

D. Excursus II: Romans 7:14-25:
A Depiction of Part of the Normal Christian Life

In Romans 7:14-25, Paul refers to the normal state of his Christian life as representative of believers in general. He does not speak of his unconverted state. Unbelievers do not hate sin (Romans 7:15) and have nothing within themselves that is against it (7:16-17, 19-20¹), nor do they will to do right (7:18; cf. 3:11), nor do they “delight in the law of God,” nor do they possess a holy “inner man” (7:22), nor do they have a godly mind that wants righteousness (7:23, 25; cf. 1:28; 8:5, 7; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:21; 2:18; Titus 1:15) and “thank God through Jesus Christ” because of freedom from the bondage of sin (Romans 7:25). Francis Turretin² effectively demolishes the position that Romans 7:14-25 deals with Paul in his unregenerate state:

Socinus [believes] that Romans 7 does not treat of Paul as renewed, but as constituted under the law. . . . Arminius agrees with him. . . . [However,] we cannot recede from the opinion commonly received among the orthodox, which is that Paul speaks of himself as renewed and that this severe struggle (often occurring between the old and new man, the flesh and spirit) is here described by him.

There are various reasons which prove it: (1) from the notation of time.³ Paul does not speak in a past tense (as before in v. 9), but in a present tense—“I am carnal” (v. 14); “I do not the good I would, I delight in the law of God” (v. 19, 22). Now when he wrote this, he was no more under the

¹ “[When Paul writes in Romans 7:19], ‘The good that I would (θέλω), I do not, but the evil which I would not (ὃ θέλω), that I do (πράσσω),’ [he means that by] reason of his regeneration and the implanting of the new life he is centrally and steadily inclined to holiness and disinclined to sin, but in a particular instance, under the stress of a temptation addressed to the *remainders* of his sinful inclination derived from his fall in Adam, he commits by a volition or choice, a single sin. His inclination is right, but his volition is wrong. And, be it observed, the volition in this instance gets its sinful quality from the *remainders of sinful inclination*, of which it is the executive, and not from the *holy inclination*, of which it is not the executive and with which it conflicts.” (*Dogmatic Theology: Anthropology*, William G. T. Shedd, Chapter 3, “The Human Will,” Supp. Help #31. Elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006). The statement of Romans 7:19 simply does not describe the state of an unregenerate person.

² Pgs. 697-699, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2, Topic 17:11-15. Trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. Philippsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994). Further evidence is examined in “Romans 7:14-25: Pauline Tension in the Christian Life,” David S. Dockery. *Grace Theological Journal* 2:2 (Fall 1981) 239-258; see also J. I. Packer’s incisive article, “The ‘Wretched Man’ in Romans 7.” *Studia Evangelica* 2:1 (1964) 621-627.

³ “The first section [of Romans 7 under consideration] (vss. 7-13) is all in the past tense, and the natural way to understand it is as autobiography. . . . The second section (vss. 14-25) is written entirely in the present tense. Grammatically, therefore, the natural way to read it would be as a transcript of Paul’s self-knowledge at the time of writing[.] . . . [T]here is no recognized linguistic idiom which will account for the change of tense, [so] it follows that the only natural way for Paul’s readers to interpret the present tenses of vss. 14ff. is as having a present reference, and as going on to describe something distinct from the past experience which the previous verses have recalled; and we must suppose that Paul knew this when he wrote them. [The idea that v. 14ff. continue to describe Paul’s previous state as unconverted must] accuse Paul of wantonly obscuring his own meaning, and laying himself open to needless misunderstanding, by a change of tense for which there is no reason at all” (pgs. 622, 624, “The ‘Wretched Man’ in Romans 7,” J. I. Packer).

law, but under grace. (2) He treats of him to whom the willing of good and the nilling of evil (or a hatred of sin) belongs: “For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (v. 15) and “For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (v. 18). Now this belongs only to the renewed, in whom God works both “to will and to do” (*to thelein kai to energeini*) although they are not always allowed to carry out what they wish (for us, to others who can think nothing good, how can they be said to will it?). (3) He treats of him who consents to the law of God in the inner man and who delights in it (v. 22), from which delight arises service—“With the mind I serve God” (v. 25). But who would say that any other than a believer delights in the law of God and according to it serves God; or that the inner man is any other than the new man?⁴ He is frequently designated as such (Ephesians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Peter 3:4). (4) He speaks of him in whom are distinguished two principles: one according to which he does the evil which he would not; the other according to which he does not perpetrate evil, but sin dwelling in him perpetrates it, and according to which he serves God (v. 17-19). Now it is evident that this can be said only of the believer, who has within him the old man and the new man, the flesh and the Spirit. (5) He treats of him who groans on account of his misery and who seeks and wishes for deliverance and congratulates himself and gives thanks when he has obtained it (v. 24-25)—which refer to no one except the renewed person. (6) A middle state between the regenerate and unregenerate is a pure invention, as if there were a middle ground between the child of God and the child of the Devil, between a living and a dead man. Nor can this be referred to the state under the law because those who lived under it were either reprobates (who were under it as a covenant and so under its curse, Galatians 3:10); or renewed (who were under it as a dispensation, in which although more sparingly and obscurely, still the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit was granted to them).

⁴ While some writers deny it, Scripture does in fact parallel the *outward/inward man* (ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος/ὁ ἔσω/ἔσωθεν ἄνθρωπος; Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16) and the *old/new man* (ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος/ὁ καινὸς/νέος ἄνθρωπος; Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22-24 (cf. 2:15); Colossians 3:9-10). The outward man is corrupting/perishing (present passive of διαφθείρω, 2 Corinthians 4:16), and the old man is corrupting likewise (present passive of φθείρω, Ephesians 4:22). The verb διαφθείρω, employed for the corruption of the outward man, speaks not merely of physical decline but sinful corruption, as it does likewise in the reference to men of “corrupt minds” (διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν, 1 Timothy 6:5). The verb φθείρω, used for the corruption of the old man, is almost always employed for sinful corruption in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 3:17 (in this verse, the sole NT instance where φθείρω does not refer to sinful corruption is paralleled with an instance where the verb does do so); 15:33; 2 Corinthians 7:2; 11:3; Ephesians 4:22; Jude 1:10; Revelation 19:2). Also, φθείρω and διαφθείρω are employed comparably not only in Ephesians 4:22 and 2 Corinthians 4:16, but also in Revelation 19:2 and Revelation 11:18. Furthermore, the only two texts with the verb ἀνακαινῶω in the New Testament refer, once, to the inward man being renewed (present tense, 2 Corinthians 4:16) and once to the new man being renewed (present tense, Colossians 3:10). An examination of the *outward/inward man* texts clearly indicates that the contrast involved is not merely one between the bodily human organism and a man’s inner being, but one between the sinful and the holy in believers. This contrast is very obvious in the *old/new man* texts as well. Note, finally, the parallel to the *inward man/new man* in 1 Peter 3:4’s reference to the incorruptible (ἀφθαρτός) *hidden man of the heart* (ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος).

The fact that the outward/inward man is employed of spiritual corruption and renewal does not mean that there is no association at all between the outward man and the physical decay of the human body. The existence of decay in the current world-system is a result of the entrance of sin with the fall of man. In the antelapsarian universe, as in the new heavens and new earth to come, physical decay, the concomitant of sin, is not present. The spiritual new creation in the believer is associated with the physical new creation to come, as the spiritual and physical outward man are associated. One sees this old/new dynamic in the fact that references to the outward/inward, corruptible/incorruptible in the believer refer to both his spiritual and physical aspects, in the fact that the *flesh* refers to both indwelling sin in the saint and to his physical body in this age as contrasted with his spiritual body to come (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-50), and in other areas of the doctrine of sanctification.

Paul ascribes nothing here to himself which cannot be found in the renewed. Not his saying that “he is carnal and sold under sin” (v. 14), because this is not to be understood absolutely, but comparatively and relatively;⁵ as Paul calls the Corinthians “carnal, and not spiritual” (1 Corinthians 3:1) because they still exhibited in their actions many remains of the flesh and the old man. Not a universal sale and captivity as to state, as if he were still under the dominion of sin, because thus he would neither delight in the law of God according to the inner man, nor could he be said to serve God with his mind; rather a particular captivity and selling as to certain acts, in which sense the flesh is said to lust against the Spirit, so that we do not what we would (Galatians 5:17). Nor when he says “sin dwells in him,” because it is one thing to dwell, another to reign. That denotes the presence of sin as it exists in the believer even unto the end, but this denotes its tyranny and dominion, which is overcome by the Spirit of Christ. Not that “he wishes for deliverance” from “the body of death,” since the believer is freed from the law of sin and death. For an inchoate deliverance and a perfect deliverance differ: one is from the curse of the law and exposure to death; the other from the dominion of sin and mortality (which attends it). The believer has already obtained the first, but he as yet expects and wishes for the other.⁶

Although a struggle between the appetite and reason often occurs in the unregenerate, such as in the Medea of the poet, who said, “I see the good, approve it too, and yet the wrong pursue” (Ovid, *Metamorphosis* 7:20-21 [Loeb, 1:342-343]), still there is a great difference between this

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Thomas Smith explains:

When the apostle says, “I am carnal,” we do not understand him as denying that he is spiritual also. But could the apostle make the general statement, “I am carnal,” if it were true that he was also spiritual? We are not left to conjecture upon this point; for just four verses further on he makes precisely the same statement, accompanying it with the explanation that it is in this sense that he makes it: “In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.” That assuredly is not the language of a carnal man, but of a spiritual man, to whom the remnants of a carnal nature still adhere. . . . [I]n the apostle’s judgment, the unregenerate man has no “inward man.” He is carnal inwardly as well as outwardly, all of a piece. He has not only flesh, but a “carnal mind,” all flesh together. . . . [N]one but the spiritual man [truly] knows himself to be carnal[.] (pgs. 278-279, “Means and Measure of Holiness,” Thomas Smith. *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (April 1876) 251-280)

