A SCRIPTURAL APPRAISAL OF THE NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AND COMPATIBILIST FREEDOM

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Christopher James Bosson

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APPROVAL SHEET

A SCRIPTURAL APPRAISAL OF THE NECESSARY CONNECTION
BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AND
COMPATIBILIST FREEDOM

Christopher James Bosson

Read and Approved by:

[Signatures]

Gregg R. Allison (Chairperson)

Bruce A. Ware

James Parker III

Date May 14, 2010
To Dad and Gramps,

my two favorite theologians
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<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<td>Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
<td>Ancient Christian Texts</td>
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<td>ANF</td>
<td>Ante-Nicene Fathers</td>
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<td>BDAG</td>
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<td>BSac</td>
<td><em>Bibliotheca Sacra</em></td>
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<td>Century Bible</td>
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<td>ECNT</td>
<td>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>The Fathers of the Church</td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>Institutes</td>
<td><em>Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion</em></td>
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<td>IVPNTC</td>
<td>Inter-Varsity Press New Testament Commentary</td>
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<td>JETS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>Library of Christian Classics</td>
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<td>MNTC</td>
<td>Moffatt New Testament Commentary</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>New American Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>New International Greek Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPNF¹</td>
<td>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNTC</td>
<td>Pillar New Testament Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOSO</td>
<td>Sermons on Several Occasions</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVF</td>
<td>Soticorum Veterum Fragmenta</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNTC</td>
<td>Tyndale New Testament Commentary</td>
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PREFACE

Wendell Berry once wrote, “One mind alone, like one life alone, is perfectly worthless, not even imaginable.”¹ The following work would have been unimaginable without the love and encouragement of many. I am eternally grateful to my parents, Allan and Cynthia Bosson, who held my hand from the first day of grade school until now, offering incalculable guidance and support along the way. My two younger brothers, Tim and Andrew, also deserve mention for their continued interest and support during my time writing. I am also indebted to a praying grandmother, Betty Colmey, and a one-time-dissertation-supervisor grandfather, Dr. James Colmey, whose sage advice to resist the urge to write my magnum opus prevented untold hours of wasted effort.

Bruce Ware deserves special thanks for suggesting that I write a dissertation on the connection between compatibilist freedom and progressive sanctification. My supervisor, Gregg Allison, was kind enough to take me under his wing after I suddenly changed topics, though he was already overseeing the doctoral work of many others. For this, I am exceedingly grateful. I would also like to thank Jim Parker for his willingness to befriend a young, shy, soccer-loving, just-off-the-field missionary from Africa who had no initial desire to pursue a doctorate degree. His Lutheresque wit and humor regarding the more quotidian aspects of life afforded a much needed respite from the deep-end

¹Wendell Berry, The Way of Ignorance (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2005), x.
theological discussions of seminary. Though we disagree at points, David Ciocchi graciously offered many helpful insights regarding recent trends in free will theory. Many thanks to Josh Farris, David King, Josh Nelson, Richard Lindström, Andrew Wilkes, Samuel Amati, and Rony Kozman for reading over drafts, giving critical insights, loaning books, and finding typographical errors in the very same sentences that I read tens of times.

A constant partner of my thoughts and soon-to-be lifelong partner, Rahel, was never satisfied nor intimidated by the words, “Trust me, I’m getting my Ph.D. in this,” in response to her challenge that my thinking was mistaken on a matter of theology. More often than not, she was right. She is convinced that writing is always easier when there’s a box of Belgian chocolates nearby. I took her up on this suggestion on countless late nights and never regretted it. More than any other, Rahel has helped to advance my sanctification by teaching me what it means to “taste and see” that the Lord is good. For this, and much more, I’m forever grateful. Soli Deo Gloria.

Christopher James Bosson
Louisville, Kentucky
May 2010
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long-standing debate over the interplay between divine and human action, a surprisingly negligible amount of dialogue has centered on the relationship between human freedom and the doctrine of sanctification. This lacuna has in turn led to a number of assumptions concerning what type of human freedom best explains a biblically-faithful doctrine of sanctification. This dissertation endeavors to generate discussion related to the connection between one’s view of human freedom and one’s view of sanctification by arguing that one is consequential to the other.

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School professor, Tom McCall, is one of few theologians who have acknowledged the implications of one’s concept of freedom on one’s doctrine of sanctification. In a paper delivered at the 2007 Evangelical Theological Society meeting, he argued that all attempts to combine theological determinism with sanctification are exegetically and theologically inconsistent and, what is worse, pastorally insensitive. Given the constraints of a determinist model of freedom, McCall argued, for example, that the “way of escape” promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13 is incapable of offering any kind of meaningful assurance to the believer struggling with temptation. After all, “What does it mean,” asked McCall, “to say that God is ‘faithful’ to provide a way of escape when God does not, at certain times and places, either provide
such a way or make it accessible to the believer?" The intended response to McCall’s question is frighteningly apparent: God is, at best, impotent and, at worst, a liar. While I applaud McCall’s willingness to engage in this all-important discussion, I believe his premise needs revising.

McCall must also be commended for his desire to use Scripture to question compatibilism’s validity. The same cannot be said for David Ciocchi who has recently pushed for a suspension of the Divine Sovereignty vs. Human Freedom (DSF) debate altogether and decries the use of biblical exegesis as a way of opting for one model of human freedom over another. Ciocchi argues that Scripture does not endorse any one form of human freedom, and that we must first “work on the logically prior problem of determining what it is about human beings that justifies God in treating them as morally responsible agents” before we pretend to know what type of human freedom persists in this world. This dissertation takes issue with Ciocchi’s premature stance toward Scripture and attempts, in part, to refocus the debate upon Scripture as a primary means of inquiry into the true nature of human freedom.

Thesis

I argue that a compatibilist account of human freedom characterized by non-constraining causation is an essential component of the Augustinian doctrine of


progressive sanctification. Accordingly, I demonstrate that arguments like McCall’s against the incompatibility of all forms of determinism with a progressive form of sanctification, while on their surface plausible and alluring, are essentially a Potemkin village fit with a facade of caricatures that work to conceal shoddy and imprecise exegesis. My chief concern is that McCall’s indeterminist construal of freedom fails to account for both human experience and Scripture by severing the necessary connection between a person’s character and actions.

Of equal importance is what I do not seek to accomplish. My primary concern is not to answer the age-old philosophical question of what type of freedom is necessary for moral responsibility. Though convinced that a compatibilist view of human freedom offers the most satisfying way forward to date in grounding moral responsibility, solving, for example, the mounting number of nagging theological and philosophical incongruities that plague the libertarian position, I spend the bulk of my dissertation illustrating how it is that Scripture, in as much as it teaches a progressive form of sanctification, assumes a compatibilist account of freedom.

The notion of a “compatibilist account of human freedom” in the above thesis statement refers to that model of human freedom that maintains the harmony of two seemingly disparate biblical truths, namely that God rules sovereignly over the universe and that humans are genuinely free. To qualify this form of human freedom as being

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3Certainly sympathetic to the compatibilist position, I remain, like David Ciocchi, agnostic as to whether or not compatibilism is the panacea for all of the difficulties tethered to the DSF debate. See Ciocchi, “Suspending the Debate about Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” 573-90.

“characterized by non-constraining causation” is to make a distinction between necessity and constraint. Compatibilist freedom affirms that, though causally determined (i.e., necessary), a person’s decisions and actions are genuinely free given that they are not constrained. Simply put, “God’s sovereign control of human choice and action is fully compatible with our freedom in choosing and acting in accordance with our strongest inclinations and deepest desires.”

The “Augustinian doctrine of progressive sanctification” refers to the approach to sanctification and God’s grace defended by Augustine against Pelagius and restated by the Reformers against medieval semi-Pelagianism. Progressive sanctification may be defined as that “work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” With this idea may be added Hoekema’s complementary definition:

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4Bruce Ware, *God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 82.


“that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which He delivers us as justified sinners from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.”

Progressive sanctification serves as the genesis of the process of glorification (2 Cor 3:18; Phil 1:6). It is, at its core, a continuous work of God decreed by the Father (Col 3:10; 1 Thess 5:23), procured by the Son (1 Cor 1:30), and effected by the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:13). Moreover, its subject, as Packer notes, “is, not merely the Christian’s works, but the man himself, with all his faculties and dispositions, in every aspect of his character.”

That sanctification is a cooperative process involving both the believer and the Holy Spirit is perhaps best illustrated in Philippians 2:12-13. Paul’s injunction to the Philippians to “work out [their] salvation” is followed by the gracious reminder that “it is God who works in [them].” Kuyper puts it well: “When we are called to speak, act or fight we do so as though we were doing it all ourselves, not perceiving that it is Another who works in us both to will and to do.”

Thus, through a cooperative process of fleshly mortification and spiritual vivification (Eph 4:22-24), the believer’s entire nature (1 Thess 5:23) is conformed increasingly to the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29), which in turn results in a greater ability to overcome sin and temptation.

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juxtapose this Augustinian doctrine of sanctification with the Wesleyan perfectionism\textsuperscript{11} and Keswick\textsuperscript{12} models of sanctification in order to (1) underscore the ways in which it enables a more faithful reading of the text and (2) detect the ways in which it alone precludes a libertarian account of freedom.

**Background**

I first encountered the theological construct of compatibilist freedom in the writings of D. A. Carson. In his book *How Long O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, Carson writes of how Scripture affirms explicitly both God's sovereignty and man's\textsuperscript{13} free will, while being, at the same time, seemingly indifferent on exactly how the

\textsuperscript{11}By "perfection," Wesley intends a second transforming work of grace whereby a Christian is restored to the moral image of God, precipitating a consistent love for God and others, a love free from any wrong tempers and sinful motivations. Though attained in one punctilious moment of faithful surrender, entire sanctification as taught by Wesley is a dynamic state of concentrated, resolute, ever-increasing love for God. This state of perfection, according to Wesley, is the birthright of every Christian and the purpose for which man is both made and redeemed. See John Wesley, *Christian Perfection*, in *Sermons on Several Occasions [SOSO]*, ed. Albert C. Outler, The Works of John Wesley [Works], ed. Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 2:96-121. For a thorough contemporary synopsis of Wesleyan sanctification, see Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 11-49.

\textsuperscript{12}Keswick sanctification is a strand of holiness teaching that enjoyed majority support among evangelicals in the wake of early twentieth-century fundamentalism and has resisted the pull of institutionalization, preferring instead the path of relative obscurity. Thus, it was founded and has continued largely as an annual convention in the bucolic lake district town of Keswick in northwest England. Today, the Keswick convention is essentially a preaching festival committed to "the deepening of the spiritual life in individuals and church communities, through the careful exposition and application of Scripture" (Charles Price and Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick: The Keswick Convention Past, Present and Future* [Waynesboro, GA: OM, 2000], 266). Taking their cue from Rom 6:1-14, the vast majority of Keswick speakers taught that, at the point of conversion, the dominating power of sin is effectively nullified in the believer. From this truth, a formula was derived for entry into the "victorious" or "normal" Christian life, a life characterized by a gradual remodeling of one's thought processes (i.e., unknown sin) and a complete overhaul of one's outer behavior (i.e., known sin) so that, in the words of Robertson McQuilkin, "There is no pattern of gradual growth [when fighting deliberate sin], ... the normal Christian will [consistently] choose God's way" (J. Robertson McQuilkin, "The Keswick Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 180).

\textsuperscript{13}Though infrequent, the word "man" is used generically throughout this dissertation to refer to both men and women.
two coexist. Carson’s summary of compatibilism marked a watershed in my then inchoate understanding of the issues surrounding the divine sovereignty versus human freedom debate. It made possible an alternative to what I then believed was a two-way street that pitted God’s freedom against man’s.

My curiosity satisfied, I became firmly convinced of Carson’s arguments for compatibilism. It was not until my second year of Ph.D. studies that I encountered any serious attempt to discredit the veracity of the compatibilist model. In the fall of 2007, one of my professors, Gregg Allison, was asked to respond to a paper written by McCall, in which he cast doubt on compatibilism’s ability to offer a theologically responsible and pastorally sensitive answer to the believer struggling with sexual sin.14 In preparation for his response, Allison assembled a small team of students to help evaluate McCall’s bold claims. Working through the contours of McCall’s arguments, it quickly became obvious that McCall showed scant awareness of the nuances of the debate. What was less obvious at the time—but later sparked the impetus for this dissertation—was the significance of McCall’s adherence to a progressive form of sanctification while maintaining a libertarian approach to human freedom.

The following semester I took a seminar, “God and the World,” taught by Bruce Ware, which surveyed several different models of providence. For that class, I wrote a paper critiquing McCall’s use of 1 Corinthians 10:13 to establish his thesis that theological determinism is incapable of making sense of God’s promised way of escape.

In a striking display of exegetical oversight, McCall ignores completely the context of the passage. He thus fails to see how the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13, resting on the analogical relationship between the Israelites and the Corinthian believers, acts as a stern warning for the latter to eschew idolatry and as the occasion for Paul to assure the Corinthian believers of God’s faithfulness. I concluded that McCall’s awkward silence on the portending nature of 1 Corinthians 10:13—intentional or not—worked to conceal compatibilism’s unique ability to make certain God’s promised way of escape.

Pleased with my paper, Ware encouraged me to turn it into a dissertation. I initially shelved the idea of writing on this topic, having already decided to write on the shortcomings of a Keswick model of sanctification. But writing a theological critique on an intrinsically atheological movement such as Keswick proved insurmountably difficult. Nevertheless, my years of studying Keswick were not in vain as my research unveiled one undeniable fact: Keswick sanctification necessitated a strong connection to a libertarian model of freedom. To sum up my findings, Keswick’s notion that the inner disposition of believers has no bearing on their ability to appropriate by faith the indwelling power of the Spirit to overcome all conscious sin logically entails that they be free, at any moment, to choose otherwise. This discovery of Keswick’s reliance on libertarian freedom led me to revisit McCall’s seemingly naïve assumption that progressive sanctification is not adulterated when linked with a libertarian model of human freedom. And so, I concluded that just as Keswick only makes sense given libertarian freedom, so too progressive sanctification requires a necessary connection
between a person’s character and actions, something compatibilist freedom is singularly able to accommodate.

**Methodology**

To guard against clouded language that often leads to faulty conclusions, chapters 2 and 3 define the terms of our discussion. I attempt here to present accurately the distilled versions of the two most-widely held models of human freedom—Libertarianism and Compatibilism—and the three most widely-practiced models of sanctification—Wesleyan Perfectionism, Keswick, and Augustinianism.

Chapter 2 delineates clearly the differences in the two most prominent models of human freedom. In brief, libertarian freedom is the belief that genuine human freedom is incompatible with causal determinism. That is, no condition can decisively incline a person’s will in one direction over another. Consequently, a person could always have done other than he or she did.\(^\text{15}\) Compatibilism (synonymous with soft determinism) maintains that a person’s free will is compatible with the universe being deterministic. Compatibilism, like hard determinism—the idea that only one future is compatible with

\[\text{15\textendash}\text{It must not be inferred from this definition that no factors whatsoever influence an agent’s decisions, only that no factors, in and of themselves, will be sufficient to incline the will to choose one option over another. No matter how strong, libertarian freedom demands that a person always has the option to choose contrary to his or her character and desires. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as “contra-causal freedom” (Ware, God’s Greater Glory, 25), “libertarian free will” (John Sanders, The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007], 13), “freedom of indifference” (Ware, God’s Greater Glory, 86), and “significant freedom” (William L. Craig, “Middle Knowledge: A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism, ed. Clark H. Pinnock [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989], 142).}\]
the past—holds that everything is causally determined. Unlike its more rigid
counterpart, however, compatibilism claims that a person’s decisions and actions are
genuinely free so long as they are not constrained. Special interest is taken in this
chapter to show the unsavory implications of a strict adherence to libertarian freedom and
the way in which hard determinism is distinguished from a soft form of determinism or
compatibilism.

This chapter also explores the salient motivations for espousing a variation of
compatibilism associated with University of California philosophy professor John Martin
Fischer known as semicompatibilism. Semicompatibilism, sometimes labeled
“contemporary compatibilism,” aids the classical compatibilist position—not immune to
criticism—by differentiating between two kinds of freedom or control: regulative control,
which requires genuine access to alternate possibilities, and guidance control, which
involves a specific kind of guidance without requiring access to alternate possibilities.
Semicompatibilists contend that guidance control is sufficient to ground moral
responsibility.

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16Hard or “physical” determinism (i.e., event-event causation) holds that at any time (at least
right up to the very end) the universe has exactly one physically possible future. For a brief overview, see
Theological versions of hard determinism maintain that a person’s decisions and actions are always
causally determined in such a way that they are constrained by God. Precluded from such forms of
determinism, however, is that sort of human freedom required for moral responsibility.

17John S. Feinberg, No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God, Foundations of Christian
Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 635-39.

18The Consequence Argument poses perhaps the most significant threat to the compatibilist
position. For this reason, in chap. 2, I define the argument and offer ways in which classical and
semicompatibilists have sought to rebut it.
Chapter 3 examines the similarities and differences between the three most prominent models of sanctification with the purpose of showing how it is that both Wesleyan perfectionism and classic Keswick teaching demand a libertarian account of freedom while the older Augustinian model of progressive sanctification, in contrast, necessitates a compatibilist account. In one instance, I compare the Augustinian doctrine of sin with that of Wesley and Keswick. Wesley and Keswick’s notion of sin as a “voluntary transgression of a known law” is shown to externalize sanctification, unwittingly reducing it to the eradication or suppression of deliberate sinful acts and excluding the positive renewal of one’s unconscious character. Given this, I point out that only a libertarian framework built on the idea that one’s inner disposition has no determinative effect on one’s actions can buttress such a definition.

I discuss only these three models because nearly every contemporary view of sanctification can be traced to at least one of them. Also, in the one Five Views on Sanctification book that I am aware of, all three of these views are recognized as among the “major” Protestant views on sanctification and the other two—the Pentecostal and Augustinian-Dispensational perspectives—are easily traceable to one of the other three.

Chapter 4 consists of an in-depth analysis of several putative sanctification texts: Romans 7:14-8:8, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:16-17, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philippians 2:12-13, and 1 John 3:6-9. These passages were selected for three reasons: (1) together they encompass the key aspects of the New Testament doctrine of
sanctification, they receive the bulk of attention in most systematic theologies, and (3) they illustrate how compatibilism is implied in a progressive model of sanctification. Exegetical scrutiny aimed at placing each passage in its proper context is employed as a means to lay the groundwork for the final chapter. The purpose for such a lengthy exegetical analysis is to counter the current trend in the DSF debate to substitute rigorous study of the biblical text with sometimes insightful but less authoritative philosophical considerations.

Lastly, in what is the dissertation’s *raison d’être*, chapter 5 explicates ways in which the previous sanctification texts of chapter 4 assume a compatibilist framework. By contrast, the indeterminist grid is shown to fall short of offering satisfactory explanations for these same texts. My primary concern here is to exhibit how libertarianism bifurcates the close connection between one’s spiritual condition and one’s response to sin and temptation. Ware addresses this concern in the following way: “If, in our salvation, we have been granted the ‘power of contrary choice,’ then it is always the case, no matter what level of growth we’ve experienced in the Christian life, no matter

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19 Some of these “key aspects of sanctification” include, but are not limited to, God’s role in sanctification, man’s role in sanctification, the process of sanctification, positional sanctification, and corporate sanctification. For a concise listing of these aspects, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746-62.

how transformed our characters are or not, that we are able to obey just as well as to disobey."\(^{21}\)

I dedicate a large portion of chapter 5 to 1 Corinthians 10:13. I do this, not only because I believe McCall has fundamentally misunderstood this text, but because it offers one of the best test cases for the necessary connection between progressive sanctification and compatibilist freedom. First Corinthians 10:13 is shown to assume a compatibilist form of freedom in regard to theology, philosophy, and experience.

Theologically, it makes better sense of the warning passage in which it is ensconced.

Philosophically, it grounds moral responsibility by securing the link between a person’s character and conduct. And, experientially, it comforts the believer by ensuring a way of escape from temptation.

Laced throughout this dissertation are ways in which a compatibilist interpretation of ability and desire escapes the flaws of libertarianism by locating moral responsibility in the connection between who a person is and what he does, a concept Scripture everywhere maintains (Gen 18:23-26; Ps 1:6; Isa 60:21; Dan 12:3; Matt 23:28; Luke 18:14; Rom 1:17; 3:21-26; 5:1; 1 Pet 4:18; Rev 22:11).\(^{22}\) Scripture admonishes us to renew our minds (Rom 12:1-2) and character (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-10) expressly so

\(^{21}\)Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 94.

\(^{22}\)It must also be said that Scripture nowhere teaches that a person’s will is free in the sense of being outside of God’s control—an idea intrinsic to libertarian freedom. “[T]he kind of freedom,” Grudem writes, “that is demanded by those who deny God’s providential control of all things, a freedom to be outside of God’s sustaining and controlling activity, would be impossible if Jesus Christ is indeed ‘continually carrying along things by his word of power’ (Heb. 1:3, author’s translation). If this be true, then to be outside of that providential control would simply be not to exist! An absolute ‘freedom,’ totally free of God’s control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God himself” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 331). See Frame, who makes a similar argument (John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002], 140).
that as we become more like Christ, we act more like Christ. Indeed, “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9). Ware summarizes this truth well:

By the transformation of our characters, we long more and more to please the Lord, to obey his word, to follow his voice, and in all these ways we live out the true and transformed natures of our hearts. Believers, then, act out of their natures just as unbelievers do. But by grace, believers are granted new natures that are in the process of transformation necessary to alter radically the deepest inclinations and strongest longings of our hearts.

I argue that only compatibilism offers a plausible account of this kind of spiritual growth and maturity.

As mentioned above, this dissertation does not attempt to quell the long-standing metaphysical stalemate over which account of human freedom best grounds moral responsibility, nor does it treat compatibilist freedom as a scriptural fait accompli. It merely argues that apart from a proper treatment of compatibilist freedom undergirding it, the Augustinian doctrine of progressive sanctification cannot subsist and that, given this realization, libertarians must either (1) reconsider their view of human freedom if they hold to progressive sanctification or (2) reconsider their view of sanctification. What they cannot do is to perpetuate stubbornly their affinity for both libertarian freedom and progressive sanctification.

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23 Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 94.

24 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2

TWO MODELS OF HUMAN FREEDOM

A little girl sat drawing at her desk. The teacher, noticing the intense effort with which the little girl was applying to her task, asked, “What are you drawing?” “God,” replied the little girl with a confident smile. Not wanting to disappoint her but still wanting to educate the little girl, the teacher calmly explained that no one had ever seen God and, therefore, no one knew what God looked like. Unfazed by the teacher’s remark, the little girl responded—with all the bravado only a little girl who is sure of herself can muster—“They will when I’m done!”

Like the little girl’s conception of God, the problem of free will may seem, at the outset, quite manageable. After all, what could be more natural to the human experience than the ability to choose between options? Robert Frost perhaps puts it best in his short poem “The Road Not Taken”: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”¹ Few beliefs seem more axiomatic than the view of human freedom that says it is up to us to decide what path we will take in life and, consequently, that we are responsible for the outcome of whatever path we choose. When confronted by this veritable “garden of forking paths,” it is

difficult to see how anything less than the existence of alternate possibilities and agent causation is essential to our understanding of free will and responsibility.

Upon closer inspection, however, problematic questions persist with this more visceral construal of freedom. Three are worth noting: (1) To what extent is God in control of our actions if we boast absolute power to the contrary? (2) Are we to assume that God’s will is somehow absolutely contingent upon our choices?2 and (3) What if it turns out that certain notions of human freedom and a robust moral responsibility are compatible with determinism? Given these roadblocks, it will not do to endorse a merely generic construal of human freedom. Rather, one’s view of human freedom must do justice to man’s nature as well as the picture of God presented in Scripture, allowing the mysteries of God’s providence to eclipse human logic.3

I attempt two things in this chapter. First, I distinguish between the two most widely accepted views of human freedom today—libertarianism and compatibilism—detailing the lures and pitfalls of each.4 Traditionally, those who are convinced that man enjoys a genuinely free will, and that this free will conflicts with determinism, are called libertarians about free will. Compatibilists, conveniently enough, are those who remain

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2I am aware that there is a limited sense in which God is said to be contingent upon human choices and, for this reason, the qualifier, “absolutely,” is intentional. Scripture, at times, teaches that God responds to free will creatures (Exod 32), regrets his decisions (1 Sam 15:11; Gen 6:6) and even, in some cases, repents of his actions (Exod 32:14). But in no instance is God ever said to be contingent on man’s choices in such a way that his ultimate desires are thwarted.

3I do not mean by this that God’s ways are in any way illogical (e.g., the Law of Non-Contradiction applies to God as much as it does to us), only that what may appear prima facie illogical or contradictory to us is often only an apparent contradiction and completely logical to God.

4In a short section sandwiched between the two larger sections, I also define the array of seldom-held determinist derivatives to aid in clarifying what is and is not meant by compatibilist notions of freedom. For instance, it is common practice today to conflate hard and soft forms of determinism. This middle section guards against such reductionism.
unconvinced that there is any conflict between man’s free will and determinism. Second, I attempt to defend, as much as it is possible, the latter of these two views. I argue that a compatibilist model of human freedom offers the most satisfying way forward to date in grounding moral responsibility in that it solves the mounting number of nagging philosophical incongruities that plague the libertarian position. One such incongruity that plays a large role in this dissertation is libertarianism’s inability to connect one’s motives to one’s actions. Compatibilism is shown to account for this strong connection by locating freedom in what a person most desires at the time. I close by presenting two biblical texts that, if they do not teach then at the very least presuppose, a compatibilist notion of freedom and by dealing with the two most common critiques posed against both theological and philosophical forms of compatibilism.

**Libertarianism**

Libertarianism or, as it is sometimes referred to, indeterminism, is the view that human beings have free will and that it is incompatible with determinism. If, for present purposes, determinism is taken as the thesis that at any time there is only one physically possible future, libertarians deny that free will can exist in a purely deterministic universe. Theistic libertarian theorists additionally reject the claim that God

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5For use of this term, see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*, Foundations of Christian Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 626. To avoid confusion, the following discussion will focus on “mere” libertarianism. I am aware that several nuanced versions of libertarianism now exist, but have sought here to include only those arguments upon which almost all libertarians agree. For a valuable survey of the expanding literature related to the more nuanced theories of libertarian free will, see Randolph Clarke, *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

works, as a rule, unilaterally to bring about his purposes in creation. In the words of Basinger, “[Libertarians] deny that a person can ever be said to have chosen voluntarily if God has influenced this person’s decision-making process itself in such a way that he has ensured (determined) that the choice he would have her make has in fact been made.”

Such “pervasive divine intervention” nullifies the sine qua non of libertarianism, namely the Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP), the belief that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have chosen otherwise.

Libertarians hold that, given an indeterministic framework, free will creatures must have two or more alternate possibilities available to them such that—regardless of what option they choose—they could always have chosen otherwise. Plantinga defines clearly this construal of freedom:

A person is free with respect to an action A at a time t only if no causal laws and antecedent conditions determine either that he performs A at t or that he refrains from so doing. The freedom of such creatures will no doubt be limited by causal

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7See Jack Cottrell, *What the Bible Says about God the Ruler*, vol. 2, *The Doctrine of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1984), who says that God, on occasion, intervenes in the course of nature and overrides the human will to accomplish his purposes. Cottrell, then, concludes that man enjoys a relative independence (196).


9Ibid., 35.


11Classical Arminian theologian Roger Olson, in an interesting twist, argues that this ability to do otherwise is not an inherited trait but is instead a result of prevenient grace: “From the Arminian perspective prevenient grace restores free will so that humans, for the first time, have the ability to do otherwise—namely, respond in faith to the grace of God or resist it in unrepentance and disbelief. At the point of God’s call, sinners under the influence of prevenient grace have genuine free will as a gift of God; for the first time they can freely say yes or no to God. Nothing outside the self determines how they will respond” (Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006], 76).
laws and antecedent conditions. They will not be free to do just anything; even if I am free, I am not free to run a mile in two minutes. Of course my freedom is also *enhanced* by causal laws; it is only by virtue of such laws that I am free to build a house or walk on the surface of the earth. But if I am free with respect to an action A, then causal laws and antecedent conditions determine neither that I take A nor that I refrain.\(^\text{12}\)

To illustrate Plantinga’s definition, consider a devotee of organic foods, Anna Jane, who is allergic to anything modified. Her choice to buy eggs from cage-free chickens or milk from hormone-free cows is only free if she is in the same position to buy instead eggs from “caged” chickens or milk from “unhappy” cows (granted these are available options).\(^\text{13}\) Anna Jane’s ability to choose differently than she did, say libertarians, allows for “genuine” and “significant” freedom.

Moreover, libertarians hold that Anna Jane’s decision to choose the organic alternative is made without any interference, coercion, or predetermination outside herself. Accordingly, to say that her decision was decisively influenced, however small, by an external agent or force acting upon her is to obviate her independence. Put simply by Geisler, “[H]umans are the first cause of their own moral actions. If humans were not the first cause of their own free actions, then the actions would not be their actions.”\(^\text{14}\)

True human freedom and responsibility, it is argued, rely upon the extent to which

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\(^\text{13}\)The absence of such non-organic items raises another issue to which we will turn later, namely the need to distinguish between ability and desire. In this case, though Anna Jane may have the desire to buy non-organic eggs and milk, she is unable to do so due to their unavailability. Thus, she is not free with respect to the non-organic items.

humans are ultimately responsible for their actions. More precisely, their wills are the only necessary and sufficient condition required for genuine freedom to subsist.

In this light, libertarians claim that no cause—one’s will notwithstanding—is sufficient to incline a person’s decision in one direction rather than another. That is, no internal (e.g., psychological or physiological) or external (e.g., government opposition, physical malady, geographical location, or God) hindrance decisively inclines a person’s will in one direction over another. But, as libertarians are quick to acknowledge, to say that free actions have no sufficient cause is not to say that they lack causes or conditions altogether. Reichenbach clarifies, “Though certain causal conditions are present and indeed are necessary for persons to choose or act, if they are free these causal conditions are not sufficient to cause them to choose or act.”

Libertarians argue, for instance, that Anna Jane’s decision to choose organic dairy products is far from capricious; instead, numerous personal reasons—her love of chickens, her desire to remain in good standing with her fellow Sierra Club members, and so forth—influenced her decision. Yet her decision is not required by these reasons. The freedom of her decision is maintained in that none of the reasons is decisive enough to determine her choice of organic over non-organic foods. If she wants, say, to save some money by buying the store-brand milk, she is free to do so.

Finally, libertarians maintain that God limits himself with respect to his creation, including free human creatures. This “self-limitation,” in the words of Basinger, means that

God has chosen to create a world in which humans have been granted the power to exercise pervasive, morally significant freedom of choice (and thus action) and that God cannot unilaterally ensure that humans exercising free choice will make the decisions he would have them make (and thus act as he would have them act).\textsuperscript{16}

Though God could have created a world in which he was the divine playwright, he chose instead to “bring into existence a universe inhabited by free-will creatures whose decisions would to some extent determine the whole picture.”\textsuperscript{17} This divine gambit is thus viewed by libertarians as a necessary consequence of indeterminist freedom. Accordingly, “In choosing to create such beings with minds and wills, God sovereignly limits himself by allowing them to use these gifts as a means of self-determination.”\textsuperscript{18} And so, as Basinger suggests, libertarians “must ultimately view God in a very real sense as a risk-taker. The God of [libertarians] hopes that individuals will always freely choose


\textsuperscript{17}Cottrell, What the Bible Says about God the Ruler, 228. Arguing for divine self-limitation, Cottrell avoids any trace of meticulous divine providence: “When God decided to create anything, his sovereign choice to create was a choice to limit himself. . . . He could have chosen the determinist model if he had so willed. But he did not. Instead he chose a self-limiting form of government in which his creatures have been endowed with a measure of self-determination. . . . In choosing to create such beings with minds and wills, God sovereignly limits himself by allowing them to use these gifts as a means of self-determination” (Cottrell, What the Bible Says about God the Ruler, 187-88). Roger Olson also makes the case that God’s sovereign control extends only so far: “God can and does exercise control, but not to the exclusion of human liberty” (Olson, Arminian Theology, 117). In saying this, Olson agrees with the long-standing Arminian belief that God’s providential control over human history is \textit{de jure} (i.e, by right or law), that is, it is at present only partially \textit{de facto} (Olson, Arminian Theology, 117).

\textsuperscript{18}Cottrell, What the Bible Says about God the Ruler, 188.
to do what he would have them do. But for the [libertarian] there can be no assurance that they will do so.”

So far, I have detailed the putative tenets of libertarianism to which most all libertarians would agree. The next section proceeds in two stages. The first stage outlines the three strongest arguments in favor of libertarianism: intuitive appeal, rational appeal, and the grounding of moral responsibility. The second stage lays out two of the most vexing questions confronting libertarians today: (1) What if, as compatibilists claim, we can be held morally responsible for our actions even if those actions were in some sense determined? and (2) if no causal antecedent, law of nature, or other factor is sufficient to incline our decisions in one direction over another, are our decisions purely arbitrary? Finally, I look at ways libertarians have sought to answer the problems of compatibility and arbitrariness.

**Intuitive appeal.** In his short story, *Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky deconstructs the world through the lens of a haplessly tormented man struggling to define himself. Musing on the mechanical nature of science and its tendency to atomize man, the nameless narrator concludes that even free will will one day be explained in strictly determinist terms:

> And since all wishing and reasoning can actually be tabulated, because one day the laws that govern our so-called free will are bound to be discovered, then—all jokes aside—some sort of graph will be drawn up, so that we shall indeed be wishing according to this graph. For, let us say, if some day they will calculate and prove to me that, if I stuck my tongue out at someone, it was because I could not help but do it, and that I inevitably had to stick it out precisely to a certain length, then what

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remains to me of freedom. . . . Why, in that case I should be able to calculate my whole life in advance for thirty years! In short, if that is how it will be, there will be nothing left for us to do; we shall have to accept whatever comes. 20

While slightly exaggerated, the ruminations of Dostoevsky’s troubled narrator illustrates the seeming counterintuitiveness of determinism and the fears it elicits. What are we to make of free will if all our actions are tabulated in advance? Can “genuine” and “significant” freedom be possible given that we must supinely “accept whatever comes”? That our moral intuition is seemingly incompatible with determinism strongly argues, so say libertarians, for indeterminist freedom. Thus, Descartes: “[It] would be absurd to doubt that of which we inwardly experience and perceive as existing within ourselves.” 21

In addition, libertarians argue that the mere process of deliberation points to the viability of several equally obtainable options. 22 We feel as if we have choices. Rather than work on this chapter, I feel as if I could go to the gym to workout or perhaps read the latest Lincoln biography sitting on my bookshelf. And, as Reichenbach makes clear, “choice makes sense only if we can meaningfully select between the options, if we could have chosen or acted differently.” 23 That said, most libertarians would caution against making libertarian freedom a fait accompli based upon intuitive appeal. For


22Viewing moral intuition as an aspect of the image of God, Walls argues that moral intuition is best approached in terms of common grace. God, in this sense, has graced all humanity with this gift in order for them to live together in society. See Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, Why I Am Not a Calvinist (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 105.

23Reichenbach, God Limits His Power, 103.
them, the intuitive conviction of agent causation is simply "one that we are entitled to take seriously and to treat with great respect as we formulate our answer to the question of freedom and necessity."  

**Rational appeal.** A second argument in favor of libertarian freedom is that it alone comports with the principles of sound reasoning. First theorized by Hasker, the argument—in its most distilled form—holds that physical determinism is inimical to rational thought. The argument unfolds as follows:

1. Every thought or belief accepted by a person is a result of that person's brain being in a corresponding state.

2. We assume, provisionally, that the physical indeterminacy which exists at the quantum level makes no perceptible difference in the overall functioning of the brain. So that, the brain functions, in effect, as a deterministic system.

3. Every brain state, and therefore every thought and belief of the person, is fully determined by the physical functioning of the brain in accordance with the deterministic laws of physics.

Given this, Hasker asks the following rhetorical question: "Is it not evident, on this supposition, that rational thinking is an impossibility?" After all, what is rational thinking if not guided by rational insight, if guided instead by the morally and rationally

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25Hasker, of course, confines his remarks to physical determinism. But this is very different from accusing all determinists of lacking rationality. His conflation of physical determinism with determinism proper is a common mistake and will be discussed in further detail later.


27Ibid., 48.
bereft physical laws that govern the make-up and function of the human brain? Such insight, though it may arrive at correct conclusions due to fortuity, is far from what most would consider rational, especially in terms of human experience. Libertarianism, according to those like Hasker, thus offers the only rational way forward.

**A ground for moral responsibility.** The third and perhaps most persuasive argument for libertarian freedom is that moral responsibility requires it. To demonstrate the way in which libertarian freedom best accounts for moral responsibility, a courtroom analogy is often given. It is argued, for example, that a person convicted of murder is morally culpable only if sufficient evidence is forthcoming to prove "efficient cause"—until enough evidence is garnered to show that the agent is the sole cause and not a mere instrument that, say, God appropriates for his purposes. Any other form of freedom, says Geisler, "makes God immoral and makes humans amoral."28

Implied further in the idea that persons are to be held morally responsible for their actions is that, given a set of circumstances, they could have acted differently than they did. This ability to act differently, argues Reichenbach, is precisely why American criminal law demarcates between murder and manslaughter. A person is charged with murder when, despite his ability to do otherwise, he deliberately chooses to murder. Manslaughter, on the other hand, is handed down when, due to mitigating factors beyond

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28Geisler, "God Knows All Things," 75.
the person’s control—acting out of self-defense or a diminished mental state—someone is murdered. Though murder is committed in both instances, only the former is said to warrant incrimination in that no mitigating factors precluded the person from freely choosing to take another’s life. 29

**Libertarianism on Trial**

Libertarian freedom contains much that is appealing. Not only does it satisfy the unwritten laws of moral intuition and rationality, but it also grounds moral responsibility in an agent’s ability to do otherwise. In what follows, I present in question form the two primary lines of argument against libertarian free will and typical libertarian responses.

