The Reformed View

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*REFORMED THEOLOGY OWES A SPECIAL DEBT TO THE PRINCI-*ples of biblical exposition recovered for the church at the time of the Reformation. It is particularly associated with the work of John Calvin, but was later developed by such seventeenth-century Puritans as John Owen and Thomas Goodwin (in England), and Thomas Hooker and John Cotton (in New England). Many later Christians have owed a special debt to the Reformed theological tradition. They include preachers like George Whitefield, C. H. Spurgeon and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; and theologians such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Hodge, Abraham Kuyper and B. B. Warfield; as well as such influential twentieth-century Christian leaders as J. Gresham Machen and Francis Schaeffer. From one point of view, most evangelical theology in the English-speaking world can be see as an exposition of, deviation from or reaction to Reformed theology.[1]

A cursory glance at the biographies or writings of these men underlines the fact that Reformed theology has always placed special emphasis on the subject of sanctification. Few axioms are more central to Reformed teaching than that theology and practice, doctrine and lifestyle are partners joined together by God. They ought never to be separated. Nor is this relationship merely a "marriage of convenience."

It is one which Reformed theology sees as being "made in heaven," or more exactly, made in Scripture. A necessary connection between biblical doctrine and holy living is fundamental to the biblical and apostolic way of thinking. That is why Scripture is so full of moral imperatives logically derived from doctrinal indicatives: since these things are true, this is how you should live (compare Mt 6:32-34; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4:20-25). The title of one of Francis A. Schaeffer's best-known books grows directly out of this Reformed appreciation of the shape of basic biblical teaching: *How Should We Then Live?* The "then" is pregnant with significance. It means "in light of the biblical teaching we know to be true, . . ." Indeed, in Schaeffer's case, it meant specifically "in the light of Reformed theology."

In fact, this marriage between what we believe and how we live was early illustrated by the *magnum opus* of Reformed theology, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion.*[2] It was (and is) a manual to the teaching of Scripture. When Calvin first published it (at the tender age of 27), it bore the significant subtitle: *Containing the whole sum of piety.*[3] In apparent contrast to medieval works which bore the title *Sum of Theology (Summa Theologiae),* Calvin sought to engage the reader in an experiential fashion. His purpose was not only intellectual; it was also spiritual. One cannot read the *Institutes* without being impressed by this. Thus, from the beginning, Reformed theology has always emphasized sanctification. It could be said of many Reformed Christians, as it was actually said of John Owen, one of the finest Reformed theologians: "His aim in life was to promote holiness."[4]

What, then, are the distinctive features of the Reformed doctrine of sanctification? By definition (Reformed means reformed according to Scripture), these should also be the leading features of the Bible's own teaching. For this reason there are, thankfully, many points of contact and agreement between Reformed teaching and other perspectives. These should not be minimized; but the function of this essay is to express the chief emphases of the Reformed perspective.

Two features are central to sanctification: Jesus Christ himself is our sanctification or holiness (1 Cor 1:30); and it is through union with Christ that sanctification is accomplished in us. As Calvin says, "First we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the

salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us."[5] But the phrase "Christ, our sanctification" has been variously understood. It is important, therefore, to notice that undergirding Calvin's statement are several strands of New Testament teaching.

Union with Christ

In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the "author," "captain" or "pioneer" of salvation (Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2). The word *archēgos* (author) is notoriously difficult to translate into English.[6] In the case of Jesus (especially in the context of Hebrews) it seems to convey the twin notions of primacy and origin. Jesus is the "author" of our sanctification, in the sense that he creates it for us, but he is also its "pioneer" because he does so out of his own incarnate life, death and resurrection. He is the "pioneer" of our salvation, because as the Hero of Faith (to be distinguished from the long list of those heroes who bear witness to him [Heb 12:1]), he has endured the cross, despising its shame and the opposition of sinners, and is now seated at God's right hand. He is the first and only fully sanctified person. He has climbed God's holy hill with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps 24:3-6). It is as the "Lead Climber" that he gives the sanctification he has won to others (Acts 5:31). As "pioneer," Jesus has himself gone ahead of us to open up the way to the Father. By doing so, he brings to the Father in similar obedience all those who are "roped" to him by grace and faith.

Christ *is* our sanctification. In him it has first come to its fulfillment and consummation. He not only died for us to remove the penalty of our sin by taking it himself; he has lived, died, risen again and been exalted in order to sanctify our human nature in himself for our sake. This is the significance of his words shortly before the cross, "Sanctify [the disciples] by the truth. . . . As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified" (Jn 17:17-19).

Behind this lies a strand of teaching in the New Testament to which evangelicals have sometimes given insufficient emphasis—the notion that the Son of God took genuine human nature, "in the likeness of sinful man" (Rom 8:3), so that "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family" (Heb 2:11). Having

sanctified his human nature from the moment of conception by his Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (Lk 1:35), Jesus lived his life of perfect holiness in our frail flesh set in a world of sin, temptation, evil and Satan. In our human nature, he grew in wisdom, in stature and in his capacity to obey the will of his Father.

As Jesus grew as a man, his human capacities developed, and with them the pressure of temptation (Lk 2:52). In that context he developed in obedience, not from imperfect to perfect, but from infancy to maturity. When he cried out on the cross "It is finished" (Jn 19:30; see also 17:4) and with royal dignity committed his spirit into the hands of his Father, he was the first person to have lived a life of perfect obedience and sanctification. In his resurrection his sanctified human life was divinely transformed into what the New Testament calls "the power of an indestructible life" (Heb 7:16). Because this has taken place first in Christ our representative, it is possible for it to take place also in us through the Spirit. Christ himself is the only adequate resource we have for the development of sanctification in our own lives.

Sanctification is therefore neither self-induced nor created in us by divine *fiat.* Like justification, it has to be "earthed" in our world (that is, in Christ's work for us in history) if it is to be more than a legal fiction. To change the metaphor, we can only draw on resources which have already been deposited in our name in the bank. But the whole of Christ's life, death, resurrection and exaltation have, by God's gracious design, provided the living deposit of his sanctified life, from which all our needs can be supplied. Because of our fellowship (union) with him we come to share his resources. That is why he can "become for us" sanctification, just as he is also our wisdom, righteousness and redemption (1 Cor 1:30).