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“The freedom from sin’s power which Christ bestows in this world is less than the deliverance for which the ‘wretched man’ cries out. For what he desires is deliverance ‘out of (ἐκ) the body of this death,’ i. e. this mortal body, which is at present sin’s place of residence (v. 23). But that deliverance will not come until ‘this mortal shall have put on immortality’ (1 Corinthians 15:53): a consummation for which, according to Romans 8:23, those who have the Spirit wait, groaning. And it is surely this groaning, in exact terms, which Romans 7:24 voices. What the ‘wretched man’ is longing for is what 8:23 calls ‘the redemption of our body.’ But if this is so, then what he gives thanks for in v. 25a must be the promise that through Christ this blessing will ultimately be his. And if v. 25a is a thanksgiving, not for a present deliverance from the condition described in vss. 15-23, but for a hope of future deliverance from it, then the juxtaposition of v. 25b ceases to be a problem [as it is on the view that Paul speaks of himself in v. 14-25 as unconverted]. On this exegesis, v. 25b is neither a *non sequitur* nor an anticlimax: it is simply a summing-up of the situation thus far described, a state of affairs which will last while mortal life lasts. The man in Christ serves the law of God with his mind, in the sense that he wants and wills to keep it perfectly, but with the flesh he serves the law of sin, as appears from the fact that he never is able to keep the law as perfectly and consistently as he wishes to do. The emphatic αὐτὸς ἐγώ, “I, even I,” [of v. 25, KJV “I myself”] expresses Paul’s sense of how painfully paradoxical it is that a Christian man like himself, who desires so heartily to keep God’s law and do only good, should find himself under the constant necessity of breaking the law and doing what in effect is evil. But such is the state of the Christian till his body is redeemed” (pg. 626, “The ‘Wretched Man’ in Romans 7,” J. I. Packer). That is: “[A]s to the agonizing question, ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ [t]he unregenerate, merely carnal, man does not regard his carnal self as a body of death, although it is such; but the spiritual man so regards the remnants of his carnal self. . . . The importance of the answer [to the question] depends upon the form of the question. Who *shall* deliver? I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord (I *shall* be delivered). And *therefore*, since such ultimate deliverance is in store for those who, while they have flesh, yet do not walk after the flesh, there is even *now* no condemnation” (pg. 279, “Means and Measure of Holiness,” Thomas Smith. *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (April 1876) 251-280).

and the struggle of the flesh and the Spirit of the renewed (of which Paul speaks). (1) As to their causes, the struggle of the unrenewed arises from the dictation of the conscience (or the strictures of the natural light, which have their seat principally in the intellect) and from the fear of punishment; the struggle of believers arises from the new and supernatural quality or principle of the Holy Spirit, which is spontaneously borne along to those things which are good; not only from a slavish dread of punishment, but from a filial reverence of God. (2) As to their subject, the light of the unregenerate is merely theoretical, remaining in the intellect and not reaching to the heart. But the light of grace (granted to the renewed) not only inheres in the governing (*to hegemoniko*) or superior part of the soul, but passes also to the concupiscible (*to epithymetikon*) or its lower part. (3) As to their objects, the contest of the unregenerate is occupied only about the more gross sins, which all abominate by the natural light; while the contest of believers is occupied with those also which (in the external court of men) are neither subjected to punishment, nor to any rebuke. (4) As to their effects, the former struggle can consist with the daily practice of sin and if it sometimes causes that good be done or evil avoided, still it can never arise to this—that it should be well done—and so represses rather than destroys sin; hence at last the reason with its light yields and is conquered. But in the struggle of believers, the flesh is bruised and mortified to such a degree that even if it cannot be eradicated absolutely and as yet exerts itself in many acts, still it cannot prevail, but is at length overcome by the Spirit, who makes believers more than conquerors (*hypernikan*).

To make Romans 7:14-25 into a description of an unconverted sinner is more consistent with Pelagianism than with the Biblical picture of the depravity of man.⁷

Romans 7:14-25 also cannot be correctly understood as the life of a lower category of Christian who has not discovered the secret of sanctification by faith alone or of higher life theology but is trapped in legalistic bondage and attempts at self-dependent Christianity and so lives in perpetual sin and defeat. Lewis Sperry Chafer presents this view:

Two extended passages bear upon the conflict which continues in every believer between the flesh and the Spirit, and therein is presented the only way of deliverance. In the first of these passages (Rom 7:15 to 8:4), the Apostle testifies, first, of his own complete failure and, second, of his victory. The failure is complete in spite of the fact that he has made his greatest possible effort to succeed. In Romans 7:15–25 the conflict is between the regenerate man (hypothetically contemplated as acting independently, or apart from, the indwelling Spirit) and his flesh. It is *not* between the Holy Spirit and the flesh. Probably there is no more subtle delusion common among believers than the supposition that the saved man, if he tries hard enough, can, on the basis of the fact that he is regenerate, overcome the flesh. The result of this struggle on the part of the Apostle was defeat to the extent that he became a “wretched man”; but, out of this experience, he learned a most vital and important lesson, namely, that there are two mighty tendencies always in the child of God, one aspiring to that which is good, and the other demanding that which is evil. This is the meaning of the conflict between “I,” the old nature, and “I,” the new nature, as recorded in

⁷ Snodgrass also notes concerning the idea that Romans 7:14-25 describes Paul in his unconverted state: “[T]o say nothing of the violence which is done to the understanding of the common reader, in supposing the apostle to describe past events in the use of the present tense—to say nothing of the absurdity of an unconverted sinner exclaiming, as he does in this passage, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’—to say nothing of the striking similarity between his language here and in other places in which he speaks, confessedly as a christian, of the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh . . . all of these considerations apart, it is enough to decide the question, to bring it into the light of historical facts, concerning which there can be no dispute. Let any candid inquirer look back upon the character and life of this distinguished individual, before his conversion; and see whether, in the progress of his history, there is no place for such a scene as that which is here described [cf. Philippians 3:4-6]” (pgs. 38-42, *The Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification*).

Romans 7:15–25, and there could be no more conclusive verdict rendered at the end of this impotent effort than the Apostle sets forth in verse 25: “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [I serve] the law of sin.”

The Apostle’s testimony is not closed thus. He goes on to report the discovery of a new principle of procedure, and a new and sufficient power available. The “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” quite apart from his own regenerate self which had so ignominiously failed, makes him free from the law or power of sin and death (8:2). He testifies further that “the righteousness of the law,”-meaning here vastly more than any written code, including, as it does, all the will of God as to every detail in every moment of the believer’s life-is fulfilled *in* him, but never fulfilled *by* him. This marvelous experience, the Apostle goes on to state, is granted to those only “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:4). Thus the Apostle prepares for the truth set forth in the second major passage (Gal 5:16–24) where the conflict is not between the regenerate man and his flesh with its inevitable defeat, but between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the flesh. We read: “*This* I say then, Walk in [or by dependence on] the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (5:16). No greater promise of victory over the flesh could be extended to the child of God than this. Not, indeed, by self-crucifixion of the flesh, nor by a supposed second work of grace by which the flesh is eradicated, but by the immediate and unceasing, overcoming power of the Spirit. The believer must learn the life of faith in which he depends upon the provided power of God. Apart from this faith there is only defeat; but with this faith there is blessed deliverance from the flesh and its lusts or desires.⁸

Without question, a believer who is self-dependent, who is not looking in faith to his Triune Sanctifier for strength and spiritual life, is going to decline spiritually (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:9).⁹ Believers must live by faith if they are to grow (cf. Hebrews 11:6). However, Romans 7:14-25 does not specifically deal with this fact, nor does Romans present Paul in a lower Christian life in 7:14-25 from which he allegedly passes, starting in Romans 8:1, into a higher life of faith. Romans 7:14-8:4ff. does not teach that there are two sorts of Christians, one type that lives in perpetual defeat and the other in perpetual victory. Chafer’s view has a number of serious problems. First, while a distinction between believers who are in fellowship with God and drawing closer to Him, and those who are out of fellowship, is clearly present in Scripture (1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 11:29), nowhere does the Bible speak of regenerate people who are “complete[ly] failure[s]” and produce no fruit at all.¹⁰ Second, it is impossible for a believer to make “his greatest possible effort to succeed” in living for God while wickedly rejecting the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit. Third, while saints can certainly grieve and quench the Spirit, one must very seriously question if a regenerate man can totally and absolutely “act independently, or apart from, the indwelling Spirit.”

⁸ Pgs. 404-406, “The Doctrine of Sin, Part 4,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 92:368 (Oct 35) 394-411.

⁹ “[W]e ought continually to *wait and depend on God* for supplies of his Spirit and grace, without which we can do nothing. . . . God is more the author, by his grace, of the good we do than we ourselves (“Not I, but the grace of God which was with me”)[.] . . . [W]e ought to be careful that by our negligences and sins we provoke not the Holy Spirit to withhold his aids and assistances, and so to leave us to ourselves, in which condition we can do nothing that is spiritually good” (pgs. 458-459, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, John Owen. Book 4:2. Elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library, Christian Library Series vol. 9. Rio, WI: 2005).

¹⁰ Compare Section III, “The Certainty of Practical Sanctification For All The Regenerate.”

Where does the Bible clearly present such a possibility? On the other hand, if Chafer means that such rebellious absolute independent action by saints is merely “hypothetically contemplated” but never actually exists in the world, one would wonder why such an extended passage of Scripture would address a situation that never actually takes place, and wonder whether advocates of Chafer’s position ought to preach from Romans 7:14-25, since nobody on earth is ever actually in the situation presented. Fourth, Romans 7:14-8:4ff. does not set up a contrast between two categories of Christians, one of which has a lower life of perpetual defeat and the second of which has a higher life of perpetual victory because they are in the sub-category of Christians “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8 teaches that all who are “in Christ Jesus” will “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”¹¹ (8:1)—those who do not walk after the Spirit instead of the flesh are still unregenerate and under “condemnation” (8:1). Those who are still “after the flesh” rather than “after the Spirit” (8:5) are the enemies of God who are headed to spiritual death in hell, while all believers, all who are indwelt by the Spirit, are “after the Spirit” (8:6-12) and characteristically walk after the Spirit. Those who live after the flesh will die spiritually, while those who are “led by the Spirit of God”—led “through the Spirit [to] mortify the deeds of the body”—they, and they only, “are the sons of God” (8:13-14).

Sound exegesis demands that the death which those who walk after the flesh undergo in Romans 8 (and those who characteristically yield themselves to sin in Romans 6; cf. v. 16, 21) is spiritual death in hell, not just some sort of lack of fellowship with God experienced by regenerate people who are allegedly stuck in a Romans 7:14-25 type of Christian experience. The verb for *death* in Romans 8:13, *apothnesko* (ἀποθνήσκω), used in the warning “if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,” is found 49 times in Paul’s epistles and 111 times in the New Testament.¹² Among a variety of other categories of use, the word is clearly employed with a reference to spiritual death by both Paul (Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:14) and other New Testament writers (John 6:50; 8:21, 24, 52; 11:25-26; Jude 12). Not one of the 111 instances of the verb

¹¹ The removal of the inspired μή κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα in 8:1 in modern Bible versions that follow the corrupt modern critical Greek text, in opposition to the *Textus Receptus* and c. 95% of Greek MSS, to adopt one of a number of other readings that possesses only a tiny fraction of MSS evidence, is very unfortunate.