**The compatibility problem.** *What if, as compatibilists claim, we can be held morally responsible for our actions even if those actions were in some sense determined?* The thrust of this question hinges on the truth or falsity of determinism. If determinism in any form is shown to be true, libertarian freedom is ineluctably false. To make matters worse, this threat to libertarianism in no way jeopardizes compatibilism, which holds that free will is not compromised by the possible truth of determinism. Here, it is worth noting that recent scholarship has cast considerable doubt on the view that moral responsibility is only possible given an indeterminist construal of freedom. John Martin

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29Reichenbach, *God Limits His Power*, 104.
Fischer, for one, cogently argues that genuine access to alternate possibilities need not of necessity be a concomitant to holding a person morally responsible. In a variation on compatibilism that he labels *semicompatibilism*, Fischer differentiates between two kinds of control: regulative control, which requires genuine access to alternate possibilities, and guidance control, which involves a specific kind of guidance without requiring access to alternate possibilities. Guidance control, Fischer contends, is sufficient to ground moral responsibility. More will be said about this modified version of compatibilism in the section on compatibilist freedom.

As one might expect, libertarian responses to this problem of compatibility largely center on proving the indefensibility of determinism. To this end, Peter Van Inwagen has produced perhaps the soundest and most well-documented rebuttal of determinism. He states informally his "Consequence Argument" as follows:

> If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born;

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30Fischer, “Compatibilism,” 44-84; idem, “Frankfurt-type Examples and Semicompatibilism,” in The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 281-308; idem, “Freedom and Actuality,” in Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 236-54; idem, “Responsibility and Control,” 174-90. For further discussion on how freedom and responsibility are not predicated on one’s ability to do otherwise and are instead determined by one’s desires that in turn shape one’s actions, see Scott C. Warren’s provocative article, “Ability and Desire: Reframing Debates Surrounding Freedom and Responsibility,” *JETS* 52 (September 2009): 551-67. Here, Warren asserts that “[t]he certainty [that humans will sin] does not stem from an inability to do otherwise, but from the fundamentally sinful desires of the natural human heart. The critical indictment of Scripture is not that humans are weak, but that they are wicked. . . . The essential problem is not that sinners cannot do what they must, but that they will not do what they can. As such, they are rightly held guilty for their sin” (560, emphasis mine). See also Calvin, who writes, “Man will then be spoken of as having this sort of free decision, not because he has free choice equally of good and evil, but because he acts wickedly by will, not by compulsion” (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.7, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC [Louisville: Westminster, 1960], 1:264).

The strength of the Consequence Argument lies in its rhetorical force. It defangs, in a few pithy sentences, the compatibilist argument by underscoring the indefensibility of determinism. It maintains that determinism cannot be true if free will consists in the power to do otherwise. Indeed, to say, as does Van Inwagen, that “it is not up to us what went on before we were born” nor “is it up to us what the laws of nature are” is to say that it is beyond our control to alter the predetermined consequences of our actions. In other words, \textit{we cannot do otherwise than we actually do}, which, in essence, renders free will a chimera.

More recently, some have sought to append Van Inwagen’s Consequence Argument, which focuses almost entirely on one’s ability to do otherwise, by shifting the focus to the second essential element of libertarianism: agent causation. Calling the Consequence Argument’s narrow focus “too thin a basis”\footnote{Robert Kane, “Libertarianism,” in \textit{Four Views on Free Will}, ed. Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 13.} to establish the case for the incompatibility of free will and determinism, Robert Kane argues that ultimate responsibility lies, not only in one’s ability to do otherwise, but also in one’s being
responsible for “anything that is a sufficient cause or motive for the action’s occurring.”

Kane continues, “If a choice issues from, and can be sufficiently explained by an agent’s character and motives (together with background conditions), then to be ultimately responsible for the choice, the agent must be at least in part responsible by virtue of choices or actions voluntarily performed in the past for having the character and motives he or she now has.” Thus, the advantage of “ultimate responsibility” over arguments solely reliant upon alternate possibilities is that not every act done of our own free wills must have an equally plausible alternative, only those acts that formed our present characters. This, in effect, says Kane, allows us to freely choose based upon our character and desires while locating ultimate responsibility in our own actions.

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33Ibid., 14.

34Ibid. Eleonore Stump, in her analysis of Augustine on free will, gives a similar necessary condition for one’s choice to be considered free: “[A]n agent acts with free will, or is morally responsible for an act, only if her own intellect and will are the sole ultimate source or first cause of her act” (Eleonore Stump, “Augustine on Free Will,” in Cambridge Companion to Augustine, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 126). For a reasoned response to Stump’s claim, see Lynne Baker “Why Should Christians Not Be Libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge,” Faith and Philosophy 20 (October 2003): 469-70, who disputes Stump’s tendency to equivocate over who is de facto the first cause of our choices, God or man.

35Kane, “Libertarianism,” 13-16. See also Robert Kane, “Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates,” in The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3-41; idem, “Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism,” in Agency and Responsibility: Essays on the Metaphysics of Freedom, ed. Laura W. Ekstrom (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 158-80; idem, The Significance of Free Will (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). If Kane’s version of libertarianism seems oddly similar to Fisher’s semicompatibilism, that is because, in many ways, it is. Hasker, for one, observes this similarity: “I believe, in fact, that the strategy of DK [Dennett, Kane]-libertarianism at this point is basically a compatibilist strategy. The compatibilist recognizes that straightforward determination of actions by external causes negates freedom and responsibility. His answer to this is to display the causal chains as interwoven, in subtle and complex ways, with the inner life of the agent. Similarly, the DK-libertarian recognizes that straightforward determination either by sufficient causation or by chance is inimical to freedom and responsibility. And the response is similar: the causation and the randomness are shown as being interwoven in complex ways with the agent’s inner life, with the chance events actually occurring within the agent’s nervous system” (William Hasker, The Emergent Self [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999], 99).
The intellectual problem. If no causal antecedent, law of nature, or other factor is sufficient to incline a person’s decision in one direction over another, is the decision purely arbitrary? Dubbed by Kane the “intellectual problem” of libertarianism, the gordian knot of arbitrary choice is one that libertarians have found increasingly difficult to cut.36 Thus, it poses perhaps the greatest risk to the coherency of their view. Ware captures the spirit of the problem:

36“The logical incoherence of an indeterminist framework has been adequately criticized by a number of authors. Frame, for one, presents a list of eighteen reasons why indeterminism, characterized by a brazen form of libertarian freedom, is wholly inconsistent. Among the reasons Frame gives are (1) “Scripture teaches that in heaven, the consummate state of human existence, we will not be free to sin. So the highest state of human existence will be a state without libertarian freedom.” (2) “In civil courts, libertarian freedom is never assumed to be a condition of moral responsibility.” For, if it were, “[it] would make it impossible to prove the guilt of anybody at all.” (3) “Libertarianism is inconsistent, not only with God’s foreordination of all things, but also with his knowledge of future events. If God knew in 1930 that I would wear a green shirt on July 21, 1998, then I am not free to avoid wearing such a shirt on that date. Now libertarians make the point that God can know future events without causing them. But if God in 1930 knew the events of 1998, on what basis did he know them?” (Frame, The Doctrine of God, 141, 143). Or, to take Frame’s argument a step further, on what basis could God change these events, say, in response to a person’s prayers? Cottrell, for example, falls prey to such an inconsistency when he writes, “For if God foreknows all the choices that every person will make, he can make his own plans accordingly, fitting his purposes around these foreknown decisions and actions” (Cottrell, What the Bible Says about God the Ruler, 208). Since what God foreknows is fixed, it would seem a priori impossible for such an event to be changed. Cottrell, along with most Arminians, simply fails to see the logic in this. Helm also shows the absurdity of such a position with respect to salvation: “It is hard to see how one can hold both (a) that God’s goodness is effective in the way that . . . verses [on conversion in Scripture (1 Thess 1:5; Rom 1:6; 9:11; 1 Cor 1:9; Eph 4:4; 2 Tim 2:5; Eph 2:8)] describe (i.e., that it is causally sufficient for making a person a Christian) and (b) that people have indeterministic freedom to choose whether or not to be converted. It would certainly be possible to hold that there are many indeterministic choices but that Christian conversion does not include any, though this is not a view that is readily found in the history of Christian thought” (Paul Helm, The Providence of God, Contours of Christian Theology, ed. Gerald Bray [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 50). For further discussion of the logical incoherence of libertarian free will, see Terrance Tiessen, Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World? (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 313, 331, and Bruce Ware, God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 85-88. Others have decided that such an inconsistency is too great a hurdle, granting God a middle knowledge (i.e., the knowledge of counterfactuals within a libertarian framework) to explain how he could alter future events. For a lucid treatment of a traditional middle knowledge (Molinist) position, see Thomas P. Flint, Divine Providence: The Molinist Account (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 35-71, and William L. Craig, “The Middle Knowledge View,” in Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 119-43. But, as some have shown, this position is not without its faults, not the least of which is its continued adherence to a libertarian form of freedom. Some of the more insightful critiques of middle knowledge have come from Robert Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” American Philosophical Quarterly 14 (1977): 109-17, and William Hasker, God, Time, and Knowledge (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press); idem, “Response to Thomas Flint,” Philosophical Studies 60 (1991): 117-26. For those detailing a nuanced version of this position, which incorporates compatibilist freedom, see Ware, God’s Greater Glory, 113-30 and Tiessen, Providence & Prayer, 289-336.
If at the moment that an agent chooses A, with all things being just what they are when the choice is made, he could have chosen B, or not-A, then it follows that any reason or set of reasons for why the agent chooses A would be the identical reason or set of reasons for why instead the agent might have chosen B, or not-A.37

And if an identical set of reasons prevail for why the agent chose B over A, it seems that all decision-making reduces to wanton choice.38 This “liberty of indifference,” as Edwards called it, is precisely the kind of freedom those like Carl Henry excoriate:

Nearly all scholars who oppose predestination by emphasizing responsibility offer no theory of human responsibility. The fact is, that man does not have nor has he ever had, the freedom to decide and act in a manner that contradicts all his indicated decisions and deeds. What defines human nature is not the power of arbitrary decision and unpredictable action, but rather man’s ability to act in view of reason and motive and hence in accord with character. To define human freedom as the power to act arbitrarily would equate freedom with unrestrained, capricious and random action. Humanity defined in terms of the Pelagian “liberty of indifference,” that is of man’s ability in each action to totally reverse his course and to be today the living contradiction of all that he was yesterday, reflects an abnormal and subrational rather than normative human experience. That sort of “free will” would make responsibility impossible. Responsible free agency consists in rational self-determination. To be morally responsible man needs only the capacity for choice, not the freedom of contrary choice.39

37Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 85-86. See also Tiessen, who makes a similar argument (Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 313).

38David Ciocchi points out that no contemporary libertarian holds to the idea that each libertarian-free choice is made between options that are *equiprobable*, that is, options that both have a .5 probability of being chosen. Instead, they believe, according to Ciocchi, that libertarian-free choices exhibit *variable-probability*, that is, they may have a string of reasons why one option is more probable than another (personal correspondence). Given Ciocchi’s remarks, I am heartened by the fact that many libertarian theorists are beginning to embrace the common sense notion that one’s character and circumstances at the time greatly influence a person’s decision. Still, no libertarian that I am aware of holds that a particular set of reasons is *sufficient* to incline decisively a person’s decision in one direction over another. And this inability to maintain choice-determining preferences in every case, still leaves room for a residual arbitrariness.

Hinted at in Henry’s comments is the mutually agreed upon reality that human agents have the capacity to choose and that their actions are self-determined. Where libertarians and compatibilists disagree, however, is over the nature of this free choice. Libertarians argue that no matter how strong the forces that act upon an agent’s will, the agent, though faced with identical reasons for choosing one scenario over another, can still act contrary to those forces. It is this freedom of contrary choice, say libertarians, that allows for responsible free agency. Compatibilists, like Henry, on the other hand, argue that, if not first rational, responsible free agency is an absolute fiction: “Responsible free agency consists in rational self-determination” (emphasis mine).40 Since responsibility is predicated upon freedom that is rational, libertarians are faced with the unpleasant conclusion that the freedom they espouse devolves into arbitrariness and, for this reason, fails to ground moral responsibility.

Libertarian responses to the charge of arbitrariness range from the interminably complex and esoteric to almost complete denial. To avoid unnecessary confusion and remain true to my goal of chronicling the more standard libertarian theories, I will focus here on the latter. Denying the charge of arbitrariness, Cottrell offers the following riposte:

One does not have to be indifferent in order to be able to choose between opposites. The choices may not at all be equally appealing to him, and he may have a much stronger inclination to choose one over the other. Desires, motives, influences, and circumstances are all important factors in the distribution of preferences. One does not choose in a vacuum. But this does not mean that we are helpless in the face of

40Ibid.
circumstances and slaves to our own desires and motives. Sometimes a person chooses the more difficult course; sometimes he goes against his deepest desires and opts for duty; sometimes after much persuasion he may reverse his decision. As long as there is this possibility, there is freedom.41

Cottrell, like most libertarians, is adamant that our decisions, while not entirely contingent on preferences, contain inequitable desires and motives. In other words, we may have a perfectly reasonable explanation for why we do what we do. All that is required is that, say, after much deliberation we decide to change course, we could reverse our decision. Nor are our decisions “slaves to our own desires and motives.” As Cottrell notes, we often opt for duty over desire. Though I may deeply desire a new mountain bike and be able to generate a creative string of justifications for my purchase, I know that given my current budget and the cost of my upcoming wedding, such a purchase would be unwise. Because we commonly choose contrary to our deepest desires, say libertarians like Cottrell, freedom must inhere not in our preferences but in our ability to do other than we did.

41Cottrell, *What the Bible Says about God the Ruler*, 193-94. Similar to Cottrell, Olson avers that “[w]hen an agent (a human or God) acts freely in the libertarian sense, nothing outside the self (including physical realities within the body) is causing it; the intellect or character alone rules over the will and turns it one way or another. Deliberation and then choice are the only determining factors, although factors such as nature and nurture, and divine influence come into play. [Libertarians] do not believe in absolute free will; the will is always influenced and situated in a context. Even God is guided by his nature and character when making decisions. But [libertarians] deny that creaturely decisions and actions are controlled by God or any force outside the self” (Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 75, emphasis mine). Olson’s comments may prima facie appear contradictory, if not for the all-important caveat that no influences decisively incline one’s will to choose a particular alternative over another. Thus, even though he claims that a myriad factors may influence a person’s decision, he can say that no creaturely action is “controlled by God or any force outside the self.” See also Hasker, who argues that, despite actions being motivated by “rewards, punishments and the like,” libertarians reject the maxim that “we always act on the strongest motive” (Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 44).
In the end, libertarian freedom is initially attractive in many respects, yet, upon further reflection, its arguments are hardly incontrovertible. It accounts for human intuition, yet fails to explain why one intuitively acts on one’s strongest motives. It grounds moral responsibility in one’s ability to do otherwise, yet fails to explain why moral responsibility requires alternatives. And finally, it allows one to be the “author of his own story,” yet fails to explain why one’s choices are not purely arbitrary since no sufficient reason can be given for why he chose one option over another. Even avowed libertarian Robert Kane admits to the weakness of libertarianism at this juncture:

A residual arbitrariness seems to remain in all self-forming choices since the agents cannot in principle have sufficient or conclusive prior reasons for making one option and one set of reasons prevail over the other. There is some truth to this objection also, but again I think it is a truth that tells us something important about free will. It tells us that every undetermined self-forming free choice is the initiation of what might be called a value experiment whose justification lies in the future and is not fully explained by past reasons.

Just how valuable the libertarian experiment is remains to be seen. At present, its theistic adherents trumpet its unique ability to permit a God free of “moral ambiguity.” For those like Olson and contemporary Wesleyan philosopher Jerry Walls, because it is impossible to reconcile God’s goodness with any form of determinism, libertarianism is valued as the only form of freedom capable of encapsulating the loving, merciful,

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42Kane, “Libertarianism,” 40.

43Ibid., 41.
morally transparent God of the Bible. But what about God's greatness? What about the picture of God in Scripture as meticulously sovereign? We now turn to the view of freedom that triages these questions as of first importance.

**Determinism**

Determinism is the view that "every event or state of affairs is brought about by antecedent events or states of affairs in accordance with universal causal laws that govern the world." Put simply, determinism teaches that there is exactly one physically possible future. It resembles, in the iconic words of William James, an "iron block":

> It professes that those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the other parts shall be. The future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb: the part we call the present is compatible with only one totality. Any other future complement than the one fixed from eternity is impossible. The whole is in each and every part, and welds it with the rest into an absolute unity, an iron block, in which there can be no equivocation or shadow of turning.

James's definition codifies much of the determinist position. It asserts that (1) every event has a sufficient cause ("those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and decree what the other parts shall be"), (2) there are no such things as alternate possibilities ("[t]he future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb"), (3) given access to all antecedent conditions, one can predict with full accuracy the

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46 William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Paternoster, 1923), 150.
subsequent history ("[a]ny other future complement than the one fixed from eternity is impossible"), and (4) chance is an illusion ("[t]he whole is in each and every part . . . in which there can be no equivocation or shadow of turning").

Though a gestalt determinism exists, it is far from monochromatic. It comes in an array of colorful variations, each exemplifying parts of James’s definition above. I discriminate between five separate types of determinism: theological determinism, fatalism, hard determinism, hard incompatibilism, and soft determinism. Some will be explored in greater detail later, some receive only passing mention, yet all are important in understanding how arguing from a generic notion of determinism is irresponsible at best. This is my reason for including this section. It is not to place the determinist model of freedom on equal footing with libertarianism and compatibilism. Adherence to strict determinism is rare among philosophers and theologians, yet it provides a useful mechanism by which compatibilism, in particular, can be more accurately represented.

**Theological determinism**

Einstein once quipped, “God doesn’t play dice.” This, in essence, is the mantra of theological determinism. Nothing is left to chance. Only one future is possible because God determines all that happens. Or, since God knows his creation perfectly, including man’s desires, only the course of events he knows will happen will indeed happen.

Theological determinism distinguishes itself from that brand of determinism that relates strictly to the material world or natural sciences. Materialists contend that human actions operate according to the same mechanistic laws that govern the physical
universe—a thesis firmly rejected by theological determinists. Theological determinists counter that all events, human or otherwise, are the result of God’s meticulous providence such that every occasion has a unique and divinely ordained outcome. Thus, parallels to Laplacian and Russellian determinism that promulgate universal causation are to be rejected.

**Fatalism**

An extreme version of determinism, fatalism embodies Dostoevsky’s dictum that man will one day be forced to “accept whatever comes.” By fatalism is meant a system in which all events are inevitable; human choice is sacrificed on the alter of a Stoic form of fate. There is no such thing as a “chance” encounter. Chance is just

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47 Calvin underscores this truth in his *Institutes*: “[B]ecause we know that the universe was established especially for the sake of mankind, we ought to look for this purpose in his governance [of mankind] also. . . . Let them now say that man is moved by God according to the inclination of his nature, but that he himself turns that motion whither he pleases. Nay, if that were truly said, the free choice of his ways would be in man’s control. . . . Indeed, Scripture, to express more plainly that nothing at all in the world is undertaken without his determination, shows that things most fortuitous are subject to him” (Calvin *Institutes* 1.16.6).

48 Universal causation, as enunciated by Laplace, claims that “we should envision the present state of the universe like the effect of its previous state and the cause of the state to come” (translation mine, Pierre-Simon Laplace, *Théorie Analytique des Probabilités*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. [Paris: Courcier, 1814], ii). Russell echoes Laplace, writing, “There are such invariable relations between different events at the same or different times that, given the state of the whole universe throughout any finite time, however short, every precious and subsequent event can theoretically be determined as a function of the given events during that time” (Bertrand Russell, “On the Notion of Cause,” in *Our Knowledge of the External World* [London: Open Court, 1914], 221).

49 As Grudem suggests, fatalism is in stark contrast to the God of the Bible who is presented as a personal God in relationship with personal creatures. And for this reason alone, it must—on purely theological grounds—be rejected. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 674.

another name for undiscovered causes.\textsuperscript{51} Despite the operose efforts of the most determined, one’s destiny is set to play out like the musical score for a player piano—exactly as it was composed. For theological fatalists, God is the composer.\textsuperscript{52} Systems of this sort teach that even God is helpless against the inescapable forces of fate, arguing, for example, that God was constrained to actualize our world as it was the only option available to him.\textsuperscript{53}

**Hard Determinism**

In contradistinction to fatalism, hard determinists deny that all events are subject to the same kind of inevitability that plagues the fatalist position. Rather, they hold that, though causally determined, the future is not independent of human effort. Adolf Grünbaum explains,

> The mere fact that both fatalism and determinism affirm the fixity or determinedness of future outcomes has led some indeterminists to infer fallaciously that determinism is committed to the futility of *all* human effort. The determinist maintains that existing causes determine or fix whether certain efforts will in fact be made at certain times, while allowing that future outcomes are indeed dependent on our efforts in particular contexts. By contrast, the fatalist holds falsely that such outcomes are always independent of all human efforts. But the determinist’s claim of the fixity of the outcome does not entail that the outcome is independent of our efforts. Hence determinism does not allow the deduction that human intervention or exertion is futile in every case.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51}Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 164.

\textsuperscript{52}For one who argues that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are incompatible, see Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness*. Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion. New York: Schocken, 1970.

\textsuperscript{53}Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 633.

That said, hard determinism, while still dependent on human effort, constrains the agent in such a way that his freedom is, for all intents, denuded of any real significance. Consider again our happy-cow-loving friend, Anna Jane. Imagine that she is calmly standing in the dairy aisle, eyes glazed over by the colorful selection of hormone-free organic milks. At which time, she is suddenly accosted and placed at gunpoint by a crazed non-organic dairy farmer murderously upset over his fledgling dairy business. The farmer then gives Anna Jane an ultimatum: “Choose my variety of non-organic milk or else.” Now, in one sense, Anna Jane has the freedom to choose organic over non-organic milk, yet, in another equally real sense, her freedom—granted she values her life!—is constrained such that she really has no choice but to concede to the demands of the demented farmer. Given this series of events, to say that Anna Jane was responsible for choosing non-organic milk is, on the one hand, true yet, on the other, patently unfair. She was forced into doing so. And so, it would seem that her freedom was nullified in any serious sense of the term.

**Hard Incompatibilism**

Deserving of passing mention, hard incompatibilism argues that, due to the physical realities of our universe, we lack the sort of free will required for moral responsibility. And we lack this free will regardless of the truth of determinism. The evolutionary offspring of Spinoza’s hard determinism, hard incompatibilism transcends the more narrow hard determinist claim that we lack free will *because* the world is deterministic, maintaining instead that we lack free will *irrespective* of whether the world is deterministic. In addition, hard incompatibilists aver the truth of certain forms of
incompatibilism\textsuperscript{55}—the view that free will is incompatible with the world being deterministic—despite retaining serious doubts whether we have the sort of free will required for moral responsibility.\textsuperscript{56}

**Soft Determinism**

Soft determinism eschews the hard determinist claim that free human effort is safeguarded regardless of whether it is forced.\textsuperscript{57} It claims instead that a person’s decisions and actions are genuinely free so long as they are not constrained. So, while in concert with the hard determinist idea that everything is causally determined,\textsuperscript{58} soft

\textsuperscript{55}Pereboom, for instance, opts for what he terms source incompatibilism as opposed to that style of incompatibilism explained in terms of alternate possibilities or leeway incompatibilism. Source incompatibilism, in his words, grounds moral responsibility in an action’s causal history in which the agent is source of that action. For more discussion of the differences between these two types of incompatibilism, see Derk Pereboom, “Hard Incompatibilism,” in *Four Views on Free Will*, ed. Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 85-86.


\textsuperscript{57}Because of its close connection to compatibilism, soft determinism is examined in more detail in the following section on compatibilist freedom.

\textsuperscript{58}In the free will debate, it is common for theological incompatibilists to conflate soft and hard determinism. In so doing, they exhibit great acuity in arguing against a hard form of determinism in which all human action is coerced. Their skill in refuting soft determinism, however, is rather disappointing. For examples of incompatibilists wrongly conflating soft determinism with hard determinism, see Norman Geisler, “God Knows All Things,” in *Predestination and Free Will*, ed. David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 61-98; Bruce Reichenbach, “God Limits His Power,” in *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, ed. David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 99-140; and Tom McCall, “The Metaphysics of Sanctification and the Problems of Pastoral Care: Questioning Theological Determinism,” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, 17 November 2007), 3-6.
determinism asserts that one’s free will is compatible with the universe being deterministic if one is allowed to choose according to one’s deepest desire at the time.

**Compatibilism**

Compatibilism, synonymous with *soft determinism*, stands alongside libertarianism as the other major position *vis-à-vis* human freedom. It is the view that, though everything is causally determined, some actions are free. For the purposes of this chapter, I will delineate between three strands of compatibilism. I take *classical* compatibilism (CC) to be that strand that is most clearly expressed in the philosophical writings of Jonathan Edwards. By *contemporary* compatibilism or *semicompatibilism* (SC), I mean that more nuanced strand representative of the Frankfurt and Fischer school. The third strand, *theological* compatibilism (TC), is taken as that strand which posits God, not material forces, as the ultimate determiner of all human choices.

**Classical Compatibilism**

Classical compatibilism is the philosophical thesis that free actions are compatible with causal conditions precisely because true freedom and responsibility rest

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59 Compatibilists do not claim that all actions are free in the compatibilist sense of free. As noted above, actions are, by definition, unfree if forced by factors, whether neurological or otherwise, that incline a person to act against his or her will. This, of course, is the case regardless of which type of freedom one espouses.

60 The use of the word “strand” here is intentional, lest anyone imagine these three concepts as having little in common. My main concern in using this taxonomy of “strands” is to bring clarity to the debate by separating the “old” from the “new,” and the more “theological” from the strictly “philosophical.” There is, of course, considerable overlap between each “strand.”

61 For use of the terms “classical” and “contemporary” to demarcate some of the differences internal to what may *prima facie* appear as a gestalt compatibilist notion of freedom, see David M. Ciocchi, “Suspending the Debate about Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” *JETS* 51 (September 2008): 573-90.
in an agent’s ability to do what he most wants to do. This freedom of inclination, moreover, is one characterized by non-constraining causation.

To qualify this form of human freedom as being characterized by non-constraining causation is to make a distinction between necessity and constraint.

Compatibilist freedom affirms that though causally determined (i.e., necessary), a person’s decisions and actions are genuinely free given that they are not constrained.

Feinberg summarizes this form of freedom as follows:

Soft determinism says that genuine free human action is compatible with causal conditions that decisively incline the will without constraining it. The causal conditions are sufficient to move the agent to choose one option over another, but the choice and resultant action are free as long as the person acts without constraint. Acting under constraint means that one is forced to act contrary to one’s wishes or desires. Acting without constraint means acting in accord with one’s wishes or desires. So, an act is free, though causally determined, if it is what the agent wanted to do.

He elaborates further on the source of one’s desires,

Various factors, including the agent’s character and experiences as well as the circumstances surrounding the choice, may have produced the desires she has, but as long as the choice is made in accord with those desires, it is considered free. The agent has mental and volitional ability to choose another option, but given the prevailing circumstances and causes, she will choose the option she does.62

By way of analogy, consider a philosophical theology student who finds herself locked in a classroom. Such constraint would seem to violate her ability to leave the room. That is, until it is realized that in the room her favorite professor is delivering a stimulating lecture on the providence of God. Barring any special factors at work that might force her to stay—a neurological disorder, being chained to the desk, and so forth

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62 Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 637.
—it may be said that she cannot get out, but it is equally true that she does not want to get out. So, while of necessity she must remain in the room, she does so willingly and, because she is not forced to act contrary to her deepest desire, freely. 63

**Semicompatibilism**

As noted above in the section on libertarian critiques, SC bolsters the classical compatibilist’s argument by nuancing what is meant by “control.” In the analogy just given, for example, the student exhibits a certain sort of control in staying in the room—what Fischer calls guidance control—even though she could not do otherwise, illustrating a lack of regulative control. Of course, the student did possess some level of regulative

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63Jonathan Edwards is one of the leading architects of classical compatibilism. In his work *A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will*, Edwards argues *ad infinitum* the seemingly jejune idea that one’s motives determine one’s will: “[I]f every act of the Will is excited by a Motive, then that Motive is the cause of the act. If the acts of the Will are excited by Motives, then Motives are the causes of their being excited; or, which is the same thing, the cause of their existence. And if so, the existence of the acts of the Will is properly the effect of their Motives. Motives do nothing, as Motives or inducements, but by their influence; and so much as is done by their influence is the effect of them. For that is the notion of an effect, something that is brought to pass by the influence of something else. And if volitions are properly the effects of their Motives, then they are necessarily connected with their Motives.” See Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will*, *Works* (n.p.: Hendrickson, 1834; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:27.

Lest anyone think CC an eighteenth-century formulation, Augustine, in *City of God*, implies a CC form of freedom. Consider these three excerpts from Book Five, where he repudiates Cicero’s denial of God’s foreknowledge: (1) “But, be these tortuous strifes and disputations of the philosophers what they will, we who profess belief in the supreme and true God confess, likewise, His will, His supreme power, His foreknowledge. Nor are we dismayed by the difficulty that what we choose to do freely is done of necessity, because He whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived foreknew that we would choose to do it.” (2) “We do not deny, of course, an order of causes in which the will of God is all-powerful… However, our main point is that, from the fact that to God the order of all causes is certain, there is no logical deduction that there is no power in the choice of our will. The fact is that our choices fall within the order of the causes which is known for certain to God and is contained in His foreknowledge—for, human choices are the causes of human acts. It follows that He who foreknew the causes of all things could not be unaware that our choices were among those causes which were foreknown as the causes of our acts.” (3) “Thus, God is the Cause of all things. … It does not follow, therefore, that the order of causes, known for certain though it is in the foreknowing mind of God, brings it about that there is no power in our will, since our choices themselves have an important place in the order of causes. … Our conclusion is that our wills have power to do all that God wanted them to do and foresaw they could do. Their power, such as it is, is a real power. What they are to do they themselves will most certainly do, because God foresaw both that they could do it and that they would do it and His knowledge cannot be mistaken.” See Augustine, *City of God*, 5.9, trans. Marcus Dods, in *St. Augustine’s City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, NPNF1 (New York: Christian Literature, 1886-90; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 2:90-91.
control—it was within her power to try to leave the room. And this is where SC again
goes beyond a more classical approach. It maintains that it is possible to have guidance
control and no regulative control whatsoever. It, in a sense, places the locked door of the
above analogy inside the mind.

Before we illustrate how this may be, recall the libertarian principle that moral
responsibility rests in the ability to do otherwise or the Principle of Alternate Possibilities
(PAP). Semicompatibilists maintain that this principle is false. A person can, they argue,
be responsible for his actions even though he could not have done otherwise. Moreover,
as Frankfurt has shown, “There may be circumstances that make it impossible for a
person to avoid performing some action without those circumstances in any way bringing
it about that he performs that action.”64 Let us consider one such circumstance or
“Frankfurt-Style Example.”

Suppose the above noted professor slipped our unsuspecting philosophical
theology student a concoction in her Diet Coke just before she entered the classroom such
that, the moment she drank it, it generated in her an irresistible urge to stay seated during
his lecture. Now let us also suppose that the professor—well-schooled in chemistry—
configures the potion to take effect only if the student decides to get out of her desk. And
so, unbeknownst to our philosophical theology student, she could not, if she so desired,
get up from her desk—she lacks all regulative control. But our philosophical theology
student is enraptured by the intricacies of the professor’s arguments and decides in the
“normal” way—that is, according to her strongest desire at the time—to stay and listen to

the lecture. She exhibits guidance control over her decision to remain seated or not. The professor’s potion thus plays no role in her decision to stay seated. It seems clear, then, that everything happened just as it would have happened despite the professor’s “intervention.” Given this, it would seem quite unreasonable to excuse the student’s responsibility based upon the fact that she could not have done other than she did. She freely decided to stay seated and thus incurs precisely the same level of moral responsibility had the professor never taken steps to ensure that she stay seated.65

So, why semicompatibilism? In short, it mollifies the effects of the Consequence Argument on CC. For those compatibilists persuaded by the intuitive force of van Inwagen’s argument that we cannot do otherwise than we do because of fixed laws in the past that are beyond our control, SC softens the would-be critique by modestly claiming that causal determinism is compatible with a certain sort of control (guidance control) apart from whether it rules out the ability to do otherwise (regulative control). SC, accordingly, does not concern itself with the usual compatibilist gerrymandering of the word “can” in the argument. Rather, as Fischer shows, SC allows a compatibilist about causal determinism and moral responsibility to grant a stringent interpretation of

65One possible example of semicompatibilism in Scripture can be found in Gen 20. Here, Abraham offers his wife Sarah to Abimelech, passing her off as his sister (v. 2). To Abimelech’s surprise, the Lord rebukes him for taking another man’s wife (v. 3). But his rebuke is tempered given that Abimelech, of his own free will, decided not to “approach” Sarah (v. 4). Later, however, God makes clear to Abimelech that he was the one who kept him from sinning, not allowing him to touch Sarah (v. 6). So, what are we to make of this? It would seem that had Abimelech tried to approach Sarah God would have kept him from doing so. But, since he did not desire to touch her, Abimelech’s freedom—despite God’s intervention—was maintained, and he was allowed to live (v. 7).
the idea that our freedom is the power to add to the given past, holding fixed the remote past.66

Theological Compatibilism

While many secularists argue that human freedom and an impersonal, mechanistic form of determinism are compatible,67 theological compatibilists have traditionally taken compatibilism to denote that model of human freedom that harmonizes two seemingly disparate biblical truths: (1) God rules sovereignly over the universe and (2) man is genuinely free. D. A. Carson defines TC as follows,

The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true:

1. God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.

2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures—they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held

66For a more detailed discussion of the benefits of SC, see Fisher, “Compatibilism,” 71-77. Libertarians have long criticized compatibilists for begging the question by interpreting the word “can” in the Consequence Argument to suit their position. They argue that compatibilist attempts to render “can” as meaning “if you want to” are merely “hypothetical” and unwarranted. See Kane, “Libertarianism,” 11-13. For a compatibilist who finds this so-called “hypothetical” account appealing, see Warren, Ability and Desire, 556-59. In his article, Warren uses the example of God’s inability to lie as evidence for the conventional way in which “can” or, in this case, “cannot” is employed. He argues here that the statement, “God cannot lie,” is not meant to connote God’s total inability to tell a lie. He certainly can tell a lie if he so desires. What one typically means by this statement is that God does not want to lie given his nature. As a compatibilist, I find the compatibilist interpretation of “can” warranted. But, since most defenders of the Consequence Argument dismiss this interpretation, meaningful debate is often stifled; for this reason, the compatibilist is better off without it.

accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.68

What is more, says Carson, that the Bible everywhere presupposes these two propositions simultaneously in no way demands that it give an explanation for how they are coterminal with one another. All that is demanded of Scripture is that it not adopt a position that is nonsensical, one in which a necessary contradiction exists. And this is precisely what theological compatibilists claim the Bible does. That is, since enough of the “unknowns” have been uncovered, it is possible to postulate the concurrence of both propositions in Scripture without holding that they are necessarily contradictory. But this still leaves room for mystery in that the Bible nowhere explicitly unveils what Carson calls the “large unknowns” of God’s providence.69 In the end, writes Carson,


69J. I. Packer, in his overwhelmingly popular little book, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, follows a similar line of reasoning to Carson, labeling this providential mystery an “antinomy” (J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God [Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1961], 18-25). It must be noted, however, that Packer does not intend—as is customary today—this term to mean a blatant contradiction: “The whole point of an antinomy—in theology, at any rate—is that it is not a real contradiction, though it looks like one. It is an apparent incompatibility between two apparent truths” (18). Only one of many antinomies in Scripture, the antinomy of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility likewise, according to Packer, finds its “reconciliation in the mind and counsel of God” (24). And though heaven promises to satisfy our own self understanding, “our wisdom is to maintain with equal emphasis both the apparently conflicting truths in each case, to hold them together in the relation in which the Bible itself sets them, and to recognize that here is a mystery which we cannot expect to solve in this world” (24). Doubtless Packer is here wanting to safeguard the mystery of God’s providence. But, like Paul Helm, I believe his use of the term “antinomy” to be unnecessarily misleading and reductionistic or—to use Helm’s parlance—“too permissive.” First, it is misleading in that the term has come to mean something entirely different from what Packer intends. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an antinomy is (1) “a contradiction in a law, or between two equally binding laws,” (2) “a contradictory law, statute, or principle; an authoritative contradiction,” and (3) “a contradiction between conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable, or necessary; a paradox; intellectual contrariness.” Second, it is reductionistic or too permissive in that Packer makes no attempt to show how God’s sovereignty and man’s free will might be consistent. Instead, he speaks only of human responsibility with no mention of the conditions for that responsibility. Appeal to an “antinomy,” then, could—as Helm makes clear—be a license for accepting nonsense (i.e., that God’s sovereignty and human indeterministic freedom constitute an antinomy). See Paul Helm, The Providence of God, Contours of Christian Theology, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 62-66.
The mystery of providence defies our attempt to tame it by reason. I do not mean it is illogical; I mean that we do not know enough to be able to unpack it and domesticate it. Perhaps we may gauge how content we are to live with our limitations by assessing whether we are comfortable in joining the biblical writers in utterances that mock our frankly idolatrous devotion to our own capacity to understand. . . . Is our conception of God big enough to allow us to read “The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Prov 16:4) without secretly wishing the text could be excised from the Bible?70

Also mysterious, say theological compatibilists, is the way in which God uses circumstances to bring about his intended desires, including those desires that conflict with our initial inclinations or desires. What about those actions ordained by God that we have no desire to do? In this case, God will have to convince us without constraining us.71 And since he knows us perfectly—he knows how we will act given a certain set of circumstances—he is able to regulate our surroundings in such a manner that we freely desire that which he ordains. Calvin explains, “God’s hand no less governs man’s internal affections than his external acts; neither does God accomplish with man’s hand those things he has determined, unless he has first worked in their hearts his will, which

70Ibid., 226.

