

Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

THE RELATIONSHIP OF POSITION TO EXPERIENCE

IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

When a Christian examines various Biblical statements regarding the Christian life, it is important for him to be able to distinguish those statements which have to do with his perfect standing before God from those which have to do with his personal less-than-perfect experience in day to day life. Furthermore, it is important for him to be able to explain the relationship between two such statements. The former are called positional statements of the Scripture, and the latter are called experiential statements. These terms will be defined more clearly later in this introduction, but note for now that these are two important things that the student of the Bible should be able to do: *distinguish* position from experience, and describe their *relationship*.

First, given a Biblical statement, does the statement speak of a position or an experience? Can they be *distinguished*? Are position and experience exclusive of one another? Or are both factors included in some Biblical statements? For some doctrines, particularly sanctification, this question has been answered in various different ways depending on one's theological bent.

Second, given two related Biblical statements regarding the Christian life, one which is positional and one which is experiential, what precisely is the *relationship* between the two of them? Some suggest that position and experience are "distinct yet inseparable," or that sanctification is "inevitable but not automatic" in light of justification, or that believers are "persons who are *genuinely* new, though not yet totally new."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 205.

But these statements are not very specific. Are positional truths real or are they fictional? Do they form the goal of Christian experience? Are they the inspiration or incentive for living in conformity with Scripture? Are they a basis of experience? Are positional things true now or only in the future? All of these views are found in theological literature.

These questions are non-trivial. For example, one's answer to the second question (what is the relationship of position to experience?) is determinative regarding one's view of the relationship of justification to sanctification. One extreme view, held by the Roman Catholic church, says that positional truths, as understood by Protestants, are fictional. The result is that sanctification is inseparably mixed with justification in Roman Catholic theology. This has a devastating result: salvation is never an assured estate for any Catholic person because justification ultimately rests on the person's experiential sanctification.

#### *Example: Sanctification*

For another example of the importance of these questions, consider the doctrine of sanctification. It is commonly understood that the Bible's teaching on sanctification can be outlined in three parts: first, there is *positional* or *definite* sanctification of one who is *in Christ*. This is in the Christian's past. Second, there is *progressive* sanctification in which the believer is being presently, progressively conformed into Christ-likeness but which will not be perfected in experience during the Christian's lifetime. Third, there is *ultimate* or *perfect* sanctification in which all believers will be perfectly sanctified and glorified in heaven with Jesus Christ in the future.<sup>2</sup>

While most would agree with what is written above, the nature of the past sanctification is debated. Some suggest it is solely a standing before God and therefore call it *positional* sancti-

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<sup>2</sup> See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel), 6:285. See also *The KJV Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), p. 1846.

fication. “This position bears no relationship to the believer’s daily life... positional sanctification is absolutely dissociated from the daily life.”<sup>3</sup> Others see it as experiential and call it *definitive* sanctification.<sup>4</sup> Reymond, following Murray, says, “It is not simply positional holiness that is envisioned by definitive sanctification: it is a real *existential* breach with the reign and mastery of sin.”<sup>5</sup> Sometimes past sanctification is seen as a combination of position and experience. Hoekema writes: “...we conclude that definitive sanctification means not only a decisive break with the enslaving power of sin but also a decisive and irreversible union with Christ...we must stress both aspects of this question: the past historical and the present experiential.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the exact relationship between past and progressive sanctification (positional/definitive and progressive) is not uniformly understood either. For those who understand past sanctification to be definitive, the relationship between all three aspects of sanctification are said to be simply *temporal*. In other words, definitive sanctification happened experientially in the believer’s past,<sup>7</sup> progressive sanctification is happening experientially in the believer’s present, and ultimate sanctification will happen experientially in the believer’s future.

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. John Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), pp 206, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Note that Charles Ryrie, “Contrasting Views on Sanctification” in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 193 and Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 205 equate the terms definitive sanctification and positional sanctification. Combs understands them differently—definitive sanctification is past and experiential while positional sanctification is not specifically in time nor experiential (personal communication).

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), p. 757. See also John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 142 and William W. Combs, “Romans” (class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Summer 2003), p. 82. Of the three, Combs sees no positional aspect of sanctification. In Reymond and Murray, we can detect a judicial aspect in definitive sanctification which is *primarily* experiential.

<sup>6</sup> Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 204. On p. 205, he equates his view of definitive sanctification which includes both position and experience with that of Chafer. Chafer sees no experiential aspect in the doctrine of positional sanctification as has already been shown, so Hoekema’s equation is somewhat dubious.

<sup>7</sup> Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 205, says, “In its experiential sense, definitive sanctification is simultaneous with justification, as an aspect of union with Christ.”

For those who understand past sanctification to have a positional meaning, the past aspect of sanctification is positional and the other two aspects are experiential. Thus it is understood that justification (basically the same as positional sanctification in this view) precedes sanctification and is “the judicial basis for sanctification.”<sup>8</sup>

For those following the Keswick theology, justification and sanctification are not attached by such a relationship but are obtained by two separate acts of faith: one which frees the believer from the penalty of sin (justification), the other from its power (sanctification).<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, the relation of position to experience is an important doctrine since it is involved such basic differences as these.

#### *Scope of Paper*

Past and progressive sanctification are only two of a number of Biblical doctrines whose relationship depends on the larger problem of the relationship of position to experience. But they do come up repeatedly in the literature, so of necessity the discussion here will focus more on sanctification than on other doctrines which touch the same matters.

It is the goal of this paper to make a precise exegetical and theological statement as to the relationship between position and experience, i.e. to answer our second question. In so doing, it will be necessary to interact with the first question as well, though a full answer for that question is not possible here. We may quote Ferguson as an alternate way of describing the problem we are addressing. He speaks of “the difficulty we have in accepting the tensions produced by the present incompleteness of God’s work in us, in view of the completeness of his work for us in

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<sup>8</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998 reprint ed.), p. 536.

<sup>9</sup> Ryrie, “Contrasting Views on Sanctification,” p. 194.

Christ.”<sup>10</sup> It is our hope to be able to understand the relation of position to experience in such a way as to reduce some of the tension.

Since positional and experiential truths can be stated in various ways, the next section will review some terminology used in this field of theology. The second chapter examines various views of the relationship of position to experience with respect to several Biblical doctrines. The third chapter explains the author’s understanding of the relationship between position and experience as revealed in the Bible. The final chapter will draw together our findings.

### *Terminology*

One of Webster’s definitions of *position* is “a person’s relative place, as in society; rank; status.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly in Christian theology, a person’s status in God’s estimation is called his *position*. A doctrine which has to do with the switch of a person’s status from one such position to another is called a positional doctrine or positional truth. For example, the doctrine of the Christian’s union with Christ, as effected by Spirit baptism, is a positional doctrine. The very use of the word *position* may originate from this doctrine, where the believer is said be put “*into* Christ,” or to be “*in* Christ.” (1 Cor 12:13, Rom 8:1), if we understand “in” in a locative sense.

Two other terms that can be used as synonyms or descriptions of positional truth are *judicial* and *forensic* (the latter is defined as “suitable for a law court” in the same dictionary). These terms are used because, Biblically, a change in a person’s position has to do with the transfer of *legal* factors. Such a transfer is *declarative* in nature because in it God declares a person to have a certain status based on something that He Himself has done. This declaration is like that made

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<sup>10</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Second College Edition, s.v. “position.”

by a judge in a judicial proceeding and thus can be labeled *juridical*. Such is the doctrine of justification, where the believer is declared to be righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to the sinner's legal account. It is done *for* the person as opposed to *in* the person or *to* the person because it is an *external* act. Similarly, the past aspect of sanctification is said to set someone apart from sin's penalty and into a holy position.<sup>12</sup>

A positional transfer therefore sets a person in a new *standing, relationship* or *citizenship* with respect to the world and to God. In the doctrine of adoption, for example, the sinner's relationship to God is changed such that he becomes a son of God. A positional truth can relate to a *title*, as in the title "saint" which is valid for a Christian by virtue of our set-apart position in Christ. Positional truth is often called *objective* because it is a once-for-all change in classification which is the same for all believers, no matter what life circumstances may prevail.

Those circumstances that currently prevail in the life of the believer can be summed up in the terms *experiential* or *experimental*. The believer's *walk* or *condition* in life will undoubtedly fall short of perfection; in other words, the believer's *practice* would not itself merit the perfect standing that he possesses in his position. Experiential truths are likened to the operation of a surgeon who does an *internal* operation and makes an *internal* change *in* the person (as opposed to a judge who does something *for* the person). Experience has to do with the *state* of a person, and is therefore *subjective* as opposed to objective because each person's experience is different. In other words, the experience is subjective because it is personal. An experiential truth is *efficient* in the sense that it does something to the person.

It is important at this point to note two other terms that appear in discussions of position

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<sup>12</sup> Rolland D. McCune, "Systematic Theology III" (class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2003), p. 74. Past sanctification is therefore basically an aspect therefore of justification.

and experience. The terms *actual* and *factual* mean that something is reflective of reality, that is, something is actual if it is real, if it corresponds to the way things truly are. These terms are sometimes used to distinguish between two doctrines, one of which, the *actual* doctrine, is said to be efficient, i.e. working out in the experience of a person. This actual doctrine is set over against another doctrine, which is seen to be fake or potential. With this understanding, we may properly interpret one of Murray's statements in his discussion on the believer's emancipation from sin:

Every one called effectually by God and regenerated by the Spirit has secured the victory in the terms of Rom 6:14...And this victory is actual or it is nothing. It is ... a deflection from the pervasive New Testament witness to speak of it as merely potential or positional. It is actual and practical as much as anything comprised in the application of redemption...<sup>13</sup>

It seems as if Murray is distinguishing between actuality and position, as if position is not a real thing. This would seem to deny our belief that positional truth is *real* in the sense that it is a *real* legal declaration, a *real* change in status or citizenship, a *real* transfer of legal factors. There is nothing *fictional* about it. But another possibility is that Murray is not so much saying that he understands positional truth as being "unreal" but instead he is offsetting his experiential understanding of the doctrine of emancipation from sin against the wrong views (in his opinions) of others who say that position is merely potential or that it is so positional as to not have any impact on the life of the believer.<sup>14</sup>

We will now move to an overview of literature on the relation of position to experience.