¹² Matthew 8:32; 9:24; 22:24, 27; 26:35; Mark 5:35, 39; 9:26; 12:19-22; 15:44; Luke 8:42, 52-53; 16:22; 20:28-32, 36; John 4:47, 49; 6:49-50, 58; 8:21, 24, 52-53; 11:14, 16, 25-26, 32, 37, 50-51; 12:24, 33; 18:32; 19:7; 21:23; Acts 7:4; 9:37; 21:13; 25:11; Romans 5:6-8, 15; 6:2, 7-10; 7:2-3, 6, 9; 8:13, 34; 14:7-9, 15; 1 Corinthians 8:11; 9:15; 15:3, 22, 31-32, 36; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 6:9; Galatians 2:19, 21; Philippians 1:21; Colossians 2:20; 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 5:10; Hebrews 7:8; 9:27; 10:28; 11:4, 13, 21, 37; Jude 1:12; Revelation 3:2; 8:9, 11; 9:6; 14:13; 16:3.

clearly speaks of saved people suffering a “death” consisting of lack of fellowship with God because of a legalistic Christian life. Furthermore, the *death* promised the carnally minded in Romans 8:6, indicated by the noun *thanatos* (θάνατος), which appears 119 times in the New Testament¹³ and which Paul employs 50 times in his epistles, is clearly used, among a variety of other ideas, for spiritual death by Paul (Romans 1:32; 5:12, 21; 6:23; 7:5; 2 Corinthians 3:7), and other New Testament writers (Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:79; John 5:24; 8:51-52; 1 John 3:14). Indeed, *thanatos* is the word employed for “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone . . . the second death” (Revelation 21:8; 2:11; 20:6). Not one clear New Testament text employs *thanatos* for a spiritual “death” experienced by the regenerate on earth when they are allegedly stuck in a Romans 7:14-25 type of life. Also, the verb *live* (ζῶω) in Romans 8:13 promises eternal life to those who through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body. The verb is used 71 times by Paul and 142 times in the New Testament.¹⁴ It is never used for a sort of spiritual life possessed only by an elite group of Christians, while it is employed (among other uses, such as the common sense of physical life) for the everlasting life possessed by all God’s people by Paul and other New Testament writers (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38-39; John 6:58; 11:25). The related noun for *life* (ζωή), which appears 39 times in Paul (cf. Romans 6:22-23; 8:2, 6) and 134 times in the New Testament,¹⁵ is used the

¹³ Matthew 4:16; 10:21; 15:4; 16:28; 20:18; 26:38, 66; Mark 7:10; 9:1; 10:33; 13:12; 14:34, 64; Luke 1:79; 2:26; 9:27; 22:33; 23:15, 22; 24:20; John 5:24; 8:51-52; 11:4, 13; 12:33; 18:32; 21:19; Acts 2:24; 13:28; 22:4; 23:29; 25:11, 25; 26:31; 28:18; Romans 1:32; 5:10, 12, 14, 17, 21; 6:3-5, 9, 16, 21, 23; 7:5, 10, 13, 24; 8:2, 6, 38; 1 Corinthians 3:22; 11:26; 15:21, 26, 54-56; 2 Corinthians 1:9-10; 2:16; 3:7; 4:11-12; 7:10; 11:23; Philippians 1:20; 2:8, 27, 30; 3:10; Colossians 1:22; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; 5:7; 7:23; 9:15-16; 11:5; James 1:15; 5:20; 1 John 3:14; 5:16-17; Revelation 1:18; 2:10-11, 23; 6:8; 9:6; 12:11; 13:3, 12; 18:8; 20:6, 13-14; 21:4, 8.

¹⁴ Matthew 4:4; 9:18; 16:16; 22:32; 26:63; 27:63; Mark 5:23; 12:27; 16:11; Luke 2:36; 4:4; 10:28; 15:13; 20:38; 24:5, 23; John 4:10-11, 50-51, 53; 5:25; 6:51, 57-58, 69; 7:38; 11:25-26; 14:19; Acts 1:3; 7:38; 9:41; 10:42; 14:15; 17:28; 20:12; 22:22; 25:19, 24; 26:5; 28:4; Romans 1:17; 6:2, 10-11, 13; 7:1-3, 9; 8:12-13; 9:26; 10:5; 12:1; 14:7-9, 11; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 9:14; 15:45; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 3:3; 4:11; 5:15; 6:9, 16; 13:4; Galatians 2:14, 19-20; 3:11-12; 5:25; Philippians 1:21-22; Colossians 2:20; 3:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 3:8; 4:15, 17; 5:10; 1 Timothy 3:15; 4:10; 5:6; 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:12; 4:1; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 2:15; 3:12; 4:12; 7:8, 25; 9:14, 17; 10:20, 31, 38; 12:9, 22; James 4:15; 1 Peter 1:3, 23; 2:4-5, 24; 4:5-6; 1 John 4:9; Revelation 1:18; 2:8; 3:1; 4:9-10; 5:14; 7:2, 17; 10:6; 13:14; 15:7; 16:3; 19:20; 20:4.

¹⁵ Matthew 7:14; 18:8-9; 19:16-17, 29; 25:46; Mark 9:43, 45; 10:17, 30; Luke 1:75; 10:25; 12:15; 16:25; 18:18, 30; John 1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 29, 39-40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47-48, 51, 53-54, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:31; Acts 2:28; 3:15; 5:20; 8:33; 11:18; 13:46, 48; 17:25; Romans 2:7; 5:10, 17-18, 21; 6:4, 22-23; 7:10; 8:2, 6, 10, 38; 11:15; 1 Corinthians 3:22; 15:19; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 4:10-12; 5:4; Galatians 6:8; Ephesians 4:18; Philippians 1:20; 2:16; 4:3; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:8; 6:12, 19; 2 Timothy 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7; Hebrews 7:3, 16; James 1:12; 4:14; 1 Peter 3:7, 10; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 John 1:1-2; 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13, 16, 20; Jude 1:21; Revelation 2:7, 10; 3:5; 11:11; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:6, 27-22:2; 22:14, 17, 19.

large majority of the time for eternal life¹⁶ in Paul and the rest of the New Testament but is never used for a Christian life possessed only by some believers. Neither the words for *death* nor the words for *life* in Romans 6-8 are ever clearly used for a type of spiritual life possessed only by a certain group of higher-level Christians or for a type of death possessed only by a certain group of lower-level Christians.¹⁷ Thus, all Christians, all who are “in Christ,” not a certain portion only, are characterized by a walk that is “after the Spirit” and not “after the flesh” (Romans 8:1). Those who characteristically walk after the flesh are unsaved and headed to spiritual death in hell, while those whose lives are characterized by a walk after the Spirit will, because they have been justified by faith alone and been given a new nature, receive eternal life. This exegetical fact means that the idea that a certain portion of Christians is described in Romans 7:14-25, while another group is described in Romans 8:1ff., is impossible.

Futhermore, the statements of 8:1-4 are tied into 7:14-25. Romans 8:1ff. is not set in contrast to 7:14-25, but explains it. “Therefore”¹⁸ (8:1)—because of the truth of 7:14-25—there is no condemnation to those in Christ, those who walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh, having been set free by regeneration (8:2ff.). Unbelievers have no struggle with sin, since they have no new principle in them through regeneration, but believers have a new spiritual life so that they hate sin, delight in the law of God, and serve Him (7:15, 22, 25). Those with this new principle of life in them will be saved (8:1, 6, 10-11,

¹⁶ See Matthew 7:14; 18:8-9; 19:16-17, 29; 25:46; Mark 9:43, 45, 10:17, 30; Luke 10:25; 18:18, 30; John 1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 46; 5:24, 26, 29, 39, 40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 54, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:31; Acts 2:28; 3:15; 5:20; 11:18; 13:46, 48; Romans 2:6; 5:17, 21; 6:4, 22-23; 7:10; 8:2, 6, 10; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 4:10-12; 5:4; Galatians 6:8; Ephesians 4:18; Philippians 2:16; 4:3; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:8; 6:12, 19; 2 Timothy 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7; James 1:12; 1 Peter 3:7, 10; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 John 1:1-2; 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13, 16, 20; Jude 21; Revelation 2:7, 10; 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:6, 27; 22:1-2, 14, 16, 19.

¹⁷ The affirmation of this sentence is not that, in every one of the hundreds of verses discussed, independently considered, such a sense, *were it already clearly established*, is impossible. Some—indeed, many—of the verses neither prove nor disprove the existence of such a sense. However, before one can conclude that a particular text speaks of a higher spiritual life that only some Christians possess, or a lower Christian life that is really “death” that an inferior sub-category of Christians possess, sound hermeneutics require that such an idea must be required and clearly established in at least one passage—otherwise eisegesis is being employed instead of correct exegesis. The ideas of eternal life and eternal death in hell very easily pass this test of required meaning in at least one passage (i. e., Romans 5:12-21). The higher life/lower “death” view does not, so it cannot be read into texts that, on their own, could go either way. A hermeneutic that allows verses that do not *disprove* a particular notion to have that idea read into them would allow, not only a higher/lower Christian life/death notion, but the idea that the Bible employs “life” to speak of being alive when in a spaceshuttle orbiting the moon—after all, does, say, Luke 2:36 prove that Anna did *not* live with her husband for the seven years of their marriage in orbit?

¹⁸ “ἄρα . . . marker of an inference made on the basis of what precedes . . . in declarative statement. . . so, then, consequently, you see” (BDAG). “ἄρα: a marker of result as an inference from what has preceded . . . ‘so, then, consequently, as a result.’ οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα ‘so, then, there is now no condemnation’ Ro 8:1” (Louw-Nida, 89.46).

