation; and 3) a doxological purpose of God in His dealings with man.¹⁹

John MacArthur, Jr. defines dispensationalism as “a system of biblical interpretation that sees a distinction between God’s program for Israel and His dealings with the church.”²⁰ He goes on to say that the central issue in dispensationalism is eschatology; he also suggests that dispensationalism has many implications for ecclesiology.²¹

Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock describe dispensationalism as a “futurist premillennialism that has strongly maintained the imminent return of Christ and a national and political future for Israel.”²² Also, it is characterized by a “canonical approach to Scripture that interprets discontinuities of the Old and New Testaments as historical changes in divine-human dispensations reflecting different purposes in the divine plan.” This last point results in an emphasis on unique features in grace that belong to the present dispensation of the church.²³

Robert Saucy states, “Anyone who asserts not only the restoration of Israel as a national entity but also a future role for that nation in God’s kingdom program has been generally identified as a dispensationalist.”²⁴

This succinct statement from Herb Bateman provides his assessment of the essence of dispensationalism: “Simply put, the basic unifying issue for all dispensationalists is that Israel is not the church.”²⁵

Finally, John Feinberg presents six “core” items that are distinctive to dispensationalism: 1) the recognition of multiple senses for terms

¹⁹Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 44–47.

²⁰John MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), p. 219.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 222.

²²Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, “Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: Assessment and Dialogue,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 379.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), p. 9.

²⁵Herbert W. Bateman IV, “Dispensationalism Tomorrow,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), p. 308.

like “Jew” and “Seed of Abraham”; 2) a hermeneutical practice which seeks to properly understand the progress of revelation, typology, and the NT reinterpretation of the OT; 3) the necessity of double fulfillment for covenant promises made to Israel; 4) a distinctive future for ethnic Israel; 5) the belief in the church as a distinctive organism; and 6) a stress on the multi-faceted aspects of God’s workings in history.²⁶

We have sought to provide a diverse and representative snapshot of definitional attempts made by some significant dispensational scholars. An early Dallas Seminary dispensationalist (Chafer) and four later Dallas-trained professors (Ryrie, Blaising, Saucy and Bock) have been consulted. Also, two Talbot Seminary grads (MacArthur and Feinberg) have contributed to our survey. Philadelphia College of the Bible is also represented (Bateman, who is also a Dallas Seminary Ph.D. grad). Not counting Chafer (deceased) and Ryrie (retired), this group represents a number of different schools in their present teaching ministries: Bock (Dallas Seminary), Blaising (Southwestern Baptist Seminary), MacArthur (Masters Seminary), Feinberg (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), Bateman (Grace Seminary), and Saucy (Talbot Seminary).

Summary

In observing these various definitional attempts, we are struck by their similarity and agreement, particularly with regard to the distinction between Israel and the church. Charles Ryrie’s statement could have been made after perusing our list: “This [the distinction between Israel and the church] is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive.”²⁷

Another concluding observation is in order as well. None of these definitions comes close to providing a connection between dispensationalism and sanctification. As MacArthur has suggested (see p. 4), dispensationalism certainly does have significant ramifications for eschatology and ecclesiology, but such doctrines as soteriology, anthropology, and theology proper are not affected. Neither Chafer²⁸ nor

²⁶John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. John Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), pp. 71–85.

²⁷Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 39.

²⁸Chafer, *He that Is Spiritual*; idem, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974); and idem, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 7 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), pp. 279–84. Chafer never mentions dispensationalism in his discussions of sanctification in any of these writings.

Ryrie,²⁹ both of whom have written extensively on the doctrine of sanctification and both of whose views on sanctification have been tied to dispensationalism (see pp. 1–2), ever makes the connection between sanctification and dispensationalism.³⁰

Thus, after investigating the definition of dispensationalism, we can find no organic connection between sanctification and dispensationalism.³¹ But how are we to understand the model of sanctification espoused by Chafer, Ryrie, Walvoord and others? If it is not to be defined by its tie to dispensationalism, then how is it to be explained? This leads us to discuss the various models of sanctification in order to correctly identify this so-called “dispensational sanctification.”