71To illustrate this point, Feinberg proposes three ways in which he, as a teacher, can ensure that a student—who presumably does not want to leave—leaves his classroom before class ends. First, he could physically remove the student by picking him up and carrying him out of the classroom. Alternately, he could threaten the student with a failing grade or a brandished pistol. But neither of these first two proposals allows the student to leave freely, that is, given any true conception of freedom. There is, however, a third way in which he could get the student to leave. He could, based on reasonable assumptions about the student and knowledge unavailable to the student, make it irresistibly advantageous for him to leave the room. “Perhaps,” says Feinberg, “I know that there will be a wealthy philanthropist outside the door just waiting to give free financial aid to the first five students who ask for help, and I share this information with the student” (639). Feinberg then concludes that, though his student had no intentions of leaving the classroom upon entering, having considered his options, he decides that his desire to leave now outweighs his original desire to stay. See Feinberg, No One Like Him, 638-39.
precedes their acts” (translation mine). In other words, God’s sovereignty extends even to the shaping of man’s inner motives (cf. Prov 16:9; Prov 21:1; Jer 10:23), yet never in a way as to constrain or curtail man’s freedom to choose (Josh 24:14-15; Rom 10:9, 11). This “interweaving” and “interlacing,” as Berkouwer describes it, of divine and human acts is indeed a mystery, yet we can be assured that “God’s sovereign control of human choice and action is fully compatible with our freedom in choosing and acting in accordance with our strongest inclinations and deepest desires.”

Scripture is replete with examples of compatibilism. Examples of men and women acting upon their deepest desires despite being oblivious, yet mysteriously subject, to God’s smiling providence dot nearly every page. In what follows, I outline two of the more vivid examples of compatibilism in Scripture. Both cases highlight, within the same contexts, the way in which God’s sovereignty functions alongside man’s responsibility without any direct explanation as to how this is the case.


74Ware, God’s Greater Glory, 82.

75For a shortlist of texts and their meanings illustrating the confluence of both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, see Carson, How Long, O Lord?, 205-12. Ware also offers an extended discussion of how God used Assyria to plunder his people, Israel, yet promised to punish them for their wickedness (Isa 10:5-19) in God’s Greater Glory, 83-84.
Genesis 50:20. Genesis 50:20 gives one of the clearest examples of how God’s sovereignty works in the midst of man’s evil intentions. Not only this, but it reminds us of the goodness of God in working all things for the good. He is a good God, and yet his goodness does not overshadow his sovereignty. God’s sovereign hand in Joseph’s life is undeniable. From the success granted him under Potiphar (39:2-3) and the prison keeper (39:21) to his rise to power in Egypt (41:39), the Lord was with him. Equally undeniable was the evil intent of Joseph’s brothers in conspiring to put Joseph to death (37:18) and ultimately selling him to the Ishmaelites for profit (37:28). It was they who sold Joseph into Egypt (45:4-5); it was they who were frightened of what Joseph would now do to them because of all the evil they had done to him (50:15, 17). The Bible nowhere suggests that they were coerced in any way. Moreover, they are totally oblivious to the plans of God. That is, until they are reunited with their brother, who reveals to them that their deeds were mysteriously intertwined with God’s: “And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (45:7-8, emphasis mine).  

God sovereignly used their evil acts to preserve his people. Echoing these sentiments, Joseph again, in Genesis 50:20, stresses that God transformed their evil into good: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Perhaps most revealing about this exchange is that nowhere are Joseph’s brothers exonerated for their acts despite

76Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture texts will be taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible.
being unwittingly used by God to bring about his purposes. Joseph’s brothers are instead rightly thought to be responsible for deserting and ultimately selling their younger brother into slavery. Similarly, God is no less responsible for sheltering the nascent Israelite community by orchestrating Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt. God’s meticulous sovereignty in preserving the Israelites is thus compatible with the freedom of Joseph’s brothers whose deepest desires were to put him to death.

Acts 4:27-28. The cross of Christ again shows how God operates to bring good from evil. Out of the greatest act of evil ever committed, the greatest possible good was accomplished. And out of this good rises the tension between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Neither is overlooked by the early church. Overjoyed at the recent release of Peter and John, the church, interpreting Psalm 2:1-2 in light of recent events, extols God’s sovereign hand: “[F]or truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (vv. 27-28). Yet, God’s sovereignty in no way mitigates the evil deeds of those responsible; there is plenty of blame to go around. The “whatever” of verse 28 is pregnant with evil deeds—false accusations, flouting of justice, and undeserved mockery to name a few—committed by rulers and people alike. Still, however “lawless” (Acts 2:23; 36) and responsible (Acts 3:13-15) the evil men, God is said to have predetermined the outcome (v. 28). Carson sums it up well: “God was sovereignly at work in the death of Jesus; human beings were evil in putting Jesus to death, even as they accomplished the Father’s will; and God himself was entirely
good.”77 It is hard to imagine how the Bible could be any clearer regarding such a controversial topic. Indeed, I concur with Carson that “Christians who deny compatibilism on front after front become compatibilists (knowingly or otherwise) when they think about the cross.”78 Still, like any theological model, TC is not without its detractors.

Compatibilism on Trial

Before placing compatibilism on trial, it is best to distinguish between theological critiques and those of a more philosophical nature. Critics of TC tend to focus on crippling the first of its two tenets mentioned above, namely, that God is absolutely sovereign and is thus ultimately responsible for the course of human events. With this in mind, I shall first deal with the TC critique that God is made ultimately responsible for evil in the world. In defense, I will argue that God’s relation to good and evil is asymmetrical, that is, he stands behind good such that it extends directly from his nature, whereas he stands indirectly behind evil such that it is not morally chargeable to him. Second, in response to the more philosophical critique that the kind of responsibility conferred by all forms of compatibilism is morally shallow, I show that the proposed alternative to the so-called shallowness of compatibilism, “total control,” is a utopian fiction.

77Carson, How Long, O Lord?, 212
78Ibid.
The Logical Problem of Evil

Any encroachment into the topic of the logical problem of evil warrants a disclaimer. Here is mine: The logical problem of evil creates gnarly conundrums for all theological models. Compatibilism, consequently, is not exempt from the wounds it inflicts nor questions it invokes. Nor is it the panacea capable of assuaging all the horrors of moral evil. That said, since the logical problem of evil has stymied history’s most perspicacious minds, I would not begin to pretend that I am up to the task of providing a universally satisfying answer to its problems. I do believe, however, that TC holds great promise for a way forward despite the insurmountable problems of evil that torment any theological construct. I turn now to the problem at hand.

Ron Nash, a staunch compatibilist, in his little book *The Concept of God*, suggests that “[t]he most serious attack against theological compatibilism maintains that the position entails that God is ultimately responsible for the evil in the world.” Kenny, in *God of the Philosophers*, articulates this attack as follows:

Anyone who accepts the compatibility of determinism with freedom must agree that agents can be justly blamed and punished for acts which they were predetermined to perform, provided only they had the ability and opportunity to refrain from them. But if the [compatibilist] system is to be tenable, it must be possible to show not only that human beings can be involved in blame for determined sins, but that God can avoid responsibility for them. And this seems to be much more difficult to show. For if an agent freely and knowingly sets in motion a deterministic process with a certain upshot, . . . [i]f determinism is true, it is

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79 For use of the qualifier “logical” to describe that problem of evil that concerns itself with the existence of evil in general and several theological/philosophical reasons for how it might be assuaged, see John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 33-203.

comparatively easy to explain how he can infallibly foresee free action, but impossibly difficult to show how [God] is not the author sin. 81

Indeed, if it is to enjoy majority support among Evangelicals, TC must provide —to the extent that it is possible—a satisfactory explanation as to how it may be that God is not directly responsible for moral evil in the world. And that explanation must do more than merely assert that God controls good and evil equally. It will not do, for instance, to quote Isaiah 45:5a-7—“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God . . . I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things”—as if this is all Scripture reveals on the issue.

Theological compatibilists, accordingly, offer a variety of well-reasoned responses for how God, though omnipotent and good, is not morally culpable for evil in the world. 82 Few, however, have improved upon those set forth by Augustine centuries ago. Augustine wrestled, like many in his day, with how God could be both omnipotent and good and still allow evil in the world. His answer: “As He is the Creator of all natures, so is He the giver of all powers—though He is not the maker of all choices. 83 Evil choices are not from Him, for they are contrary to the nature which is from Him.” 84

In sum, Augustine argued that (1) God rules through the created order and that (2) God’s

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82 Many consider Feinberg’s *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil* to be the *locus classicus* of compatibilist treatments on the problems of evil.

83 . . . omnium potestatum dator, non voluntatum.

84 Augustine, *City of God*, 5.9, NPNF₁, 2:92.
nature is wholly good. Each of these propositions in turn act as a framework for how God can be good and still allow evil in the world.

For Augustine to say that God rules through the created order is to say that he concurrently exercises his rule through secondary agents within the created order. Secondary agents, according to Augustine, make free choices and thus “have an important place in the order of causes.” Nonetheless, their wills only do that which “God wanted them to do and foresaw they could do.” As the first cause and “Creator of all natures,” God is responsible in an ultimate sense for their sin; yet “He is not the maker of all choices.” That is, he is not morally culpable for the sinful choices that extend from secondary agents who, to use compatibilist parlance, do what they most desire to do. The texts above attest to this. It was Joseph’s brothers who sold Joseph into slavery; likewise, it was “godless men” who put Christ on the cross. All of this, however, raises the more perplexing question: “If God is the ‘Creator of all natures,’ why did he not create secondary agents who, by nature, freely do only what is good?” This leads us to the second of the two propositions contained in Augustine’s quote, namely that God’s nature is wholly good.

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85 Feinberg is especially helpful here. He aids Augustine’s notion of proximate or mediate cause by distinguishing between two types of mediate action. As an example of the first, he cites God’s use of Assyria to judge the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Isa 7:18-20; 8:6-8; 10:5-6). Here God’s action is somewhat remote, as Assyria’s mediate actions are sufficient to punish Israel. Second, he uses the example of the inspiration of Scripture to show that in some instances, both God and man can be proximate causes, although what God does as part of the proximate cause differs from man’s role. For Feinberg’s helpful discussion, see Feinberg, No One Like Him, 651-54.

86 Augustine, City of God, 5.9, NPNF1, 2:92.

87 Ibid.
Scripture everywhere insists upon the pure goodness of God. He is never presented as an accomplice to evil or secretly malevolent or as responsible for evil in the same way that he is responsible for good. His goodness extends from his character: “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he” (Deut 32:4). “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). His goodness is further seen in that his plans for the Jewish exiles were for their “welfare and not for evil, to give [them] a hope and a future” (Jer 29:11).

Likewise, God orchestrates everything for the good of “those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Habakkuk struggles to understand why God would allow the Babylonians to punish Judah precisely because he is “of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong” (Hab 1:13). God’s goodness is, in Carson’s words, “the assumption [of Scripture], the non-negotiable.”88 Since this is the case and since evil is never directly attributable to God, it seems we are justified in holding that God’s relationship to good and evil is asymmetrical, that is, he stands indirectly behind the evil of secondary agents while, at the same time, he directly emanates goodness from his character (Jas 1:17). Carson sums up God’s asymmetrical relation to good and evil this way:

“If I sin, I cannot possibly do so outside the bounds of God’s sovereignty . . . , but I alone am responsible for that sin—or perhaps I and those who tempted me, led me astray, and the like. God is not to be blamed. But if I do good, it is God working in me both to will and to act according to his good pleasure. God’s grace has been manifest in my case, and he is to be praised.”89

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89 Ibid., 213.
Or, with Ware, we might say, “God is good and not evil though he controls both good and evil. . . . when God controls good, he is controlling what extends from his own nature; yet when he controls evil, he controls what is antithetical to his own nature.”

So, why does God not prevent moral evil from occurring by creating creatures whose natures were predetermined to always do what was right? According to Augustine, God, being supremely good and omnipotent, allows evil to manifest itself in the universe so that a greater good might result:

And in the universe, even that which is called evil, when it is regulated and put in its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good; for we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil. For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil.

It follows, then, by Augustine’s reasoning, that God is not to blame for evil if he has a good reason for bringing it about, which he must have.

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90Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 102. For a more detailed discussion replete with biblical support of how it is that God stands asymmetrically behind good and evil, see Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 102-09.

91Several theologians have offered compatibilist accounts of the greater good defense, especially insightful, however, is Helm’s treatment in which he argues that “without permission of moral evil, and the atonement of Christ, God’s own character would not be fully manifest” (Helm, *The Providence of God*, 213-15). For a variation on this defense which he calls the “Integrity of Humans Defense,” see Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 165-90. Feinberg here argues that evil arises from compatibilistically free, non-glorified human beings, created according to God’s intention. By contrast, Alvin Plantinga advocates a solution to the problem of evil that incorporates libertarian freedom. For discussion of his “Free Will Defense,” see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). See also Aaron O’Kelley, “John Feinberg on the Logical Problem of Evil: An Evaluation,” (paper presented for a doctoral seminar on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, April 2008) who finds Feinberg’s defense unconvincing and ultimately unnecessary.


93Not only this, but, as Helm points out, God is logically incapable of doing evil and therefore blameless, since, as Augustine argues, evil is nothing more than the privation of good (Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 11-12). See Helm’s use of Augustine to combat Kenny’s claim that compatibilism fails to exculpate God of evil (Helm, *Eternal God*, 159-65).
It is worth reflecting on, at this juncture, the libertarian alternative to the question of how God can allow evil without being directly responsible for it. It is, in the words of Craig, “that God sovereignly permits us freedom to sin against him.”94 He foreknows the evil actions of man but, because he values their freedom, does nothing to prevent them. This construal, unfortunately, does little to solve the problem. For, as Helm surmises, “It is certainly not obvious that someone who does something knowing that evil will result while not intending the evil is free from responsibility.”95 So, it would appear that the libertarian schema no more absolves God from responsibility than does the compatibilist one.96 Invoking permission offers no escape from God’s sovereignty. Even when the Bible speaks of God permitting, it assumes his sovereignty (cf. 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chr 21:1). We are better off, then, upholding the polarities of God’s omnipotence and omnibenevolence simultaneously and, with Augustine, upholding the biblical tension between God’s asymmetrical relation to good and evil.

The Problem of Shallowness

Saul Smilansky has recently argued that any compatibilist position—regardless of its ability to sufficiently ground some ascriptions of responsibility—that cannot


95Paul Helm, Eternal God: A Study of God without Time (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 159. Of course, it is entirely possible to deny, as many libertarians do, that God does not know the future and is therefore not responsible for evil given that the future is open even to him. But the belief that God lacks knowledge of certain future events precisely because these events are unknowable given libertarian freedom creates further “difficulties” that, quite frankly, are outside the bounds of an historic and biblical doctrine of God.

96If anything, it further obfuscates the problem by providing no grounds for why man, having been permitted to sin, in fact chooses to sin. Given libertarian freedom, he could just as easily, though admittedly unlikely, choose never to sin.
adequately account for what he calls ultimate “up to usness” fails as a possible free will alternative. “Without libertarian free will,” Smilansky opines, “however sophisticated the compatibilist formulation of control in the broad sense, and whether it focuses on character, reflection, ability to follow reasons, or anything else available at the compatibilist level, in the end no one can have ultimate control over that for which one is being judged.”97 To elaborate: If causal determinism is in some sense true, then even our character is the result of a causal history dating back to before we were born, a history in which we, to a large extent, had no control over. Since we were not responsible for, at minimum, the initial decisions that formed our character and since our actions are the necessary results of our character, we lack the kind of ultimate control needed for bona fide responsibility. Smilansky thus concludes that any construal of freedom that amounts to a mere “unfolding of the given” and looks no further than the motives and character of a person is “morally shallow.”98

Answers to Smilansky’s charge of shallowness do not come easy for the compatibilist. Admittedly, though the charge concedes that all forms of compatibilism are able to ground some ascriptions of moral responsibility, it saddles the theological compatibilist with the unpopular reality that one lacks ultimate control over his decisions. Smilansky’s critique, however, is not without its problems.

98Smilansky’s full evaluation of compatibilism can be found in his chapter “Why Not Compatibilism?” in Free Will and Illusion. Smilansky considers himself a hard determinist who sees the benefit in retaining the illusion of free will. See Smilansky, Free Will and Illusion, 40-55.
First, the problem with what some have called *source incompatibilism*, the Kanian notion that responsibility depends upon sourcehood, lies in its myopic use of the term “control” to convey a picture of “total control.” On this picture, the locus of control must be entirely ours if we are to be morally responsible. But “total control,” as Fischer so aptly puts it, is “a total fantasy—metaphysical megalomania.”

Numerous examples may be given to show just how little control we actually possess. For example, the moment that an external factor, say, the sun, over which we have no control and on which we are totally dependent, exerts itself from the outside, say, flickers out, we undergo a rather significant change in behavior (to put it mildly!). So, the picture of agency as one of “total control” is, in a word, far-reaching. What is more, it is no less far-reaching in Scripture. Scripture nowhere promulgates the idea that human agents may have absolute or total control over their destiny such that even God is absolutely contingent upon their choices.

The second problem with the charge of *shallowness* as it relates to TC is that it fails to take into account the nature of God presented in Scripture. God, of course, plays no part in Smilansky’s purely philosophical treatment. Luck acts as a substitute:

In the end, even if we “freely” do what we want in compatibilist terms, what we want, our desires and beliefs, is not ultimately something we *choose*: in a deterministic picture there was no real opportunity for us to be people who do otherwise. If in the end it is only our bad luck, then it is not morally our fault—*anyone* in “our” place would (tautologically) have done the same, and so everyone’s not doing this, and the fact that *our* being such people as do it, is ultimately just a matter of luck.

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100 Smilansky, *Free Will and Illusion*, 45.
For Smilansky, the “given” in the “unfolding of the given” is whatever background, circumstances, and, ultimately, character traits luck fortuitously bestows. But this is certainly not the case with God, especially not the God of the Bible, who creates us in his image (Gen 1:26-27; Ps 8:5-8), knits us together in our mother’s womb (Ps 139:13b), bestows common grace as reflected in man’s intellect (Rom 1:21), morality (Rom 2:14-15), societal institutions (Rom 13:1), and creative accomplishments (Gen 4:22; 11), and who finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Lam 3:31-36; Ezek 18:30-32; 33:11). The God of the Bible is transcendent (e.g., Pss 115:2-3, 135:6; Prov 21:1, 16:9; Jer 10:23; Eph 1:11), yet he is also presented as deeply personal so that, even though he defines the parameters of right and wrong and a fortiori what we are held responsible for, he does so in such a way that our ultimate good is served (Phil 2:12-13; Rom 8:28). Far from an impersonal “it” or misanthropic puppeteer who abhors the thought of free will creatures, the God of the Bible is a personal “he,” a heavenly Father, separate from creation, yet perfectly immanent (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25, 28; Eph 4:6; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3).

So, when it is conceded that this God—not luck or material forces—is the ultimate determiner of our characters, the charge of moral shallowness due to our inability to shape prior circumstances fades given that God’s love for his creation is infinitely deep.

Before I conclude, there is one more item that needs addressing. I did not include this item in the lists of critiques because, at least in the formal sense of the word, it is nothing of the sort. It does call into question, however, the validity of claiming biblical support for my view and, for that reason, I include it here.
A select number of evangelical theologians have recently questioned whether the Bible endorses a particular variety of free will. David Ciocchi, for example, in his article “Suspending the Debate about Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” argues that we should suspend the DSF debate altogether, saying that Scripture gives us no direct endorsement of one form of freedom over another and that we must first “work on the logically prior problem of determining what it is about human beings that justifies God in treating them as morally responsible agents”\(^{101}\) before we pretend to know what type of human freedom persists in this world. While I agree in part with Ciocchi that answers to the hard questions of moral culpability have proven elusive and that no one form of freedom is safe from criticism, I see no need—nor do I think it helpful—to suspend the debate entirely, if for no other reason than one account of freedom may provide a more ready-supply of satisfying answers than another. Nor do I think it wise to abandon Scripture pell-mell in an open-ended search for the best arguments secular philosophy has to offer.\(^{102}\) How is it that Ciocchi is so sure that the Bible “underdetermines” free will theory and that “[n]o appeal to biblical teaching will settle the question of what sort of freedom is necessary for moral responsibility”?\(^{103}\) Why not remain agnostic about the

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\(^{102}\)I also agree with Warren that Ciocchi’s exclusive focus on freedom can obscure the debate. A good example of how this may be is seen in our conception of the doctrine of hell. Ciocchi raises this doctrine as a matter that further heightens the debate. But, as Warren observes, “In such a context, if we see freedom alone as the issue in establishing degrees of moral responsibility, we are likely to find ourselves asking whether fallen humans are free enough to warrant being condemned to hell” (Warren, “Ability and Desire,” 566). And this would certainly confuse the matter. For, after all, the real question is whether humans are wicked enough to be condemned to hell and how it is that their freedom reveals their true character.

\(^{103}\)Ciocchi, “Suspending the Debate about Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” 584.
Bible's teaching on human freedom, engaging it instead for potential answers?

Moreover, concerning Ciocchi's claim that biblical teaching supplies "an implicit endorsement of free will, and nothing more,"\(^{104}\) I find it difficult to believe that in all cases, Scripture's account of freedom stops at the threshold of a merely generic endorsement of free will.\(^{105}\) If nothing else, Scripture does seem to suggest that a progressive form of sanctification requires some variety of compatibilist freedom. And, if this is true, one is justified in holding to Scripture's implicit endorsement of compatibilism insofar as Scripture teaches a progressive model of sanctification. Of course, one is free to deny that Scripture teaches a progressive form of sanctification, but such a denial in no way overturns the thesis of this dissertation, which intends to show the organic link between compatibilist freedom and a progressive model of sanctification.\(^{106}\)

**Conclusion**

This chapter provides a survey of the free will landscape. I have sketched out the variegated natures of each view, carefully classifying each strand so as to occlude language that clots the debate. It is surprising how many theologians work with such a

\(^{104}\)Ibid., 583.

\(^{105}\)The two examples supplied above, Gen 50:20 and Acts 4:27-28, are only two of several in Scripture that, at the very least, *implicitly* affirm a compatibilist model of freedom. If, as it seems, Ciocchi disagrees, then I would challenge him to formulate a more likely option of human freedom.

\(^{106}\)After reading an earlier draft of my dissertation, Ciocchi sent me the following response: "We should continue to study the Word of God for all the insight the Holy Spirit will allow us on any subjects it addresses. . . . The claim that I make in my article is not meant to be inconsistent with affirming the usefulness of Scripture in increasing our understanding of anything, including human freedom. It's rather that I believe that we must be careful not to address questions to the Bible that God did not inspire its authors to answer."
parochial view of determinism, seeing, for instance, little need to distinguish between hard and soft forms. I have also attempted to demonstrate how libertarianism and compatibilism are two logically contradictory notions of freedom. The former holds that causal determinism obviates free will, while the latter says that our actions are free, though causally determined, if done without constraint. The former says that no factors are strong enough to determine our decisions; there are no choice-specific reasons why we might choose one option over another. The latter, by contrast, says that, given the prevailing factors—both internal and external—at the time, some set of conditions is sufficient to cause us to choose a particular option. Given this logical contradiction, any doctrinal view incorporating one view cannot at the same time incorporate the other without generating a contradiction in the overall system. This is especially relevant later when it is realized that compatibilism comports best with the doctrine of progressive sanctification.

Finally, I have attempted to make briefly the case for why compatibilism, in its multifarious strands, is better suited to aid us in making real intellectual progress in the debate over free will. I have argued, for instance, that freedom and moral responsibility consists in being able to do what one most desires at the time, and that this need not marginalize one’s role in the world. As Frame posits,

To feel free is to feel that one has a significant role to play in the world, and that is true of all of us. To feel responsible is to affirm for ourselves the purpose for which God has made us. To feel significant is to recognize that God has given each of us an important role in history, and that he has arranged everything else in the Universe to be consistent with that role.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107}Frame, \textit{The Doctrine of God}, 152.
Compatibilism does nothing to curtail this type of freedom. Rather, it goes a long way in explaining it, especially in light of the scriptural evidence.

In this chapter, I have resisted discussion of one final matter to which I will now briefly refer. In *God’s Greater Glory*, Ware makes the point that only compatibilism can account for the necessary connection between who one is and what one does. Character transformation in the life of the believer, says Ware, is the product of a nature attuned to Christ:

"The very reason that we are called to work at the transformation of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2) and the renewal of our characters (Col. 3:8-10) is precisely that as we become more like Christ, we choose and act more like Christ. In other words, we still act out of our natures, even as believers. . . . By the transformation of our characters, we long more and more to please the Lord, to obey his word, to follow his voice, and in all these ways we live out the true and transformed natures of our hearts. Believers, then, act out of their natures just as unbelievers do. But by grace, believers are granted new natures that are in the process of transformation necessary to alter radically the deepest inclinations and strongest longings of our hearts."\(^{108}\)

Ware goes on to show that libertarian free will bifurcates this all-important connection by grounding freedom and moral responsibility in the power of contrary choice and agent causation. So, no matter what strides we make in becoming more like Christ, we may just as easily obey as well as disobey. Every decision is “up to us” such that no factors are sufficient to incline our will in one direction over another. As will be shown throughout this dissertation, such a notion is inimical to the idea that our changed characters necessarily lead to obedience. The implications of libertarian freedom, then,

\(^{108}\text{Ware, } God’s Greater Glory, 94.\)
are deeply deflating to those who, though making progress in their Christian life, lack confidence in their own ability to make the right choice when tempted. Rather, confidence only comes with knowing that God has given us grace to overcome temptation through the power of his Spirit (Rom 8:1-8), who changes our desires by reproducing the life of Christ in us. But how exactly are we transformed such that we begin to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 25)? This is the subject of our next chapter.
CHAPTER 3
THREE MODELS OF SANCTIFICATION

Few disciplines require lifelong devotion. The pursuit of holiness is one of them. As Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* illustrates, regeneration is only the beginning. The Christian life is a protracted war involving the Christian in daily combat with the desires of his flesh, the world, and Satan. It is more than simply pretending to be free of sin or, as Lewis puts it, “dressing up as Christ.” It is the putting to death of the old nature with all its “faculties, properties, wisdom, craft, subtlety, and strength.” It is a war in which successive battles are won, yet whose complete victory awaits glorification. Sanctification is thus, in essence, that link between regeneration and glorification. It is glorification begun (2 Cor 3:18), not completed.

This growth in Christian maturity has historically been viewed by the church as a “progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and

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1 Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, speaks of the Christian’s standing as a son of God as one of “pretense”: “[The Lord’s Prayer’s] very first words are Our Father. Do you now see what those words mean? They mean quite frankly, that you are putting yourself in the place of a son of God. To put it bluntly, you are dressing up as Christ. If you like, you are pretending” (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. and enl. [New York: HarperCollins, 2001], 187-88). But, says Lewis, this pretense slowly gives way to reality when it is realized that Christ is causing things to “go on in your mind which would not be going on there if you were really a son of God” (189). Lewis’s use of the word “pretense” to describe the Christian life is rather unfortunate. While he articulates well the progressive and even cooperative nature of sanctification, his wording is misleading and should therefore be avoided.


like Christ in our actual lives.” Variations on this fundamental definition, however, have arisen among evangelicals, concerning both the extent of man’s involvement and the extent of maturity attainable in this life. Some have argued, for instance, that a believer’s only involvement includes his willingness to yield to the Spirit’s indwelling presence, which has a counteractive effect on sin in his life. Others have insisted that a “second blessing” following conversion marked by a decisive break with conscious sin is within the believer’s reach. While not always evident, each of these variations continue, to some degree, within evangelicalism today.

The theme of this chapter is sanctification as broadly conceived by three separate traditions. John Wesley’s style of Christian perfectionism is the subject of the first section. Considerable weight is given here to Wesley’s concept of entire sanctification as outlined in his sermons, though space is devoted to his thoughts expressed in various other writings as well, including his pamphlets, hymnals, and personal correspondence.

In the second section, I explore the quixotic spirituality of the Keswick movement. For more than seventy-five years, Keswick Conventions captured and inspired listeners with a message of victorious Christian living. Reaching their zenith in the 1950s, the conventions had the unique role of essentially determining the character of

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5 These three models were selected because nearly every contemporary view of sanctification can be traced to at least one of them. In the case of Keswick, though it shares much in common with Wesley’s view, it distinguishes itself by excising Wesley’s notion of perfection. It is, for this reason, sometimes referred to as a “halfway house” between Augustinianism and Wesleyan perfectionism. See Packer, Keep in Step with the Spirit, 120.
popular evangelicalism in the mid twentieth century. Using the once daily themes of these early annual Keswick Conventions as a guide, I discuss some of the more recondite views of Keswick sanctification.

The final section examines the distinctive elements of Augustine’s teachings on holiness found in the writings of John Calvin, John Owen, J. C. Ryle, and others in the Augustinian tradition. Augustine’s emphasis on the perpetual indwelling presence of concupiscence in the whole person and man’s need, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, to pursue holiness are some of the focal points of this section.

I conclude with a few thoughts and observations on the commonalities and differences between each model. The intent of this chapter—though it may prove unavoidable—is not to elevate the merits of one model of sanctification over another. It is instead to demonstrate how Wesleyan perfectionism and Keswick sanctification require a concomitant libertarian freedom, whereas the Augustinian model of sanctification requires compatibilism.

**Wesleyan Perfectionism**

Of John Wesley’s many contributions to the Christian church, none is more central to his theological system nor elicits more confusion than his doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification. Wesley defined the state of perfection as a “personal, definitive work of God’s sanctifying grace by which the war within oneself might cease and the heart be fully released from rebellion into wholehearted love for God and
others." Its centrality in Wesley's thinking is indicated both in the amount of space he allots to the notion of perfection in his voluminous corpus and in his own words on the subject's significance in his ministry. Only months before his death, Wesley, in a letter to a friend, wrote of Methodism's chief purpose: "This doctrine [of perfection] is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appeared to have raised us up." In many respects, that confusion exists over what Wesley intended by the term "perfection" is perhaps best seen in his seeming need to articulate often his "grand depositum."

To allay uncertainty over his doctrine of perfection, Wesley devoted much of his time, writings, sermons, and hymnody to the topic. As for time, Wesley met on several occasions after his pivotal experience at Aldersgate in 1738 with his fellow clergy to examine and crystallize what was and was not meant by the doctrine. At these meetings, catechismal questions and answers were formulated to aid the ignorant and the skeptic. Here is a sample from the first of such meetings:

Q. What is it to be sanctified?
A. To be renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.

Q. What is implied in being a perfect Christian?

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8As many scholars have pointed out, much of the confusion over Wesley's doctrine is due to his persistent and seemingly truculent use of the term "perfection" to describe a state that is anything but perfect in the common sense notion of the term. Packer, for one, has suggested the more palatable, "total love," as a more accurate descriptor. Although fraught with the same conceptual difficulties as its counterpart, the term, so says Packer, frees one from the more tangential arguments that arise from Wesley's wording (J. I. Packer, Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God, 2nd ed, rev. and enl. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 115).
A. The loving [of] God with all our heart, and mind, and soul (Deut. vi. 5).

Q. Does this imply that all inward sin is taken away?
A. Undoubtedly: or how can we be said to be saved from all our uncleanness? (Ezek. xxxvi. 29).9

Along with devoting his time, Wesley outlined clearly what he means and, perhaps what is more important, does not mean by the term “perfection” in sundry writings. Most salient among these writings is his preface to his 1742 volume of Hymns and Sacred Poems, which he published with his brother. Wesley here presumed that perfection is nothing short of a heart that fully images God:

This it is to be a Perfect Man, to be Sanctified throughout, created anew in JESUS CHRIST: Even “to have a Heart so All-flaming with the love God,” (to use Archbishop Usher’s [sic] Words) “as continually to offer up every Thought, Word, and Work, as a Spiritual Sacrifice, acceptable unto God thro’ Christ.” In every Thought of our Hearts, in every Word of our Tongues, in every Work of our Hands, to shew forth His Praise who hath called us out of Darkness into his marvellous Light! O that both we and all who seek the LORD JESUS in Sincerity, may thus be made Perfect in One!10

In these brief introductory remarks, Wesley affirmed unambiguously his belief that to be a perfect man is to be a man “sanctified throughout.” Perfection is, in Wesley’s mind, a state of unending love for God such that man’s every thought, word, and deed redound to the praise of the one who “called [him] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).


10As cited in the preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems, ed. John Wesley and Charles Wesley (Bristol: John and Charles Wesley, 1742), vi-vii.
Not only does Wesley’s preface clarify the warp and woof of his doctrine, it also underscores what he does not mean by the term “perfection.” He inveighed, for instance, against those who understood perfection as a static state of spiritual arrival.

[Methodists] willingly allow, and continually declare, there is No such Perfection, in this Life, as implies either a Dispensation from Doing Good and attending all the Ordinances of God; or a Freedom from Ignorance, Mistake, Temptation, and a Thousand Infirmities necessarily connected with Flesh and Blood. . . . There is no Perfection in this Life which implies any Dispensation from attending All the Ordinances of God, or from doing Good unto All Men, while we have Time, tho’ specially unto the Household of Faith. And whoever they are who have taught otherwise, we are convinced are not taught of God. We dare not receive them, neither bid them God speed, lest we be Partakers of their evil Deeds.\textsuperscript{11}

In using the word “perfection,” Wesley never imagined that the believer would arrive at a point of infallibility or a point at which he was no longer tempted by sin. Nor did Wesley imagine that perfection in the believer means he can disregard God’s ordinances:

There is no “perfection of degrees,” as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to “grow in grace” and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior.\textsuperscript{12}

Though attained in one punctilious moment of faithful surrender, entire sanctification, for Wesley—far from a fixed state of blissful sinlessness—is a dynamic state of concentrated, resolute, ever-increasing love for God; it is the teleological end to which all Christians should aspire.

In one of his earliest works, a pamphlet entitled “The Character of a Methodist,” Wesley described a true Methodist as one characterized by “love to all of

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., ii-iii.

mankind” and gifted with a perpetual desire “not to please himself, but him whom his soul loveth.” Moreover, “There is not a motion in his heart but is according to [God’s] will. Every thought that arises points to him, and is in obedience to the law of Christ. . . . For his obedience is in proportion to his love, the source from whence it flows. And therefore, loving God with all his heart, he serves him with all his strength.”

Undoubtedly, in writing this short pamphlet, Wesley purposed to make Methodism more palatable to those who thought it, in the words of Outler, a “newfangled theory.” Still, there was no denying Wesley’s eagerness to cultivate and promote a movement whose followers dedicated themselves to living out what they believed to be New Testament Christianity, followers whose hearts overflowed with the love of Christ such that their every thought redounded to God’s glory.

By far, the locus of Wesley’s theology rests in his sermons. Writing in the preface to his first published volumes of sermons, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (1746), Wesley communicated that “[e]very serious man who peruses these [sermons] will therefore see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion.” It was in this soil that Wesley planted and watered his seeds of perfection; it is here that his thoughts take shape.

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In 1733, Wesley preached one of his most complete statements on Christian perfection, “The Circumcision of the Heart.” Years later, in a letter to John Newton, he described it as the height of his theological pilgrimage regarding perfection: “Jan. 1, 1733, I preached the sermon on ‘The Circumcision of the Heart’, which contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart.”16 It was clear from his sermon that Wesley considered love to be the essence of sanctification. “If thou wilt be perfect, add to [a deep humility, steadfast faith, and a lively hope] charity: add love, and thou has the ‘circumcision of the heart’. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law,’ ‘the end of the commandment’.” Only perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). It is, for Wesley, the “royal law of heaven, . . . the sole end as well as source of our being.”17 Sermonizing on Deuteronomy 30:6—“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live”—Wesley reserved some of his most striking language to indicate that to be perfect was to be perfect in love. “How clearly does this express the being perfected in love! How strongly imply the being saved from all sin! For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?”18 Love, taught Wesley, is God’s intended substitute for sin. And since sin has nothing in common with love, the two cannot reside simultaneously in the


believer. To be a perfect Christian, then, is to exhibit, at all times, a consistent love for God and others, a love free from all wrong tempers and sinful actions.

Sin, for Wesley, though, is narrowly defined. He understood sin in the following sense: “By ‘sin’ I here understand outward sin, according to the plain, common acceptation of the word: an actual, voluntary ‘transgression of the law’; of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God acknowledged to be such at the time that it is transgressed.” With this definition of sin, we are now in a position to clarify Wesley’s definition of perfection even further. Perfect love, for Wesley, is that state of total love for God and man that knew of no deliberate or conscious sin.

How, according to Wesley, is this perfect love attained? Is it through a gradual process of growing in grace, or is it achieved instantaneously? Answers to these questions lie in Wesley’s concept of justification and the role given to faith in Wesley’s theology. As for justification, Wesley, true to his Puritan heritage, held that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer. But Wesley augmented the Puritan tradition, claiming that Christ’s imputed righteousness is limited to a person’s forgiveness and

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20 "The first thing that admits of no dispute among reasonable men is this: to all believers the righteousness of Christ is imputed; to unbelievers it is not. . . . But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers?" In this: all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them, or of anything that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done by and suffered for them" (John Wesley, *The Lord Our Righteousness*, SOSO, ed. Albert C. Outler, *Works*, ed. Frank Baker [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 1:454-55). See also John Wesley, *Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ*, *Works*, ed. John Emory (New York: T. Mason & G. Lane, 1839), 6:100-02.

initial acceptance by God; it is not, argued Wesley, a means of his actually being considered just before God. For this, Wesley borrowed the Roman Catholic doctrine of infused or inherent righteousness. The believer is becoming righteous on account of his active obedience. Thus, though Wesley claimed they are distinct events, sanctification was the de facto continuation of justification and entire sanctification its fulfillment.

22"The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past" (John Wesley, Justification by Faith, SÓSO, ed. Albert C. Outler, Works, ed. Frank Baker [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 1:189).

23"Least of all does justification imply that God is deceived in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what in fact they are not, that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things, that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no" (Wesley, Justification by Faith, Works, 1:188).

24Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification, 75. Much of Wesley's theology was made up of a curious amalgam of various teachings, including the Reformed views of imputed righteousness, man's utter sinfulness, and God's sovereign grace (albeit by maintaining a prevenient form of grace), the Roman Catholic ideal of infused justification, and the Arminian understanding of election and libertarian freedom. Informing all of these views, moreover, was his four-fold method of theological reflection on Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (Albert C. Outler, “Theological Method and the Problems of Development,” in Sermons 1-33, ed. Albert C. Outler, Works, ed. Frank Baker [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 1:55-66). The most likely reason for such a goulash of views was that much of Wesley's teaching was phenomenological. That is, Wesley was constantly trying to come to grips with the way things work in human experience. His doctrine of Christian perfection, then, appears to fit this pattern as it includes a dizzying admixture of influences, views, and a heavy dose of experience.

25The Roman catholic view of justification as laid down at Trent can be found in Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London: George Routledge, 1851), 29-48. For a concise, yet sound and fair look at the Roman Catholic view of justification from a Reformed perspective, see Anthony A. Hoekema, Saved by Grace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 163-69.

26Wesley, Justification by Faith, Works, 1:187.

27Wesley's doctrine of justification, then, in many ways, mirrors Bucer's idea of "double justification." That is, the belief that, after a "primary justification" in which man's sins are forgiven and he receives divine acceptance, there follows a "secondary justification," in which man is made righteous. For further discussion related to Bucer's understanding of justification and how it compares to that of Calvin, see Alister E. McGrath, Justitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2:34-39. Calvin refutes this doctrine, also held by Osiander, in his Institutes (John Calvin Institutes 3.11.12, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC [Louisville: Westminster, 1960], 1:741-43).

But what of faith’s role in Wesley’s theology? Wesley vehemently affirmed that faith is the only condition of both justification and sanctification. In answer to the skeptics who questioned the role of faith in Wesley’s understanding of sanctification, he responded, “Exactly as we are justified by faith, so we are sanctified by faith.” This answer from Wesley, however, only prompted the more difficult question of the place of good works in his concepts of justification and sanctification, to which he reciprocated,

It is incumbent on all that are justified to be zealous of good works. And these are so necessary that if a man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect that he shall ever be sanctified. He cannot ‘grow in grace,’ in the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus; nay, he cannot retain the grace he has received, he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.

So as not to be misunderstood, Wesley clarified,

Though it be allowed that both this repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the same sense with faith or in the same degree. . . . Not in the same sense; for this repentance and these fruits are only remotely necessary, necessary in order to the continuance of his faith, as well as the increase of it; whereas faith is immediately and directly necessary to sanctification.

Wesley repudiated the idea that obedience to God’s moral law is necessary to salvation in the same sense as faith in Christ’s death. Elsewhere, he wrote, “[F]allen man is justified, not by perfect obedience, but by faith. What Christ has done [in dying on the cross] is the foundation of our justification.” But neither is Wesley content to say that obedience to

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30 Ibid., 2:164.

31 Ibid., 2:167.

the law is unnecessary. It was, in his words, "remotely necessary, necessary in order to the continuance of his faith." Obedience to the law, in other words, is the means whereby justification meets its fulfillment. Though obedience is not essential to salvation, Christians are nevertheless expected to fulfill the law on the basis of their faith as expressed in acts of obedience and love. Faith, then, is that active principle of holiness in the believer that appropriates, not just what God does for them through Christ's death on the cross—the foundation of their justification—but what he now does in them through Christ's life—the remotely necessary condition of justification. It is one's acts done through them by Christ that ultimately leads to the full sanctification of one's personhood. In this way, Wesley related obedience to the law, not to the passive act of justification, but to the active process of sanctification. Dieter articulates the obvious consequence of such a move: "The Christian's life is designed under grace to be a progressive movement from the new birth to entire sanctification and perfection in love. The end result of Christian perfection is not an inner spirituality but works of love" (emphasis mine). Entire sanctification, for Wesley, means outer conformity to the life of Christ. It promises little in the way of inner transformation.

In view of Wesley's role given to faith in sanctification, Wesley taught that the normal pattern of the Christian life is one of gradual death to sin and growth in grace.

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33Here again we see where Wesley's concept of justification as inherent righteousness plays a large role in his concept of perfection. Lindström argues that Wesley's denial of a purely forensic justification stems from his struggle against antinomianism: "[Wesley] finds antinomianism's very essence to lie in the idea that Christ has met the claims of the law on man's behalf and that therefore he is not called upon to fulfill the moral law. Accordingly he disassociates the fulfillment of the law from atonement and justification and attaches it instead to sanctification" (Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification, 75).

until, by faith, he reaches a place of “receiving grace upon grace.”^35 Yet, he also taught that, for those who expectantly seek “full salvation,” they can be granted this second working of grace instantaneously if only they believe. Though ordinarily given just before death, this second working of grace can, in theory, be attained at any time. At the close of one of his sermons in 1765, Wesley gave an impassioned plea for his listeners to seek total love in the here and now: “Look for it then every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it now, if you believe it is by faith. . . . [E]xpect it by faith, expect it as you are, and expect it now!”^36

The state of perfect love, according to Wesley, is the birthright of every Christian and the purpose for which man is both made and redeemed. In addition, he maintained that, subsequent to the experience of full salvation, Christians can be assured of their place in a higher state of grace in precisely the same way that they are assured of having been justified: the witness of the Spirit. In response to the question “[H]ow do you know that you are sanctified, saved from your inbred corruption?” Wesley wrote, “We know it by the witness and by the fruit of the Spirit. And, first by the witness. As, when we were justified, the Spirit bore witness with our spirit that our sins were forgiven; so, when we were sanctified, He bore witness that they were taken away.”^37

To conclude, Wesley’s narrative of Christian perfection is one in which the believer, freed from the dominion of sin at the new birth, grows in grace until he reaches

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^37Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 76.
a state of salvation from all willful sin. Love is its essence, faith its foundation, total
renewal into the image of God its goal. Most notable for the purposes of our discussion,
however, is how Wesley’s doctrine of perfection associates the fulfillment of the law with
sanctification rather than justification. In so doing, it bifurcates man’s inner person from
his outer works. I take this up later in the chapter’s conclusion.

**Keswick**

Rooted in Wesley’s teaching on the Christian life, Keswick ranks as one of the
foremost contemporary views of sanctification. Few, however, would recognize it by its
original moniker. Keswick has indeed worn several hats through the years: “Deeper Life
Theology,” “Higher Life Theology,” and “Victorious Christian Living,” to name a few.
And even though Keswick has undergone a dramatic shift from its highly influential
revivalist roots to a behind-the-scenes, more domesticated movement offering broad
instruction on life and conduct, vestiges of its teachings can still be found38 in the

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38Keswick overtones can be heard in the current teachings of men like Charles Stanley, Stuart
Briscoe, and Bruce Wilkinson. In the last half century, men such as Major Ian Thomas, Alan Redpath,
Stephen Olford, Eric Alexander, and Billy Graham have embodied Keswick teaching. Before that, the
well-known Baptist minister, F. B. Meyer, Moody Church founder, D. L. Moody, and beloved devotional
writer, Oswald Chambers—who also, at times, exhibited Wesleyan perfectionist tendencies—were among
its adherents. It is also worthy of note that Keswick has, in the past, exerted a large influence over several
landmark evangelical ministries and institutions, including Campus Crusade for Christ, Moody Bible
Institute, Columbia International University, Wheaton College, and Dallas Theological Seminary. See
Charles Price and Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick: The Keswick Convention Past, Present and Future*
(Waynesboro, GA: OM, 2000), 182-83; William C. Kostlevy, “Keswick,” in *Historical Dictionary of the
Holiness Movement*, ed. William C. Kostlevy (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001), 151. For a helpful
overview of Keswick’s influence on evangelicalism in the early part of the twentieth century, see Andrew
David Naselli, “Keswick Theology: A Historical and Theological Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of
Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement, 1875-1920” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 2006); J. I.
Packer, “What the Puritans Taught Me,” *Christianity Today* (October 8, 1990): 44-47; Alister E. McGrath,
*J. I. Packer: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); and Wendy M. Zoba, “Knowing Packer: The
writings and sermons of several well-known evangelical pastors and in the past curriculums of several evangelical educational institutions.

As rare as it is to find an evangelical today who has heard the term, it was equally as rare to find one who had not heard of Keswick during much of the twentieth-century. Indeed, it was a strand of holiness teaching that enjoyed majority support among evangelicals in the wake of early twentieth-century fundamentalism. Unlike other movements of the time, however, Keswick resisted the centripetal pull of institutionalization, preferring instead the path of relative obscurity. Thus, it was founded and has continued largely as an annual convention in the bucolic lake district town of Keswick in northwest England.

Though today the Keswick convention is essentially a preaching festival committed to "the deepening of the spiritual life in individuals and church communities, through the careful exposition and application of Scripture,"39 it was originally a camp-style revivalist meeting dedicated to—as proclaimed by the original Convention in 1875—promoting "practical holiness."40 Keswick, to be sure, wrote the book on practical holiness. Each day of the convention was perfectly situated to lead a person to a point of crisis and ultimately to a higher plane of practical holiness.

39Price and Randall, Transforming Keswick, 266.

The first day of the convention week was given to the topic of sin and a person’s spiritual need for deliverance. Focus then shifted the second day to God’s provision for successful Christian living through the finished work of Christ and the inner work of the Holy Spirit. In light of man’s inability to conquer sin and Christ’s provision of himself as the divine subjugator of sin, day three centered on the need for unconditional surrender, giving rise to the Keswick maxim, “No crisis before Wednesday!” The fullness of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling presence of Christ in the heart of the believer was the theme of the fourth day. Though not originally included, a fifth day was later added to the convention. The fifth day brought the week to a close by exhorting the convention-goers to sacrificial service, especially that of missional endeavor.\(^{41}\)

The major themes of the old-style Keswick week correspond to much of the method and message of Keswick sanctification today and, for this reason, frame our discussion here.\(^{42}\) Day two of the Keswick week drew attention to Keswick’s emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to sin in a believer’s life.\(^{43}\) The Holy Spirit’s role, according to the Keswick speakers, is to repel conscious sin\(^{44}\) in the believer’s life.


\(^{42}\)Barabas takes this approach in his work, *So Great Salvation*, considered by many to be the definitive work on Keswick history and thought.

\(^{43}\)Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 220.

\(^{44}\)It must be noted that Keswick retained the Wesleyan notion of sin as purposive. When Keswick spoke of victory over sin, it assumed defeat of known sin in a believer’s life. Accordingly, the normal Christian life is one of “uniform sustained victory over known sin” (Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 84, 99; McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” 153). This is somewhat understandable given its interest in the practical application of religious truth over doctrinal theology.
by means of “counteraction.” By “counteraction,” it was meant that, insofar as the Holy Spirit is permitted, he acts as a countervailing force against the continuous downward tendency of the flesh. From Romans 8:2 it was argued that deliverance comes, not through eradicating the perpetual downward pull of sin, but by using “a new law, a mightier force, which counteracts the power of the law of sin.”

“The very fact,” theorized Keswick theologian Evan Hopkins, “that the ‘law of the Spirit of life’ is in force, and is ever a continual necessity, is a proof that the law of sin and death is not extinct, but is simply counteracted; in other words, that the tendency to sin is still there.” Hopkins illustrated his point by asking his listeners to imagine a lighted candle being passed through a dark room. Just as a candle in a dark room counteracts the tendency to darkness that surrounds it, said Hopkins, so too the indwelling Christ counteracts the ever-present law of sin and death. Much to the chagrin of Methodists at the time, then, Keswick did not teach that sin could be rooted out of the spiritual life entirely, only that, if permitted, it is constantly counteracted by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In short, Keswick taught repression, not eradication. But it is a qualified repression. The normal Christian life, according to Keswick, is one of “uniform

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45Barabas, So Great Salvation, 95. The principle of counteraction is often illustrated using the story of Peter walking on water. Peter, it is said, was able to walk on water, “not because his tendency to sink had been eradicated by the power of Christ, but because through faith-contact with Christ he was perpetually receiving a supply of divine power which completely counteracted his weight” (95). The moment he took his eyes off Christ, he sank. See Evan H. Hopkins, “Deliverance from the Law of Sin,” in Life More Abundant: Spirit-filled Messages from the Keswick Convention, ed. Herbert F. Stevenson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 57.


sustained victory over known sin” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{48} Counteraction is thus limited to the sanctification of a person’s external acts. Despite a person’s turn to practical holiness, his unconscious sinful motives remain untouched.

A second feature of the Keswick week was that of crisis. Moule once summed up Keswick’s message as “a crisis with a view to a process.”\textsuperscript{49} The process of sanctification is to be preceded by a point of full surrender. Indeed, this decisive point of surrender was at the heart of the Keswick week. At one Keswick convention, Hopkins urged his hearers to, as Romans 12:1 states, “present their bodies” into God’s hand, to hand them over definitively, not gradually. “There is a crisis,” he said, “the tense in the original points clearly to that. What you have been trying to do gradually God wants you to do suddenly, immediately, up to the light you have.”\textsuperscript{50} One early convention-goer described his dramatic experience of full surrender at Keswick after feeling “utterly helpless” to grasp “the blessing”:

On Tuesday evening, at the after-meeting, I rose with others to testify my desire, but could not rise a second time with those who could testify that they had realized that Christ was to them what they had believed. It was as if I only felt how utterly helpless every effort to grasp the blessing is, and could do nothing but bow in emptiness before the Lord. On Wednesday evening I was again in the after-meeting, and it was there the Lord revealed Himself. And as the words of the simple chorus were sung—“wonderful cleansing, wonderful filling, wonderful keeping”—I saw it all, Jesus cleansing, Jesus filling, Jesus keeping. . . . I believed and I received Jesus as my Cleanser. I look to Him to make the blood-sprinkling as glorious and

\textsuperscript{48}Barabas, So Great Salvation, 84, 99; McQuilkin, “Keswick Perspective,” 153.


\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 63.
effectual as the blood-shedding was. And I saw that the filling cannot but follow the cleansing.51

Third, faith was a constant theme of the convention week. That practical holiness came by faith was axiomatic to the Keswick message.52 For Keswick, there was no difference between the faith that justifies and the faith needed for sanctification. Freedom from sin’s dominion, wrote Hopkins, is a “blessing we may claim by faith, just as we accept pardon.” He continued, “It is possible to see in the death of Christ an all-sufficient atonement for sin, and yet not to see that in that death we have also the secret or source of personal purification of sin.”53 Personal purification of sin, then, according to one convention-goer, necessitated a second definite act of faith in the death of Christ:

Just as the unconverted, but seeking, soul thinks that it must work and labour in order to obtain salvation, but finds in God’s Word that it is pardoned by simply resting on the finished work of Another, so the believer, who after conversion

51M., “Testimony,” Life of Faith 4 (October 2, 1882): 221. Similar testimonies of surrender among Keswick speakers pepper the Keswick landscape. F. B. Meyer’s experience with the Spirit led him to pray: “My God, I cannot go on like this. I am powerless. I preach and people listen, but they are not saved and I have lost my grip” (F. B. Meyer, “Transformed into His Likeness,” in The Keswick Week, 1921 [London: The Marshall Brothers, 1921], 18). What is significant is that this prayer came, not at the outset of his ministry, but at its zenith. When he voiced this prayer, Meyer was already the pastor of a highly successful Baptist church in Leicester. See Ian Randall, “Old Time Power: Relationships between Pentecostalism and Evangelical Spirituality in England,” Pneuma 19 (Spring 1997): 61. Even Graham Scroggie—who perhaps had the longest tenure of any Keswick speaker, 42 years—though not entirely comfortable with the notion of climactic spiritual crises, told of a decisive moment in his own life when he, on the brink of forfeiting his thirteen-year pastoral ministry, “met with God” and thereafter made a fresh resolve to make the Bible central in his ministry. As cited in Randall, “Old Time Power,” 72. To “meet with God” in a moment of crisis subsequent to salvation was fundamental to Keswick teaching. It seems little has changed in this regard. Representative of current Keswick thought, past president of Columbia Bible College, J. Robertson McQuilkin, writes, “Depending on the intensity of conflict, the length of time out of fellowship, and one’s personality, this decision may be a major emotional crisis. But even without any emotion, in the sense of a turning point or a decisive event, this decision is rightly called a crisis. For such a person, a normal, successful Christian experience is not the product of a gradual process of spiritual development, let alone automatic progress. A decisive turning point is needed” (McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” 171).

52This is clearly seen in the renaming of Robert Pearsall Smith’s monthly journal that later came to serve as the semiofficial periodical of the movement. Smith’s The Christian’s Pathway to Power became, under the guidance of Evan Hopkins, The Life of Faith.

desires to be kept from daily sin, is perplexed until he sees that he also is to obtain deliverance in a similar way; and that God calls upon him for a second definite act of faith, in order to obtain this deliverance; just as definite an act of faith as at first brought him into the enjoyment of pardon and peace (emphases author's).54

One such phrase, ubiquitous in Keswick circles, typified Keswick's teaching on faith: “Holiness by faith.”55 It was this phrase that attracted the harshest censure against Keswick teaching from other evangelicals.56 Many critiqued Keswick’s tendency—even if unwittingly—to conflate justification with sanctification. Overtones of Wesleyan perfectionism in Keswick teaching were impossible to ignore. For Keswick, as for Wesley, the life of faith is Christ’s life (Gal 2:20), a life lived daily in the power of the Spirit. The same divine power that justifies also sanctifies.

Lastly, Keswick was characterized by a passive reliance on the Holy Spirit. As Bebbington has shown, the romanticism of the day played a large role in shaping the quietistic ethos of the movement.57 Inner peace and yieldedness was the end to which all Keswickers aspired. According to one Keswick-goer, his Christian life had been spent as a “worker for the Lord.” But it wasn’t until he entered into a “rest of soul for which [he]
had long been a seeker," that God gave him a new life in Christ.\textsuperscript{58} Hopkins concurred: "An essential condition of all spiritual progress and power is soul-rest."\textsuperscript{59} To cease to yearn and humbly yield one's life to God is a hallmark of Keswick sanctification. Striving is replaced with a "restful availability."\textsuperscript{60} Duty and service are replaced with consecration and appropriation of the inner Christ. To the extent that one is willing to surrender his self-will, the quiet calm of the Spirit's victorious stream awaits.

To review, Keswick was a revivalist movement dedicated to the practical holiness of the believer. It claimed no doctrinal statement, much less sought denominational status. But its impact on evangelicalism's understanding of sanctification was—and is still—immense. At Keswick's height, its message of a crisis of belief followed by a higher plane of Christian living (i.e., the "average" or "normal" Christian life) and the Christian's need for a passive self-reliance on the Spirit pervaded much of

\textsuperscript{58}D., "Column for Testimony," \textit{Life of Faith} 4 (July 1, 1882): 136.

\textsuperscript{59}Hopkins, \textit{The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life}, 120.

\textsuperscript{60}W. Ian Thomas, \textit{The Saving Life of Christ} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 63. Such "restful availability" was the experience of longtime Keswick proponent and Torchbearers International founder, Major Ian Thomas. As a University student and Inter-Varsity Fellowship group leader, Thomas immersed himself in Christian service. In his words, he was a "windmill of activity," always "buzzing around the place, every holiday, every spare moment!" While in University, he started a slum club down in the East End of London "out of a sheer desire to win souls, to go out and get them." Consequently, it was at the age of nineteen, after being "reduced to a state of complete exhaustion spiritually," that he finally felt like "there was no point going on." Then, it happened: "Then, one night in November, that year, just at midnight, I got down on my knees before God, and I just wept in sheer despair. I said, 'Oh, God, I know that I am saved. I love Jesus Christ. I am perfectly convinced that I am converted. With all my heart I have wanted to serve Thee. I have tried to my uttermost and I am a hopeless failure.' That night things happened. I can honestly say that I had never once heard from the lips of men the message that came to me then but God, that night simply focused upon me the Bible message of Christ Who Is Our Life. The Lord seemed to make plain to me that night, through my tears of bitterness: 'You see, for seven years, with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for Me, on My behalf, the life that I have been waiting for seven years to live through you.' That night, all in the space of an hour, [I] discovered the secret of the adventurous life. I got up the next morning to an entirely different Christian life, but I want to emphasize this: I had not received one iota more than I had already had for seven years!' See Major Ian Thomas, "Biography of Major W. Ian Thomas," [on-line], accessed 9 October 2006; available from http://torchbearers.gospelcom.net/html/major/major_bio.html; Internet.
the popular Christian literature. Equally influential were Keswick’s related doctrines of sin and counteraction, which effectively consign sanctification to the mere purification of a person’s external, purposive acts. As holy as a person might look on the outside, his inner nature may just as well tell a different story. Keswick offered no solution for how a person’s inner motives might affect his actions. I explore this oversight in greater detail later. I consider now the Augustinian model of sanctification.

**Augustinianism**

In contradistinction to the two holiness traditions discussed above, the Augustinian tradition boasts a distant pedigree. Though elements of Wesley’s perfectionism and Keswick’s quietism can be found in the teachings of Pelagius, Arminius, William Law, Samuel Rutherford, William Marshall and others, both traditions are viewed as essentially new inventions. One can trace, on the other hand, the foundational tenets of Augustine through men like Gottschalk in the ninth century to Bradwardine and Wycliffe in the fourteenth to its expressional apotheosis in the writings of the Reformers and seventeenth-century Puritans up to the modern period in men such as Edwards, the Princetonians—Charles and A. A. Hodge, Warfield, etc.—Ryle, and several of the Dutch Reformers, including Kuyper and Bavinck.

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Augustinians proffer numerous definitions for sanctification. Owen elaborately defined it as “an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, and thereby enabling them from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield obedience unto God, according unto the tenor and terms of the new covenant, by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ.”

Boyce related sanctification to holiness of character and life:

[To] sanctify means to make holy. . . . [Sanctification is that] character of holiness produced by the continuous working of the Holy Ghost through the word of truth; but also. . . . as involving that dedication of person and life to God, which constitutes that ‘living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God,’ which is the believer’s ‘reasonable service.’ Rom. 12:1. Christian holiness includes both character and life. ‘Sanctification’ is the process by which these are accomplished.

Owen and Boyce’s definitions, though distinct, contain many similarities. Both acknowledge the Spirit’s work in the believer. Likewise, both affirm that sanctification is the process of becoming more holy; finally, both agree that this continuous working of the Spirit takes place at the level of a person’s character.

Beginning with Augustine, those espousing a progressive form of sanctification have consistently stressed the pervasive effects of indwelling sin on the


whole person. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, gives a poetic account of his youthful struggle with what he terms his sinful “disorder”:

But what was it that I delighted in save to love and to be beloved? But I held it not in moderation, mind to mind, the bright path of friendship, but out of the dark concupiscence of the flesh and the effervescence of youth exhalations came forth which obscured and overcast my heart, so that I was unable to discern pure affection from unholy desire. Both boiled confusedly within me, and dragged away my unstable youth into the rough places of unchaste desires, and plunged me into a gulf of infamy. Thy anger had overshadowed me, and I knew it not. I was become deaf by the rattling of the chains of my mortality, the punishment for my soul’s pride; and I wandered farther from Thee, and Thou didst “suffer” me; and I was tossed to and fro, and wasted, and poured out, and boiled over in my fornications, and Thou didst hold Thy peace, O Thou my tardy joy! Thou then didst hold Thy peace, and I wandered still farther from Thee, into more and more barren seed-plots of sorrows, with proud dejection and restless lassitude. Oh for one to have regulated my disorder.

Writing fifteen centuries after Augustine yet in the same spirit, Liverpool Bishop J. C. Ryle characterized sin as that “vast moral disease of man”:

Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. . . . Its seat is in the heart, and like the heart in the body, it has a regular influence on every part of the character. . . . The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum; but it lies deep down in the constitution.

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64 Augustine refused to perpetuate the dualistic anthropology of Plato that insisted that it was the physical body that exerted a negative influence upon the soul—“It was not the corruptible body that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the body corruptible. And though from this corruption of the body there arises certain incitement to sin—indeed, even vicious desires—we must still not blame all the sins of an evil life on the body” (Augustine, *City of God*, 14.3, NPNF¹, 2:264). It was not the sinless soul burdened by a shell of corruption that led Adam to sin; quite the contrary, argued Augustine, it was the sinfulness of his soul that precipitated the corruption of the body.


For Augustine and Ryle, sin is any transgression of God’s law, whether known or unknown, whether inward or outward. It is nothing less than “[t]he slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character . . . and [it] at once makes us guilty in God’s sight.”67 And it is not until one recognizes the extent of sin’s cancerous hold that higher standards of holiness are realized.

Just as sin engulfs all aspects of man, Augustinian sanctification likewise involves the renewal of the whole person. “It covers,” in the words of Kuyper, “[one’s] entire mental, spiritual, and physical nature.”68 Though imperfect in this life, sanctification is per totum hominem (“throughout the whole man”).69 In view of this, its goal is not merely the correcting of man’s acts, but, as Packer points out, the cleansing of his character: “The process [of sanctification] consists of the progressive eradication from his will of evil attitudes and habits of choice and their corresponding replacement by good ones.”70

In addition to stressing the holistic nature of sin and sanctification, those in the Augustinian tradition claimed that the cleansing of one’s character began with a definitive

67Ibid., 32.


70Packer, “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” 155. See also Ryle, who writes, “Sanctification does not consist in the occasional performance of right actions. It is the habitual working of a new heavenly principle within, which runs through all a man’s daily conduct, both in great things and small. Its seat is in the heart, and like the heart in the body, it has a regular influence on every part of the character. It is not like a pump, which only sends forth water when worked upon from without, but lie a perpetual fountain, from which a stream is ever flowing spontaneously and naturally” (Ryle, Holiness, 32).
act, that is, regeneration,\textsuperscript{71} and that this act of regeneration is unfruitful if, in the words of Calvin, it does not “pass into our daily lives.”\textsuperscript{72} To highlight its importance, Calvin linked, in his \textit{Institutes}, his treatment of regeneration and adoption to sanctification: “The object of regeneration . . . is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God’s righteousness and their obedience, and thus to confirm the adoption that they have received as sons [Gal. 4:5; cf. II Peter 1:10].”\textsuperscript{73} Thus, no assurance is given to those who, “content to roll the gospel on the tips of their tongues,” have not first experienced its penetrating effects on the “inmost affections of the heart.”\textsuperscript{74}

Also essential to the Augustinian message was that the act of justification and cleansing of a person’s character are not to be confused or conflated. Justification must remain justification and sanctification must remain sanctification. In what follows, I sketch the putative Augustinian view of justification as outlined in the Reformed Confessions of Faith and list the fourfold way that Augustinians clarify the difference between justification and sanctification.

\textbf{The Heidelberg Catechism (1563).} In Question and Answer 60, we are given a warmhearted look into the nascent doctrine of justification as outlined by Calvin just a few years prior in his \textit{Institutes} (1559):

\begin{itemize}
\item Like Calvin, Ryle maintained that sanctification was “the invariable result of that vital union with Christ.” Sanctification was, for Ryle, inseparable from regeneration. “In a word,” he wrote, “where there is no sanctification there is no regeneration, and where there is no holy life there is no new birth” (Ryle, \textit{Holiness}, 21).
\item Calvin \textit{Institutes} 3.6.4.
\item Ibid., 3.6.1.
\item Ibid., 3.6.4.
\end{itemize}
Q. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ; that is, although my conscience accuse me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and that I am still prone always to all evil, yet God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me, if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.75

From this, the following observations can be made: (1) Man is incapable of keeping all the commandments of God (cf. Gal 5:1-5); (2) justification is an act of God’s undeserved grace; (3) Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us such that his obedience takes the place of our disobedience; and (4) justification is received by faith alone.

The Belgie Confession (1561). What is said about justification and its relationship to sanctification in the Belgie Confession can be found in Articles 22-24.

From all three articles, we cobble together the following:

[W]e justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits, and so many holy works, which he hath done for us and in our stead, is our Righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him in all his benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins. (Article 22)

We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ’s sake, and that therein our righteousness before God is implied; as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man, that God imputes righteousness to him without works. . . . and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities. (Article 23)

It is so far from being true, that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do any thing out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith as is called in Scripture a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in his Word. . . . howbeit they are of no account towards our justification. . . . Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?). (Article 24)76

Of interest here is that (1) faith is an “instrument,” not the grounds of our justification, (2) our salvation rests in being declared righteous; it is “not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:9), and (3) good works naturally accompany being justified, not because they are intrinsically meritorious, but because God has graciously accepted them through Christ.

The Westminster Confession (1647). The last of the classic Reformed confessions, the Westminster Confession, was drawn up largely by Puritan pastors. Chapter 11 contains their summary of the doctrine of justification, from which we cull the following:

Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone. . . . by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.77

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Note the following points of interest: (1) Effectual calling is linked to justification; (2) justification is on account of Christ imputing righteousness to the believer, not *infusing* it; and (3) justification is, at the same time, the being forgiven of one’s sins and the being accepted by God as righteous. The chapter goes on to affirm that

> God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.\(^78\)

Contrary to the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, the Westminster Divines taught that (4) believers never forfeit their “justified” status by sinning, thus failing to persevere, and, (5) though their sins displease God, (6) they can have confidence that God will continue to forgive them.

> With this understanding of justification in mind, Kuyper lists four ways that “our ancient theologians” sought to clarify the difference between justification and sanctification:

1. Justification works *for* man; sanctification *in* man.
2. Justification removes the *guilt*; sanctification the *stain*.
3. Justification imputes to us an *extraneous* righteousness; sanctification works a righteousness *inherent* as our own.
4. Justification is at once *completed*; sanctification increases gradually; hence remains *imperfect*.\(^79\)

\(^{78}\)Ibid., 3:327-28.

The initializing, then, of sanctification is free of all human effort. It is the result of God’s covenant of grace unilaterally enacted upon man, not man’s best effort to make himself more holy.  

Nor is Augustinian sanctification the result of a second act of faith. Rather, it is a weaving together of both faith in God’s Spirit and personal exertion. Sanctification, said Augustinians, is a cooperative effort between God and man whereby God works in the person “both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13) by making us “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). God treats us according to how he made us, rational moral agents who, having been regenerated by his grace, are set free to obey him. By his grace, God cooperates with the human will, causing it to desire godliness. “God prepares the human will,” wrote Augustine, and by his cooperation God perfects what he initiates through his work. In the beginning he works in us so that we may have the will, and in perfecting he works with us when we have the will. . . . Therefore, he works apart from us, in order that we may will. But when we will, and so will that we may act, God cooperates with us. However, we ourselves can do nothing to bring about good works of godliness

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80 Kuyper compares such futile human attempts to fulfill the law before being sanctified to a harp with broken strings: “The harp was made to produce music by the harmonious vibration of the strings. But the production of music is not the mending of the harp. The broken strings must be replaced, the new strings must be tuned, and then is it possible to strike the melodious chords. The human heart is like that harp: God created it pure that we might keep the law; which an impure heart can not do. Hence being profaned and unholy, it must be sanctified; then it will be able to fulfil the law” (Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit, 437).


82 And when the Holy Spirit makes these holy habits, this bent of the heart toward holiness, a permanent disposition, then we have become fellow workers with God in our own sanctification. Nor is it as tho He did one part and we another, but He using our work as a chisel in the sculpturing of our own soul” (Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit, 507).

83 Packer, “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” 156.
apart from God either working so that we may will or co-working with us when we will.\textsuperscript{84}

God is the author of sanctification; yet our wills are not supplanted to the point of being irrelevant or inconsequential. Instead, as Owen explained,

The Holy Ghost works in us and upon us, as we are fit to be wrought in and upon; that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience. He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures; he works \textit{in us} and \textit{with us}, not \textit{against us} or \textit{without us}; so that his assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself.\textsuperscript{85}

What is more, that God works in us does not mean, according to Berkhof, that “man is an independent agent in the work, so as to make it partly the work of God and partly the work of man; but merely, that God effects the work in part through the instrumentality of man as a rational being, by requiring of him prayerful and intelligent co-operation with the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{86} Put simply, we obey and in that obedience find that the one who called us to obey is faithfully working out our sanctification through us (1 Thess 5:23-24).

In addition to being a cooperative effort, Augustinianism teaches that sanctification consists of a dual aspect. Positively, it is \textit{vivification}, the growing and maturing of the regenerate man; negatively, it is \textit{mortification}, the killing of latent sinful habits. First, we grow in conformity to Christ by “\textit{increasing} and \textit{strengthening} those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86}Berkhof, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 534.
\end{itemize}
graces of holiness which we have received and [have] been engaged in the exercise of.”87 How do we increase and strengthen those graces according to Owen? “By exciting them unto frequent actings. Frequency of acts doth naturally increase and strengthen the habits whence they proceed; and in these spiritual habits of faith and love it is so, moreover, by God’s appointment.”88 We, therefore, according to Owen, grow in grace by actively pursing and using the means of grace—praying, reading, meditating, singing, etc.—already given them by God.

The second aspect of sanctification, said Augustinians, is that we grow in conformity to Christ by gradually eradicating or mortifying the often imperceptible entrenchment of indwelling sin.89 Mortification of sin, then, is not mere suppression or counteraction of a sinful tendency. Rather, it is, in the words of Owen, “the utter ruin, destruction, and gradual annihilation of all the remainders of this cursed life of sin.”90 To mortify sin is to drain its lifeblood, to put to death by the cross of Christ its “faculties, properties, wisdom, craft, subtlety, [and] strength.”91 And this is done only by the assistance of the Spirit. Any other such means, Owen argued, is an exercise in futility:

87Ibid., 3:388.
88Ibid., 3:389.
89“Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still acting, still labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are from the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even where there is least suspicion” (Owen, Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, Works, 6:11).
90Owen, A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit, Works, 3:545.
91Owen, Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, Works, 6:8. So, too, Calvin: “[F]rom [the word] ‘mortification’ we infer that we are not conformed to the fear of God and do not learn the rudiments of piety, unless we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought. As if God had declared that for us to be reckoned among his children our common nature must die!” (Calvin Institutes 3.3.8, emphasis mine).
I have proved that it is the Spirit alone that can mortify sin; he is promised to do it, and all other means without him are empty and vain. How shall he, then, mortify sin that hath not the Spirit? A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify one sin without the Spirit.92

Coupled with Augustinian sanctification’s teaching on the dual aspect of sanctification is its emphasis on the progressive nature of sanctification. Stagnant or moribund living is antithetical to the Christian experience. Indeed, Ryle told of how it could never be God’s will that a believer’s soul “stand still”:

If you have reason to hope that you are a true believer and yet do not grow in grace, there must be a fault, and a serious fault somewhere. It cannot be the will of God that your soul should stand still. “He giveth more grace.” He takes “pleasure in the prosperity of His servants.” (Jas. 4:6; Ps. 35:27.) It cannot be for your own happiness or usefulness that your soul should stand still. Without growth you will never rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). Without growth you will never do good to others. Surely this want of growth is a serious matter! It should raise in you great searchings of heart. There must be some “secret thing” (Job 15:11). There must be some cause.93

The Christian is instead marked by an increase in the power of the graces given him by the Holy Spirit. He exhibits a deeper sense of his sin, a more intense love for God and man, and more of the power of godliness in his heart.94 Thus, through a gradual, cooperative process of spiritual vivification (Rom 6:11) and fleshly mortification (Rom 8:13), his inner nature is conformed increasingly (2 Pet 3:17-18) to the image of Christ

92Owen, Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, 6:34.


94Ibid., 101. See also Kuyper, who, recapitulating the teaching of the early church fathers, spoke of sanctification as being “perfect in parts, imperfect in degrees.” Kuyper explained that sanctification was a “perfect” work in that God perfectly causes it to affect every part of the new man. Yet it was “imperfect” in the degree of its development, never ascending to perfection in this life. See Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit, 468-73.
(Phil 2:12-13; Rom 8:29), which in turn results in a greater ability to overcome sin and temptation (1 Cor 10:13).

In conclusion, Augustinian sanctification takes seriously the pervasive power of sin, involves the renewal of the whole person, relies upon the cooperative efforts of both the Holy Spirit and man, and consists of the dual aspects of vivification and mortification. It comprises, in sum, the “universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit into the image of God, through Jesus Christ, . . . the implanting, writing and realising of the gospel in our souls.”

**Conclusion**

I reviewed, in this chapter, the three main evangelical perspectives on sanctification. To be sure, much remains untouched. I did not explore thoroughly each perspective’s view of sin; I said nothing of other positions on sanctification, many of which find their genesis in one of the three perspectives; and, most noticeably, I resisted the urge to share what I believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of each position. But enough has been said to warrant a preliminary discussion into how the essential points of difference among the three perspectives lend themselves toward one view of human freedom over another. Two such points of difference are especially noteworthy.

First, Augustinianism emphasizes the sanctification of the whole person, whereas Wesleyan perfectionism and Keswick accent the sanctification of one’s deliberate sinful acts. Wesley and Keswick defined sin as a “voluntary transgression of a

known law.” In the case of Wesley, the desire—whether inward or outward—to deliberately violate the known will of God is eradicated at the point of consecration and faith; for Keswick, it is suppressed. Hence, both Wesley and Keswick taught that sanctification ceases at the point of unconscious or involuntary sin. The effect of this belief is that it externalizes sanctification, reducing it to the eradication or suppression of conscious sinful acts and excluding the positive renewal of a person’s unconscious character.96

Keswick’s doctrine of counteraction compounds this problem of unconscious neglect further by affirming that the “drag” of conscious sin is merely suppressed, not eradicated, when counteracted by a stronger force, the Holy Spirit. Inferred in traditional Keswick teaching, then, is the reality that—despite being counteracted—indwelling sin remains fixed in the Christian. Thus, one is saddled with the unsavory conclusion that, although the converted sinner’s actions may be sinless, he himself remains entirely unsanctified in the sense that no subjective renewal of his character has taken place. In a word, on the day he finishes running the race of the Christian life, his inner person will be no holier than the day he started.97 This outcome, of course, is in stark contrast to that of the Augustinian model of holiness which holds that sanctification involves more than a sweeping change of a person’s acts. It is, for Augustinians, a progressive renewing of a person’s character such that, as his character is conformed increasingly to the image of

96Packer, “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” 166. Though Wesley held that a person could be “sanctified throughout,” undergoing a complete change of nature, his view of sin and his belief that a person could lose their salvation seem to indicate a purposeful departure from Augustine’s understanding that sanctification involves the complete, lasting renewal of the whole person.