13-14) and will be different (8:1-4, 13-15). The development of the argument in Romans 7:14-8:1ff. demonstrates that the idea that one category of Christians is described by the second half of chapter seven and another category by chapter eight is false. Romans 7:14-25 describes the struggle in every true believer, in those who are “in Christ Jesus” and therefore “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:1), those who with their mind serve the law of God (cf. 12:2) and thank God through Christ Jesus for the progressive victory over sin the Spirit produces in them (7:25). Indeed, the closer a believer grows to God, the more the victory over sin described in Romans 6-8 is experientially manifest in his life, the more he will hate the indwelling sin that still remains in him, and the more passionately he will be able to concur with the lamentations of Romans 7:14-25 about what remains of his indwelling corruption. Romans 7:25-8:1ff. proves that 7:14-25 do not describe a hopeless,¹⁹ flesh-controlled, sub-par Christian, but a

¹⁹ Recognizing that all believers on earth experience Romans 7:14-25 does not lead to spiritual despair or to acceptance of a low level of Christian experience. Contrast the article on sanctification in *The Baptist Encyclopedia* (vol. 3; Elec. acc. *Baptist History Collection*, ver. 1. Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005) by William Cathcart:

Sanctification. — Sanctification (ἁγιασμός) is separation from the world, purity of heart and life, holiness. The inspired truth of God is the instrument by which the soul is sanctified, and the Spirit of God is the author of that blessed work. It commences in the soul when the Comforter gives a new heart, and when he imparts that faith in Jesus which enables the believer to shake off the allurements and power of sin. Its *nature* is often misunderstood by Christians. In the unconverted man there is but one bent, one inclination, and it always points to some form of selfishness or sin. He forgets God, or only thinks of him to resist him. And though his conscience may occasionally remonstrate with him, yet he has but one purpose in life. The Christian *has two dispositions*: the controlling one is governed by love to Christ and hatred of sin; the inferior one is composed of the remains of his corrupt nature, and it is full of hatred to Jesus and a holy life. These opposite inclinations are found in some measure in every regenerated member of Christ’s family, from the most perfect disciple, ready for heaven, to the most defective believer, just born of the Spirit. There never was a true believer on earth entirely free from the abiding evil of which Paul speaks in Romans 7:23: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” This law of sin needs continual watching, and it needs resistless grace; and it only perishes in a child of God when death destroys the life of the body. Sanctification, after it is commenced by the new birth and a firm reliance upon Christ, consists in a constant growth in faith and in love to Christ; these developments of the religious life impose increased restraints upon our evil tendencies, and give additional power to our earnest and frequent prayers for grace to overcome every foe of Jesus within and around us. We should aim at *complete consecration* to God. . . . Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” When any creature was given to a Jewish priest to be offered up to God in sacrifice, nothing was retained by the worshiper, not even a portion of the hair or of the wool. A Jewish altar must be built not of hewn, but of whole stones (Joshua 8:31); the priest must not be deformed or injured: he must be a perfect physical man; and the sacrifice must be without blemish, and must be given whole to the priest. And we are required to present our bodies *a living sacrifice*, an enduring and complete offering to God. Sanctification is *a progressive work*. Paul says, “Leaving the principles (rudiments) of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;” that is, unto the full development of Christian graces. An intelligent patriot, in a time of war, enlists; but though he loves his country, and has a strong body and a vigorous mind, he needs drilling to make him useful. Five thousand veterans could chase one hundred thousand warriors of his order. But let him be drilled for six months, and pass through two or three battles, and he is fitted for anything which the experienced and brave patriot can achieve. So the believer, as he journeys along the narrow way, learns more every day of the cunning and perseverance of sin, and of the power of grace to resist it; and while he may never be freed from the attacks of the tempter, nor from his internal weaknesses, till death, yet he may become a powerful veteran in watching, fighting, and routing sin; and he may become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, so that sin shall never have dominion over him. A holy heart and life *give the*

Spirit-produced striving against indwelling sin, the normal Christian life of the apostle Paul and the rest of the regenerate.

J. I. Packer discusses and critiques the Keswick position²⁰ set forth by Hannah W. Smith²¹ and advocated by Steven Barabas²² and others,²³ which is very similar to the

richest pleasure. When the believer falls he prepares for the most miserable doubts, and for bitter repentance. Soon he will be crying, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" "Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free Spirit." And, besides, the chastising hand of God may fall heavily upon him and his, to make him renounce sin. But if he is only faithful to Jesus, grace equal to every trial will be given him; Jesus will walk with him in every furnace of affliction, and give him joy when the most acute anguish shall scourge others. So Paul was blessed in his sorrows, and as a result, he says, "We glory in tribulations also;" and so the martyrs have been favored as their bodies were subjected to the worst woes that human cunning could invent; the Saviour filled them with his love, and they had overflowing pleasures in their agonies. Holiness of heart *pleases God.* The sin of the angels drove them from heaven. The guilt of our first parents expelled them from Paradise. The sinful pride of Moses, when he smote the rock for water, shut him out of the earthly Canaan. We should follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, and without which our prayers will not be heard, for David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." It gives the world the noblest *testimony to the power of Christ.* A community of holy persons attracts the attention of all around them. Their purity of life and love to Jesus become proverbial, and with the greatest eloquence and success they preach the Cross of Jesus, even when they do not utter a word. In this way they keep the Saviour's words, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Cathcart's recognition of the applicability of Romans 7:14-25 to all believers did not lead him to despair, or to a low level of Christian life, nor stop him from calling Christians to "complete consecration to God." Similarly, in a critique of Higher Life theology, Dr. Alvah Hovey wrote: "[T]he Christian is not left to contend with his evil nature by the simple force of holy purpose in his renewed heart, but . . . is assured of victory by the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ. Left to himself he would be no match for the strength of sin in his old nature; but by union with Christ he is not only set free from condemnation, but also strengthened with might by the Spirit, and set forward every day on the way to complete victory over sin" (pg. 68, *Doctrine of the Higher Christian Life Compared With the Teaching of the Holy Scriptures*). Such statements, by those who maintain the classic view of Romans 7:14-25 and of sanctification in general, are hardly the sentiments of hopeless despair.

²⁰ John Murray also points out a number of serious problems with the Keswick view of Romans 7:14-25:

It is to be appreciated that the Keswick leaders, as a rule, interpret Romans 7:14-25 as depicting the experience of one who is a believer. But when they maintain that 'the experience of struggle and defeat here described is not the God-intended normal experience of Christians, but shows what happens when any person, regenerate or unregenerate, tries to conquer the old nature by self-effort' (p. 77 [Barabas, *So Great Salvation*]), then we must dissent on several grounds. It is a bold assertion to describe the struggle of Romans 7:14ff. as one of defeat and that categorically and without qualification. And where is the evidence to support the inference that this depicts the struggle which ensues when a person 'tries to conquer the old nature by self-effort' or that it 'is descriptive of a Christian *regarded in himself*, apart from active faith in Christ' (p. 78)? Are such protestations as 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man' (v. 22) and 'Consequently then I myself with the mind serve the law of God' (v. 25), the language of a Christian 'apart from active faith in Christ'? Finally, if, even on Keswick assumptions, we properly estimate the implications of the sin which still dwells in the believer, then the conflict, indeed the contradiction, delineated in Romans 7:14ff. is inevitable. Granting the presence of sin in any form or to any degree and granting that the person is regenerate, it is futile to argue that this conflict is not normal. Anyone imbued with sensitivity to the demands of holiness and who yearns to be holy as the Father in heaven is holy must experience the contradiction which Romans 7:14ff. portrays. A believer without this tension would be abnormal. The more sanctified the believer is, the more conformed he is to the image of his Saviour, the more he must recoil against every lack of conformity to the holiness of God. If we take seriously the contradiction which resides in the believer between the flesh and the Spirit, between sin and righteousness, between unholiness and holiness, how could it be otherwise? As long as sin remains there is contradiction within the saint, and it is contradiction without reservation. It is only by ignoring the reality of the contradiction that we can get away from the *necessity* of this inward conflict. The holier a regenerate person is the more conscious will he be of the gravity of the sin that remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it. There is no need or

place for a contrast between the exultant confidence of Romans 8 and the struggle of Romans 7:14ff. The more intense the conflict of Romans 7, the more the apostle gloried in the triumphing grace and hope of Romans 8 and of Romans 7 itself. And the more he gloried in the certitudes of Romans 8 and 7, the more he would be conscious of the contradiction which rested in his own bosom. It is only by evading the realities of sin and grace that we can escape from the stern realism of the conflict of Romans 7. There is a grand candour in this passage, the candour of inspired utterance. (pgs. 285-286, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 4, review of *So Great Salvation*, Barabas)

Both Murray and Packer effectively demonstrate that the Keswick view of Romans 7:14-25 is certainly false.

²¹ Hannah W. Smith considered Romans 7:14-25 as a description of “the wearying and unsuccessful conflict with sin” from which one escapes in Romans “eight” (Letter, 1866, reproduced in the entry for February 14 of *The Christian’s Secret of a Holy Life*, Hannah W. Smith, ed. Dieter; see also Letter to Miss Beck, August 25, 1878, reproduced in the entry for September 5). However, Mrs. Smith, as she meditated on the subject intending to write on it in the Quaker *Friend’s Review*, recognized: “The Scriptures certainly say very little about there being two experiences in the Christian life. For the most part the Christian is evidently spoken of and looked upon as one who has actual possession of all the fullness of Christ’s salvation.” To deal with those who reject the Higher Life and second blessing theology because of this lack of Scriptural evidence, she recommended: “The way to meet the arguments of those who say there is only one experience, is to ask them whether they individually and experimentally are enjoying the fullness of the gospel, whether they have habitual victory and uninterrupted peace . . . ask them . . . what are those Christians to do who don’t possess this fullness, whose peace is not uninterrupted, and whose victories are alternated with defeats. . . . The experimental argument is the only one that will meet these opposers. ‘Have you got it? If not, how are you going to get it; or if you have it, how am I to get it?’” The “wilderness,” where Israel was “neither in Egypt nor in the Promised Land,” represents the “7th of Romans, the wilderness experience of the Christian.” This view cannot be proven by exegeting Scripture, but experience proved that it was true: “The truth is we have got to deal with facts, and the fact is that the majority of Christians do need and must have a second experience . . . It is hardly worthwhile for any one to tell those of us who have taken these two steps, that there is but one. We know better; and our own experience is far more convincing to us than a thousand theories” (Letter to Miss Beck, reproduced in the entries for September 5-6 of *The Christian’s Secret of a Holy Life*, Hannah W. Smith, ed. Dieter). Thus, Hannah W. Smith recognized that only experience could establish the Higher Life theology—its opponents could not be answered with Scripture. It was clear, however, that the classical view of Romans 7 could not be correct, for it would lead to self-examination, watchfulness, and an abhorrence of remaining indwelling sin, while such feelings were not consonant with the end of the Higher Life—feeling happy—which required that one be careless about indwelling sin or ignorant of its presence by opposition to self-examination. Rather, one must practice the Quietism of Fenelon. Hannah wrote: “Give up all future self-reflective acts. . . . It is the rule of my life never to think over any past action. This . . . enables me to live continually in the present moment with God. Fenelon says, ‘Make it a rule to put an end, at the close of every action, to all reflections upon it, whether of joy or sorrow. When we are no longer embarrassed by these restless reflections of self, we begin to enjoy true liberty. False wisdom, on the other hand, [is] always on the watch . . . [and] suffers severely whenever it is permitted to perceive the smallest speck of imperfection in self. The chagrin we feel at our own defects is often a greater fault than the original defect itself.’” . . . Nothing so decidedly [contributes to] solid spiritual progress, as when one is able to view one’s own failures without being disturbed” (Letter to Priscilla, January 22, 1882, reproduced in the entry for November 9 of *The Christian’s Secret of a Holy Life*, Hannah W. Smith, ed. Dieter). Surely the fact that Mrs. Smith’s carefree happiness was hindered by the old view of Romans 7 indicated that it must be in error.