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<sup>13</sup> Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps one such view he dislikes is that of Chafer, who says "The union with Christ has provided a *possible* deliverance; but it must be entered into and claimed by such human acts of faith...The word crucify as related to believers is always in the *past*, implying the judicial fact and not a spiritual experience." See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1918), pp. 124, 126. This would seem to be the direct opposite of Murray's statement. This alternative way of understanding Murray's statement is only a hypothesis, for he does not come out and say that he is making such an argument.

## CHAPTER II

### SURVEY OF VIEWS ON POSITION AND EXPERIENCE

It will be helpful in the development of our exegetical and theological definition of the relationship of position to experience to review approaches that we find in the literature. This will form a basis for comparison. This chapter will simply explain the views that are found. Some of the views overlap, and are not necessarily mutually exclusive of each other. Many of them are either incorrect or need to be clarified to form a full explanation of the relationship between position and experience.

#### *Position and Experience Not Distinguished At All*

As we have seen, the Roman Catholic position is that justification and sanctification are one and the same doctrines. In other words, position and experience are not distinguished. Karl Keating says, “The Catholic Church, not surprisingly, understands justification differently. It sees it as a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal. The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good.”<sup>15</sup> Justification therefore is made to be a combination of eradication, sanctification, and renewal. Keating goes onto combine the doctrine of regeneration with these as part of justification.

Regarding statements which Protestants see as indicative of a present status or reality (for example, the Christian’s true status as a ‘saint’), Keating comments, “Catholics look at such

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on “Romanism” by “Bible Christians”* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 167-8.

verses as merely Paul's expectations for his disciples; fundamentalists look at them as his acknowledgement of their existing status."<sup>16</sup> Thus he says that Paul is not speaking of us as we *are* but is speaking of us as we *ought to be*.

Lewis and Demarest agree, "Catholicism designates the increase of justification as sanctification."<sup>17</sup> It is an inner change to righteousness which is essentially equivalent to sanctification.

#### *Position as Positionally True But Not Experimentally True*

Chafer says, "*Positionally*, the 'old man' has been put off for ever. *Experimentally*, the 'old man' remains as an active force in the life which can be controlled only by the power of God...The 'old man,' then, is the Adamic nature which has been judged in the death of Christ. It still abides with us an active principle in our lives, and our *experimental* victory over it will be realized only through a definite reliance upon the indwelling Spirit."<sup>18</sup> There is the idea here that somehow a positional truth is true but experimentally the opposite is true. There is an apparent contradiction or antinomy here (at least to the human mind). This seeming contradiction is due to Chafer's misunderstanding of the "old man" and "new man" concepts. We have answered this difficulty elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> Later on, this paper will integrate the Bible's old man/new man teaching with our view about the relationship of position to experience.

#### *Position as Distinct But Inseparably Related to Experience*

This relation of justification to sanctification is outlined in what Lewis and Demarest

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis and Demarest, 3:175.

<sup>18</sup> Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, pp. 113, 114.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew A. Postiff, "A Theological and Exegetical Examination of the 'Old Man' Versus 'New Man' Contrast." (November 18, 2003, accessed November 28, 2003) Available from <http://fellowshipbibleannarbor.org/BibleStudies/doctrinal/ColCh3Vv9to10ExegesisPaper.pdf>. Internet.

class as Reformed evangelical theology: “Justification is a legal declaration of right standing before God (imputed righteousness), whereas sanctification makes the believer existentially holy (inherent righteousness)...In terms of their inner unity, justification issues in sanctification, thereby eliminating the error of cheap grace. And sanctification is grounded in justification, thereby avoiding the error of works-righteousness.”<sup>20</sup> As quoted earlier, Berkhof says that justification is the judicial basis for sanctification.<sup>21</sup>

The idea is that justification inevitably leads to sanctification and is at the same time the ground or possibility of any holiness that the believer demonstrates in his life.

#### *Position as Intermixed with Experience*

In his discussion of Spirit baptism, Walvoord defines Spirit baptism as effecting a new position for the believer in Christ, which includes two aspects: identification with Christ, and a union of new life. Defined as such, regeneration is linked with Spirit baptism. He explains: “The two aspects of baptism into Christ are inseparable and blend into one entity. Christ becomes the sphere in which the believer lives.”<sup>22</sup> He quotes Chafer’s explanation that the sphere in which the believer resides can interpenetrate the believer;<sup>23</sup> thus it seems that the positional truths of Spirit baptism move into the believer and become experiential, even though Walvoord denies that Spirit baptism has any experimental facet itself.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 3:184.

<sup>21</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 536.

<sup>22</sup> John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

### *Position as the Incentive to Holy Living*

Positional truth is sometimes seen as an incentive to holy life. “This position bears no relationship to the believer’s daily life more than that it should inspire him to holy living. The Christian’s position in Christ is...the greatest incentive to holiness of life...”<sup>25</sup>

### *Position as Not Real or Actual*

This view teaches that position is not reality but experience is reality. We said earlier that, at least upon initial inspection, Murray seems to hold this view, but his “actual” vs. “positional” dichotomy can alternatively be seen as his way of making an argument against another position. Even Erickson uses language that indicates a disjunction between position and reality: “It [forensic justification] is not an actual infusing of holiness into the individual. It is a matter of declaring the person righteous, as a judge does in acquitting the accused. It is not a matter of making the person righteous or altering his or her actual spiritual condition.”<sup>26</sup> He is right to say that justification does not mean “to make righteous” but the statement is made in such a way as to suggest that imputation is not actual. Speaking of the doctrine of sanctification, Lewis and Demarest give this definition of sanctification: “The present chapter [on sanctification] considers how the Spirit makes those who are righteous in principle (i.e. regenerated and justified) holy in fact (i.e. sanctified).”<sup>27</sup> In other words, the position of righteousness is *in principle* but this has not reached the level of *in fact* until sanctification is completed.

As a more extreme example, Catholic Karl Keating makes a very explicit<sup>28</sup> characteriza-

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<sup>25</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, p. 206.

<sup>26</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), p. 969.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3:173.

<sup>28</sup> And wrong, in our conviction.

tion of how fundamentalists answer the question of the relationship between position and experience. “Accepting Christ accomplishes one thing and one thing only. It makes God cover one’s sinfulness....The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful. It is not a real eradication of sin, but a covering or nonimputation. It is not an inner renewal and a real sanctification, only an external application of Christ’s justice.”<sup>29</sup> While we strongly disagree with what he has said on several fronts,<sup>30</sup> his statement at least demonstrates that some theologians understand reformed thought to teach that position is fake or some kind of “legal fiction.”

### *Position as the Goal of Experience*

This view teaches that position is the ideal and experience falls short of that ideal. The position is the goal of your experience. The mantra is “be what you are!” Scofield writes, ““The divine order, under grace, is first to give the highest possible standing and then to exhort the believer to maintain a state in accordance therewith...God’s work on a believer is “intended simply to bring the believer’s character into perfect conformity to the position which is his in the instant of his conversion.”<sup>31</sup> Stanford says, “The development of our condition is *toward* our finished position, and at the same time *from* that completed source.”<sup>32</sup>

Robert Pricer writes: “Evangelical theology ... has always recognized a gap between ‘positional vs. experiential truth’ ... as well as in the New Testament distinction between ‘indicative

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<sup>29</sup> Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 167.

<sup>30</sup> Keating wrongly understands the true Biblical teaching that God truly does deal with sin through the atonement. He does not simply “sweep it under the rug.”

<sup>31</sup> C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Adrian, Michigan, LifeLine Philippines reprint, no date), p. 80, 83.

<sup>32</sup> Miles J. Stanford, *The Complete Green Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 131.

and imperative' ...slack to be taken up between the experience of a believer and what he is ideally supposed to be 'in Christ'."<sup>33</sup> He continues, "Thus, upstairs 'in the heavenlies' God already sees Christians as perfect; on the earthly, lower plane, believers must 'catch up' by appropriating these 'riches of Christ,' a divine potentiality for spiritual growth. This is the distinction between 'positional' and 'experiential truth' ... It is this heavenly 'positional truth' which is 'appropriated' as you become experientially what you already are 'in Christ.'"<sup>34</sup>

You may have heard statements such as the following: Ultimate sanctification is when the believer's experience meets his position. This is a temporal distinction which indicates that you are not really what your position is. Basically in this view position is the ultimate goal of a believer's experience: the closer the believer is to his position, the better off he is. Position seems to be diminished in this view, in the sense that experience is the "real" measure of the man.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Position Connected to Experience by Commands and Conjunctions*

Grammatical structures in the text of Scripture indicate a relationship between position and experience. Pratt suggests that the "imperative exists as a guide to believers on their road to greater holiness of life."<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the imperatives in the Scriptures suggest that which is not yet perfected in Christian experience, that is, the imperatives define what is yet lacking in

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Price, *Beyond Born Again*, [http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert\\_price/beyond\\_born\\_again/chap3.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert_price/beyond_born_again/chap3.html), paragraph 14.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Price, *Beyond Born Again*, [http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert\\_price/beyond\\_born\\_again/chap4.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert_price/beyond_born_again/chap4.html), paragraph 24.