97Ibid., 166.
Christ, his desires begin to reflect that transformation. Keswick, however, accords well with libertarianism.

The libertarian model of human freedom is predicated, not upon man’s character, but his willful actions at the time. If a believer arbitrarily decides to sin, it is not because his heart is necessarily wicked; likewise, if he decides to allow the Holy Spirit to counteract conscious sins in his life, it is not necessarily because his internal motives are good. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit’s work is absolutely contingent upon the believer’s choice to appropriate his counteractive force or not. Man, then, not God, is the ultimate cause of his sanctification. And, as was shown in the previous chapter, such contingency best fits libertarian freedom.

The second major difference between the different perspectives is the level of man’s cooperation in sanctification allowed by each. Wesley and Keswick, breaking from traditional thought on how holiness is attained, taught that holiness is the byproduct of faith. In a word, they linked sanctification to justification rather than regeneration, to which it had always been linked. Faith thus becomes a basis for, not an instrument of, sanctification. Hence, both Wesley and Keswick curtailed, to varying degrees, man’s cooperation in sanctification.

98 Thus, Wesley writes, “By the ‘righteousness which is of faith’ is meant that condition of justification (and in consequence of present and final salvation, if we endure therein unto the end) which was given by God to fallen man through the merits and mediation of his only begotten Son” (John Wesley, The Righteousness of Faith, S O S O , ed. Albert C. Outler, Works, ed. Frank Baker [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 1:206). Contemporary Wesleyan theologian R. Larry Shelton adds, “God pronounces believers righteous and justifies them when they fulfill by faith-obedience the requirements of the covenant relationship. . . . This is righteousness, not a quality to be imputed or imparted, but a relationship of true covenant-union. . . . In union with Christ the believer brings into subjective actuality what the objective death of Christ had accomplished in potentiality” (R. Larry Shelton, “Initial Salvation: The Redemptive Grace of God in Christ,” in A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology, ed. Charles W. Carter [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 1:494). Murray underscores the problem with this construal of faith: “[S]peaks always of our being justified by faith, or through faith, or upon faith, but never speaks of our being justified on account of faith or because of faith” (John Murray, Redemption: Accomplished and Applied [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 155).
involvement in the sanctification process, regarding it as an arbitrary decision to
appropriate by faith the Spirit’s power or not. Only Keswick, however, with its bent
toward passivity, curtailed man’s involvement to the point of nearly excluding it
altogether.

As shown above, Keswick decried energetic resistance to sin. All bellicosity
in the Christian life is discouraged; instead, the Christian’s only requirement is to “hand
over the fleshly deeds of the body to the Spirit for mortification,” allowing him to do the
rest. Packer captures sardonically the backwards thinking of such an approach to sin:
“If I do anything to defeat sin, sin will defeat me; but if I do nothing beyond appealing to
the Spirit to defeat it for me, instantaneous victory is assured.” Certainly, this is a far cry
from Owen’s warning: “Be defeating sin, or it will be defeating you!” According to
Keswick, sanctification, like justification, is a vicarious affair—whatever I am
commanded to do is done in my stead by another. Man’s cooperation, beyond yielding
to the Spirit, is thus absolutely excluded.

In Augustinian holiness, man’s willingness to cooperate with the Spirit is
derived from a changed heart, a result of his regeneration and continued fight against sin.
Augustinians held that to cooperate with the Spirit is not to surrender fully one’s battle
with sin in a moment of crisis. Jesus’ words, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John

99Barabas, So Great Salvation, 106-07. Barabas summarizes the Keswick message as follows:
“Sanctification is thus the result, not of attempts at suppression of the flesh, but of faith in the finished work
of Calvary. It is not self-mortification, but mortification through the Spirit. It is the place of the Holy Spirit
to accomplish sanctification in the believer’s life; it is His function to put to death the deeds of the body in
the believer. It is the believer’s responsibility to consent to die; . . . so, if we wish to make any progress in
holiness, we have to give up belief in the value of self-effort in holiness. The gift of holiness must be
worked out in our daily life, but we work from holiness, not to holiness” (Barabas, So Great Salvation, 107,
87).

15:5), were not a call to erase all human effort from the Christian life, but a call to cooperate with him through his Spirit to put to death earthly desires (Col 3:5), all the time recognizing that it is his indwelling power at work (Phil 2:13). Whether it be putting to death the old man and putting on the new (Eph 4:22-24), escaping temptation (1 Cor 10:13), or being kept blameless until the coming of our Lord (1 Thess 5:23-24), man cooperates with the Spirit in his sanctification.

Before I close, I want to say one final word concerning the implications of the Augustinian doctrine of justification for sanctification and human freedom. But first, a comment on Wesley’s concern: Wesley feared that the Reformers, with their concept of forensic justification, undermined the need for good works in the Christian experience. His solution was thus to assimilate sanctification into justification, leading him to maintain a doctrine of “double justification” as first proposed by Bucer. Wesley’s fear was unwarranted, however, as those in the Reformed tradition maintained that, by virtue of one’s union with Christ, forensic justification is more than a legal fiction; it is “a reality, since union with Christ is not only a legal union but also a personal, real, spiritual union effected by the Holy Spirit.” Further, they thought it inconceivable that a

101 This fear also led Wesley to hold that a believer could lose his salvation: “[The believer who takes his justification for granted] grows a little and a little slacker till ere long he falls again into the sin from which he was clean escaped. . . . So he sins on, and sleeps on till he awakes in hell” (John Wesley, Predestination Calmly Considered, Works, 3rd ed. [London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 10:257).

102 See 74 n. 27 on Bucer’s concept of “double justification.”

justified person would not want to make strides in practical holiness. As Thomas Watson explained: “It is absurd to imagine that God should justify a people and not sanctify them, that He should justify a people whom He could not glorify.”

The Reformers, unlike Wesley, taught that both justification and sanctification are received in union with Christ. Justification affects our legal standing; sanctification, our consequent ethical renewal. As soteriological elements the two are distinct; in practice, they are inseparable. “A justified person,” writes Letham, “who is not at the same time set apart as God’s and thereby being renewed into his image just does not exist. Again, there is no such being as a person who is being sanctified but is not also justified by faith.”

The Augustinian doctrine of justification is important for the following reason: Whereas Wesley assimilated sanctification into justification, Augustinians claimed a distinct separation of the two, thereby circumventing Wesley’s justification by faith and works. To elaborate: For Wesley, one’s justification—and, for that matter, sanctification

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104 So Calvin in response to the Papists who questioned the role of good works in justification: “[The Papists] pretend to be grieved that, when faith is so gloriously extolled, works are degraded. What if, rather, these were encouraged and strengthened? For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them. . . . Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. . . . Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness” (Calvin Institutes 3.16.1).


106 “[O]ur righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ. . . . by faith we grasp Christ’s righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. . . . These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies” (Calvin Institutes 3.11.23; 3.16.1).

—is, in some measure, *determined* upon one’s good works; for the Reformers, one’s good works are *a result of* one’s righteous character.¹⁰⁸ For Wesley, one’s eternal security rests in one’s actions; for the Reformers, it rests solely in God’s grace. And finally, for Wesley, one’s perseverance is ultimately dependent upon one’s choice to accept by faith the Spirit’s power, whereas, for the Reformers, one’s perseverance is ultimately dependent upon God’s grace. To make sanctification dependent upon God’s grace, then, is to internalize sanctification, to link it to that inner change of one’s desires that derives from regeneration. But one’s view of human freedom is crucial here. For, if we suppose that one *necessarily* acts out of this internal change of desires, compatibilism is our only option. Libertarian freedom, for reasons that have already been shown, cannot guarantee that such actions will always take place. Thus, progressive sanctification relies upon both the Augustinian view of justification and the compatibilist model of sanctification.

In conclusion, compatibilism provides the most suitable matrix for a model of sanctification where man’s inner character is progressively renewed, resulting in right actions. Unlike libertarian freedom, which is better suited to a Wesleyan perfectionism or Keswick model, compatibilism offers a model of human freedom where man is said to act freely yet never as to make God absolutely contingent, a model of freedom where God’s actions are seamlessly compatible with man’s. I turn next to see more clearly how

¹⁰⁸Indeed, as Calvin notes, one’s deeds are pleasing to God only if done out of a purified heart: “[P]urification of heart must precede [men’s works], in order that those works which come forth from us may be favorably received by God” (*Calvin Institutes* 3.14.8).
Scripture details this seamless compatibility between the progressive sanctification of the believer and compatibilist freedom.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF KEY SANCTIFICATION TEXTS

If the connection between compatibilist freedom and progressive sanctification is in fact necessary, it must be so because of, not in spite of, the scriptural evidence. Evangelicals too often overlook exegesis of Scripture in favor of endless philosophical disputes that instead govern the DSF debate. As noted, Ciocchi avers that Scripture is of no consequence in the debate. But, for evangelicals open to rigorous study, Scripture offers clarity into the sometimes murky waters of the debate. This chapter attempts to provide such a study.

The following passages have been chosen because they fit a threefold criteria: (1) Each of these texts receive significant attention in the sanctification sections of most systematic theologies, (2) together they encompass the key aspects of the New Testament doctrine of progressive sanctification, and (3) they illustrate how Scripture presupposes a freedom of inclination—grounded on the idea that a believer acts out of his inner character—to account for the cooperative nature of progressive sanctification.1 With the above criteria in mind, the foremost aim of this chapter is not to argue for the necessary connection between compatibilist freedom and progressive sanctification. This will be

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1While Scripture is not explicit on the details of how God and man cooperate in the process of sanctification, enough evidence exists to place the burden of proof upon those who maintain man’s ability to choose other than God intended. Such weight given to the human partner hardly seems bipartisan.
the central purpose of chapter 5. Though the conclusions of each section offer a brief
word on the possible implications of the passages for my overriding thesis, the goal of
this chapter is a more modest one, namely, to exegete key Scripture texts with the
purpose of gaining greater clarity into the original intent of the biblical author. Where
possible, I have avoided following needless trails into the more banal aspects of the text
and have instead sought to cover those theological points deemed relevant to this study.
My aim is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of each text, only an introduction to
the main contours of each so as to lay the groundwork for the next chapter.

Romans 7:14-8:8

Before embarking on the more controversial task of identifying the “I” of
Romans 7:14-25, I first situate the passage into the larger context of Romans 6-8.
Romans 6 begins with the expected response to Paul’s earlier revelation that, even as the
law worked to augment man’s trespass, God’s grace reigned supreme: “What shall we say
then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (v. 1)? Paul makes plain the
absurdity of such a question by showing how the justified believer is now free from the
sin-dominated nature that was once his in Adam (v. 6). Not only is he free from the
ruling principle of sin; he is now a “slave to righteousness,” (v. 18) which leads to his
being sanctified (vv. 19, 22).

Romans 7 addresses the next questions of the place of the Mosaic law and its
relation to sin. The law, Paul writes, only served to imprison and stimulate the very sins
it forbade. But just as death breaks the marriage bond (vv. 2-3), so too those who have
“died to the law through the body of Christ” (v. 4) have been delivered from the law that
once enslaved them. Paul, anticipating the next question, then asks whether the law can be exonerated from the charge of being intrinsically sinful (v. 7). Answer: The commandment—“holy and righteous and good” (v. 11)—is not at fault; it is the corrupt sinful nature, “seizing an opportunity through the commandment” (v. 13), that produces death by waging war against those elements in a person that desire to obey God. Only the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ (v. 25) can deliver the believer from this war-ravaged “body of death” (v. 24).

In Romans 8, Paul concludes his preceding arguments with a hope-filled rhapsody of the life lived in and directed by the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ sets us free from the “law of sin and death” (v. 2), enables us to fulfill the “righteous requirement of the law” (v. 4),2 “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (v. 16), “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (v. 27), and guarantees that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 38-39). In sum, the Spirit sets in motion a principle of life in contrast to the principle of sin and death concomitant with the law (7:6; 8:2, 11).3 Romans 7:14-25 resides in this context.

Verses 14-25 of Romans 7 stand as some of the more controversial verses in all of Scripture. Though the main topic of the passage, the Mosaic law, is clear, there is little consensus on the identity of the person whose struggle Paul depicts here. However

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2 See Kevin W. McFadden, “The Fulfillment of the Law’s Dikaiôma: Another Look at Romans 8:1-4,” *JETS* 52 (September 2009): 483-97. McFadden here ably argues, against the historical interpretation that sees Christ’s obedience as fulfilling the law’s requirement, that v. 4 refers in its context to the new Christian’s obedience, empowered by the Spirit, to fulfill the law’s righteous requirement.

tangential to the main topic, it remains the source of fierce debate and raises a variety of theologica
and practical concerns, including one’s understanding of sanctification. Is the Christian experience one of constant struggle? Or, has Christ rescued us from the severity of the struggle described here? Is Paul meaning to describe the Christian life lived apart from appropriating God’s Spirit? All of these questions combined with a natural curiosity into Paul’s intent have led to no shortage of discussion on this passage.

The majority of early Church Fathers believed these verses to describe an unregenerate person. Commenting on the phrase “sold under sin” (v. 14), Ambrosiaster typified the interpretation given by many of the early Church Fathers:

To be sold under sin means to trace one’s origin to Adam, who was the first to sin, and to subject oneself to sin by one’s own transgression. For Adam sold himself first, and because of this all his descendants are subjected to sin. Thus people are weak and unable to keep the precepts of the law unless they are strengthened by God’s help. This is why Paul says: The law is spiritual but I am carnal, sold under sin. This means that the law is firm and just and without fault, but man is weak and bound either by his own or by his inherited fault, so that he cannot obey it in his own strength. That is why he has to take refuge in God’s mercy. For what does it mean to be subjected to sin other than having a body corrupted by the wickedness of the soul which is dominated by sin?

Schreiner maintains that whether or not Paul is meaning to adjudicate between Christian or pre-Christian experience is entirely peripheral to his purpose. He argues that “the arguments are so finely balanced because Paul does not intend to distinguish believers from unbelievers in the text. Paul reflects on whether the law has the ability to transform human beings, concluding that it does not” (Thomas R. Schreiner, Romans, ECNT, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998] 390). Unbeliever and believer alike will find no respite in the law, only death. For unbelievers, the law kills because of their inability to keep it. On the other hand, believers—caught up in the tension between the already sanctified and the not yet fully sanctified—continue to struggle with sin, awaiting that final day of redemption when they will know entire liberation (391).


Ambrosiaster, Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians, trans. and ed. Gerald L. Bray, ACT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 1:57.
Augustine, too, followed this construal, that is, until his battles with the Pelagians over the freedom of the will caused him to change his opinion. Reflecting on his change in thinking, Augustine explained,

And it had once appeared to me also that the apostle was in this argument of his describing a man under the law. But afterwards I was constrained to give up the idea by those words where he says, “Now, then, it is no more I that do it.” For to this belongs what he says subsequently also: “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” And because I do not see how a man under the law should say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man;” since this very delight in good, by which, moreover, he does not consent to evil, not from fear of penalty, but from love of righteousness (for this is meant by “delighting”), can only be attributed to grace.  

Almost all of the Reformers adopted the mature Augustine’s interpretation.

None, however, championed its theological significance more than Luther, for whom these verses encapsulated that glorious revelation that the Christian is *simul iustus et peccator* (“simultaneously a justified person and a sinner”). Justification, being a forensic declaration of one’s right standing *coram Deo* (“before God”), does nothing to remove the presence of indwelling sin; rather, sanctification plays this role. To that

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7 In his *Confessions*, Augustine compared his own early struggles with sin to those described by Paul: “In vain did I ‘delight in Thy law after the inner man,’ when ‘another law in my members warred against the law of my mind, and brought me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.’” For the law of sin is the violence of custom, whereby the mind is drawn and held, even against its will; deserving to be so held in that it so willingly falls into it. ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death’ but Thy grace only, through Jesus Christ our Lord?” See Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.5.12, trans. J. G. Pilkington, in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin*, ed. Philip Schaff, NPNF¹ (New York: Christian Literature, 1886-90; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 1:121. Idem, *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Paula F. Lasdes, in *Augustine on Romans*, ed. Robert L. Wilken and William R. Schoedel, ECLS (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982). Here, Augustine wrote, “The man described here [in v. 16] is under the Law, prior to grace; sin overcomes him when by his own strength he attempts to live righteously without the aid of God’s liberating grace” (Augustine, *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, ECLS, 6:17).

effect, the life of the believer is characterized by a constant struggle with sin and an inability to obey fully God’s law. Luther’s reading of this text remained the classic statement of “normal” Christian experience into the twentieth century. There were, of course, exceptions.

One such exception to this standard reading of the text was Wesley, who viewed this passage as the perfect portraiture of a man totally enslaved to sin. Paul is thus “assuming” the character of a hypothetical man, who is “first, ignorant of the law, then under it, and sincerely but ineffectually striving to serve God.” No until Romans 8:1 does the “miserable bondage” of the law end and the man enters into the grace of God.

Keswick also deviated from the norm. Like Wesley, Keswick held that Paul was depicting here man’s ineffectual attempt to serve God. The significant difference was that Keswick believed the man to be regenerate. According to the Keswick interpretation, verses 14-25 portray a schizophrenic Christian, a Christian out of sorts, trying—in his own strength—to do that which Christ has already promised to do for him.

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9 How lively a portraiture is this of one ‘under the law’! One who feels the burden he cannot shake off; who pants after liberty, power, and love, but is in fear and bondage still! Until the time that God answers the wretched man crying out, ‘Who shall deliver me’ from this bondage of sin, from this body of death?—‘The grace of God, through Jesus Christ thy Lord’” (John Wesley, The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption, SOSO, ed. Albert C. Outler, Works, ed. Frank Baker [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984], 1:260).

10 Commenting on the question posed by Paul in Rom 7:7—“What shall we say then?”—Wesley writes, “This is a kind of digression, (to the beginning of the next chapter,) wherein the apostle, in order to show, in the most lively manner, the weakness and inefficacy of the law, changes the person, and speaks as of himself, concerning the misery of one under the law. This St. Paul frequently does when he is not speaking of his own person, but only assuming another character, Rom. iii, 6; 1 Cor. x, 30; chap, iv, 6. The character here assumed, is that of a man, first, ignorant of the law, then under it, and sincerely but ineffectually striving to serve God. To have spoken this of himself, or any true believer, would have been foreign to the whole scope of his discourse; nay, utterly contrary thereto; as well as to what is expressly asserted, chap, viii” (John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament [New York: Lane & Scott, 1850], 379).
And it is not until the point of consecration and faith that the Christian travels "out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8." But not all Keswick speakers were satisfied with this rendering of the text.

In the summer of 1965, John Stott delivered a series of Bible expositions on Romans 5-8 to the Keswick faithful. Stott jolted his listeners by not adhering to accepted Keswick teaching on Romans 7. Instead of picturing the sub-standard or abnormal Christian life, Stott argued that Paul was here detailing the everyday life of the mature believer:

From these two points [i.e., Paul's acknowledgment of the law and his longing to obey it] we deduce that the speaker in the last part of chapter 7 is a mature, believing Christian; a believer who has been given a clear and a proper view both of his own sinful flesh and of God's holy law. His position is that in his flesh there is nothing good, whereas God's law is the good that he desires. . . . Now let me repeat that anyone who acknowledges the spirituality of God's law and his own natural carnality is a Christian of some maturity. . . . Indeed, an honest and humble acknowledgment of the hopeless evil of our flesh, even after the new birth, is the

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11Hopkins, in several of his sermons, compared the Christian life to a rod that sinks when lead is attached and rises when counterbalanced by the presence of a cork: “Suppose that I take a rod and attach to it a piece of lead. I drop it into a tank of water. By the law of sinking bodies, it descends; that illustrates the law of sin. Now I get a piece of cork, and fasten that also to the rod, and placing it in the water I see that by the law of floating bodies, it has a tendency to ascend. But the lifting power of the cork is not strong enough to overcome the downward tendency of the lead, so that it may be kept from sinking. It rises and sinks alternately. There you have the “up and down” life. ‘I myself’ by the cork serving the law of floating bodies, and “I myself” by the lead obeying the law of sinking bodies. . . . It is thus that I read Romans 7. We do not triumph by virtue of our own struggles and efforts to keep ourselves from sinking, but by abiding in the life-belt and letting Christ have the whole weight of our load, which He counteracts by His superior power” (Hopkins, “Deliverance from the Law of Sin,” 56-57). See also Robert C. McQuilkin, The Message of Romans: An Exposition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1947), 75-87. For more scholarly treatments of the Keswick view, see Handley C. G. Moule, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, EB, 7th series, vol. 19 (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1894), 1:187-202; David Wenham, “The Christian Life: A Life of Tension? A Consideration of the Nature of Christian Experience in Paul,” in Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His Seventieth Birthday, ed. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 80-94; Ronald Y. K. Fung, “The Impotence of the Law: Towards a Fresh Understanding of Romans 7:14-25,” in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, ed. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 34-48.
first step to holiness. . . . The power and subtlety of the flesh are such that we dare not relax one moment. The only hope is unremitting vigilance and dependence.  

Leaving no doubt where he stood, Stott concluded his sermon with these words: “I do not myself believe that the Christian ever, in this life, passes for good and all out of the one cry into the other, out of Romans 7 into Romans 8, out of despair into victory. No. He is always crying for deliverance, and he is always exulting in his Deliverer.”  

Though Stott’s message was undoubtedly thought to be somewhat contentious by the convention-goers, much of his exposition was in concert with the traditional reading of the passage. Indeed, since Augustine, few evangelicals have questioned Paul’s description of himself as a believer in Romans 7:14-25. And this is for good reason. The arguments in favor of this interpretation are many.

The most important reasons given for why Paul is here describing a regenerate person may be summed up as follows:

1. The change from the past tenses of verses 7-13 to the present tenses of verses 14-25 can only mean that Paul shifts from speaking of his pre-Christian experience to that of his present state.

2. It best fits the structure of the letter. Chapters 5-8 are about the new life in Christ. For Paul to revert back to the situation in Romans 3 and begin a rather lengthy discussion of the life of the unbeliever in the midst of these chapters would seem strangely out of place.


13Ibid., 78.

14The convention minutes perhaps best capture the tacit impact of Stott’s study. It was recorded that “[l]ively discussion among the theologically-minded followed this stimulating study.” See “Salvation’s Full Implications,” in The Keswick Week, 1965 (London: Marshall Brothers, 1965), 56. The significance of Stott’s message can also be seen in that, still today, it tops the bestseller list of most-listened-to sermons from past Keswick conventions according to the official Keswick Ministries website, http://www.keswickministries.org.
3. Paul makes several positive statements about the "I" that could hardly describe the natural man of Romans 1:18-3:20 or 8:5-8. Who else but the regenerate man could "delight in" (v. 22) and "serve" (v. 25) the law of God?^^15

4. Verses 14-25, like Galatians 5:16-18, mark the Christian life lived in the tension of the already-not yet, the life lived in two ages simultaneously.^^16 Complete deliverance from "this body of death" (v. 24) awaits that day of final consummation when the corruptible will put on incorruptible (Rom 8:23). As it stands, we are _stimul justus et peccator._

5. The odd placement of verse 25b ("So then, I myself serve the law of God with the mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin") after Paul's seemingly climactic statement to his soliloquy in verse 25a ("Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!") is best accounted for if Paul refers to a regenerate person. Though difficult on any reading,^^17 for Paul to have an unregenerate person in mind in verse 25b after he has just assured victory through Christ is a _non sequitur_.

Better: Verse 25a acknowledges Christ's deliverance from sin at the end of all things,^^18 and verse 25b shows the ongoing presence of sin.

For those who find these arguments decisive, verses 14-25 give an account of "normal" Christian experience, a Christian's ongoing struggle with sin. It vividly depicts that agonizing struggle of the Christian caught between the ages. The new age may have dawned but the lures of the old still remain—its powers of sin, the flesh, and the law.

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^^15Leon Morris observes that even though Paul speaks of himself as "of the flesh" (v. 14), this need not imply that he has a "sinful mind," because it is with his mind that he serves God's law (v. 25). See Leon Morris, _The Epistle to the Romans_, PNTC, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 286.

^^16On the passage's significance to the already-not yet theme in the New Testament, see Nygren, _Commentary on Romans_, 295-96 and Schreiner, _Romans_, 382-84.

^^17The difficulty of this verse has led some liberal scholars, for instance, to propose that a gloss has been inserted into the text or that the verses have become transposed and are in need of rearrangement. For the former proposal, see Rudolph Bultmann, "Glossen im Römerbrief," _Theologische Literaturzeitung_ 72 (1947): 197-202. For the latter, see C. H. Dodd, _The Epistle of Paul to the Romans_, MNTC (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 114-15. No matter how sure one might be about what Paul "should have said" or "meant to say," the text should be allowed to stand for itself. No evidence exists for either proposal and both have been rightly rejected by most commentators.

^^18So Schreiner, who points out the intentional use of the future tense verb, _προστατεύω_, in v. 24. Thus, he writes, "The deliverance for which God is thanked in verse 25 does not become a reality when one believes. It is experienced on the day of redemption when one is freed from the corruptible body" (Schreiner, _Romans_, 382).
Full deliverance awaits the eschaton when the corruptible puts on the incorruptible (Rom 8:30). In the interim, though, Christ has set the Christian free from the “law of sin and death” to fulfill the “righteous requirement of the law” (v. 4). The Christian who walks “according to the Spirit” (v. 4) now overcomes those effects of sin once thought insuperable.\(^{19}\)

However plausible it may seem, strong arguments have been marshaled against the above interpretation. Among some of the more important reasons given for why Paul is here describing an unregenerate person may be summed up as follows:\(^{20}\)

1. The text contains no mention of the Holy Spirit and not until the paean of verse 25a is Christ mentioned. The unusual absence of the Spirit starkly contrasts the Spirit-filled life of the believer elsewhere described by Paul (cf. Rom 7:6; 8:1ff.).

2. Unlike the person of Galatians 5:16-26 who, aided by the Spirit, triumphs over the flesh, the “I” of Romans 7:14-25 is restive and incompetent. This suggests that the reality of the believer struggling against the desires of the flesh is indeed Pauline, only that Paul does not intend this particular text to be such an example.


3. The “I” of verse 14 is said to be “sold under sin” (περαμένων ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν), an objective status completely at odds with the believer who has supposedly been “set free from sin” (Rom 6:6, 7, 18).21

4. Paul makes several statements concerning “I” that are irreconcilable if taken to represent a regenerate person. He, for instance, asserts that it is held “captive to the law of sin” (v. 23) and cries “Wretched man that I am!” (v. 24). Contrast this with the statements in Romans 6 where Paul asserts that those united with Christ (v. 5) have been “set free from sin” (vv. 7, 18) and are, therefore, no longer “enslaved by sin” (v. 6). Thus, the “I” of verses 14-25 is more emblematic of the unregenerate “I” of verses 8-11.

For those who find these arguments persuasive, verses 14-25 continue Paul’s narrative of one outside Christ, introduced in verse 7. Given this, Paul’s shift from the imperfect to the present tense is most likely to stress the condition or state of the person enslaved to sin.22 No matter how desirous he is to do what is right, the pull of his flesh is stronger (vv. 18-20). Paul then closes his narrative with the joyous statement of verse 25a, which anticipates the freedoms of Romans 8 that accompany regeneration.23

Much of the division centered around this passage stems from differing theological agendas. Still, it is quite clear that not all the exegetical data points in one

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21See Moo, who argues that Paul’s language implies a condition of slavery under sin’s power given that the verb, περαμένω (“to sell”), from which the participle, περαμένος, comes, often refers to the selling of slaves. The ἐν μέσῳ, says Moo, also suggests that, “in being sold, ἐγώ has been placed ‘under the authority of’ sin.” He continues, “Because of this, and because Paul has just been using slavery imagery (6:6, 16-22; 7:6, allusions to slavery here are probable” (Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 423).


23Richard Longenecker, Paul: Apostle of Liberty (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 110. On this reading, the last half of v. 25, far from an inserted gloss or “incongruous intrusion,” appropriately concludes the preceding verses. It, in the words of Cranfield, “sums up with clear-sighted honesty—an honesty which is thoroughly consonant both with the urgency of the longing for final deliverance expressed in v. 24 and also with the confidence that God will surely accomplish that deliverance in His good time reflected in v. 25a—the tension, with all its real anguish and also all its real hopefulness, in which the Christian never ceases to be involved so long as he is living this present life” (Cranfield, Romans, 171).
direction. Indeed, interpreting Romans 7 is, in the words of Moo, like “fitting pieces of a puzzle together when one is not sure of the final outline; the best interpretation is the one that is able to fit the most pieces together in the most natural way.”\textsuperscript{24} With this in mind, while I affirm that Christians struggle with sin (cf. Gal 3:16-17), I would suggest that the most natural reading of this text points in the direction of the person being unregenerate. Paul, in verses 14-25, describes his past condition as a Jew under the law\textsuperscript{25}—he was “sold under sin” (v. 14b), held “captive to the law of sin” (v. 23). Translated in terms of freedom, Paul acts out of his sinful nature (v. 17) and, though he does not understand his actions (v. 15), because his nature is one enslaved to sin, he cannot do other than sin (v. 23). All the delighting in God’s law that Paul can muster is insufficient to overcome his greatest inclination, which, because his heart is dominated by the flesh, is to sin. In contrast, Romans 8:1-8 celebrates the life lived in union with Christ because of his salvific work on the cross. Now, the Christian, having been given a new nature, is set free to “live according to the Spirit” (vv. 4-5), to act out of a nature dominated by the Spirit; his greatest desire, then, is to please God. And while the mind set on the flesh cannot submit to God’s law (v. 7) nor please God (v. 8), the mind set on the Spirit is “life and peace” (v. 6).

\textsuperscript{24}Moo, \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, 414.

\textsuperscript{25}Moo, \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, 417. I agree with Moo that the “I” represents Paul, but Paul in solidarity with the Jewish people.
First Corinthians 10:13 reads, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” My aim in approaching this passage is twofold. I will examine first the context surrounding the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13, making sure to show how the analogical relationship between the Israelites and the Corinthian believers acts as a stern warning for them to eschew idolatry and as the perfect occasion for Paul to assure the Corinthian Christians of God’s faithfulness. Next, the promise itself will be examined to show how it functions to continue the warning in verses 1-12 and assure the Corinthian Christians—leading up to the prohibition to “flee from idolatry” in verse 14—that God will give them the strength to resist apostasy.

Any plausible interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13 must harmonize with the promissory and assuring atmosphere in which it rests. The textual horizon of this

26There is some debate over the exact nature of Paul’s exhortations—whether they are to be taken as analogical or typological. In favor of the former is that the Corinthians, unlike the Israelites, have yet to “fall”: “[W]hat we have in 1 Corinthians 10 is not a full typology like one finds in Hebrews in the comparison of Christ and Melchizedek. The correspondence is incomplete because the Corinthians have not yet perished in the ‘desert’ (v. 5). In fact, Paul uses the Israelite example so that the Corinthians will repent and not perish. He sees an analogy between the wicked behavior of the Israelites and that of at least some of the Corinthian Christians” (Ben Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 217). For other commentators who take Paul’s exhortations as analogical in nature, see C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 227, and F. F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians (London: Oliphants, 1971), 92.


28For a helpful discussion on the three horizons of redemptive interpretation—textual, epochal, and canonical—needed to rightly interpret passages of Scripture, see Richard Lints, The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1993), 293-310.
passage is one of warning: if the Corinthian Christians persist in their over confidence, their fate will be the same as that of the Israelites (v. 12). Certainly there was no shortage of malfeasance present within the Corinthian church. Typifying their misconduct, however, was an unwavering embrace of an over-realized eschatology manifested by their timid egos. As Merckle has shown, such an embrace can be seen to account for their false understanding of the Christian ministry (1 Cor 1:11-13; 3:3-4; 4:6-7), allowance of gross immorality (1 Cor 5; 6:9), contorted views on marriage (1 Cor 7), abuse of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11), and denial of the future resurrection of believers (1 Cor 15:12). That there were also some Corinthians who thought themselves above the ability to “fall” into idolatry is evidenced in Paul’s emphatic warning in verse 12—“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall”—combined with his rhetorical statements in verse 22: “Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”

In verses 1-6, Paul draws on a number of Old Testament texts to show that “[w]hat happened then is relevant for the instruction of the Corinthians now because their situation is analogous and because the benefits from Christ are comparable.” Witherington underscores further this analogical relationship:

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29 I am deeply indebted to one of my colleagues, Aaron O’Kelley, for this insight.

30 That Paul specifically has apostasy in mind here is substantiated further when it is realized that “stand” and “fall” language of v. 12 is commonly used by Paul to refer to salvation (Rom 11:20; 1 Cor 15:1; 1 Tim 3:6-7). See Paul D. Gardner, The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 8-11:1 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 167, and Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 228.


32 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 218-19.
[T]he Israelites received the benefits of the Exodus-Sinai experiences [passing through the Red Sea as a kind of “baptism into Moses” taken presumably from the Christian practice where believers are baptized “into Christ” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27)] and the manna and water in the wilderness [possibly prefiguring the elements in the Lord’s Supper]. . . . His point is the Israelites had the same sort of benefits as Christians do, even benefits from Christ himself, and even this did not secure them against perishing in the desert and losing out on God’s final and greatest blessing.33

Given their similar plight, the Corinthians stand primed to incur the very same judgment placed upon the Israelites if they insist on continuing in their idolatry (v. 14). Such an ignominious end, however, need not materialize if only they take heed to Paul’s warnings (vv 6-12).34

Viewed from this perspective, Paul’s exhortations are divinely-designed incentives by which the promise of verse 13 reaches its fulfillment. Simply stated, Paul’s injunction to “flee idolatry” (v. 14) functions as the “way of escape” (v. 13).35 1 Corinthians 10:13, then, occasioned by Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians to endure, stands as a comforting promise of God’s covenant faithfulness36 to all believers that he


35Ibid., 8. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, The Race Set before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance & Assurance (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 266, and Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 462. Calvin puts it well: “I myself think that this was written to encourage them, so that, after hearing such dreadful examples of the wrath of God, as Paul has just mentioned, they might not be disturbed, and so lose heart” (John Calvin, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John W. Fraser, Calvin’s Commentaries, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], 460.

36God’s capacity to be trusted is predicated upon his covenant faithfulness. That the faithfulness in view is tied to God’s covenant faithfulness to the Israelites is realized in that both occurrences of the phrase “a God of faithfulness” (πιστός θεός) in the LXX arise in the context of the covenant (Deut 7:9; 32:4). See Gardner, The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian, 154.
will not allow them to be tempted beyond their ability to resist falling away. But, it is unlikely that this is the only interpretation of Paul’s warning. There are two reasons for this. Not only is verse 13 situated awkwardly—verse 14 seems to flow nicely on the heels of verse 12—but also “the very generality of the promise makes it possible to understand it independently of its context.” And so, while the “temptation” in Paul’s mind is specifically idolatry leading to apostasy, there is no indication that such a temptation be limited to idolatry. Given this, it is perhaps best to see the context as offering the perfect occasion for Paul to give a general promise of God’s faithfulness to provide a morally right solution to all those believers, not only faced with the temptation not to endure, but so too those—precisely because enduring temptation is part of the sanctification process—who are undergoing trials of various kinds (e.g., Jas 1:2-4).

Extensive debate circles around the exact meaning of πείρασμός—“trial,” (REB, NJB) “testing,” (NRSV) or “temptation” (NIV, KJV, ESV)—in verse 13. With Thiselton, however, I would argue that, while all three translations are possible, ________________

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37Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 460.


39“Thus, following hard on the heels of the warning to ‘beware lest they fall’ in v. 12, Paul reassures his Corinthian friends that they need not fall, at least not in the vicissitudes of Christian life common to all” (Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 460).

40Schreiner too sees Paul’s specific reference to temptation as one of idolatry yet does not seem to rule out the possibility that he may have other temptations in mind. See Schreiner, The Race Set before Us, 266. For those holding a similar position, see See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 460; Ciocchi, “Understanding Our Ability to Endure Temptation,” 469; Allison, “A Response to Tom McCall’s ‘The Metaphysics of Sanctification,’” 7 n. 34.

Paul is more concerned with sin as an orientation than concrete acts of “falling short.” Given this, Paul “addresses the craving in terms of a temptation which draws, seduces, beguiles, attracts, and corresponds to the deeper nature of sin.”\textsuperscript{42} Such a rendering points to the overall tenor of Paul’s argument, namely, one’s ability to escape temptation is not grounded in one’s decision to make the right choice given a better option, but rather in one’s newfound ability to act out of Christ-like motives. For, as Gardner rightly points out, “Apostasy is not something that happens by accident or without concentrated intent and persistent action. Paul obviously does not believe apostasy results from one particular sinful act, however heinous.”\textsuperscript{43}

Despite man’s propensity to sin out of a sinful orientation, of great comfort in this passage is the phrase “he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.” For Paul, man’s slide into sin does not stem from his inability to do otherwise but from a heart full of sinful desires. The critical indictment of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is not, as Warren points out, that “humans are weak, but that they are wicked.”\textsuperscript{44} And so, Thiselton contends, “Israel or Christian believers can never claim that they could not help themselves in the face of pressure to abandon covenant faithfulness, for God will ensure, as part of his own covenant faithfulness, that he will not simply leave them to face impossible odds. His

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\textsuperscript{42}Anthony Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 477.


grace provides ever new opportunities for human faithfulness.⁴⁵ Exactly how God provides these new opportunities for human faithfulness is unclear, though it seems reasonable to assume that, along with the warnings, one other such way is by graciously providing strength (Isa 41:10; 1 Cor 10:22) and wisdom (Prov 2:6-7; 1 Cor 1:24; Jas 1:5) to the believer battered by the vicissitudes of life.⁴⁶ What is clear, however, is that such a way of escape from falling away is no mere fiction—it is certain.⁴⁷

First Corinthians 10:13 undoubtedly stands as one of the most comforting passages in all of Scripture. Whatever the temptation, God’s covenant faithfulness is such that he will never allow it to become irresistible. Behind Paul’s warning is a faithful God, ready to aid those enduring sundry trials, assuring them that that he has provided a way of escape.⁴⁸ Salvation, as Volf affirms, is assured:

Paul gives clear and ample evidence of his view that [the Christian’s] salvation is certain to reach completion. This thought is integral to his understanding of individual salvation. Though threats to the consummation of [the Christian’s] salvation may and will appear, they cannot successfully challenge it. God’s


⁴⁶Contra F. F. Bruce, who envisions God’s way of escape to consist in his insulating Christians from trials and temptations that might overcome their ability to resist. See Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 93. For a similar take on what is meant by God’s “way of escape,” see Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” in Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 727. Witherington, in what seems to me more likely, holds that both the ability to endure the temptation and an out are in view here: “God will provide them with an out so that they can escape their present malaise. Paul believes that God never allows a Christian to be tempted to such a degree that by God’s grace one cannot resist or find a way of escape” (Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 224).