Hannah Smith advocated what became the Keswick view of Romans 7:14-25 in “the first article she ever published, in the *Friends Review*,” proving that “George Fox” recognized that Romans 7:25a was the key to escape from the life of Romans 7:14-24, and that Christ “must live” the Christian life “for us” (excerpt from the *Friends Review* reproduced in the entry for February 17 of *The Christian’s Secret of a Holy Life*, Hannah W. Smith, ed. Dieter). The Keswick and Higher Life theology was good Quaker teaching, and Hannah W. Smith delighted to meditate upon and reference the writings of George Fox and other Quakers in her writings (e. g., Letter to Mother, March 18, 1867; Letter to Frank, April 4, 1871; Letter to Father and Mother, June 9, 1875, Letter to a Friend, May 18, 1879 reproduced in the entries for

March 7, June 1, July 26 & September 14 of *The Christian's Secret of a Holy Life*, Hannah W. Smith, ed. Dieter).

²² “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification.” *The Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. 27 (1955) 153-167. Packer is reviewing the book *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* by Steven Barabas. Note the analysis of this book in Appendix **get the number!!**) Packer’s article is a devastating critique of Barabas’ position overall: “There was thus no response from the Keswick faction which rebuffed the critique offered by Packer. It is widely agreed that Packer’s review marked the end of the dominance of the Keswick approach among younger evangelicals . . . the theological weight of Packer’s critique seemed to many to prove unanswerable.” (pg. 79, *J. I. Packer: A Biography*, A. McGrath. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997). However, Packer’s rebuttal has the serious weakness that Packer rejects (pgs. 160-161) what he calls “a mystical doctrine of personal communion with the Holy Ghost” and likewise opposes the idea that a “life in which the Holy Spirit plays no conscious part is sub-normal Christianity.” Packer gives no verses from the Bible for his rejection of personal communion with the Holy Ghost (contra 2 Corinthians 13:14), but simply blows fellowship with Him off as being “magic” by a quote from B. B. Warfield. Packer’s acceptance of a life in which the Holy Spirit plays no conscious part is a dangerous error in his doctrine of sanctification. One wonders if his vehement opposition to the doctrine of conscious fellowship with the Holy Ghost stems from the incredible amount of quenching and grief the Spirit receives from the liturgical and lifeless Anglican communion in which Packer ministers, a denomination that is filled to the brim with unregenerate people and apostasy. The serious error of Packer in downplaying the communion of the Holy Ghost, while widespread in modern Reformed circles, and recognized as a danger by some modern writers among the Reformed themselves (e. g., Bruce Waltke, professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, wrote: “Reformed doctrine . . . may lead to spiritual deadness by reducing Christianity to a rational system of thought rather than maximizing and realizing the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit in life” (pg. 22, “Evangelical Spirituality: A Biblical Scholar’s Perspective.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31:1 (March 1988).) does not represent the uniform position of classical Reformed authors. When John Owen wrote *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and spent many pages detailing the believer’s personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit, he embraced a theology of sanctification notably different from Packer. Consider also the warm embrace of communion with the Spirit by the Dutch Second Reformation Calvinist Wilhelmus à Brakel:

[T]he Holy Spirit . . . transmi[ts] . . . the image of God [and] imprint[s] [it] upon the heart of man, who is re-created in this image. . . . The transmission of this image occurs by the operation of the Spirit of God, who imprints the image of God upon man, causing Christ to be formed in them. . . . This sealing, which confirms believers and assures them that they are partakers of the covenant of grace, occurs in various ways.

First, this occurs when the Spirit reveals to believers that He dwells in them as in a temple. The bride requested, “set me as a seal upon Thine heart” (Song 8:6); that is, let me thus be imprinted upon Thy heart, that Thou wouldest continually think upon me and that my appearance would continually be before Thy eyes. In like manner the Holy Spirit sets Himself as a seal upon the heart of believers, making them conscious of His presence and indwelling, whereby He assures them as clearly and powerfully that they are partakers of the covenant of grace as if they were sealed with a seal. . . . Secondly, the Holy Spirit seals them by imprinting the image of God upon them, as well as by showing and revealing to them that the image of God is in them. He convinces them of the genuineness of their initial change, of their being ingrafted into Christ, of their faith whereby they truly received Christ and still do so daily both unto justification and sanctification. He convinces them of the genuineness of their insatiable desire to continually enjoy communion with God, of their spiritual life which, though feeble, is nevertheless genuine, and of their hatred for sin. He makes them aware how it wounds and grieves them when they perceive internal sin, imperfection in their performance of duty, as well as their failure to perform that which is good. He shows them that it is not only all their desire to be holy, but that their utmost effort is to do everything in faith, to be motivated by the love and fear of God, to live in childlike obedience, etc. The Spirit makes them conscious of all this, so that they perceive it in such a manner that they can neither deny it nor be deprived of its inherent comfort. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Having on the one side revealed this to them, He leads them, in the consciousness of this received grace, not only to the Word of God but also to the promises which are made to such persons as they are. He sheds light upon such texts and causes them to acknowledge the infallible truth expressed in them. In this condition He ushers them into the presence of God and by virtue of two propositions—one being deduced from the grace they possess and the other from the Word of God—causes them to come to the conclusion that

they are most certainly the children of God and thus will become partakers of eternal salvation. By way of such reasoning, the Holy Spirit not only labors to give clarity and assurance concerning both God's grace in them and the promises of Scripture for them, but also takes an active part in the formulation of this conclusion. By granting much light, He causes them to be steadfast and assured in this conclusion. By His sealing power He impresses this reality so deeply upon their heart that they believe it with such certainty as if they saw it with their eyes and touched it with their hands—yes, as if they were already in possession of salvation itself. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit also occasionally seals in an immediate manner by means of clear and powerful declarations within the heart, such as: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; Thy sins are forgiven thee; Thou art an heir of eternal life,” and similar passages. Such declarations occasionally occur by means of a Scripture passage which is powerfully applied. At other times this can occur without a specific text, bearing in mind that such a declaration will always be in agreement with Scripture, it being the touchstone for such a declaration. This immediate sealing does not only result in the confirmation of their spiritual state, but the Holy Spirit grants them the immediate enjoyment of the matter itself, which results in peaceful serenity, a pleasant and sweet frame of mind, and an exhilarating joy. This causes such a person to be saturated with love, be in a holy frame of mind, be lifted up in the ways of the Lord, be ready to heroically do battle with the enemy, and walk in the way of God's commandments. The bride refers to this as being kissed. “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine” (Song 1:2). She further testifies, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love,” etc. (Song 2:4-6). Such was David's desire, “say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” (Psalm 35:3). It is this blessing which Christ promises to believers. “I will love him, and will manifest Myself to Him. We will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:21, 23).

One should know, however, that, although all believers are sealed, [they do not enjoy experiential fellowship with the Spirit] with equal clarity. (pgs. 187-190, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol 1. It should be noted that experiential communion with God the Father, Son, and Spirit is not a doctrine that requires allegorization of the Song of Solomon for Scriptural support.)

Indeed, Warfield himself, whom Packer quotes for his opposition to communion with the Holy Ghost, makes many affirmations affirming the reality and centrality of such communion. For example, Warfield affirmed:

For the right interpretation of Scripture there are, of course, requisite all sorts of human preparations, knowledges, fitnesses (general and spiritual training, knowledge of languages and history, etc.); but the essential qualification is, nevertheless, faith and life in communion with the Holy Ghost, who teaches us to understand the complete harmony of Scripture, even in the apparent contradictions of Scripture[.] . . . For the Holy Spirit leads all those who are of believing heart, and who call on Him for the purpose of receiving enlightenment only from Him, into all truth. (“The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” in *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, vol. 6 of *Works*)

Warfield similarly wrote:

We may of course speak of a mystical aspect of Christianity, and we may even speak of the doctrine or rather the experience of the Holy Ghost, as the real truth of mysticism. The term “Christ-mysticism” may have a good meaning . . . [although it] may also be gravely misleading. . . . [H]ad only all Christians understood, and lived up to their belief in the Holy Ghost, they would all have been mystics[.] . . . All Christians . . . actually are “mystics” in the sense [that] . . . communion with God is of the very essence of Christianity: Paul tells us in so many words, that “if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.” No man is a Christian who has not the experience of the indwelling Christ. (Review of *Mysticism and Modern Life*, John Wright Buckham, in *Critical Reviews*, vol. 10 of *Works*. Quote marks have been removed.)

Enjoyment of the communion of the Holy Ghost (2 Corinthians 13:14), contrary to the affirmations of Packer, is not only characteristic of better Reformed writers, but it indubitably characterizes historic Baptist theology as well, for conscious, experiential communion with the Trinity is not “magic,” but the plain teaching of Scripture. When “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5), conscious, experiential fellowship is in view. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15)—what is this but experiential fellowship? The Apostles could say, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” a fellowship as experiential as their fellowship one with another (1 John 1:3). Christ promises: “[H]e that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:18-23). Does Christ manifest Himself to the believer, and come with His Father to abide with the believer, without conscious, experiential fellowship with his beloved redeemed one? To “know the love of

Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19) cannot be merely intellectual, but also experiential. When Christ comes in to the believer, to sup with him, experiential fellowship is clearly in view (Revelation 3:20). Packer’s affirmation that a life in which the Holy Spirit plays no conscious part is not sub-normal Christianity is extremely dangerous and entirely erroneous.

It is also amazing that Packer will oppose Keswick with tremendous vehemence, while employing far softer language for the by any reasonable measure far more serious errors of charismatic fanaticism and soul-damning Romanism and theological modernism. Packer will hope that he has heard the “last gasp” (pg. 124, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*) of the Keswick doctrine, but never expresses such a hope for modernism, Romanism, or the charismatic movement. He indicates that “hatred of the cruel and tormenting realities of overheated holiness teaching [Keswick] remains in his heart to this day” (pg. 129), but expresses no such sentiments about the doctrines of modernists and Romanists, calling such non-evangelicals “other Christians” (pg. 126), and speaks of a “world church—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and nonepiscopal Protestant” (pg. 139) all together. When asked if he is “for or against the charismatics,” he will not say he is against them (pg. 141), but will call the charismatic movement “evangelicalism’s half-sister” (pg. 141) declare that his “experiences in fellowship with charismatics have almost all been good” (pg. 143), praise fleshly and worldly charismatic “worship” as “deeply cleansing and invigorating” (pg. 146), affirm that charismatic tongues should not be condemned as a private prayer language (pg. 152) but are a “good gift of God” (pg. 169), and that their alleged exorcism ministries are “salutary for many” (pg. 158). Packer will state his certainty that “charismatic renewal is certainly central at present in God’s purposes of revitalizing his church . . . it [is] plain at once that God is in it” (pg. 147, 150) although Packer knows full well that “current charismatic phenomena do not fully correspond to those of 1 Corinthians 12-14” (pg. 149), their “tongues” are “not language” (pg. 168) and “cannot be confidently equated from any point of view with New Testament tongues” (pg. 179), and, indeed, “the theology most commonly professed within the movement to account for its own claimed distinctives is deeply unbiblical” (pg. 161) and “cannot be established from Scripture” (pg. 163), and their “healings” and “prophetic” gifts are not those of the New Testament (pgs. 171-174). Although Packer knows charismatic doctrines are deeply unbiblical, they should not be “dismiss[ed] as eccentric, neurotic, or even demonic” (pg. 150). Indeed, Packer affirms, all “stand condemned” who do not “thank God for all the new life . . . of which the charismatic movement has been the human channel,” for we should “not [move] away from . . . the charismatic renewal” (pg. 194). Charles F. Parham, “father of the modern Pentecostal movement,” (pg. 23, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, Charles R. Smith), although a fanatic, false prophet (e. g., pgs. 33ff., 60, 77, etc., *The Everlasting Gospel*, Parham), hell-rejector (pgs. 51ff, 92ff, *ibid*), and Ku Klux Klan commendor (pg. 190-191, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*, Robert Anderson), who although “arrested for the grossest immorality, a form of immorality for which we have no name in our English language, though it is described in the first chapter of Romans” (pg. 34, *The Tongues Movement*, Louis S. Bauman, rev. ed. Winona Lake, IN: Brethren Missionary Herald, 1963; cf. pgs. 140, 142, 272-273, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*, Robert Anderson, where Torrey and others affirmed that Parham was guilty of sodomy), had greater discernment about the tongues movement than J. I. Packer. Ten years after Parham initiated modern “tongues” in 1901, he wrote:

Two-thirds of this tongue stuff over the country is not Pentecost. . . . [there are] no real languages, [but] fleshly controls of spiritualistic origin[.] . . . the real Pentecost [is] not chattering or jabbering . . . Hear this: three-fourths of the so-called Pentecosts in the world are counterfeits, the devil’s imitation to deceive the poor earnest souls. . . . Many hundreds, in seeking Pentecost . . . were ripe for hypnotic influence. . . . Two-thirds of the people professing Pentecost are either hypnotized or spook-driven, being seized in the first place by a false spirit or coming under the control of one afterward . . . [many are] demon-controlled. . . . They plead the blood, and claim to be Jesus, giving messages, and imitate every gift of the Holy Spirit and Pentecostal tongues[.] (*The Everlasting Gospel*. Baxter Springs, Kansas: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1911, pgs. 31, 55, 72, 120-121)

While Parham is too low, by a third or a fourth respectively, in his estimate that two-thirds or three-fourths of modern Pentecostalism’s supernatural experiences are fakes or demonic, he has far more wisdom than Packer, who recognizes that modern charismatic phenomena are not those of Scripture but nonetheless claims that they are from God. Packer should also have considered the testimony of Pentecostal historians that tongues speech had its roots in demon possession as practiced in pagan African religions:

[I]t is far easier not to deal with the fact that the tradition of violent possession, (which is the same as spirit-possession) associated with the earliest camp meetings is far more African than European, and hence there is reason to hold that, in part at least, it was inspired in the whites by their contact with Negroes. . . . [T]he

phenomenon of spirit possession [i]s a type of highly emotionalized religions and ecstatic experience commonly designated by such terms as “filled with the Holy Ghost,” “lost in the Spirit,” speaking in tongues and rolling.” Spirit possession by a deity is the outstanding manifestation of West African religion[.] . . . [T]he slaves were not completely stripped of their culture upon their arrival in America. A number of “Africanisms” survived . . . such as spirit possession, the dance, and shout songs[.] . . . It may be categorically stated that black pentecostalism emerged . . . [with a] view of religion that had its roots in African religion. . . . William J. Seymour . . . was to contemporary pentecostalism what Luther was to the Reformation, a major catalyst . . . Seymour’s Azusa Street revival was the torrential downpour that created a major worldwide flood. . . . [B]lacks initiate[d] the Azusa Street meeting . . . [d]irectly or indirectly, practically all of the Pentecostal groups in existence can trace their lineage to the Azusa Mission. . . . Seymour, W. E. Fuller, first overseer of the black wing of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of the Americas, C. H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, and G. T. Haywood fo the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, were the sons of emancipated slaves. Their . . . view of religion had its roots in African religion. . . . [T]he influence of African spirit possession on those black pentecostal pioneers who were born as slaves in the American South . . . is a much-neglected and often misunderstood phase of the story (pgs. 123-124, 137-139, “Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement,” Leonard Lovett, pgs. 123-141 of *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan. Lovett “served as the pioneer dean of the . . . official seminary for . . . the Church of God in Christ . . . the largest black pentecostal denomination” (pg. 123). Some quotations by Lovett of other sources have had their quotation marks removed; see the Lovett’s article for documentation and further source material).

If Keswick theology is a stovetop worth of “overheated holiness teaching,” charismatic fanaticism is a city-engulfing inferno of it, but Packer treats its demonic character with the sinful gentleness of David toward murderous Absalom. He will condemn Keswick “quietism” (pg. 127) which he notes developed in connection with the Romanist mystical Quietist “Madame Guyon” (pg. 230), yet will positively comment on pagan Romanist “mystical prayer” (pg. 180) which developed from Quietists and “mystic writers . . . including the Anglican William Law, the Roman Catholics Molinos, Fénélon, Gaston de Renty, Francis de Sales, and Madame Guyon” (pg. 111). Packer will manifest no vehement opposition, but quote positively, unregenerate modernists and neoorthodox writers such as “Karl Barth” (pg. 54) or “J. V. Taylor,” who Packer affirms has “finely said” that “it does not matter . . . whether the Christ who fills our vision is the historical Jesus” (pgs. 35-38). Packer praises “profound and perceptive treatments of the spiritual life . . . [with qualities of] spiritual sensitiveness and moral integrity that modern evangelical writing on holiness has not begun to match” by “Roman Catholics, high Anglicans, and medievalists of all persuasions” (pg. 85). Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was more in step with the Spirit than is J. I. Packer when the Apostle anathematized (Galatians 1:8-9) those who hold to the heresies espoused by modernism and Romanism. “Packer had no doubts about what needed to be done with the old Keswick teaching . . . he wanted ‘to kill it dead,’” (pg. 77, *J. I. Packer: A Biography*, McGrath), yet he repudated the plain Biblical doctrine of separation (Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6) for “the merits of collaborating with other Christians [?] who were not evangelicals” (pg. 158, *ibid.*), he wrote a book with Anglo-Catholics (pg. 155, *ibid.*), said: “I cannot see that anything Scripture says, in the first chapters of Genesis or elsewhere, bears on the biological theory of evolution one way or the other . . . [to be a] theistic evolutionist . . . [does not make one] not an evangelical” (pg. 200, *ibid.*), affirmed that “non-charismatic evangelicals . . . [should] relate to . . . charismatics . . . in strongly positive terms” and make a “strong affirmation of the divine authenticity of characteristic charismatic experiences” (pgs. 245, 247 *ibid.*), “invited . . . evangelicals and Catholics . . . to ally themselves for the work of Christian mission” since “on both sides of the Reformation” Protestants and Papists “trust and love the Lord Jesus Christ” (pgs. 271, *ibid.*), and consequently to “Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism . . . Packer offered . . . a vision of a ‘transcendent new togetherness[?]’ . . . in the face of opposition from fundamentalists” (pg. 272, *ibid.*). Since good Roman Catholics are “true Christians,” Packer believes in bringing “together on the same platform catholics [both Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics], charismatics, and evangelicals, all united” (pg. 277, *ibid.*). While such a union involves the abandonment of the necessity of Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone, “Packer insisted that it is not ‘any theory about faith and justification’ which brings salvation to people,” since requiring “notional soundness and precision” on justification by faith alone is “near to being a cultic heresy” (pg. 273, *ibid.*), a view of justification closer to that of Paul’s anathematized opponents in Galatians than that of the Apostle (Galatians 1:8-9).

Packer does not do well at all to call the militant defense of and separation over justification by faith alone “near to a cultic heresy,” nor does he well when he wants Keswick theology dead but will

appraise positively or not condemn and certainly not separate over far more serious charismatic, modernist, and Romanist heresies.

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Andrew Murray wrote: “A good many Christians are living a low life, a life of failure and of sin, instead of rest and victory . . . they give way to despair. . . . It is the state of the regenerate man in Romans 7. There you will find the Christian man trying his very utmost to live a holy life. God’s law has been revealed to him as reaching down into the very depth of the desires of the heart, and the man can dare to say: ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man. To will what is good is present with me. My heart loves the law of God, and my will has chosen that law.’ Can a man like that fail, with his heart full of delight in God’s law and with his will determined to do what is right? Yes. That is what Romans 7 teaches us. . . . a wretched Christian life, without joy, or strength, or victory. . . . [I]n this passage (Rom. 7:6-25) the name of the Holy Spirit does not occur once, nor does the name of Christ occur. The man is wrestling and struggling to fulfill God’s law. Instead of the Holy Spirit and of Christ, the law is mentioned nearly twenty times. In this chapter, it shows a believer doing his very best to obey the law of God with his regenerate will. Not only this; but you will find the little words, *I, me, my*, occur more than forty times. It is the regenerate *I* in its impotence seeking to obey the law without being filled with the Spirit.” (pgs. 29-31, 36, *Absolute Surrender*, Andrew Murray).

One notes that Romans 6 also contains no mention of the Holy Spirit, nor, for that matter, do Romans 2-4, 10, 13, or 16, but Andrew Murray and other advocates of the Keswick theology would hardly affirm that sanctification as described in Romans 6 is possible without the Holy Spirit, and nobody who believes the gospel would affirm that justification is possible, as described in Romans 3-4, without the convicting and drawing work of the Spirit. Very few would draw any conclusions from the fact that the title “Christ” is absent from Romans 4 & 11, or “Jesus” absent in Romans 9, 11-12. Furthermore, it simply is false when Murray says: “[I]n this passage (Rom. 7:6-25) the name of . . . Christ . . . does not occur.” Was Paul’s conclusion to his discussion in Romans 7:25 too obscure, or too hard to notice? The summation of the whole matter in Romans 7:14-25 is progressive deliverance through Jesus Christ, who is specifically named: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:25). Did Murray read the passage to which he referred? However, Murray is not at all alone in exegetical gymnastics among Higher Life advocates in Romans 7. Many Keswick and Higher Life writers treat Romans 7:25a as the conclusion of Romans 7:14-25, as Paul’s actual conclusion in Romans 7:25b is very difficult for the Keswick view of the passage to explain. Thus, e. g., William Boardman spends an entire chapter of his *The Higher Christian Life* (pgs. 264-280) explaining how one escapes from Romans 7 and enters into Romans 8 when one passes into the Higher Life, making Romans 7:25a the centerpiece of his argument (although he does not exegete the passage, just proof-texts Romans 7:25a and argues from testimonials). Boardman even makes the astonishing affirmation that advocates of the orthodox view of Romans 7 “always clip this graphic chapter . . . to make it suit their experience” (pg. 277, *ibid*) because they, Boardman claims, view Romans 7:24 as the end of the chapter, while in truth 7:25a “closes” the chapter “with the exultant note of deliverance” (pg. 277, *ibid*)—the fact that Romans 7:25b actually is the end of Romans 7 is not even mentioned! Likewise, Romans 7:25a is treated as the end of Romans 7 in the preaching at the Oxford Convention (pg. 129, pg. 291, *Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, Held at Oxford, August 29 to September 7, 1874*. Chicago: Revell, 1874).