<sup>35</sup> John Piper, *A Godward Life* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1997), p. 188 has this idea of becoming what you are: "Living out the reality that you are is the proof that you are. One clear illustration of becoming what you are is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7..." (underlining mine).

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Pratt, "The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification in Romans 5-8" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999), p. 243.

one's Christian life.<sup>37</sup> To Hoekema, the imperatives show Paul's understanding of the life-long struggle against sin.<sup>38</sup>

Various conjunctions such as "therefore" and "since" are mentioned in key verses related to our topic as well. Verses such as "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ..." (Col 3:1) and "Therefore I urge you brethren..." (Rom 12:1) contain the "therefore" conjunction which indicates an explicit connection between the foregoing material and the exhortations which are upcoming in the following verses.

These grammatical items are often cited but the exact impact they have on the relationship between position and experience are not always clearly delineated.

#### *Position Connected to Experience by a Possible Appropriation*

Stanford, a Keswick teacher, teaches that position is tied to experience by an acquired understanding and belief of identification truths. The practical reality of position can then be appropriated into experience. For example, Stanford favorably quotes Evan Hopkins concerning the mastery of sin in a believer's life and says, "To know God's way of deliverance from sin as a master he must apprehend the truth contained in the sixth chapter of Romans."<sup>39</sup> In other words, the experience of a faith apprehension actually is the gating function to allow the position to have experiential value. Position here is everything: realizing it drives the whole Christian life.

In this view, holiness may not be exhibited in a Christian's life, i.e. sanctification may only follow position as a possibility. "[Romans 6:1-10] is the *foundation* as well as the *key* to the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>38</sup> Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 207.

<sup>39</sup> Evan H. Hopkins, *Thoughts on Life and Godliness*, p. 50, as quoted in Stanford, *The Complete Green Letters*, p. 31.

possibility of a ‘walk in the Spirit’...If they really did *know* that the ‘old man’ *was* crucified with Christ and so, on the divine side, it is made possible for them to live where sin’s power and manifestation may be constant disannulled...The union with Christ has provided a *possible* deliverance; but it must be entered into and claimed by such human acts of faith as are expressed in the word ‘reckon,’ and the additional words which follow in the passage...”<sup>40</sup> The notion of possibility is mentioned three times, emphasizing that a walk in the Spirit may not occur.

### *Position as Seen in the Already/Not Yet View*

Pratt suggests a somewhat different view than any of those outlined above. He says that Paul’s writings can be characterized as either indicative or imperative. On the indicative side are those statements presented as true for the believer, while on the imperative side are those statements enjoining the believer to a certain kind of life.<sup>41</sup> Pratt ties this indicative/imperative to his view of the “already” and the “not yet” aspect of the Christian life, much as progressive dispensationalists use the already/not-yet framework for eschatology. “The indicative exists already while the imperative shows the not yet of Christian experience.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly Hoekema writes, “Believers, as long as they are in this life, are in tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’:

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<sup>40</sup> Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, pp. 120, 126, 124. The passage referred to at the end of the quote is Rom 6:13bff. See Pratt, “The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification in Romans 5-8,” p. 240, for a rebuttal of this view. Pratt says that his “study has shown that the indicative cannot be understood as conditioned by the obedience of the believer to the imperative. Such an understanding was shown to be quite impossible in light of Paul’s indicative statements. Our findings support the idea that Paul’s indicative provides the foundation and ground for the giving of the imperative.” But, contrary, to the opinion of some, Chafer did not teach that the believer’s crucifixion was *made true* by an act of dedicatory faith; in fact, he says in *Systematic Theology*, 5:205, “To *reckon* is to count on what is true of one’s complete identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection” (underlining is mine).

<sup>41</sup> This way of describing the Bible’s teaching is common. For other uses of this kind of language, note Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 207, Ferguson, “The Reformed Perspective,” pp. 48, 67.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Pratt, “The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification in Romans 5-8,” p. 243.

already they are in Christ, but they are not yet perfect.”<sup>43</sup> Herrick makes a similar statement regarding this “eschatological tension”:

What we mean by ‘eschatological tension’ is that there is a sense in which Christians have been completely and decisively brought into this new community, but another sense in which we are still trying to escape the old community. We live in the ‘now’ of God’s saving purposes, but there is a ‘not-yet’... This ‘configuration’... will exist until God perfects us...<sup>44</sup>

The approach of Pratt and the others is not exactly related to our study because the indicative covers a wide range of territory—some indicatives can be of a positional variety while others can be of an experiential variety. For example, to say that someone has been constituted a saint is a positional statement; to say that someone has been born again is an experiential statement. The “indicative” terminology is less precise than we wish to be in this paper.

### *Summary*

This chapter reviewed several explanations found in the literature as to the relationship of position to experience. Certainly position is the beginning of experience, in the sense that no true Christian experience can be had without position. But the literature variously tries to convince us that position is a) not to be distinguished from experience; b) true but experientially not true at one and the same time; c) distinct but inseparably related to experience; d) intermixed with experience; e) the incentive to holy life; f) not real or actual; g) the goal of Christian experience; h) connected to experience through imperatives and conjunctions; i) connected to experience through a (possible) act of appropriation; j) already true but not yet true.

As we can see, there is a dizzying array of explanations to our question on the relation of position to experience. In the next chapter, we will attempt to bring some clarity to the problem.

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<sup>43</sup> Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Greg Herrick, “*Old Man*” and “*New Man*” in *Paul*, Accessed November 28, 2003. 1999, Biblical Studies Press. Available from <http://www.bible.org>. Internet.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RELATIONSHIP OF POSITION TO EXPERIENCE

Part of the motivation for doing this study is to improve on a statement that I made in another exegesis paper. In that paper, I wrote the following regarding the believer's transformation from being an old man to being a new man:

The crucifixion of that old man in Romans 6 shows the shift that the person undergoes at the moment of salvation: out of the realm of the unregenerate into the realm of the regenerate; out of his old relationship to Adam and into a new relationship with Christ; and out of his old subjugation under sin into a new freedom from the power of sin. This is a positional change but is not *only* a legal or judicial fact in the mind of God with no other implications. In fact, it has a major impact on the Christian's experience. The believer does experience his new regenerate realm, his new relationship with Christ, and his new freedom from the power of sin. This change is the basis for sanctification in the life of the believer, both as to why it is necessary and how it is possible.<sup>45</sup>

The statements suffer from some of the same problems as what we found in the previous chapter, namely the implicit understanding that position is just a "fact in the mind of God" and the idea that experience is related to position, but the precise nature of that relationship is not clearly specified.

The goal of this chapter is to draw out of the Scriptural data a cohesive understanding of how precisely position and experience are related. We will do this by examining the Old Testament, then the New Testament, including an examination of the doctrine of emancipation from sin, and two illustrations.

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<sup>45</sup> Postiff, "A Theological and Exegetical Examination of the 'Old Man' Versus 'New Man' Contrast," pp. 25-26.

### *Position and Experience in the Old Testament*

The idea of positional or judicial truth in the OT is present but its relation to experience is not revealed in much detail.

We can clearly see the idea of imputation, for example, in the OT, particularly in Abraham (Gen 15:6), David (Ps 32:2), and Phineas (Ps 106:30-31) to whom God imputed righteousness. In OT thought, imputation can be of something that properly belongs to the person, such as guilt. The Law speaks of the man who kills an animal but does not bring it to the entrance of the tabernacle. The text of Lev 17:4 says that “bloodguilt is to be reckoned to that man.” The imputation can, alternatively, be something that does not properly belong to the person to whom the imputation is made. For example, the Messiah was predicted to “bear our griefs and carry our sorrows” and “bear the sins of many” (Isa 53:4, 12). The sins of the people did not belong to the Messiah, but he was imputed their guilt so that he could “carry” them away. As with the New Testament idea of imputation, imputation in the Old Testament amounts to a transferal of legal factors, and not moral qualities.<sup>46</sup>

But while imputation in this understanding is positional, its relationship to experience is not so detailed. We might find a reference to such a relationship in the Ps 32:2 text where David proclaims the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and to whom iniquity is not imputed. This blessedness, while it can be seen as a synonym for salvation, may include an experiential aspect as well. This can be seen from the following context in verses 3-4, where physical and emotional distress weighed heavily on David before he confessed his sin. The experience of this blessing was absent when he left his sin unconfessed.

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<sup>46</sup> Rolland D. McCune, “OT Theology I” (class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Summer 2002), p. 76.

Another area where we could see position as it relates to the Israelite experience is in the separation of so-called “holy things.” For instance, Lev. 22:2-3 mentions the holy gifts which are to be avoided by unclean persons. The set-apart position of the gift demands certain behavior when one is in close proximity to the object.

There are at least two reasons that the relationship between position and experience does not come up as much in the OT. First, as mentioned above, the amount of revelation on positional subjects is somewhat limited. Second, the nature of OT salvation did not include such positional truths as Spirit baptism and the resulting union with Christ, adoption, or an extensively-revealed doctrine of sanctification.

The OT saint was immersed in the national citizenship of Israel and the physical context of the sacrificial system. National citizenship was a kind of positional status of the Jew, but this does not have to do with the transfer of legal factors, as was defined in the first chapter. Of course, the Jew’s citizenship did come with a demand on his behavior, namely the terms of the Mosaic covenant, which were required to be worked out in experience. The church saint has a spiritual citizenship and a spiritual context which naturally puts more emphasis on the positional truths. (This is not to degrade the spiritual nature of the OT saint’s situation, just to say that it is far less an emphasis than in the NT.)

### *Position and Experience in the New Testament*

Since the OT dispensation carries through nearly the whole of the gospel literature in the NT and Acts is more narrative than theology, our study will start with the Pauline literature in the NT. Paul is the primary exponent of “church truth” and the positional doctrines we mentioned above.