²⁹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp. 61–83; idem, “Contrasting Views,” p. 191. As mentioned above on p. 3, Ryrie prefers to label his view of sanctification as Chaferian rather than dispensational.

³⁰B. B. Warfield never mentions Chafer’s dispensationalism in his review of Chafer’s *He that Is Spiritual* (*Princeton Theological Review* 17 (April 1919): 322–27). In light of the fact that Warfield has no problem giving labels to Chafer’s view of sanctification (such as “Higher Life,” “Arminian,” and “quietistic”), we would expect him to make a connection between Chafer’s sanctification and his dispensationalism, but Warfield never does.

³¹One might well ask at this point how the Chaferian model of sanctification (to use Ryrie’s term) ever came to be tied to dispensationalism. There are at least three suggested proposals, and we will add a fourth. 1) Dispensationalism’s tendency to compartmentalize truth led to this type of sanctification teaching (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988], pp. 24–25). 2) Dispensationalism’s emphasis on God’s electing purpose for national Israel suggests that, regardless of Israel’s sin problems through the centuries, God remains faithful to His covenant promises to her. This same emphasis is applied to the individual believer in this present age. The believer is absolutely secure in his relationship with God even though he or she may fall far away from Him. Thus, the emphasis on carnal as opposed to spiritual believers occurs (C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* [Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1958], pp. 61–62). 3) The dispensational emphasis on pure grace as opposed to the bondage of the Mosaic Law leads to a rejection of the necessity of the lordship of Christ in the salvation message. This permits the possibility and expectancy of carnal Christians who have failed to accept Christ’s lordship in their justified state (MacArthur, *Faith Works*, pp. 228–29, and Crenshaw, pp. 82–84). 4) Dispensationalism’s expectation of the apostate nature of Christendom at the end of the present age of grace points to an expectation of disobedience on the part of true Christians. Hence, a group of carnal Christians is foreseen by this proposal; if the church were able to avoid carnality, apostasy would not arise. But one would expect an apostate generation to arise if a group of carnal Christians failed to train them as they should have.

All of these suggestions are possibilities, but none of them could be considered theologically necessary. Belief in compartmentalization, the election of national Israel, emphasis on pure grace as opposed to law, and the apostate nature of Christendom does not require one to adopt any particular view of sanctification.

MODELS OF SANCTIFICATION

We will consider five models of sanctification in this portion of the paper.³² Rather than delineating the historical background and specific doctrinal details of each one, we will seek to broadly summarize the main emphases of each model and then provide some comparisons and contrasts between them. In particular our discussion of each model will center upon the significance of a post-conversion sanctification experience and the relationship between justification and sanctification.

Wesleyan Sanctification

John Wesley's main contribution to sanctification teaching is his separation of justification from sanctification, both of which are to be received in separate acts of faith. Wesley describes this sanctification as "entire sanctification" or "perfection."³³ The experience of receiving this type of sanctification has five specific elements: 1) it is instantaneous;³⁴ 2) it is distinctly subsequent to justification;³⁵ 3) it is only received by those who seek for it;³⁶ 4) it defines sin as "conscious, deliberate acts";³⁷ and 5) it may be lost.³⁸

Thus, Wesleyan sanctification emphasizes the necessity of a post-conversion experience of entire sanctification that is attained by an act of faith distinct from justification. In this model the relationship between justification and sanctification³⁹ is merely a possibility.

³²These are the same five models presented in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

³³John Wesley, "Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, ed. T. Jackson, vol. 1 (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1845), pp. 386, 390.

³⁴John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., n.d.), pp. 25, 52, 104.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁹When using the term "sanctification" with justification in this discussion, we are specifically speaking of experiential or progressive sanctification. Most writers admit to some type of positional sanctification that occurs at the point of conversion, but our discussion here is centered upon the understanding of the relationship between justification and progressive sanctification.