No one has expressed the riches of this biblical teaching more eloquently than Calvin himself:

> We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ [Acts 4:12]. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of him" [1 Cor 1:30]. If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception; if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth

> he was made like us in all respects [Heb 2:17] that he might learn to feel our pain [compare to Heb 5:2]. If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if remission of the curse, in his cross [Gal 3:13]; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.[7]

If Calvin is right, then the dynamic for sanctification, indeed for the whole life of the Christian, is to be found in union with Christ.

The Effecting of the Union

In Christ's incarnate, crucified, risen and glorified humanity lies the sanctification I lack in myself. The question therefore becomes: How are his sanctification and my need for it brought together?

According to the New Testament, it is by the ministry of God's Spirit and by the exercise of the believer's faith. Union with Christ is the purpose and one of the foci of the ministry of the Spirit. Jesus emphasized that the Spirit "will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you" (Jn 16:14). This was to be realized when the Father would give the apostles the Spirit, the Counselor, to be with them forever (that is, on the Day of Pentecost: "On *that* day you will realize that I am in my Father, *and you are in me, and I am in you*" [Jn 14:20, emphasis mine]). 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.

But this union with Christ does not take place over our heads, as it were. It engages our whole being. Consequently, a second element in it is that of *faith.* In the New Testament's language, we believe *into* Christ *(pisteuein eis),* that is, into union with him. Faith involves trusting in and resting on the resources of Christ as though they were our own.

The first disciples' experience in this context was obviously in some

elements unique. They alone belonged to the time before and after Christ. Like other believers of the Old Testament era, they were regenerated before the death, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost events (and in some sense, united to Christ [compare Jn 15:3-5; 13:10]). But, like believers in all ages thereafter, they also received the Spirit of the *ascended* Christ, an event which (in their case necessarily) was chronologically separated from their regeneration. Their entrance into all that union with Christ means to New Testament believers was therefore progressive. By contrast, for Christians after the initial period of overlap between the Old and New epochs of redemption, the experiences of faith, regeneration *and* baptism with the Spirit take place simultaneously—a threefold perspective on the one event in which no perspective is simply reducible to either of the other two.

Union and Sanctification

How does this union have significance for sanctification? Or are Calvin's eloquent words, cited above, simply a theologian's rhetoric? The fact that union with Christ has profound significance lies on the surface of the New Testament. In the crisis hours before his arrest, Jesus gave his disciples careful instruction on this theme (Jn 14:20; 15:1-4; 17:23). Similarly, in dealing with pressing pastoral problems, Paul frequently reminds his readers of their union with Christ as the solvent of their situation and the ground of his own exhortations to them (compare to Rom 6:1-14; Gal 2:20-21; Eph 2:1-6; Col 2:6—3:17). On the basis of such passages the Westminster Confession of Faith, for example, is able to say:

> They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified really and personally, *through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection.*[8] (emphasis mine)

The most meticulously logical development of this appears in Romans 6:1-14.

> What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ

> was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
>
> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.
>
> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.
>
> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

The complexity of Paul's logic in this passage is obvious. He has just been expounding the central fact of redemptive history: what was forfeited in Adam has been regained in the Last Adam, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12-21). The principle is that where sin increased, the grace of God has increased all the more (Rom 5:20). To this there is an obvious retort: "Shall we continue sinning, therefore? For if increased sin evokes increased grace, does it not follow that our indulgence in sin will promote grace and therefore enhance the glory of God?"

Such a response is a monstrous misunderstanding of the gospel. Paul's reaction is as violent as it is theological. For the forgiveness of sins is not received in a vacuum, but in union with Christ ("In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" [Eph 1:7]). But if we have been united to Christ, we share in him as a crucified and risen savior. When he was crucified, he died to sin; when he was resurrected, he was raised to new life with the Father (Rom 6:8-10). If in becoming Christians we have been united to *this* Christ, it follows that (in some sense) we have died to sin with him and been

raised similarly into a new life. This being the case, how can those who have received forgiveness in Christ, and are thus united to him, go on living in sin? They do not. Indeed, Paul's point is that they *cannot* because they have died to sin.

Paul's logic is impeccable:

1. We receive forgiveness of sins through Christ.
2. This reception involves being united to Christ.
3. The Christ to whom we are united, died to sin.
4. Since we are united to him, we also have died to sin.
5. If we have died to sin, we cannot continue living in it.
6. Therefore, we cannot continue in sin that grace may increase.

Justification is received by faith alone, but since that faith unites us to Christ as sanctifier, justification and sanctification can no more be separated than Christ himself can be divided.

Death to Sin

While Paul's logic is flawless, his interpreters have found his teaching sufficiently obscure to give rise to a variety of interpretations of it. In particular, his idea of the believer as one who is "dead to sin" has frequently been abused to suggest various forms of perfectionism. Here even Homer nods, when in his often masterly paraphrase of Romans, J. B. Phillips translates Romans 6:7 as: "a dead man can safely be said to be immune to the power of sin." But both Scripture and experience make it abundantly clear that Christians can "safely" be said *not* to be immune to the power of sin!

Again, it is sometimes suggested that the key to sanctification lies in Paul's command to count oneself "dead to sin." Defeat in the Christian life is therefore attributed to a failure to enter into a new stage of experience altogether in which sin is no longer a serious challenge to the Christian. But this is the high road to theological and pastoral, as well as psychological, shipwreck. The notion that we have died to sin and are alive to God lies at the heart of the biblical doctrine of sanctification. Death to sin and life to God *is* sanctification. But what is the nature of this death and life?

Reformed theology has not answered that question with a completely harmonious voice exegetically; but theologically and pastorally the response has been relatively constant. Even an outline of its chief fea-

tures underscores the fact that Reformed theology has stressed the cosmic context in which Scripture expounds sanctification.

In the immediate context in Romans, Paul has been expounding the work of Christ and his grace by contrasting them with Adam and his Fall. Through Adam, sin and death have come into the world. But such is the divinely instituted relationship between Adam and his posterity, the human race, that persons by nature are "in Adam." He has acted as their head and representative. Consequently, through his one act of disobedience, all persons in Adam have come under the power of sin and death (compare to Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). This is the ultimate foundation for, and explanation of, the fact that humanity is unsanctified before God. "There is no one righteous, not even one. . . . No one will be declared righteous in his sight. . . . All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:10-23). This situation is encapsulated in Paul's statement that "sin reigned" (Rom 5:21).