## Distinction between Position and Experience

There are many passages which give us a sound basis to distinguish between position and practice. In Col 2:10, Paul has said that believers are “complete in Him,” yet Epaphras was “always laboring fervently in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (4:12). The apparent conundrum is resolved simply by seeing that Paul understands the use of “complete” in 4:12 as referring to the experience of the believers and “complete” in 2:10 in connection with their perfect standing in Christ. There are evidently two ideas, which though they use the same word, are differentiated in Paul’s thought. In fact, he makes the difference between a judicial truth and an experiential one in 3:9, where he proclaims his desire to have the righteousness of Christ (imputed righteousness), not that which is his own coming from obedience to the law.<sup>47</sup>

## Grammatical and Exegetical Considerations

A few basic observations regarding the structure of the Biblical text give us reason to understand experience as issuing from and being grounded in judicial truths. For instance, the overall structure of some of Paul’s letters, indicated by certain conjunctions as in Rom 12:1, Eph 4:1, Col 2:16, and Col 3:1 (“therefore”), shows that there is a close relationship between the doctrines in the preceding sections and the practice exhorted in the latter sections. The relationship between (what is often) positional truth and that which is experiential is so close that Paul seems to be saying, “given this truth I’ve told you, now live appropriately in the light of it.”

This structure is also reflected in the use of verbs in the indicative and imperative moods.

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<sup>47</sup> There are many other texts that can show us the difference between positional and experiential perfection. For the former, see Rom 5:1, 8:1; Php 3:20; Heb 7:19; Heb 9:9 with 9:14; Heb 10:1 with 10:10; Heb 12:23; Col 1:22. For the latter, see 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 3:3; Php 3:13; Col 1:28, 3:5; 1 Thess 3:10; 2 Tim 3:17; Heb 13:21; James 1:4; 1 Peter 5:10.

The indicative indicates the facts of our existence, we might say, while the imperatives are designed by God to elicit human obedience in experience. As we mentioned earlier, the indicative verbs are not limited to positional statements, yet positional statements do fit under that category. Van Parunak has done a cursory study of imperatives in a recent paper using computer tools and has verified what he calls the “bipartite structure commonly associated with Paul’s epistles, with exposition in the first half and exhortation in the second.”<sup>48</sup>

We gather from these facts that experience is not to be dissociated from position; indeed it cannot be. Neither position nor experience should be emphasized to the detriment of the other. Position is a valid basis for imposing requirements on those who hold a position. These texts also indicate that position indicates a possibility of proper experience. Such things as a judicial removal from the realm of darkness and emancipation from sin indicate that the believer owns the possibility of sanctification since he is free from the bondage of sin and now has the ability to obey God. (This possibility *will* be exercised but that issue is taken up in a later section.)

#### Statements of Positional Identity and their Relationship to Experience

The Bible states positional truths in such a way that they are clearly “real.” There is no doubt in the Biblical authors’ minds that positional truth is so “actual” that it can be explained with stative verbs identifying the audience as “being” what their position “is.” There is no idea that the audience has to strive to get to that position, or consecrate themselves to obtain it, or empty themselves enough to benefit. They “are” what their position “is.” There are several such “identity” statements.<sup>49</sup>

For instance, Rom 6:14 says, “you are not under the law, but under grace.” This posi-

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<sup>48</sup> H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Windows Software for Bible Study.” *JETS* 46/3 (September 2003): 479-480.

<sup>49</sup> Some of them can be found by searching the Bible for “you (pl) are” ([ὅμεις] εστε).

tional identity issues in an experiential question: “shall we sin...?” to which Paul answers emphatically “No!” 1 Cor 3:16-17 says “you are the temple of God...which is holy.” 1 Cor 5:7, speaking of the necessary removal of sin from the church, says, “you are unleavened.” 1 Cor 6:11 goes on to say that “you are washed...you are sanctified...you are justified.” In Eph 2:19 Paul says “you are...fellow citizens” instead of strangers. In Eph 5:8 he says “but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Paul first mentions their position as children of light and then exhorts them to walk as such. The very next verse indicates how the requirement is met—by the Spirit who produces fruit such as is becoming for children of light. Many other such statements can be found in the Scriptures.<sup>50</sup>

Paul does not have any trouble saying that the Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians “are” their position and that these things have a relationship to experience.

#### Divine Provision Connecting Position to Experience

The justified, adopted, and sanctified position of the Spirit-baptized saint makes it possible for God to work holiness in the believer, something that He would not have done when that person was a guilt-ridden, un-sanctified enemy of God outside of the family of God. In other words, because of the position that you have in Christ, God is free to work with you in experience.<sup>51</sup> This work of God in the life of the believer is indicated in several scriptures. “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.” (Php 1:6, 2:13). God’s work in the believer then makes the *possibility* of proper experience a *reality*. In other words, a Christian’s

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<sup>50</sup> Consider Col 2:10, 11, 12, 3:3; and 1 Peter 2:9 among others.

<sup>51</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 6:276: “The old nature must be judged in order that God may be free to deal with it in the believer’s daily life and apart from all judgments.”

position is not the end of the story: God's work provides the necessary connection between position and experience. This happens through God's direct work inside the person as well as the person's obedience to God's commands, but nevertheless, ultimately God is the cause.

#### Proper Experience as an Intended Result of Christ's Work

The very purpose of Christ's coming was to take away sin and cause a newness of life—not just the position, but the practice. This is indicated in scriptures such as 1 John 3:5, Rom 6:4, and 8:29 which teach us that Christianity is not just to remain in “theory” but is to be implemented in the experience of “practicing righteousness,” walking “in newness of life” and being “conformed to the image of His Son.” This indicates that position cannot be seen in isolation—experience is designed by God to follow position. While experience may not (and usually does not) come *rapidly*, it must come *certainly*. Christ died for it to do so.<sup>52</sup>

#### Position Evidenced by Experience

In fact, we have to think the other way as well, i.e. that experience can be indicative of position. They are so closely linked that the latter can be used as a litmus test for the presence of the former. 1 John bubbles over with this kind of teaching: the one who practices righteousness is indeed righteous, even as Christ is righteous (1 John 3:7). The tests of life are evidences of the truth of one's profession. In other words, position and experience are so closely associated so as to allow experience to be evidence of the position, *or the evidence against it*.<sup>53</sup> The same can be said of the book of James with its emphasis on good works (1:22, 2:17) as evidence of faith.

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<sup>52</sup> Chafer says, “How important in His eyes, then, is the quality of the Christian's daily life; for Christ's death not only contemplated his eternal blessedness in the glory, but his present ‘walk’ as well!” *Systematic Theology*, 6:276.

<sup>53</sup> See Donald W. Burdick, *The Epistles of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), p. 55. Most commentaries on 1 John will point out this truth.

Again, position and experience are inextricably related. Romans 6:16-17 says that the one to whom you yield yourself as a slave, that one is your master. In other words, to continue in sin is to evidence the fact that your real master is sin, not righteousness and the Lord Jesus Christ. John Piper also suggests the idea that experience is evidence of position.<sup>54</sup>

### The Word λογίζομαι in Romans 6:11

Romans 6 is a key to understanding the relationship of position to experience. An important word that appears there is λογίζομαι. It is at the center of the debate about how position works out in experience. Some suggest that “to reckon” is just a simple recollection of what God has provided for us in the death of the old man; others suggest that “to reckon” actually brings into effect those truths stated earlier in the chapter.

BDAG defines λογίζομαι in three ways. First, there is a numerical sense in which one determines or calculates something by a mathematical process. Second, it can have the idea of giving careful thought to a matter, and third, to hold a view about something, to think or believe.<sup>55</sup> Liddell and Scott categorize the meanings into two primary categories, those that have reference to a numerical calculation and those that do not.<sup>56</sup> In the second category, the word can range from a simple taking a mental note of something, to ponder, to make a conclusion based on some thought, or to lean one’s weight or trust.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Piper, *A Godward Life*, p. 188.

<sup>55</sup> BDAG, s.v. “λογίζομαι.”

<sup>56</sup> H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. rev H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940 with revised supplement, 1996), p. 1055.

<sup>57</sup> Moulton and Milligan, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament according to the Texts of Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, and the English Revisers*, 5<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., H. K. Moulton. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), s.v. “λογίζομαι”, p. 377, show that there is little additional to be gleaned from the papyri contemporary to the NT except perhaps there are more numerical and financial uses illustrated there.

We can conclude that when λογίζομαι is used, it cannot mean to *make something true* by the act of considering it, but instead it means to consider something that *is* true, and true enough to warrant serious consideration. Therefore, the command to “consider yourselves to be dead to sin” in Rom 6:11 does not mean to “make yourself dead to sin” by faith or by thinking hard enough about it.<sup>58</sup>

Neither should this imperative be raised above other imperatives either in the Romans 6 passage or throughout the Bible. What do I mean by this? Those who suggest that reckoning is the key to unlocking the possibility of sanctification, the gating function through which one must pass to have any sanctification happen in experience, are making the “consider” imperative more important to the Christian life than all others combined: before the others can be obeyed, this one must be obeyed or nothing can happen. Instead of going to this extreme, we should recognize that “to consider” is one imperative among many in the Christian life; as such, it is part of the definition of what is appropriate behavior for the position. While one may not understand or fully apprehend the truth in Rom 6:11, that does not absolve him from exercising the possibility provided in the emancipation from sin. In other words, the possibility of exercising oneself in holiness comes from the death to sin which happened at salvation, not from the exercise of Rom 6:11. Undoubtedly a lack of understanding and reckoning the facts laid out in Rom 6 will be to the detriment of one’s walk with the Lord, but this does not change the facts.<sup>59</sup>

But then again, “consider” should not be made less important than it is. To make “consider” simply be a mental recognition does not fit the force of the word in context. From our

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<sup>58</sup> McCune, “Systematic Theology III,” p. 71-72 says, “This is not a crisis experience or a second work of grace. Nor does it mean that we create the above situation by an act of sanctifying faith.”