Pentecostal Sanctification

Flowing out of the Wesleyan holiness movement of the nineteenth century, Pentecostal sanctification maintains that a post-conversion experience sought by the believer is a necessity.⁴⁰ Rather than seeking for entire sanctification, Pentecostals seek for baptism in the Spirit.⁴¹ The result of this Spirit baptism is empowerment for service (rather than the Wesleyan concept of perfection in love).⁴² Stanley Horton summarizes Pentecostal sanctification teaching by explaining that baptism in the Spirit is an event subsequent to and distinct from justification; it empowers the individual for various types of Christian service; and it is a blessing that should be sought by all believers.⁴³

Again, we see the necessity for a post-conversion experience. We also note that the link between justification and sanctification is only a possibility based upon a believer's decision to seek baptism in the Spirit.

Keswick Sanctification

Like Pentecostal sanctification Keswick theology shares many similarities with the Wesleyan holiness movement.⁴⁴ One example of this similarity is that it views sanctification and justification as two

⁴⁰Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867–1936*, ATLA Monograph Series, vol. 5 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974), pp. 4–5.

⁴¹Timothy L. Smith, "The Doctrine of the Sanctifying Spirit: Charles G. Finney's Synthesis of Wesleyan and Covenant Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (Spring 1978): 100–103, and Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 38.

⁴²Stanley M. Horton, "The Pentecostal Perspective," in *Five Views of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 130. Although he was not a Pentecostal, R. A. Torrey (*The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 6th ed. [London: James Nisbet & Co., 1905], p. 13) also argued for this meaning of Spirit baptism. This was a common theme among most American revivalists at the turn of the century. Also see Douglas Robinson, "The 'Ordo Salutis' and Charismatic Movement," *Churchman* 97 (1983): p. 233.

⁴³Horton, "The Pentecostal Perspective," pp. 128–34. Howard M. Ervin (*Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. A Critique of James D. G. Dunn's Baptism in the Holy Spirit* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984], p. vii) confirms the first two of these points.

⁴⁴W. Ralph Thompson, "An Appraisal of the Keswick and Wesleyan Contemporary Positions," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1 (Spring 1966): pp. 11–20; and Everett L. Cattell, "An Appraisal of the Keswick and Wesleyan Contemporary Positions," in *Insights into Holiness*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1962), pp. 264–65.

distinct gifts from God to be received in separate acts of faith. Believers receive the gift of sanctification through a “crisis” decision.⁴⁵ Before this “crisis” decision takes place, believers find themselves in the position of the “carnal Christian.” After this decision they enjoy the “victorious life” in which the believers’ spiritual nature is able to counteract the sinful nature so that they can live on the plane of victory and receive the “fullness of the Spirit.”⁴⁶ Thus, the result of this post-conversion experience of “crisis” is that believers can enjoy “consistent success in resisting temptation to violate deliberately the known will of God.”⁴⁷

Keswick shares similarities with both the Wesleyan and Pentecostal models in its emphasis on a post-conversion experience as a necessity for “victorious” living. The obedience one would expect to see in the life of the sanctified believer is only a possibility based upon the individual believer’s willingness to make his crucial post-conversion decision.

Chaferian (“Dispensational”) Sanctification

We have chosen to use Charles Ryrie’s suggested title for this model of sanctification,⁴⁸ and we have already stated above that this is the model often referred to as “dispensational” sanctification. Some have referred to this viewpoint as the “Dallas view”⁴⁹ since the vast majority of its adherents are graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary and follow its founder’s perspective on sanctification.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1952), pp. 84–86, 115; and J. Robertson McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 178.

⁴⁶W. H. Griffith Thomas, “The Victorious Life [II.],” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 76 (October 1919): 464; McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” pp. 153, 175–78.

⁴⁷McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” p. 155.

⁴⁸Ryrie, “Contrasting Views,” p. 191.

⁴⁹See William W. Combs, “The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 6 (Fall 2001): 28–33, whose section entitled “The Dallas Seminary Theology” provides a helpful history and description of Chaferian sanctification.