Throughout Romans 5 and 6, Paul uses the definite article with the word sin *(hē hamartia)*, perhaps suggesting that sin is to be thought of as a personified power or as a realm in which humans live. It reigns as a king (5:21; 6:12) and makes people serve it as their master (6:14) so that they are sin's slaves (6:17, 20). It is a warring general who uses people's bodies as his weapons *(hopla* 6:13); it is an employer who pays wages at the end of the day—but "the wages of sin is death" (6:23).

Against this background it becomes clearer what death to sin *does not* mean. It does not describe an activity which the Christian must perform (die to sin!), for the verb is in the indicative mood, not the imperative. Paul is not telling us we are to do something; he is analyzing something that has taken place.

Nor does death to sin mean that we are no longer capable of committing any acts of sin. Not only would that contradict the teaching of Scripture elsewhere (for example, 1 Jn 1:8-10) and run counter to actual experience, it would make nonsense of Paul's urgent exhortations in this very passage to cease sinning. "Do not let sin reign" and "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin" (Rom 6:12-13) suggest that the Christian continues to battle with it.

Freed from Sin

What, then, does Paul mean? He explains in verse 7: "Anyone who has

died has been freed from sin." Two different interpretations of his words have been adopted by Reformed theologians.

First, Paul's words in this verse *(ho gar apothanōn dedikaiōtai apo tēs hamartias)* may be narrowly interpreted to mean: "For the one who has died is *justified* from his sin." In this case Paul is saying that sharing in Christ's death for sin means being released from bearing the burden of guilt for sin ourselves.[9]

Alternatively, Paul's words may mean: "The one who has died (with Christ) is not merely justified, but has also been set free from the reign, or dominion of sin." There are solid reasons for accepting this second interpretation:

1. At this point in the context of Romans 6, Paul is speaking about the dominion or reign of sin; his concern is with the authority of sin over us, not its guilt. The point at issue is whether Christians continue to live under the reign of sin as they formerly did. Since Paul's general argument is that Christians are delivered from the reign of sin (although not its continuing presence), "set free" from sin is the more relevant concept.

2. Later in the passage (6:18), Paul specifically expounds the significance of union with Christ in terms of freedom from sin: "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness." Here the context is clearly one of deliverance from bondage, not alleviation of guilt, and the term Paul uses *(eleutherothentes)* implies such freedom.

Against this view it is sometimes argued that proper exegesis demands the conclusion that the believer has died to sin in the same sense that Christ is said to have died ("The death he died, he died to sin once for all" [Rom 6:10]). Christ could not die to sin except in the sense of bearing its guilt, it is argued.

But Paul has already indicated that sin's reign is expressed in death. Insofar as Christ died for us, we must say that he submitted himself not only to death, but to the reign of sin through death. He too died to sin, in the sense of dying to its reign over him. It may further clarify Paul's thinking here if we remember that for him, the resurrection involved Christ's deliverance (his vindication, or justification) from the reign of sin in death (1 Tim 3:16). In union with him, we too are delivered from sin's reign as a tyrant-king as well as from sin's guilt. Only because we are free from both are we in any position to resist the

remaining presence of sin.

In view of this, Paul says: "Sin shall not be your master" (Rom 6:14). This indicative-mood statement forms the basis for the radical imperatives which Paul issues to those who have thus died to sin and are now alive to God.[10]

We may follow Paul further. Not only is this "death to sin" deliverance from its dominion—and something which has already been accomplished, rather than an injunction to be obeyed—it is a fundamental and universal principle of sanctification for every Christian. Indeed, it is so true of each and every Christian as to be virtually definitive of *being* a Christian. "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus" (all Christians) have thus died to sin. "We died to sin" *(hoitines apethanomen tē hamartia)* might be more fully rendered: "We *who are the kind of people who* died to sin," that is, "we—who have this as one of our leading characteristics—have died to sin."[11] Therefore we are to act "as those who have been brought from death to life" (6:13; "as dead men brought to life" is C. K. Barrett's fine rendering).

This is so because "we have been united with [Christ] in his death" (v. 5). Here again Paul's language is illuminating. His use of *sumphutos (sun,* along with; *phuo,* to bring forth, beget, and in the passive, to spring up or grow) suggests that we share one bundle of life with Christ in what he has done.[12] All that he has accomplished for us in our human nature is, through union with him, true for us and, in a sense, of us. He died to sin once; he lives to God (6:10). He came under the dominion of sin in death, but death could not master him. He rose and broke the power of both sin and death. Now he lives forever in resurrection life to God. The same is as true of us as if we had been with him on the cross, in the tomb and on the resurrection morning!

We miss the radical nature of Paul's teaching here to our great loss. So startling is it that we need to find a startling manner of expressing it. For what Paul is saying is that sanctification means this: in relationship both to sin and to God, the determining factor of my existence is *no longer my past. It is Christ's past.* The basic framework of my new existence in Christ is that I have become a "dead man brought to life" and must think of myself in those terms: dead to sin and alive to God in union with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Precisely at this juncture, however, personal experience tends to in-

trude. As Christians we continue to sin. And the danger is that we may think that the sinful lifestyle is still *normative* for us. We thus obscure the power of the gospel by focusing attention on the remaining sin in our lives. But for the New Testament, that view of the Christian life is to look at grace through the wrong end of the telescope. No one has expressed this with more accurate eloquence than John Murray:

> We are too ready to give heed to what we deem to be the hard, empirical facts of Christian profession, and we have erased the clear line of demarcation which Scripture defines. As a result we have lost our vision of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Our ethic has lost its dynamic and we have become conformed to this world. We know not the power of death to sin in the death of Christ, and we are not able to bear the rigour of the liberty of redemptive emancipation.[13]

A similar point was made three hundred years earlier by the great Puritan theologian John Owen. He saw two major pastoral burdens to be: "To convince those in whom sin evidently hath the dominion that such indeed is their state and condition"; and "To satisfy some that sin hath not the dominion over them, notwithstanding its restless acting itself in them and warring against their souls; *yet unless this can be done, it is impossible they should enjoy solid peace and omfort in this life*"[14] (emphasis mine).

A New Creation

Union with Christ in his death and resurrection is the element of union which Paul most extensively expounds. But the principle of Romans 6 is a wider one: if we are united to Christ, then we are united to him at all points of his activity on our behalf. We share in his death (we were baptized into his death), in his burial (we were buried with him in baptism), in his resurrection (we are resurrected with Christ), in his ascension (we have been raised with him), in his heavenly session (we sit with him in heavenly places, so that our life is hidden with Christ in God) and we will share in his promised return (when Christ, who is our life, appears, we also will appear with him in glory) (Rom 6:14; Col 2:11-12; 3:1-3).