<sup>59</sup> Beware of taking this statement too far. The Bible does not allow for a Christian who is consistently unlearned and disobedient with respect to any imperative of the Scriptures, these things are included.

definition of λογίζομαι above, it appears that God through Paul does indeed load the word with the idea of a serious mental consideration that passes to a trust that the object of the consideration is indeed true. Such a trusting consideration will deliver one from the frustration of thinking there is no way out of a besetting sin. It will also deliver us from the remaining shreds of attitude that echo a wrong sentiment to the question of Rom 6:1, “Shall we continue in sin...?” Those shreds of desire to continue in sin are still present due to the remaining depravity and sin nature which would have us regard sin lightly and also have us regard the work of Christ lightly. The proper response, Paul enjoins, is to “sum up” all the facts given in the first ten verses. This reckoning is a present tense command, and it should be understood as iterative, that is, it is repeated whenever the need arises. After an initial consideration, it may come easily to the believer and be nearly “second nature” to face life with the mindset that he is dead to sin because of his identification with Christ. The present tense is not such that it requires a continuous conscious activity on the part of the believer, as this would make it impossible to carry out more than a single present tense command at one time, a constraint that is obviously not Biblical.

### Illustrations

Consider an example from everyday conversation that may help to understand the difference between position and experience. Imagine your mother or father exclaiming to you, “Act your age!” This is common enough, but what is the precise meaning of this statement? To be technical, an age is a number of years. Behavior cannot match up to a number of years because it belongs to a different category: behavior and years are like apples and oranges. What is really meant is, “Act in a way that is appropriate for your age” or “Behave in a way that is befitting or required for one your age.” The comparison is now one of apples (behave) to apples (appropriate behavior). In other words, the status that you have reached at a given age requires a certain kind

of behavior. Not only that, but the assumption is that your age indicates the possibility of acting properly. So, your age has built into it the *possibility* and the *requirement* for your behavior.

The connection of the illustration to theology is that the age is analogous to position. Even though we all understand what is meant, it is not technically correct to say “act your position” because actions and positions belong to two different categories, again apples and oranges. Again, “be what you are” is confusing because the “be” has to do with behavior, but the “are” has to do with position. That is equivalent to saying “be a legal position.” This makes little sense.

Instead, you should “Act in a way that corresponds to your position” or “Be the way that is befitting or required for one of your position.” If the analogy of position and experience to “act your age” holds at all, we should be able to see in the Scriptures (and we did, above) that position has integrally associated with it the possibility and requirement for acting in the given way.

The trouble with “act your age” is that there is probably no available definition of what is acceptable behavior at a given age.<sup>60</sup> The Christian, however, is not in the dark, because the Bible’s imperatives related to sanctification *are* the definition of what is required.

Another illustration may help. When a judge frees a prisoner, he makes a legal declaration of the prisoner’s new position. It is now possible for that prisoner to walk free, and it is expected that he will do so. There are many other experiences that he could have as a free man, but these are among the most basic that will follow from the positional declaration. In this case, the position yields immediately in possibility and requirement. In this example, the positional shift will not itself yield experience; instead, it will take something else to effect that, namely enough gumption on the part of the prisoner to walk free. But this is, for all intents and purposes, inevitable, as no prisoner would remain under prison-like conditions in normal circumstances.

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<sup>60</sup> A fact which would provide any child a great excuse to give his parents!

With the sin nature, of course, work is required by the Spirit of God, in sanctification, to help the sinner “walk free.” But God does work in the believer and this guarantees the exercise of the possibility in light of the requirement. God does not abandon his children after their initial positional transfer.

### *Evaluation of Other Views*

In this chapter, we saw Biblical evidence which can be used to evaluate the views listed in the previous chapter. Several can be dismissed immediately. The Roman Catholic view that has no distinction between position and experience can be discarded in light of the distinction we showed. The view that mixes position and experience can be dismissed on the same grounds. The view that position is unreal has been shown to be false, for Paul uses statements indicating that his audience “is” what their position “is.” Position itself is not the goal of experience, for these two are unmixable categories. Rather, position defines the possibility and requirement of experience, and comes with the divine provision for the experience. Neither is position followed only *possibly* by proper experience, but the work of God in the saint guarantees that it will certainly come to pass, however slowly that may be. The already/not yet view suggests that we “are” and we “are not” at one and the same time; this view also seems to mix the categories of position and experience. While already/not yet is a way of expressing the tension of the Christian life in terms of what is true of the believer and what God commands for improvement, it does not serve to remove that tension.

Our view that position carries with it the possibility, the expectation, and the divine operation which brings possibility to fruition seems to be a better way of expressing that tension and explaining the relationship of position to experience.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

It is our first contention that position and experience are distinct but inseparably related. Without this as our foundation, our theology will be hopelessly muddled. Furthermore, positional truths are as real as anything else that God does—legal declarations are not fake or fictional.

With regard to the relationship between position and experience, many have said correctly that position is the basis and ground of proper Christian experience and can be a motivation to proper experience. In the previous chapter we added that position and experience are related in three ways: first, a positional transfer gives the possibility, from the human viewpoint, of proper experience; second, position contains within it a requirement or expectation; and third, position is, from God's viewpoint, the fact that frees Him to do His work in the believer's life. He brings the possibility into experience in order to match the expectation. God's work in the person is what guarantees the possibility will be brought to its expected fruition.

Speaking generally in terms of the doctrine of sanctification, this theological construction of the relationship between position and experience shows that sanctification is possible, though not automatic, and yet ultimately inevitable. This is corrective of views that suggest sanctification is only a possibility for a few saints. To the contrary, every true saint will move along the path of sanctification—God ensures that (Rom 8:30, 1 Cor 1:30, Php 1:6, 2:12-13). One of the means he uses to do so is the requirement set forth in the imperative forms in the Scriptures. This

renders it necessary for the believer to participate appropriately.<sup>61</sup>

More specifically, if we go back to the opening of chapter 3, where we discussed the transfer from old man to new man that occurs at the believer's salvation, we can be a little more precise now. Recall that I said, "this is a positional change but is not *only* a legal or judicial fact in the mind of God." I put it this way to ensure that the reader did not think the positional shift could be present *without* a corresponding change in experience. The possibility, requirement and divine operation which are at the heart of the relationship of position and experience are helpful here. The position of the person was truly changed from the realm of the old man to the realm of the new. This is not in itself experiential, but it issues in experience since with this positional change comes the possibility of a holy life (the reigning power of sin has been broken [Rom 6:6]), the requirement of a holy life (that is the idea of Paul's statement that "we should walk in newness of life" [Rom 6:5]), and the operation of God to produce, progressively, that holy life (e.g. "if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" [Rom 8:13b, cf. 7:24-25a]).

Without these elements, discussions on the relationship of position to experience can be technically correct as far as they go, but they may be confusing, or worse, unbiblical. For example, to say that position as the goal of experience does not properly take into account their distinctness, although most understand what is meant. To say something is positionally true but at the same time experientially not true is simply confusing; such statements should be theologically "sharpened." To separate position from experience so far as to make experience unnecessary or superfluous is unbiblical. To relate position to experience by the inherent possibility, expectation, and divine operation associated with the position lends clarity to the debate.

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<sup>61</sup> The phrase "inevitable but not automatic" is not a novel one, but we have tried to explain it clearly in this paper. See William W. Combs, "The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology." *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (Fall 2001): p. 44.

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p. 536. “Justification is the judicial basis for sanctification. God has the right to demand of us holiness of life, but because we cannot work out this holiness for ourselves, He freely works it within us through the Holy Spirit on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us in justification.” p. 536. He takes regeneration as does Strong, the original impartation/beginning of holy disposition, which sanctification then strengthens. But he also says that regeneration is completed at once. So here we have a complete yet not complete idea.

Berkhof, Louis. *Manual of Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933, p. 265-7.

“Sanctification is not, like justification, a legal act of God, but a moral and re-creative activity, by which the sinner is renewed in his inner being and made to conform ever-increasingly to the image of God.” p. 267.

But then he says earlier, “The Biblical words [for sanctification] express the idea of a position or relationship between God and man rather than that of spiritual qualities wrought in the heart.” p. 265. This seems to show clearly the mixture of experiential and positional truth. “But while the Scriptural words are first of all indicative of a relationship, they also denote that operation of God by which He, through the Holy Spirit, works in man the subjective quality of holiness...” p. 265. Hoekema’s definition on page 193 is similar.

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Major Bible Themes*. Rev., John F. Walvoord. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.

p. 206. Speaking of positional sanctification: “This position bears no relationship to the believer’s daily life more than that it should inspire him to holy living. The Christian’s position in Christ is, according to Scripture, the greatest incentive to holiness of life...” p. 207. “The great doctrinal epistles observe this order. They first state the marvels of saving grace and then conclude with an appeal for a life corresponding to the divinely wrought position..” “Positional sanctification and positional holiness are ‘true’ sanctification and holiness. “As positional sanctification is absolutely dissociated from the daily life, so experiential sanctification is absolutely dissociated from the position in Christ.” These are amazing statements to me. There is a connectedness among these things. You must have the first to have the second; if you have the first, you must also have the second!