⁴⁷Fee writes, “Paul’s point, then, is that in ordinary human trials one can expect divine aid. There is no danger of ‘falling’ here” (Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 461).

⁴⁸Ibid., 462.
faithfulness and love make divine triumph the unquestionable outcome. For Paul, certainty of final salvation rests on God’s continued intervention to that end. 49

**Galatians 5:16-17**

Galatians 5:16-17 follows another of Paul’s warnings. Verses 1-12 warn of judgment to those who turn from the gospel (cf. Gal 2:5, 14). 50 To accept circumcision, warns Paul, is to place oneself at the mercy of the law (vv. 2-3) and to severe oneself from Christ (v. 4). It is to cease to “obey the truth” (v. 7) that the only thing that counts for anything is “faith working through love,” not circumcision or uncircumcision (v. 6).

Yet, in light of his warnings, Paul is confident that the Galatians will “take no other view than [his]” (v. 10) and that those seeking to remove the offense of the cross (v. 11) will “bear the penalty” they deserve (v. 10).

Paul, then, in verses 13-15, accents the failure of the Galatians to remove certain libertine tendencies within the church 51 inimical to the selfless and loving service to others consonant with Christian freedom. Christ, after all, did not set them free to accommodate the flesh, to gratify its passions and desires (cf. vv. 19-21a). It is rather for love that he set them free (v. 13), particularly that kind of selfless love exhibited in Christ’s death on the cross (Gal 2:20). Given this, God’s moral standards outlined in his


50 Paul continues this theme of caution throughout the fifth chapter of Galatians. Following his list of actions that flow from a fallen human nature, Paul warns the Galatians that “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 21).

51 Paul does not address “libertinism” as a holistic philosophy *per se*, only the tendency toward libertine living, which most likely included acts of self-promotion, self-vindication, and an overall disregard of others. For a similar stance, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 238.
“law” are no less binding on the Christian; they still must fulfill the whole “law” (v. 14).

Indeed, as Longenecker writes,

Commitment to Christ carries with it ethical obligation. On that both Paul and the Judaizers agreed. The difference between them, however, was in the manner in which that obligation is to be fulfilled. For the Judaizers, Christian obligation is to be understood in terms of subjecting to the Mosaic law as the expressed will of God, with the prescriptions of Torah giving guidance for ethical living. For Paul, the obligation of the Christian is love that expresses itself in service to others, with that obligation being grounded in and guided by the Christian’s new existence in “the Spirit.”

And so, for the Christian “led by the Spirit” (v 18), not only has the ethical obligation to fulfill God’s law been effectively summed up in love, but a new power to fulfill this lofty obligation is present. The Holy Spirit is the effective answer to both nomistic (strict adherence to the Mosaic law) and antinomistic (libertine living) tendencies replete within the church. For Paul, the Christian life hinges on the presence and activity of the Spirit. We turn now to our text.

Galatians 5:16-17 reads, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” Having just acknowledged the antithesis between the Spirit and the law, Paul proceeds to recount the struggle between the Holy Spirit, and the flesh. What does Paul intend here by “flesh”? The word σάρξ in the New Testament has various meanings; here it means the tendency of man to disobey God in all areas of life.

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52 Longenecker, Galatians, 241.

Jewett defines it as “everything aside from God in which one places his trust.”

Moreover, σάρξ must not be restricted to mean only bodily sins; it designates sins committed by the whole person. Of the fifteen works of the flesh listed in verses 19-21, only five are what might be considered bodily sins, the rest are sins of character and relational activity—enmity, jealousy, envy, etc.—illustrating how Paul relates closely one’s sinful desires and one’s sinful actions.

Paul’s primary concern in these verses is to herald the sufficiency of the Spirit as the divine antidote to the “desires of the flesh.” “For flesh,” says Barrett, “there is but one cure: Spirit.” Paul’s command to “walk by the Spirit,” then, is more than sage advice or routine suggestion. It is through the Spirit alone that the attached promise

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54 Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 103. BDAG gives one possible rendering of σάρξ here in Galatian 5 as an “instrument of various actions or expressions.” It continues, “In Paul’s thought especially, all parts of the body constitute a totality known as σάρξ or flesh, which is dominated by sin to such a degree that wherever flesh is, all forms of sin are likewise present, and no good thing can live in the σάρξ (Rom 7:18).” Several times in Paul, σάρξ is said to be opposed to πνεῦμα (Rom 8:4-6, 9; 13; Gal 3:3; 5:16, 17; 6:8; John 3:6). Actions that flow out of such opposition are, according to Paul, “evident”: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Gal 5:19-21a).

55 So, Fee, who writes, “At issue is not a Spirit-flesh struggle within the believer’s heart, but the sufficiency of the Spirit—over against both the law and the flesh, as God’s replacement of the former and antidote to the latter” (Gordon D. Fee, “Freedom and the Life of Obedience [Galatians 5:1-6:18],” *Review and Expositor* 91 [1994]: 202).


57 The verb περιπατέω (“to go about” or “walk around”) appears frequently in Paul’s letters in the figurative sense of “live” or “conduct oneself” (cf. Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 4:2; 10:23; Eph 2:2; 4:17; Phil 3:17; Col 2:6; 3:7; 1 Thess 1:12; 4:1). With this in mind, Paul uses four distinct verbs in the second half of Gal 5 to capture the Spirit-controlled life of the believer, all of which carry roughly equivalent meanings: πενίθητα ἐπιθήκη ("led by the Spirit") in v. 18, ζῶον πνεύματι ("live by the Spirit") in v. 25a, and πνεύματι στοιχεῖον ("walk by the Spirit" or "keep in step with the Spirit") in v. 25b. See Longenecker, *Galatians*, 244, and Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC, vol. 30 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 386.
—“and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh”—becomes a reality. At work behind the believer are two ethical forces, the Spirit and the flesh, both of which seek to control his desires. Given this truth, Paul’s victorious message to the believer in verse 16 is clear: Live a life controlled by the Spirit and you will negate the desires of the flesh. This, of course, is similar to Paul’s emphasis in Romans 8:5-9 that the mind set on the flesh is death whereas the mind set on the Spirit is the very essence of resurrection life.

If, indeed, verse 16 expresses the gist of Romans 8:5-9, is it then correct to assume that verse 17 expresses the import of Romans 7:14-25? While many have seen a connection here, for reasons already discussed, it is unlikely that such a link exists. Of utmost importance is the different outcomes of the conflicts. In Romans 7 defeat is inevitable. By contrast, according to verses 16-17, victory is available despite the

58 Guthrie, along with the RSV, mistakenly takes the verb ἐφαρμόσετε as a future indicative, essentially translating the later half of v. 16 as another, although more forceful than the first, imperative, “do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” See Donald Guthrie, Galatians, CB (London: Nelson, 1969), 144. It is more accurate, however, to regard the verb as a second person aorist subjunctive preceded by the double negative οὐ μὴ. Similar constructs in the New Testament commonly express a strong prohibition, which may either be a threat (Gal 4:30) or an assurance (Luke 6:37). In view of this, it is perhaps best to take οὐ μὴ ἐφαρμόσετε, as does Bligh, as an emphatic assurance—“Walk by the Spirit, and rest assured that you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” For those who take the phrase οὐ μὴ ἐφαρμόσετε to denote an emphatic assurance or promise, see Bligh, Galatians in Greek, 201; George, Galatians, 385; Longenecker, Galatians, 245; and Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, 243.

59 So, Toussaint, who writes, “When the Christian turns to Christ and looks to Him for strength, the Holy Spirit enters the struggle on behalf of the believer and victory is assured. In Galatians 5:16 Paul commands the believer to walk by means of the Spirit. This imperative is followed by οὐ μὴ with the subjunctive, which is an emphatic negation used here as a strong promise. The flesh and Spirit are so contrary to one another that a walk by the Spirit automatically excludes a fulfillment of the baser desires. Victory is available to every Christian” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “The Contrast between the Spiritual Conflict in Romans 7 and Galatians 5,” BSac 123 [1966]: 314).

60 For those who see the two battles as one and the same, see Hoekema’s early work, “The Struggle between Old and New Natures in the Converted Man,” 46; Bligh, Galatians in Greek, 202; Longenecker, Galatians, 246; George, Galatians, 387; Timo Laato, “Paulus und das Judentum: Anthropologische Erwägungen” (Ph.D. diss., Åbo Akademis Universität, 1991), 181-82; J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, The Epistles of St. Paul (London, 1865), 210.
presence of the flesh, which sometimes hinders the person from always doing the good thing he wants to do (v 17).61

Struggle between the flesh and the Spirit is the mainstay of the Christian until he dies.62 Paul assumes as much in Galatians 5 when he warns those Galatian believers who were tempted to return again to a yoke of circumcision (v 1-6) and use their freedom as “an opportunity for the flesh” (v 13). Freedom from the law is not an excuse for libertine living. Instead, it is a means of “running well” (v 7), of walking in the Spirit’s

61Whether one sees a connection between Rom 7 and Gal 5 depends largely upon how one interprets the closing phrase of v. 17, ἵνα μὴ ἀνθελθῇ ταῦτα ποιήσῃ (‘to keep you from doing the things you want to do’). Those who argue for the connection typically take the construction of ἵνα μὴ ἀνθελθῇ ταῦτα with the subjunctive ποιήσῃ to express consequence or result such that the person is not always able to do the good they wish to do (cf. Rom 7:15-19). See Bligh, Galatians in Greek, 202; George, Galatians, 387; A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, 2nd ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), 998. It is common, on the other hand, for those who see little or no connection of these two passages to render the ἵνα clause as a proper clause of purpose, expressing the purpose of both the flesh and the Spirit: If the man wills to obey the Spirit, his flesh works against him; likewise, if he wants to fulfill his fleshly desires, the Spirit deterst him. Bruce argues that this construal makes better sense of why the inhibition of the Galatian believers to do what they want is ascribed to both the flesh and the Spirit. See Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, 244-45. See also Burton, who regards the clause as the purpose of both flesh and Spirit, “in the sense that the flesh oppresses the Spirit that men may not do what they will in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, and the Spirit opposes the flesh that they may not do what will after the flesh” (Ernest Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920], 302). Longenecker takes a third path, seeing a connection to Romans 7 yet, like Burton, deems the phrase as a purpose clause of both the flesh and the Spirit. See Longenecker, Galatians, 245-46. I am more inclined toward the first interpretation. Though I see little connection in the two battles of Gal 5 and Rom 7, I agree with Bligh that v. 17 seems irrelevant if it merely announces a principle at work within the believer that strives to prevent him from doing whatever he wills with no relation to the emphatic assurance that precedes it in v. 16. When taken as a result—“Spirit and flesh are opposed one another with the result that you cannot always do the good you want”—v. 17 explains Paul’s assurance that if we “walk by the Spirit” we need not worry about gratifying the desires of the flesh. Contextually, it also seems to fit better with the statement that follows—we need not worry about the perpetual frustration that comes from being under the law (Rom 7:15) if we are “led by the Spirit.”

62One of the more moving accounts of one affected by this reality is that of Martin Luther, who in his commentary on Galatians, recalls how he was tormented over his sins as a young monk: “When I was a monk I thought I was lost forever whenever I felt an evil emotion, carnal lust, wrath, hatred, or envy. I tried to quiet my conscience in many ways, but it did not work, because lust would always come back and give me no rest. I told myself: ‘You have permitted this and that sin, envy, impatience, and the like. Your joining this holy order has been in vain, and all your good works are good for nothing.’ If at that time I had understood this passage [Gal 5:17], ‘The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh,’ I could have spared myself many a day of self-torment. I would have said to myself: ‘Martin, you will never be without sin, for you have flesh. Despair not, but resist the flesh’” (Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, trans. Theodore Graebner [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1939], 250).
power to overcome fleshly desires (v. 16). Paul knew what it meant to run well. In 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, he describes in vivid detail his own struggle against sin: “So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:26-27). Perfection, moreover, for Paul, was not to be obtained in this life: “Not that I have already obtained [the resurrection from the dead] or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil 3:12). Paul compared the Christian life to a race, one in which perfection awaited its finish. Given this, Christians ought often to pray that prayer ascribed to Robert Murray McCheyne, “Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be.”

And yet, for those who “belong to Christ” the passions and desires of the flesh have been crucified with Christ (Gal 5:24; cf. Gal 2:20). The believer is not, in the words of Bruce, “the helpless battleground of two opposing forces.” He is no longer “enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6). The “law of sin and death” has been broken because of Christ’s work on the cross (Rom 8:1-4) and the Holy Spirit now dwells in him (v 9, 11). Allegiance to the Torah as a basis for salvation is gone, ushering in a new lifestyle that is controlled by the Spirit. At issue, therefore, is not undue emphasis upon the internal tension in the life of the believer, but the sufficiency of the Spirit in opposing the desires of the flesh.

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64 Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, 245.
Ephesians 4:22-24

Ephesians 4:22-24 reads, “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” These verses capture, perhaps better than any other New Testament text, the mysterious interplay between divine and human action in salvation. To “put off” the old person (v 22) and “put on” the new person (v 24) are inceptive acts incumbent on every believer. At the same time, it is God who renews our minds (v 23) and creates us after his likeness (v 24; cf. Eph 2:10, 15; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). “Here, the language reflects,” in the words of Andrew Lincoln, “a perspective in which there is a combination of God’s gracious initiative and human responsibility, as it is made clear that the new person is created by God but must be put on by the believer.”

These verses, in addition, underline the way in which one’s actions are fastened to one’s desires. The old person under the dominion of this present age will, of necessity, act out of who he is in Adam. In contrast, the new person under the dominion of the new creation will appropriate those ethical qualities characteristic of the new Adam in whom the image of God is restored (cf. Col 3:10). The Ephesian believers understood well the truth of this dichotomous way of living. Once they walked according to the “futility of their minds” (v 17), minds that could not receive God’s revelation.66 Having

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once hardened their hearts to the gospel, they walked aimlessly in the darkness of their understanding, “alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that [was] in them” (v. 18). No impure thought nor subsequent act was too egregious, beyond the reach of their callous, selfish intent (v. 19). But they had since entered a new existence—they had been given a new knowledge. Now they had “learned” Christ (v. 20). No longer slaves to sin, their patterns of thinking and resultant behavior were to be diametrically opposed to that of their old person. In the verses that follow, Paul transitions from his bald denunciation of their former way of life (vv. 17-19) to what is expected of a Christian (vv. 25-5:2), instructing them of their new identity in the risen Christ.

Following the statement of instruction in verse 20, Paul shares the nature of the instruction in verse 21: It embodies truth just as Christ’s life demonstrated the “indispensable [sic] practical aspects of total truth.” Next, in verse 22, Paul looks at the content of the instruction. He begins by introducing the first of three infinitives of indirect discourse—ἀποθέσασθαι (“to put off,” v. 22), ἀνανεώσασθαι (“to be renewed,” v. 23),

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67Hoehner gives three reasons why, syntactically, the contrast is emphatic: “(1) the adversative ἀλλὰ; (2) the change from τὰ ἐπιθυμεῖν to ἑμεῖς, which is emphatically placed; and (3) the adverbial conjunction οὕτως, which applies what had been stated before (cf. 5:24, 28, 33), namely, that the conduct of Gentiles is not what believers learned regarding Christ” (Hoehner, Ephesians, 593). I also agree with Hoehner’s assessment that the aorist verb ἐπιλεγμένος in v. 21 is “constative” and carries with it the idea that one’s “learning” of Christ occurs not only at conversion but continues throughout his life as he studies God’s Word and is ministered to by Christ’s body (595).

68Hoehner, Ephesians, 593, and Lincoln, Ephesians, 290.

69Edwin D. Roels, God’s Mission: The Epistle to the Ephesians in Mission Perspective (Franeker, Netherlands: T. Wever, 1962), 208-09. I agree with Hoehner and Lincoln here that the adverbial conjunction καθὼς is best viewed as “a comparative, expressing the nature of the instruction (‘you were taught in him just as he is the truth embodied in Jesus’).” See Hoehner, Ephesians, 598, and Lincoln, Ephesians, 283.
and ἐνδύωσαθεὶς ("to put on," v. 24)—the combination of which indicates a fundamental break with the past.\textsuperscript{70} The aorist tense suggests, as with the infinitive in verse 24, an inceptive act that most likely refers to conversion. And though Paul’s expression is without exact parallel, there is good evidence to show that Paul is echoing the Old Testament notion of clothing oneself with moral and religious qualities,\textsuperscript{71} further evidence that the phrase refers to an accomplished event rather than a command to engage in a further process of activities. But what of the term, παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ("old

\textsuperscript{70}Two schools of thought exist as to the exact function of these infinitives. One school posits that they function as imperatives in direct discourse. Hence, they would translate the close of v. 21 and the opening phrase of v. 22, "you were taught that you [should] put off the old self." The most compelling reasons for this are essentially threefold: (1) Infinitives of indirect discourse commonly refer back to an imperative of direct discourse in Paul (cf. Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 5:9, 11; 2 Thess 3:5-6, 10, 14); (2) contextually, if imperatival, Paul’s injunctions to "put off" and "put on" would fit well with the following applications of putting off and putting on in vv. 25-5:2; and (3) for the infinitives to function as imperatives here seems most natural given that this is the paraenetic section of Paul’s epistle. Those who think this way include F. F. Bruce,\textsuperscript{72} The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 357-58; John Calvin,\textsuperscript{73} The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, trans. T. H. L. Parker, Calvin’s Commentaries, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 189-90; Charles Hodge,\textsuperscript{74} A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (New York: R. Carter and Brothers, 1856; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 259-60. Another school believes these infinitives function as indicatives in direct discourse or as complementary infinitives to ἐδιδάχθη ("you were taught") in v. 21. I am persuaded by this school for the following reasons: (1) Infinitives of direct discourse commonly follow verbs of communication (cf. Gal 1:12; 2 Thess 2:15; and Col 2:7); (2) the parallel passage in Colossians 3:9-10 contains aorist passive particles, indicating that the act of putting off and putting on are accomplished events; (3) the use of the indicative in Romans 6:6, where the "old self" is clearly the unregenerate person, rules out the imperative (since the more obscure passage should bow to its clearer counterpart, it appears then, as Hoehner asserts, "that the old person in the present context must refer to what we were before our conversion rather than what we presently are which needs to be laid aside" [Hoehner, Ephesians, 602]); and (4) perhaps most convincing is the fact that Paul’s pattern of preceding his exhortations with indicatives of the faith is kept intact. Here, the indicatives of vv. 22-24 lay the foundation for the exhortations that immediately follow in verses 25-5:2. Indeed, if these infinitives do not function as indicatives it would be the longest absence of indicatives before a section of injunctions in Ephesians. For a comprehensive look at why these infinitives function as indicatives, see Hoehner, Ephesians, 599-602. For a short list of those who agree with Hoehner and me, see H. C. G. Moule,\textsuperscript{75} The Epistle to the Ephesians, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886), 118-19; John Stott,\textsuperscript{76} The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 180; Peter T. O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, PNTC, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 326-27; Robertson,\textsuperscript{77} A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research, 1089; and Grant R. Osborne, "Mind Control or Spirit-Controlled Minds?" in Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World, ed. John Woodbridge (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 60-63.

\textsuperscript{71}O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 327. Some examples given by O’Brien include strength (Isa 51:9; 52:1), righteousness (Ps 132:9; Job 29:14), majesty (Ps 93:1), honor (Ps 104:1; Job 40:10), and salvation (2 Chr 6:41).
Who is this “old” self? The ESV rightly attaches this old person to one’s προτέραν ἀναστροφήν ("which belongs to your"72 former manner of life" or "conduct, behavior").73 The old person is thus integrally connected with one’s sinful conduct. Yet one’s sinful conduct, for Paul, is not to be divorced from one’s inner person. One’s total person was once enslaved to sin (Rom 6:6; Col 3:9), including one’s conduct and character. Hodge captures well Paul’s holistic approach in his use of the term “old self”:

“This evil principle or nature is called old because it precedes what is new and because it is corrupt; and it is called self because it is ourselves. We are to be changed—and not merely our acts. We are to crucify ourselves.”74 As for the further description of the “old self” as “corrupt through deceitful desires,” Paul signals that the self-centered desires of the flesh are deceitful in that they contain empty promises.75

Paul, in verse 23, contrasts the static condition of the old mind characterized by its darkened understanding with that of the new, which is undergoing a process of renewal. The conjunction δὲ marks the contrast with the previous verse and is better translated as “but.” Ἀνανεοῦσθαι ("to be renewed") is a present passive infinitive

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72This phrase is supplied by the translator.

73Hoehner rightly rejects linking the prepositional phrase κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφήν to the preceding infinitive ἀποθέσθαι based upon the sentence structure and the awkward translation of the preposition—"with reference to"—demanded by such a connection.

74Charles Hodge, Ephesians, CCC (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 155.

indicating that the believer is the recipient of constant renewal. Together the contrast is unmistakable: “but you are being renewed.”

The sphere in which God renews the new person, according to verse 23, is in the “spirit of [his] mind.” Given that there is no analogy to this phrase in all of Greek literature, its meaning is open to interpretation. Some regard the phrase as a reference to the Holy Spirit, while others take “spirit” to refer to both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. A more plausible interpretation is a reference to the human spirit. The text clearly states that the Ephesian believers are to be renewed in the spirit “of [their] minds” not “in [their] minds,” and, as O’Brien observes, “it is hard to imagine how God’s Spirit can be described as belonging to ‘[their] mind[s].’” Moreover, though the analogy is unparalleled in Ephesians, there is no need to assume that, simply because Paul emphasizes the Spirit throughout the letter (1:17; 3:16; 4:3; 5:18; 6:18), he always has in mind the Spirit of God when using the term “spirit.” Paul teaches elsewhere a distinction between the human spirit and the Spirit of God (cf. Rom 8:16). It is the Spirit

76“The present tense suggests that the renewal of the mind is a repeated process throughout the believer’s life, which is in contrast to the inceptive act involved in putting off the old person (v. 22) and putting on the new person (v. 24)” (Hoehner, Ephesians, 607). See also Hodge, Ephesians, 156; O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 329.


78Gordon D. Fee, God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 710-12. Fee concludes that the first referent is the human spirit; however, one should “recognize the Holy Spirit as hovering nearby” (712).

79O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 330.

80Hoehner maintains that the Holy Spirit is “never alluded to as the ‘Spirit of your mind’ but rather is referred to as the ‘Spirit of holiness’ (Rom 1:4), ‘Spirit of God’ (Rom 8:9), or ‘Spirit of adoption’ (Rom 8:15)” (Hoehner, Ephesians, 608).
of God who animates the human spirit at conversion so that it bears witness with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the terms “spirit” and “mind” act as further examples of Paul’s accumulation of synonyms for the purpose of emphasis (cf. 1 Thess 5:23). Renewal is to take place in a person’s inmost being (Eph 3:16). Implied is the complete renewal of a person’s old pattern of thinking and sinful motivations.

By contrast, verse 24 shows that it is not enough to merely rid oneself of the flesh; something must be put on. The infinitive ενδυόμεθα, like its counterpart in verse 22, indicates an inceptive act predicated upon one’s regeneration. Unlike the infinitive in verse 23, the middle voice of the infinitive here signifies that the subject is receiving the benefit of his or her action rather than being the recipient of God’s action. Put simply, “[Regeneration] is God’s mighty work, not ours; yet the fact that this new identity is put on shows that his new creation is gladly appropriated by the believer.” Again, we see the intricate balance kept between divine and human activity.

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81 O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 330.


83 Whether in the active or middle voice, the infinitive ενδυω always connotes “to clothe or to put on.” It occurs 117 times in the LXX, ninety-one times in the canonical texts; in almost every case it carries the same meaning of “to wear or clothe.” In the New Testament it is used twenty-seven times, three times in Ephesians (4:24; 6:11, 14). Here, it refers to the literal putting on of clothes (active in Matt 27:31; Mark 15:20; Luke 15:22; middles in Matt 6:25; Luke 8:27; Acts 12:21; Rev 1:13) as well as the metaphorical putting on of spiritual characteristics or power (Luke 24:29; 1 Thess 5:8; 1 Cor 15:53), the new person (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), or Christ (Gal 3:27).

84 Hoehner, Ephesians, 609. See also BDAG, s. v. “ενδυω.”

85 O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 331. So too Lincoln, who writes, “Here, the language reflects a perspective in which there is a combination of God’s gracious initiative and human responsibility, as it is made clear that the new person is created by God but must be put on by the believer” (Lincoln, Ephesians, 288).
Also implied is the seismic break with the past experienced by the new convert. The aorist middle strongly suggests a complete laying aside of the old person with its unbreakable chain of sinful desires. In other words, dualism—the simultaneous existence of both the old and new persons—is to be ruled out. One cannot be regenerate and unregenerate at the same time. This leads, then, to a vexing problem: Who is this new self?

Those of Reformed persuasion have, by in large, understood Paul as advocating a struggle between old and new persons in converted man. So, the thinking goes, before conversion the believer was enslaved to his old self; at conversion, however, he was freed by putting on the new self, but without totally losing the old self. Hoekema,

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86Hoehner, Ephesians, 610; O’Brien, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 329; and Lincoln, Ephesians, 284.

87Hoehner, Ephesians, 610. See also John Murray, Principles of Conduct (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), who writes, “The old man is the unregenerate man; the new man is the regenerate man created in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is no more feasible to call the believer a new man and an old man, than it is to call him a regenerate man and an unregenerate. And neither is it warranted to speak of the believer as having in him the old man and the new man. This kind of terminology is without warrant and it is but another method of doing prejudice to the doctrine which Paul was so jealous to establish when he said, ‘Our old man has been crucified’” (218).

88Bavinck describes the fight against sin in believers in the following terms: “[The struggle in the Christian life] is between the inward man of the heart recreated to God in true righteousness and holiness, and the old man who, though having lost the position of centrality, nevertheless wants to maintain himself, and who fights the harder in proportion to the extent that he loses more and more ground. . . . These two forces stand, armed and militant, over against each other battling for the whole of the human person. . . . The struggle is in very fact a struggle between two beings in one and the same being. . . . In every deliberation and deed of the believer, consequently, the good and the evil lie, as it were, mingled through each other. The measure and the degree to which both are present in any particular thought or deed differ greatly, of course, but nevertheless there is something of the old and something of the new man in all our actions and thoughts” (Herman Bavinck, Our Reasonable Faith, trans. Henry Zylstra [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956], 494-95). See also Hodge, Ephesians, 154-56; Louis Berkof, Systematic Theology, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 533; and Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 247-51. John Walvoord, describing himself as a “dispensational Augustinian,” takes a similar line: “We may conclude that, once a person is saved, the spiritual state of that person includes a new nature and an old nature. . . . From the Augustinian-dispensational perspective, the basic problem of sanctification is how individuals with these two diverse aspects in their total character can achieve at least a relative measure of sanctification and righteousness in their life” (John F. Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” in Five Views on Sanctification, ed. Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 208-09).
early in his career, was a proponent of this view and articulated the perspective well:

“[T]here is a sense,” he wrote, “in which every converted person is a kind of Jekyll-Hyde combination. For the Scriptures clearly affirm that there is a continual struggle within every converted man between his old nature and his new . . . . In a way we could say that the converted man is a bundle of contradictions.”

The problem with this view of man as a “bundle of contradictions,” though, as we have seen (and as Hoekema later came to realize), is that it does little to account for texts like the present one (cf. Col 3:9-10).

Ephesians 4:22-24 seems to suggest that the old person—the person in unity once wholly dominated by sin and guilt—has been done away with once for all (cf. Rom 6:6). Christ’s death on the cross dealt a deathblow to the old self, inaugurating a completely “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

This is not to say, however, that the Christian does not undergo a constant battle against sin. To say this would be, as mentioned above, to ignore a significant portion of Scripture dedicated to the contrary (cf. Eph 6:11-13; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7;

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89Hoekema, “The Struggle between Old and New Natures in the Converted Man,” 42.

90To say that the old and new persons are merely “aspects” of the person, as does Walvoord, redefines the scriptural understanding of personhood. See Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” 209. We are better off, with Moule, regarding the old and new persons within us not as “elements or presences” but as “highly personified, relations and connexions attaching to us.” And as such, the “one [old man] may be definitely left, the other [new man] definitely entered” (Moule, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 225).

91Calvin opines that some vestiges of sin remain, “not to rule over [believers], but to humble them by the consciousness of their own weakness” (Calvin *Institutes* 3.3.11).
Gal 5:16-17; Heb 12:4; 1 Cor 9:26-27). In this light, it is best to view the Christian as making a definite break with the past to the point where he is no longer an old person but a new person who is being progressively renewed. The battle with sin continues, yet a new power is present that enables him to resist its subtle temptations (1 Cor 10:13) and gain the upper hand. Sin, in a word, ceases to reign (Rom 6:12), but it does not cease to dwell in the believer. To quote Calvin, it remains in the regenerate man like a "smoldering cinder of evil."

To illustrate this construal of sin in the believer, consider the fall of communism in the Soviet Union. Communism, as a political ideology, for all practical purposes ignores our failure to obey God's law with any kind of real consistency. Lest anyone take pride in their ability to fulfill the law, Calvin reminds us that the sweeping nature of God's directive applies to even the sinful desires of the flesh: "For we are bidden to 'love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our faculties' [Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37]. Since all the capacities of our soul ought to be so filled with the love of God, it is certain that this precept is not fulfilled by those who can either retain in the heart a slight inclination or admit to the mind any thought at all that would lead them away from the love of God into vanity. What then? To be stirred by sudden emotions, to grasp in sense perception, to conceive in the mind—are not these powers of the soul? Therefore, when these lay themselves open to vain and depraved thoughts, do they not show themselves to be in such degree empty of the love of God? For this reason, he who does not admit that all desires of the flesh are sins, but that that disease of inordinately desiring which they call 'tinder' is a wellspring of sin, must of necessity deny that the transgression of the law is sin" (Calvin Institutes 3.3.11).

The new self described in the New Testament, therefore, is not equivalent to sinless perfection; it is genuinely new, though not yet totally new. The newness of the new self is not static but dynamic, needing continual renewal, growth, and transformation" (Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” 81-82).

For the Spirit dispenses a power whereby [believers] may gain the upper hand and become victors in the struggle" (Calvin Institutes 3.3.11).

Calvin Institutes 3.3.10. Augustine concurs: “How, then, do we say this sin is dead in baptism, as this man also says, and how do we confess it dwells in our members and works many desires against which we struggle and which we resist by not consenting to them, as this man also confesses, except that it is dead in that guilt by which it held us, and until it is healed by the perfection of its burial it rebels even though dead? However, it is called sin, not in such a way that it makes us guilty, but because it is the result of the guilt of the first man and because by rebelling it strives to draw us to guilt. unless we are aided by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, lest even the dead sin so rebel that by conquering it revives and reigns” (Augustine Against Julian 2.9.32, FC, 16:95-96). Again, Augustine: “It like manner, the concupiscence of the flesh against which a good spirit lusts is not only a sin, because it is disobedience against the dominion of the mind—as well as punishment for sin, because it has been reckoned as the wages of disobedience—but also a cause of sin, in the failure of him who consents to it or in the contagion of birth” (Augustine Against Julian 5.3.8, FC, 16:249).
purposes, began its descent into history when Gorbachev introduced his policies of glasnost ("openness") and perestroika ("restructuring") in 1985. Further evidence of its impending demise came with Reagan's memorable plea in 1987 for Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. No less than four years later, the Soviet Union relinquished its monopoly of power and the fifteen constituent republics of the USSR held their first round of competitive elections. Communism died. And yet, as some will attest, it lives on in the minds of many. Though the former Soviet states function today as independent, democratic republics, the communist illusion of a classless, stateless collectivism continues to appeal to many who languished under its sway. In the same manner, sin, though defeated (Rom 6:11), continues to entice the believer with the passions and habits of the old person. But the reality of sin's despotic rule and monochromatic existence is overcome by the believer whose inner man is being renewed (Eph 4:23) and who presents his body to God as an instrument of righteousness (Rom 6:13). Furthermore, its ultimate fate is sealed: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:24-25a).

The latter phraseology of verse 24—"created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness"—parallels that of Colossians 3:10—"which is being renewed

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96To say that the believer is free of all sinful dispositions and desires is, after all, rather unrealistic. As Bavinck acknowledges, "If the truth of God had completely taken over and conquered the consciousness of the believer, there would naturally be no room left for error and falsehood; and if the love of God had wholly filled the heart, there would be no room for hatred, envy, wrath and the like. But that, as every one knows from his experience, is not the case; and Scripture testifies that we cannot look forward to such a perfect condition in this life. The struggle will remain until the end because the faith, the hope, the love, and all the Christian virtues will never be perfected in this life and therefore room remains in our soul for unbelief, doubt, discouragement, fear, and the like" (Bavinck, Our Reasonable Faith, 494-95).

97This illustration came out of an ongoing series of provocative discussions with my fiancé, Rahel, whose prosecutorial instincts have served to enhance much of my thought on this subject.
in knowledge after the image of its creator." In both instances the prepositional phrase *kata 'heôv* defines the standard of creation as being in accordance with God. 98 “When God created Adam, he made him after his likeness or image (Gen 1:27). What Adam lost in the fall, has been regained by Christ, a new creation in the likeness of God’s image.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 spells out this new creation that God alone makes possible: 99 “[I]f anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” But the believer’s conduct must be consistent with his newfound status. They are to participate in the process of sanctification by imitating God’s righteousness and holiness (Eph 5:1; 1 Pet 1:16). 100 Together the terms “righteousness” and “holiness” allude to virtuous living as a whole, 101 a “disposition considered agreeable to God.” 102 Indeed, the terms, as Packer rightly notes, are essentially one, only they are viewed from different angles: “Holiness is righteousness viewed as the expression of our being

98 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 611.

99 The aorist passive *tov ktiôthentov* signifies that it is God who does the work of creation, while believers are the recipients. The aorist tense, in addition, signifies that the act of new creation was also an inceptive act of God. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 610-11.

100 “Here in 4:24, the portrait of the new person as created in God’s likeness in the righteousness and holiness which come from the truth functions as a challenge to the readers to enter into and to live out that which through their baptism they already know themselves to be. In this way, it is made clear to them that God has not accomplished some instant or total transformation but has made it possible for them to participate in the truth and thereby produce those ethical qualities appropriate to being like God” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 289).

101 O’brien, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 333.

consecrated to God. Righteousness is holiness viewed as the practice of conforming to God’s law. The two are one.”

To review, Ephesians 4:22-24 illustrates yet again the nexus between divine initiative and human responsibility. God transforms unilaterally the old humanity into the new, yet man must still appropriate this reality by putting on the activities of the new person and allowing himself to be renewed. This internal process of renewal restores right thinking, which ultimately results in right conduct. Moule waxes eloquent over this seamless compatibility of right thinking and right action that typifies the sanctification process:

[T]he recollection of covenant possession will pass on into the action of conscious acquisition. The man who knows that he possesses Christ will evermore resolve, in experience, to find Him. The man who knows that, by the grace of God, he has put the New Man on, will therefore rise up, in working experience, in view of each hour’s need, to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Philippians 2:12-13**

Philippians 2:12-13 reads, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” This passage has received a fair amount of

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104 So, Lincoln: “The new identity, already achieved for believers, has to be appropriated so that its distinctive ethical qualities will become evident. The new person is created to be like God, and this likeness is exhibited in the righteousness and holiness that epitomize a life in a right relationship to God and humanity and also recall [sic] characteristics of this God himself” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 290).

105 Moule, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 226.
attention to this point in my dissertation. And rightly so. Few passages offer clearer insight into the nature of sanctification than this one. Since this passage’s meaning is rather plain, there will be less space afforded here to exegesis and more given in the final chapter to its implications.

The Philippian church was divided. Expressed in an overall lack of love for one another, they fractured the church (v. 3) by perpetuating a selfish disregard for the interests of others (v. 4). Such opprobrium did more than just create a hostile environment among the believers; it was antithetical to Christ’s example (vv. 5-11) and led to a watering down of the gospel. Paul, then, eager to stem this trend, exhorts the Philippians to live lives “worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (1:27). Philippians 2:12-13 continues this exhortatory tone set by Paul.

Paul’s expression τὴν ἐαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατέργασο ("work out your own salvation") is typically understood in two different senses: individual and corporate. In favor of the corporate sense, some have argued that, given the wider context of the passage, Paul is here urging the Christians to do whatever it takes to restore unity among the community of believers. So, Fee: “[w]ork out your own salvation [means] ‘in your relationships with one another live out the salvation Christ has brought you.’ This is therefore not a text dealing with individual salvation but an ethical text dealing with the outworking of salvation in the believing community for the sake of the world.”

106Gordon D. Fee, Philippians, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 104. See also Gerald F. Hawthorne, Philippians, WBC, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 139-40.
Unconvinced, others argue that Paul has in mind personal salvation. Their reasons for this are as follows:

1. Paul consistently uses σωτηρία to denote personal salvation. This is the case in the two earlier uses of the word (Phil 1:19, 28).

2. The plurals κατεργάζεσθε ("work out") and ἑαυτῶν ("your own") only indicate that Paul has in mind all believers are to work out their own salvation; he does not intend by this some kind of a corporate rapprochement.107

3. The verb used by Paul, κατεργάζομαι, is in the present tense and carries with it the idea of a continuous, sustained, unending effort to produce a certain state or condition.108 In which case, it is easier to imagine an end to such tireless activity geared toward unifying the church than to imagine an end to one’s pursuit of full salvation in this life, especially in light of the New Testament imagery of salvation as a pursuit (Rom 14:19), a race (1 Cor 9:24-27), a fight (1 Tim 6:12), or a straining toward a future goal (Phil 3:12).