This, then, is the foundation of sanctification in Reformed theology. It is rooted, not in humanity and their achievement of holiness or

sanctification, but in what God has done in Christ, and for us in union with him. Rather than view Christians first and foremost in the microcosmic context of their own progress, the Reformed doctrine first of all sets them in the macrocosm of God's activity in redemptive history. It is seeing oneself in this context that enables the individual Christian to grow in true holiness.

This general approach is well illustrated by Paul's key statements: "We know that our old self *[anthrōpos,* man] was crucified with [Christ] so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom 6:6).

What is here said to be accomplished already is the central element in sanctification (we are no longer slaves to sin, we are servants of God). It is accomplished by doing away with "the body of sin"—an expression which may refer in the context of Romans 6 to the physical body, or more generally, to bodily existence as the sphere in which sin's dominion is expressed. In Christ, sin's status is changed from that of a citizen with full rights to that of an illegal alien (with no rights—but for all that, not easily removed!). The foundation of this is what Paul describes as the co-crucifixion with Christ of the old man.

The "old man"*(ho palaios anthrōpos)* has often been taken to refer to what I was before I became a Christian ("my former self"). That is undoubtedly implied in the expression. But Paul has a larger canvas in mind here. He has been expounding the fact that men and women are "in Adam" or "in Christ." To be "in Adam" is to belong to the world of the "old man," to be "in the flesh," a slave to sin and liable to death and judgment. From this perspective, Paul sees Jesus Christ as the Second Man, the Last Adam, the New Man. He is the first of a new race of humans who share in his righteousness and holiness. He is the first of the New Age, the Head of the New Humanity, through his resurrection (compare to 1 Cor 15:45-49). By grace and faith we belong to him. We too share in the new humanity. If we are in Christ, we share in the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), we are no longer "in the flesh," but "in the Spirit." The life and power of the resurrection age have already begun to make their presence felt in our life.

What is so significant here is the transformation this brings to the Christian's self-understanding. We do not see ourselves merely within the limited vision of our own biographies: volume one, the life of

slavery in sin; volume two, the life of freedom from sin. We see ourselves set in a cosmic context: in Adam by nature, in Christ by grace; in the old humanity by sin, in the new humanity by regeneration. Once we lived under sin's reign; now we have died to its rule and are living to God. Our regeneration is an event of this magnitude! Paul gropes for a parallel to such an exercise of divine power and finds it in two places: the creation of the world (2 Cor 4:6; 5:17) and the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Eph 1:19-20).

Against this background Paul urges radical consecration and sanctification (Rom 6:11-14). In essence his position is that the magnitude of what God has accomplished is itself adequate motivation for the radical holiness which should characterize our lives.

In actual practice, it is the dawning of this perspective which is the foundation for all practical sanctification. Hence Paul's emphasis on "knowing" that this is the case (vv. 3, 6, 9), and his summons to believers to "count" themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11). "Count" ("reckon," KJV) does not mean to bring this situation into being by a special act of faith. It means to recognize that such a situation exists and to act accordingly.

Sanctification is therefore the consistent practical outworking of what it means to belong to the new creation in Christ. That is why so much of the New Testament's response to pastoral and personal problems in the early church was: "Do you not know what is true of you in Christ?" (Rom 6:3, 16; 7:1; 1 Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 14, 19; 9:13, 24). "Live by the Spirit's power in a manner that is consistent with that! If you have died with Christ to sin and been raised into new life, quit sinning and live in a new way. If, when Christ appears, you will appear with him and be like him, live now in a manner that conforms to your final destiny!"

Spiritual Warfare

When the groundwork of sanctification is seen in this light, its progress is inevitably marked by conflict or tension. By contrast with teaching which emphasizes that the chief characteristic of the Christian life is *quietness* (physical, mental or spiritual), Reformed theology has stressed pilgrimage *(Pilgrim's Progress)* and conflict ("The Holy War"). Such conflict is not viewed as either an unfortunate malfunction or the

result of a lack of faith or spirituality. Rather, conflict is inherent in the very nature of the glory of what God has already done for us. The magnitude of grace, when it impacts fallen humanity in a fallen world, inevitably produces conflict.

The New Testament provides several perspectives on this conflict which together present a unified picture.

The conflict is the result of our now being ***in Christ*** and yet, at the same time, living ***in the world*** (compare 1 Cor 1:2, "in Corinth" and "in Christ Jesus"). Since by nature we were dead in sin and used to live according to the fashions of this world, gratifying our own lusts (Eph 2:1-3), our new lifestyle in Christ is bound to be on a collision course with the lifestyle of this world. Why else would Paul "insist . . . that [we] must no longer live as the Gentiles do" (Eph 4:17)? The goals, motives and energies of our lives now stand in complete contrast to the world around us. That radical difference makes tension, conflict, even stress inevitable (compare to 2 Tim 3:1-9).

A further biblical element in this conflict which Reformed theology has consistently sought to emphasize has been the opposition of Satan to Christian growth. What is true of the reign of sin is also true of the dominion of darkness. We have been freed from it, yet its presence is not finally destroyed. Rendered ultimately powerless (Heb 2:14, where the same verb *[katargeō]* appears as in Rom 6:6 in connection with the destruction of the body of sin), Satan continues to menace Christians. He seeks, says Calvin in connection with Job, "to drive the saint to madness by despair."[15] He is the hinderer, the enemy, the accuser, the tempter, the devourer. He seduces, deceives and tempts us with his many wiles.

Reformed literature therefore contains many serious manuals to serve the Christian soldier.[16] Here again we find the New Testament's emphasis on sanctification taking place in a cosmic context. We have "received every spiritual blessing in Christ . . . in the heavenly realms" (Eph 1:3, also v. 20). But now that we are united to him we are immediately involved in a conflict which is engaged precisely in the same heavenly realms (Eph 6:12). Our daily lives involve the skirmishes of the eschatological war of the end times. For this reason we need to wear all the armor of God, so that "when the evil day comes" we may remain standing.