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *He That Is Spiritual*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1918.

p. 113: “Positionally, the ‘old man’ has been put off for ever. Experimentally, the ‘old man’ remains as an active force in the life which can be controlled only by the power of God.” p. 112: The term “old man” “is used only three times in the New Testament. Once it has to do with the present *position* of the ‘old man’ through the death of Christ (Romans 6:6). In the other two passages (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:3, 9) the fact that the ‘old man’ has been put off for ever is made the basis of an appeal for a holy life.” p. 114: “[The ‘old man’] still abides with us as an active principal in our lives, and our *experimental* victory over it will be realized only through a definite reliance upon the indwelling Spirit.”

p. 126: Speaking of the once-for-all co-crucifixion, Chafer lists a ton of imperative forms to be done “in view of this divine accomplishment.” “Such is the human responsibility toward that deliverance which God has provided *through* the death of His Son and proposes now to accomplish *by* the Spirit.” There seems to be a potentiality in the deliverance, as a provision, which is not yet (fully) accomplished in the life/experience of the person. This corresponds well with his continual emphasis on the possibility of life where sin’s power is disannulled: “if they really did *know* that the ‘old man’ *was* crucified with Christ and so, on the divine side, it is made possible for them to live where sin’s power and manifestation may be constant disannulled.” p. 126. Explicitly he says so earlier on p. 124: “The union with Christ has provided a *possible* deliverance; but it must be entered into and claimed by such human acts of faith as are expressed in the word ‘reckon,’ and the additional words which follow in the passage...” (Rom 6:13bff). Knowing and believing are presented as the gate. Page 120: “[Romans 6:1-10] is the *foundation* as well as the *key* to the possibility of a ‘walk in the Spirit.’”

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Salvation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1917.

On his 33 things that happen at salvation, “These positions are known only through a divine revelation....Since they cannot be experienced their reality can be entered into only by *believing* the Word of God.” p. 43. These “thirty three distinct positions” “are facts of the newly created life out of which most precious experiences may grow.” p. 42. Also, “A true Christian is more than a person who feels or acts on a certain high plane: he is one who, because of a whole inward transformation, normally feels and acts in all the limitless heavenly association with his Lord.” This is confusing to me. It seems he is talking eternal facts, positions, and then all of a sudden “inward transformation.” What is the “normally” business he mentions?

\_\_\_\_\_. *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993.

p. 3:244. “Thus, in the case of the sanctification of a person, the moral change in that person’s life may not be the result of sanctification...” (???) “Such sanctification was neither the estate of those believers nor did it refer to their ultimate transformation when they would appear in glory (Eph 5:27; 1 John 3:2).” It is a classification, a standing, a position.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988, pp. 47-93.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

p. 982: “Justification is an instantaneous occurrence, complete in a moment, whereas sanctification is a process requiring an entire lifetime for completion. There is a quantitative distinction as well. One is either justified or not, whereas one may be more or less sanctified...Justification is a forensic or declarative matter...while sanctification is an actual transformation of the character and condition of the person. Justification is an objective work affecting our standing before God, our relationship to him, while sanctification is a subjective work affecting our inner person.”

Campbell, Donald K. *Walvoord: A Tribute*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1982, pp. 189-200, section by Ryrie entitled “Contrasting Views on Sanctification.”

“Positional sanctification is that position every believer enjoys by virtue of being set apart in the family of God by faith in Christ. It is an actual, not theoretical, position and is not dependent on the state of one’s spiritual growth.” p. 189

“Experiential sanctification concerns the progressive development of holiness in the experience of the Christian. Every biblical exhortation to godly living underscores this aspect of sanctification.” p. 189-90.

He goes on to contrast three views: Reformed, Chaferian, and Victorious Life views with respect to four questions: 1) relationship between justification and sanctification; 2) relationship between God’s sovereignty and human activity in the work of sanctification; 3) question of one or two natures in the believer; 4) means of victory in the Christian life. p. 190.

“Reformed view of sanctification may be summarized as teaching the gradual extirpation or extermination of depravity.” p. 190. It is not perfectionism since this process is never completed in this life.

“The Chaferian view of progressive sanctification may be summarized by the idea of counteraction of the new nature of the believer against the old, or of the Spirit against the flesh.” It involves yieldedness to the will of God, confession of sins, and growing in grace.” p. 191. 1) More emphasis on human responsibility and activity in the process than in the Reformed view. His characterization also included the statement that 2) the struggle between the two natures is denied in the Reformed view. Neither of these is true of Reformed views I’ve been reading by Hoekema or Ferguson. He goes on to give the 3-fold condition of not quenching (yielding), not grieving (confessing), and walking in the Spirit as the outline or way to achieve Spirit filling, and calls this “the central doctrine.” He does not make any proof of this exegetically, it is just stated p. 191-2.

He distinguishes the Victorious life (Keswick) view from the previous two, although it seems to me that Chafer has more in common with Keswick. Teaches the carnal Christian. Does not teach eradication or counteraction, Ryrie says (contra Lewis and Demarest’s evaluation). Just Christian growth. But that seems to contradict the immediately following sentence: “The believer receives sanctification by faith through a crisis act of entire consecration to God.” p. 192. That crisis is also a process; dying to self and abso-

lute surrender. Faith and absolute surrender allow one to experience fullness of the Spirit, which is not a second blessing, but is a definite act of faith separable from regeneration.

On question of justification and sanctification. Chaferian and Reformed basically agree. Quoting Berkhof page 536: "Justification precedes...judicial basis for sanctification..." p 193. See Systematic Theology for original source. Ryrie says "the Chaferian view makes a great distinction between the two operations" p. 194 – apparently greater than the Reformed view. Keswick takes justification and sanctification as two separate things requiring faith to obtain. Reformed: inseparable yet distinct; Chaferian: distinct yet inseparable (what a play on words!); Keswick: separate and distinct.

On the relation between God's sovereignty and Human activity. Chaferian and Reformed are similar again here. "Warfield's view includes human activity, seems to slight human responsibility because of its emphasis on irresistibility and the almost automatic nature of sanctification. Although it is true that every true believer will give evidence of sanctification (1 Cor. 4:5), it is not true that that is automatic. The believer must act responsibly in obedience to God's commands." p. 195. Quotes from Murray's Sanctification favorably here as well, who takes a less irresistible view. Chafer agrees. Ryrie even points out initial dedication in Murray's Romans commentary is similar to Chafer's once-for-all view. This rests on the wrong view of the aorist. Chafer is then different than Reformed in emphasizing human activity. Keswick is distinct in that it emphasizes God's activity in salvation "let go and let God." This is quietism and passivism. Sanctification is received by a separate act of faith.

On the question of one or two natures. Reformed, he says, teaches one nature, though I have had a lot of interaction with two-nature reformed people (like Anthony Hoekema). Chafer and Keswick say two natures that are in conflict.

On the means of victory. Reformed: sovereign, automatic, and extirpation. This is the Warfield camp, basically. He is not accounting for later ones like Murry, Hoekema, etc. Victorious life teaches surrender, faith, suppression of the old nature. Trumbull's book title is instructive: *Resting on the Facts*. Chafer teaches filling of the Spirit is the key to Christian living. Quoting Chafer He that is Spiritual p. 67, "Though the will be moved upon by the enabling power of God, spirituality, according to God's Word, is made to depend upon that divinely-enabled human choice; Romans 12:1, 2; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and 1 John 1:9 being sufficient evidence." Of course, Ryrie is assuming that there IS A SINGLE KEY.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Saved By Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 192-233.

Keating, Karl. *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988, pp. 167-

"Accepting Christ accomplishes one thing and one thing only. It makes God cover one's sinfulness. It makes him turn a blind eye to it. It is as though he hides the soul under a cloak. Any soul under this cloak is admitted to heaven, no matter how putrescent the real-

ity beneath; no one without the cloak, no matter how pristine, can enter the pearly gates.” p. 167.

“The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful. It is not a real eradication of sin, but a covering or nonimputation. It is not an inner renewal and a real sanctification, only an external application of Christ’s justice.” p. 167. This demonstrates a wrong view of reformed thought which says the position is fake, not in fact, etc. He ignores the teaching that sanctification follows in making the soul more practically separated to God.

Then again, the RC position is clarified in this same paragraph: “The Catholic Church, not surprisingly, understands justification differently. It sees it as a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal. The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good.” p. 167-8.

Verses on sainthood of the saints “Catholics look at such verses as merely Paul’s expectations for his disciples; fundamentalists look at them as his acknowledgement of their existing status.” p. 172. This does not speak of us as we *are* but as we *ought to be*.

Kevin Ball: Catholics co-mingle the two so much that if you fail in sanctification, you are not justified. John Calvin: Relationship between justification and sanctification: it is faith alone that saves, but faith that saves is never alone. Justification will usher in sanctification.

Naomi: We are to walk in accordance with our position. “We are, with the Lord’s help, to walk in such a way that our experience is concordant with our position.”

Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce A Demarest. *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 3:171-236.

Speaks of a principial righteousness as over against a factual holiness. “The present chapter [on sanctification] considers how the Spirit makes those who are righteous in principle (i.e. regenerated and justified) holy in fact (i.e. sanctified).” p. 173.

Notes the “traditional Protestant distinction between justification and sanctification” p. 174.

“Catholicism designates the increase of justification as sanctification...This initial justification is augmented by the grace of Christ.” p. 175. He footnotes the first part with the following: “According to Karl Adam: ‘Justification is not . . . a mere external imputation of the righteousness of Christ. It is the communication of a true inward righteousness, of a new love which re-makes the whole man; it is sanctification.’” From *The Spirit of Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 208. I could probably find the same in Keating’s book.

Speaking of the Pentecostal approach to sanctification, they say: “At justification and the new birth God imputes righteousness to believers. Thus positionally, although not experi-

entially, believers are wholly sanctified through the work of Christ.” p. 180. Then, progressive sanctification “involves the gradual process whereby holiness is made actual in daily life. This goal is achieved as believers cooperate with the Spirit in the work of sanctification. Christians grow in holiness by identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, by separation from the sinful world, and by consecration to God’s service.” p. 181. See Stanley M. Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” in Melvin Dieter et al., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 131.