⁵⁰Chafer, *He that Is Spiritual*. A representative list of Dallas Seminary alumni who have written on this subject is necessary here: Walvoord, “Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” and idem, *The Holy Spirit*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958); Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him: Fellowship, Conduct, Conflict, Maturity* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966); Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989); Robert Wilkin, “Sanctification Part 4: Man’s Role in Present Sanctification (with an Appendix Containing Questions and Answers),” *Journal of the Grace*

Maintaining the Keswick perspective on the two natures within the Christian, Chaferians teach that victory over the sinful nature is accomplished by yieldedness to the Spirit in an act of dedication or surrender.⁵¹ As with the preceding models, Chaferians separate sanctification and justification. They propose that an act of dedication on the part of the believer is necessary in order to initiate the process of sanctification.

Reformed Sanctification

Reformed theology emphasizes the inevitable occurrence of obedience (sanctification) in the life of the justified.⁵² God is seen as the primary impetus behind the believers' growth in obedience as He prompts them to obey.⁵³ Believers, in turn, are responsible to obey the commands of God, but they will do so because of the sanctifying work of God in the believer's heart.⁵⁴

Before proceeding to the concluding paragraph under this model of sanctification, we would like to take note of several dispensationalists who are advocates of the reformed model.⁵⁵ These include early

Evangelical Society 7 (Autumn 1994): 3–23; and Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Haysville, NS: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992). See Combs, "The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology," pp. 31–32, for a more comprehensive listing.

⁵¹Chafer, *He that Is Spiritual*, p. 22; Ryrie, *Balancing*, pp. 186–91; Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him*, pp. 127–30.

⁵²This is basically the doctrine of perseverance, and it is affirmed by many theologians including John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.3.1; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, rev. ed. (n.p.: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), p. 522; and B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), p. 356.

⁵³Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981–89), pp. 215–16, points to 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20,21 and Titus 2:14 as evidence of this point. Also see Cary N. Weisiger III, "The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification," *Christianity Today* (1 September 1967): Supplement, p. 23.

⁵⁴Warfield (review of *He that Is Spiritual*, p. 327) writes: "He who believes in Jesus Christ is under grace, and his whole course, in its process and its issue alike, is determined by grace, and therefore, having been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, he is surely being conformed to that image.... You may find Christians at every stage of this process, for it is a process through which all must pass; but you will find none who will not in God's own good time and way pass through every stage of it."

⁵⁵Though we could also have mentioned dispensationalists who hold to the Keswick and Pentecostal views when we discussed those models, we have chosen to insert this list under the Reformed heading since most attacks against "dispensational

dispensationalists like H. A. Ironside who writes, “Nowhere in Scripture is it taught that there is a sudden leap to be taken from carnality to spirituality, or from a life of comparative unconcern as to godliness to one of intense devotion to Christ.”⁵⁶ To this group we can add Alva J. McClain,⁵⁷ Homer Kent,⁵⁸ Robert Saucy,⁵⁹ John MacArthur, Jr.,⁶⁰ David Turner,⁶¹ J. Lanier Burns,⁶² and Robert A. Pyne.⁶³ (These last two dispensationalists are currently professors at Dallas Seminary).

In distinction to the previous four views, the Reformed position neither expects nor encourages a post-conversion decision prior to sanctification. God works in believers’ hearts causing them to live obediently. Christians participate in this process but only as the indwelling ministry of the Spirit gives direction. Thus, sanctification is seen as an inevitable or necessary result of justification.

sanctification” have come from the Reformed camp. Contrary to the understanding of some in Reformed theology (particularly covenantalists), it is possible to hold to the Reformed view of soteriology while still remaining a dispensationalist. See Stephen R. Spencer, “Reformed Theology, Covenant Theology, and Dispensationalism,” in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical and Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell*, ed. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 238–54, who shows that “Reformed theology is larger than covenant theology and that a person may align with Reformed theology without aligning with covenant theology” (p. 239).