W. H. Griffith Thomas quotes, as paradigmatic of the Keswick position on Romans 7:14-25, Evan Hopkins making the same argument about Paul referring to himself but not to Christ or the Holy Spirit on pgs. 275-276 of “The Victorious Life” (I.)” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (76:303) July 1919, 267-288, referencing pg. 49 of Hopkins’ *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*. William Boardman also taught that “the mass of Christians were quite satisfied to go on in the usual way, and live in the seventh of Romans, instead of stepping on into the eighth,” as the minority do who have entered the Higher Life; these have discovered the secret that “one may step out of the ‘wretched man’ experience, in which the mass of God’s people are living, under bondage to law, into the glorious liberty of the eighth of Romans” (pg. 93, 139, *Life and Labours of the Rev. W. E. Boardman*, Mrs. Boardman; cf. also pgs. 182-183, 263ff., *The Higher Christian Life*, Boardman). The traditional view of Romans 7:14-25 “involves one in endless difficulty and monstrous absurdity” (pg. 140, *ibid*). On the contrary, the alleged Keswick contrast between a flesh-dependent person who has not learned the secret of the Higher Life in Romans 7:14-25 and one who has

position of Chafer,²⁴ and which Pentecostalism took over from its Keswick parent,²⁵ and argues against it:

Keswick scouts the Augustinian²⁶ view that Romans vii reflects Paul's normal, everyday experience, on the ground that it records only "heart-breaking defeat" (p. 76), "ineffectual struggle" (pg. 81), "spiritual stalemate," (p. 82).²⁷ This, Keswick affirms—rightly—is not the New Testament picture of healthy Christian life. Dr. Barabas quotes with approval the remark that "if normal Christian experience does not rise any higher than that, then we must change our Lord's invitation to read, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will tell you how to be wretched . . . !'" Instead, Keswick affirms that verses 7-25 show "what happens when any person, regenerate or unregenerate, tries to conquer the old nature by self-effort" (p. 77), i. e. without the use of the Keswick technique of consecration and faith. "The key to the interpretation," it is suggested, "is found in the frequent repetition of 'I,' while there is not a single

found out the Keswick secret in Romans 8 simply does not fit the development of the book of Romans, but is an arbitrary idea that must be read into and which distorts the text.

²⁴ Absolute unity on the doctrine of sanctification among speakers at the Keswick convention from its origin until the present time does not exist, although certain historical trajectories can certainly be traced. Assertions by Packer, Barabas, and any other writer on sanctification should be evaluated based on the accuracy of their Scriptural content. Neither the Reformed position as represented by Packer nor the Keswick position as represented by Barabas presents a doctrine of sanctification wholly correct or wholly in error. One major danger in Packer's Reformed doctrine is a neglect of the the Biblical fact of a distinction between the believer who is right with God and the one who is not so (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29), while a major danger of the Keswick position as presented by Barabas is its neglect of the actual change within the believer's nature through Spirit-produced mortification and vivification.

²⁵ See, e. g., pgs. 261-262 of Myer Pearlman's Pentecostal classic, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*. Springfield, Gospel Publishing House, rev. ed., 1981. Following his Keswick progenitors, Pearlman concludes that with the "cry of triumph" of Romans 7:25a Paul "enter[s] the wonderful eighth chapter" of Romans, entirely ignoring Paul's actual conclusion in Romans 7:25b.

²⁶ Augustine of Hippo taught baptismal regeneration, that outside of the visible institution of the Catholic denomination there is no salvation, and many other damnable heresies. Biblical sanctification should not be termed "Augustinian," since it did not originate with a man who taught a false gospel and consequently could not possibly have the right doctrine of sanctification. Modern evangelical defences of an allegedly Augustinian view of sanctification should consider if it is wise to associate with Augustine's sacramentalism and other errors, such as his denial of the possibility of assurance of salvation: "In the treatise *On Rebuke and Grace* Augustine postulated that the number of the elect was fixed in such a way that it could neither be increased nor diminished, though the identity of the elect was hidden. This led him to conclude that no one could be sure of his own salvation: 'for who of the multitude of believers can presume,' he asked, 'so long as he is living in this mortal state, that he is in the number of the predestinated?' [pg. 39-40, *On Rebuke and Grace*; Chapter 40, "No One is Certain and Secure of His Own Predestination and Salvation," in *Church Fathers — The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 5, "Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings, ed. Philip Schaff]" (pg. 189, *The True Image*, Philip E. Hughes). Augustine tied his denial of the possibility of assurance to an affirmation that a true believer can lose salvation and fall out of a state of saving grace: "For on account of the usefulness of this secrecy, lest, perchance, any one should be lifted up, but that all, even although they are running well, should fear, in that it is not known who may attain, — on account of the usefulness of this secrecy, it must be believed that some of the children of perdition, who have not received the gift of perseverance to the end, begin to live in the faith which worketh by love, and live for some time faithfully and righteously, and afterwards fall away, and are not taken away from this life before this happens to them. If this had happened to none of these, men would have that very wholesome fear, by which the sin of presumption is kept down, only so long as until they should attain to the grace of Christ by which to live piously, and afterwards would for time to come be secure that they would never fall away from Him" (Chapter 40, "No One is Certain and Secure of His Own Predestination and Salvation," *ibid*).

²⁷ [Packer states in a footnote:] So Moule, who characterizes it as "a stern but on the whole disappointing conflict[.]" . . . Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans, ad vii. 7-25*.

mention of the Holy Spirit. . . . In chapter viii, however, where there are at least twenty references to the Holy Spirit and the 'I' drops out, there is a triumphant note throughout." Normal Christian living, therefore, is not in Romans vii, but in Romans viii, "and is experienced as the Holy Spirit by His counteractive power is permitted to have His way" (p. 82).²⁸

It seems impossible to pronounce this exegesis a success. It is arbitrary and gratuitous. There is nothing in the text or context to suggest it. It has to be read into Paul's words, for it cannot be read out of them. "So then," Paul sums up (vii. 25), "with the flesh [I serve] the law of sin." He means, glosses Moule (*Comm[entary on Romans]*, on 7:14-25), "wherever and whenever I 'revert' to the life of self." But this limiting gloss is nowhere in the text. Again, the Keswick "key" to the passage is quite unpalatable; for Paul, so far from opposing the Christian's working to the Spirit's, as if the one excluded the other, constantly treats the second as the ground of, and incentive to, the first (Philippians ii. 12-13, etc.). Moreover, Keswick, on this showing,

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Packer, earlier in his article (pgs. 161-162), dealt with the idea of sanctification merely as counteraction which can be turned on or off instantaneously and completely by an act of faith and consecration or a lapse thereof:

When . . . Keswick teachers turn to the question, how we may do God's will, what they say amounts to this: that we must pass back to the Spirit the duty He has shown us to be ours, for Him to do it in our place. . . . [I]nstead of working through our conscious personal life, the Spirit stands over against it. . . . [The Keswick] doctrine is that the Spirit's power . . . is placed at the Christian's disposal, to "use" (by an act of renewed consecration and faith) whenever temptation arises. Energetic resistance to sin is decried, for "deliverance is not attained by struggle and painful effort, by earnest resolution and self-denial" (p. 90); instead, the Christian "is to hand over the fleshly deeds of the body to the Spirit for mortification. . . . He is then to stand in faith. . . . It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to do the rest" (pg. 107). If I do anything to defeat sin, sin will defeat me; but if I do nothing beyond appealing to the Spirit to defeat it for me, instantaneous victory is assured. The Spirit's work of repelling the assaults of sin in my heart is thus *vicarious* in exactly the same sense as was Christ's work of bearing the penalty of sin on His cross. In each case what I was bound to do is done in my stead by Another, and in each case my cooperation is absolutely excluded. This is express quietism, but it differs from other forms of quietism in that the whole process is represented as being under my control. . . . In this doctrine of "power" . . . [Packer cites Warfield, *Perfectionism*, II, p. 609, as stating that] the analogy of a material force is most unpleasantly suggested. . . . God stands always helplessly by until man calls him into action by opening a channel into which his energies may flow. It sounds dreadfully like turning on the steam or the electricity. [Packer continues,] [t]here is no question that this is a true bill. Yet it is not easy to see how else Keswick teachers could express themselves; for this is how, on their own premises, they must think of the matter. If I regulate the sanctifying process by the degree of my own willingness to be sanctified, and if the Spirit in sanctification works, not through my own conscious working but apart from it, so that my part is not to work with Him, but to cease working and set Him to work alone, then it is exactly like turning on the steam or the electricity. We do not, therefore, overstate the difference between the [true] and the Keswick doctrines when we contrast them thus: according to the first, the Holy Spirit uses my faith and obedience (which He Himself works in me) to sanctify me; according to the second, I use the Holy Spirit (whom God puts at my disposal) to sanctify myself. It should be superfluous to point out that such doctrine is . . . unscriptural [and] irreligious.

In a footnote (pg. 161), Packer deals with Dr. Barabas' denial that his position teaches quietism, "on the ground that intense activity in using the means of grace is necessary to keep up one's consecration and to maintain faith. But such activity, as is explicitly stated in the passage from Bishop Moule which he quotes, is merely *preparatory*: "the temptation of the hour will be met less by direct efforts of the will than by indirect"—i. e., by handing the matter over to the Spirit and *ceasing to act in it oneself*. This is the quietism of Keswick teaching. Moule knew very well what he was teaching, and in *Veni Creator* (p. 197) describes the believer's part in sanctification as "a blessed and wakeful Quietism." In a second footnote (pg 162), Packer states that "it is worthy of remark that even so able a . . . theologian as Moule could not, having once adopted Keswick thought-forms, avoid expressing himself in [the] Pelagian way [where God stands helplessly by until the believer decides to turn on His power like the steam or electricity]. . . . [Moule wrote,] "It is not that God is not sufficient. . . . But the man does not always adequately *use* God" (*The Epistle to the Romans, ad vii. 7-25*). Note that the analogy of the Higher Life as "making the junction between the machinery and the steam-engine," so that with the steam connected, one "goes easily and without effort," was explicitly employed at the Oxford Convention (pg. 291, *Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, Held at Oxford, August 29 to September 7, 1874*. Chicago: Revell, 1874).

completely misrepresents the . . . view [that Romans 7:14-25 is a description of the normal Christian life] which it rejects. There is nothing in the passage to warrant the description of Paul's conflict with sin as *heart-breaking defeat*, *stalemate*, or *ineffectual* striving. These epithets could be justified only if it were true that there are no degrees of deliverance, so that anything less than complete victory is complete defeat. But this is just what is in dispute, and ought not to be taken for granted. The truth plainly is, that Keswick exegetes were already prepossessed with the idea that healthy Christian life is a "maintained condition" (pp. 72, 83) of complete victory over known sin before they came to study Romans vii; and it was this cramping assumption that compelled them to read the chapter statically instead of dynamically. Hence they found in it nothing more than a confession of failure; for their preconception excluded from it altogether the idea of *progress*, in which [other] expositors find the real key to its meaning. In actual fact, writes Dr. Warfield, this passage "depicts for us the process of the eradication of the old nature . . . what is really in the chapter is divine grace warring against, and not merely counteracting but eradicating, the natural evil of sin . . . the working of grace is by process, and therefore reveals itself at any given point of observation as conflict."²⁹ The deliverance which grace effects is never final in this world, but is continuous and progressive. And all that Paul actually says in verses 14-25 is that at present his intention always exceeds his achievement,³⁰ that though he would be perfect he is always something less than perfect, and that he longs for the day when by Christ's power sin will have been rooted out of him completely and his reach will no more exceed his grasp (vii. 24; cf. vii. 23).