Keswick outlines the 3 stage sanctification that we hold (initial, experiential, and complete/final). But the second one is only entered by “a decisive surrender subsequent to conversion to Christ as Lord.” p. 182. This is tied with the counteraction theory, where believers after the second blessing live in victory over sin and rest from spiritual struggle. Again, as with perfectionists, sin is redefined to the level of motive or intentionality. p. 182-3. The three kinds of Christians are found here, as in Wesleyan and Pentecostal approaches.

The relation of justification and sanctification, wrt Reformed Evangelicals: distinction between them but inextricably related; “justification is a legal declaration of right standing before God (imputed righteousness), whereas sanctification makes the believer existentially holy (inherent righteousness). Moreover, justification is an instantaneous event, whereas sanctification is a life-long process.” Finally, justification allows for no degrees, whereas sanctification admits of degrees. In terms of their inner unity, justification issues in sanctification, thereby eliminating the error of cheap grace. And sanctification is grounded in justification, thereby avoiding the error of works-righteousness.” p. 184.

Goes on to mention the distinction between “positionally holy by virtue of being in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10), but empirically they remain sinful.” p. 184. Freedom from dominion, but not presence of sin. Continuous struggle.

Calvin “held justification and sanctification in close relation: ‘Christ justified no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.’” p. 185. Mortification and vivification. Berkhof holds a view similar in many respects to mine.

He gives good definitions following McCune (or vice versa!) on separation in OT thought and how it also had the idea of holiness.

Just had an idea about those pictures or metaphors used of sanctification. The idea of being a child of God, put into a position like Christ, would indicate that child-like growth into adulthood would be like experiential sanctification. Growth. The renewal of the new man is like this. Romans 7 seems to go on to explain a picture of the law and death to that in illustrating the point of Rom 6 death to sin. But then he is moving here to talking about the Law itself; where is the border between these two topics?

Speaks of “actual righteousness” to be obtained when we see Christ. p. 201.

I should be careful to briefly mention some basic beliefs about sanctification if I get into it, namely that 1) sin resides in the believer; 2) struggle against sin; 3) perfection not possible in this life.

“Sanctification also involves a *liberating process to be actively pursued* in order that we may become experientially what we are forensically. Freed from the built of sin [by permanent forensic justification], we seek to be liberated from its power.” p. 205-206.

The idea of should and ought permeate his discussion of our sanctification. We should grow in control of our bodies, minds, emotions, relations.

This is a pregnant paragraph on pp. 213-214. “Although the spiritual life both begins and continues in personal response to the Holy Spirit, it is *not all of God*. The Buddhist goal of egolessness sounds spiritual, but is not the Christian goal. The Holy Spirit’s ministries are renewing. The Spirit’s ministries do not reduce a person to total passivity nor lead to a mere resignation to a fate as in some types of Islam. All God wants to take from us in our sinfulness! The Spirit does not eradicate one’s distinct ontological being but rejuvenates the powers of informed and loving self-determination to overcome the old nature. The Spirit revitalizes the ego in Christ’s likeness. Christians do not just “let go and let God” (do it), nor do they claim, “The Devil made me do it.” The spiritual life does not mean total placidity. The Holy Spirit renews our power of self-determination. Although the Holy Spirit is its ultimate causal agent, he is not the only causal agent. Christians are ontologically real agents who actively work together with the Spirit. Insofar as some Calvinists and some exponents of the exchanged life give the idea that the Christian life is all of God they sound pious, but they are unbiblical and unrealistic.”

“A reduction of salvation to Christ’s legal provisions fails to account for the personal relationships of reconciliation or the existential aspects of redemption and sanctification...Believers are substantially changed by their new legal status...” p. 217.

Needham is one who overemphasizes the positional nature of who we are in Christ. p. 218-9. To such an extent that he makes a Christian two persons, one before salvation and a new one after salvation.

Scotfield, C. I. *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Reprint by LifeLine Philippines. Adrian, Michigan. No date of printing included, unfortunately, pp. 75-84 on standing and state.

Standing and position and title are refer to the same thing which is judicial truth; state and walk similarly refer to the same experiential truth. He quotes thereafter many verses, some of which are positional, some actually future, etc. He quotes Scripture side by side in a neat way showing the indicative versus the imperative statements. It just doesn’t go quite far enough to explain what the connection is, beyond the fact that they are both present and juxtaposed in the Scriptures. Heb 10:14 and Php 3:12 illustrate the difference – perfect yet not perfect.

He makes a very sharp distinction between standing and state when he says: “What [the Philippian jailer’s] actual state may have been is quite another matter; certainly it was far, *far* below his exalted standing in the sight of God. It was not all at once that he became as royal, priestly, and heavenly in walk as he was at once in standing.” p. 78. “The divine order, under grace, is first to give the highest possible standing and then to exhort the be-

liever to maintain a state in accordance therewith. The beggar is lifted up from the dung-hill and set among princes (1 Sam 2:8), and then exhorted *to be* princely. “ p. 80.

God’s work on a believer is “intended simply to bring the believer’s character into perfect conformity to the position which is his in the instant of his conversion.” p. 83.

I also read pp. 66-74 on the believer’s two natures. The counteraction theory is pro-pounded here.

Moo, Douglas. *The Epistle to the Romans*. In *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

p. 373. “Paul’s language throughout is forensic, or positional; by God’s act, we have been placed in a new position. This position is real, for what exists in God’s sight is surely (ultimately) real, and it carries definite consequences for day-to-day living. But it is status, or power structure, that Paul is talking about here.” This is interesting, because he emphasizes position, says it is real, and says it is surely (ultimately) real. Not sure what the surely ultimately together mean. It’s not quite real but will be in the future? But he does emphasize positional truth here.

Murray, John. *Collected writings of John Murray*, vol 2, Systematic Theology. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977. See around page 227 where Saved by Grace quotes him several times.

pg. 288: Murray writes, “...when we keep in view the forensic character of the term ‘justify,’ we readily detect what is forensic and at the same time consonant with the apostle’s thesis, namely, the judgment executed upon sin in order that we may enjoy emancipation...it is difficult for us to grasp this juridical aspect of deliverance from the power of sin...”

Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.

“Sin is dethroned in every person who is effectually called and regenerated.” p. 141.  
“Everyone one called effectually by God and regenerated by the Spirit has secured the victory in the terms of Romans 6:14; 1 John 3:9; 5:4, 18. And this victory is actual or it is nothing. It is a refelection upon and a deflection from the pervasive New Testament witness to speak of it as merely potential or positional. It is actual and practical as much as anything compressed in the application of redemption is actual and practical. p. 142.

p. 121 has the notion of a surgeon being experiential work and the judge being judicial or forensic work.

Piper, John. *A Godward Life*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1997. See pp. 187-9 for a statement on “become what you are.”

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. Chicago: Moody, 1999. The Chariot Victor printing is substantially the same but the page numbers are somewhat different.

p. 346-7. The judgment of the sin nature is a result of salvation; two reasons why the justified person will not continue in sin are as follows: “The judgment frees us from the domain of sin” and “the judgment frees us from the dominion of sin.” For the latter, Ryrie says, “Now Paul appeals to believers to be free from the dominion of sin on the basis of Christ’s death unto sin. The appeal involves reckoning (v. 11), refusing (v. 12), and presenting (v. 13). Reckoning or considering means to calculate, to add up the truth of the facts presented in verses 1-10 and then act accordingly.” He seems to not handle the idea that the dominion of sin was broken at salvation, when he says that we are appeal to to be free from the dominion!

Stanford, Miles J. *The Complete Green Letters*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

This is a Keswick, deeper life book on sanctification (introduction).

pp 100-105. He makes a clear statement of complete and perfect position as opposed to experiential condition. “Every believer...is already separated to God in Christ Jesus. What makes the difference in the believer’s condition is that he becomes clearly aware of his sanctified position in the risen Lord.” p. 101. “It is important to realize that the term [sanctification] has nothing whatsoever to do with the thought of cleansing or purification, as so many seem to think.” p. 100.

p. 103 he distinguishes between promises to be anticipated and facts to be appropriated and enjoyed now. [The Holy Spirit] gives us in our condition what we appropriate from our position.” It seems that we are the gating function; or our faith is, to release the abundance of benefit stored up in our positional storehouse.

pp. 31-34. “The trouble of the believer...is not sin as to its guilt, but sin as to its ruling power. In other words, it is not from sin as a load or an offense, that he seeks to be freed...but it is from sin as a master.” p. 31 quote from Evan H. Hopkins, *Thoughts on Life and Godliness*, p. 50). This contradicts what we say about the power of sin already being broken for the believer. “To know God’s way of deliverance from sin as a master he must apprehend the truth contained in the sixth chapter of Romans.” p. 31. This is his key to sanctification, the tie from position to experience. “Assurance of deliverance from the sphere of the ‘flesh’ and of the dethronement of ‘the old man’ rests upon the apprehension and acceptance of this fact of co-crucifixion.” p. 32 quote from *Life on the Highest Plane*, Vol. II, pp. 78, 79 by R. Paxson. The point of all this is to say that identification is one way in which experience is tied to position. “Our ‘reckoning’ ourselves dead to sin in Jesus Christ does not make it a fact—it is already a fact through our union with Him. Our reckoning it to be true only makes us begin to realize the fact in experience.” p. 34 quote of James R. McConkey, *The Way of Victory*, p. 16).

pp. 130-136. “Our present experience is greatly inferior to our eternal position, no matter what the stage of our spiritual growth. The development of our condition is *toward* our

finished position, and at the same time *from* that completed source.” p. 131. Interesting two-sided thing going on here.

pp. 77-83. “All spiritual life and growth is based upon the principle of position. It can be summed up in one word: source.” p. 77. Seems to take position as the SOURCE from which all else flows (see previous paragraph). The “in-Christ” position is for every believer, “whether he is aware of it or not. The Christian who comes to see his position in the Lord Jesus begins to experience the benefit of all that he is in Him. His daily state is developed from the source of his eternal standing.” p. 77. These sentences give a lot of ammo along the line of what I’m looking for. He emphasizes on 77-78 the need to rest in Christ as our position instead of struggling by looking at our condition. In other words, rest is another way in which experience is tied to position. “If he does not know of his position in the Lord Jesus, and how to abide in Him as his very life, there will be but one result. He will struggle in his un-Christlike condition rather than rest in his Christ-centered position.” p. 78. To know then is another connection between experience and position. He comes right out and says so next: “Scriptural, fact-centered faith in the Lord Jesus as our position before the Father is the one means of experiencing that finished work in the growth of our daily condition.” p. 78. “Only the believer who knows, grows.” p. 78.