But the conflict is not only external and objective; it is internal and subjective—with the flesh as well as with the world and the devil. All that is true *for me* in Christ has not yet been accomplished *in me* by the Spirit. I live in the Spirit, but I also continue to live in the flesh (though no longer dominated by it, nor a debtor to it). But as I have been delivered from bondage to the flesh, I continue to live my life with a body and mind marred by sin, and in a world and community which have been dominated by the flesh. Although I have been delivered from addiction to sin, its presence remains. I experience withdrawal symptoms and remain weakened by its devastating impact on my life. The desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are contrary to one another. Whatever view I would like to take of my own degree of sanctification, I know that there are times when Paul's words ring true: "You do not do what you want" (Gal 5:17). In microcosm, I experience a reflection of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Because I am destined for the glory of Christ, so long as I am in the body, I groan, longing for the day when my life as a child of God will be brought to its final consummation (Rom 8:23).

In this context, especially in more recent years, Reformed exegesis has not been unanimous in its interpretation of Romans 7:14-25. In the post-Reformation centuries, it has been normal, if not normative, to understand Paul's words as a description of a regenerate person. Despite trends to the contrary, my opinion is that this remains the best approach to understanding the passage.[17] It does, however, need to be underlined (as it has not always been in Reformed or any other tradition or interpretation) that while what Paul says in Romans 7:14-25 may be true of him as a believer, *it is not the only way of describing his experience as a believer.* At the heart of Romans 7:14-25 is a profound paradox, both elements of which must be recognized. As G. C. Berkouwer has written: "Whoever thinks he has been treated [in Rom 7:14-25] to an intolerable contradiction is probably the victim of the effort to make this duality psychologically transparent. He is a dupe indeed: there is no transparency here, only grief over sin, meekness, confession of guilt, and a glory in salvation."[18] For Paul is viewing himself within a particular context—his continued imperfection when judged by the spiritual standards of the divine law.

But whether Romans 7:14-25 in particular is Paul speaking as a Christian or not, *it is a strange Christian who has not at some time realized that everything Paul describes is also experienced by all Christians.*

So long as we are in the body, in this world, will we find ourselves crying out from time to time: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:24-25). Our sanest conclusion about our present status as believers will be: "I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature [*sarx* = flesh] a slave to the law of sin" (Rom 7:25). No other interpretation does justice to the remarkable combination of Paul's cry of victory and his recognition of the reality of sin's continuing influence via the flesh in Romans 7:25.[19] Nor is this pessimism. Indeed it is biblical realism. It is the inevitable concomitant of a glorious redemption already inaugurated but not yet consummated. The greater the glory, the greater the contrast with all that has not yet been glorified.

Partly in reaction to such a serious (and dark) emphasis, some have been tempted to stress the way in which the Spirit of God lifts the believer beyond this plane of experience. In response, Reformed theologians have sought to say, graciously but firmly, that while the dispensation of the Spirit is indeed glorious (2 Cor 3:7-11), it is seriously mistaken to conclude that the presence of the Spirit will keep us from sin. It illustrates the difficulty we have in accepting the tensions produced by the present incompleteness of God's work in us, in view of the completeness of his work for us in Christ. But the biblical response to the view that the Spirit raises God's people above those conflicts is that in fact *it is the presence of the Spirit that produces these conflicts.*

It is those who have the first fruits of the Spirit who groan inwardly as they wait eagerly (note the balance!) for their final redemption (Rom 8:23). Here "first fruits" does not mean that we have only a little of the spirit and we need more if we are to cease groaning and enter into victory. The Spirit himself is the first fruits of glory. No one can be possessed by him without being caught up in the contrast between flesh and Spirit.

Necessary Mortification

This conflict, inherent in sanctification prior to glorification (final

sanctification), in turn provides the proper context for a further feature of the Reformed doctrine of sanctification: the necessity of mortification.

The Latinate nature of the term "mortification" suggests the world of the medieval, the monastic and the masochistic. At times Christians have mistakenly resorted to weapons of the flesh rather than the sword of the Spirit to deal with sin. But again at this point, Reformed theology has sought to maintain a biblical balance, recognizing the continuing presence of sin in the believer and Scripture's frequent exhortations to deal with it severely. Wrong views of sanctification can frequently be traced to misunderstanding the nature of sin in the Christian.

In the New Testament, mortification is not a form of legalism (as Col 2:9-23 emphasizes), but a repercussion of divine blessing. It is those who belong to the kingdom of God as "beatitude people" (Mt 5:1-12) who are urged to deal rigorously with sin (Mt 5:21-48), to cut off or pluck out whatever is a source of temptation. It is those who are united to Christ in his death, resurrection, ascension, session and coming glory who are urged to "put to death, *therefore,* whatever belongs to your earthly nature," whether it be mental acts or physical deeds (Col 3:5-11).

Since Christians have put off the old man and put on the new man, they should live accordingly (Col 3:9-10). It is those who have received God's promises who should purify themselves "from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor 7:1). It is the person who has the hope that "when [Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" and who "purifies himself, just as [Jesus] is pure" (1 Jn 3:1-3). It is the one who already possesses the Holy Spirit as the gift of God's future kingdom, who by that Spirit is to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Rom 8:13). "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24).

Grace demands mortification. Without it there is no holiness. John Owen writes graphically: "Let not that man think he makes any progress in true holiness who walks not over the bellies of his lusts."[20]

Mortification is the outworking of our union with Christ in his death to sin. But that must not be limited to our interior life. There

is in the New Testament what Calvin called an internal and an external mortification. Bearing the cross involves crucifying the lusts of the flesh. The providential experiences of life serve a similar function. Just as we put sin to death in order to live (Rom 8:13), so God sends painful providences in order that new life may arise both in us and in others. This external mortification is described variously. It involves bearing the cross; it is the Father's pruning in order that we may bear more fruit (Jn 15:2); it is described supremely in Paul's remarkable words in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12:

> We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

Union with Christ is not an inner mysticism. It affects the whole person. The silhouette of Christ's life marks all of the Christian's experience. Our personal *Sitz im Leben* becomes the instrument God uses to work out the realities of our union with Christ. Thus, Louis Berkhof has written:

> By this union believers are changed into the image of Christ *according to his human nature.* What Christ effects in his people is in a sense a replica or reproduction of what took place with Him. Not only objectively, but also in a subjective sense they suffer, bear the cross, are crucified, die and are raised to newness of life with Christ. They share in a measure the experiences of their Lord.[21]

Imitation and Self-Evaluation

The ground plan of sanctification, union with Christ, is prophetic of the divine goal in sanctification: renewal in the image of Christ. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that be might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). The whole schema of redemptive history has this in view.