While Paul undoubtedly has both senses in mind—how can they be fully separated?—I am inclined to believe that the more common understanding of the phrase as meaning one’s individual salvation is correct. Along with the reasons provided above, I agree with O’Brien that the Philippian believer’s outworking of the gospel through the perpetual outworking of his own salvation has an eschatological motivation.109 Such a motivation as a basis for ethical pursuit is used by Paul in the very next chapter (Phil 3:12-21).

How, then, are the Philippian Christians to work out their personal salvation, and, to a lesser extent, the infighting that has polluted their community? They are to do

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108 BDAG, s. v. "κατεργάζομαι."

so with φόβος καὶ τρόμον ("fear and trembling"). The two nouns φόβος and τρόμος come to Paul from the Old Testament where it describes the dread brought about by God’s workings among his people (Deut 2:25; 11:25). Paul alone uses this expression in the New Testament and only of believers (1 Cor 3:2; 2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5). Thus, the working out of the Philippian’s salvation should elicit a sense of “holy awe and wonder before God,” especially in light of their eschatological hope.

Lest they feel abandoned to accomplish the impossible task of working out their own salvation, Paul reassures his readers that behind their κατεργάζεσθε ("working") is God’s ἐνεργῶν ("energizing"). Paul’s preceding imperative to work out their own salvation is backed up by the indicative that it is God working through them who will accomplish all things for his good pleasure. The conjunction γάρ ("for" or "because") further solidifies the indicative by showing that what is to come undergirds that which precedes it. According to Volf, the conjunction γάρ indicates that “God does not work and has not worked ... because man has worked .... The contrary is true: because God works and has worked, therefore man must and can work.”

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110 Fee, Philippians, 102.

111 Ibid., 105.

112 BDAG gives the following definition for the verb ἐνεργέω: “[T]o put one’s capabilities into operation, work, be at work, be active, operate, be effective” (BDAG, s. v. ἐνεργέω").

113 O’Brian, The Epistle to the Philippians, 284. Rom 6:14 uses γάρ in similar fashion. Note how the second clause grounds the first: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since [γάρ] you are not under law but under grace.” See O’Brien, The Epistle to the Philippians, 284.

114 Volf, Paul and Perseverance, 268-71.
But how does he work? Paul makes clear that the gracious, energizing activity of God, that same gracious, energizing activity that raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20), now resides in them to supply both the θέλειν ("desire") and ἐνεργεῖν ("energizing power") to carry out his good pleasure.\footnote{O'Brien, The Epistle to the Philippians, 287.} O'Brien observes that θέλειν signifies more than a mere wishing (e.g., Gal. 4:20); rather, it "denotes a resolve or purposeful determination (see also Rom. 7:15, 18, 19; 2 Cor. 8:10) that the imperative κατεργάζεσθε presupposes."\footnote{O'Brien, The Epistle to the Philippians, 287.}

I conclude that upon further scrutiny, the traditional reading of Philippians 2:12-13 emerges largely unchanged. Paul exhorts his readers to live out the gospel by working out their differences; more fundamental than this, however, they are to work out their own personal salvation in light of the approaching day of the Lord. Cementing their ability to do this is the quiet ongoing hand of God that works to shape their desires for the sake of his good pleasure.

**1 John 3:6-9**

First John 3:6-9 must be examined against the larger backdrop of false teaching that occasioned John's polemic. Commentators have offered several
explanations for who it was that John had in mind when he wrote his letter, the sheer number of which attests to the inability to determine, with any kind of real certainty, the likely culprit. Despite this uncertainty, three characteristics of John’s opponents rise to the surface in nearly every case. First, they denied that Jesus was the Christ (2:22). They, in essence, denied that Christ had “come in the flesh” (4:2). Against these false teachers, John proclaims a message of a corporeal Savior:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

Second, the false teachers lived lives of perpetual duplicity, saying one thing and doing another. John, throughout the letter, uses several “if we say” (1:6-10) and “anyone who says” (2:9; 4:20) statements to point out the counterfeit claims of the false

\[117\] Stott argues convincingly that John intended his letter to refute the aberrant teaching of the proto-Gnostic, Cerinthus, and his disciples. Though none of his writings have survived, Cerinthus seems to have been a well-known heretic. We learn about him chiefly from Irenaeus in his work, Adversus Haereses. Irenaeus here records the now famous incident involving John, who found himself in the same Ephesian bath-house as Cerinthus. Knowing that Cerinthus was inside, John rushed out of the bath-house before bathing, shouting “Let us fly, let even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within!” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.3.4, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, in Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF [Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885-96; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956], 1:416). The essence of Cerinthus’s error lay in his severance of Jesus from the divine Christ. Cerinthus taught that Jesus’ body was assumed by the divine Christ upon baptism, only to depart just before Jesus suffered on the cross. For a full introduction to the Cerinthian error, see John Stott, The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary, rev. ed., TNTC, vol. 19 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1964; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-53. Other possible opponents suggested include, a view similar to the Cerinthian heresy, but not Cerinthianism itself (I. Howard Marshall, The Epistles of John, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 21), a dissident group which had left the community over a different interpretation of John’s Gospel and affinity for perfectionist teaching (Raymond E. Brown, The Epistles of John, AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982], 69, 80), and docetists or those who believed Jesus only appeared to be fully divine when in reality he was not (Stephen S. Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, WBC, vol. 51 [Waco, TX: Word, 1984], 44-45).
teachers. While they claimed to have fellowship with God and live sinless lives, their acts of unrighteousness and uncharitableness told a different story (cf. 3:18). Third, the false teachers were characterized by lovelessness. Doing everything out of selfishness and vain conceit, the false teachers esteemed their “enlightened” condition as worthy of greater respect. Assaulting their hubris, John asserts that all those “born of God” have been given a knowledge of the truth (2:20-21), and this knowledge compels Christ’s disciples to “love one another” (3:11). Indeed, this is the ultimate test of true faith: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18).

First John 3:6-9 reads,

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

John, though his words are directed here to the community of faith, undoubtedly has his opponents in view. In true Johannine fashion, he marks these verses with a series of striking antitheses: abiding in Christ and a life of habitual sin (v. 6), the practice of

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118Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 163.
righteousness and the practice of sin (vv. 7-8), those who belong to the devil and those who belong to Christ (vv. 8-9). Such ethical dualism serves to contrast the righteous lifestyle that should mark the true believer with the smugness exhibited by the false teachers. In addition, the sheer frankness and simplicity of John’s dualistic language also serves to emphasize his message. Like a father speaking to his young children (v. 7), John, in the most straightforward manner conceivable, tells of the utter incongruity of sin in the Christian.119

Given John’s jejune style of writing in verse 6—“No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him”—one may expect a rather dry, straightforward interpretation such as “Christians do not sin;” yet, it is his firm candidness with regard to sin in a believer’s life that creates much of the difficulty here, especially when it is realized that just a few verses earlier he asserts that anyone who claims to have never sinned is a liar and the truth is not in him (vv. 8, 10). It seems apparent, then, from these verses, that John is not advocating sinless perfectionism. But, if not, what does he intend by claiming that “no one who abides in him keeps on sinning” (v. 6) and—the even more quizzical—“he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God” (v. 9)?

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119Stott is more precise: “To see and to know Christ, the sinless Saviour of sinners, is to outlaw sin; to sin is to deny Christ and to reveal that one is not living in him. Sin and Christ are irreconcilably at enmity with each other. Christ in his sinless person and saving work is fundamentally opposed to it” (Stott, The Letters of John, 128).
Commentator’s attempts to resolve this conflict fall under three main rubrics: grammatical, theological, and contextual. The grammatical interpretation of the text stresses the present, continuous tense of the verb ἀμερισάνει ("to sin") so that it is taken to mean that a person will not and cannot fall into a persistent habit of sinning (adopted by both the NIV and ESV as "keep(s) on sinning"). While a believer may occasionally sin, his life is not characterized by sin. Stott argues that this is a subtlety that John’s readers would have readily grasped and that such usage has been confirmed by linguists. The problem with this explanation is that it “overreads” the verb tense. That it cannot support the weight that the translation “keep(s) on sinning” places on it is evidenced by the fact that 5:16 uses the present tense to describe isolated sinful acts, not chronic wrongdoing. Most likely the present tense is meant, as Schnackenburg points out, “to suggest an observation and a rule. It is pointed indirectly against the gnostics with their disregard of the divine commandment.”

120 So, Bruce: “What [John] does assert is that a sinful life does not mark a child of God, so that anyone who leads such a life is shown thereby not to be a child of God. . . . There may be odd exceptions, but that is the general rule, which has been verified by experience” (F. F. Bruce, The Epistles of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 90).

121 Stott, The Letters of John, 139-40.


123 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 159-60. Of further importance is Kruse’s insight that the present tense says nothing of the habitual or non-habitual nature of the sinning: “[The use of the present tense] only shows that the author has chosen to depict the sinning as something in progress, rather than as a complete action” (Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 129). Smalley also poses the very legitimate question of degrees of divine preservation: “If God, whose nature remains in the Christian (3:9) and keeps him safe (5:18), can be said to protect the believer from habitual sin, why can he not preserve him as well from occasional sins?” (Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 160).

Another means of reconciling the statements in verses 6 and 9 with John’s earlier assertions is more theological in nature. First, some have sought to redefine sin, taking it to mean “a willful or deliberate transgression.” Keswick and Wesley undoubtedly fall into this category with their mutual understanding of sin as a “voluntary transgression of a known law.” According to this view, verse 6 is better translated, “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning deliberately.” In response to this, it must be stated that the Bible nowhere makes such a distinction. And, even if it did, one is hard-pressed to show that this is what John meant. All sin—voluntary or not—John says just a few short verses earlier, is *ἀνοικτά* (“lawlessness,” v. 4), opposition to and rebellion against God.125

A second theological explanation is that John is here describing, not a reality, but an ideal.126 The believer, ideally, ought to live without sin. This view finds support both in the textual horizon where John seems to encourage such an ideal (1 John 2:1) as well as in the intertestamental horizon where life in the new age is described as a consistent walking with God in which “all [will] live and never again sin, either through heedlessness or through pride” (1 Enoch 5:8; cf. Levi 18:9; Jub 5:12; 4 Ezra 9:31). Smalley appends this interpretation by arguing further that John has in mind a believer’s

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125See 152 n. 131 concerning Kruse’s treatment of *ἀνοικτά*.

potential freedom from sin. The believer, accordingly, has within himself the power to overcome sin, though full salvation awaits the consummation. John’s message is thus a summons to become what you are, realizing that what you are is not yet what you will one day be.

While it has much to commend it, such an interpretation does little to account for John’s bald claim in verse 9 that no one born of God can sin. The language of cannot is the language of a realist, not the should not language of an idealist. Not only this, but, as Stott has shown, John was writing in a time of crisis, a time that demanded a bold voice:

The situation he was addressing was one of harsh reality; it would do little good to resort only to “ideas” and “ideals”. The pre-Gnostic false teachers made concrete claims, and John was outspoken in contradicting their claims and calling them lies. In doing so, he also made counter-claims. Are we to imagine that these were “ideals” which his opponents could have dismissed as untrue, unpractical and unattainable?

If John was not speaking of a Christian’s spiritual potential, then how did he intend his readers to reconcile such a tension?

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127Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 161.

128Marshall, The Epistles of John, 183. Commenting on v. 9, Augustine, too, avers that John’s statement, “he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God,” applies to the perfect love of the next life: “If our circumstances are such that we make some progress in this life by the grace of the Savior, when lust declines and love increases, it is in the next life that we reach perfection, when lust is finally extinguished and love is made perfect” (Augustine, Letters 177, ACCS, ed. Gerald Bray and Thomas C. Oden, trans. Joel Scandrett [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 11:199). So, too, Bede, who comments on v. 6, “We cannot sin to the extent that we remain in Christ. John is speaking here about the vision and knowledge by which the righteous are able to enjoy God in this life, until they come to that perfect vision of him which will be revealed to them at the end of time” (Bede, On 1 John, ACT, ed. Gerald Bray and Thomas C. Oden, trans. Joel Scandrett [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 11:198).

Perhaps the best solution to this conundrum is found in reflecting upon the context in which John writes. In short, John may be working with a definition of "sins" that corresponds to the ἁμαρτία ("lawlessness") of his detractors (3:4). If this is the case, argues Yarbrough, John uses the same word, ἁμαρτάνω ("to sin") in verses 6 and 9 with two significantly different connotations: "[John's opponents] have sinned not in the inadvertent sense of the word but in the sense distinct to the discourse of this section, in which John has argued (3:4) that the ἁμαρτία of some constitutes ἁθυμαία."

This fact is especially likely when it is realized that, throughout the New Testament, ἁθυμαία connotes "opposition to and rebellion against God, like the opposition and rebellion of Satan" (Matt 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:21; Rom 6:19; 2 Cor 6:14; 2 Thess 2:3,7). Nowhere does it mean a violation of the Mosaic law. Verse 6, then, serves as a dividing line between those who persist in ἁθυμαία or a "confirmed posture of noncompliance with John's message" and those who abide in Christ. For those in

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130. Yarbrough, 1-3 John, 183-84.

131. Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 129. Kruse, referencing de la Potterie, points out that, in the LXX, ἁθυμαία becomes virtually synonymous with ἁμαρτία and that it occasionally has satanic associations and overtones (2 Sam 22:5; Ps 17:4). Several Jewish texts also teach that the sins of the Israelites are brought about by Satan and his spirits (T. Dan 5:4-6; 6:1-6; T. Naph 4:1; 1QS 3:18-21; 4:9, 19-20, 23). As it relates to the tension between 1 John 1:8,10 and 1 John 3:6, Kruse concludes that "if we recognise the connection between sin and ἁθυμαία (rebellion) in 3:1-10, we might say that the sin which distinguishes the children of the devil is the sin of the devil, rebellion or ἁθυμαία, and it is this sin that it is impossible for believers to commit because God's 'seed' remains in them and they cannot commit it" (Kruse, The Letters of John, 128, 132).


133. Yarbrough, 1-3 John, 185.
Christ, those that possess “God’s seed” (v. 9), it is inconceivable that they would engage in the fundamentally satanic act of rebellion against God.

The rebellion of John’s opponents came in several forms. Yarbrough suggests three categories of sins into which John’s opponents had run aground: doctrine (2:22), ethics (2:4), and love for God and others (stressed throughout the epistle). In verses 7-8, we see the ethical perversion of John’s adversaries. Claiming to know Christ, they were living lives consonant with the devil (v. 8). They saw no need to connect being

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134The rather arcane phrase, “God’s seed” (οὐγνηνομενοι, lit. “his seed”) is generally taken to mean one of four things. It is either regarded as a term denoting the believer’s status as God’s offspring (Yarbrough, 1-3 John, 195; Bruce, The Epistles of John, 92), the Holy Spirit (Kruse, The Letters of John, 125; Brown, The Epistles of John, 411; Schnackenburg, The Johannine Epistles, 175), a “divine life-principle” (Marshall, The Epistles of John, 186; Robert Law, The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of John [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909], 389), or the gospel (Dodd, Commentary on the Johannine Epistles, 77-78; Stott also cites Augustine, Bede, and Luther as adopting this interpretation [Stott, The Letters of John, 133]). The most satisfactory explanation probably lies in a combination of God’s word and Spirit. Given the Old Testament background—of which John would no doubt have been familiar—that adumbrated a coming messianic age characterized by those indwelt by the law (word) and Spirit of God (Jer 31:33-34; Ezek 36:25-27), ωμα most likely refers to “the word of God which is received in faith by the Christian, and which (through the inward activity of the Spirit) leads to rebirth, and the experience of increasing holiness by living in Jesus” (Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 174). In addition, Smalley shows that this exegesis also accords with how the New Testament depicts purification from sin as a result of the word and the Spirit of God in John 15:2-4 and Acts 15:8-9 (Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 174). Somewhat novel, though more provocative than plausible, is Lieu’s explanation of the term as a means of recalling the story of Cain and Abel in Gen 4. Borrowing from both Jewish and gnostic interpretations of the passage, Lieu theorizes that just as Adam’s “seed” was passed, not to Cain (the first born and supposed offspring of the devil), but to Seth (the “other seed,” cf. Gen 4:25), so too “God’s seed [in 1 John 3:9] is to be found not in Cain and his contemporary ‘followers’ but in those of God’s choice, who have been born of him” (Judith Lieu, The Theology of the Johannine Epistles, New Testament Theology [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 35).

135Yarbrough, 1-3 John, 183.

136So, Kruse, who writes, “It would appear that those who were trying to lead the readers astray were breaking the nexus between doing what is right and being righteous, or, as the author has already put it, between having fellowship with God and walking in the light (1:5-7), between knowing God and obedience to his word (2:4-6), and between being in the light and loving fellow believers (2:9-11)” (Kruse, The Letters of John, 121).
righteous with doing what was right. Rejecting the casuistic claims of the heretics, John plainly asserts that “[w]hoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous” (v. 7; cf. 2:29). Righteousness, in other words, comes from imitating the righteousness of Christ, whose righteousness was displayed in his act of propitiation for the sins of the world (2:2).

To sum up, though not Pauline, 1 John 3:6-9 covers many of the same themes found in the earlier texts. Two such themes are particularly noteworthy. First, it affirms the strong connection between character and conduct. Prior to verses 6-9, in what acts as a doctrinal premise to chapter 3, John urges his readers to live out their true identity as beloved children of God (vv. 1-3). In so doing, he presumes that true followers of Christ, those “born of God” (v. 9), will not sin recklessly and habitually out of a pure heart (v. 6). Instead, “Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as [Christ] is righteous” (v. 7).

To the extent that they understand their newfound status as adopted children of God, they will not—of necessity—make a practice of sinning. A righteous heart leads inevitably to righteous living. Second, we see here that perfection in the Christian life awaits the eschaton, when we will truly become what we are. To interpret John’s call in 1 John 3:6 and 9, as did Wesley, as a summons to a consistent, unwavering love for God and man.

137 Smalley notes several allusions in both the Old and New Testaments to the concept of acting righteously and being righteous (Gen 18:23-26; Ps 1:6; Isa 60:21; Dan 12:3; Matt 23:28; Luke 18:14; Rom 1:17; 3:21-26; 5:1; 1 Pet 4:18; Rev 22:11). From this evidence, he draws the following two conclusions: (1) “Acting righteously is not simply a matter of performing actions which are right. It suggests also the existence of a righteous character (being δικαιοσύνα), from which those actions flow, and is thus (as in 2:29b) a sign of divine sonship (contrast 3:10)” and (2) “This character is God-given, not created by the believer” (Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 167).

138 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 166.

in this life ignores the context in which John writes. As we have seen, John here understands “sins” as the sins of his detractors, and it is these “sins” that are impossible for those “born of God” to commit (v. 9). By not committing ἁμαρτία and instead exhibiting love for their brother, believers in turn distinguish themselves as “children of God” (v 10).

Conclusion

I began this chapter by stating that my primary goal was to decipher the original intent of the biblical authors so as to lay the groundwork for the final chapter. In what follows, I shall sum up my findings. Romans 7:14-25 portrays Paul as a man imprisoned by sin, a man yet regenerate. He, in honest terms, describes the human condition without Christ. But the “wretched man that I am” of Romans 7 is followed immediately by the “no condemnation for those that are in Christ” of Romans 8. Controlled by the Spirit, the man who trusts in Christ is thrust into a new era of living characterized by life and peace (8:6).

I maintained that the impetus of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is not that God will provide a way of escape from a litany of sins and temptations, or that the believer has the power to resist God’s way of escape just as he might have followed it. Such thinking is incongruous with the the promissory and assuring character of the context in which it lies. Paul’s main concern here is to affirm the covenental promise that Christians will never commit apostasy so as ultimately to fall away from the faith and lose their salvation.
expressly because they will always heed Paul’s warning, which functions as a way of escape. That said, the passage still presents a test case for how God’s means of providing a way of escape from general incidents of temptation—whether it be through instilling strength and wisdom in wearied believers or creating circumstances in which he knows believers will resist the temptation to sin—in no way hinders their ability to choose freely that path of least resistance.

I argued that Galatians 5:16-17 pictures the spiritual battle that wages inside every believer. The flesh is opposed to the Spirit with the result that the believer is unable to do the good he wants to do. And this battle continues as long as one labors in the flesh. There is, in the words of George, “no spiritual technique or second blessing that can propel the believer onto a higher plane of Christian living where this battle must no longer be fought.”140 Bloesch similarly observes, “The victorious life is a striving towards victory rather than a matured possession of victory. The life of faith is a life of conflict and struggle.”141 Paul gives no evidence that the believer ever transcends the spiritual conflict described in Galatians 5. In fact, we might also say with Luther that “the better Christian a man is, the more he will experience the heat of the conflict.”142


142 Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 251.
Still, we can have confidence that if we walk in cooperation with the Spirit (vv. 16, 25), God's kingdom inheritance awaits (v. 21).

In a similar way, Ephesians 4:22-24 illustrates the cooperative nature of sanctification in that, though God graciously creates the new person, man is responsible for putting off the old person and putting on the new. In contradistinction to the traditional Reformed understanding, I argued that to "put off" the old person is consonant with putting it to death. Man, newly created in Christ, thus puts to death the old person, which in turn inaugurates the dawning of the new person who is being progressively renewed in Christ, all of which is contingent upon the interlacing of divine initiative and human responsibility, including man's ability to act out of that which God has accomplished, that is, the creation of the new person.

Philippians 2:12-13 is another text that was shown to speak plainly of the cooperative nature of sanctification. In view of the rampant greed and dissension that overshadows the Philippian church, Paul enjoins the faithful to work out, pursue, and give strenuous effort to, their salvation in light of the approaching day of the Lord, all the while realizing that it is God who enables both their willing and doing to accomplish his good pleasure.

Finally, I went outside the Pauline corpus to examine the themes laid out in 1 John 3:6-9. I argued here that John's enigmatic call to perfection in verses 6 and 9 is best seen in light of the skullduggery of his opponents. On this view, his call to perfection is not a call to sinlessness; it is a call for his readers to abscond from the doctrinal and ethical codswallop being perpetuated by the heretics. Sandwiched between verses 6 and
9, verses 7 and 8 were shown to demonstrate the truth of Law’s axiom that “[d]oing is the test of being.”\textsuperscript{143} Just as Christ manifested his righteousness by laying down his life for us—“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us” (v 16)—so too Christians ought to evidence their righteousness character by loving their brother (vv 10-11).

The next chapter explores these insights further by revisiting the sanctification texts in turn and placing compatibilist explanations alongside those of a libertarian model. Libertarian explanations will be shown to elicit an intuitive appeal but, beyond that, ultimately to fail in offering a robust account of the biblical author’s intent. By comparison, compatibilism will be shown to satisfy, as much as it is possible, the philosophical, scriptural, and, in some cases, even intuitive boundary markers that fence the DSF debate.

\textsuperscript{143}Law, \textit{The Tests of Life}, 220.
CHAPTER 5
THE NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AND COMPATIBILIST FREEDOM

"[T]heological determinism is incompatible with a theologically responsible and pastorally sensitive doctrine of sanctification. Attempts to combine determinism with sanctification either become inconsistent or present Christians with a deeply problematic view of the Christian life. . . . I am convinced that whatever exactly the correct formulation of the doctrine of sanctification is, it isn't one that relies upon or incorporates determinism."1 With that, McCall does more than merely question the merits of what he terms "theological determinism;"2 he denounces it as a wholly inadequate means of human freedom and, consequently, wholly incompatible with the "correct" form of sanctification.3 In place of theological determinism, McCall proffers a short list of nonnegotiables that should accompany all acceptable metaphysical options: "As I see

1Tom McCall, "The Metaphysics of Sanctification and the Problems of Pastoral Care: Questioning Theological Determinism," a paper delivered November 15, 2007 at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, 2, 29.

2While McCall does "not mean to ignore the distinction between 'hard' determinism, on one hand, and 'soft' determinism or compatibilism on the other hand," he persists in using the generic "determinism" to symbolize both throughout his paper. Such laziness on McCall's part seems to foster—and rather conveniently so—an altogether reductionistic construal of soft determinism that works to silence the element of human responsibility intrinsic to the model. See McCall, "The Metaphysics of Sanctification and the Problems of Pastoral Care," 5.

3I am somewhat puzzled by McCall's use of the adjective "correct" here. Throughout his paper, McCall advocates and assumes a standard Augustinian style of sanctification that I outline in my third chapter. It seems obvious that his idea of a "correct" version of sanctification is Augustinian. If so, then why not admit it?
things, any acceptable option will be brutally honest about the depth of human depravity and the utter inability of the human person apart from grace. But any acceptable option will also be careful to account for genuine human agency and responsibility, and surely it will echo and promote the radical optimism of grace.”4 To this list, I would add that any acceptable option will be grounded in Scripture.

This chapter takes issue with McCall’s notion that a soft form of determinism is an inadequate model of human freedom, inimical to a progressive form of sanctification. I attempt to show instead that theological compatibilism actually satisfies McCall’s requirements for a viable metaphysical option of human freedom and, in so doing, offers an essential component to, in his words, a “theologically responsible and pastorally sensitive” doctrine of sanctification.

Much of what is discussed here depends on what was said in previous chapters. In chapter 2, I outlined the central tenets of libertarianism and compatibilism, showing that theological libertarianism makes God absolutely contingent on man given man’s ability to always choose other than he does, while theological compatibilism allows for the mutual interlacing of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility such that God’s desires and man’s are, in effect, the same. I also posited in this chapter a form of compatibilism known as semicompatibilism, which aids the compatibilist by nuancing two types of control: regulative control (access to alternate possibilities) and guidance control (access to a specific kind of guidance that does not require access to alternate possibilities). In so doing, semicompatibilism evades the libertarian rebuff that typical

compatibilist interpretations of the word “can” in the Consequence Argument beg the question. Semicompatibilists allow the accepted definition to stand, arguing that questions of one’s ability or inability need not determine whether one’s moral responsibility is maintained. The third chapter defined, along with two other forms of sanctification, the first half of this dissertation’s equation, namely that of Augustinian or progressive sanctification. In addition, it was argued that progressive sanctification makes most sense when accompanied by a compatibilist form of human freedom.

Chapter 4 built on the third chapter by analyzing several key sanctification texts. Attention was paid to the main theological themes in each text. Hinted at was how compatibilism helps to explain each text and how, in many cases, it is simply assumed by the biblical author.

Finally, gleaning from these preparatory matters, the goal of the present chapter is to argue for the necessary connection between progressive sanctification and compatibilist freedom. I argue that only compatibilism, with its proper balance of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, makes certain the pilgrim’s progress toward Christ-likeness. Revisiting the sanctification texts discussed in chapter 4, I juxtapose libertarian interpretations of the texts with compatibilist ones, pitting the shortcomings of the former against the strengths of the latter.

**Revisiting the Sanctification Texts**

**Romans 7:14-8:8**

I argued in the last chapter that Romans 7 depicts Paul in solidarity with the Jewish people as an unregenerate person. My reasons for this can be summed up as
follows: (1) there is no mention of the Holy Spirit, (2) the language of “sold under sin” (v. 14) reflects a condition of slavery under sin’s power, (3) the “I” of Romans 7, unlike that of Galatians 5:16-18-26, is unable to conquer his flesh, and (4) the assertion that the “I” is “held captive to the law of sin” (v. 23) is more emblematic of the unregenerate “I” in Romans 7:8-11, not the believer in Romans 6 (cf. vv. 5, 7, 18).

I argued further that compatibilism is solely equipped to make sense of this interpretation. In particular, I asserted that Paul’s frustration in not being able to do the good he wants to do is because he acts out of a nature dominated by sin. No amount of remorse or self-effort can deter him from his greatest motivation, which is to sin. Not until Paul acknowledges his wretched state and his need for Christ does he enter into the freedoms of Romans 8. It is here in the interim that Paul undergoes a “nature transplant.” Now, filled with a new nature that has the freedom to “walk according to the Spirit,” Paul’s desires begin to change—they are now dominated by God’s Spirit. And because his actions reflect his changed heart, he begins to please God. Certainly, God may have determined that Paul would undergo such a transplant. But there is nothing in the text that suggests that Paul himself, under his own volition, did not in fact desire the very same thing. What is more likely, God orchestrated the circumstances in such a way that Paul’s ultimate decision to turn to Christ was ensured, yet never in a way that impinged on what he desired most, namely to trust in the one who alone could fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. Compatibilism, then, satisfies McCall’s requirement of man’s total inability apart from God’s gracious providence. Apart from the grace of God in
orchestrating the very things that only he knows will conform Paul's desires to his, Paul remains mired in his wretched state. God's grace, to be sure, knows no bounds, yet it works only in concert with Paul's inner disposition and motivations. But what of the indeterminist construal? How would the indeterminist interpret this passage given the necessity of alternate possibilities?

Indeterminism struggles to make sense of Romans 7 given that Paul, though deciding to sin, could always have chosen otherwise. If Paul's fate were ultimately his responsibility, all of God's determinative powers would cease at the threshold of Paul's own decision to trust Christ or not. What does this mean? It means that regardless of Paul's inner disposition to sin, despite the fact that his every motive is bent on disobeying Christ, he is fully capable of making the opposite, albeit irrational, decision to obey instead. In the same way, upon being converted, Paul may likewise choose to keep sinning regardless of his being a new creation in Christ. Simply put, libertarian freedom affords no assurance that one's actions will reflect one's inner transformation. The libertarian might respond at this point, "Yes, but at least the person's freedom is ensured. At least they are not forced to comply with something against their wishes." But at what cost? It would seem at the cost of God's sovereignty in assuring that a believer's new nature will incline their will so that it is progressively conformed to the image of Christ.

5Though some, like Olson, may invoke prevenient grace as a solution to this problem of total depravity, it is of little help here in that it only makes possible one's freedom to choose; it has no bearing upon one's decision to choose based upon one's deepest desires at the time.
Human freedom that exacts freedom from God is surely not worth it. Not only is the cost too high, but one must not forget the character of the “controller.” As Helm explains,

"In providence the controller is not blind, nor is the control exercised apart from what men and women themselves want. The controller is God, who is the supreme purposer of the universe. He exercises his control, as far as men and women are concerned, not apart from what they want to do, or (generally speaking) by compelling them to do what they do not want to do, but through their wills." Though untamed, God has graciously chosen to work in a manner free from constraint.

He works with, not against, our deepest wishes.

The libertarian would do well, at this juncture, to consider a form of compatibilism, say semicompatibilism, that ensures both God’s freedom and man’s responsibility cooperating together to bring about lasting change. As has been shown, all that is needed to ground moral responsibility, according to semicompatibilists, is a kind of guidance control. Hence, man’s responsibility need not be curtailed simply because he lacks genuine access to alternate possibilities. Even though Paul, in Romans 7, has no ability to choose Christ (i.e., he lacks regulative control), as long as he chooses to follow consistently his desire to disobey—which he will given his character—he alone is responsible for his actions.

6At this point, the libertarian may argue that the cost is warranted or, at least, accounted for given that God willingly limits his own sovereignty. Divine self-limitation, as has been shown, however, only further complicates matters. God’s placing of himself at the mercy of man’s decisions, while it allows for libertarian freedom, forces him to take the risk that man may not decide to obey regardless of the circumstance. In addition to failing to ensure a progressive form of sanctification, enacting divine self-limitation also provides no ontological basis for God’s knowledge of future free choices and events. Such a risky view of providence is simply unscriptural.

1 Corinthians 10:13

First Corinthians 10:13 provides what is possibly the best test case for the necessary connection between compatibilist freedom and progressive sanctification and will, therefore, receive considerable attention. In order to accommodate all the ways in which compatibilism best accounts for this passage, the following discussion is best approached in three parts: theological, philosophical, and experiential.

First, we begin with compatibilism’s unique ability to make certain Paul’s promise in 1 Corinthians 10. Paul’s promise to the Corinthian believers is that their salvation is assured, that regardless of the temptation to apostatize they need not worry about whether God has provided a means of escape. What is more, this means of escape is not independent of their will to do what they most want at the time. Though God “provides” (v. 13), they still must “flee” (v. 14). Paul knows that his warnings to flee idolatry will be heard by all true believers. He knows that the analogical example of Israel’s moral failings in the wilderness will be sufficient to deter the believer from deserting the things of God. All of this, however, is heavily determined on one thing, namely, the certainty that God will do what he said. It stands to reason, then, that some manner of determinism is necessary to account for such assurance. To make God contingent upon man’s choice as libertarian freedom does, whether God limited himself

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8Thiselton equivocates over whether this verse should be used as a test case for compatibilism. On the one hand, he questions the wisdom in using this verse to “address ‘compatibilistic’ arguments about human freedom in response to temptation and grace.” On the other, he gives a tepid endorsement of such an exercise when he writes that his “closing comments on this verse resonate with [such compatibilist arguments]” (Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 478-79 n. 161). Included in the “closing comments” to which Thiselton refers is the following statement: “Paul assures his readers [in the prologue to his letter] that in the interim period of eschatological pilgrimage (1:7) . . . God will keep them firm . . . unimpeachable at the Day . . . because πιστὸς ὁ θεὸς (1:8, 9a)” (479, emphasis mine).
in this way or not, merely makes possible the likelihood of man’s escape. Given this, we are left with two real options: either (1) we assume a hard form of determinism that essentially erases man’s responsibility by constraining his will or (2) we assume a soft form of determinism that affirms the compatibility of both divine and human agency by excising constraint from the equation. Since hard determinism makes little sense of the freedom texts in Scripture, it would seem to be ruled out. Compatibilism, at this point, looks like our best option.

And yet, it may be objected that the price of such certainty guaranteed by compatibilism is too high. The price is nothing less than the belief that our choices are fixed—every choice we make is volitionally necessary and every choice we do not make volitionally impossible. For some this amounts to fatalism’s Trojan-horse-attempt to market itself under the guise of a softer, more gentle form of determinism. But this charge against soft determinism, while attended by a certain intuitive appeal, is ultimately underwhelming given that Scripture seems to support the interconnectedness between the compatibilist notions of volitional necessity, volitional impossibility, and moral responsibility. In other words, according to Scripture, a person may be morally liable for something he finds volitionally necessary or volitionally impossible to do. In the case of Judas, for example, even though Jesus predicted his betrayal in advance, he was still fully responsible for his sinful act (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). In one sense, Judas was physically able to do otherwise yet, in another, he could not have done other than he did.

9In view here is McCall’s seemingly casuistic attempt to conflate compatibilism with all forms of determinism.

Moreover, what are we to make of Hebrews 4:15, which states that Jesus was tempted “in every respect” yet was without sin? Are we to assume that such temptations were, for Jesus, merely artificial because it was volitionally impossible for him to sin? More likely, assuming that Jesus’ desire was always to do the will of his Father (John 4:34) and that the temptations were real, it was volitionally necessary that he resist and in turn virtually impossible that he succumb. Finally, Paul reminds us that those whose minds are “set on the flesh” (Rom 8:7), regardless of their inability to please God (v. 8), are still deserving of death (v. 6). Given this weight of biblical evidence, to say that compatibilism is thus guilty of fatalistic notions of constraint is to misunderstand more than just the concept itself—it is to misunderstand the clear teaching of Scripture.

But what of the secondary interpretation of this text that it acts as a general promise of God’s faithfulness to all believers faced with temptations and trials of many kinds? How does one’s freedom affect God’s ability to provide a way out? Witherington offers the following solution: “God will provide them with an out so that they can escape their present malaise. Paul believes that God never allows a Christian to be tempted to such a degree that by God’s grace one cannot resist or find a way of escape.” I agree. However, Witherington follows up this statement with the following: “[But] this does not mean one will necessarily resist.” Such an interpretation, while rightly focused on

12Ben Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 224.
13Ibid.
God's grace as the instrument of escape, lacks credibility. To say that "[t]his does not mean one will necessarily resist" mistakenly imports into the text an idea that is not present, namely, that God's promise to provide a way of escape is predicated upon the free will of the believer for its fulfillment. If anything, Paul highlights God's sovereignty! The notion that the Israelite wanderings took place exactly as they did so that a later generation of Christians could benefit from them is predicated solely on God's ability to predetermine the exodus events down to the minor details of what happened (vv. 6, 11). Man's ability to stand, moreover, is based upon God's willingness to support him: "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (v. 12). Finally, it is God's faithfulness, not man's, that makes certain a way of escape (v. 13).

Why, then, would Paul, after accenting God's sovereignty, revert to making the way of escape contingent upon man's decision to endure? Such a strained interpretation is only necessitated by a form of freedom that, at all costs, blindly holds on to man's ability to choose otherwise. Thus, from a theological standpoint, compatibilism supplies the only means whereby man's free will is not infringed upon and God's sovereignty not diminished.

Second, compatibilism makes better philosophical sense of this passage. I established in chapter 4 that God gives the ability to endure temptation but said nothing

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14 Following Witherington, Gardner also awards man the final say concerning his destiny: "No temptation is so great that God's grace is not ample to deal with it (1 Cor 10:13). The only force, power, or person that can separate the believer from fellowship with Christ is that believer, and only then after a protracted struggle" (Paul D. Gardner, The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 8-11:1 [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994], 167, emphasis mine). For one who does not view God's promise as dependent upon the free will of the believer, see Allison, "A Response to Tom McCall's 'The Metaphysics of Sanctification,'" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, 17 November 2007), 8 n. 34.
of the nature of that ability. In what follows, I will outline two possible ways of interpreting this ability. First, I present the indeterminist interpretation and offer two objections to this explanation. Second, I will argue that a compatibilist model of human freedom has implications that are consistent with making certain a way of escape for the believer faced with temptation. My fundamental aim here is to show how compatibilist freedom connects a person’s spiritual condition with his response to temptation.

Intrinsic to libertarian freedom, as it pertains to this text, is the idea that man is endowed with a two-way ability to endure—he may choose to endure the temptation or he may choose not to endure it. Assuming it physically possible, say libertarians, a believer’s failure to endure—since he could have chosen to endure—makes him morally responsible. Notice that nothing is said of man’s spiritual condition. This is because, while certainly a factor in man’s decisions, no factor, including one’s strongest desire at the time, is sufficient to decisively incline one’s will in one direction over another. Two philosophical objections may be posed against the libertarian interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13.