The new exegesis, then, is not preferable to the old. It appears to be the result of reading Romans vii in the light of a preconceived and unproven theory which excludes any sense of imperfect attainment from the healthy Christian consciousness. And its rejection means the rejection of [the Keswick concept of sanctification as] complete counteraction as doubly erroneous; for our examination of Romans vii confirms us in the belief that the Christian's sanctification, while far less than complete, is far more than counteraction. It is nothing less than the progressive uprooting of sin within him by the conquering energy of the Spirit of God.³¹

²⁹ [Packer cites] *Perfectionism*, II, pp. 583f. [by B. B. Warfield].

³⁰ [Packer cites A. Nygren, *Romans* [1952], p. 243 as follows:] "He has in mind the tension which exists, in the Christian life, between will and action, between intention and performance."

³¹ "'Keswick' and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification," pgs. 164-166. Packer concludes his article by stating: "It has become clear how profoundly unsatisfactory the new [Keswick] teaching is in comparison with the old. It is *Pelagian*; for, in effect, it makes the Christian the employer, and the Holy Spirit the employee, in the work of sanctification. It is *shallow*; for it externalizes sanctification, reducing the Spirit's work to the mere preventing of sinful acts and excluding from it altogether the positive renewal of the agent's person. As such, it is a *depressing* message for the Christian; for what a regenerate man, as such, desires most of all for himself is, not freedom from conflict and tension as an end in itself, but freedom from the pollution and defilement of sin in his heart. ["Oh for a *heart* to praise my God, / A *heart* from sin set free!"] . . . is [the believer's] constant cry. And this, Keswick assures him, is precisely what he cannot even begin to have in this world. The law of sin can be counteracted in his life, but not in the slightest degree eradicated from his heart. On his dying day, his heart will be no purer than on the day of his new birth. We may suspect that the salvation proclaimed by Reformed theology [and other non-Keswick positions on sanctification that also avoid the errors of Reformed theology], which centers round a real, progressive purifying and renewing of his heart, will impress him as far greater and infinitely more desirable than its Keswick counterpart, which extends only to his actions and leaves his corrupt heart exactly as it was. Moreover, the Keswick message is *delusive*; for it offers a greater measure of deliverance from sin than Scripture anywhere promises or the apostles themselves ever attained. This cannot but lead either to self-deception, in the case of those who profess to have entered into this [post-conversion second] blessing, or to disillusionment and despair, in the case of those who seek it but fail to find it. In the latter case, according to Keswick, the reason for the failure is not that there is no such blessing to be had, but that the seeker's acts of consecration and faith were defective; and he is therefore directed to repeat them more thoroughly. It is unnecessary to dwell on the bondage and frustration to which such advice must lead.

Romans 7:14-25 is not a description of Paul before his conversion, nor of the Apostle in some sort of state of legal bondage from which he is delivered in Romans 8 to enter into a higher Christian life. The second half of Romans 7 depicts an aspect of Paul's normal Christian life, the aspect that relates the normal Christian life to the holy law of God,³² and is in this respect a paradigm for the Christian life and growth of all believers.³³

Application of the Exegesis of Romans 7:14-25

Since Romans 7:14-25, continuing into chapter 8, is a description of the normal Christian life, as seen in the godly Apostle Paul, a number of conclusions necessarily follow.

1.) You should beware of claims of Christian experience that allegedly are different and higher than Romans 7:14-8:4. A believer who affirms that he has reached a higher plane where he never has to struggle with sin is surely either self-deceived or a hypocrite, for he makes a claim to a level of Christian experience that exceeds any promised in the Bible for the believer's earthly pilgrimage. Any Christian on earth who thinks he has risen to a plane above one where he can regularly follow the model prayer's

"The Convention," Dr. Barabas assures us, "is not interested in academic discussions of theology and ethics, or even in adding to the store of Bible knowledge of those who attend, but simply and only in helping men to be holy." (p. 108). Perhaps it is this very unconcern that has caused the trouble. After all, Pelagianism is the natural heresy of zealous Christians who are not interested in theology. May we venture to suggest that the Convention would more effectively promote its avowed aim by reforming its tradition according to the Word of God?

³² Romans 7:14-25 "reproduces Paul's present theological self-knowledge as a Christian: not all of it, but just that part of it which is germane to the subject in hand—namely, the function of the law in giving knowledge of sin. (The other side of Paul's self knowledge, that given him by the gospel, is set out in chapter 8.) The thesis of the paragraph [consisting of Romans 7:14-25], 'I am carnal, sold under sin,' is stated categorically and without qualification, not because this is the whole truth about Paul the Christian, but because it is the only part of the truth about himself that the law can tell him. What the law does for the Christian is to give him knowledge of the sin that still remains in him. When he reviews his life by the light of the law, he always finds that he has done less than the good that he wanted to do; thus he 'finds' and 'sees' that sin is still in him, and that he is still to a degree being taken captive by it (vss. 21-23). The wretchedness of the 'wretched man' thus springs from the discovery of his continuing sinfulness, and the knowledge that he cannot hope to be rid of indwelling sin, his troublesome inmate, while he remains in the body. He is painfully conscious that for the present his reach exceeds his grasp, and therefore he longs for the eschatological deliverance through which the tension between will and achievement, purpose and performance, plan and action, will be abolished" (pgs. 626-627, "The 'Wretched Man' in Romans 7," J. I. Packer).

³³ Many other views of Romans 7:14-25 have been invented. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to deal with every one of the unusual ideas people have thought up to explain the passage. It is sufficient to present the true view that Romans 7:14-25 speaks of Paul in his normal Christian life, as a paradigm for Christians in general, and compare this position with the common contrary views that the pericope deals with Paul as unregenerate or with someone living based on law apart from faith.

request, “forgive us our sins” (Luke 11:4), has allowed the deceitfulness of sin to very greatly lead him astray.

2.) While focusing on Christ, strive at all times to be aware of, on guard against, and strenuously opposing the motions of indwelling sin. To be unaware of your remaining corruption is very dangerous and an indication of serious spiritual deficiency. Furthermore, if you convince yourself that you have reached a higher plane where you no longer struggle against sin, and where your desire for righteousness no longer exceeds the measure to which you have arrived at (Romans 7:15), you will seriously hinder your further progress in grace. The Lord Jesus promised: “Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). You should be filled with a boundless hunger for greater holiness than you possess, and hate the fact that you still have such awful remains of corruption within you. God will bless such hunger and thirst after righteousness by filling you ever the more with His holiness. Thinking that you have entered a state where you no longer need to hunger and thirst for greater holiness than you have will cause this blessed hungering and thirsting, and the Divine holiness that is imparted by means of it, to abate. Do not make the mistake of confusing a proper desire to resist and not hold on to any sin—a proper Christian sincerity and upright walk—with freedom from all conscious sin. How will becoming unconscious that your flesh is constantly lusting against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17) be of any spiritual benefit, rather than of certain spiritual weakness? Rather, you should grow in your hatred for your indwelling sin, and in your understanding of its lusting. Your ability to mortify indwelling corruption will be hindered if you pretend that it is perfectly counteracted or that its actions are in any way different from what they truly are.

3.) Humble yourself greatly because of your own vileness, wickedness, and worthlessness. Will you add, on top of all the sin you have already, that of pride and blindness to your own sinful condition?

4.) Recognize that it is a certain principle that, especially when you seek to do good, evil is then present with you (Romans 7:21).³⁴ Be especially on your guard against sin when you are engaged in especially spiritual activities, from public worship to personal devotions.

5.) Recognize that the closer you are to the Lord, and the more the Holy Spirit conforms you to the image of Christ, the greater this conflict against sin will become. Isaiah was especially conscious of his sin (Isaiah 6:4) when he saw Jehovah on His

³⁴ Note the classic experiential exposition and application of this verse by John Owen in his *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers*.

throne, high and lifted up (Isaiah 6). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). The more His light shines upon you, the more you will see, hate, and strive against what darkness remains within you.

6.) Focus on the promise of spiritual victory that the Lord has given to you. The promise is not that you will, on earth, reach a place where spiritual warfare is no longer necessary, but that you can make continued and constant progress in the eradication of indwelling sin and growth in holiness. When Joshua and the armies of Israel were promised victory in the land of Canaan, they were not promised that all the heathen would be eliminated in a day, but that “the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little, until thou be increased, and inherit the land” (Deuteronomy 7:22; Exodus 23:30). Nor was the Lord’s covenant with Israel that all the Canaanites would remain, unweakened and defiant as ever, in the land, but simply be suppressed so that Joshua could forget that they were there, which would be no true victory at all. Rather, the promise was that Israel would, strengthened by Jehovah, win battle after battle and take into actual possession more and more of the land that was all already legally deeded to them. “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life” (Joshua 1:5; cf. 1:1-9), for “[y]e are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). As none of the strongholds of the heathen in Canaan could stand against Joshua, strengthened and led by Jehovah, so there is not a sin that you cannot make ever consistent progress against—indeed, the New Covenant in Christ’s blood makes your progressive victory now, and ultimate victory in the future, an absolute certainty. So do not despair if the warfare is long, nor delude yourself into thinking that you can put down your weapons and rest at any point in this life. Rather, take to heart the promise made to Joshua: “Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:7-9).

7.) Let the reality of your continued battle with sin in this life make your thoughts of and longing for heaven all the sweeter. Oh, to be free from even the presence of sin! “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). How wonderful will it be to find yourself perfectly conformed to the moral likeness of Christ, and enjoying

unbroken fellowship with Him for all eternity! How glad you will be, then, for every battle fought, for every victory won! Press on, oh Christian pilgrim—victory is coming, and victory is secure. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).