To summarize what I’m getting from this is that the identification truths are the basis of growth or the connection from position to experience; these must be realized/known/considered/seen/apprehended and faithfully believed (aka reckoned) to the extent that the believer rests in them in order for growth to occur through the appropriation of its practical reality. (see p. 109 for his listing somewhat like what I’ve constructed from my reading.) Later on he gives another sequence about reckoning: we must know and reckon, then abide and rest, then depend and walk. (See p. 188-89).

He uses illustrations like the grain of wheat dying and producing fruit to explain his view that position is the source of life, from which life is transmitted (p. 79-80).

He mentions old man is self and new Man is Christ. This is off base. “We are told to do in faith what our Father has already done in fact.” p. 82. He also says, “By faith in the work of the cross, the old man is put off; by faith in our heavenly position in Christ, the new man is put on.” This disagrees with my old man / new man paper and makes two distinct acts of faith. Fact: Rom 6:6, Col 3:9, Gal 3:27, Col 3:10, 3:3-4 → Faith: Eph 4:22, Rom 13:14, Eph 4:24, Eph 6:14.

pp. 106-111. “As in all positional steps, identification is not experiential, but is a matter of placing our faith in the facts of the Word.” p. 106. He makes an interesting explanation a few lines later: “All is held in trust for us in Christ, our new position, and becomes our condition as we are taken forward, step by step, in faith.” p. 106. Identification has to do with growth.

He definitely makes this faith precedent to the actual operation of Rom 6-8, when he uses the when/then time words in the following: “When we are able to receive and appreciate the benefits of the riches of Romans 1-5, then He is free to take us into the reality of the

wealth of Romans 6-8. When we are firmly established in the positional truth of Christ dying *for* our sins and rising again for our justification (Rom 4:25), then we are prepared to see our position and enter into the benefits of our having died and risen *with* Him (Rom 6:5).” p. 106.

“God provides the facts before He calls for faith.” p. 107. “It would be utterly impossible for our Father even to suggest that we count ourselves as having died to sin and become alive to Him in Jesus if it were not already true of us!” p. 108. Interesting. So it is true, but no benefit is derived until we realize it. “However, true as our identification with the Lord Jesus is, if we are not fully aware of the facts we will derive little benefit from them in our daily life.” p. 108.

“That which we reckon in our position becomes experiential in our condition.” p. 109.

There is a big emphasis on seeing and hating the self-life and replacing that with the Christ life (p. 111). This is like exchanged life stuff. There is a notion that we have died with Christ but experientially need to be taken down into that death. (p. 110).

pp. 253-256. “The Holy Spirit then begins to reveal the truths that will deliver him from the reign of sin (Rom 5:21).” This is just plain wrong, but characteristic of the view – a confusion results from the positional/experiential. A schizophrenia if you will. Once he “sees himself exactly where he has been positioned all along...he can begin walking ‘in newness of life (Rom 6:4).” p. 256.

pp. 181-245. Makes a dichotomy between justification/birth truths and identification/sanctification truths. He does define reckon as “to regard as being, to count as true.” p. 184. He mentions the layout of Paul’s epistles as doctrinal and then application/practical, so we should first know what God has done, then what he will do. This made me think of OT thought, where it was often the case that the Jews (e.g. Psalmist) would recall what great things God has done and then on that basis trust God or look to him for deliverance or whatever. I wonder if there is anything more to this that could help me).

He seems to be saying that the believer is at the same time a natural self and a new self when he quotes 1 Cor 2:14 in the context of a believer to say that selfishness will not get the Word of God to work effectively in the life. p. 197.

“Romans 6 has to do with the tyrannical reign of *the principle of sin*—not its symptom, sins.” p. 204. “Romans 7...has to do mainly with *the principle of law*.”

Interesting that I’ve just picked this up, even though having seen it at various points before and heard it through JD: “Romans 7 is the *struggle* (usually years in duration) that has to do with the principle of law, and brings the answer to its bondage. Romans 8 is the *walk* based on the principle of life in Christ as ministered by the Spirit of Life.” p. 211. In other words, they make Rom 7 one phase of your Christian life, the one of struggle, bondage to self, etc., and Rom 8 the next, more advanced stage of life.

He takes “carnally minded” in Rom 8:6 as referring to a believer: “For the believer, to be ‘carnally minded’ does not bring death, as all believers pass through a great deal of carnality as part of their growth. To be ‘spiritually minded’ does not bring life, as all believers are alive in Christ.” p. 213. This is silly. The contrast is between believer and unbeliever in this text. He uses the NASB to help him, but even that doesn’t make it clear. He explains, “the Word is stating that the make-up, the bent, the life of the flesh, is nothing but death; whereas that of the Spirit is life and peace...” p. 213-4.

Reckoning self as dead is an error, he says, p. 219. The old man is still around.

pp. 291-294 on the procedure for teaching this deeper Keswick life to the church, and the value of outside-of-church conferences.

Strong, Augustus Hopkins. *Systematic Theology*. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907, pp. 869-881.

Many good statements regarding sanctification.

“Sanctification is not a matter of course, which will go on whatever we do, or do not do. It requires a direct superintendence and surgery on the one hand, and, on the other hand a practical hatred of evil on our part that cooperates with the husbandry of God.” p. 870.

“The Christian is two men in one; but he is to ‘put away the old man’ and ‘put on the new man.’” p. 870. “The Christian is ‘crucified with Christ’ (Gal. 2:20); but the crucified man does not die at once. Yet he is as good as dead. Even after the old man is crucified we are still to mortify him, or put him to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).” p. 870.

“From the lack of persistence in using the means appointed for Christian growth—such as the word of God, prayer, association with other believers, and personal effort for the conversion of the ungodly—sanctification does not always proceed in regular and unbroken course, and it is never completed in this life.” p. 874.

“‘Ye were sanctified’ (1 Cor. 6:11), and the designation: ‘saints’ (1 Cor. 1:2), applied to early believers, are, as the whole epistle shows, expressive of a holiness existing in germ and anticipation; the expressions deriving their meaning not so much from what these early believers were, as from what Christ was, to whom they were united by faith.” p. 880. This seems to be teaching a sort of position but talks of holiness in germ form. Later on in that paragraph he describes sanctification in OT usage as either outward holiness or inward holiness, and a Christian he says is made outwardly holy, set apart for God’s service; the inward holiness is there “in him the beginnings of purity.”

Warfield, Benjamin Breckenridge. *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*. 10 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1932. Reprint edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003, vol. 9, pp. 301-9.

Speaking of the synergistic idea in salvation/sanctification as one under the ultimate initiative and control of God: “The exhortation that we shall ‘put on’ this new man (Eph. 4:24, cf. 3:9-10), therefore does not imply that either the initiation or the completion of the process by which the ‘new creation’ ...is wrought lies in our own power; but only

urges us to that diligent cooperation with God in the work of our salvation, to which He calls us in all departments of life..." p. 451, vol. 2. p. 461: "But it has never been imagined that the sinner could get along with justification alone. It has rather ever insisted that sanctification is so involved in justification that the justification cannot be real unless it be followed by sanctification."

The direction from God to man is in Rom 4, for example. But this may help in my understanding of reckoning in Rom 6. Words such as count, account, reckon, and impute. "putting to one's account", whether on the positive side "setting to one's credit" or the negative "laying to one's charge." Warfield, vol. 9, p. 301-2. This is the meaning in each of the three major imputations set forth in the Bible, namely the imputation of Adam's sin to mankind, of mankind's sin to Christ, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers. (p. 302); these are the "three constitutive doctrines of Christianity" related to "the sinfulness of the human race, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and justification by faith." p. 305. The grounds, things imputed, consequent treatment may be different in each case, but the meaning is the same (302). "The sin of Adam was so set to the account of his descendants that they have actually shared in the penalty which was threatened to it...the sins of His people were so set to the account of our Lord that He bore them in His own body on the tree, and His merits are so set to their account that by His stripes they are healed." p. 302-3 in Warfield.

From Pastor and Jon Saxe:

Section on philosophy: epistemology comes first, then metaphysic, i.e. before you can be told what to do. Define truth, then put some action.

Area of logic: facts, then we move to conclusions. The reason.

History of doctrine.

History. See Bunyan. He worked it out in an allegory. Salvation and then experience. Whole allegory is about what you have in the Lord. So in history we see this problem being addressed.

Exegetical arguments: structure of books (practical followed by doctrinal sections); indicative vs. imperative (what is the connection?); conjunctions like therefore and so on

Is ultimate sanctification where experience meets position? A common way of understanding it, I suppose. But position has to do with legal standing, penalty of sin (or does positional sanctification have something different to say than justification?). How can practice meet no penalty?