⁵⁶H. A. Ironside, *Holiness: The False and the True* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.), pp. 139–40. Also pp. 41–42, 49, 56, 132; idem, *The Eternal Security of the Believer* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1934), pp. 12–13.

⁵⁷Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace*, ed. Herman A. Hoyt (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 166.

⁵⁸Homer Kent, review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John F. MacArthur, Jr., in *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (Spring 1989): pp. 67–77.

⁵⁹Robert L. Saucy, “Second Response to ‘Faith According to the Apostle James’ by John F. MacArthur, Jr.,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (March 1990): pp. 43–47.

⁶⁰MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 219–29; idem, *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

⁶¹David L. Turner, review of *Five Views on Sanctification*, by Melvin E. Dieter, Anthony A. Hoekema, Stanley M. Horton, J. Robertson McQuilkin, and John F. Walvoord, in *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (Spring 1989): 94–98.

⁶²J. Lanier Burns, review of *Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away*, by Judith M. Gundry Volf, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (January–March 1993): p. 123.

⁶³Robert A. Pyne, review of *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*, by John F. MacArthur, Jr., in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (October–December 1993): pp. 497–99.

Summary

Though we did not take the time to consider the Wesleyan and Pentecostal views of justification, we must note that these models do propose a strongly Arminian approach to salvation. In such a theological scheme, God's election is based upon an individual's decision to be saved. This approach is also tied to their understanding of sanctification which is likewise based upon the believer's decision to grow. Reformed, Keswick, and Chaferian scholars would all disagree with the Arminian approach to justification. However, both the Keswick and Chaferian schools would agree that the believer's post-conversion dedication or crisis is necessary before sanctification begins.⁶⁴ The Reformed model, on the other hand, would suggest that God initiates both justification and sanctification in those whom He elects.

The Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Keswick, and Chaferian models all agree that some form of a post-conversion decision is necessary before "real" or "victorious" growth can occur. While all acknowledge the work of God in sanctification, all appear to place a great responsibility upon believers themselves to initiate the growth process. On the other hand, the Reformed model proposes that believers will grow inevitably because of their conversion to Christ. Believers are responsible to obey and will do so because of the Spirit's work in their lives.⁶⁵

Finally, the relationship between justification and sanctification is viewed as inevitable and necessary in the Reformed model while in the Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Keswick and Chaferian models this relationship is understood as merely possible or potential.⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

Our study has shown that there are several scholars who have equated the Chaferian model of sanctification with dispensationalism.

⁶⁴Walvoord, "Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective," p. 235, writes, "One's experience of sanctification is clearly conditioned on one's response to the sanctification that the Holy Spirit intends to provide.... Though sanctification is a work of God in the heart of the individual, it is accomplished only in harmony with the human response."

⁶⁵Turner (review of *Five Views*, pp. 94–98) makes this same point several times by suggesting that the four views are contrasted with Reformed teaching in regard to the necessity of post-conversion experiences. He writes (p. 98): "Thus, there may only be *two* views of sanctification presented in this volume."

⁶⁶For a more thorough treatment of this entire discussion see Combs, "The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology," pp. 19–33; and Jonathan R. Pratt, "The Relationship between Justification and Sanctification in Romans 5–8," (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999), pp. 9–39.

In studying the numerous definitions of dispensationalism we found that the main essence of dispensationalism is a distinction between national Israel and the church. Based on this finding we can conclude that there is certainly an organic connection between dispensationalism and eschatology and ecclesiology. But we found no evidence of any essential connection between dispensationalism and sanctification. Finally, we compared Chaferian (“dispensational”) sanctification with other models of sanctification. We found compatibility between Chaferian teaching and that of Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Keswick approaches, particularly in regard to the necessity of a post-conversion experience and in regard to a separation between justification and sanctification.

We trust that this study will encourage students of sanctification to avoid labeling any model as “dispensational.” We also hope that those who may have been inclined toward Chaferian sanctification because they thought it to be tied to dispensationalism will revisit this subject with the goal of basing their sanctification views on the text of Scripture rather than upon respect for a favorite theologian or theological system.