Humans by creation were made as the image of God, and called to

express that image as offspring and reflectors of the divine glory. We sinned and fell short of the glory of God. Thus Adam and Eve became prodigals. In Christ, glory and sonship are restored (he was declared to be the Son with power when he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father [Rom 1:4; 6:4]). Through Spirit-union with Christ in the epochal events which brought him to the new humanity of the resurrection, we are already being conformed to his image—from one degree of glory to the next (2 Cor 3:18).

The corresponding responsibility for the believer is the imitation of Christ. Like mortification, this is a notion which, because of its abuse, has often fallen into disuse among evangelical Christians. But it is thoroughly biblical. Union with Christ for the Thessalonians meant that they "became imitators of the Lord" (1 Thess 1:6). We are to have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16), who left his disciples an example, "that you should do as I have done for you" (Jn 13:15). When Peter urges slaves to live as Christians, he tells them: "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). Peter is applying to slaves a general principle which governs all Christian living. His language is graphic: *example* (*hupogrammos,* or "write under") is the word for a written copy. It belongs to the world of elementary education, where the teacher writes letters on one line and tells the child to copy them on the next line. Peter is urging Christians to write the biography of their own lives with one eye on the lifestyle which Jesus had written. Imitation of the incarnate Savior is the essence of continuing sanctification.

Because sanctification involves the imitation of Christ, its goal is true humanity, regained through Christ. That this is the heart of the Reformed doctrine of sanctification cannot be overstressed. Sanctification is radical humanization. It means doing the "natural" thing spiritually, and the "spiritual" thing naturally. "What a redeemed soul needs," wrote Abraham Kuyper, "is human holiness."[21] Restoration of the image of God to true humanity is God's ultimate purpose for his people. The model and source for this transformation are both found in the humanity of Jesus Christ, the one truly sanctified human.

It is in this context that the thorny issue of the relationship between sanctification and self-image should be discussed. How we view ourselves has an immense impact on the style of our sanctification. Here,

the Reformed perspective prevents us from falling into a common trap in discussions of self-image: reductionism and simplification, which invariably result either in what is often disparagingly referred to as worm theology ("Would he devote that sacred head *for such a worm as I?*"), or alternatively in little more than an ego-trip ("God loves me the way I am—period").

The truth of the matter is that now as a Christian I must see myself from two perspectives and say two contrasting things about my life: in myself there dwells no good thing by my own creation or nature (Rom 7:18); and in Christ I have been cleansed, justified and sanctified so that in me glorification has begun (1 Cor 6:11). Even in final glory, presumably, part of the cause of our praise of Christ will be that we are capable of distinguishing between what we have become because of Christ and what we would have become of ourselves. (The Lamb is forever worthy of praise not only because of his eternal divine person, but because he shed his blood to redeem humanity [Rev 5:9].)

The New Testament will not allow us to reduce these two polarities to a common denominator. We must say both: God has given me a new identity with a glorious destiny; in myself I am utterly defiled and deserve only death. I belong to a time when the present evil age and the future glory overlap. I must therefore see myself from two perspectives. Miss this and we miss the biblical doctrine of sanctification, for the Christian's self-image is not properly viewed binocularly, reducing two different perspectives to one, but microscopically, by viewing the variety of activity involved in growth in holiness.

The Means of Sanctification

It should now be clear that in Reformed theology sanctification is by no means a mystical experience in which holiness is ours effortlessly. God gives increase in holiness by engaging our minds, wills, emotions and actions. We are involved in the process. That is why biblical teaching on sanctification appears in both the indicative ("I the Lord sanctify you") and the imperative ("sanctify yourselves this day").

Here we should be careful not to be misled by wrong deductions drawn from biblical metaphors. In some expositions of sanctification, for example, the phrase "the fruit of the Spirit" or the analogy of the vine and the branches (Gal 5:22; Jn 15:1-8) are taken to suggest that

Christian graces grow effortlessly. Indeed, in such teaching effort is sometimes seen as a hindrance to sanctification. Christians are exhorted rather to "let go, and let God have his wonderful way." Similarly, the Christian is encouraged to sing:

Buried with Christ and raised with him too;
What is there left for me to do?
Simply to cease from struggling and strife,
Simply to walk in newness of life,
Glory be to God!

But at best this is confusing. At worst the metaphor loses all contact with the control center of the rest of Scripture and goes into an orbit of its own, seriously distorting apostolic teaching. It rends asunder what God has joined together: indicative and imperative; Christ's work and our response of faith; God's grace and our duty.

Reformed teaching on sanctification has focused attention on four areas in which the grace and duties of sanctification coincide. Together, these constitute "means of grace."

The Word

The Word of God is the principal means. It is to be hidden in our hearts as the preservative from sin (Ps 119:11), and those who keep its precepts know the liberty of God's children (v. 45). God's Word is the instrument of both the initial cleansing which takes place in regeneration (Jn 15:3) and the sanctification which continues through the whole Christian life ("Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" [Jn 17:17]).

God uses Scripture. It is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). By it our lives are transformed. It is God-breathed for this very purpose, equipping us through its "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). It has the power to instruct the mind, introduce clear thinking, inform the conscience and conform us to God's will. At the same time, we are to grab hold of the sword of the Spirit; we have "purified [ourselves] by obeying the truth" (1 Pet 1:22); *we* are to abide in Christ by letting his Word take up residence in our lives (Jn 15:7).

This is why, in Reformed theology, the law of God is seen to play such an important role in sanctification. Its three functions or uses are

well known: to convict of sin, to restrain evildoers and to instruct believers. A distinctive feature of Reformed theology is that the third use is seen to be the central one:

> The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For even though they have the law written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God [Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16], that is, have been so moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit that they long to obey God, they still profit by the law.[23]

Is this legalism? Legalism means *either* seeking salvation on the basis of obedience to the law *or* believing that every detail of life is covered specifically by some law. But neither of these positions was ever mandated in Scripture, even during the epoch when the Mosaic Law governed life in considerable detail.

God's law expresses what he intended humanity to be when he made us as his image. That is why so many of the commandments in Exodus 20 can readily be traced back to the ordinances of creation in Genesis 1—3. Further, Jesus himself expounds the continuing relevance of the law in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:17-48) and the gospel he proclaimed gave rise to his "new command" (Jn 13:34; 15:9-17).