My first objection may be developed as follows: If, as libertarianism implies, a person’s ability to choose is—for lack of a better word—arbitrary, there is the real, albeit unlikely, possibility that a new believer might never sin, thus living from the outset of his Christian life like a glorified saint. In other words, there is nothing hindering him from invariably choosing the same option every time. Such an interpretation bifurcates the connection between a person’s spiritual condition and response to temptation by permitting someone to live like a glorified saint without ever having developed into
That said, what is interesting about this objection is that it falls limp when a Wesleyan or Keswick notion of freedom is assumed. Given Wesley and Keswick's notion of sin and their emphasis on the potential for a higher plane of Christian living, the likelihood of a person living free of conscious sin is a very real possibility. For Wesley, a definitive crisis of faith signifies salvation from all known sin. Likewise, Keswick taught that, if consistently appropriated by the believer, the Holy Spirit would counteract all known sin in a believer's life. Thus, while improbable, the notion that a believer could live like a glorified saint—at least outwardly—is not, philosophically speaking, out of the question. When a progressive form of sanctification is assumed, however, the libertarian interpretation seems to yield no answer for why a person might act according to his inner spiritual condition.

My second objection to the libertarian interpretation is that it cannot account for why one person (P) chooses to endure while another (Q) does not. Consider two

15Ciocchi, "Understanding Our Ability to Endure Temptation," 473. Elucidating further the unsavory implications of such an interpretation, Ciocchi points out that "[i]f someone came to [an Indeterminist] and said, for instance, 'I have been a believer for ten years and have never once given in to a temptation,' he would have no theoretical grounds for rejecting this claim. Given the [indeterminist] interpretation, what this believer says might be the truth" (475). Commenting on this scenario, McCall inveighs that it "focuses solely on the believer's own condition or state" and "does not take grace into consideration" (McCall, "The Metaphysics of Sanctification and the Problems of Pastoral Care," 12 n. 24). Taken on its face, such an objection may seem warranted, that is, if you grant McCall the type of resistible grace that he presupposes. McCall, responding to Ciocchi—who makes a similar objection to the one I have articulated above—continues: "[B]y my lights Ciocchi never discusses the place of grace according to his own recommended 'Calvinist' scheme. Moreover, he never wrestles with the question of what—or Who—it is that determines the actions of the believer struggling with temptation. But this is the big question, and simply avoiding it by saying that the person's condition determines his actions is no help at all. Why is this person in such a condition? No matter how long we might prolong the process by appealing to other events as secondary causes, the theological determinist at some point must admit that it is due to God's direct decree" (12 n. 24). Condensed, McCall's argument is rather unoriginal: For God to be just, his grace must always be resistible. And, since the Calvinist "scheme"—haply wed to theological determinism—does not allow for such freedom, it must, therefore, be rejected. But, this logic has been found wanting (see my understanding of "soft determinism" in chap. 2) on a number of fronts, not the least of which is its fusion of soft determinism with other more fatalistic versions of determinism. Indeed, by my lights, McCall's conception of freedom bears the greater burden of proof.
persons |P| and |Q|, both of whom are confronted with the temptation to engage in voyeurism by viewing inappropriate material on the Internet. |P| chooses to refrain, while |Q| does not. Why? According to libertarian freedom, no recourse exists to explain the actions of |P| and |Q| except the extremely stolid one that, for whatever reason, |P| exercised his volitional ability to endure rather than give in, and |Q| did not. Again, the necessary connection between a believer’s spiritual condition and response to temptation is severed in that indeterminism fails to account for why one person chooses to endure and why another person chooses not to endure. Once again, the adequacy of such a construal of human freedom seems tenuous.\(^{16}\)

In light of these objections, it must first be said that there is nothing *arbitrary* about classical compatibilism. Classical compatibilism holds that man’s actions are directly attributable to his deepest desires at the time. Translated in terms of temptation, a believer will endure temptation if he is more inclined to endure than not. If he should choose to give in to the temptation, he has no one to blame but himself, because his choice was an expression of his desires, which are in turn an expression of his inner spiritual condition. Consequently, his failure to endure is based upon his preference not to endure, not on his inability to endure despite his wishes to the contrary. It is thus safe to say, with Ciocchi, that his “‘could not endure’ was [actually] a ‘would not endure.’”\(^{17}\)

Further, theological compatibilism holds that these desires are directly attributable to God. To take this even further, it holds that God progressively works his

\(^{16}\)Ciocchi, “Understanding Our Ability to Endure Temptation,” 475.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 477.
desires in us so that we ultimately accomplish his will. And all of this is done in such a way that man’s free will is preserved. That said, it explains perfectly why one person might choose to endure, while another does not. It also explains why the state of glorification, given a progressive model of sanctification, is unattainable in this life.

Compatibilism operates in the realm of desires. In order for glorification to become a reality, then, given compatibilist freedom, one must consistently desire to love the Lord with all one’s heart, mind, and soul. But Scripture nowhere promises such a possibility in this life. Progressive sanctification, the reader will recall, holds that sin permeates the whole person (Phil 3:12). More than mere deeds that displease God, it is man himself, his every motive saturated by sin, that needs transforming. And while ultimate victory is assured, the battle waged against sin in the deeper recesses of the heart continues in this life. What Scripture does promise, however, is an ever-increasing conformity to Christ’s perfection to the one who walks by the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25) and sets his mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5). It promises that man is sanctified through a cooperative process of putting to death the old man and repeatedly putting on the new man created in Christ (Eph 4:22-24; 2 Cor 5:17). Again, compatibilism works to make this cooperation possible by not making God contingent on man’s free choice; instead, it works to harmonize both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility by connecting one’s character to one’s actions.

It is also worth noting how a semicompatibilist might view this text. Consider a kleptomaniac (K), who cannot resist the urge to steal. For the sake of argument, let us say that God makes it so that |K| will escape the temptation to steal by providing inner
strength to overcome his kleptomania. And let us surmise that if |K| decides to forgo that
provision of inner strength and steal once more, he will be prohibited from doing so.

Translated into the language of semicompatibilism, he lacks regulative control. As one
might suspect, since it is God who is at work shaping |K|’s desires to fit his own, |K|
decides not to steal those few items of silverware in the commercial kitchen that he is
pressure washing. Translated: |K| exercises guidance control in that he does exactly what
he wants to do. Granted he does exactly what he wants to do, he satisfies the
semicompatibilist requirement of retaining guidance control, which is all that is needed
for genuine moral responsibility to exist. For those libertarians not convinced by the
theological notions of ability and desire, semicompatibilism offers yet another way in
which compatibilism is preferable to libertarian interpretations.

Third, a compatibilist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is preferred to a
libertarian one in terms of experience. I realize that this may, at first, seem rather absurd
or paradoxical, given McCall’s claim that such a view is “insensitive.” But has McCall
really understood or, perhaps better, has he wanted to understand, the true nature of
compatibilism? As already shown, McCall’s idea of compatibilism leaves much to be
desired. By “insensitive,” I take McCall to mean that any form of human freedom that, in
any way, dares to incorporate a measure of divine determinism, no matter what the color,
is essentially not in the best interest of the human agent. I deny this a priori claim.
Simply because compatibilism seeks to do justice to the biblical notions of God’s
sovereignty and man’s responsibility and, in so doing, maintains an element of divine
sovereignty that, not only springs forth from an all-benevolent God but cooperates with
man’s desires in such a way that his freedom is secured, is no grounds for elimination. This seems to me a rather unfortunate mistake, especially when it is realized that there is more comfort in knowing that an all-wise God is in meticulous control of every aspect of his creation, a God who desires and ensures that good will prevail in the lives of those called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). To diminish this God’s greater glory would indeed seem vastly more “insensitive.”

The following case study illustrates the way in which a compatibilist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13, far from insensitive, offers comfort to the believer struggling with temptation.

**A case study.** Jimmy struggles. He struggles with being addicted to alcohol, and he struggles with how God operates in the world. Though only having been a Christian a short time, Jimmy knows that God is sovereign. He has heard his preacher tell of God’s sovereignty in the life of Daniel, of how it was that God sovereignly gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief eunuch (Dan 1:9) and of how God supernaturally caused the vegetables he ate and the water he drank, in a mere ten days, to strengthen him such that he overshadowed in appearance and health those youths who ate the king’s food (v. 15). He has also read Spurgeon:

I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes—that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens—that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphis over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence—
the fall of sere leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He that believes in a God must believe this truth.\textsuperscript{18}

But Jimmy knows Spurgeon better than most, and he is not prone to ignore how Spurgeon balances God’s sovereignty with man’s free will. He knows that Spurgeon prefaces the above passage with a word of man’s responsibility in the affairs of this world:

I can not tell you where human will and free agency unite with God's sovereignty and with his unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other ever since the time of Adam. Some have said, Man does as he likes; and others have said, God does as he pleases. In one sense, they are both true; but there is no man that has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We can not tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by; and yet I can not go home but through a certain road. John Newton used to say, there were two streets to go to St. Mary Woolnoth; but Providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbath I came down a certain street—I do not know why—and there was a young man who wished to speak to me; he wished to see me many times before. I say that was God's Providence—that I might meet that young man. Here was Providence, and yet there was my choice; how, I can not tell. I can not comprehend it.\textsuperscript{19}

Along with Spurgeon, Jimmy knows that the Bible intimates that man is free, that his decisions have consequences, and that he is rightly held accountable to God for his actions. After all, it was Daniel—though undoubtedly the recipient of God’s gracious actions—not God, who resolved not to defile himself with the king’s food or wine (v. 8). What is more, he feels intuitively that his decisions are his, and that they are not coerced. And all of this causes him to question how it is that God is sovereign over his desire for alcohol.


\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 200-01.
Not wanting to dismiss the clear teaching of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility in Scripture, along with the wider teaching of God’s goodness, Jimmy decides to hold that God’s sovereignty and man’s free will are somehow compatible. He then reasons that, since evil is never directly attributable to God in Scripture, his struggle with alcohol addiction is due to his sin, not God’s evil intent. God, however, is not absent. He stands behind his addiction in a way that will result in his ultimate good. Beyond this, Jimmy reads in 1 Corinthians 10:13 of God’s faithfulness in providing a way of escape for believers ensnared by the temptations of life. He is comforted by the fact that God’s promise to provide this means of escape is not dependent upon his own best efforts or decision to persevere; rather, it is dependent upon God conforming him into the image of his Son such that the things of God become more desirable than his alcohol and heeding Paul’s warning to flee temptation becomes more desirable than the risk of falling away. Jimmy knows that his ability to resist temptation, then, is certain, and this fills him with hope. Thus, he can say with Spurgeon:

Providence is amazing. O! that thought, it staggers thought! O! it is an idea that overwhelms me—that God is working all! The sins of man, the wickedness of our race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence—all these things in some mysterious way are working the will of God! We must not look at it; we can not look at it. I can not explain it.²⁰

As illustrated here, there is little comfort in knowing that God’s promised way of escape is merely hoped for but not guaranteed given libertarian freedom. For, as I have argued, such freedom at best only makes possible God’s way of escape, because it

²⁰Ibid., 200.
severs the link between a believer’s character and actions. No matter how hard God works to ensure his ability to resist, given the power of contrary choice, the believer may always choose not to resist. That said, the libertarian can give a plausible account of a his response to temptation. What he cannot do, however, is make certain God’s promised way of escape. Only the compatibilist, who locates ability in a person’s strongest inclinations, can ensure this level of certainty. Consider again the latter part of Hoekema’s definition of sanctification in Chapter 1, that the Holy Spirit “renews our entire nature according to the image of God and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.”21 Compatibilism alone permits this kind of spiritual growth and maturity. To the believer walking by the Spirit (Rom 8:4-6; Gal 5:16, 25), God’s way of escape will be irresistibly attractive as he lives according to his renewed nature. Likewise, to the believer in danger of falling away, the warnings and injunctions of 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 will make certain his ability to persevere. This is truly good news to the believer like Jimmy who, though he struggles with temptation, can rest in the fact that God is securing his salvation and working good out of what seems like gratuitous evil.

If my arguments are sound, then, McCall is left to give an account of the apparent theological, philosophical, and experiential inconsistencies that plague his position. And, if no satisfactory answers are forthcoming, he must admit that a soft form of determinism does more to promote, what he calls, the “radical optimism” of grace because it alone makes certain a 1 Corinthians 10:13-way-of-escape.

Galatians 5:16-17 and Philippians 2:12-13

Galatians 5:16-17 recounts the ongoing battle in the life of the believer, the internal battle between one’s desire for the Holy Spirit and one’s desire for the flesh. By “flesh” Paul intends that instrument used to disobey God in every area of life. Sins of the flesh, moreover, are a result of a sinful disposition. Whether expressed bodily or not, they are committed by the whole person. Paul makes no distinction between sins that are strictly related to the body and those strictly related to one’s character; the two are inseparable.

I also argued in the last chapter that Paul’s battle here is different from that described in Romans 7. Unlike his battle with the flesh in Romans 7 in which defeat was unavoidable, victory in Galatians 5 is attainable. Galatians 5, in this way, reflects better the teaching of Romans 8 that believers have been freed from the dispensation of the flesh, that they are no longer slaves to the flesh but are now ruled by God’s Spirit. What is more, freedom from the tyranny of the flesh is certain if they walk in obedience to this indwelling Spirit. But how can Paul give such an emphatic assurance to the believer? In what follows, I suggest two different ways in which Paul’s confidence in Galatians 5:16-17 is warranted: (1) he undoubtedly knows of and trusts in the cooperative nature of sanctification, and (2) he knows that given the choice to obey or not, the heart controlled by the Spirit will always act according to its deepest desire, which is to please God, and it will, therefore, obey. Let us look at the first of these two propositions by considering again Paul’s statement to the Philippians.
As was shown in the last chapter, Philippians 2:12-13 is best viewed individually, though the corporate sense is not absent. Paul enjoins the believers in Philippi to work out their common salvation in their life together, but to do so chiefly by working out their own individual pursuit of God. The two are hardly distinguishable. In much the same way, God’s activity and man’s is one and the same. Man’s striving is ultimately God’s empowering. Yet this “divine empowering,” as Collange affirms, “does nothing to curtail human action; rather, it provokes a reaction that it supports” (translation mine).\(^{22}\) That is, God works, not only to empower our doing, but to empower the very willing that lies behind our doing. Fee underscores well the way in which God uses our desires to determine our conduct, which in turn accomplishes his good pleasure:

Christian ethics has nothing to do with rules that regulate conduct. Rather, it begins with a mind that is transformed by the Spirit, so as not to be conformed to this age but to the character of God, knowing God’s will, what is good and pleasing and perfect to him (Rom 12:1-2). We are not those who have been begrudgingly caught by God, so that we obey basically out of fear and trembling over what might happen if we were to do otherwise. Rather, being Christ’s means to be converted in the true sense of that word, to have our lives invaded by God’s Holy Spirit, who creates in us a new desire toward God that prompts godly behavior in the first place.\(^{23}\)

In other words, man acts out of his character. As he begins more and more to desire the things of God, as his character is conformed to God’s character, he naturally does those things that please God. Further, there is no thought, as Fee mentions, of “otherwise” in man, for all he desires to do is what God desires for him to do. His every move is in


\(^{23}\)Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 105.
accordance with God's desires. No scenario exists in which he desires to thwart God's will but is unable to do so because he is constrained to follow it. Indeed, for the believer whose mind is set on the Spirit (Rom 8:6), who delights in the Lord (Ps 37:4), God will grant him the desires of his heart, desires coterminous with God's. And since God is wholly good, his desires are not capricious; they are full of loving intent for his creation.

In addition to trusting in the cooperative nature of sanctification, Paul also trusts that, given the choice to obey, the person controlled by the Spirit will always do so because of his desire to please God. Paul has no category for a believer who walks by the Spirit and who, regardless of his standing, because he always has the ability to choose otherwise, chooses—in a moment of weakness—to indulge in the desires of the flesh. If this were the case, Paul's injunction, at best, would amount to "walk by the Spirit and you probably will not gratify the desires of the flesh, that is, since you have genuine freedom to always choose otherwise regardless of your changed heart." Once again, it is difficult to see how such an injunction creates greater comfort for the believer. Where is the added comfort in stressing the Spirit's power to overcome the flesh, if it is really only dependent upon man's power? It is also difficult to see how Paul can assure his readers that the flesh keeps them from doing the good things they want to do (v. 17). For, if libertarian freedom is assumed, one can indulge in every fleshly desire and still choose at the moment of decision to obey.

What is more likely here is that Paul works with a model of human freedom that allows for both certainty and responsibility. As for certainty, Paul bases his promise that the believer will not gratify the desires of the flesh upon his assumption that, as the
believer's whole person—desires and all—is controlled by the Spirit, he will act accordingly. But this is only possible given compatibilist freedom. In the case of responsibility, Paul urges the Philippian believers to cooperate with the Spirit in working out their own salvation implying that, if they do not, they are responsible for their lack of effort. Yet this moral responsibility must be balanced with God's sovereignty, which is also at work. Here again, we see how, while not explicit, a compatibilist form of freedom that strikes the proper balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is implied by Paul to make certain the progressive sanctification of the believer.

Ephesians 4:22-24

In chapter 4, I went against the tide of Reformed thinking concerning the place of the old person in the believer. Instead of viewing the person as, in some manner, still attached to the old person, I argued that it is best to view the Christian as having made a definitive break with the old person, resulting in a completely new person who is being progressively renewed into the image of Christ. My reason for this is simple: I know of no other way to take Paul when he says that the believer is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). If, by this, Paul means that the believer is a mixture of both the old and the new persons, he simply does not tell us. What he does tell us is that the old person was "put off" and the new person "put on" at conversion much like someone might "put off" or "put on" an article of clothing, which seems to suggest a fundamental separation. This, of course, does not entail that the old sinful habits in the believer have been fully extirpated, only that the believer is no longer dominated by the sin and guilt that marked his old self. It was further shown that, in contrast to the inceptive acts of putting off and putting on in
verses 22 and 24, verse 23 refers to God’s act of renewing the spirit of the believer’s mind. Implied here is a complete renewal of the person’s inmost being, including his old sinful habits and motivations. Finally, I argued that the two aorist middle infinitives ἀποθέωσαι (“to put off”) and ἐνδυόμεθα (“to put on”) in verses 22 and 24 signify that the believer receives the benefits of his, not God’s, act of putting off the old person and putting on the new. And so, though God creates the new person, it is man, according to verse 24, who acts to “put it on.”

These few verses in Ephesians are saturated with the combination of the gracious initiative of God and man’s responsibility that is the touchstone of progressive sanctification. God’s grace is seen in both his creating the new person after his likeness and in his continued renewal of man’s spirit. Man’s responsibility, accordingly, is manifested in his putting off of the old person and putting on of the new at his conversion. Paul obviously sees no need to deliberate further on how these two aphorisms might simultaneously be true. He simply assumes their compatibility. Theological compatibilism, then, with its dual notion that God is sovereign and man is responsible without Scripture giving us any explicit details as to how this might be, seems best suited to account for Paul’s discourse.

Radically optimistic grace rarely comes in greater clarity! God continues to graciously renew the believer’s spirit but not in a way that enervates his free will to choose. Given the fact that he has put off the old person and put on the new, the believer is to “speak the truth with his neighbor” (v. 25), “give no opportunity to the devil” (v. 27), “let no corrupting talk come out of [his mouth], but only such as is good for building
up” (v. 29), “not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (v. 30), put away “all malice” (v. 31), “be kind to [others], tenderhearted, forgiving [others]” (v. 32), and be continually “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). All of this is contingent on the believer actively pursing the things of God, yet nowhere is his freedom said to be diminished, even though it is God who continues to renew his desires and motivations to perform these very acts of obedience. Thus, not only is compatibilism implied, but it seems as if Paul spells it out in a matter of a few verses in much the same way as it is spelled out in the passages examined in chapter 2 (Gen 50:20; Acts 4:27-28). That is, God’s sovereignty and man’s free will are place side by side without any explanation as to how the two might coinhere. In the end, God is glorified, his grace magnified, and man’s freedom upheld.

1 John 3:6-9

First John 3:6-9 contain two of the most perplexing verses in all the New Testament. Both verse 6 and verse 9, on their surface, seem to suggest that sinless perfection is not only possible for the Christian, but expected. Wesley thought as much. Given certain parameters—one’s definition of sin and perfection—he taught that these verses spoke of the reality of unending love to which all Christians should aspire. And Keswick, for its part, though cautiously aware of the effects of the fall, also held that in Christ a believer is positioned such that he is no longer dominated by sin and that “if he walks in the Spirit that which is positional may be made experimental.”24 Barabas adds,

“If he continues to remain under the dominion of sin, it is because he wants to sin and does not claim his privileges in Christ.”25 Do one’s “privileges in Christ” include being free of all conscious or deliberate sin? I think not.

In the last chapter, I reasoned that, given John’s prior assertions that the believer is never completely free of sin in this life (1:8, 10) and given the context in which he writes, the “sinning” to which John refers is not merely meant as a violation of the Mosaic code but the “lawlessness” akin to that of his opponents. Against the calumny of his opponents who most likely claimed sinless obedience but lived in wanton disobedience, John counters that, for the one born of God (v. 9), a persistent mindset of rebellion is unfathomable. To not “make a practice of sinning,” therefore, is to denounce the Satanic-driven rebellion against God emblematic of the false teachers. So, while Wesley and, to a lesser degree, Keswick persist in the surface interpretation of this text—granted their definitions of the word “sin” and, in Wesley’s case, perfection—I argued that context, not definitions, should dominate the discussion. The question, then, is why Wesley, in particular, and Keswick are more comfortable with the plain reading of this text. The answer seems to lie, not only in the way they define their terms, but in their implied concepts of freedom.

Both Wesley, with his view that man can forfeit his salvation,26 and Keswick, with its notion that the Christian life is dependent on man’s willingness to appropriate the

25Ibid. In a conversation with former Columbia International University president and Keswick spokesperson Robertson McQuilkin, he confided that, in the twenty-five years he knew his father, he never remembered seeing his father deliberately sin.

counteractive power of the Spirit, maintain that man is the ultimate arbiter when it comes to his salvation and his Christian walk. They maintain libertarian freedom. Knowing this, their somewhat optimistic stance that man is capable of ascending, in a moment of faithful crisis, to a higher plane of Christian living free of conscious sin appears fully justifiable. For, given libertarian freedom, such an interpretation is entirely possible. Faced with the choice to appropriate the Spirit’s power or not, a person might always choose to appropriate that power regardless of his inner condition.

Augustinians, on the other hand, maintain that God is the ultimate determiner of man’s decisions. They maintain compatibilist freedom. Knowing this, the plain reading of 1 John 3:6 and 9 that man can achieve outward sinlessness is overreaching. For, since a person makes choices based upon his character that is progressively, yet never completely, made to reflect the character of Christ until he dies, such an interpretation is impossible. Faced with the choice to sin or not, a person will always choose out of his character at the time, and because his character is locked in a battle with his flesh until he dies, sinlessness awaits his glorification. Such a reality compels the Augustinian to look elsewhere for a suitable interpretation of 1 John 3:6 and 9, which I did.

Of additional note is John’s connection between being right and doing right in verses 7-8: “Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil.” John is here working with a vastly different

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27Consider the above quote by Barabas: “If he continues to remain under the dominion of sin, it is because he wants to sin and does not claim his privileges in Christ” (Barabas, So Great Salvation, 100, emphasis mine).
definition of “righteousness” than his opponents. For his opponents, to act righteously meant simply performing acts of righteousness; for John, it meant being righteous. John urged his readers to live out who they were in Christ, not to be fooled by the tawdry, self-righteous, nominal acts of his opponents who showed their true allegiance by their lack of love for their brother (v. 10). Once more, we see the explicit scriptural connection between one’s character and conduct. Implied in this connection, however, is a type of human freedom that can make sense of why a person necessarily acts out of his character.Compatibilism gives us this certainty by maintaining that connection between who a person is and what he does. Libertarian freedom, on the other hand, fails to provide an adequate explanation for why a person necessarily acts out of who they are because it bifurcates the all-important connection between a person’s character and conduct.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter how compatibilism satisfies McCall’s nonnegotiables—human depravity, human agency, and grace—needed for a model of human freedom that accords with progressive sanctification. Revisiting the texts of chapter 4, I showed how compatibilism’s soft form of determinism complements progressive sanctification by grounding its core premise that one necessarily acts according to one’s inner nature at the time. Libertarian interpretations of these same passages, on the other hand, were shown to raise serious doubts as to whether libertarian freedom, with its denial of all forms of determinism, is a viable alternative to compatibilism.
In particular, libertarian freedom fails to make sense of Paul’s description of himself as “sold under sin” in Romans 7:14. To be “sold under sin” is to be enslaved to sinful desires such that one’s every action is marred by selfish motives. Yet, given libertarian freedom, no matter how selfish one’s motives, one could always choose, at the moment of decision, to obey. Libertarian freedom thus gives an insufficient accounting for the level of human depravity that Paul describes.

As for 1 Corinthians 10:13, I questioned libertarian freedom’s ability to make sense of this passage on three fronts: theologically, philosophically, and experientially. Theologically, I showed how the whole tenor of Paul’s warning in verses 1-12 accents God’s unlimited sovereignty, thereby erasing any notion of freedom that makes God contingent upon man. Philosophically, I demonstrated how libertarianism’s problem of arbitrariness leads to a cadre of inane conclusions. For instance, it gives no reason for why one might not live like a glorified saint from the outset of one’s Christian walk. Further, it cannot account for why one person chooses to endure while another does not. Lastly, libertarian freedom was shown to offer little in the way of comfort to the believer struggling with existential sin because it only makes possible, not certain, God’s way of escape from temptation.

The cooperative nature of sanctification found in Philippians 2:12-13 was shown to preclude any hint of “otherwise” in the believer’s decisions. The believer’s every move is a direct result of God’s gracious will being worked in him. Libertarianism simply cannot explain why the believer necessarily acts in accordance with God’s symbiotic work of sanctification in his life. Galatians 5:16-17, too, demonstrates the way
in which contra-causal freedom fails to explain the plain meaning of the text. That is, it cannot justify why a believer who walks by the Spirit necessarily obeys—despite his desire to please God—given that he could always choose otherwise.

Ephesians 4:22-24 was shown to exhibit the dual aspects of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility intrinsic to theological compatibilism. God’s sovereignty is seen in his gracious act of creating the new person and in his continued renewal of that person into the image of his Son. Human agency is seen in man’s putting off of the old person and putting on the new at his conversion. Both are stated without qualification and the compatibilism of both are assumed without explanation.

In 1 John 3:6-9, I demonstrated how the Wesleyan and Keswick models of sanctification necessitate a libertarian model of freedom and thus permit the unrealistic interpretation of verses 6 and 9 that John is advocating a life of sinless perfection. By contrast, it was shown how such an interpretation is impossible given an Augustinian model. Since Augustinian sanctification necessitates compatibilism, the believer, choosing out of his character at the time, never attains perfection of any sort in this life because his character remains the restive battlefield of the flesh and the Spirit until he dies. In one final comment, I show how verses 7-8 of 1 John, with their emphasis on the connection between acting righteous and being righteous, rule out libertarian freedom as a possible means of explaining why one’s righteous character necessarily leads to performing righteous acts.

The fact that each of the texts examined were shown to necessitate a compatibilist notion of freedom in no way enshrines compatibilism as the default view of
human freedom in Scripture. What it does do, however, is put an end to the trope that compatibilism is nothing more than a masked form of hard determinism. If, as has been shown, compatibilism comports with the widely accepted biblical teaching of progressive sanctification, there is good reason to believe that, whatever form of determinism it may entail, it is not one that negates moral responsibility.

This chapter, in the end, shows that the implications of compatibilist freedom on a progressive model of sanctification cannot be ignored. Enough was said to show how compatibilism’s unique ability to account for the connection between one’s character and one’s actions enables the progressive sanctification of the believer. I now turn to a few final thoughts on what this dissertation has sought to accomplish and areas of future study generated as a result of the issues raised.
CHAPTER SIX

FINAL THOUGHTS

The interplay between divine and human events has generated much theological, philosophical, and ethical discussion. Too little, however, has centered around the implications of human freedom on a robust doctrine of sanctification. One of the few to enter the discussion has been Tom McCall. McCall posits that a compatibilistic model of human freedom is unfit to account for the complexities of 1 Corinthians 10:13, including why God would promise a way of escape knowing that it is inaccessible to the believer and why God would be so indifferent to man’s supposed lack of freedom. First Corinthians 10:13 is indeed complex. But solutions to its complexities are illuminated when subjected to philosophical clarity regarding human freedom and proper biblical exegesis. Consequently, this dissertation has attempted to show that McCall has fundamentally misunderstood both the nature of compatibilist freedom as well as the context of 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Beyond misinterpreting 1 Corinthians 10:13, McCall also seems oblivious to the incongruity of libertarian freedom with a progressive model of sanctification. Though he espouses a traditional understanding of progressive sanctification, he ignores the intrinsic way in which libertarian freedom shatters its most basic tenet. Central to progressive sanctification is the necessary link between one’s character and actions.
Libertarian freedom bifurcates this link by furnishing no reason why a person must necessarily act out of his character. Intrinsic to a libertarian model of freedom, after all, is the idea that, for genuine freedom to exist, no cause may be sufficient to determine a person’s choice in one direction over another; he could always have chosen other than he did.¹ McCall overlooks this all-important chink in the libertarian armor, and, in doing so, opens the door to a more viable alternative.

That viable alternative, so this dissertation argues, is one that incorporates a return to a common sense understanding of the bounds of logic, scriptural fidelity to both God’s gracious sovereignty and man’s genuine freedom, and a greater sense of mystery concerning the nature of God.

**A Return to Common Sense**

The cost of human freedom, for the libertarian, is high. It requires that they limit God’s sovereignty—whether unwanted or self-imposed—to allow for total human control. Not only this but it requires that they disregard accepted norms of common sense. Common sense would suggest that a person’s greatest inclination at any given time would necessarily lead to his acting according to that compulsion. Libertarians reject this, claiming instead that the option to go against one’s strongest desires at the time is within one’s power. And they do so, admittedly, at the expense of God’s sovereignty as outlined in Scripture.

¹Presented in chapter 2, libertarians such as Robert Kane have tried to distance themselves from the libertarian principle of alternatives, holding instead to an idea of “ultimate responsibility” or “up to usness,” which asserts that, even though man may act out of his desires at the time, as long as his present character is traceable to decisions he made in the past, he still bears ultimate responsibility for his actions. But such an evasion fails to deal with the core problem, namely that God is ultimately still contingent on man’s decisions. And, at least for the Christian, such a notion is incompatible with a strong view of God’s sovereignty as outlined in Scripture.
sovereignty. So, God's sovereignty is sacrificed for a model of freedom that, in the end, offers little in the way of common sense but much in the way of man's prerogative.

Compatibilism, by contrast, offers a perfectly good reason for why one person chooses one way and another person another way—one's desires necessarily determine one's actions. The price of such common sense is belief in a God who, in some fashion, stands behind evil to maintain his unlimited sovereignty. But, as we have seen, God's nature, when rightly understood, eliminates this cost by determining our actions in such a way that comports with our strongest desires and controls evil such that our best interest is maintained and his glory assured.

A Return to Scripture

Unlike Ciocchi, I believe that forthcoming answers to the questions surrounding the DSF debate lie in a return to Scripture. More, not less, scriptural analysis is needed to elucidate the way in which God interacts with his creation. If a strong case, as I have attempted, can be made that the doctrine of progressive sanctification—considered by most to be the model of sanctification taught in Scripture—requires a compatibilist framework, then it stands to reason that other doctrines and other texts may make similar demands. To think, as some have done, that we may have exhausted Scripture's ability to explain the harder questions of moral responsibility and the problems of evil is not only unfortunate but handicaps further progress.

\footnote{To say, as compatibilists do, that we act out of necessity, hardly seems a sacrifice when it is granted that we do so without constraint. I, for one, am content with having my choices in some sense determined if it means that I always do exactly what I desire to do at the time.}
Having outlined ways in which certain sanctification texts assume a compatibilist model of freedom, there are potentially several ways forward in terms of further theological study. The first is a look at other sanctification texts to verify the claim that a person always acts out his character and that God always works through that character to accomplish his will. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:3-4 come immediately to mind. More broadly speaking, a second way forward might include a sweeping biblical theology of the way God’s sovereignty interfaces with man’s responsibility. My modest contribution, along with Ware’s, Carson’s, and others, serve as a rudimentary beginning to such an important task. That said, if compatibilism is taught in Scripture, there is no reason to think that it is isolated to just a few texts. Third, exploration into how other doctrines may assume compatibilism would be instructive. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, for example, by nature of its close connection to sanctification, seems to lead necessarily to good works not as a means to salvation but as a result of salvation. Such a result is only possible given a form of freedom that accommodates this reality.

A Return to Mystery

A. W. Tozer begins his little book on the attributes of God with the following statement: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” I concur. Yet it also bears mention that what does not come into our minds when we think about God is equally as important. The exact nature of God is a

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divine mystery. Since the doctrine of human freedom, as a theological construct, relies upon this mystery, it too contains mysterious elements and will probably, for this reason, never be fully understood. This is not to say, however, that the doctrine is contradictory, only that it may be forever beyond the limits of human reason. Peter van Inwagen speaks of this kind of mystery in regards to the Trinity, but his words are relevant to our discussion:

It may be that it is important for us to know that God is (somehow) three Persons in one Being and not at all important for us to have any inkling of how this could be—or even to be able to answer alleged demonstrations that it is self-contradictory. It may be that we cannot understand how God can be three Persons in one Being. It may be that an intellectual grasp of the Trinity is forever beyond us. And why not, really? It is not terribly daring to suppose that reality may contain things whose natures we cannot understand.4

Nevertheless, attempting to uncover how God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility might exist simultaneously remains a worthwhile enterprise regardless of whether it is possible to fully apprehend it. For, as Crisp observes, “If we try to pursue our reflections upon matters theological in the tradition of faith seeking understanding, then there is a right place for ‘thinking God’s thoughts after him’, and reasoned reflection about theistic metaphysics.”5 But reasoned reflection about theistic metaphysics need not consist of a brand of certainty that leaves no room for divine mystery. It must instead be tempered with humility, knowing that the secret things belong to the Lord (Deut 29:29). “Theology,” as Crisp puts it, “must give way to doxology.”6


5Oliver Crisp, Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

6Ibid., 33.
In the end, compatibilism helps to explain why it is that, as a person's character is progressively conformed to the image of Christ, his actions follow suit. It also accounts for the cooperative nature of progressive sanctification by allowing God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to operate in tandem together without either being attenuated. And, lastly, it grounds God's promise to make certain the perseverance of his saints so that his work of progressive sanctification is completed (Phil 1:6; 2 Thess 2:13-14). Whatever else may be said— and much was left unsaid—progressive sanctification necessitates compatibilist freedom. Of course, one is welcome to disagree with this thesis. If it can be shown, for instance, that libertarian freedom allows for, in every circumstance, one's character to determine one's actions or that God is not ultimately contingent on man's free will, then compatibilism could indeed be dismissed as the only concomitant of progressive sanctification. But such a proof would seem to prove too much—one would hardly be left with libertarian freedom as it has come to be understood. The only other option for the libertarian, and the best option as I see it, would be to reconsider his view of sanctification, eschewing a progressive model in favor of Wesleyan perfectionism or Keswick sanctification.
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ABSTRACT

A SCRIPTURAL APPRAISAL OF THE NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AND COMPATIBILIST FREEDOM

Christopher James Bosson, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010
Chairperson: Dr. Gregg R. Allison

This dissertation proposes that a necessary connection exists between a progressive model of sanctification and a compatibilist model of human freedom. Chapter 1 presents the thesis, background, and methodology for the dissertation, giving special interest to the way that compatibilism is uniquely qualified to accommodate the necessary link between one’s character and conduct intrinsic to a progressive model of sanctification.

Chapter 2 defines and examines the two most widely held models of human freedom: libertarianism and compatibilism. Compatibilism is shown to comport more closely with Scripture and to solve many of the nagging philosophical problems associated with a libertarian model of freedom.

Chapter 3 continues to build a foundation for the remaining chapters by defining the three most widely held models of sanctification: Wesleyan perfectionism, Keswick, and Augustinian or progressive sanctification. Here it is argued that Wesleyan
perfectionism and Keswick require a concomitant libertarian freedom, whereas an
Augustinian model of sanctification requires compatibilism.

Chapter 4 offers scriptural support for the connection between progressive
sanctification and compatibilist freedom. The central focus is on determining the biblical
author’s intent and on laying the exegetical groundwork for the final chapter.

Chapter 5 argues for the necessary connection between progressive
sanctification and compatibilist freedom by questioning libertarian interpretations of the
texts examined in the previous chapter. Since it potentially bifurcates the scriptural
connection between one’s character and conduct, libertarian freedom is shown to be a
poor candidate for the type of freedom necessitated by a progressive model of
sanctification.

I close, in Chapter 6, by calling Evangelicals to return to a common sense
understanding of the bounds of logic, scriptural fidelity to both God’s gracious
sovereignty and man’s genuine freedom, and a greater sense of mystery concerning the
nature of God.
VITA

Christopher James Bosson

PERSONAL
  Born:  March 28, 1977, Auckland, New Zealand
  Parents:  Allan and Cynthia Bosson

EDUCATIONAL
  Diploma, Calvary Baptist Day School, Savannah, Georgia, 1995
  B.S. in Chemistry, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 1999
  M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

MINISTERIAL
  Journeyman Missionary, International Mission Board, Uganda, East
  Africa, 2000-02
  Minister of Music, Elk Creek Baptist Church, Elk Creek, Kentucky, 2004-06

ACADEMIC
  Garrett Fellow for Dr. Russell Moore, The Southern Baptist Theological
  Seminary, 2006-08
  Garrett Fellow for Dr. Gregg Allison, The Southern Baptist Theological
  Seminary, 2007-2009

ORGANIZATIONAL
  Evangelical Theological Society