For this reason sanctification in the New Testament involves conformity to the moral law, for Christ "condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3-4). Rather than contradict law, love is its fulfillment (Rom 13:8-10). Consequently, the law of God remains the standard of holiness for the New Testament believer. But now (in contrast to what may have been true before becoming a Christian) believers endeavor to fulfill the law, not in order to be justified but because they have already been justified, not in the flesh but in the Spirit, not out of merit-seeking but out of the response of faith which works by love.

This emphasis on Scripture as a means of sanctification also helps to explain why Reformed theology has placed such an emphasis on preaching as an instrument in sanctification. Expository preaching which engaged the minds of the congregation as hearers (in contrast to elaborate liturgy at which the congregation were spectators) was a

leading characteristic of all the mainstream reformers, not least of which was Martin Luther; but it has been in the Reformed churches that this emphasis has been most marked.

Calvin preached several times each week in Geneva, patiently expounding book after book of Scripture. (Indeed, when he returned to the pulpit of St. Peter's church after a period of forced exile, he simply carried on expounding from the point at which he had left off![24]) In one form or another such in-depth preaching characterized the later Puritans and other Reformed pastors such as Jonathan Edwards.

What is so striking about their sermons, however, is that they covered the whole Word of God and did not limit their preaching either to a few "evangelistic" texts or necessarily to evangelistically oriented messages. Compare many of these older sermons with much evangelical preaching today and one is struck by the contrast. How much doctrine they taught from Scripture! They believed that the whole Bible was given to make whole Christians.

This emphasis on preaching is grounded in the conviction that God works through it to sanctify his people. Because God's Word of grace "can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32) and is useful for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16), it is to be preached (2 Tim 4:2).

For this purpose God has given gifts to his church to help us to reach full maturity (Eph 4:11-16). It is interesting in this context that those Paul mentions are all (apparently) ministries of the Word. It is equally interesting that the Ephesian church (which received this instruction along with other congregations) had firsthand experience of what Paul had in mind. He had taught them daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus and from house to house (Acts 20:20). This went on for three years, Luke notes. Indeed, one tradition records that these meetings lasted for five hours each day![25]

This in no way denigrates the private reading and study of Scripture (a phenomenon simply not possible for the first Christians, since even if they had been able to collect the entire canon of the New Testament, the materials required for one copy would have cost a year's wages). But it does emphasize the strategic role which public exposition of Scripture can play in the life of the church, and also the premium which

Scripture places on the mind and its activity in sanctification. It is by the *renewal* of the mind that we are transformed by the Spirit, as we reflect (or contemplate) the glory of the Lord in Scripture (Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 3:18).

The Providences

The providences of God, not least of which are severe trials and afflictions, are also ordained for the purpose of sanctification. "These afflictions," wrote John Flavel, with the quaintness characteristic of a seventeenth-century divine, "have the same use and end to our souls, that frosty weather hath upon those clothes that are laid and bleaching, they alter the hue and make them white."[26]

This is confirmed by biblical biography and explicit testimony. In most of the key figures in redemptive history we can trace the way in which God's providences molded their characters. What people or devils intend for evil, God intends for good (Gen 50:20). Affliction serves as a divine beacon for those who are going astray (Ps 119:67).

We have already discussed this theme from another point of view in considering the external dimension of mortification. That discussion should serve to remind us that providence yields sanctification only as it is experienced in union with Christ. Only to those who love God and are called (into union with Christ) according to his purpose, do all things work together for good (Rom 8:28). This is because in his foreknowledge, God has predestined his people to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Because this is the end in view in all the circumstances of life, believers can respond to them positively, knowing that the Spirit of God is employing them in his transforming ministry. In providence, then, the believer looks for God's handiwork and submits to God's severe mercies. Indeed, says Calvin, united to Christ, "the church of Christ has been from the beginning so constituted that the Cross has been the way to victory and death the way to life."[27] United to Christ, we understand providences in these terms: "Just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows" (2 Cor 1:5).

The Fellowship of the Church

The fellowship of the church is the context in which sanctification

matures, and in this sense is also a means for its development. For sanctification involves our attitudes and actions in relation to others. The love which is the heart of imitation of Christ (compare to 1 Cor 13) cannot be isolationist; the death of our inordinate love of self is tested therefore in fellowship. This is the thrust of Paul's exposition of true sanctification in the context of weak and strong sharing the same fellowship: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself" (Rom 15:1-3).

Reformed theology sees the church as a preaching and suffering community. By these means it is sanctified, is thus transformed into Christ's likeness and so bears witness in the world. But several other elements mark the true church. Included among them are the fact that the church is a caring and praying community. These elements in its life are also helps for our sanctification.

The church is a fellowship of pastoral care. Explicit directions are given to those who have specific gifts (Rom 12:3-8, for example). But exhortation is also given to the whole church to exercise a pastoral ministry: "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given *for the common good*" (1 Cor 12:7, emphasis mine). It is "as each part does its work" that the whole body in Christ "grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16). We "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Col 3:16). The New Testament letters illustrate this regularly, both with extended exposition and with what we might call apostolic one-liners—simple epigrams which are aimed at the mutual encouragement of holy living. If we bear in mind that the recipients of the "practical" segments in Paul's letters are addressed in the second person plural, his intended impact will become clear. His logic is that these things are to be true of all of you as a church and therefore of each of you as individuals.

By contrast, our logic in the twentieth century has tended to be that once these things are true of me individually, and I can gather enough individuals like myself around me, then they will be true of the church. We move from the individual to the corporate, the microcosm to the macrocosm. Paul's teaching moves in the opposite direction. Once that is grasped, the necessity of church association for true sanctification

becomes self-evident.

The church is also a community of prayer. Again the sheer weight of the prayers which permeate the apostolic writings confirm this and shame the contemporary church for its mistaken assumption that sanctification can be produced prayerlessly. This is a theme which requires extended treatment beyond the scope of this essay.[28] Here it is sufficient to mention it for the sake of completeness in expressing the Reformed standing on sanctification.

The Sacraments

Finally, it should be noted that in Reformed theology, the sacraments play an important role in sanctification. How they do was a major bone of contention at the time of the Reformation and remains so today, and cannot be expounded in detail here. Simply expressed, in Reformed teaching, the sacraments are communicative signs. They point us away from ourselves to Christ; but they also are a visible, tangible means by which he communicates with us and we with him. They display his grace and our union and communion with him in it. They mark off and remind us of the distinction between the church and the world (Rom 6:1-4; 1 Cor 10:16, 21). In doing so, they provide incentives to Christ-likeness and sanctification.

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. But, as Robert Bruce so well expressed it, while we do not get a better Christ in the sacraments than we do in the Word, there are times when we get Christ better.[29] In the words of Horatius Bonar's communion hymn which so well represents the Reformed approach to the Lord's Table,

Here O my Lord, I see Thee face to face;
Here would I touch and handle things unseen,
Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,
And all my weariness upon Thee lean.

The sacraments are helps to sanctification precisely because they are means to a fresh realization of our union and communion with Christ. They point us back to its foundation and forward to its consummation

in glory (as we have been buried with Christ in baptism, we will be raised with him in resurrection; as we commune with the crucified and risen Christ, we also proclaim him until he comes again). Here we are brought back to the foundation on which the Reformed understanding of sanctification rests: union with Christ. We are baptized into him and share in the virtue of his death and resurrection; as we eat the bread and drink the wine, we are able to say, because of that union, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Sanctification is simply the outworking of this communion. We become like those with whom we have the closest communion; and in Reformed theology, sanctification means becoming like Christ.

Notes

[1]Such statements inevitably involve a subjective reading of history, but note the words of I. H. Marshall (my own esteemed New Testament teacher, and himself a Wesleyan Methodist) to the same effect: "within conservative evangelicalism the dominant school of thought is Calvinism." *Kept by the Power of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany, 1975), preface.

[2]First published in 1536 and revised constantly, the work known in English as the *Institutes* is a translation of the final Latin edition of 1559.

[3]For Calvin "piety" did not mean what is sometimes connoted by "pietism" today, that is, a separation of life into sacred and secular and a withdrawing from the latter. Rather, Calvin states, "I call 'piety' that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces" *(Institutes* 1.2.1). For Calvin this governs the whole of life.

[4]David Clarkson, "A Funeral Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Late Reverend and Learned Divine John Owen, D.D." (London, 1720). Clarkson was at one time Owen's assistant and was a leading seventeenth-century theologian in his own right.

[5]Calvin *Institutes* 3.1.1.

[6]"The noun *archēgos* is difficult to translate satisfactorily. It signifies one who is both the source or initiator and the leader (*archē* plus *agō*), one who first takes action and then brings on those on whose behalf he has acted to the intended goal." P. E. Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 100, fn. 88.

[7]Calvin *Institutes* 2.16.19.

[8]"Of Sanctification," *The [Westminster] Confession of Faith* 13.1.

[9]The classic exposition of this view is found in Robert Haldane, *The Epistle to the Romans* (reprinted, London, 1966). He has been followed by many exegetes since, including in recent times C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, vol. 1, 1975; vol. 2, 1979).

[10]See John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans vol. 1, 1959; vol. 2, 1960), 1:222; also Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans,* trans.

and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980): "Paul's concern is not with guilt, but with the power of sin" (p. 170).

C. E. B. Cranfield's exposition at this point fails to take account of the entire context of Paul's teaching in Romans 6. He says that "free from sin" (Rom 6:7) "must clearly mean 'has been justified from sin' rather than 'has been freed from sin' . . . since, while . . . the Christian is no longer the completely helpless and unresisting slave of sin, he is not in this life actually free from sin" (1:311).

Cranfield shares with other exegetes the nervousness that if Paul affirmed Christians are free from sin he would be guilty of the very perfectionism the New Testament elsewhere denies (compare to 1 Jn 1:5-10) and also from the continual warfare in which the Christian is engaged (Gal 5:17). But the perspective from which Paul speaks in Romans 5—7 is one in which he sees sin as a tyrant-king from whose reign (not presence or even influence) Christ delivers the Christian. Curiously, on 6:18, Cranfield states this without showing his earlier reservations: "They have already been set free from sin in the sense that they have been transferred from the possession of sin to the possession of a new master and so are now in a position to resist sin's controlling hold upon them" (1:325).

[11]Paul's relative pronoun here *(hoitines)* appears to be equivalent to the Latin *quippe qui* ("seeing that"). The sense is "which by its very nature." Compare to H. G. C. Moule, *Idiom Book of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 123-25.

[12]Compare to G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. 7, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964-76), p. 786, for the view that "the basic meaning is 'native.' "

[13]John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 205.

[14]John Owen, *Works,* ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols., (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1980), 7:517.

[15]Calvin *Institutes* 1.18.1.

[16]Outstanding examples of these are William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (London, 1662-65) and Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (London, 1652). For a modern exposition in the same tradition, see D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare* (Edinburgh, 1976) and *The Christian Soldier* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1977).

[17]In recent decades the weight of opinion, under the powerful influence of European scholarship, largely has been committed to some form of the view that Romans 7:14-25 does not describe Paul's personal Christian experience. It is of interest to note the relatively recent expressions of commitment to the "traditional" Reformed view on the part of three leading English-speaking scholars: J. I. Packer, "The Wretched Man in Romans 7," *Studia Evangelica* 2, pp. 621-27; J. D. G. Dunn, "Rom 7:14-25 in the Theology of Paul," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 (1975), pp. 257-73; Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans.*

[18]G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification,* vol. 1, Studies in Dogmatics: Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 60.

[19]Such is the force of Rom 7:25 that many modern commentators find themselves driven to conclude either that the verse is misplaced, and originally came after verse 23, or that it is a scribal gloss. But, as Kasemann (who adopts the latter position) recognizes, this is "against the whole textual tradition."

[20]Owen, *Works,* 6:14.

[21]Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 451.
[22]Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit,* trans. H. De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), p. 461.
[23]Calvin *Institutes* 2.7.12.
[24]Various preaching programs marked Calvin's extended ministry in Geneva, involving him in preaching every day on alternate weeks and twice on Sundays. This marked a decrease in his preaching load from an earlier period of ministry!
[25]The Western text adds to Acts 19:9 that Paul taught in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, "from the fifth to the tenth hour" (from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.), on which F. F. Bruce comments, "A very reasonable guess, if guess it be. Tyrannus no doubt gave his lectures before 11 a.m. at which hour public life in Ionian cities, as elsewhere, regularly ended," *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 356.
[26]John Flavel, *Works* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1820), 4:407.
[27]John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, The Epistles of Peter,* ed. D. W. Torrance, trans. W. B. Johnston (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 240.
[28]I have suggested a Reformed or covenantal approach to prayer in "Prayer—A Covenant Work," *Banner of Truth Magazine* 137 (1975), pp. 23ff.
[32]Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper,* trans. and ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1958).